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Meaning, Shape, and Number in *Upon Appleton House*

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Andrew Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* is a poem that is uniquely about dimension—about height, breadth, depth, size, measure, and proportion; about insides, outsides, and boundaries; about building one's dwelling and positioning oneself properly in it; about finding or creating a shape fit to dwell in.[1] As previous readers have noted,[2] the moral and aesthetic questions posed in the poem—how does one build one's house, one's life, one's art?—are cast in the language of architectural design and geometrical shape. S. R. Heninger, David Evett, and Don Parry Norford[3] in particular have established the Neoplatonic roots of Marvell's references to the "*holy Mathematicks*" (line 47)[4] of the squaring of the circle in Stanza 6 of *UAH*. Their work has demonstrated the importance of Pythagorean number symbolism and Neoplatonic speculative thought, not only in Stanza 6, but for an overall understanding of the poem.

What remains to be considered more fully, I believe, is how Marvell's use of numerical symbology functions as a moral, structural, and aesthetic principle in the poem itself. I would like to apply the insights of these earlier readers—and their observation of the central thematic importance of Stanza 6—to a closer analysis of the dynamics of *UAH* by examining its imaginative geometry. I see the central relationship in *UAH* as that between the dual symbolic architectures of number and language implied by the figure of the circle enclosed in the square. *UAH* explores boundary conditions—how one fits language to landscape, topographical description of the Fairfax estate to "the world without" of civil turmoil that bounds and threatens to invade it, verbal and numerical signification to physical contingency. As the poem progresses, physical and imaginative boundaries are redefined: walled-in structures, with their implications of violence are succeeded by transparent maps or

models that accommodate themselves to their surroundings. But underlying the architectural, geometrical, and topologyical figures and the motifs of union and violation that run through *UAH* is the central motif of the marriage of shape and meaning evoked in a poem where quantity and metaphor exchange function. It is this marriage of—or interplay between—shape and meaning that I hope to establish as the central dynamic of Marvell's poem.

The opening stanza introduces this central architectural motif in a manner that associates architecture with violence, an association that recurs throughout *UAH*, as well as elsewhere in Marvell:

> Within this sober Frame expect
> Work of no Forrain *Architect*
> That unto Caves the Quarries drew
> And Forrests did to Pastures hew;
> Who of his great Design in pain
> Did for a Model vault his brain. . . . (ll. 1-6)

Whatever its context in his poetry—the divided soul and body, the camp of war and political struggle, or the garden's shade—for Marvell the architect's work expresses the conflict between art and nature,[5] between the shaping impulse of the human mind and the natural world as quarry for the mind's constructions, between the human rage for order and the violence or ruin which in his vision inevitably accompanies that order.[6] Architecture signifies a violation, a disjunctive, oppositional relationship, a wound in an inevitably prior, Edenic (or androgynous) unity. Out of this recurring wound, the world of Marvell's poetry is shaped and born.

In light of this deep ambivalence about the value of architectural and other imposed patterns of order and symmetry, the allusion to the quadrature of the circle in Stanza 6 deserves the frequent scrutiny it has received:

> 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. (ll. 41-48)

As a traditional emblem of perfection and eternity, as well as of the Scriptural "crown of life" promised to God's elect in James 1:12, the circle carries a symbolic dimension. The circle has a structural resonance as well since circular imagery is woven into each subsequent section of *UAH*; the "Crowns of Gold" (l. 120), that the Nunappleton Nuns strive for; the "sweet, / And round" (ll. 305-06) fires of fragrance in the Fairfax garden; the "Fairy Circles" (l. 430) of the mowers' dance; the circles of "gadding Vines" (l. 610) that lace the poet-philosopher in the woods; and the circle of flowers that crowns Maria Fairfax (l. 700). Also, the poem completes a circle of movement from the Fairfax house to the garden, to the meadow, to the woods, and then back to the garden and house. Moreover, the six-part stanzaic organization of the poem's description—the house (Stanzas 1-10), the Nunnery and the family history (Stanzas 11-36), the garden (Stanzas 37-45), the meadow (Stanzas 46-60), the woods (Stanzas 61-81), and Maria Fairfax (Stanzas 81-97)—suggests the hexagonal shape of "*Romulus* his Bee-like Cell" (l. 40). Not only is the bee, as D. C. Allen notes in "Upon Appleton House" in *Image and Meaning* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1968, pp. 200-1), a Virgilian symbol of harmony, but the bee's hexagonal cell, like the shape of the poem, fits perfectly within the circle.[7] Furthermore, the circle occupies a fit place in the poem, positioned as it is in Stanza 6, whose circular numerological valence matches its verbal content. Like the circle inscribed in the square, the economies of shape and meaning, number and language here fit.

Squares or groupings of fours are at least equally prominent as a structural and thematic force in the poem. The "fragrant Gardens, shaddy Woods, / Deep Meadows and transparent Floods" (lines 79-80) of Appleton House form a tetrad of elements that clearly invoke the Pythagorean Tetrad of earth, air, fire, and water that binds the Cosmos[8] and that function, in the words of David Evett, as "a formulaic *topos*" of the landscape or as a *locus amoenus* (505). Like the prelapsarian England, the "*Paradise* of Four Seas" (line 323) prior to the Civil War alluded to in Stanza 41, these gardens, woods, meadows, and floods are extracted from their surroundings to become not just elements of the Appleton House state, but an ordering principle of *UAH* as poem. The architecture of the square is embedded in the landscape and the poem. It should also be noted that lines 79-80, which introduce the motif of the Tetrad, appear in Stanza 10, the stanza with the number of the Pythagorean Tetrad of four elements (1 +2 +3 +4). Furthermore, as John Wallace has observed (237-38), *UAH* is metrically built out of stanzaic squares: the eight-line iambic tetrameter units of each stanza, known to

Renaissance rhetoricians as the "quadrangle equaliter," form a structural quadrature that contains the circle of the poem. The aesthetics of the quadrangle is further accentuated by the rhymed couplets of each stanza which, in conjunction with Marvell's customary practice of enclosing syntactic units within the couplet form, tends to divide each stanza into groupings of four pairs. Or, to look at the structural division of the entire poem, if the opening and closing sections are added to the Tetrad of garden, meadow, flood (the Denton River), and wood that forms the middle sections, the square number four "fits" into the circular number six. Viewed from the perspective of the geometrical trope of Stanza 6, the shape of *UAH* embodies and duplicates the squaring of the circle.[9]

But the crux of Stanza 6 and of our entry into the geometry of the poem is the assertion that the circle *cannot* be squared: "Let others vainly strive t'immure / The *Circle* in the *Quadrature*!" Mathematically speaking, a circle equal in area to a given square cannot be constructed within the framework of Euclidian geometry.[10] S. K. Heninger concisely articulates the Neoplatonic implications of this mathematical dilemma: "the problem of squaring the circle is a geometrical formulation of the incongruity between the world of concept and the world of matter" ("Some Renaissance Versions of the Pythagorean Tetrad," 6).[11] Heninger's observation can be applied more specifically to the dynamics of *UAH* by dividing "the world of concept" that he identifies into the two symbolic alternatives of conceptualization that *UAH* consistently and relentlessly asks us to examine: the verbal and the mathematical. The puns on "Lines," "Figure" and "equal," for example, and the fact that the circle and the square are incommensurate paradoxically undercut the very relationship between geometry and language that they seem to exploit. They alert us to the uncertain relationship between geometrical shape and verbal meaning, between qualitative and metaphorical proportion that resonates throughout the poem. If, according to Pythagorean metaphysics, geometric proportion is a figure or image of an underlying cosmic order, the *lack* of proportion implied by the incommensurability of the circle with the square points to the limits of a Pythagorean reading of the geometry of the poem. Indeed, *UAH* offers us no neat proportion between numbers and things, between signifier and signified, between language and the world that it seeks to describe. In fact, in its sensitivity to the problematical nature of verbal reference,

this poem of inescapable yet unstable metaphor shares the landscape of discourse of contemporary critical theory.

It offers instead (along with or in place of?) a more complex relationship of humility expressed by the power of verbal signification and figuration. The poem turns from the prideful, divisive, ("vainly," "immure") architecture of a mathematical model that can find no fruition in physical or geometrical space to its own architecture: "These *holy Mathematics* can / In ev'ry Figure equal Man." The "*holy Mathematicsk*" of Pythagorean speculation can "equal Man" only by moving beyond numerical equality, beyond number as quantity to number as relationship, as symbol, as marriage with the multivalent, verbal human order. Geometrical "Figure" must be contained, "fit" (line 15) into the more encompassing "Figure" of the poem's signifying, metaphorical order. To Pythagorize is not to number, but to symbolize, to name.

The possible allusion on lines 45-48 to the famous Vitruvian diagram (or to later Renaissance variants) of the human body inscribed in a square and circle[12] suggests that the verbal figures, or tropes, of *UAH*, unlike the geometer's abstract shapes, will touch the world at every point and, like the birds' "equal Nest" (line 12) or the "equal fires" (line 306) of the flowers in the Fairfax garden, radiate from a human and domestic center. It is Maria Fairfax who is addressed in the poem's penultimate stanza as "*Heaven's Center. Nature's Lap. / And Paradice's only Map*" (765-68), and it is the Fairfax and Vere families, past, present, and future, that compose the subject of orderly and symmetrical tribute in Stanza 62. The "sober Frame" (line 1) of *UAH* is a construct of language and number centered in the human frame.

This said, the central dynamic in the poem remains the interplay, first between verbal and geometrical figure, and, second between each of these symbolic orders and the world they seek to describe. (Or, to translate word into figure):

NUMBER——MATTER LANGUAGE——WORLD

ARCHITECT POET

The architect mediates the marriage and division of (between) number and matter; the poet analogously mediates the marriage and division of (between) language and world.

To see how language and number interrelate at key junctures in *UAH*, consider Stanza 7, which immediately follows and significantly develops the reference in Stanza 6 to the squaring of the circle:

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

Stanza 7 is, in fact, a gloss on Stanza 6, illustrating how the poem will "in ev'ry Figure equal Man," in this case by accommodating dwelling to dweller, square (material world) to circle (human soul). The literal description of the square central hall of the Fairfax house surrounded by a cupola (Allen 188-89) is transformed by a hyperbolical verbal "swelling" that animates and impregnates the space around the master of the house, Thomas Fairfax, outrageously bending geometrical shape and verbal reference. Unlike the birds and beasts in Stanza 2 whose "Bodies measure out their Place" (line 16), humans, "[t]hese rational *Amphibii*" (line 774), live in what Sir Thomas Browne calls "divided and distinguished worlds" (Keynes I, 45), the worlds of sense and conceptualization that can be fit only by the holy mathematics of the symbolic imagination. These lines, in their playful distortion of physical space, point to a sought relationship between a mental dweller and his dwelling in which space curves to accommodate what Marvell in "On a Drop of Dew" calls the soul's "pure and circling thoughts" (line 25).[13] Shape reflects meaning and moral dimension in *UAH*. References to curved lines scattered through the poem—"the swelling Hall" of the Fairfax house above, the "Leaves, that to the stalks are curl'd" (line 315) in the garden, "[t]he arching Boughs" (line 509) of the woods, and the "wanton harmless folds" (633) of the Denton River—are the sinuous measures of humility: "Height with a certain Grace does bend, / But low things clownishly ascend" (lines 59-60). The landscape of Appleton House reflects the play of the human mind, and the complex humility of the poem lies in the mind's accepting the world as a dwelling to inhabit rather than a wilderness to be carved. The geometry of the poem expresses the attempt to determine the dimensions and boundaries of an imaginative world, to fit symbolic orders to the natural world.

The principles of "fit" architecture in *UAH* suggest that the geometrical shapes alluded to in the poem reflect an implicit order, a division into and an interpenetration of boundaries rather than one imposed on or by

either some "external" world or "inner" symbolic order. Appleton House, its fields, meadows, rivers, and gardens, cannot be set apart from the evidence of turmoil that surrounds it. The violence and disjunction of the 1642-49 Civil War enters the linguistic order of the poem and pervades its landscape from the very beginning in its opening condemnation of the ruinous architect "That unto Caves the Quarries drew, / And Forrests did to Pastures hew" (lines 3-4). Efforts to "contain" the world in the sense of walling it out inevitably fail in *UAH*. Boundaries, walls or fences are repeatedly set up in the poem only to curve, dissolve, collapse, or be punctured by "the World without" (line 99).[14] Section One, by introducing the poem's controlling architectural motif, establishes the spatial, aesthetic, and moral norms of sobriety and humility that the remainder of the poem will develop. The sections that follow depict this humility as a different, more inclusive kind of "containment" that operates increasingly in *UAH*. As the poem progresses, the walled-in building or square, with its implications of violence and violation, is replaced by the transparent map or model that peacefully and imaginatively accommodates itself to its surroundings.

Thus, in Section Two, the Nuns' life at the Nunappleton Priory is the wrong kind of retreat, a seeming withdrawal from the world that actually mirrors the pride, sensuality and artifice that it pretends to reject. The restraining walls of the Priory represent "the unjust divorce" (line 236), not only between Thomas Fairfax and his intended bride, but also between the decadent artifice of the Priory's inner world and "that wider Den" (line 101) of "the World without" (line 99). The Priory parodies the architecture of humility, as straight lines bend in idolatrous flattery to Isabel Thwaites: "And if our Rule seem strictly pend, / The Rule it self to you shall bend" (lines 155-56). Like "the first Builders" (line 24), the architects of Babel, the Nuns in their prideful ambition to climb to heaven exemplify the moral disproportion that results when "low things clownishly ascend"—"Your voice, the sweetest of the Quire, / Shall draw *Heav'n* nearer, raise us higher" (lines 161-62). William Fairfax's marriage to Isabel Thwaites pierces the walls of the Priory and exposes the hollowness and ruin of its architecture: "Young Fairfax through the Wall does rise. / Then th'unfrequented Vault appear'd, / And superstitions vainly fear'd" (lines 258-60). The Priory is a claustrophobic barrier, a dead and empty space ("unfrequented Vault"), an oppressive ediface whose sinister magic is "disposset" (272) as its boundary is penetrated.[15]

In Section Three, the Fairfax floral garden with its "five imaginary Forts" (line 350) symbolically guarding against the temptations of the

five senses is a Protestant refutation of the idolatrous sensuality of the Nunappleton Priory. But it, too, leaves the conflict between a reclusive moral order and the violence of the external world unresolved. The retirement of this earlier Lord Fairfax,[16] whose "warlike studies could not cease" (284), brings with it the residue of his previous military engagements. His garden-forts serve as "five Bastions" to "fence" (285)—to barricade and fight against—the senses. The unstable rupture of conflict is further suggested, first playfully in the description of the bee as soldier-sentinel who "if once stir'd, / . . . runs you through, or asks *the Word*" (line 320), but then more somberly in an elegiac lament for the loss of an earlier garden-England free of war:

> Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle
> The Garden of the World ere while,
> Thou *Paradise* of four Seas,
> Which *Heaven* planted us to please,
> But to exclude the World did guard
> With watry if not flaming Sword. . . . (lines 321-25)

This "*Paradise* of four Seas," like the garden-fort, is an ordered enclosure, guarded by a figurative "watry if not flaming Sword," but threatened by literal violence: Stanza 43, in fact, disturbingly inverts the tenor and vehicle of the garden-warfare trope that defines Section Three of the poem by exchanging the earlier description of the garden in military terms in Stanza 37-40 for description of war in horticultural terms: "But War all this does overgrow: / We Ordnance plant and Powder sow" (343-44).

Section Four, describing the Fairfax meadows, even more radically subverts the geometry of a bounded, protected landscape by disclosing a series of violent and disturbing shifts in perspective that call all measurement or dimension in doubt. The grass is "unfathomable" (line 370), fluid, and permeable as oppositions of size, height, depth, color, and substance are mirrored, conflated, or confused. Allusions to the meadows cut by the mowers' scythes disturb the descriptive surface of the poem (Tayler 150-52). References to the meadow as "A camp of Battail newly fought" (line 420) as well as to other realms of military, political, or gladiatorial conflict (Alexander the Great, bodies of Roman soldiers, the English Levelers, the Spanish bullring) invade the pastoral landscape with the red stain of war. Then, in Stanza 61, the outside world invades the imaginative boundaries of Appleton House as poem. One of the

mowers' wives, "bloody Thestylis" (line 401), slaughters a bird "And crys, he call'd us *Israelites*; / But now to make his saying true, Rails rain for Quails, for Manna Dew" (lines 406-08). At this strikingly self-referential point, a figure in the world outside the poem comments on the poem (*he* refers to Marvell or to the poet). This figure and this reference to the poem is then incorporated into it. The signified—in a violent and bloody way—penetrates and contaminates the signifier, to produce a subtle and threatening tension between figure and figure, language and landscape.

Stanza Five moves from the active physicality of the meadows to contemplative withdrawal in the Fairfax woods. In accordance with its contemplative dimension, the woods defines a perceptual rather than a physical boundary: "Dark all without it knits; within / It opens passable and thin" (505-06). The apparent solidity and denseness of the woods, the "huge Bulk" (501) that first appears to the unaccustomed eye, gives way to an easier, more flexible pattern of harmony which "in as loose an order grows, / As the *Corinthian Porticoes*" (507-08). Pain and loss, always a part of the poem, are woven in the woods section into patterns of balance and symmetry analogous to "equal," regular geometrical figures. The history and fortunes of the Fairfax family are presented in a stanza that encloses the family and its history in a consummate pattern of lateral, vertical, and temporal symmetry:

> The double wood of ancient Stocks
> Link'd in so thick, an Union locks,
> It like two *Pedigrees* appears,
> On one hand *Fairfax*, th'other *Veres*:
> Of whom though many fell in War,
> Yet more to Heaven shooting are:
> And, as they Natures Cradle deckt,
> Will in green Age her Hearse expect. (lines 489-96)

The symbolic birds in the woods, unlike the slaughtered rails in the meadow, who discover that "Lowness is unsafe as Hight" (line 411), find a pattern of balance that modifies violence and disorder. The nightingale, legendary victim of rape and violence, transforms her pain into song and blends aesthetic height with physical lowness: "Low shrubs she sits in, and adorns / With Musick high the squatted Thorns" (lines 515-16). The stock doves burn in love for one another "in . . . equal Flames" (line 528), the heron sacrifices "[t]he eldest of its young," and

the woodpecker follows the principles of "*holy Mathematics*" by "meas'-ring the Timber" as it "numbers up" the trees that are "fit to stand" (lines 540, 545, 544).

Yet beneath these evocations of the rituals of passage of birth, marriage, and death, the dark forces of violence that threaten or accompany them remain: the heron sacrificing its young, the stockdoves mourning "for some Cause unknown" (line 525), and the woodpecker destroying "the hollow Oak" (line 548) as "through the tainted Side he mines" (line 550). Only in its concluding stanzas does this section move from discord and division toward unity with another kind of movement inward as the sanguinary external history of the ancient world is succeeded and redeemed by the inner mystical wisdom of these same nations:

> What *Rome, Greece, Palestine*, ere said
> I in this light *Mosaick* read.
> Thrice happy he who, not mistook,
> Hath read in *Natures mystick Book*. (lines 582-84)

Section Six, which concludes the poem with its description of Maria Fairfax's evening walk through the garden of Appleton House, presents Maria as the creatrix and matrix of the moral and aesthetic order to which the poem pays tribute: "But by her *Flames*, in *Heaven* try'd, / *Nature* is wholly vitrifi'd" (687-88). She is the model for the Tetrad of elements that compose the landscape:

> 'Tis *She* that to these Gardens gave
> That wondrous Beauty which they have;
> *She* streightness on the woods bestows,
> To *Her* the Meadow sweetness owes;
> Nothing could make the River be
> So Chrystal-pure but only *She*;
> *She* yet more Pure, Sweet, Streight, and Fair
> Then Gardens, Woods, Meads, Rivers are. (lines 689-96)

Finally, by taming "loose Nature" (line 657), by imbuing the landscape with the qualities of her own virtues, Maria has become a map or figure of Edenic harmony: "You *Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap. / And Paradice's only Map*" (lines 767-68).

This image completes a movement of allusion from material structures (Appleton House, the former Nunappleton Priory) to increasingly imaginative constructs (the Fairfax garden-forts, the masquelike, metamorphic shapes of the meadow, the poet's contemplative temple-sanctuary in the woods, and finally the vitrification of nature—the transformation of the world into glass or transparency). The immured building, carved out of the wastes of nature and guarding itself against but ultimately invaded by a hostile surrounding, is gradually displaced by a map, model, or mirror both containing and contained in the world around it (Norford 255-57). The vision of fit humility that emerges is one of a "green, yet growing Ark" (line 484), of numbered architecture built from the timber, *silva*, or material substance of the natural world, yet floating above it and containing in its "sober Frame" (and "in Paires" [line 488] of rhymed couplets) the creatures and elements of "the World without" (line 99).

The incommensurability of the circle with the square corresponds to the incommensurability of signifier and signified, to the arbitrary nature of the symbol. As a reflection on *UAH* itself, it corresponds to the incommensurability of the spatial order of Appleton House with the order of the verbal and numerical languages describing it. The "fragrant Gardens, shaddy Woods, / Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods" are "fragrant," "shaddy," "[d]eep," and "transparent" in a way that illuminates this distinction. The Fairfax garden flowers have a fragrance "Whose shrill report no Ear can tell, / But Ecchoes to the Eye and smell" (lines 307-08). These synaesthetic "Ecchoes" point to a complex of sensory and imaginative response,[17] to a multidimensional quality even more clearly evident in the spatial and visual adjectives describing the other elements of the landscape. Hopefully this paper has already suggested how "deep," "shaddy," and "transparent" with symbolic and metaphorical implications the meads, woods, and streams of *UAH* are.

It is no surprise that the poet who writes in "The Garden" of the mind's transcendence, "Annihilating all that's made / To a green Thought in a green Thought in a green Shade" (lines 47-48), should celebrate, in the replacement of spatial by imaginative structures in *UAH*, this same metaphoric dimension. From its opening figure of tortoises dwelling "In cases fit of Tortoise-shell" (line 14) to its closing figure of the salmon fishers who, "like *Antipodes* in shoes, / Have shod their *Heads* in their *Canoos*" (lines 741-42), *UAH* examines the boundaries of things, the

principles of fitting and containment. A final return to Stanza Six summarizes how the poem inscribes (without immuring) the circle in the square:

> *Humility* alone designs
> Those short but admirable Lines,
> By which, ungirt and unconstrain'd,
> Things greater are in less contain'd. (lines 41-44)

The octosyllabic "short but admirable Lines" of *UAH* itself embody the geometry of humility. The allusive and richly punning language of the poem reveals at every turn of its multivalent meaning how "Things greater are in less contain'd." In its inherent figural capacity, all language, like the "closely wedg'd" (line 503) forest where the poet encamps himself, encloses meaning more densely and elusively than geometrical figures enclose space. The shifts, displacements, and distortions in the imaginative texture of the text cannot be contained in the square of space or referentiality. *UAH*, which is so much about containment, and in which the words "in" and "within" appear so frequently and significantly,[18] is as much a topological poem about insides, outsides, and boundaries, as it is a topographical poem. In its sensitivity to the ways in which texts do not "contain" meaning in the same way that one spatial or geometrical object "contains" another, to the problematical nature of verbal reference, to the inescapable nature of metaphor, it shares the landscape of discourse of postmodern critical theory. This discourse is announced in the opening lines: "Within this sober Frame expect / Work of no forrain *Architect*" (1-2). The second line, and the rest of this stanza, by supplying only a negative description of what *not* to expect, denies or evades the promise of referentiality implied by the "Within" in the first line. Nothing—only the absence of the work of the "forrain *Architect*"—is contained in these words which open into the poem. The poet, architect of symbols, creates what no natural creature loves, "an empty space" (line 15) with language "[a]nd in his hollow Palace goes / Where Winds as he themselves may lose" (lines 19-20).

Consequently, the imaginative geometry of *UAH* calls in question the distinction between inside and outside, either, as we have already seen, by making their boundaries increasingly tenuous, or by describing the inside/outside relationship in ways that suggest their ambivalence or inversion. For example, as it floods the meadows, the Denton River

paradoxically drowns itself—"The River in it self is drown'd" (line 471)—and disappears inward in the very extension of its boundaries. Or, in the woods section, the trees in the wood are "so closely wedg'd / As if the Night within were hedg'd" (lines 503-04): night, which would ordinarily surround and define the condition of the woods, appears to the unaccustomed eye ("When first the Eye this Forrest sees" [line 497]) to be limited and contained within the woods. This perspective from within the woods then yields a further shift: "Dark all without it knits, within / It opens passable and thin" (lines 505-06). As the poet moves *into* the wood, the wood *opens*, thereby inverting the association:

within/closed // without/open
into: without/closed // within/open.

Indeed, the syntax of line 505 ("without it knits, within") further suggests the tangle or knitting of inside and outside that marks the whole poem. This knitting (or confusion) of boundaries is most prominent, however, in the well-known description of the river in what is arguably the speculative pinnacle of the poem, Stanza 80:

> See in what wanton, harmless folds
> It ev'ry where the Meadow holds;
> And its yet muddy back doth lick,
> Till as a *Chrystal Mirrour* slick;
> Where all things gaze themselves, and doubt
> If they be in it or without.
> And for his shade which therein shines,
> *Narcissus* like, the *Sun* too pines. (lines 633-40)

Within its "wanton, harmless folds," the river forms an intricate, playful, yet innocent and natural boundary with the meadow, a boundary that "ev'ry where the Meadow holds," with no need to "vault" (line 6), "strain" (line 32) or "restrain" (line 99) itself as earlier examples of fallen humanity in the poem do. Leaving aside its possible theosophical implications,[19] this stanza offers the most sustained presentation in *UAH* (although in the figure of a simile) of its own uncertain referentiality and of the wavering boundary between inside and outside, poem and world—a boundary which, with the omission of the implied "at" on line 637 ("Where all things gaze [at] themselves"), momentarily collapses between gazer and object, self and other. The manner in which the river

"holds" the meadow on line 634 reflects the same recurring subversion of boundaries: does the river hold the meadow back and keep it outside or does it hold (possess or contain) the meadow within itself? The folds of signification point both ways.

Yet in spite of the incessant siege on its own signifying, referential, and metaphorical strategies, *UAH* avoids ruin and deconstruction by generating meaning through the relationship of its two symbolic orders, the verbal and the numerical. A short and concluding look at the poem's final two stanzas, Stanzas 95 and 96, their relationship to one another, and the relationship in them of number to word will illustrate the interplay or proportion between number and meaning:

LXXXVI

'Tis not, what once it was, the *World*,
But a rude heap together hurl'd;
All negligently overthrown,
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.
Your lesser *World* contains the same.
But in more decent Order tame;
You Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap.
And Paradice's only Map.

LXXXVII

But now the *Salmon-Fishers* moist
Their *Leathern Boats* begin to hoist;
And, like *Antipodes* in Shoes,
Have shod their *Heads* in their *Canoos.*
How *Tortoise* like, but not so slow,
These rational *Amphibii* go?
Let's in: for the dark *Hemisphere*
Does now like one of them appear. (lines 761-76)

Stanza 96 is the culmination of the poem's effort to assert or establish moral and aesthetic ("decent") order in the midst of the moral and aesthetic disorder described on lines 761-64. Its effort at containment and modeling is achieved by the symmetry and balance of having the final four lines answer and control the undisciplined chaos of the first

four lines, by having the "lesser *World*" of line 765 contain and correspond to "the *World*" as "rude Heap" of line 761. And even in their barrenness and ruin, the elements of the fallen human world fit the Tetradic pattern of the Appleton House "*Woods, Streams, Gardens, Meads*" (line 752). as "*Heaven's Center,*" Appleton House fulfills the promise in Stanza 6 of inscribing the circle in the square. And the number of this stanza, ninety-six (16 times 6, square number multiplied by circular number), further fulfills the promise of harmonizing the circle and the square. Read symbolically—as numbers are (at least at times) to be read in this poem—the number ninety-six harmonizes in its symmetry and regularity with the syntactic structure and the meaning of its linguistic component. It is the perfect numerical expression of the "decent" proportion which *UAH* aims for from its beginning, the perfect culmination of that movement and impulse. But it does not, significantly, conclude the poem.

The verbal and numerical components of Stanza 97 also correspond, but with a contrasting effect to those of Stanza 96. The first two words ("But now") signal a shift or withdrawal from the assertions of the previous stanza, or at least a recognition that its world of order is a limited, a "lesser *World*" than the world of contingency and disorder that physically, if not imaginatively, surrounds it. Stanza 97 gives us this world, with salmon fishers hauling in their day's equipment and with the poet describing them in the curiously jarring simile that disturbed T. S. Eliot:[20] "And, like *Antipodes* in Shoes, / Have shod their *Heads* in their *Canoos.*" Yet this odd simile, which in its humorous overingenuity reminds us of the distance between vehicle and tenor, between global antipodes and local fishermen, between the suppositional structures of poems and the wooden canoes of fishermen who do not read poems, is in perfect keeping with the context of the stanza. At its boundary, the poem verbalizes the limitations of its own figures and boundaries. "Let's in" echoes the "Within" of line 1; closing couplet mirrors opening couplet, but with a difference that means all: "in" now is a withdrawal *out* of the poem, a withdrawal from an imaginative to a physical dwelling. "[T]he dark hemisphere" of approaching night casts a shadow of division on the protected circle of "decent Order tame" in Stanza 96; the poem's last word, "appear," casts a shadow of skepticism on all its previous assertions. And what better number for this stanza than ninety-seven? Uneven, prime, non-symmetrical, irregular, it proclaims the very sense of contingency and disproportion that is the subject of the final stanza. Stanzas 96 and 97, then, are companion pieces, similar in

relationship to Stanzas 6 and 7. In each pair of stanzas, a deliberately grotesque verbal figure (the "swelling Hall," "Antipodes in Shoes") in the latter stanza modifies the verbal claims and the mood of the previous stanza while the second stanza's wit of numerical irregularity (7, 97) modifies and complements the first stanza's claim of harmony and proportion (6, 96).

A reading that encompasses *UAH* must respond to the interplay between language and number, poem and architecture (note how many words such as "frame," "design," "compose," "lines," "figure," "measure," "paint," "represent," "fit," "pend," "disjointed," "polisht," and "knit" embrace both symbolic orders). In this interplay, the two orders crossfertilize: the verbal order reveals patterns, shapes, and symmetries that evoke mathematical order while the mathematical order, presented in the light of Pythagorean symbolism, operates as a system of verbal signification. More than the projected marriage of Maria Fairfax, or the fitting of dweller to dwelling, it is the marriage of these two symbolic orders that squares the circle of *UAH*.

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Notes

[1] Any analysis of Marvell must take into account his play with the duplicitous potential of language. See, for example, Elizabeth Cook's comment in *Seeing Through Words: The Scope of Late Renaissance Poetry*: "This notion of art as reaffirming rather than elaborating, restoring rather than duplicating [explains] the reflexiveness, the self-referentiality of many of Marvell's phrases.... As in his restorative, almost tautological poems, Marvell's language seems to double back on itself to re-produce and affirm an original, natural language" (156). As Ms. Cook, however, implies and as a poem like "The Mower Against Gardens" illustrates, Marvell's language, in referring to its origin or "natural" state, is itself double and fallen.

[2] See John Wallace's discussion of the poem in *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* and Daniel Jaeckle's "Marvell's Reformed Theory of Architecture: *Upon Appleton House* I-IX" in the *John Donne Journal* 4 91985), 49-67.

[3] See David Evett, "*Paradices only Map*," *PMLA* 85 (1970), 504-13; Don Parry Norford, "Marvell's *Holy Mathematics*" *Modern Language Quarterly* 38 (1977), 242-60, and S. R. Heninger, "Some Renaissance Versions of the Pythagorean Tetrad," *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961), 7-35.

[4] This and all future citations from *UAH* will be taken from *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), I, 59-83.

[5] See Edward Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, pp. 150-58.

[6] "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body," for example, ends with the Body's disconcerting comparison of the Soul to an architect: "What but a Soul could have the wit / To build me up for Sin so fit? / So Architects do square and hew, / Green Trees that in the Forest grew (41-44)." This quatrain sums up the unresolved conflict between Soul and Body. The Soul is an artificer whose skill and intelligence ("wit") fits the Body into its sinful state. Sin—division and ruin—is an inherent attribute of the shape that the Soul-architect creates. See also "The Mower against Gardens" lines 5-6 and "An Horation Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," lines 67-70.

[7] See, for example, T. Katharine Sheldahl Thomason's sensitive and informed analysis of the hexagonal shape of the poem in terms of what she identifies as six distinct types of pastoral poetry in "Marvell, His Bee-Like Cell: The Pastoral Hexagon of *Upon Appleton House*" *Genre* 16 (1983), 39-546.

[8] See S. R. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmoney: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, for a discussion of the Neoplatonic and Pythagorean background to Renaissance poetic theory.

[9] Stanzas 87 and 88 reintroduce this Tetrad as symbol of the cosmic order created by the presence of Maria Fairfax. Several other key thematic passages in the poem occur in stanzas with likely symbolic numerical significance, such as the reference to the quadrature of the circle in Stanza 6, the reference to "Flow'rs eternal and divine, / That in the Crowns of Saints do shine" on lines 359-60, the balanced, unified vision of the woods' "arching boughs" in Stanza 64, the possible Hermetic allusions in Stanza 80 to the Denton River where "all things gaze themselves" and the reference to Maria Fairfax as "*Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap. And Paradice's only Map* in Stanza 96. To extend this speculation a bit further, the reference to England as a "*Paradise* of four Seas" occurs in Stanza 41, a number whose proximity to but distinct irregularity in comparison to the Tetradic number 40 can perhaps be seen as a numerological statement about England's fall from Edenic harmony.

[10] Although the transcendental nature of pi was not mathematically demonstrated until the nineteenth century (see Kline 51), the incommensurability of circle and square was suspected long before then.

[11] Daniel Jaeckle, in "Marvell's Reformed Theory of Architecture," also connects the incommensurability of the circle and square with a distortion of signification, but he emphasizes the Christian implications of this distortion, or loss of the "algorithmic notion of architecture" (51) more than I do. According to Jaeckle, Marvell rejects Vitruvian architectural theory because it "does not pay sufficient attention to the Fall of man" (57). For Jaeckle, the structural and geometrical deformations in the poem are less playful than postlapsarian: because of the Fall, man has become deformed and no longer is a formal microcosm of the world; therefore, the theory of Pythagorean proportionality is not tenable. While this approach clarifies much of the poem, I am still not sure that it captures its tone entirely, and I am more in agreement with his final tentative statement: "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" (64).

[12] See Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, ed., trans. Frank Granger, Loeb Classical Library, No. 251, 280 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), II, 161: "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 figure and toes will be touched by the circumference. Also a square will be found inscribed within the figure, in the same way as a round figure is produced."

[13] Margoliouth, *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, p. 12.

[14] See, for instance, lines 249-60, 313-20, 393-424, 601-08, 713-20.

[15] T. Katharine Thomason in "Romulus His Bee-Like Cell" (44-45) senses similar overtones in this section of the poem, seeing it as Protestant satire, not just on the Nuns, but also on the decadence, artificiality, and voluptuous neopaganism of the pastoral romance.

[16] According to Margoliouth, this line "would naturally refer to Sir Thomas Fairfax," the son of Sir William Fairfax and Isabel Thwaites (232).

[17] Marvell makes similar use of the metaphorical implications of "Eccho" in "Bermudas," where we are told that the Pilgrims' song "May / Ecchoe beyond the Mexique Bay (lines 35-36)" and in the speaker's reference to "My ecchoing Song" (line 27 in "To His Coy Mistress."

[18] See, for example, lines 13-14, 41-44, 47-48, 97-98, 101, 125-26, 135-36, 189-92, 200, 285-86, 317-18, 351-52, 455-56, 459-60, 471-72, 481-84, 503-06, 519-20, 577-84, 633-40, 647-48, 661-64, 707-08, 721-22, 765-68, 769-72, 775.

[19] As John Wallace has shown in *Destiny His Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 239-40, the reference to the "forrain *Architect*" is a satirical allusion to William Davenant's presumption in Claiming *Condibert* to be "an epic palace" and a statement that *UAH*'s aesthetics of humility will differ sharply from those of Davenant's poem.

[20] See especially Maren-Sofie Rostvig's Hermetic interpretation of this stanza in "'Upon Appleton House' and the Universal History of Man," *English Studies* 42 (1961), 349-50.

[21] In his essay "Andrew Marvell," Eliot in fact condemns both figures—"the swelling Hall" and "*Antipodes* in Shoes"—in the same paragraph as "undesirable images" that "support nothing but their own misshapen bodies" (256), thus substantiating, even in his criticism, a sense of correspondence between them and the stanzas that they appear in.

Errata
for Jonathan F. S. Post,
"Herrick, Cultural Clout, and the Burden of Simplicity"

page 259, lines 9-10 should read
Carew (about whom the authoritative book is still to be written) by a considerable margin.

page 260, line 26 should read
in Cromwell's army

page 261, line 8 from bottom should read
Meddowes,"

page 261, last line should read
than excavating a previously neglected portion of an author's canon.

page 265, line 21 should read
of hamstrung frogs

page 266, line 3 from bottom should read
sees it functioning in significant counterpoint to Herrick's lyric impulse.

page 267, line 7 should read
At the very least, Coiro's book allows us to re-imagine

page 270, line 8 from bottom should read
Crewe and his family.