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Rhetorical patterns in the poetry of Andrew Marvell

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RHETORICAL PATTERNS IN THE POETRY OF ANDREW MARVELL

A Thesis

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of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

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PREFACE

When the volume entitled Miscellaneous Poems appeared in 1681, three years after Marvell's death, it was well received only by "persons of the author's own persuasion," that is, by Whigs and Puritans. Royalists abused it; some, including Dryden, ignored it. The volume did not include the anti-Royalist satires by whose ferocity Marvell had become notorious; and the poems in tribute to Oliver Cromwell--"An Horatian Ode," "The First Anniversary," and the 184 lines (all that were printed) of "A Poem Upon the Death of O.C."--were removed from the copies on sale.¹ Thus only the lyrics, most of them written before 1650, were presented to the public. That the poems were not judged and found admirable on their own merits, even by a reader so discerning as Dryden, indicated not only the intensity of political partisanship Marvell had inspired but also the change in taste that had occurred since the first half of the century.

What the change involves is brought forcefully to mind by thinking of the verse of Donne and Dryden. Just as striking a contrast is found by comparing Marvell's poetry written before 1650 with that written after the Restoration. Differences of both intention and structure divide Marvell's lyrics from his satires. His poetic ideas have a different aim; his linguistic methods have changed. If the word rhetoric is used to signify the poet's use of language, as it is throughout this study, it can be said that Marvell's satiric rhetoric

¹Pierre Legouis, Andrew Marvell, Poet, Puritan, Patriot (Oxford, 1961), p. 226.

and his lyric rhetoric are not alike. It is Marvell's use of language and the ways in which it changed that I wish to consider in relation to the rhetorical movements of his time.

Perhaps the same qualities of temperament that allowed Marvell to go abroad during the Civil War and to shift conspicuously from Royalist to Whig sentiments in the early part of his career, prompted him to cease using the metaphysical style after 1650 and to take up a style that conformed to the new fashion in rhetoric. At any rate, Marvell's poetry reflects in a very interesting way what might be called the stylistic revolutions, the general changes in rhetoric that succeeded one another in the seventeenth century.

Marvell began composing verse in 1646 or 1647 and wrote what most critics consider his best poems before 1650. The rhetoric of these early lyrics gives critics reason to label Marvell a metaphysical poet and to trace the relation of his poetry to Donne's. Through his use of the metaphysical mode of writing, Marvell aligns himself with the anti-Ciceronian movement in rhetoric, predominant in the first half of the century. However, being at some distance from the immediate impact of the anti-Ciceronian revolt which in 1650 was being superseded by later developments, Marvell's early work shows perhaps some aspects of the softer Ciceronian style of the poets who preceded Donne; the melodious flow of Marvell's lines and in particular their sensuous rendering of natural beauty are quite unlike the roughness of Donne's. In the poems written to Cromwell and in the satires of the post-Restoration era, the poet's rhetoric shows the sharp changes characteristic of the differences between the anti-Ciceronian style and the so-called "plain style" of the latter half of the century. All of Marvell's works do not attain literary excell-

ence in equal measure; the satires of his later years do not reach in their way the level of his best lyrics. Early, Marvell writes poems that embody the best features of the metaphysical manner; and his metaphysical poems escape the weaknesses of this style, those excesses censured by Johnson in his Life of Cowley. Later, Marvell's work does not incorporate the highest reaches of the satiric mode nor of the plain style; he writes often jogging, heavy-handed, facile verse. In discussing the rhetoric of his poems, it is necessary to consider both later, less felicitous poems and early, great ones. Insights derived from a study of their rhetoric are not affected by the disparity in the aesthetic quality of the poems. Comparison of the features of Marvell's varying styles with the rhetorical movements of the century reveals that Marvell's stylistic variations parallel and embody the changing rhetorical principles. The two-fold insight that derives from this study is, on the one hand, the increased understanding of Marvell's use of language in both early and late poems and, on the other, the increased understanding of the rhetorical movements. The reader of Marvell's poems is possessed of a sensitivity to his poetry that is based on an awareness of his rhetoric as idiosyncratic and as reflective of the habits of the age.

CHAPTER I

RHETORICAL MOVEMENTS OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

A Renaissance poet's use of language had a more studied and conscious relationship with the general rhetorical principles of the age than does that of most modern poets. Two influences on the development of style in the Renaissance no longer exist. In the first place, during the Renaissance and until the end of the seventeenth century, rhetoric was taught in the grammar school curriculum as part of the Trivium that included also logic and grammar. Pedagogues conceived of rhetoric as not only discipline in correct usage but as discipline in the development of style. In the second place, not only writers but also philosophers and scientists theorized extensively about style; it was their theories that initiated revolutions in rhetoric and impelled the use of the new ideas.

The rhetorical theories of people like Erasmus, Bacon, Sidney, and Gascoigne, all of whom discussed style, functioned on one level while the pedagogical methods and the practices advised by rhetorical handbooks used as school texts functioned on another. The schoolboy learned style primarily through imitation, composing exercises in direct imitation of the verbal style and spirit of a classical author.¹ He learned to use forms of composition and numerous figures of speech. He was especially concerned with the latter, for the school discipline of rhetoric continued through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to be primarily concerned with tropes and figures, the ornaments of style. Thus, as a boy in the Hull grammar school and later at Trinity

¹William G. Crane, Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: The Formal Basis of Elizabethan Prose Style (New York, 1937), p. 62.

College, Cambridge,² Marvell was, without doubt, taught the use of language by the usual methods of the time. His acquaintance with many figures of speech, hyperbole in particular,³ is demonstrated by his poems; "An Horatian Ode" gives proof of his genius in the schoolboy mode of imitation.

Probably Marvell did not encounter theories about style, except by implication, until his grammar school days were over, for the masters did not inculcate theory of itself; imitation and practice were emphasized. In initiating new fashions in rhetoric, the theorists and their reforms seem not to have affected school methods so greatly as they affected styles in writing. In school Marvell must have learned many of the same elements of rhetoric, in much the same way, as Sidney, for instance. As a writer, however, Marvell responded to the fashions in style current in his own time, and the rhetoric of his poetry and Sidney's contrasts accordingly. We see in Marvell's work evidence of his two-leveled encounter with rhetoric: as a student he encountered rhetoric in the curriculum; as a writer he encountered theories about rhetoric, or at any rate he responded to ideas about the use of language the theorists had first voiced. Two rhetorical movements in the seventeenth century and, to a lesser extent, one in the second half of the sixteenth have bearing on Marvell's poetry.

By the time of Elizabeth, Ciceronianism, the earliest of the three movements, was wide-spread. The schoolmasters had come to insist not only that style could be learned only by imitation, but more rigorously that the imitation had to be of the one best author--Cicero. Cicer-

²Pierre Legouis, Andrew Marvell, Poet, Puritan, Patriot (Oxford, 1961), p. 3.

³Joseph H. Summers, ed., Introduction to Marvell (New York, 1961), p. 14.

onianism persisted in spite of opposition from Erasmus and others. Elizabeth is said to have read nearly all of Cicero's works with Roger Ascham, her tutor; and Sidney declared him his favorite author.⁵ The prevalent style of writing, imitated from Cicero, was deliberately ornate and copious. The mannerisms of Lyly's Euphues are examples of stylistic devices favored by advocates of the full, embellished style. With the orientation of rhetoric toward ornamentation, much importance was given to figures of speech, which numbered over five hundred if all names, Greek, Latin, and English, are counted.⁶ The vernacular rhetoric books of the sixteenth century reflect the Ciceronian trend. In these, the stylistic virtues of amplification and ornateness are emphasized for composition in English as in Latin. This emphasis resulted in a diffuse, inflated style in which the words and their dis-⁷position were more important than the thought they expressed.

The two rhetorical revolutions of the seventeenth century had more direct bearing on Marvell's poetry than the earlier, Ciceronian movement. Both the scientific movement of the latter half of the century and the anti-Ciceronian movement of the earlier seventeenth century occurred during Marvell's lifetime. Though the terminology used to describe the two rhetorical styles was similar, the terms had different

⁴A. C. Clark, "Ciceronianism" in English Literature and the Classics, collected by G. S. Gordon (Oxford, 1912), p. 134.

⁵Ibid., pp. 134-38.

⁶Crane, pp. 88-91.

⁷William G. Crane, "English Rhetorics of the Sixteenth Century," in The Province of Rhetoric, ed. Joseph Schwartz and John A. Rycenga (New York, 1965), pp. 216-17.

connotations for the theorists of the two schools; for the later scientific movement, though directed against Ciceronianism, was also in part a revolt against the anti-Ciceronian style of the early 1600's.⁸

Both the anti-Ciceronian movement and the scientific movement grew from a need to validate ideals by the observation of reality, and both insisted on the precedence of res over verba. The style advocated by both groups of theorists is characterized by the close adherence of manner to thought, by clarity, by brevity, by non-ornateness or simplicity.⁹ But the very differences in the writing of early and later halves of the century indicate that some fundamental differences lie beneath the apparent similarity of terminology.

The principles of the anti-Ciceronian movement are embodied in the Senecan style in prose and the metaphysical style in poetry. Erasmus, in the early sixteenth century, not only discouraged the widespread imitation of Cicero but encouraged the use of a style that took its form directly from the content.¹⁰ The Ciceronian movement did not, however, meet with any check until the theories and practices of Ramus began to influence rhetoric in England. Ramus' educational reforms in France were based on the reorganization of the subject matter of the Trivium. Of the traditional five parts of rhetoric, Ramus retained only two--elocutio (style) and pronuntiatio (delivery)--to be treated in the study of rhetoric; he assigned inventio and dispositio, the discovery and arrangement of matter, to logic; and he omitted memoria

⁸Richard F. Jones, "Science and English Prose Style in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century," in Essential Articles for the Study of English Augustan Backgrounds, ed. Bernard N. Schilling (Hamden, Conn. 1961), pp. 87-102.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ruth Wallerstein, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 55-56.

11. from the curriculum. Though taught separately, style and thought were brought into a close and basic relation in actual composition. This emphasis on such a fundamental relation between matter and manner is the most important innovation of the anti-Ciceronian movement, which was fostered by the Ramist reorganization of curriculum.

Seneca was the particular ancient on whose writings the anti-Ciceronians modeled their own. The theorists emphasized the necessity of observation and reliance on reality in the description of human behavior. Rhetoricians recommended for such observations expressive brevity, derived from the conformation of words to idea and from the use of such literary means as aphorism, point, antithesis. ¹² Clarity, in theory a characteristic of this style, was in practice often not achieved. "Strong" lines full of "significant darkness" resulted from the use of paradox and other stylistic devices employed to attain the ideal brevity. ¹³ The resulting "simplicity" of style was one of non-orativeness and adherence to a particular concept of reality rather than a lucidness of utterance.

The scientific movement, the second rhetorical revolution of the century, was initiated by Bacon. The insistence of his followers on the use of a plain style grew from a belief that only through a "non-rhetorical" diction, that is, a deliberately unliterary diction, could scientific observation be accurately expressed. The reality the plain style was designated to express was material reality. The conformity of manner to matter implied to the scientists the rejection of all

¹¹Thomas O. Sloan, "A Rhetorical Analysis of John Donne's 'The Prohibition,'" in The Province of Rhetoric, p. 530.

¹²Jones, pp. 87-102.

¹³George Williamson, "Senecan Style in the Seventeenth Century," in Essential Articles, pp. 137-38.

musical cadences and ornamental figures of speech as they would interfere with the clear, readily comprehensible expression of observed physical phenomena. By brevity was understood the omission of all that was not clearly relevant to the points under discussion; any phrase that had only some verbal raison d'être was excluded. An easy, utilitarian style was the ideal. Robert Plot in the Natural History of Staffordshire of 1686 makes clear the scientific emphasis: "I shall make all Relations (as formerly) in a plain familiar Stile, without the Ornaments of Rhetoric, least the matter be obscured by too much illustration; and with all the imaginable brevity that perspicuity will bear."¹⁴ In 1664, the Royal Society organized a committee that included Dryden and other literary figures, whose function was to seek ways to improve the language. The statement concerning the intentions of the committee condemns superfluous eloquence, rejects amplification and unnecessarily fine style, and advocates simplicity and brevity.¹⁵ Dryden's ideas, without so stringently rejecting ornamentation, are centralized in his notion of propriety, which called for language that fitted the occasion, the matter, and the person addressed.¹⁶ It is Dryden's own natural, colloquial style that has received tribute in the twentieth century as the foundation of modern prose.

Poetry had direct relevance to rhetoric as it was studied in the Renaissance. Poetry was commonly conceived of as an art differentiated from rhetoric--that is, classical oratorical prose-- only by rhythm;

¹⁴Jones, pp. 72, 87-102.

¹⁵Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York, 1965), pp. 554-55.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 557-59.

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like rhetoric, poetry was to function as persuasion. The post-classical definition, of poetry as matter in verse richly ornamented by figures, came down through the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century; poetry was the expression of truth to the imagination in sensuous terms. Two types of poetic sprang from this general conception. One type held poetry to be a verbal art, requiring special diction and style notable for variety of figure, to be mastered in the classical manner of imitation of other authors. This type of poetic grew from pedagogical methods and study of the rhetorical handbooks. A second type of poetic grew from a sense of poetry as an imitation of life and from the idea of the direct relation of ornament to genre. This theory held that poetry was not based only on imitation of current models but involved, too, elements of the poet's own invention; ¹⁸ "the best imitation is one which rests on the truth (factual history) but is adorned and enriched with those versimilitudes which reveal springs ¹⁹ of human action and the color of human experience."

These two conceptions of poetry reflect the trends in rhetoric described. The one, the conception of poetry primarily as an art of verbal effects, parallels the Ciceronian movement. The other, the conception of poetry as an imitation of life, parallels the anti-Ciceronian movement. A third type of poetic, coming into prominence in the latter half of the seventeenth century, conceived of poetry as having a utilitarian, social function; as such, it parallels

¹⁷Donald Leman Clark, Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance: A Study of Rhetorical Terms in English Renaissance Literary Criticism (New York, 1963), pp. 99, 160.

¹⁸Wallerstein, pp. 26, 66-67.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 16-17.

the scientific movement.

The three trends in rhetorical thought are reflected in three schools of poetry as well as in three types of poetic. In the poetry of the middle and later sixteenth century, such as Sidney's and Spenser's, the numerous sonnet sequences of the 1590's, and the early poems of Shakespeare, the reader can distinguish a uniform tone and a characteristic treatment of similar topics. Grown from what Cruttwell terms the "simple sensibility of the early Renaissance" are poems which have similar stylistic qualities--many words to little matter; precisely defined ideas; melodic, smooth diction.²⁰ In the love poetry in particular, the images, built on a similar range of associations, are the expected ones, decorative and idealistic. The language is sweet and amorous, standardized, unambiguous. Special poetic diction flourishes in Spenser's deliberately antiquated diction, in the Euphuistic manner, in the use of classical metrics. The poems flow according²¹ to the formula of style learned and passed on to other poets.

In this sort of writing are found the characteristics which single it out as poetry based on the precepts of the Ciceronian movement. The same copious style, involving the use of words and verbal mannerisms in pictorial patterns is found in prose and verse. The beauty of this style is commensurate with the author's skill in the use of conventional design. Thus, Spenser treats a familiar idea in sonnet LXXV of the Amoretti; the only bulwark against the loss of individual fame is the immortality bestowed by poetic commemoration. Yet the image

²⁰Patrick Cruttwell, The Shakespearean Moment and its Place in the Poetry of the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1955), p. 6.

²¹Ibid., pp.5-38.

of the name inscribed on the shore used to describe the brevity of human fame is strong and suggestive; the thought is freshened.

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
 but came the waves and washed it away:
 agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
 but came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
 (1-4) 22

In many sixteenth century poems, like this one, the play of language that presents an unremarkable thought is often striking. If there is monotony in reading much of this verse, it grows from the unvaried sad-sweet tone and the similarity of the thought.

Much of the impetus behind the new style in poetry of the 1590's and early seventeenth century springs from the deliberate attempt of authors like Donne and Shakespeare to mock and satirize the Petrarchan, Ciceronian tradition of amorous verse. Shakespeare's sonnet CXXX and Donne's "The Baite" grow from such an impulse. "The Baite," for example, begins with the ordinary clichés:

Come live with mee, and bee my love,
 And we will some new pleasures prove
 Of golden sands, and christall brookes,
 With silken lines, and silver hookes. (1-4) 23

But the poem ends in a verse that sets the tradition to mocking itself:

For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
 For thou thy selfe art thine owne bait;
 That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
 Alas, is wiser farre then I. (25-28)

The language of Shakespeare and Donne and others such as Herbert is

²²Edmund Spenser, The Minor Poems, Vol. II, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et.al. (Baltimore, 1947), p. 226.

²³John Donne, The Poems, Vol. I., ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford, 1912), p. 46. All quotations from Donne's poems are taken from this edition.

based on common speech--the turnings of phrase are not flowery and the words are ordinary. Donne's verse in particular is emphatically colloquial and filled with the personal idiosyncrasies of ordinary conversation. The metaphysical poets deliberately reject the classical formulas of style and with them the classical gods who had been cultivated so assiduously in earlier poetry. The single point of view and the ideal unreality of approach common to the sonneteers disappear in metaphysical verse, to be replaced by dramatic fragmentation of the poet's character, which varies not only from poem to poem but within single poems as well. Though the metaphysical poet may play a role, so that his own perhaps shifting personal attitude is indecipherable, each role presents the poet's true, if momentary, being. There is no sense of hearing the poet recite a rote response or pay tribute to an idol remote from the individual reader. Since the pattern of metaphysical poetry is the introduction of the new and the startling, even in the repetition of it there is little monotony. A surface of esoteric knowledge functions on the same level as colloquial idiom; both exist in direct relation to the thought. The complexity of language figures the tension that grows from the complicated conception of the subject. A sense of the paradoxical nature of experience is reflected in the ironical use of traditional figures of speech. For instance, Marvell's effects in "To His Coy Mistress" are based on the ironical use of hyperbole.. The metaphysical concentration of language and complex interweaving of ideas is the antithesis of the typical lyric fullness and extended development of simple ideas. The metaphysical conceit perhaps concentrates the long drawn-out conceit of the early Renaissance, but the complications of

the later conceited language often cannot be disentangled by extending the metaphor again; the complication is in the complex sensing of the subject. The object is viewed in the round; the poet is critic as well as hymn-maker. The poet can see the large as well as the small
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view and plays the microcosm against the macrocosm.

Metaphysical poetry can be viewed as the complement of the anti-
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Ciceronian movement in prose. In both there is the movement away from a specialized diction into the tone and language of ordinary speech. In both there is the attempt to create a medium to express new ideas or to confront old conceptions with new ones. "Looseness of structure, succinctness, pithiness of phrasing, and jerkiness of
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rhythm," held to be characteristic of the Senecan style of prose, can be said to be like the structure that goes with the poet where his mind takes it, like the condensation, even like the often deliberately startling and uneven rhythms of the metaphysicals. Half a stanza of Donne's "The Sunne Rising" exemplifies his not unusual use of successions of irregular heavy accents.

She's all States, and all Princes I;
Nothing else is;
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,
All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie. (21-24)

By far the most important common ground of poetry and prose is the emphasis in both on the relation of style to subject, of language to to the experience presented.

²⁴My ideas in this paragraph are based on those of Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660 (New York, 1962), pp. 104, 126-27; and Cruttwell, pp. 5-68.

²⁵Bush, p. 127.

²⁶Corbett, p. 554.

The writing of the post-Restoration period is very different from that of the earlier seventeenth century. Although the metaphysical mannerisms of style, in particular the comparisons of disparate objects, the conceits, survive in the work of minor poets, the true metaphysical mode, what Cruttwell calls the sense of tragedy, is lost.²⁷ Of the kinds of verse written, there is a preponderance of satire which condemns unambiguously, with nothing of the subtle irony of tone characteristic of the earlier verse. It is propaganda which attempts consciously to create dislike and contempt for the object of its hate.

Part of the explanation for the abrupt change to such a different manner of composition is the change in the public. The poetry of the earlier time had a very limited circulation in court or educated circles; often there were only manuscripts and no printed edition until after the poet's death. The voices of poets of the latter part of the century reach out to a larger and more varied public, one not bound by common social links. The views of the poet must thus be argued and posed in such a way as to convince the readers and shape public views to some social end.²⁸ Consequently, it is poetry fundamentally without a metaphysical or philosophical dimension. It is bound to its time, to its political or social questions, and it does not deviate from its chosen direction, and cannot, if it be expected to accomplish its goal. The language that accompanies these social preoccupations is flat or one-dimensional for the sake of clarity; words do not evoke vistas beyond the surface view. Dryden, the best of the seventeenth century satirists, uses figurative language that is flat; it adheres strictly

²⁷Cruttwell, p. 197.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 204-06.

to the problem at hand and does not expand beyond it. A few lines from "MacFlecknoe" show his precise and limited use of language.

No Persian carpets spread th'imperial way,
But scattered limbs of mangled poets lay;
From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies and relics of the bum. (98-101)²⁹

Clever puns, ironic overtones, and pointed allusions belong to the same dimension and serve to make the writers' views more biting. The doubt concerning the existence of single truth, so well rendered in the complexities of the metaphysical manner, is not present in post-Restoration satire.

Many of the traits of the plain style are found in the satiric verse of the second half of the century. The natural prose style that Dryden helped to formulate carries over into his verse and into that of other poets. The condensation of many associations into few words in metaphysical poetry becomes conciseness in post-Restoration verse. Both styles avoid the Ciceronian copiousness but with different effects. The use of the vocabulary and emphasis of common speech is attributable to both, but post-Restoration satire narrows the range of ordinary language by limiting the range of reference. The liveliness or wit Bacon had named as one of the characteristics of the new style he favored is found in both metaphysical and post-Restoration verse, in the one subtle and ambiguous and in the other clear, understandable, and sometimes scurrilous. The close relation between matter and manner is evident in both, though in the earlier verse the multiplied points of view create many manners and in the later the reduction of the scope of the subject reduces the variety of approach.

²⁹ John Dryden, The Poems, ed. John Sargeant (New York, 1913), p. 91.

There exists, it seems to me, a significant correlation between the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the rhetorical movements of the same period--thus, early Renaissance poetry is related to the Ciceronian rhetoric, metaphysical poetry is related to the anti-Ciceronian rhetoric, and post-Restoration poetry is related to the scientific rhetoric, the plain style. Perhaps poets responded consciously to the change of fashion in language; or perhaps both poets and rhetorical theorists responded to social currents that impelled changes. At any rate, the changes that occurred in the language of poetry and the revolutions in rhetoric were concurrent, concomitant phenomena. Acquaintance with rhetorical theories is one key to the poets' use of language; it is a key that can be used to open doors into Marvell's verse. His poetry reflects more than one rhetorical movement because his work spanned the middle period of the seventeenth century when far-reaching changes in society and in rhetorical theory took place.

CHAPTER II

RHETORICAL PATTERNS IN MARVELL'S POETRY

The examination of Marvell's rhetoric which I propose is not that a Renaissance critic might have undertaken. The usual study of that era was an examination of figures of speech isolated from the poetic context; for example, Abraham Fraunce's The Arcadian Rhetorike is primarily a study of Sidney's figures. Such a practice accords with a Renaissance conception of rhetoric as the ornament of speech. Understanding the word rhetoric, however, in the sense in which it was used not by the authors of rhetorical handbooks but by those who theorized about style, who initiated the trends, I undertake a more general and theoretical examination of Marvell's verse. Rhetoric is taken to mean the use the poet makes of language. Thus, rather than describe, for instance, all Marvell's hyperboles as Fraunce might have, I will describe how his use of hyperbole accords with his metaphysical and anti-Ciceronian rhetoric. Conclusions about changes in his rhetoric will be drawn from a consideration of his general use of language, based on discussion of individual, representative poems.

Marvell's earliest datable poem is "Fleckno," written in 1645 or 1646. He probably ceased to write verse about 1675, though the doubtful authenticity of his later satires makes certain dating impossible. The greater number of his poems was written before 1659; during this period his best work, the lyrics and the official poems of the era of the Protectorate, were composed. After 1659 he wrote fewer poems, his production consisting of a small collection of sa-

tires and a few lyrics.

The writing of verse was never Marvell's primary occupation. Many of his poems are occasional; he never undertook any monumental poetic project. But of the small group of poems he produced, many are very finely wrought. Moreover the poems are notably various. There are lyrical poems about nature and love; there are religious poems, satiric poems, and verses that commemorate particular historical events. There are Latin poems as well as English. He makes use too of a number of verse forms, though he experiments far less extensively with metrics and stanzaic forms than with subject and genre. Finally, Marvell's use of language shows the varied influence of the Ciceronian, the anti-Ciceronian, and the scientific rhetorical theories.

Marvell's poetry falls into no clear-cut rhetorical schema. His verse, as would be expected, is not influenced successively by each of the three schools of rhetorical thought. His earliest group of poems, the greater number of the lyrics, was written by 1653, the end of his residence in the country with Lord Fairfax. In this group the poet's rhetoric is predominantly metaphysical and demonstrates anti-Ciceronian modes of language. Marvell was unlike Donne, however, who, as one primary innovator of the metaphysical style, was involved in the controversy between the Ciceronians and anti-Ciceronians and carefully avoided using the melodic and wordy diction of his predecessors. Marvell, at a distance from the metaphysical rebellion, made use of Ciceronian qualities in the formation of a consistently melodic and sensuous lyrical diction. Thus Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian rhetorical elements coalesce in

his best lyrics.

A second group of poems, including all of the official poems celebrating events of the Cromwell era, shows the influence of a third kind of rhetoric that began to be important in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Written between 1653 and 1659, these poems have traits of his earlier rhetoric but show also some of the characteristics of the plain style. The last group of poems, most of which are satires written in the post-Restoration period, rarely have any metaphysical impetus but demonstrate the means and aims of the plain style.

What caused the variations in Marvell's use of language, particularly his relatively abrupt change from the metaphysical mode to the devices of the plain style? It seems likely that he followed the shift in rhetorical fashion, changing his poetic instrument so that he might better encounter the changed social temper. He was elected member of Parliament from Hull in 1659, the year following the death of Cromwell. It is manifest that his position in the government was at least partially responsible for his impulse to use his verse as a practical tool by which to make the gesture of reforming the society which he so strongly disapproved of.

The change in rhetoric develops from his new conception of the function of poetry. Whereas his earlier poems, particularly his lyrics, can be described as exercises in verbal ingenuity whose essential existence occurs in the mind and imagination of poet and reader, the satires and the poems that are characterized by their use of the methods of the plain style have no existence as art; they function only in relation to some external social situation or object.

The verbal ingenuity which the satires undoubtedly possess--the puns, the conceits which are sometimes as startling as metaphysical conceits--this verbal cleverness is other-directed. In the earlier poems the verbal ingenuity is directed inward, to reveal the essence of the poetic cosmos. Both satires and lyrics function as persuasion, but the one kind of verse is aesthetic persuasion of the imagination while the other is persuasion to accomplish some social end.

The closing of the couplet in Marvell's verse after 1649¹ is one evidence of the growing influence of the plain style, for such precise structuring of language is characteristic of this rhetorical movement. The sensuous, melodic Ciceronian diction has no place in the satires; the softness is lost when the apprehensions that formed it--the love of nature above all--have no place in the poems. The anti-Ciceronian sense of paradox and the Senecan aphoristic concision of language are not present in the satirical confrontation of a diseased social reality.

In Marvell's case the change of poetic instrument was for the worse. In the case of Dryden, Marvell's younger contemporary, whose early poems are full of unfelicitous metaphysical mannerisms, the change to the plain style is a triumph. The older poet's lyrics, imitative and compounded of various derivative elements, have yet an unique Marvellian flavor and the best of them achieve a rare success. His satires do not possess a comparable strength. Those satires that Marvell wrote can scarcely be distinguished from those written by an anonymous group of satiric hacks; in fact, some of those thought to be spurious are of higher poetic value than those known to be Marvell's. Legouis accounts for Marvell's lesser achievement in the use of the

¹Pierre Legouis, Andrew Marvell, Poet, Puritan, Patriot (Oxford, 1961), p. 184.

satiric mode by citing him as a forerunner in the development of this genre:

The immeasurable advance from our poet to Dryden can only be accounted for by the superiority of genius assisted by industry over talent injured by carelessness. Yet one also notes here the difference between two ages of a genre, adolescence and full growth.

2

Marvell wrote little verse after the Restoration. Both his work in Parliament and his prose writing served better as weapons against the government than did his satiric poetry. But in a study of Marvell's use of language, it is as interesting, if not as pleasing, to consider the less successful satires as to consider the carefully crafted lyrics.

The detailed examination of five poems will indicate the rhetorical patterns that prevail in Marvell's verse. "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" and "The Mower against Gardens" were both written before 1653. Both are metaphysical poems; each deals with the immediate subject in such a way as to suggest ideas about the whole of human experience. The main effects of each are accomplished by an anti-Ciceronian rhetoric. The delicately ambiguous, suggestive language of the former and the tight, pointed language and the significant resolution of the final couplet of the latter poem are the poetic complement of the significant darkness of the Senecan style. In each poem, the language is precisely tailored to the thought, according to the anti-Ciceronian manner; there are no vapid words, however lovely. Although the main effects in each poem are governed by the methods of the anti-Ciceronian rhetoric, the diction of each poem is

²Ibid., p. 192.

characterized too by some Ciceronian traits. The pretty, melodic, emotional language of the nymph and the picturesque and voluptuous language of the mower resemble more the diction of sixteenth century poems than the harsh, rough, intellectual diction of Donne and the Senecan prose stylists. Sensuous apprehensions and melodious rhythms combined with a tight unity of language and thought in the expression of a metaphysical conception of man's world--a mingling of Ciceronian traits in an anti-Ciceronian rhetorical structure--is characteristic of most of Marvell's early lyrics.

In "A Poem Upon the Death of O.C." of 1659, the influence of the scientific revolution in rhetoric begins to be seen. The poem exists primarily in relation to the externally imposed purpose of celebrating the death of the Protector. The language revolves exclusively around this purpose and has little aesthetic existence which earlier occasional poems, the elegy "Upon the Death of Lord Hastings," for example, still embody. Except for the passage beginning "I saw him dead," the language of the poem is flat and opens no metaphysical second dimension beyond the literal level of the words. Like the other poems of this period, this poem is transitional, its rhetoric balanced between the anti-Ciceronian mode and the plain style. Despite its florid language and elaborate images, its aims are those of the plain style.

"The Statue in Stocks-Market" is a satire of the reign of Charles II. In its absolute clarity of statement, with its unambiguous, consistently condemnatory overtones, this poem exemplifies the characteristics of the plain style; its rhetoric is typical of Marvell's last poems. Its success as a satire lies in the forceful impact of the

language as it hits at Charles' government through the statue that represents him.

Finally, I discuss "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost," a late lyric; it is of interest in considering Marvell's later rhetoric as it appears in a non-satiric poem. Its effect is opposite to that of the satires--it is eulogy, not condemnation--yet the language does not regain its earlier, metaphysical qualities but remains, like his satiric rhetoric, essentially flat.

Some consideration of "Fleckno" is necessary in evolving a total view of Marvell's use of language. While limiting myself to a glancing consideration of the whole poem, I discuss its rhetoric; as a satire and perhaps the earliest of Marvell's poems, it figures in its language the satiric instrument that the poet made use of throughout his life. Marvell's few satires written in the period of predominantly lyric production before 1659 indicate that the habits of the plain style were not garnered only after the Restoration. Like his later satires, "Fleckno" is clever and unambiguous. However, the poet delights in verbal ingenuity for its own sake, and, not taking his subject very seriously, creates a light tone. These aspects of "Fleckno" are very unlike the harsher-toned, seriously motivated satires of the post-Restoration era.

Consideration of Marvell's rhetoric in relation to the rhetorical movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries becomes significant in the realization that a deeper understanding of his poetic method emerges from the study. His diction shows traits of Ciceronianism, and, more important, his use of language in its own individual way coincides with the methods of both the anti-Ciceronian and the scienti-

fic revolutions at the time when each was important.

"The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun"

The artful language of "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" has in recent times inspired a critical debate; but, whether interpreted as an allegory of the Church mourning Christ³ or as a literal outcry against the needless slaughter of an animal,⁴ this poem--the subject and the means the poet chooses to communicate its meaning--is at a great remove from those the post-Restoration poet chose to compose.

Organized in verse paragraphs, the poem proceeds by a wave-like motion--that is as it is designed to be--like the succession of ideas in a young girl's mind, toward the emotional climax of its ending. The thoughts of the nymph are simple and romantic; they are exactly those one would expect from the character built up in the course of the poem. The language, through its simplicity and limited range of associations, is completely suitable to the speaker, yet it possesses a complex and artful suggestiveness. It is not simply a nymph's lament; the ironic overtones distance the narrative and offer the reader the verses for their verbal delight. The irony of the hyperbole that is the essence of the poem is implicit in the very nature of the nymph's

³M. C. Bradbrook and M. G. Lloyd Thomas, Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 48-50.

⁴Legouis, pp. 56-57.

literal description of the fawn's surpassing beauty and the serious rehearsal of her own death. The poem has the sustained focus of "To his Coy Mistress" without the speed the subject of that poem requires. There are no digressions or points at which the poem breaks in its motion (weaknesses that mar other poems of Marvell's). The poem moves with the movement of the nymph's mind straight to the end, sustaining both the literal level and the level on which the words render a second depth of meaning.

The language of this poem has many strengths; one is its sustained evocation of the character of the nymph; and another, which depends on the first, is its persuasive force that argues to the reader the value of such an emotion as hers and the value of its vehicle, the poem. Written in the octosyllabic couplets Marvell used in many lyrics, the poem opens simply, the play already begun, with the girl's description of what has happened. She is at once characterized by the words she uses--the "wanton" soldiers, "ungentle men", have shot her fawn--as well as by the sentiments, the forgiveness, the faith in Heaven's justice she expresses. As she continues to speak, her words assimilate the complex tone that accompanies the simple layer of meaning of the girl's story. Without her awareness, as it were, of its coming into being, her words set into play another level of language that ranges apart from the story being told in verbal arabesques that are beautiful of themselves and powerful in their ability to arouse echoes in the reader's mind.

Though they should wash their guilty hands
 In this warm life-blood, which doth part
 From thine, and wound me to the Heart,

Yet could they not be clean. . . .(18-21)⁵

The circular play and the simple-seeming complexity of the language of these lines is like that of much of the poem. The life-blood, proceeding from the fawn's wounded life and wounding his mistress to the heart so that both will die, will not yet wash the guilty blood from the troopers' hands; their Lady Macbeth stains are too deep to be cleansed by the blood of the fawn-lamb. Twists of language like this offer space for the development of a deeper significance than the apparent one. The overtones of these lines are grave; but, sometimes the doubling of language is not so serious. The nymph recounts the story of her lover's gift. He brought her a fawn and presented it to her with a joke.

I know
 What he said then; I'me sure I do.
 Said He, look how your Huntsman here
 Hath taught a Faun to hunt his Dear. (29-31)

Here the poem plays the nymph's naive accents against the deeper, punning language of her unconstant lover.

Having taken on its own life, the language continues to play even in a passage where a second meaning is an illusion.

This waxed tame, while he grew wild,
 And quite regardless of my Smart,
 Left me his Faun, but took his Heart. (34-36)

The regular emphasis on the end rhyme is used so effectively here that the cleverness seems more serious than it is. The description of the fawn extended over nearly fifty lines that follows is preceded by a line in which the gentle animal is termed a "Beast." Coupled with this term is an ingenuous and lively depiction of the sweet fawn; its feet are

⁵Andrew Marvell, The Poems, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1963), p. 22. All quotations from Marvell's poems are taken from this edition of his works.

softer and whiter than any lady's hands and it runs as fast as if it were borne up by the four winds. Repeatedly the nymph describes its whiteness and sweetness; it is so white that "in the flaxen Lillies shade,/ It like a bank of Lillies laid;" (81-82) and it is as sweet as the roses on which it fed. "Had it liv'd long, it would have been/ Lillies without, Roses within." (91-92) Like the rest of the poem, this section makes a two-fold impact on the reader. The endearing beauty of the fawn and her touching descriptions of their relationship involve the reader in their idyll. Yet, quite apart from the narrative, the reader senses the irony of the hyperbole--the beast is too good to be true and a sophisticated second vision puts the narrative at a distance once again.

In the final section of the poem, as the fawn dies, the girl reaches emotional heights and vows eternal remembrances; a vial of their mingled tears will be placed in Diana's shrine and she will commission a statue of herself cut in marble with the fawn in white alabaster at her feet. And, though made of stone, she will weep forever. The wealth of classical allusions in this final portion--Marvell refers to the Heliades, to Diana, to Elizium, to Niobe--serve at once to dignify the girl's exaggerated gestures of grief and ironically again to set the reader at a distance from her sentimental mourning for her pet. The clenching balance of the final couplet reiterates the double valency of the language throughout. She will have the fawn made of alabaster, "For I would have thine Image be/
White as I can, though not as Thee." (121-22)

It seems significant to me that Legouis has noted no instance of a poem on a similar subject written by a metaphysical poet, though he refers

readers to poetical laments for animals both earlier and later. It is impossible to imagine a poem by Donne or by Herbert (although Crashaw would perhaps have been in his element) on such a subject. Nothing is less Donnean than the soft emotionality of the nymph. The emotionality, even though belonging to the personality of the girl, is one trait of the softer Ciceronian rhetoric that Marvell was able to incorporate effectively into his verse. The pronounced music of the lines, characteristic of many of Marvell's other lyrics, and the prettiness of many of the nymph's words are other traits of the old, mellifluous diction that Donne avoided so conscientiously. But words like wanton and lillies and roses and their associations, which are Elizabethan commonplaces, are in Marvell's use given a new significance that is part of his complex and metaphysical handling of language. The poem is a metaphysical one in its verbal complexity and suggestively ironic consideration of an imaginary world. The intermingling of Ciceronian elements does not change the basic metaphysical tension of its language.

This poem illustrates to me very well the double purpose of Renaissance poetry, to persuade and to delight.⁷ The rhetoric, the use the poet makes of language, is here involved in both functions. On the one hand is the character of the nymph, whose pleasing, plaintive speech persuade us to give out emotional acquiescence to her story. On the other hand is the doubling of her words back on themselves, so that their range of evocation is broadened and our aesthetic pleasure

⁶Legouis, p. 56.

⁷Rosamund Tuve, "Imagery and Logic: Ramus and Metaphysical Poetry," Journal of the History of Ideas, III (Oct., 1942), 366-70.

in the verbal shapes they form is heightened. Yet both the literal level and the more evocative one act together to heighten the special effects of both by the play of one against the other and to accomplish the persuasion and the delight.

Both functions of the rhetoric here--the dramatic and the verbal play that I take to be delightful--are characteristic anti-Ciceronian uses of language. It seems to me, especially in the light of this poem, that it is the impulse to delight and the language that accompanies this impulse that is lacking in Marvell's later verse. In "The Nymph Complaining" the poet is searching out a truth of the imagination and presenting it in imaginative, suggestive language. The literalness of the narrative is a literalness not of a factual world but of an imaginative, almost fairy-tale one, where blood is shed in forgiveness, and sorrow is carved in marble. The second level of language, revolving around the literal presentation of the nymph's complaint, throws on the story the reflection of the actual world where grief is not so pure or so funny perhaps. The delight grows mainly from the play of language that sets the two worlds off against one another. In Marvell's later total absorption in one world, his poetry loses this double-leveled suggestiveness of language and the intellectual delight it involves. His rhetoric is made to serve the practical purposes of politics, and language play takes place on the single level of denotation required by effective satire. The delicate delight changes to a rougher pleasure that emerges with the sense of having attacked successfully. The imaginative orientation of the anti-Ciceronian rhetoric seen in this poem is replaced later by the social orientation of the plain style.

"The Mower Against Gardens"

It has been conjectured that the four Mower poems belong to the same period, 1651-1652, as "Upon Appleton House"; the shorter poems seem to be related to stanzas LII-LV of the long one and were thus probably also written during Marvell's residence with Lord Fairfax.⁸ Unlike the other three Mower poems which are pastoral love poems, "The Mower Against Gardens" uses no pastoral devices. The speaker, though identified in the title as a mower, is not the simpler, more rustic character, Damon, the lover of Juliana. Damon in the three other Mower poems describes his love for his cruel mistress in terms of familiar meadows, meadow occupations, meadow creatures. Damon is the mower whose "wholesome Heat/ Smells like an Alexanders sweat": ("Upon Appleton House," 427-28) his character combines the strong manliness and heroic simplicity without shallowness that the lines in "Upon Appleton House" imply to be the attributes of the ordinary mower. The mower here who commends the pure virtues of the fields and inveighs against the artificial pleasures of gardens is a sophisticated character whose detailed knowledge of garden practices and delight in recounting them appear to be more those of a thoughtful town dweller than of a wholesome mower or even a hard-working gardener.

The first four lines of "The Mower Against Gardens" introduce the theme of the poem:

Luxurious Man, to bring his Vice in use,
 Did after him the World seduce:
 And from the fields the Flow'rs and Plants allure,
 Where Nature was most plain and pure.

⁸Legouis, p. 27.

The voluptuous gardens, enclosed within walls, have fallen to the practice of unnecessary arts that the untainted nature of the meadows is ignorant of. The mower's professed asceticism, his advocacy of the unartificial and virtuous beauties of the fields, is belied, however, by the interest with which he discusses those cultivated perversions of innocent nature; most of the poem is devoted to their description. The mower maintains his theme, rejecting the horticultural follies of gardens, but his tone is not condemnatory; rather it often has a "sophisticated playfulness."⁹ Beginning with their culture in a "dead and standing pool of air" and "luscious earth," the poet recounts some of the wonders of gardens. The artificialities of the plants reflect the debased minds of men who induce these unnatural complexities.

The Pink grew then as double as his Mind;
The nutriment did change the kind. (9-10)

And the "doubleness" of man's mind, though perhaps a result of his fallen state, allows him to appreciate the induced beauties, artificial though they be. Luxurious (in the seventeenth century sense of voluptuous) garden glories are rejected by the Puritanical mower, but his initial rejection is complicated by his appreciation of their attractive perfection.

The Tulip, white, did for complexion seek;
And learn'd to interline its cheek. (13-14)

The innocence of the tulip is lost, but the flower gains an artificial beauty.

The gardener has committed a more serious crime against nature than the inducing of rarities; he has also perverted the natural processes of reproduction. He has grafted wild stock onto tame to produce an

⁹Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, p. 40.

"adult'rate fruit," and forced the cherry "to procreate without a sex." But even these offenses aren't taken too seriously; the poet can speak lightly about the sexless cherries as eunuchs in a "green seraglio."

The brief picture of a "fragrant" and "willing" nature is a moment's vision on the way to a conclusion that interestingly resolves the lightly posed paradox of the attractions, nearly balanced in the poem--for the mower's interest in the garden is obvious in spite of his disapproval of it--of meadow and garden. The poet suddenly delves deeper than the relatively superficial distinctions between nature's two guises to point out in a serious and meaningful way how it is that the meadow has a deeper reality. Fauns and fairies roam the fields, though

Their Statues polish'd by some ancient hand,
 May to adorn the Gardens stand;
 But howso'ere the Figures do excel,
 The Gods themselves with us do dwell. (37-40)

The perfect, artificed statues, like the rare and perfect tulips, are found in gardens, but the real gods from whom the statues are modeled inhabit the fields. The metaphysical expansion of the last lines sweeps away both "the narrow ascetic and the mere fine gentleman";¹⁰ in their reach lies the poem's highest significance.

The rhetorical effects of this poem are enhanced by the unusual scansion of the lines. Marvell here pairs the octosyllabic line that he so often uses in his lyrics with a decasyllable in a meter reminiscent of the classical elegiac;¹¹ the uninterrupted swinging rhythm

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹ Margoliouth, Commentary to The Poems of Andrew Marvell, p. 224.

of the octosyllabic couplets that is particularly marked in the other Mower poems is changed by the use of the pentameter line. The rhythm that results is one of increased surface complexity; the addition of a metric foot allows the speaker a larger scope to express, one feels, a greater sophistry than would the more regular motion of two lines of similar length. The second line of the couplet gains an additional crispness, an aphoristic punch, in its contrast to the initial longer line. The poem's sophisticated, light tone grows from this unusual movement in the couplets. First lines unroll all their length and halt; for almost all the lines in the poem are end-stopped. Second lines answer concisely. The snap of the last line in the poem, though more emphatic and climactic, is like that of all its second lines. In another Mower poem, "Damon the Mower," written in the usual octosyllabic couplets, Marvell achieves a resounding final line without the impetus of this meter. But the poet manipulates metric possibilities in "The Mower against Gardens" as he rarely does; and much of the poem's aesthetic interest derives from its metric success.

The mower asserts his ascetic objection to gardens and their impure luxuries only to give an ironic and ambiguous turn to the thought by dwelling happily on the features of some of the horticultural iniquities. The final resolution places the poem on a higher level than argument, enforcing the ascetic point of view but transcending it. The meter underlines the strength of the final line and emphasizes the crisp conciseness that flavors the thought. The precise disposition of the language and the crisp manner in which the words are said are metaphysical modes, as is the lightly ambiguous, sophisticated rendering of the thought. It is an ambiguity

that is transcended but not dissolved as the poem ends. The qualities that make this poem metaphysical--the metrically inspired aphoristic concision, the paradoxical double force of the meaning, the pithy conclusion--are characteristics of the Senecan style in prose. These aspects of the poem identify it with the anti-Ciceronian movement in rhetoric. By means of these anti-Ciceronian rhetorical methods, the language and the thought are forcibly united. The tightly controlled language projects the metaphysical suggestion that truth resides in the fields. Because of the poet's skillful use of words, the meaning is not confined to the limits of the poem. The poem is able to suggest, perhaps, ideas on the nature of existence.

Though the poet here uses language in a tight metaphysical or anti-Ciceronian fashion, the words themselves and the pictures they evoke have a soft sensuousness that recalls pre-metaphysical poetry. The "sweet fields" where Nature dispenses "a wild and fragrant innocence," the "luscious earth," the exotic perfumes that "taint" the roses, the painted flowers--the sensuous caress of these words, sometimes as delicate as the fragrant fields, sometimes as sensual as the luscious earth, is not Senecan. The impurities of gardens are described in language as voluptuous as that of "Hero and Leander," (for example, the kneaded earth) or as picturesque as that of Shakespeare's sonnets (the complexion of the tulip). The sensuous quality of Marvell's words here can be best described for our purposes as Ciceronian. But it is similar to the sensuous qualities of language in the verse of the so-called baroque poets such as Milton and Crashaw. The soft, emotional, picturesque

¹²Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style (New York, 1955), pp. 184-94.

language of "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" is closer to the Ciceronian sensuousness; the rich, tactile qualities of language of "The Garden" are perhaps best described as baroque. Marvell, in expressing the antithesis between "fallen" and "unfallen" nature, contrasts the pure beauties of the fields and their delicate sensuous invitation with the luxurious sensualities of gardens, employing thus in one poem the two manners of sensuous language the corpus of his verse encompasses. Legouis describes Marvell as being nearly the only one of Donne's disciples to find a source of inspiration in the love of nature.¹³ It is in Marvell's poems about nature, like this one, that the unmetaphysical, Ciceronian elements of his rhetoric emerge.

This poem, in which Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian elements mingle, is an imaginative dramatization of the contrasts between fields and gardens. The poet creates the character of a mower who sees significance in the beauties before him. The poem pleases the aesthetic sense by its thoughtful, imaginative beauty. It fulfills no practical, propagandistic need as do Marvell's later poems; its means and ends are literary.

¹³Legouis, p. 27.

"A Poem Upon the Death of O.C."

Oliver Cromwell died September 3, 1758; composed soon after the event, "A Poem Upon the Death of O.C." is the last of Marvell's official poems, written to celebrate the notable events of the Protectorate.¹⁴ Legouis finds that the sentiments Marvell expresses here are "heart-felt"; to him, they seem to arise from personal grief for Cromwell the man.¹⁵ Wallerstein is in agreement.¹⁶ Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas differ, not finding any evidence in the poem to prove the poet's affection for the Protector.¹⁷ The language of the poem is curiously suspended between two distances, offering the reader for the most part a distant view of the death and the leader, and approaching closer only in the final, most powerful section to view the corpse and mourn the loss of the man and his virtues of character.

The first half of this long poem is built about two events whose tenuous natural relation to Cromwell's death is strengthened by poetic, verbal means in order to produce the official sight of the cosmos-shaking death of a ruler. In this section, the reader is put at a distance so that the nobility of this poetic death may be perceived. The physical causes of Cromwell's inglorious death in bed are not referred to; the poet chooses to attribute his death to "love" and "grief." By ingenious twists of language the effeminate

¹⁴Ibid., p.111.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ruth Wallerstein, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 292-93.

¹⁷Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, pp. 82-83.

love and grief and the death they inflict come to signify in the best possible way Cromwell's strong tenderness of character.

Cromwell's death is not depicted as an accident of fate; rather Providence has taken care to choose the death that best befits him. In this opening section the language rolls in an official panegyric tone. The vocabulary maintains an elevated dignity of manner. The couplets flow in regular rhythms.

. . . Providence . . .
 Now in its self (the Glass where all appears)
 Had seen the period of his golden years:
 And thenceforth onely did attend to trace,
 What death might least so fair a Life deface.
 (3-6)

The words wind about the fact of Cromwell's death until the decess takes on the royal seriousness befitting the demise of a head of state. The word golden for instance echoes the phraseology of earlier official poems in which Cromwell is likened to the sun, and it rings as well with the usual royal associations.

Cromwell had won his fame as a warrior and, as such, might most nobly have died fighting. A verbal maneuver brings the reader to see his death in another light:

For what he least affected was admir'd,
 Deserved yet an End whose ev'ry part
 Should speak the wondrous softness of his Heart.
 To Love and Grief the fatal Writ was sign'd;
 (Those nobler weaknesses of humane Mind. . .).
 (18-22)

Through love of his daughter, Eliza, and grief for her dying, Cromwell dies. His sorrow and his affection are noble emotions and his strength is only more evident in his demonstration of them. In a series of word games, the poet plays on the closeness of the rela-

tionship between father and daughter. The life of each is dependent of that of the other. Her last breath mists his battle-bedecked chest and "the dear Image fled the Mirrour broke." The rapid associations the word mirrour here sets spinning in the reader's mind--the heart broken in grief, the chest in death, the armor set aside--contribute to the verbal aura with which the poet crowns his hero. Pictured in formal poses, the man is yet remote. In the passages which follow, Cromwell is compared to mournful birds and to parent-vines bleeding from the pruning shear; the reader's conception of the strong grief is fixed in distinct shapes, ideational rather than visual.

A second lengthy verbal excursion brings the storm of the day before the death into glorious conjunction with Cromwell's demise.

But never yet was any humane Fate
By nature solemniz'd with so much state.
He unconcern'd the dreadful passage crost;
But oh what pangs that Death did Nature cost!
(109-112)

The death of the Protector is solemnized by heavenly rites. Cromwell's noble strength is again the key of Marvell's argument.

Nature it seem'd with him would Nature vye;
He with Eliza, It with him would dye. (133-34)

The power of his great grief is matched by the power of nature; nature's nobility, like Cromwell's, is proven by its ability for strong sorrow.

Having encased Cromwell's death in an auspicious setting and having at the same time paid tribute to the Protector's noblest qualities--his strength and his tenderness--the poet gradually moves closer to the man himself. He notes that the day of Cromwell's decease fell on

the date of two of his greatest military victories. He descends from the verbal heights maintained to this point to laugh in a manner that is less pompous, though perhaps not less serious, at those who would rejoice at Cromwell's death.

What day should him eternize but the same
 That had before immortaliz'd his Name?
 That so who ere would at his Death have joy'd;
 In their own Griefs might find themselves imploy'd. . . .
 (147-50)

He recites Cromwell's accomplishments, emphasizing his piety. Cromwell was a soldier of the Lord, having "first put Armes into Religions hand" (179) and having conquered by prayer. Verbal cross-references serve to join the loosely structured sections of the poem. The tempest is referred to here as heaven's act of mourning for her favorite. The love and grief that cause the death are seen now as extensions of his piety. Tenderness grown of Christian love for others was his strength; he was a reluctant enemy and a good friend. Grief for Eliza was the climactic sorrow; but religious grief for human suffering made its mark first. "Pity it seem'd to hurt him more that felt Each wound himself which he to other delt." (197-98) He 's gone and "valour, religion, friendship, prudence" (227) died with him.

Following the parade of poetic ideas about the death, following the enumerations of Cromwell's exploits and virtues, Cromwell's person and personality are introduced into the poem. The motifs of his strength and tenderness continue to be iterated. Coming each day from his bedchamber, he seemed Mars, but a Mars "temper'd with an aire so mild,/ No April sunns. . . e'er so gently smild." (235-36) The veils of glory, so carefully formed to protect the hero from the less than regal, are pushed into the background and the poet confronts

the corpse.

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 sweetnesse shed.
(247-50)

The simple words give us a real emotion. The significance of the death is the loss of this ruler. His stature, is like the length of an oak tree, better measured in the horizontal position of death. The vision of Cromwell in the "bright abysse," clothed in his characteristic virtues, contrasts with the dull misery of those left without the ruler who had guided his subjects upward. The poem ends with a short tribute to Richard Cromwell. Sun imagery recurring, the lines express the poet's hope that the son's fainter beams may grow stronger in the absence of the father's overpowering light. The final section of the poem, particularly lines 247-304, expresses a deep grief for a good man whose qualities of character celebrated throughout the poem are not soon to be found in another ruler. The strength of Cromwell's character and the poet's response to the loss his death inflicts are brought to the surface of the poem; the reader is no longer held at a distance.

Marvell's rhetoric in this poem anticipates the ultimate and permanent change; the direct and coarse language of "The Last Instructions" must exclude the delicate and ambiguous language of "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun." The artful, metaphysical use of language is replaced by a different style of writing, a "plain" style. Implicit in the dramatic plainness of the last lines of this poem is the poet's sorrow for the loss of Cromwell and the social values he represented; the poet has to use now a different kind of rhetoric,

a rhetoric characterized by a non-aesthetic directness and unambiguous plainness to attain different poetic goals.

The absolute plainness of these last lines answering to the darting imaginativeness of the earlier lines on Charles, [in "An Horatian Ode"] gives notice. . . of the change in poetic aim and method which is to come with an altered hope, or rather perhaps a substitution of fortitude for hope, and with an altered orientation to life.

18

The change in poetic instrument seems, as Wallerstein suggests, necessitated by Cromwell's death that precipitated a change in the society that surrounded the poet.

The two kinds of diction of "A Poem upon the Death of O.C." relate differently to the over-all rhetorical patterns in Marvell's poetry than has been the suggestion perhaps of the previous discussion. In the earlier part of the poem, the diction is pompous and inflated, out of proportion to the actual significance of events. The manner is elaborate; the vocabulary is rather decorative. In spite of these Ciceronian-sounding qualities, it seems to me that the language is more like Marvell's later rhetoric, his version of the plain style, than like the metaphysical language of his early lyrics. In the first place, the purpose of the linguistic devices is always perfectly clear; the verbal surface is more than closely related to the conceptions it expresses--it exists only for the content. The verbal twists are rarely accompanied by the author's sense of joy in the intrinsic worth of literary art that is to me a primary aspect of Marvell's earlier metaphysical manner. The words, though not simple ones, are flat; no second sense emerges beyond the literal level

¹⁸Wallerstein, p. 293.

of denotation. The language is often verbally clever, but the verbal wit that involves the play of imagination is not present. Thus, without being plain, this language has anti-Senecan qualities and functions in order to make certain social points like Marvell's later satiric style.

Strangely perhaps, the "plain" final lines, particularly "I saw him dead," have in their unadorned preciseness of language a certain Shakespearian vividness that is very artful and literary and unplain. And the simplicity, by deepening the emotional impact, broadens the implications of the words. These lines function aesthetically and in this sense, have, in spite of their "plainness," Senecan qualities.

The reader's sense that the final portion of the poem is heartfelt and that the earlier part is mere words results from the diction. A final rhetorical distinction may be based on these impressions. In many lyric poems, as in the final lines of this poem, the reader is brought into close emotional contact with subject and poet. In the later satires like in the opening section of this poem, the reader is held at a distance, perhaps so that the reader's clear vision may be ensured.

"The Statue in Stocks-Market"

In "The Statue in Stocks-Market," the poet does not meditate in a sustained fashion on the poem's subject; he follows instead his usual satiric technique, displayed in what Legouis calls his "rimed chronicles,"¹⁹ such as "Last Instructions to a Painter," and his occasional satires, like this one. He distributes verbal blows freely to any offensive objects that come into the reach of the poem. The initial incident provides a loose organization at best.

The poem is a sprightly, unembittered but total condemnation of the King and of Viner and of the society they and the statue represent. The poet not only satirizes court manners and the management of public affairs, but also, hitting at large matters through small, pokes fun at the physical appearance of sovereign and subject too. Marvell scores his blows in direct fashion, using unoblique words. By means of the same kind of telling verbal connection that in "A Poem upon the Death of O. C." had been used to eulogize, the poet ridicules. The unrelated circumstances--the unveiling of the statue, its peculiar appearance, Viner's financial losses--are joined poetically with successful satiric intent.

But now it appears from the first to the last
 To be all a revenge and a malice forecast,
 Upon the King's birthday to set up a thing
 That shews him a monster more like than a king.

(5-8)

The poet runs on at a swift, anapestic jog, proceeding in the same unambiguous and jauntily implacable manner from the central incident to touch briefly on any faintly related point subject to satire. He

¹⁹Legouis, p. 168.

manages in the course of the poem to ridicule Sir Robert's appearance, Sir William Peake's seat on horseback, and the quality of Viner's gold coin; he also makes derisive reference to the Dutch picture scandal, a recent naval defeat, and the near loss of the crown by theft. All of these points are played against the absurdity of the statue erected in honor of a King, head of a court government, whose frivolity, bad management, and extravagance Marvell condemns. The lively style enables the satirist to make his points precisely yet without brutality; thus, the reader is led to scorn the object of the poet's ire rather than the poet's own bad taste, as one must do in reading others of Marvell's satires. The bright wit of the last two stanzas typifies the poem's character of restrained and rather good-humored condemnation. By Sir Robert's order, the graver was employed after the initial unveiling of the statue to make further revisions of the original sculpture. The poet doubts that anything can improve so dismal a failure.

But alas! he will never arrive at his end,
For 'tis such a king as no chisel can mend. (55-6)

The last line here opens out in a way uncharacteristic of this poem or of Marvell's satires in general; it is the King as well as his stone portrait that is beyond repair. Yet for all his faults Charles is better than James.

For though the whole world cannot shew such another,
Yet we'd better by far have him than his brother.
(59-60)

Marvell attacks large abuses and small, using the absurdities of the statue to govern in a loose fashion this particular treatment of his continuing larger subject, his satiric scrutiny of governmental

misconduct.

It has been pointed out that Marvell alternates in his satires between the use of heroic couplets and the use of the freer, popular rhythm that is found in this poem; it has been noted too that the tone of Marvell's later satires is dependent in great degree on the meter chosen.²⁰ The fast-moving rhythm of this poem that scans so loosely that it may be better termed accentual verse than anapestic and may even be said to hark back to Middle English verse,²¹ sustains the reader's interest. Other poems, written in the less brisk heroic couplets, poems which like "Last Instructions to a Painter" and "The Loyall Scot," tend to be longer, become monotonous, and have a bitter flavor. The ear of the reader of Marvell's satires is more forcefully captured by the free, accentual rhythm; thus, the poet's points are perhaps more clearly and strongly made.

The method of Marvell's rhetoric in this poem is that of the plain style. Without ever departing from his fixed intention of passing judgment on contemporary court circles, he ranges freely, and unambiguously, and concisely about the announced topic of the King's statue. His verbal wit is clever and geared precisely to the target, with no extraneous implications that might bounce off in other directions. The irrelevancies, the brief excursions into matters that really have nothing to do with the marble equestrian, are all relevant to his governing preoccupation. He has a purpose that relates to one world, the world of society; reference to any other level of existence is rigidly excluded.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 189-90.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 187-88.

Compared to Marvell's earlier lyrics, this poem is a superficial treatment of the subject--it is not played upon for its deep implications, its metaphysical aspect. Compared to "The Definition of Love" or "On a Drop of Dew," it is a shallow poem. The treatment of words is similarly shallow; they are not manipulated for the sake of philosophical or aesthetic pleasure. They are truly plain or flat, limited in connotation, and do not echo as Marvell's words can. Yet this poem is a successful satire; its success grows out of its deliberately limited point of view and its clear and clever use of words. Its goal is not intellectual but social.

"Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome"

The existence of such poems as "Fleckno" prevents the formulation of a lucid graph to summarize Marvell's use of language. The pattern of Marvell's use of the metaphysical mode in his lyrics before 1650 and his use of a direct, nearly always satirical mode after the Restoration, with his state poems of the era of Cromwell as transition between the two kinds of rhetoric, can be relatively neatly correlated with the anti-Ciceronian and scientific revolutions in rhetoric of the same halves of the century. But then, what of "Fleckno" of 1645 and "Tom May's Death" of 1650 and "The Character of Holland" of 1653, all of which resemble the late satires in intention and idiom far more than they resemble the other poems written in the same years?

It is especially interesting that "Fleckno" may have been Marvell's first poem, written at the age of twenty-five or twenty-six.

22

²²Ibid., p. 11.

Marvell had then the satiric instrument in hand as early as or earlier than the lyric. In this light, the intention and rhetoric of "Fleckno" bear consideration, especially since the poet is here, remarkably successful, as successful as he ever would be, it seems to me, in the management of the difficult satiric genre.

Though the poet's impulse in writing "Fleckno" is essentially the same as that which inspired the composition of later satires, the tenor of the earlier work is somewhat different. "Fleckno" is essentially less serious than the later satires; like them, it directs verbal ridicule at an object that deserves scorn, but whereas the later satires are aimed at serious political abuses, "Fleckno" ridicules a single individual. Fleckno represents nothing. Though he is a priest, the priesthood itself is not satirized, nor are all poets or all musicians, though he writes verse and plays the lute. On the other hand, men like Viner and Sir William Peake and all those mentioned in the later satires are the poet's targets as members of the corrupt court circle. Furthermore, in the later satires, the poet intends that his verses effect correction of the governmental ills he attacks, futile though his effort may be. From "Fleckno" the reader receives the impression that the poet is having such fun poking at his pitiful subject that he would rather the poor man's sad condition and silly habits were never corrected.

The lesser seriousness of "Fleckno" reveals itself in its tone; it is straight-forwardly funny. No thought of England's being in the hands of such a man embitters the humor. The poem, even through the lines of unappealing details about chancres and eating flies, sus-

tains a level of pure mirth that is unmatched in post-Restoration satires. The poet here enjoys playing on the grotesque details of Fleckno's character for the sake of the fun. The fun is largely verbal; considered in other words, the man's plight is not humorous. But the poem itself is funny, for the rhetoric makes it so. The poet's delight in the words themselves and in his manipulation of them is like the similar impulse which, aiming at something other than ridicule, is an important part of Marvell's lyric intention. One device for verbal fun is puns, which are more frequent in this poem than in his later ones of a similar nature. Margoliouth notes in the description of Fleckno's room the puns which play on its coffin-like properties. "Seeling" can refer to the black wall-hangings at a funeral as well as to a wainscot, and "sheet" to a winding sheet as well as to one for a bed.

23

There three staircases high,
Which signifies his triple property,
I found at last a chamber, as 'twas said,
But seemed a coffin set on the stairs' head--
Not higher than sev'n, nor larger than three feet;
Only there was nor seeling, nor a sheet. . . .

The lines move rather rapidly, as swiftly as his later satiric use of the heroic couplet but not as fast as the poems in accentual meter.

On the whole, the rhetoric of the satiric instrument here is much like that of later poems. The intention is somewhat different, and the poet's delight in his subject for its purely verbal possibilities is similar to his metaphysical usage. But the language here, like its later counterpart, is direct and unambiguous and flat. The words, even the puns, have connotations limited to the subject at

²³Margoliouth, Commentary, p. 236.

hand; they do not, as in metaphysical lyrics, range between the literal world and the world of the imagination. The word play is comic and clever but does not hold the same kind of refined aesthetic pleasure held by the ambiguities of "The Garden." The reader has never any doubt that the poet's arraignment is complete; the words never pose an ironic question mark beside the obvious meaning, as in many lyrics they do.

Legouis suggests ancient and modern models for Marvell's use of the satiric genre--Donne, Cleveland, and Horace among others.²⁴ Certainly at Marvell's time the genre was gaining in popularity; the end of his life witnessed the beginning of its period of triumph over other forms of verse. What is most interesting to us here is that Marvell had in reserve during the years in which he was interested in composing a different type of poetry a satiric method and a satiric rhetoric. His political convictions incited him to the use of this poetic mode when, probably influenced by the opinion of the time, he lost interest in the lyrical metaphysical use of language.

"On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost"

"On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost" of 1674 belongs to the period of the satires. Interesting in its similarities to Marvell's non-lyric work, it is yet a poem that springs from a very different, non-satiric impulse which is reflected in its tone and structure. In 1673, Marvell had defended Paradise Lost in prose in the Second Part of The Rehearsal Transpros'd. Marvell and Milton had in common their Puritanism

²⁴Legouis, pp. 166-67.

and their association under Cromwell. Marvell's poem on Milton's epic is not a defense but a eulogy, based on admiration of the poem and admiration of the man as poet. Marvell's lines were used as introduction to the second edition of Paradise Lost and to several subsequent editions as well.

The poem has a stair-like structure formed of short verse paragraphs, each indented to indicate a new step. It is an argument in which Marvell recalls his own doubts about the success of Milton's poem when he first heard of its design. Then, in a logical, dialectical manner, refuting them one by one, Marvell, as speaker in the poem, challenges and eliminates the doubts. The initial doubts serve to emphasize the hugeness of the undertaking so that Milton's success looks larger against this background.

Two ideas grow with the step-by-step structure of doubt and vindication--the one of the vastness of the work and the second of the blindness of the man. The first two lines immediately lay hold of the subject by these two points: "When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold, / In slender Book his vast Design unfold. . . ." Blind yet bold poet, vast design in slender book--in these pairs of, if not antithetical at least contrasting, adjectives, Marvell captures something of the metaphysical balance of opposites; he continues this balance of unlikes throughout the steps of the argument.

Maintaining the conversational tone of the first lines, Marvell continues to sililoquize on his initial reaction to Milton's book. Seeing that Milton attempts to encompass so much, the speaker fears that he will "ruine. . . The sacred Truths. . . The World o'rewhelming," (8,9, 10)

²⁵Margoliouth, Commentary, p. 260.

for he is as strong as the blind Samson. A second doubt builds another step in the argument; (11-17) how is the poet to find his way through "that wide Field" without perplexing what "he would explain?" In this paragraph the underlying counterpoint--blind yet strong--is touched again; the poet must find his way by "Understanding blind." Marvell's third misgiving is that perhaps others, in copying Milton's design, may produce a better work. Marvell's reference in these lines, 17-22, is to Dryden's intention of writing his own version of Milton's poem.²⁶ This sally at Dryden is continued into the next step, 23-30, the one which begins the reverse process of vindicating the poet on the basis of the doubts raised.

The lines are now addressed to Milton himself and are no longer the enunciation of Marvell's private perplexities. The emphasis of "mighty Poet," (23) indicates the resolution of the conflict between Milton's apparent powers and his ambitions. Milton has accomplished all he intended and his strength is all the more apparent against the background of what might have been weakness. Milton's imitators cannot compete; Milton has encompassed all thoughts leaving nothing but "Ignorance or Theft" for other. His majesty finds out the "Devout" and deters the "Profane"; he does not err into confusion. Here the motif of Milton's weakness is concluded by comparing his work to that strong and sustained flight of the Bird of Paradise. That the work is too vast, Marvell's first doubt, is answered in the sixth paragraph, (41-44) the last in the structure of the argument. Referring for the final time to Milton's blindness, Marvell attributes Milton's powers

²⁶Idem.

of composition to a gift of prophecy such as the gods gave Tiresias.

The structured argument, the recurring motifs of blindness and weakness versus the vastness of the undertaking, the tone which, though never intensely serious, is one of genuine admiration and respect for Milton's achievement--all of these elements in the poem have the ring of Marvell's earlier, metaphysical poems. The comparison of Milton's poetic flight to that of the Bird of Paradise has the extravagance yet the appropriateness of successful metaphysical conceits. In the part of the poem thus far treated, there is only one lapse into a manner that dips below the dispassionate but dignified overall tone; this lapse is the reference to Dryden.

The last paragraph of the poem (45-54) is not part of the structure discussed above. Marvell adds a defense of Milton's blank verse and, in sincerely justifying it, becomes very jocular, using (though in a light-handed way very unlike his usual satiric manner) the techniques of his satires and including himself in the general scorn directed at those governed solely by fashion: "I too transported by the Mode offend,/ And while I meant to Praise thee, must Commend." (51-52) In these lines Marvell uses the second conceit of the poem, one whose tone contrasts as sharply with the earlier metaphor of the Bird of Paradise as this final group of lines contrasts with the rest of the poem. "Town-Bays" write "tinkling Rhime" like a "Pack-Horse" shakes his "Bells." The reader has the sense of coming down away from the heights Marvell has appropriately used to pay tribute to Paradise Lost into the world of Town-bays, where petty, stinging insults fly among the authors.

The poem is a combination of Marvell's earlier and later styles.

According to post-Restoration dictates, it is written in strictly accentuated, generally end-stopped, heroic couplets. He praises Milton at one point in characteristically post-Restoration terms, judging Milton by the current standard of propriety. "Thou hast not miss'd one thought that could be fit,/ And all that was improper does omit. . . ."

(27-28) The logical argument of the poem is intermingled with a measure of petty abuse of Dryden in the satirical manner, and the poem ends in a jingling final stanza inconsistent with the rest of the poem. (45-54)

In contrast are the higher wit and the fuller view of the greater part of the poem that Marvell uses in combination to praise what he seriously feels to be Milton's enormous achievement. The dramatized argument, the tight organization, the continuing tension of opposed qualities in the discussion are metaphysical habits of composition. But the reader comes to feel finally that there is no real metaphysical conflict, that the resolution is literary, that the tension was a stylistic device. There is a neo-classic facility that sounds even in the best and most serious portion of the poem; there is a schism between this and "The Garden" not less clear than that between "The Garden" and the satires.

The rhetorical precepts current in the latter half of the seventeenth century are evident here in the lapse in Marvell's quasi-metaphysical verbal flight. This poem is a persuasion given immediate force by its dramatic style like that of metaphysical lyrics; but the poet argues without any remnant of fierce metaphysical intensity, for the outcome is already decided. The easy flow of words and the regular rhythm accord with the unhurried yet direct pace of the poet toward the

one goal he has in mind--the tribute to the greatness of Paradise Lost. Marvell's imagination excludes irrelevant aspects of his argument; yet, at the same time, his preoccupation with Milton's work is superficial enough to allow him to strike into satire without sensing the inconsistency of the change. In accord with the plain style are the simple words, the regular meter, the adherence to one purpose which will allow offshoots but no movement of thought, digression but no ambiguity.

This poem is a lyric, but a late one. The dialectical, dramatic structure is the most important surviving element of Marvell's earlier anti-Ciceronian rhetoric. The sensuous, Ciceronian music is no longer there. The melody is gone even in the metaphoric lines of the fifth paragraph (31-40). In these strong lines of the poem, the melody is replaced by heavy accents appropriate to the gravity of the subject.

And above humane flight dost soar aloft,
With Plume so strong, so equal, and so soft.
The Bird nam'd from that Paradise you sing
So never Flags, but alwaies keeps on Wing. (36-40)

And the final lines of the poem have a tinkling sound that is not melodious. The absolute clarity of purpose and statement and the poem's lack of verbal tension or metaphysical pull indicate that its rhetoric is predominantly that of the plain style.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion of Marvell's poetry in terms of the aims and means of the rhetorical movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries indicates the conclusion that Marvell's use of language does fall into the linguistic patterns of the rhetorical revolutions. It is clear that Marvell's lyrics, written before 1653 when the anti-Ciceronian style was yet the dominant rhetoric, are poems of aesthetic subtleties; it is equally clear that Marvell's satires, of the post-Restoration era when the plain style was predominant, are poems blatant in method and practical in purpose. Was he influenced by rhetorical fashions to such an extent that he changed his poetic instrument into the vehicle of the plain style when the metaphysical mode was disparaged by the theorists of the new manner of writing? Perhaps so. But more important than the urge to be correct is the fact that the anti-Ciceronian rhetoric suited his metaphysical genius and his lyric imagination. When, later, his overwhelming preoccupation with the problems of government, initiated by his association with Cromwell's Protectorate and his later position in the Parliament during the reign of Charles II, effectively suppressed his delight in aesthetic pleasures and substituted the need to attempt reform through satire, the plain style offered him a poetic method better suited to his new need than the otherworldly metaphysical manner did. As suggested by transitional poems such as "A Poem Upon the Death of O.C.," the changing times necessitated the change in rhetoric. As evidenced by early satires like "Fleckno," the satiric mode and the rhetorical methods of the plain style were not forced and foreign poetic tools.

The close precision of diction notable in all of Marvell's poetry, early and late, is it seems to me, as much a result of his acceptance of the rhetorical theories of the seventeenth century as a result of his "rational habit of imagination."¹ Both the anti-Ciceronian movement and the scientific movement were oriented about a fundamental insistence that words must be governed by thought, that manner must adhere to matter. As noted before, the two kinds of rhetoric, in theory so similar, in practice so disparate, owe many of their differences to the unlike subject matter each treated. But, though the metaphysicals dealt with the other-worlds of the human mind and the satirists dealt with social realities, both were concerned to avoid amplification or copiousness and to create a verbal medium strictly related to the intentions of the theme of the poem. Marvell's words never wander from the point, whether the point is the creation of an imaginative realm symbolized by words that are ornamental as well as suggestive, as in "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun," or whether the point is to ridicule the follies of the court circle, as in "The Statue in Stocks-Market." The Ciceronian usages discussed before--the melodic flow of many lyrics, and the sensuous and pictorial use of words particularly in descriptions of nature--do not interfere with Marvell's close adherence to the fundamental precept of the precise relationship of verba to res. The general revolt against Ciceronianism in the seventeenth century is implicit in this precept and is as evident in Marvell's verse as in the rhetorical theories.

The significance of a study of rhetorical movements in relation to

¹Ruth Wallerstein, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 340-41.

Marvell's poetry is proportionate to the literary insights gained. One such insight concerns the nature of the two primary poetic moods of the seventeenth century, the metaphysical and the post-1660 satiric. Neither of these moods was the innovation of individual sensibilities alone. We are particularly inclined to think of metaphysical poetry, especially in its rhetorical novelties, as being Donne's invention. From consideration of the rhetorical movements, it seems apparent that metaphysical poetry and post-Restoration satiric poetry, in style as well as thought, are offsprings of the spirit of the time. Donne's verse and Marvell's render in poetry the rhetorical principles of the anti-Ciceronians. Dryden's verse and Marvell's render in poetry the rhetorical principles of the scientific rhetoricians. To answer the impossible question of which came first--theory or practice--is not so important as to see the rhetorical practices of the poets, Marvell in particular, in the context of the ideas of those who at that time theorized about the use of language. The role of the individual sensibility in the formation of a poem's rhetoric is important but not absolute; other influences, the rhetorical revolutions, shaped it too. Marvell's natural gravitation toward the metaphysical style in his early poems and toward the plain style in his later ones is in part attributable to the influence of the rhetorical methods then in vogue.

Besides enlarging our view of Marvell's use of language and placing it in context of the linguistic modes of the age, the study of rhetoric invests individual poems with significance on another level: that is a deeper understanding of how the poet achieves his effects and a sense of knowing what to expect from the poem's verbal structure. For

instance, it is interesting to associate the Senecan concision of means and use of aphorism with Marvell's habit of clinching final lines, as in "The Mower against Gardens." Or it is interesting to associate the plain stylists' rejection of paradox and ambiguity with the flat language of Marvell's late works. This type of insight is particularly useful in approaching the later satires, which, by subject and brutality of tone, seem so unappealing and imperfect in comparison with Marvell's lyric triumphs. But all of his poems, even best and most familiar, gain an added dimension when viewed in relation to the general fashions in rhetoric.

Marvell's use of language seems particularly successful and skillful in lyrics. But his linguistic structures seem to me to have been always very thoughtfully formed. His words are carefully tailored to the thematic intent. And in this concern to suit manner to matter his poetry incorporates the most important rhetorical idea of his day.

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