

Topic Page: [Marvell, Andrew \(1621-1678\)](#)

Definition: **Marvell, Andrew** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

English metaphysical poet and satirist. In his lifetime, he was known for his withering satires on corruption and mismanagement in the court of Charles II. Today, Marvell is chiefly remembered for his lyric poetry, first collected in 1681 in a volume that included 'The Garden', "Bermudas" and his best-known poem, 'To His Coy Mistress'.

Summary Article: **Marvell, Andrew**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

English metaphysical poet and satirist. In 'To His Coy Mistress' (1650–52) and 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland' (1650) he produced, respectively, the most searching seduction and political poems in the language. He was committed to the Parliamentary cause, and was Member of Parliament for Hull from 1659. He devoted his last years mainly to verse satire and prose works attacking repressive aspects of the state and government. Today his reputation rests mainly on a small number of skilful and graceful but perplexing and intriguing poems, which were published after his death as *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681).

Marvell was born in Winestead, and was educated at Hull Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge. At the outbreak of the Civil War his sympathies were not fixed, though he seems to have associated with the Royalists, but by the 1650s he was committed to the Parliamentary cause, acting as tutor to the daughter of Lord Fairfax, who had recently retired as a Parliamentary general. He probably wrote much of his lyric and philosophical poetry during his two years at Fairfax's Yorkshire seat, Nun Appleton House. He then became tutor to a ward of Oliver Cromwell's and, in 1657, assistant Latin secretary to the government, working under English poet John Milton. He became reconciled to the Restoration in 1660 and remained a loyal, if independent, critic of the political scene.

His reputation in his own day was as a champion of liberty and toleration, and as a writer of controversial and important texts. His poetry includes love lyrics, pastorals, and religious poems, executed with a compelling mixture of lyric grace and dialectical urgency and complexity. His prose works include *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* (1677), a scathing review of Charles II's reign.

Some of his earlier poems ('Fleckno', 'Tom May's Death', and 'The Character of Holland') had been satirically motivated, and he later turned to writing satirical pamphlets and prose works. The most significant are *The Rehearsal Transposed* (1672, with a second part 1673), in which he advocated religious toleration, and *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government*.

For the extreme wit of his poetry (as in 'The Definition of Love') Marvell belongs among the metaphysical poets, yet in his sequence of pastorals on gardens he is reminiscent of the Elizabethan lyricists. Typically, he mixes dialectical argument with sensuous evocation and hints of hidden meaning or allegory in a rich and suggestive manner. It is often difficult to determine precisely what he means, or what his attitude to the subject is (as in the complex poem 'Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn'). Part of his quality lies in his attempt to reconcile Platonic ideals with human reality, allegory with the facts of history, and the mysteries of religion with the limitations of mortality.

quotations

Marvell, Andrew

essays

Persuasive techniques in 'To His Coy Mistress'

documents

Marvell, Andrew: From 'The Garden'

weblinks

Marvell, Andrew

images

Marvell, Andrew

Marvell, Andrew

audios

Marvell, Andrew To His Coy Mistress

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Chicago

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Harvard

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