Andrew Marvell

(31 March 1621 – 16 August 1678)

“Music, the mosaic of the air.”

Andrew Marvell

(31 March 1621 – 16 August 1678) was an English metaphysical poet, Parliamentarian, and the son of a Church of England clergyman. As a metaphysical poet, he is associated with John Donne and George Herbert. He was a colleague and friend of John Milton.

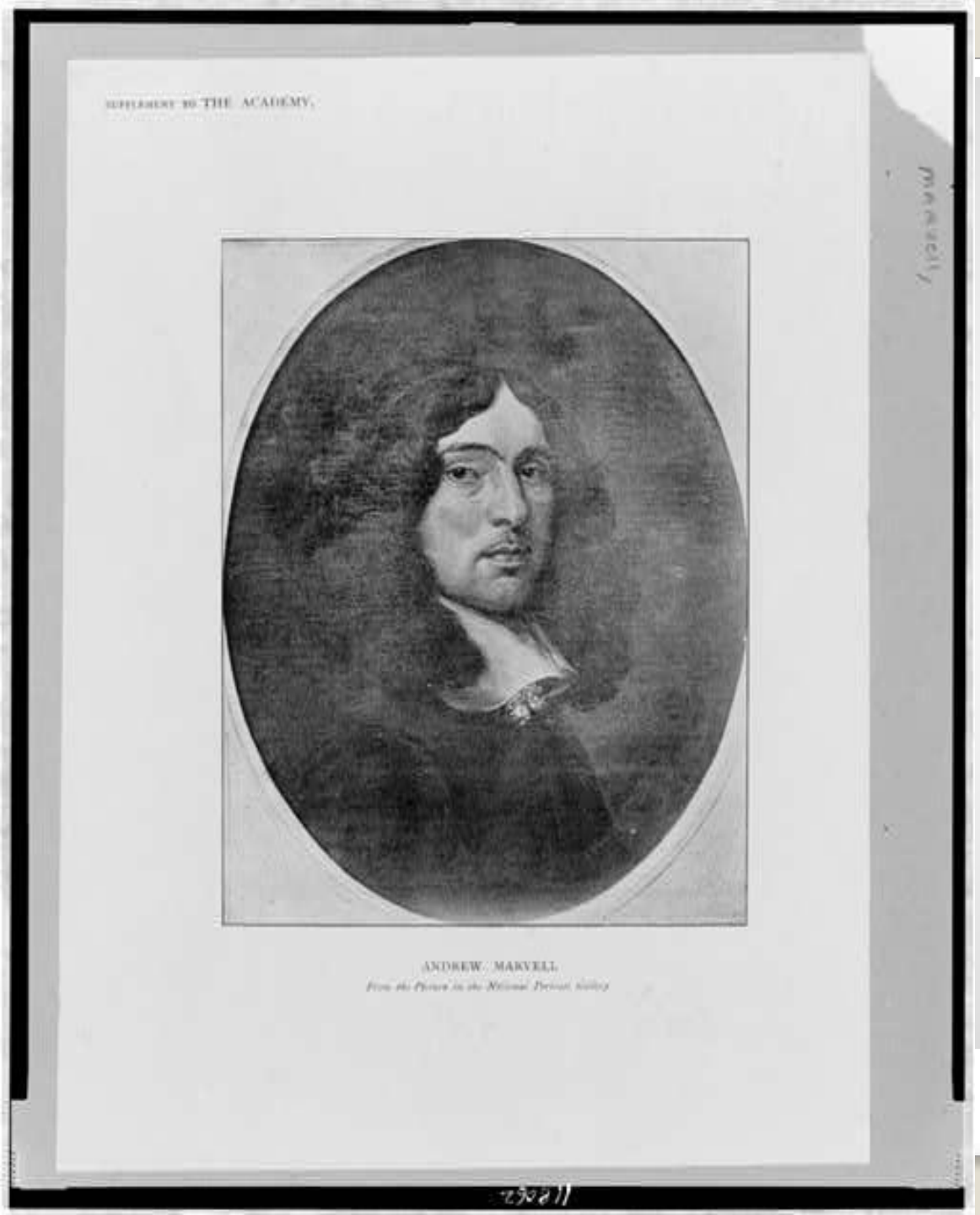
Marvell was born in Winestead-in-Holderness, East Riding of Yorkshire, near the city of Kingston upon Hull. The family moved to Hull when his father was appointed Lecturer at Holy Trinity Church there, and Marvell was educated at Hull Grammar School. A secondary school in the city is now named after him.

At the age of twelve, Marvell attended Trinity College, Cambridge and eventually received his BA degree. Afterwards, from the middle of 1642 , Marvell probably travelled in continental Europe. He may well have served as a tutor for an aristocrat on the Grand Tour; but the facts are not clear on this point. While England was embroiled in the civil war, Marvell seems to have remained on the continent until 1647. It is not known exactly where his travels took him, except that he was in Rome in 1645 and Milton later reported that Marvell had mastered four languages, including French, Italian and Spanish.

First poems and Marvell's time at Nun Appleton

Marvell's first poems, which were written in Latin and Greek and published when he was still at Cambridge, lamented a visitation of the plague and celebrated the birth of a child to King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria. Though in poems written between 1645 and 1649 he had evinced royalist sympathies, Marvell seems to have been attracted by the strong personality of Oliver Cromwell, and in 1650 he wrote "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland."

For 2 or 3 years beginning in 1651, Marvell was tutor to Mary Fairfax, daughter of Lord General Fairfax, a retired Commonwealth general who lived at Nun Appleton, and here he wrote some memorable poems. Among them are the lovely "Music's Empire" and "Upon Appleton House, to My Lord Fairfax," a complex and sophisticated compliment to Mary Fairfax consisting of almost 400 octosyllabic couplets in which landscape description serves emblematically to convey political and philosophical ideals.

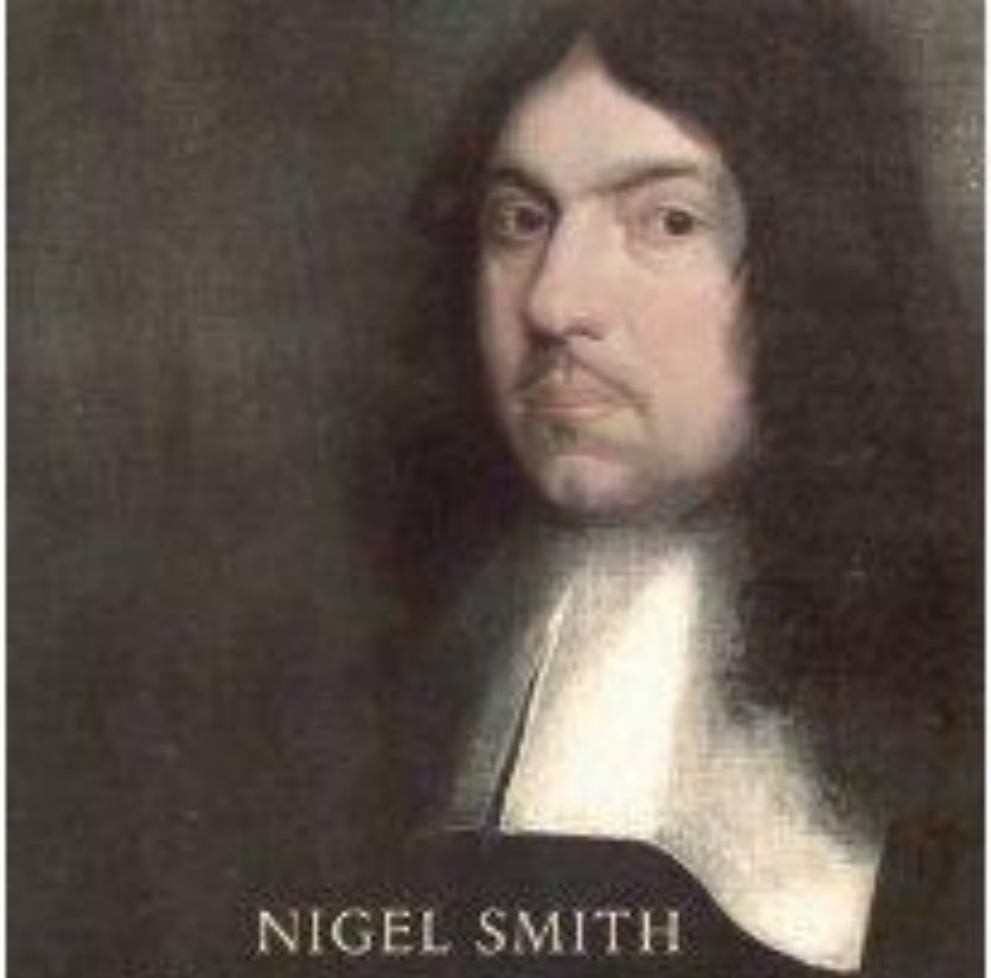


THE forward youth
that would appear
Must now forsake his
Muses dear,
Nor in the shadows
sing
His numbers
languishing.
'Tis time to leave the
books in dust,
And oil the unused
armour's rust,
Removing from the
wall
The corslet of the
hall.

During the period of increasing tensions leading up to the First Anglo-Dutch War of 1653, Marvell wrote the satirical "Character of Holland".

He became a tutor to Cromwell’s ward, William Dutton, in 1653, and moved to live with his pupil at the house of John Oxenbridge in Eton. Oxenbridge had made two trips to Bermuda, and it is thought that this inspired Marvell to write his poem Bermudas. He also wrote several poems in praise of Cromwell, who was by this time Lord Protector of England. In 1656 Marvell and Dutton travelled to France, to visit the Protestant Academy of Saumur

In 1657, Marvell joined Milton, who by that time had lost his sight, in service as Latin secretary to Cromwell's Council of State. Starting in 1659, Marvell was elected M. P. for his hometown of Hull, and he continued to represent it until his death During his last twenty years of life, Marvell was engaged in political activities, taking part in embassies to Holland and Russia and writing political pamphlets and satires. Marvell's *Miscellaneous Poems* were printed posthumously in 1681.



NIGEL SMITH

ANDREW MARVELL

The Chameleon

After the Restoration

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658. He was succeeded as Lord Protector by his son Richard, but in 1660 the monarchy was restored to Charles II. Marvell eventually came to write several long and bitterly satirical verses against the corruption of the court. Although they circulated in manuscript form, and some found anonymous publication in print, they were too politically sensitive and thus dangerous to be published under his name until well after his death. He avoided punishment for his own cooperation with republicanism, while he helped convince the government of Charles II not to execute John Milton for his antimonarchical writings and revolutionary activities. The closeness of the relationship between the two former office mates is indicated by the fact that Marvell contributed an eloquent prefatory poem, entitled *[[On Mr Milton's Paradaise Lost]]*, to the second edition of Milton's famous epic *Paradise Lost*.

From 1659 until his death in 1678, Marvell was a conscientious member of Parliament, steadily reporting on parliamentary and national business to his constituency and serving as London agent for the Hull Trinity House, a shipmasters' guild. He went on two missions to the continent, one to the Dutch Republic and the other encompassing Russia, Sweden, and Denmark.

Marvell died on 16 August, 1678 of tertian ague, and the malpractice of the attending physician. He was buried in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.

MISCELLANEOUS

POEMS.

BY

ANDREW MARVELL, Esq;

Late Member of the Honourable House of Commons.

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