

*Andrew Marvell: A Literary Life*. Matthew C. Augustine.  
Literary Lives. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. xvi + 234 pp. €21.83.

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Early in his literary life of Andrew Marvell, Matthew C. Augustine celebrates the freedoms of this strange genre of biography. Not bound to material prints and traces, the literary biographer can take wider passes while circling the subject. In the case of Marvell, the elliptical shape of Augustine's orbit means that we often find ourselves with our backs to the poet, gazing out on the landscape of seventeenth-century England, before being tugged around by the pull of his writings.

That we need multiple orbits to grasp the variety of Marvell's writing is clear from recent decades of Marvell studies which have brought the lyric poet in from the gardens of Nun Appleton to the tighter confines of his urban wit. Augustine has been a leader in these new Marvell studies, and his sensitivity to the moves of its literature is in evidence everywhere in his *Literary Life*. For readers versed in Marvell, Augustine blurs the boundaries that still mark our view of his writings. For those just coming to the poet, *A Literary Life* invites further study by offering lively readings of key texts and concise summaries of contexts for understanding Marvell's life in writing. The contextualizing sections are tucked neatly among Augustine's readings, from whence they open onto scenes of early modern reading and writing; the grammar school and university classroom; the discourses and events of church and state; the canons and traditions of poetry; and the authors and agents of textual production.

Although he offers context as a way to read Marvell, Augustine resists the temptation to fashion a singular interpretation. "Contextualisation," he writes, "often brings us to the brink of mystery but no further"; to fill the gaps in Marvell's life requires mortar mixed from our own interests. The biographer could do worse than to leave space for "the delight many readers take in the sense that Marvell's poetry holds an unfathomable secret" (3). Perhaps Augustine's description of Marvell as a "trans" poet working in "queer forms," suggestive though it is, does not quite work to hold open that space. Nevertheless, *A Literary Life* succeeds in holding forth the mystery—indeed, the mysteries—of Marvell's writing largely because Augustine overcomes the biographer's instinct to wrangle every hard-won discovery into causal narrative.

*A Literary Life* is organized chronologically; though it might be read piecemeal, the greater reward is in following the weave of Augustine's prose. After introducing the genre and subject of his literary life, Augustine works through the materials of early biography with an eye to the ways that Marvell's Yorkshire childhood established life-long modes of seeing and being (chapter 2). In chapter 3, we accompany the poet to Trinity College, Cambridge, where we learn of the books that Marvell likely read and how scholastic debate may have shaped his verse dialogues. Chapter 4 focuses on the formation of Marvell's conscience through his Continental travels and his engagement with (as well as his absence from) the English Civil Wars. Augustine reads Marvell's understudied satire "Flecknoe" alongside the challenging lyrics "The Nymph

Complaining” and “The Unfortunate Lover” to show Marvell as a “poet of wounds,” one who recycled tropes and destabilized them by adding a striking degree of self-reflexivity (81).

Over the next three chapters, we see Marvell’s career as a civil servant shaping and informing his poetic career. In chapter 5, Augustine uncovers spiritual and erotic elements within the political ironies of the verse he wrote while serving as tutor to Mary Fairfax. Next, we see Marvell using “The Character of Holland” as a job application to the Commonwealth government, with his poems on Cromwell serving as a sort of annual review (chapter 6). And nowhere is Augustine’s skill at reading politics with poetics more evident (and more appreciated) than in chapter 7, where he takes on Marvell’s painter poems, those Restoration satires in which text and context are so embedded in the world of gossip that they remain “largely illegible to non-specialist audiences” (184).

Part of the difficulty of understanding these poems lies in our reluctance to surrender the view of Marvell as anti-absolutist Whig. As Augustine argues in his final chapter, this view comes from reading *An Account of the Growth of Popery* (1677) back onto a life that may be best understood as loyalist, both in religion and in politics. To take Marvell’s address to tyranny as evidence of a thoroughgoing Whiggishness misses the self-gratifying and strategic ways that Marvell played both sides against the middle. And thanks to Augustine’s own ability to do just that—to play the many sides of Marvell against the mysterious middle—we now have a deeper sense of the pleasures and purposes of Marvell’s life in writing.

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*Conceiving Desire in Lyly and Shakespeare: Metaphor, Cognition and Eros.*  
Gillian Knoll.

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*Conceiving Desire in Lyly and Shakespeare* offers a fresh perspective for studies of cognition and sexuality by extending the scope of cognitive linguistics to accommodate the erotic. Knoll applies the “cognitive metaphor theory” of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner to the metaphors by which characters on the early modern stage “think and imagine and desire” (2). For Knoll, metaphors are the “building blocks for erotic experience” (19) as well as the means of accessing that experience.

Three types of “fundamental” metaphors are selected for exploration: motion (related to sensation and arousal), space (to intimacy and sensation), and creativity (to building a relationship). At each stage in the argument, these metaphors are related