



## “FORBIDDEN MIXTURES” AND NONHUMAN HYBRIDS: NEW MATERIALIST ENTANGLEMENTS IN ANDREW MARVELL’S POETRY

“Yasaklanmış Karışımlar” ve İnsan-Dışı Melezler: Andrew Marvell’in Şiirlerinde Yeni Materyalist Dolanıklıklar

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### ABSTRACT

This study scrutinizes Andrew Marvell’s preoccupation with the entanglement and interdependence of oppositions in “The Mower against Gardens” and “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”. Exploring the motif of “forbidden mixtures” as a key point of intersection between early modern metaphysical poetry and new materialism, the article interrogates how Marvell negotiates tensions between nature and culture, body and soul, purity and artifice, demonstrating that oppositions are neither absolute nor mutually exclusive. In “The Mower against Gardens”, the mower’s resistance to human intervention in the God-given natural world underscores the ethical, aesthetic, and ontological consequences of conflating artifice with nature. In “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”, the soul’s lamentation and its embodied articulation reveal a dialogic interdependence with the body, destabilizing rigid spiritual-material dichotomies. The article situates these poems within the intellectual, theological, and philosophical currents of the seventeenth century, and argues that Marvell’s metaphysical strategies articulate a relational ontology in which such notions as co-dependence, mediation, and flux govern the dynamics of existence. Hence, the study broadens the perspective of traditional interpretations of Marvell’s metaphysical poetry, positions Marvell as a poet whose metaphysical imagination envisions opposites not as fixed hierarchies but as interpenetrating forces, offering nuanced insight into the ethical and ontological stakes of early modern conceptions of nature, culture, and the self.

**Keywords:** Andrew Marvell, metaphysical poetry, Bruno Latour, new materialism.

### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Andrew Marvell’in “The Mower against Gardens” ve “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body” adlı şiirlerindeki karşıtlıkların dolanıklılığına ve karşılıklı bağımlılığına dair derin ilgisini incelemektedir. “Yasaklanmış karışımlar” motifini,

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erken modern dönem metafizik şiir ile yeni materyalizmin kesişim noktası olarak irdeleyen bu makale, Marvell'in doğa ve kültür, beden ve ruh, saflık ve yapaylık arasındaki gerilimleri nasıl müzakere ettiğini sorgular ve karşıtlıkların ne mutlak ne de birbirini dışlayan unsurlar olduğunu gösterir. "The Mower against Gardens" şiirinde, çayır biçen adamın Tanrı'nın bahsettiği doğal dünyaya yapılan insan müdahalesine karşı direnişi, yapaylık ile doğayı birleştirmenin etik, estetik ve ontolojik sonuçlarını vurgular. "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" şiirinde ise ruhun yakınması ve beden aracılığıyla somut olarak ifade edilmesi, katı ruh-madde ikiliğini sarsan diyalogik bir iç içe geçme halini ortaya koyar. Bu makale, bu şiirleri erken modern dönemdeki entelektüel, teolojik ve felsefi akımlar bağlamında ele alır ve Marvell'in metafizik stratejilerinin, varoluş dinamiklerini yöneten birbirine bağımlılık, dolayım ve akış gibi mefhumların belirlediği ilişkiyi dile getirdiğini öne sürer. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma Marvell'in metafizik şiiri hakkında yapılan geleneksel yorumların bakış açısını genişletir, Marvell'i karşıtlıkları sabit hiyerarşiler olarak değil, birbirine nüfuz eden güçler olarak tasavvur eden bir şair olarak konumlandırır ve erken modern dönemde doğa, kültür ve benlik kavrayışlarının etik ve ontolojik boyutlarına dair incelikli bir bakış sunar.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Andrew Marvell, metafizik şiir, Bruno Latour, yeni materyalizm.

## Introduction

Seventeenth-century English poetry has been traditionally considered to be marked by its preoccupation with oppositions and tensions between flesh and spirit, nature and culture, body and soul, self and other, self-enclosure and social entanglement, yet these seeming dichotomies are rarely fixed or absolute. Hence, one of the most prominent qualities of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry is its passion for "paradoxical argument" as Grierson (1959: xxxvii) states in his introduction to the collection of metaphysical poems of the seventeenth century. For example, Andrew Marvell as a seventeenth-century metaphysical poet of borders and transitions "does not long stand in one place or inhabit a single perspective" and his poetry is therefore "a poetry and a psychology of looking in two directions, of standing at the margins, of occupying a position neither outside nor genuinely inside prevailing structures of political identity, of spiritual economy, of erotic desire" (Augustine, 2011: 47). Hence, oppositions frequently coalesce into one another; "solitariness and social engagement, private and public realms and writings, are closely and often perplexingly intertwined" in Marvell's work (Loxley, 2011: 8). As a result, Marvell's poems, particularly "The Mower against Gardens" and "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" exemplify the metaphysical poet's ca-

capacity to explore and complicate such tensions and entanglements. By tracing the ethical, aesthetic, and ontological implications of Marvell's "[f]orbidden mixtures" from "The Mower against Gardens" (Marvell, 2005: 105), the study investigates the poet's preoccupation with destabilizing conventional binaries and presenting opposites as interdependent and generative forces rather than fixed hierarchies. The article interrogates Marvell's metaphysical strategies which negotiate the interplay between human artifice and divine creation, the corporeal and the spiritual, and the ethical stakes of relationality. The analysis thus situates Marvell, viewed as "the supreme poet of debate" (Bate, 2005: xiii), at the intersection of early modern thought and poetic innovation, and investigates his poetics which illuminate the mutable, co-dependent structures that underlie the seventeenth-century conceptions of the world, the self, and the cosmos.

In contemporary debates, questions of the human-nonhuman relationship are frequently interrogated through the lens of modernity and its destructive legacy. It is often argued that the emergence of scientific rationalism in the seventeenth century solidified the division between nature and culture. Nature began to be conceived as inert, mechanical, and devoid of agency, while human culture was positioned as entirely separate from it. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour (1993: 13) develops this critique, asserting that modernity rests on the radical nature-culture divide and "the separation between humans and nonhumans". This separation, he argues, conceptually isolates nature from social and cultural domains, rendering it a realm of passive objects external to human activity. The aim of Latour's project is fundamentally posthumanist and new materialist, seeking "to displace the reigning humanist biases of both natural science and sociology in favour of symmetrical relations between human and nonhuman" (Clarke, 2017: 143-144). Similarly, in the introduction to *Material Eco-criticism*, Iovino and Oppermann (2014: 4) note that traditional thought has granted agency solely to humans, viewing the material world, including inanimate matter and nonhuman life, as mute and incapable of generating meaning. New materialist theories, however, challenge this view by asserting that such a rigid dichotomy between human and nonhuman, nature and culture, is untenable. The material world is better understood as a dynamic network of entangled agencies, where humans participate as one actor among many.

In the early twenty-first century, a theoretical shift emerged that redirected attention toward materiality, objects, and things. This movement

was often understood as a critical reaction against the textual or linguistic turn of the 1970s and 1980s. The linguistic turn had posited that language is the fundamental medium through which humans encounter and construct the world; reality, in this view, is always mediated and produced through linguistic and textual structures. As Derrida (1997: 158) famously asserted in *Of Grammatology*, “there is no outside-text”. Post-structuralism, the intellectual force behind this view, radically foregrounded the discursive production of both reality and subjectivity. It exposed the instability of meaning, revealed that signification is never fixed or transparent, put forward the idea that signification is perpetually deferred and self-undermining. Yet, this linguistic emphasis often neglected the role of materiality, prompting a turn in late twentieth and early twenty-first century thought.

The transition toward materiality unfolded across several overlapping academic domains. This material turn gained traction in several disciplinary contexts, including feminist science and technology studies, which foregrounded embodied knowledge, material-discursive practices, and the agency of objects and technologies, ecocriticism, which challenged anthropocentric frameworks and reoriented literary and cultural analysis toward ecological entanglements, object-oriented ontology, which destabilized human-centred metaphysics by attributing autonomy and withdrawn depth to objects, and affect theory, which illuminated noncognitive, bodily, and prelinguistic forces that exceed linguistic determinism. The theoretical shift towards materiality emerged within such diverse disciplinary conversations. Hence, philosophers associated with posthumanism and new materialism sought to restore the material world to theoretical visibility, arguing that matter itself plays an active role in shaping human perception, experience, and the production of meaning. For new materialists such as Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett, Descartes’ seventeenth-century division of matter from spirit not only “exalted the human in solitary eminence over all other life forms by positing the capacity for thought and reflection as uniquely human attributes” but also “created a fissure in human experience from which we are still struggling to recover” (Marcus, 2019: 375). This fissure corresponds to “a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture” designated by the adjective “modern” (Latour, 1993: 10). However, as Jane Bennett (2010: 112) argues, materiality “draws human attention sideways, away from an ontologically ranked Great Chain of Being and to-

ward a greater appreciation of the complex entanglements of humans and non-humans”.

The seventeenth century, a period of epistemic fracture and ontological renegotiation, unfolds at the intersection of Reformation polemic, the nascent scientific revolution, and the residual metaphysics of a late scholastic cosmos. In this transitional landscape, binary schemata such as flesh/spirit, nature/culture, corporeality/transcendence and male/female function less as fixed ontological partitions than as sites of contestation, their supposed stability eroded by theological dissent, empirical inquiry, and shifting cosmological imaginaries. Metaphysical poetry emerges as a locus for staging such instability: a discursive arena where conceptual polarities are not merely described but deferred and displaced through the structural ingenuity of the conceit. Against this backdrop, Marvell’s poems, particularly “The Mower against Gardens” and “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body” enact what might be called an early modern poetics of hybridity. As this article situates Marvell within a matrix of early modern epistemic shifts, ontological instability and conceptual hybridity, it employs Latourian “quasi-objects” as an analytical tool, hence applying a twentieth-century theoretical framework to seventeenth-century materials to illuminate the instability, hybridity and material entanglements in Marvell’s poetry. In other words, while the study applies Latour’s notion of the “quasi-object” to a seventeenth-century poetic context, the concept is used retrospectively as Marvell’s hybrid entities anticipate what Latour would later theorize. Besides, the parallel between Marvell’s poetic imagination and Latour’s theoretical model operates at the level of structural affinity rather than strict equivalence.

Marvellian poetics refuses the purity of discrete categories in favour of Latourian “quasi-objects”, unstable composites that trouble the modern constitution’s putative separation of nature and culture; these “quasi-objects” are “in between and below the two poles” of the dualist paradigm (Latour, 1993: 55). These unstable composites should be seen in the “Marvellian terrain of indeterminacy” as instability or indeterminacy is claimed to be “the defining condition of Marvell’s epistemology” (Hirst and Zwicker, 2011: 4). Hence, in tandem with this indeterminacy, the motif of forbidden mixtures becomes not simply a moral or theological admonition but an ontological provocation, foregrounding the porousness of boundaries between vegetal and human, material and spiritual, artificial and organic. Marvell is a poet of margins and borders who explores the liminal, foregrounds the

indeterminacy of language and exposes “the porous boundaries between words and other words, other meanings, other contexts” (Augustine, 2011: 47). Thus, this article tracks Marvell’s “affinity for dialectics, those slipper contests of binaries and oppositions” (Augustine, 2011: 47), and situates Marvell’s poetics of mixture within the entangled intellectual ecologies of seventeenth-century England, reading his verse alongside the period’s natural philosophical treatises, theological controversies, and emergent taxonomies of the natural world. Drawing on new materialist approaches, it argues that Marvell’s destabilisation of binary logic anticipates a posthumanist ontology in which agency, substance, and meaning are co-constituted across heterogeneous assemblages. What emerges is neither the simple dissolution of opposites nor their harmonious synthesis, but a poetics of perpetual negotiation, a middle space between these oppositions, where categories interpenetrate, resist closure, and remain productively unresolved.

In “The Mower against Gardens” Marvell stages an inaugural scene of contamination, locating the poem’s polemic not merely in a moralised denunciation of horticultural artifice but in a deeper anxiety about the ontological status of altered nature. In other words, the dual sense of the word “contamination” refers both to theological impurity and to ontological hybridity. The opening invocation of a primordial, pure garden, uncultivated, self-sufficient, divinely ordained, constructs an Edenic baseline against which human intervention appears as both an aesthetic imposition and a categorical transgression. The poem exposes the impossibility of returning to an unmediated natural condition as its opening refers to the figure of the “luxurious man”, a character who embodies the human agent responsible for the corruption of the natural world and thus establishes the locus of the mower’s indignation (2005: 105). The garden is seen as “the quintessential Marvellian locale because it stands on the boundary (...) between culture and nature (Bate, 2005: xix). Yet the poem’s own figural economy undermines this very opposition: the diction of grafting, transplanting, and hybridisation mobilises the same vegetal lexicon to describe both natural fecundity and its so-called corruption, suggesting that nature and culture are not sequential states but coextensive conditions, entangled from the outset. In Latourian terms, the cultivated garden is a networked assemblage of human and nonhuman agencies such as soil, plant, seed, gardener, tools and divine creation that jointly constitute meaning and matter. Latourian quasi-objects “do not belong to Nature, or to Society, or to the subject”

(Latour, 1993: 65). The mower's world, which ostensibly contrasts nature with artifice, dramatizes the symmetrical interplay between human and nonhuman forces. Marvell's poetic imagination, much like Latour's theory, refuses the Cartesian separation of matter and spirit, object and subject. This entanglement, read through a Latourian lens, disrupts the modern separation of the human as the locus of artifice and the nonhuman as the repository of authenticity. Instead, Marvell's mown and cultivated landscapes behave as quasi-objects: simultaneously natural and artificial, autonomous and anthropogenic, resisting the purity of either pole. In this sense, the mower's ostensibly righteous stance against cultivation becomes an unstable moral vantage, for his rhetoric inadvertently reveals the impossibility of returning to an unmediated natural state. The poem thus demonstrates that artifice itself is already inscribed within the natural.

If "The Mower against Gardens" interrogates the permeability of the nature/culture divide, "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" extends this destabilising logic to the ostensibly more intractable dualism of spiritual and corporeal substance. The poem parodies, rather than faithfully reproduces, a Cartesian separation, which presents Marvell as resistant to strictly rationalist schemas. The poem stages "the tension-through-dialogue" (McDowell, 2019: 289). Framed as an agonistic exchange, the poem enacts what might at first appear to be a Cartesian impasse: the soul, imprisoned within the body, laments the tyranny of material constraint, while the body, in turn, registers the afflictions imposed by its immaterial counterpart. Yet the alternating laments do not merely rehearse the antiphonal structure of a binary opposition; rather, they expose the mutual implication of each term in the other's condition. The soul's imprisonment is inseparable from the body's animation, just as the body's suffering is inseparable from the soul's inhabitation. From a new materialist perspective, employed as a modern interpretive lens in this study, this reciprocal dependency subverts the theological and philosophical hierarchies that privilege the soul as the seat of agency and meaning. The poem renders the soul not as an incorporeal transcendence but as an embodied actant, an interfolded entity in the Latourian sense, whose very operations are conditioned by the material affordances and limitations of its host. To regard the soul as a Latourian actant further allows one to see the soul's operations as materially inflected rather than merely metaphorically embodied. In turn, the body is not a passive vessel but a dynamic participant in the production of experience, thought, and identity. This mutual constitution enacts a proto post human-

ist ontology as matter and meaning emerge in co-agency rather than in hierarchical succession. Thus, the dialogue's apparent binary dissolves into a more intricate topography of interdependence, mirroring the entangled hybridity of the mower's garden.

Both poems enact a shared ontology of entanglement. They articulate a Marvellian poetics where "forbidden mixtures" function less as a site of moral prohibition than as a generative principle of being. The motif of "forbidden mixtures" in Marvell operates as a structuring analytic that reshapes early modern ontological assumptions. At first sight, the practice of grafting may be conventionally viewed as "a corruption of the original purity" (Davis, 2011: 38). Yet, one comes to realise that there is no return to such a state, and death has been there in the Arcadian space from the outset, as the figure of the mower with his scythe, associated with death, calls to attention human beings' mortal nature. Whether framed in vegetal terms such as the graft, the transplant, the cultivated hybrid, or in anthropological terms such as the ensouled body, the embodied soul, Marvell's verse persistently troubles the conceptual quarantines that seventeenth-century thought sought to impose. In both cases, the integrity of the binary depends on a fantasy of originary purity, whether Edenic nature or immaterial spirit; yet the poems disclose that such purity is always already compromised by admixture. The nature-culture divide itself introduces monsters, which undermines the fantasy of completeness and undifferentiated fusion. What emerges is a vision in which contamination is not the aberration of a prior unity but the very condition of existence, a condition that, far from collapsing into undifferentiated monism, retains the tension of difference while refusing the security of impermeable borders. It is from this intersection that his poetry draws its enduring intellectual and aesthetic vitality.

### **Mixtures and Hybrids in the Seventeenth Century**

The instability of boundaries in Marvell's poetics of forbidden mixtures resonates with broader early modern debates in natural philosophy, particularly the shift from Aristotelian elemental theory to mechanical models. In the Aristotelian framework, the mingling of substances was understood as a process capable of generating new, stable forms, in which the qualities of the constituents combined to produce a coherent whole. By contrast, atomism reconceived mixture as the contingent aggregation of discrete particles. This epistemological shift was accompanied by anxieties about human intervention in natural processes, as theorists such as Bacon explored the possibility of improving nature through deliberate cultivation, experi-

mentation, and horticultural artifice. In seventeenth-century materialist thinking that deals with the intermingling of substances, perception is reciprocal. For instance, Campanella, who believes that all things are capable of perception, states that “there can be no sensation without the sensing being’s acquiring a likeness of the sensed”; likewise, Bacon claims that bodies are influenced by the presence of nearby bodies through “reciprocal perception” (as cited in Lamb, 2011: 21-22). In this light, Marvell’s critique of gardens in “The Mower against Gardens” can be read as participating in a discourse that simultaneously admires and mistrusts human mastery over nature, foregrounding the tension between generative mixture and artificial adulteration.

The theological stakes of mixture are particularly evident in Marvell’s “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”, which are also evident in the post-Reformation debates surrounding the nature of the soul. Calvinist emphases on total depravity and the body’s inherent corruption framed the soul as a spiritual agent in constant tension with its material vessel, reinforcing a dualistic hierarchy. Yet contemporaneous thinkers sought to stabilise the body/soul binary, conceiving of the soul as distinct yet operationally dependent on the body. Marvell’s poetry, however, problematises both strict dualism and monistic solutions, presenting the body and soul as mutually implicated and interdependent. Therefore, the poems resonate with theological and philosophical currents that stressed psychosomatic unity, anticipating later discourses which view the material and spiritual dimensions of existence as co-constitutive, effectively unsettling any binary opposition between the two.

Botanical discourse further delineates the cultural and symbolic contours of Marvell’s poetics. Seventeenth-century treatises on grafting, transplantation, and hybridisation foregrounded both the creative potential and the moral-epistemic risks of human intervention in natural life. Grafting embodied the paradox of improvement and adulteration: it promised new forms of vitality while simultaneously provoking anxieties about contamination and deviation from an imagined natural order. This beautiful, imagined natural order is, in the Latourian sense, “disturbed once the quasi-objects are seen as mixing up different periods, ontologies or genres” (Latour, 1993: 73). Hence, the pastoral tradition that dates to ancient and premodern times is re-deployed in seventeenth-century poetry in the early modern period. Marvell’s ambivalence toward cultivated gardens reflects this tension, aligning poetic critique with broader early modern concerns

about artificiality and authenticity. Moreover, these botanical practices often functioned as metaphors for cross-cultural contact, trade, and colonial expansion, with grafting and transplantation serving as symbols of the intermingling of peoples, races, and religious traditions. Marvell's poetry thus engages the epistemological and theological questions of mixture as it simultaneously interrogates the socio-political imaginaries of seventeenth-century England, situating literary reflection within the wider networks of early modern knowledge, power, and encounter.

These historical vectors, natural philosophical debates, theological discourse on the soul, and botanical practices of hybridisation reveal that Marvell's forbidden mixtures are deeply embedded in the intellectual and material concerns of his age. The apparent binaries that structure his poetry such as nature/culture, body/soul, and material/spiritual are revealed to be neither self-sufficient nor stable; their integrity is always contingent upon complex networks of relationality, intervention, and interpretation. By situating Marvell within these interwoven epistemic, theological, and botanical discourses, one can see that his verse moves beyond a reflection of contemporary anxieties about mixture, actively staging them as sites of conceptual and ontological negotiation.

Reading Marvell through a Latourian lens posits these poems as discursive assemblages, revealing how they operate as complex networks of human and non-human actors. In these assemblages, actants such as gardens, bodies, souls, and the very materials of language participate reciprocally in the production of knowledge, meaning, and agency. Latourian assemblages could be seen through the poetic form of the dialogue that intrigues Marvell; his relatively small body of work encompasses poems entitled "A Dialogue, Between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure", "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body", and "A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda", which demonstrates that the poetic form of the dialogue enables Marvell "to convey several legitimate sides of an issue at once" and to communicate the view that "all experience is at best partial" (Schoenfeldt, 2011: 90). Similarly, a new materialist perspective emphasizes the co-constitution of matter and concept: hybrid plants, embodied souls, and grafted landscapes are neither wholly passive nor entirely subordinated to human intentionality; they are produced through dynamic, relational interplay. Marvell's poetics thus enacts a proto-posthumanist ontology characterised by permeable boundaries, provisional oppositions, and the elevation of mixture as a generative principle. By foregrounding this interdependence,

his poetry anticipates a post-binary framework, preserving difference without recourse to hierarchical privilege; consequently, it offers a vision of early modern literature as a site enacting and transforming epistemic, ethical, and ontological tensions.

Latour's critique of the modern distinction between nature and culture provides a compelling theoretical lens through which to read Marvell's metaphysical poetics. In both "The Mower against Gardens" and "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" Marvell anticipates the later Latourian concept regarding the impossibility of maintaining pure ontological separations. The mower's lament over the forbidden mixtures of artifice and nature dramatizes precisely the kind of hybridization that Latour terms translation, which corresponds to the continual intermingling of human and nonhuman agencies despite the modern desire for purification. The dichotomy is carried out through the processes of translation and purification, two practices that depend on each other. Translation "creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture" while purification "creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other" (Latour, 1993: 10-11). For Latour, the core problem with modernity lies in its contradictory approach: the proliferation of hybrids, which are entities that blur the boundaries between nature and culture and belong to both realms simultaneously, coexists in tension with the process of purification, which seeks to erase these hybrids by enforcing a strict separation between nature and culture, human and nonhuman. This attempt to rigidly define boundaries is inherently unstable, as the very act of modernization continually produces hybrids, undermining the dichotomies it tries to uphold.

Similarly, the dialogue between soul and body exposes the instability of spiritual-material binaries, revealing their relational interdependence and displacing a paradigm of absolute opposition. In this sense, Marvell's poetry enacts a premodern or, as Latour might suggest, a nonmodern vision of porous and mutually constitutive categories, destabilising the boundaries between nature, culture, matter, and spirit. His metaphysical imagination, in other words his "liminal cast of mind" (Augustine, 2011: 54), thus resists the modern constitution by articulating a world of entangled agencies; in such a world, meaning and existence are constituted through the dynamic interplay of co-dependent forces, nor through their separation.

Latour critiques the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin modernity. He argues that the central claim of modernity, which is

predicated upon the separation of nature and culture, is a conceptual fiction. According to him, the modern constitution operates by maintaining a strict divide between human and nonhuman, subject and object, politics and science, even as, in practice, these domains are continuously entangled (Latour, 1993: 13-14). To describe the modern constitution, Latour concentrates on the natural philosopher Robert Boyle and the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes from the seventeenth century (Latour, 1993: 15).

Latour identifies two simultaneous but contradictory processes in modern thought: purification and translation (or mediation). Purification refers to the ideological act of dividing the world into two distinct ontological zones: nature, as the realm of objective facts, and culture, as the realm of human interpretation. Translation, however, describes the inevitable creation of hybrids or quasi-objects, entities that blur these distinctions. Modernity sustains itself by claiming to purify while multiplying hybrids, a paradox that Latour exposes as its defining contradiction. From this Latourian perspective, we have never truly been modern because our world has always been composed of networks of human and nonhuman actors, entangled by processes of mediation. Rather than a clean separation, reality consists of dynamic assemblages, with agency distributed across both material and social entities. The Latourian perspective proposes a nonmodern constitution, a framework that acknowledges these entanglements and moves beyond dualisms. In this vision, the world is not divided into nature and culture but is made up of networks of associations that include both.

### **Forbidden Mixtures in “The Mower against Gardens”**

The seventeenth century has been construed as an epoch defined by transitional epistemologies, a historical moment wherein poetry serves to both reflect and negotiate conceptual oppositions. Binary antinomies permeate the period’s literary production, their tension rendered especially visible in metaphysical poetry through the intricate operations of conceit. The procedures of poetic figuration and artifice in Marvell’s poetry “depend on yoking together like and unlike, identity and otherness, in precarious combinations” and his writing is marked by both “yearnings for absolute identity” and “images of violence and rupture” (Paleit, 2019: 315). Marvell’s dialectical poems exemplify the period’s preoccupation with ostensibly antagonistic concepts since oppositional terms in his poems coexist, intersect, and at times, appear to collide. Whether these binaries persist as incommensurable or are rendered commensurate by means of poetic mediation remains a point of critical contention.

Seventeenth-century poetry is equally invested in processes of transformation and metamorphosis, which serve as mechanisms for interrogating and, potentially, reconciling such oppositions. The theological and metaphoric deployment of transubstantiation, for instance, foregrounds the permeability of boundaries, suggesting that antinomies may interpenetrate rather than remain rigidly fixed. Against this conceptual backdrop, Marvell's "The Mower against Gardens," the first of the Mower sequence, chosen in this study as the representative of Marvell's horticultural poems, offers a particularly instructive case. This poem is regarded as "a brilliantly argued assault on the *artificiality* of horticulture" because gardens are "enclosed, whereas Nature should be open", the plants in a garden are "grafted – genetically engineered (...) to create unnatural exotica" and "botanical exploration is a form of imperial exploitation, even sexual perversion" (Bate, 2005: xix). These gardens are marked by sexual perversions because of forbidden mixtures. The poem's conceptual investment in the motif of forbidden mixtures interrogates the relationship between nature and culture, ultimately privileging the former as divinely sanctioned while casting the latter as humanly constructed and potentially corruptive. By focusing on this motif, the study contends that Marvell both enacts and contains the tension between coalescence and separation, revealing a poetic negotiation that acknowledges and contests the binary.

The title of Marvell's poem immediately signals the central antagonism, with the preposition "against" formally instantiating the opposition that structures the entire work. Positioned within the pastoral tradition, the poem engages the familiar tension between the purity and simplicity of untamed nature and the artifice and corruption of cultivated landscapes, which is a hallmark of pastoral discourse. Marvell exploits this tradition to underscore the contrast between plain, unadorned nature and the ornamental gardens shaped by human hands. Departing from the conventional pastoral figure of the shepherd, who typically celebrates the pleasures of rural life, Marvell substitutes the mower, a figure whose association with the scythe imbues him with a more formidable presence; "the nurturing shepherd" is replaced by "the destructive mower" (Purkiss, 2011: 74). The scythe's symbolic connection to death renders the mower an inherently more intimidating figure than the naïve shepherd. This substitution not only heightens the sense of menace but also foregrounds the poem's underlying concern: the destructive impact of cultivated and encultured man upon the integrity and autonomy of the natural world.

Marvell opens the poem with the figure of the “luxurious man,” immediately establishing the locus of the mower’s indignation (2005: 105). This character embodies the human agent responsible for the corruption of the natural world, exploiting its innate simplicity and purity to satisfy his own indulgences. “Luxurious” denotes “opulence, sumptuousness, or rich abundance” and thus evokes a figure transgressing divine creation and defiling unadorned nature through sophistication for personal gratification; besides, its Middle English sense “lecherous” further implicates the luxurious man in lust, one of the deadly sins, linking moral vice with the sexual imagery that permeates the poem (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The luxurious man thereby seduces the natural world: he entices flowers and plants away from their native habitats, redirecting them into ornamental gardens shaped by human design. The lascivious man’s attempt to seduce the natural world and to allure the flowers from the fields underscore the multi-layered disruption he effects. In this act, the overindulgent, lustful man mirrors the corruption of his own nature, imposing his deviation upon the world and leading it away from its original trajectory. The luxurious man pushes the natural world into an unnatural course of action by means of designing non-God-given gardens crafted by man’s ornamentation and sophistication. The Latin etymology of the verb “seduce” that refers to the act of leading one away or apart from the right course of action (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) suggests that the overindulgent, lustful man seduces the world after him, leads the world away from its natural course, disrupts the natural order, misleads the natural world, deviates the natural course; seducing the world after himself is supposed to mean that the luxurious man makes the natural world like himself, like the luxurious man who has deviated from God’s path and who has corrupted his original pureness. This seduction of nature resonates with biblical allegory, invoking the Fall and the Garden of Eden. Just as Adam’s disobedience results in the loss of innocence and expulsion from Paradise, the luxurious man defiles the natural world through gardens shaped by human knowledge, sophistication, and desire. Marvell subverts the traditional gendered imagery of temptation in the biblical scene: the seducer is male, while the garden itself is rendered as a feminized entity, an object of human manipulation and aestheticized desire. This subversive act evinces that Marvell’s representations of gender challenge “conventional binary schemes” as he seems to be “an admirable ventriloquist for personae of both genders—as well as some personae who are neither one nor the other” (Enterline, 2019: 164). In other words, Marvell performs a radical act of vo-

cal multiplicity, creating personae that exist outside a strictly dichotomous framework and thereby subverting the very logic of gendered categorisation.

Central to this framework is the notion of nature, understood both as the physical world of flora, fauna, and landscape, and as the inherent essence of humanity. Nature, derived from Latin *natura*, signifies birth and origin; humans are born from God-given nature in a state of purity (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Yet the process of enculturation, the grafting of human knowledge onto divine creation, estranges man from his natural origin. He becomes, metaphorically, a plant unaware of its stock, asserting dominion over what is inherently wild. The luxurious man's ambition to graft "upon the wild the tame" reflects a hubristic desire to domesticate God's creation, positioning himself as "that sovereign thing and proud" who aspires to overrule the natural order (Marvel, 2005: 105). Against this aspiration, the mower, armed with his scythe, stands as a counterforce, reminding man of the limits of his power and the inevitability of death. In this interplay, Marvell stages a complex negotiation between divine nature, human corruption, and mortality, situating the poem within the broader ethical and metaphysical concerns of seventeenth-century thought.

The mower condemns the lascivious man for vexing nature and engendering life without sexual intercourse. In crafting his geometrically ordered gardens in opposition to the natural world, the luxurious man appropriates birthing imagery traditionally associated with the female sex, effectively assuming the role of a procreative agent over his cultivated landscapes. While fertility is conventionally attributed to women, Marvell invests the gardens of the luxurious man with feminized qualities of nurturing and sustenance such as earth as a maternal body, yet these qualities are subverted, for the enclosed gardens are neither natural nor generative in the divine sense. The soil, manipulated and kneaded at the whim of the gardener, functions as an artificial womb: perfumed, doctored, and treated with unnatural nutriment, it produces distorted and hybridized flora. The speaker in Marvell's poem says that "[t]he pink grew then as double as his mind," signalling the perversion of natural kinds (Marvell, 2005: 105). The speaker in this poem figures "gardens as artificial perversions of nature" (McRae, 2011: 128). The archaic sense of the word "kind" refers to nature, the natural order (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Hence, the luxurious man's interventions, by altering the nutritive and organic processes of the garden, constitute an unnatural violation of this order. The perversion of the natural world signi-

fies “the proliferation of monsters” or unnatural hybrids in the Latourian sense (Latour, 1993: 12). The gardener’s desire to impose his own artificial logic upon the natural world yields a grotesque, adulterated product: a perverted imitation of what is inherently pure. Culture, in this configuration, both defiles nature and alienates man from it, replacing the organic vitality of God-given landscapes with artificial ornamentation and the statues of human gods. By contrast, the natural world remains imbued with spiritual forces such as fauns, fairies, and other animating presences that distribute innocence and maintain the integrity of creation. Marvell’s critique thus frames the artificial garden as a locus of forbidden mixture; in this space, the imposition of culture upon nature produces not harmony or enhancement but disfigurement, perversion, and the estrangement of man from his own divine origin.

In “The Mower against Gardens”, Marvell stages a sustained critique of human interference in the natural world, using the figure of the mower to oppose the luxurious man’s artificial dominion. The mower yearns for “a simpler and undifferentiated green” or “the originary state of undifferentiation”, which represents the “bucolic narcissism” of the prelapsarian state (Hirst and Zwicker, 2019: 397–98). The mower dreams an Elysium of undifferentiation and indistinction, profusion and completeness and he is therefore against gardens and gardeners. The poem, via the motif of forbidden mixtures, explores the tension between nature and culture, depicting the gardener’s imposition of human knowledge and desire as a perversion of God-given order. Fertility and generative power, traditionally associated with the feminine and divine, are co-opted and distorted, producing unnatural, hybridized forms that reflect both moral and ontological corruption. Marvell’s imagery draws on biblical allusion, sexualized metaphors, and the pastoral tradition to emphasize the consequences of disrupting the natural hierarchy: imposing culture upon nature yields grotesque and adulterated results, alienating man from his own divine and natural origin. Ultimately, the poem envisions the mower as a moral and metaphysical counterforce, affirming the sanctity of unmediated nature while exposing the dangers inherent in the overreach of human artifice.

In this way, Marvell, who is “captivated by the ways in which the ostensibly firm contrast between art [read as culture] and nature is repeatedly eroded” (Schoenfeldt, 2011: 95), presents a conflation of nature and culture, disrupting the hierarchical distinction between the two. The mower against gardens loathes the gardener who deals “[f]orbidden mixtures”

between the tree and the bark (Marvell, 2005: 105). The mower is against the collapse of the boundary between the tame and the wild, between the natural and the unnatural; he is repulsed by the adulteration of nature; he believes that the adulteration of nature results from the act of grafting two different species. The natural world is bastardised according to the mower, since no plant now knows the stock that it is derived from; as a result, “th’ uncertain and adulterate fruit / Might put the palate in dispute” (Marvell, 2005: 105). The perversion of the natural world leads to the annihilation of the boundary between the legitimate and the illegitimate, the pure and the impure, the unadulterated and the adulterated. The mower likens the cultivated garden to a “green seraglio” with “its eunuchs” (Marvell, 2005: 105). The eunuch as an emasculated man is suggestive of the fear of castration, and this fear leads to the fear of the eradication of the distinction between the male and the female. Similarly, he is disturbed by the gardener that vexes nature and procreates “without a sex” and this also evokes the fear of undifferentiation between the two sexes. Whatever is procreated without a sex is unnatural and monstrous. The mower’s separation between nature and culture causes the multiplication of the monstrous hybrids. Yet, Marvell, referring to himself as “the *Marvel of Peru*” within the space of his poem, speaks of another world searched through new oceans; in this world, the great divide between nature and culture is obliterated (2005: 105).

Marvell’s garden poems acknowledge that we can never go back to Edenic nature, yet we cannot help ourselves but long for nature, we cannot escape such nostalgic yearning. Hence, his poetry abounds with optical illusions, wherein a “natural” landscape is exposed as “painted” (Bate, 2005: xix). In his poetic world, nature and culture coexist in a state of entanglement because each generates “a beautifully crafted liminal place”, hence his poetry is characterised by “a threshold between nature and culture, a fusion of history’s one-directional time with the cyclical rhythms of the calendar” (Bate, 2005: xix-xx). In Marvell’s poetic space, as it is seen in his other poem “The Garden”, “a green thought” is entangled with “a green shade” (Marvell, 2005: 101). Thus, the hierarchy between the body and the mind is obliterated.

### **Metaphysical Interpenetration in “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”**

This study scrutinizes the voice of the soul with the aim of highlighting the distinctions and the interdependencies between soul and body. The first stanza reveals that these ostensibly opposing entities are not mutually ex-

clusive but co-constitutive. In Marvell's poetics, the ineffable soul is mediated through the material body; the soul can be mediated through "either a transparent drop [of dew] or a series of pictures at an exhibition" (Schoenfeldt, 2011, p. 89). Both the soul's opening and the body's response commence with the lamentatory exclamation "O," followed by the parallel construction "O, who shall..." signalling a shared rhetorical and structural pattern (Marvell, 2005: 103). The term dialogue denotes a conversation between two or more persons, and an exchange of and a discussion about ideas. In Marvell's poem, the dialogue is at once conversational and confrontational. The soul and body converse with each other, articulate themselves in opposition, yet their identities are defined relationally, through the very tensions they negotiate. This co-dependence undermines the notion of stable, oppositional binaries; it suggests a dynamic reciprocity and thus acknowledges difference without absolute separation.

One of Marvell's favourite poetic forms is "the poetic dialogue" (Bate, 2005: xiii). In "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" Marvell extends the metaphysical interrogation of opposites by dramatizing the reciprocal entanglement of immaterial and corporeal existence. The soul laments the body's material constraints, portraying itself as confined and impeded; the body counters with the burdens of physical suffering, emphasizing the inescapable demands of flesh. Far from presenting a unidirectional hierarchy, the poem constructs a relational field, each term within it defining and being defined by the other. This relationality mirrors early modern philosophical debates over dualism and psychosomatic unity: Cartesian and Neoplatonist frameworks sought to separate mind and body, yet Marvell's dialogue foregrounds their interpenetration, articulating a mutual dependency that resonates with contemporaneous Anglican and dissenting accounts of embodied spirituality. His dialogues, besides engaging with the body-soul dialectic of classical Neoplatonism in the seventeenth century, deals with "the debate in English poetry between Cavalier delight in the senses (*carpe diem*) and Puritan desire for mortification (*memento mori*)" (Bate, 2005: xiii). In a Marvellian dialogue, the echo of the vanquished voice endures in the reader's consciousness despite the apparent triumph of one perspective.

Structurally, the alternating stanzas, mirrored openings, and rhetorical echoes reinforce the interconnection of soul and body. Each voice laments through similar cadences and patterns, establishing a shared linguistic and temporal framework within which opposition is enacted rather than resolved. From a Latourian or new materialist perspective, the poem can be

read as an assemblage: body and soul operate as co-agents within a network of interdependent forces, each mediating and responding to the other. The poem stages a metaphysical negotiation, preserving difference yet rendering it permeable; as a result, the boundaries of identity are contingent, performative, and relational. Hence, Marvell's "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" complicates any simplistic binary between immaterial and material, spirit and flesh. The poem offers "no final resolution in which the soul shakes off the fetters of the human body" (Spurr, 2011: 161). The poem demonstrates that the co-constitution of opposites allows for a dynamic interplay: the soul cannot articulate its lament without the body's resistance, and the body's claims acquire meaning only in relation to the soul's presence. Marvell thus envisions a proto form of post-binary ontology, one that replaces hierarchical or absolute opposition with relationality, co-dependence, and negotiated difference, offering a metaphysical model that is simultaneously ethical, epistemic, and corporeal.

The soul inaugurates Marvell's dialogue with a rhetorical lament: "O, who shall from this dungeon raise / A soul enslaved so many ways?" (Marvell, 2005: 103). The soul signifies the spirit of a person, alongside the inner character and moral qualities that define human subjectivity. Yet the soul's account does not foreground its spiritual attributes directly; instead, it articulates its predicament through the metaphor of the body, emphasizing its confinement and oppression. The body is imagined as a dungeon, as a dark, enclosed, subterranean space associated with imprisonment, torture, and captivity. This imagery conveys the soul's perception of bodily existence as restrictive, a cage that limits and corrupts its intrinsic freedom. The dungeon metaphor pervades the stanza, establishing the soul's condition as both constrained and tormented, a hellish inversion of its natural celestial abode, reminiscent of Dantean infernal imagery. The verb "raise" encodes multiple layers of meaning that enrich the soul's lament. It signifies lifting or elevating the soul to a higher position, reflecting its aspiration toward the heavens and the ethereal sphere from which it is estranged. Simultaneously, "raise" connotes increasing strength or fortitude, suggesting the soul's desire to overcome its subjugation. Moreover, it evokes resurrection or deliverance from death, framing the body's mortality as a temporary but fatal constraint that the immortal soul seeks release from. The soul's yearning, therefore, is both ontological and moral: it seeks liberation from the corporeal encumbrance, an ascension from the fatal limitations imposed by matter. The additional sense of "raise" as lifting a siege or com-

elling an enemy to abandon its post further emphasizes the soul's defiance against bodily domination, casting the body as an adversary from which freedom must be wrested. In these layered semantic possibilities, Marvell renders the soul's lament simultaneously metaphysical, ethical, and corporeal: the soul is imprisoned, oppressed, and weighed down by the body, yet it retains an irreducible claim to autonomy, immortality, and ascent.

In this first stanza, Marvell establishes the dialectical tension between body and soul and indicates their interdependence. The soul's definition of itself in opposition to the body presupposes the body's existence, just as the body's subsequent lament presupposes the soul's presence. This reciprocal articulation destabilizes any notion of absolute dualism, suggesting instead a relational ontology in which opposites co-constitute and define each other. Instead of presenting a strict hierarchy, Marvell constructs a dynamic interplay. Consequently, the soul's aspirations, the body's limitations, and their mutual responsiveness generate a space for negotiating difference, dependence, and the permeability of metaphysical boundaries.

The stanza's third and fourth lines extend the imprisonment metaphor: "With bolts of bones, that fettered stands / In feet, and manacled in hands" (Marvell, 2005: 103). In these lines, the soul's enslavement is further elaborated, as it is physically restrained within the dungeon of the body. A bolt, defined as a large metal pin used to fasten or lock a door or window, evokes the soul being securely locked into the corporeal form. The verb "fetter," meaning both to restrict freedom and to chain a prisoner's feet, reinforces this imagery of confinement, suggesting that the soul is immobilized much like a butterfly pinned against a wall. The specific mention of the feet is significant, as "fetter" and "feet" share an etymological resonance, deepening the connection between constraint and corporeality. Similarly, the soul is "manacled in hands," with "manacle" deriving from the Latin *manus* and denoting metal restraints designed to prevent escape (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). These recurrent images of fetters and manacles visually articulate the soul's bondage within the body, making the abstract predicament of spiritual confinement tangible. Yet the soul's entrapment paradoxically implies motion and resistance. The verb "stand" parallels the earlier "raise," both evoking upward aspiration: the soul strives to transcend the downward pull of corporeal mortality and the brute forces of the body. The seeming paradox of standing while bolted underscores the relational definition of the soul; it can only articulate its opposition and desire for ele-

vation through reference to the very body that confines it. Thus, the soul's lament is mediated through bodily images of bones, chains, and manacles, eschewing ethereal metaphors of celestial ascent. This striking visuality renders the soul perceptible; traditionally invisible and immaterial, the soul manifests by means of the materiality of the body. Its embodiment in physical terms simultaneously enacts its imprisonment and affirms its presence. The soul's confinement generates a creative tension, imbuing it with restlessness and rhetorical ingenuity, and making its pursuit of freedom more vivid and compelling.

Viewed from this perspective, the soul and body emerge as co-dependent rather than wholly opposed. The soul, though immaterial, requires the corporeal frame to define and visualize itself; conversely, the body is animated and given moral significance through the soul's articulation. Binary oppositions are thus both employed and destabilized: the soul is fleshed out, yet distinctions between immaterial and material, spirit and flesh, are blurred. The two entities converse in a complex dialogue, oppositional in tone yet interdependent in function. Marvell's stanza stages a dynamic interplay: apparent hostility paradoxically produces relationality, demonstrating that the soul and body, though differentiated, are entwined and mutually constitutive.

The poem continues the imprisonment metaphor in the lines: "Here blinded with an eye, and there / Deaf with the drumming of an ear" (Marvell, 2005: 103). The soul, traditionally associated with invisible, transcendental light and supersensuous perception, is here paradoxically constrained by the bodily faculties of sight and hearing. These sensory limitations are aligned with the tortures of the dungeon, emphasizing the soul's entrapment within the corporeal frame. The soul asserts its existence beyond physical perception, privileging inner vision over external sight; nevertheless, it employs the very faculties it claims to transcend to articulate its lamentation. The outer eye and ear are subordinated to the mind's eye and the inner ear, through which the soul visualizes and interprets its own confinement. This interplay underscores the soul's alignment with the human psyche, highlighting its capacity for reflection, imagination, and linguistic artistry.

The soul's adept manipulation of language, marked by its careful deployment of imagery, alliteration, and rhythmic patterning in phrases such as "bolts of bones" and "fettered in feet", demonstrates its command over poetic form, even while claiming to be "blinded" or "deaf." Thus, the soul

exerts authority over sound and sight, using them to encode its presence within the physical world. This raises a fundamental question about the locus of poetic agency: does poetry belong to the soul, or is it mediated by the body? While the soul disavows sensory perception, it simultaneously appropriates the bodily faculties to assert its visibility and presence, materializing itself through language. By poeticizing the sensory world, the soul embodies itself and makes its immaterial existence perceptible. Thus, the soul's blindness and deafness become conditions that foreground its creative ingenuity, allowing it to negotiate the tension between immateriality and material expression.

The seventh and eighth lines sustain the imagery of the soul's enslavement and torment at the hands of the body: "A soul hung up, as 'twere, in chains / Of nerves, and arteries, and veins" (Marvell, 2005: 103). The metaphor of the soul being "hung up" evokes the sense of suspension and suffering, while the chains of nerves, arteries, and veins resonate with the earlier fetters and manacles, reinforcing the impression of bodily constraint. In enumerating these various corporeal components such as feet, hands, bones, eyes, ears, nerves, veins, the soul effectively fragments the body, paradoxically asserting its own agency by depicting itself as besieged within a multiplicity of material forms. By means of this proliferation of imagery, the soul is both embodied and made visible; the body becomes a canvas upon which the soul enacts its own presence and articulates the intensity of its confinement.

The stanza concludes with the lines: "Tortured, besides each other part, / In a vain head, and double heart" (Marvell, 2005: 103). These lines extend the metaphorical torment while introducing further binary tensions. The phrases "vain head" and "double heart" are rich in ambiguity and resonate with oppositional dynamics: head versus heart, unity versus division, spiritual authority versus corporeal dominance. The "vain head" can be interpreted in multiple ways: it may signify the soul's perceived superiority over the body, reflecting an intellectual or spiritual pride, or it may convey futility, as in the useless struggle of the mind to detach from bodily constraints. Meanwhile, the "double heart" evokes duality and multiplicity: it simultaneously suggests division between the soul's aspirations and the body's needs, and correspondence, as in a pair or partnership, highlighting the interdependent yet tension-filled relationship between soul and body. All these images reinforce the binary frame that structures the poem while also revealing its instability: the soul and body are in dialogue, intertwined

via conflict and resemblance, each defining and shaping the other through both opposition and resonance.

In the second stanza, the body takes up the interlocutor's voice, responding to the soul's lamentation with its own perspective. The body's account is structured as a defensive rejoinder, asserting its indispensability and resisting the soul's claim to superiority. Where the soul positions itself as imprisoned and elevated above the material, the body emphasizes the interdependence of corporeal and spiritual existence. By articulating its own sensations, limitations, and faculties, the body discloses that the soul's purportedly transcendental attributes are realized only by means of its material substrate. The language of the body is tactile, visceral, and richly corporeal, contrasting with the soul's metaphors of chains, dungeons, and imprisonment. Marvell's poetic wit is considered to "thrive on incongruous juxtaposition" (Bate, 2005: xvii). This juxtaposition foregrounds the paradox of metaphysical co-dependence: the soul's immateriality is both constrained and made intelligible by the body, while the body's significance is amplified by the soul's striving and imaginative projection.

The body's rhetoric highlights the paradoxical intimacy of the binary: the soul's attempts at transcendence are inseparable from the very corporeal mechanisms it seeks to escape. The body enumerates its own faculties such as senses, limbs, and internal organs, revealing that each is a site of both limitation and mediation, enabling the soul's perception, imagination, and expression. By claiming ownership over these faculties, the body asserts that the soul cannot exist or act independently, yet the body's authority is itself mediated by the soul's conceptual framing: the very language and imagery through which the body is represented are borrowed from the soul's vision of its own captivity. Thus, the dialogue enacts a reciprocal constitution: the soul and body are mutually defining, neither fully autonomous nor entirely subordinated, engaged in a continual negotiation that renders their binary both operative and unstable.

Marvell's structuring of the exchange, alternating laments and rejoinders, underscores the dialogic logic of interdependence. The poem dramatizes the tension between oppositional forces while simultaneously blurring the lines of strict dichotomy, suggesting that the soul and body, though often imagined in conflict, are co-constitutive. By giving each entity a voice that relies upon the other for intelligibility, Marvell articulates a metaphysical vision characterised by the entanglement of materiality and spirit, imprisonment and liberation, limitation and aspiration. The result is a dynamic

interrogation of binary oppositions, in which co-dependence, mediation, and relationality complicate simple notions of transcendence or corporeal primacy.

Both “The Mower against Gardens” and “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body” reveal Marvell’s preoccupation with the instability and permeability of binary oppositions. Marvell is the “amphibious” poet “possessed of a fluid mind” and “a man of anything but fixed identity” (Spurr, 2011: 159). In “The Mower against Gardens”, the tension between nature and culture is dramatized through the figure of the mower, who resists the artificiality and defilement imposed by the “luxurious man.” Marvell emphasizes the natural world’s purity and divine ordination, contrasting it with human attempts at cultivation and ornamentation, which produce “freaks of nature” and underscore the consequences of transgressing God-given limits. The so-called “forbidden mixtures” of human artifice and natural order blur distinctions between nature and culture, and expose the dangers of conflating them, underscoring the moral, aesthetic, and ontological stakes of such interventions. The poem foregrounds the hierarchical tension: nature, as a manifestation of divine providence, remains superior; however, culture, if it is untethered from its ethical and spiritual moorings, risks corruption and perversion.

As a poem written by a “adversarial” poet who skilfully internalizes dialectic (Von Maltzahn, 2011: 179), “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”, by contrast, internalizes the dialectic within the self, dramatizing the relational interdependence of ostensibly opposed entities. The soul laments its imprisonment in the body, deploying corporeal imagery to visualize its confinement, whereas the body asserts its indispensability as the medium that the soul needs for the realisation of its existence and expression. The dialogue destabilizes the rigid binary of spirit versus flesh, revealing that the soul’s transcendence is contingent upon the body, just as the body’s significance is amplified through the soul’s striving. The oscillation between lamentation and rejoinder, imprisonment and mediation, highlights a dynamic co-constitution, marked by the co-existence of opposition and interpenetration, producing a relational ontology that challenges simple hierarchies.

Both poems reveal Marvell’s nuanced interrogation of dichotomies, whether external, as in nature versus culture, or internal, as in body versus soul. He neither fully collapses these binaries nor leaves them unmediated; instead, he explores their points of contact, friction, and interdependence.

In both contexts, forbidden mixtures operate as a conceptual lens through which the consequences of conflating or violating boundaries are explored. The result is a poetic vision, characterised by the inseparability of opposition and entanglement; in this vision, purity and corruption, materiality and spirit, coexist in a tension that is simultaneously ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic. Marvell thus offers a sophisticated meditation on the fluidity of oppositions, affirming both the autonomy and the interrelation of entities that are conventionally treated as mutually exclusive.

The close readings of “The Mower against Gardens” and “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body” illuminate Marvell’s sustained preoccupation with the dynamics of opposition, mediation, and relationality. In both poems, he foregrounds the tension between entities traditionally conceived as discrete or hierarchically ordered, while simultaneously articulating their interdependence and capacity for mutual implication. The motif of forbidden mixtures functions as a conceptual fulcrum: in “The Mower against Gardens”, it dramatizes the perils of human artifice encroaching upon God-given nature, while in “A Dialogue between the Soul and Body”, it underlines the impossibility of absolute separation between material and spiritual existence. By exploring these interstitial spaces, where binaries are both asserted and destabilized, Marvell cultivates a metaphysical poetics attuned to flux, co-dependence, and the ethical and ontological stakes of relationality. This dual focus on external and internal oppositions situates Marvell within the intellectual currents of seventeenth-century thought, from pastoral ideals to natural philosophy; besides, it anticipates a broader interrogation of the porous boundaries between ostensibly opposed realms. As such, the study of these two poems provides a framework for understanding how Marvell’s metaphysical strategies negotiate the tension between conflict and synthesis, ultimately offering a vision characterised by provisional boundaries and forbidden mixtures.

### **Conclusion**

This paper points to the Cartesian separation of matter from spirit in the seventeenth century, which elevated humanity to a position of singular dominance over other life forms by defining thought and self-reflection as exclusively human traits, thereby producing a rupture in human experience that continues to trouble our understanding of the world today. The rise of new materialism in the twenty-first century and the revived focus on connections among human and non-human things provide us with a new way of reimagining and conceptualising the entanglements of humans and

non-humans and the interpenetrations of nature and culture, matter and spirit, body and soul in seventeenth-century English poetry.

Marvell's "The Mower against Gardens" and "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" interrogate seventeenth-century binary frameworks, revealing that the oppositions between nature and culture, body and soul are neither absolute nor self-contained. Through the motif of forbidden mixtures, Marvell dramatizes the ethical and ontological consequences of human intervention in the natural and spiritual orders, while simultaneously illustrating the co-dependence and interpenetration of ostensibly opposed realms. His metaphysical conceits, from the mower's defiance of cultivated gardens to the soul's embodied articulation within the body, articulate a relational poetics governed by flux, mediation, and provisional hierarchies. Positioned within the broader intellectual, theological, and philosophical currents of the early modern period, Marvell's poetry models a sophisticated vision of relationality. In this vision, boundaries are porous, opposites are mutually constitutive, and mixtures, though forbidden, become sites of ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic reflection. By attending to these interstices, Marvell both envisions the complexities of human and cosmic order and foregrounds the mutable structures that underpin early modern thought and poetic imagination. Marvell's deployment of the forbidden mixture motif unearths the complex interplay between opposition and interdependence. Whether manifested externally, in the adulteration of gardens, or internally, in the dialogic tension of soul and body, these mixtures articulate a vision of relationality, wherein categorical boundaries are continuously negotiated. Such a poetics resonates with contemporary seventeenth-century intellectual discourses, ranging from natural philosophy and horticultural treatises to theological debates on corporeality, sin, and immortality, revealing the interconnection of ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic concerns in early modern thought.

To conclude, in Marvell's poetics, co-dependence, mediation, and flux serve as profound reflections on the nature of existence itself. By dramatizing the tensions and convergences between seemingly antagonistic realms, Marvell refuses simplistic dichotomies, offering instead a sophisticated metaphysical vision characterised by the interpenetration of opposites; in such a vision, mixtures are fraught yet generative, and the boundaries between God-given and human-made, material and spiritual, remain ethically and ontologically charged. Considered from this vantage point, Marvell moves beyond being as a poet of pastoral and metaphysical re-

finement and appears as a thinker deeply attuned to the provisional, mutable, and interdependent structures that underpin seventeenth-century conceptions of the world, the self, and the cosmos.

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