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## Worlds Enough and Time: The Fantastic Afterlives of "To His Coy Mistress"

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Reception studies of Marvell have examined his political and high-cultural legacies but neglected, comparatively low-cultural prose genres such as science fiction and fantasy. Between 1950 and 2020, "To His Coy Mistress" was by far his most influential work in these realms, generating thirty-five titles—two of them including Marvell's name, one making him a character in the story. Most treat the poem as a romance in embryo, with sublimely vast scales of time and space subtending the adventures, separations, and reunions of loved ones. In short, the Coy Mistress is thought to give in. As a group, these texts mark out a new subfield and provide a case study in reception, engaging with the poem in ways ranging from the superficial to the modest to the substantive. Implicitly treating "To His Coy Mistress" as a thought experiment not unlike those of science fiction—and sometimes even as proto-science fiction—they raise questions about intertextuality, de-metaphorization, realism, and science in both early modern and modern literature; about the survival of the former in the latter; and about the methodology of reception study itself.

**Keywords:** "To His Coy Mistress"; reception; science fiction; fantasy; romance; the Sublime; literalization



If the past is usable, consider three modern uses of Andrew Marvell. Exhibit A is *Worlds Enough and Time: Five Tales of Speculative Fiction*, a 2009 collection of short stories by the science fiction writer Dan Simmons. None of them has anything to do with Marvell or with “To His Coy Mistress,” and the title earns its keep only by marking the tales’ stereotypical science-fiction settings, on time- and space-scales larger than those of a conventional realist novel.<sup>1</sup>

Exhibit B is the seduction scene in Philip K. Dick’s science-fiction novel *Counter-Clock World* (1967), with its recitation of “To His Coy Mistress”:

He was silent: he inspected a Venusian snuffle-fur-bound copy of English poetry of the seventeenth century....

Opening the volume, Sebastian said, “Andrew Marvell. *To His Coy Mistress*. ‘But at my back I always hear time’s winged chariot hurrying near, and yonder all before us lie deserts of vast eternity.’” He shut the volume, convulsively. “I saw it, that eternity outside of time and space, wandering among things so big—” He ceased; he still found it pointless to discuss his afterlife experience.

“I think you’re just trying to hurry me into bed,” Ann Fisher said. “The title of the poem—I get the message.”

He quoted, “‘The worms shall try that long-preserved virginity.’” Smiling, he turned towards her; perhaps she was right. But the poem kept him from anticipation; he knew it too well—knew it and the experience it envisioned. “‘The grave’s a fine and quiet place,’” he half-snarled, feeling it all return, the smell of the grave, the chill, the cramped, evil darkness. “‘But none, I think, do there embrace.’”

“Then let’s hop into bed,” Miss Fisher said practically. And led the way to her bedroom.<sup>2</sup>

Leaving aside what “Venusian snuffle-fur” is—and we never find out—we note the parodic humor of a *carpe diem* poem functioning for once as an act of seduction rather than literary display. The fun only snowballs when we learn that Ann has seduced Sebastian, not vice versa, and for highly mercenary rather than erotic reasons. But this gender reversal seems fitting in a novel dominated by temporal reversal. Time

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Simmons, *Worlds Enough and Time: Five Tales of Speculative Fiction* (New York: Eos, 2009)—though see the introductory comments at 5–6, 226. All of my subsequent references to Marvell’s poetry are by line numbers in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith, rev. ed. (Harlow: Longman Pearson, 2007) and appear in text.

<sup>2</sup> Philip K. Dick, *Counter-Clock World* (1967; New York: Vintage, 1995), 106. Cf. Cherry Wilder, “Double Summer Time,” in *New Writings in SF 29*, ed. Kenneth Bulmer (n.p.: Corgi, 1976), 26; James Kahn, *World Enough, and Time* (1980; London: Grafton/Collins, 1988), 183–4.

essentially flows backward, with dead people dug out of their graves, like Sebastian, and living a Benjamin-Button-like life of reverse aging. The lack of lineation and the slight misquotation of Marvell (“*The worms*”) similarly take second place to the larger issues Sebastian identifies: “time and space” and “eternity.”

If Dick casts Marvell as a love poet, in Exhibit C the fantasy and science-fiction writer Michael Moorcock, a central figure in the New Wave science fiction of the 1960s, makes Andrew Marvell a major character in *The Whispering Swarm: Book One of The Sanctuary of the White Friars* (2014). An odd mix of the non-realist genres of fantasy and science fiction with the realist ones of autobiography and history, the novel makes Marvell not just a character, “Captain Marvell” (punning on the superhero’s name), but at darkly appropriate times a quoter of the “Horatian Ode” and “To His Coy Mistress” to the novel’s protagonist, the young Michael Moorcock himself.<sup>3</sup> A time traveler and seer, Moorcock’s Captain Marvell cuts a highly ambiguous figure, alternately crossing swords with Royalists as an agent of Protector Cromwell and saving the life of the hapless Moorcock, who, despite his modern democratic inclinations, is seduced into a romantic plot to save Charles I from execution.

This troika of usable Marvells suggests our subject’s larger scope: the reception of Marvell in the fantastic genres of science fiction and fantasy in the century after Grierson’s and Eliot’s rediscovery of the poet ca. 1920.<sup>4</sup> SF/F writers have tended to think of Marvell as the timeless lyric poet endlessly anthologized, taught, and memorized in mid-twentieth-century school curricula—a New Critic’s dream and endlessly adaptable. With its sublimely vast expanses of space and time, “To His Coy Mistress” has produced the lion’s share of Marvell references in SF/F, sparking superficially allusive titles, as well as more substantive engagements with his subject matter. References to the poem usually signal a romance plot in which loved ones reunite after long separation. Less often, SF/F treats Marvell as a political poet and satirist. In the run-up to World War II (and concurrent, incidentally, with the launch of an SF magazine called *Marvel Science Stories*), the Welsh editor and travel writer Howell Davies wrote three SF novels under

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Moorcock, *The Whispering Swarm: Book One of The Sanctuary of the White Friars* (New York: Tor, 2014), 293, 323, 451 (quoting “Horatian Ode” [33–6]; “To His Coy Mistress” [10, 24]).

<sup>4</sup> While the boundaries between science fiction and fantasy remain porous, both are offshoots of romance and members of the larger family of genres known as *fantastika* or *the fantastic*, including fairy tales, Gothic, horror, and magical realism. See John Clute and David Langford, “Fantastika,” in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 3rd ed., ed. John Clute et al., <http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/fantastika>; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975). While the abbreviation “SF” is often employed with strategic ambiguity to cover both science fiction and speculative fiction, I use it as shorthand only for the former, just as I employ “F” for “fantasy.”

the pseudonym “Andrew Marvell,” drawing on the persona of Marvell the Whig patriot and opponent of absolutism (now updated to include 1930s fascism) and inaugurating the Marvell-in-SF phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> John Crowley’s time-travel story, *Great Work of Time* (1989), rethought the “Horatian Ode”’s line, reimagining the act of “ruin[ing] the great work of time” as the act of ending an alternate British Empire in an alternate timeline.<sup>6</sup>

But the more modest remit of this article is the set of thirty-five SF/F works after 1950 that trade on the lines, subject matter, and the author of that one poem: “To His Coy Mistress” (hereafter “TCM”). Most of them (25) quote a phrase from it in their titles. Of those twenty-five, most (17) feature some variant of “world enough and time”—the distant runners up being “vaster than empires and more slow” (3); “vegetable love” (2); and “time’s winged chariot,” “before the flood,” and “a fine and private place” at one apiece. Two actually include the poet’s name: Brian Aldiss’s “Marvells of Utopia” and Alfredo Véa, Jr.’s *La Maravilla*.

Our opening examples establish a sliding scale of engagement with Marvell’s poem, from 1) superficial engagement (Simmons), to 2) modest engagement (Dick), to 3) substantive engagement (Moorcock). While all three tend to involve some form of a romance plot set against the vastness of space and time, in Category 1 (superficial engagement) Marvell serves as mere ornament, as means to an end. The SF/F writer quotes his poem in a title or epigraph, rather than the main text, without creating characters, plots, or settings directly reminiscent of “TCM.” Quoting the poem adds a touch of witty class to work not otherwise implicated in literary history by knowing reference to earlier canonical works in non-fantastic genres.<sup>7</sup> In some cases, the writer appears to quote Marvell only because previous SF writers have quoted him, not as a result of independent and sustained reading of Marvell’s *oeuvre*. Category 2 (modest engagement) involves quoting “TCM” in the text itself and then integrating the poem somehow into character, plot, or setting—often in a way that expands the poem

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<sup>5</sup> “Andrew Marvell” (pseudonym of Howell Davies [1896–1985]), *Minimum Man* (1938; London: Science Fiction Book Club, 1953); *Three Men Make a World* (London: Gollancz, 1939); and *Congratulate the Devil* (1939; Cardigan: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2008). In *Minimum Man* a fascist dictator in England is brought down by a new race of diminutive supermen, who eventually display fascist tendencies themselves, threatening their larger homo sapiens ancestors. In *Three Men Make a World* the eponymous trio, faced with the threat of Hitler and Mussolini, unleashes a chemical that turns all petroleum into jelly, thereby throwing the globe back into a semi-pastoral but fragmented pre-industrial state, but a better one on balance because free of technology-fueled state surveillance and oppression. In *Congratulate the Devil* another chemical allows unscrupulous people to puppet-master the emotions and actions of anyone within a 300-foot radius, creating the conditions for some form of fascism in Britain; luckily, it comes to naught.

<sup>6</sup> John Crowley, *Great Work of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1989). Cf. the Great Game of imperial conflict in Michael Westlake’s alternate history, *World Enough* (2009), discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> Thanks to Gary Westfahl for the phrase “a touch of class”: personal email, 2 January 2020.

through some degree of literalization or de-metaphorization. The writer clearly knows the poem and responds in some meaningful way (sometimes parodically),<sup>8</sup> treating Marvell as more than ornament by extending or rethinking his subject matter. Just shy of a storm, works in Category 3 (substantive engagement) make Marvell more of an end than a means. They take “TCM”’s propositions seriously, not just regarding it as a flight of fancy but using quotation as a springboard to examining and commenting on it or him at length and to extending some key character or idea in a significant way—often by thorough-going, sometimes irreverent literalization.

In the varied reception of “TCM” and its gnominically suggestive lines, sublimity overshadows irony.<sup>9</sup> Marvell comes across for the most part as a comparatively de-politicized, de-queered, and de-ironized poet of romance and the Sublime. Writers of SF see themselves as the cheeky ironists, cleverly taking the poet out of context. When they acknowledge his irony, it becomes a challenge to outdo him—their greatest irony being the application to a galactic future of a poem from the obscure past of a single planet. Virtually all fantastic co-optations of Marvell’s “TCM” depend on its hint of romance in both senses: love and adventure.<sup>10</sup> In “TCM,” SF/F writers glimpse a buried narrative in which after eons of flirting and pursuit from one end of the Earth to

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<sup>8</sup> For parody, see John Sladek’s nonsensical, Oulipo-style rewriting of “TCM,” “Down His Alarming Blunder” (“Had we but will at least, and locks, / More blueness, Mr President, were no warranty. / We would talk now and butter that time / To feel and smell our daily suspect’s file. / You by the wasted Senate’s grille / Should quasars prove: I by the side / Of brain would depreciate”), in *Maps*, ed. David Langford (London: Gollancz, 2011), 162, as well as his passing reference to “TCM” in a parody of Robert Heinlein’s *Puppet Masters* and Daniel Keyes’s *Flowers for Algernon*: “The Transcendental Sandwich,” in *The Steam-Driven Boy and Other Strangers* (Frogmore: Panther, 1973), 121 (“the syllogistic properties of an Andrew Marvell poem”). Cf. Michael Bishop’s more respectful imitation of “TCM” in “For the Lady of a Physicist” (1978), in *Blooded on Arachne* (Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1982), 337–8.

<sup>9</sup> On the importance of the Sublime to SF, see Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 6–7, 146–81. SF/F writers sense in “TCM” the natural or scientific Sublime, a scientist’s awe at the grandeur of the universe; as opposed to the technological Sublime, awe or fear of the vastness or power of technology. See J.B.S. Haldane in n. 117 below.

<sup>10</sup> Building on the work of Barbara Fuchs and Brian Attebery, I define *romance* as a non-realist adventure story involving vast expanses of space and time, quests, the supernatural, and loved ones separated and reunited (especially in, but not limited to, a boy-meets-girl plot). See Fuchs, *Romance* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 9; Attebery, “Romance,” in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, ed. John Clute and John Grant (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), 820–21. Romance is thus an important precursor to SF: Hugo Gernsback, qtd. in Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 6; Paul Alkon, *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 18, 35–6, 42–4, 54; Farah Mendlesohn, Introduction, *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Edward James and Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9; Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 20–21; Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 40; idem., *The History of Science Fiction*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), vi, xiii–xv, 3, 15, 25–6, 29, 31–4, 37–40, 56; Bould and Vint, *Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 7, 36; Ryan Vu, “Science Fiction before Science Fiction: Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern SF,” in *The Cambridge History of Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 18.

the other, the man and woman finally consummate their love.<sup>11</sup> This interpretation of Marvell's meta-*carpe diem* poem as a romance in embryo was suggested in 1950 by the subtitle of Robert Penn Warren's historical novel *World Enough and Time: A Romantic Novel*;<sup>12</sup> and whether later SF/F writers knew the book or not, it drew a reasonable inference, demonstrating that for many modern readers the poem's genre and tone have loomed larger than its meta-dimensions and politics, sexual or otherwise.

What makes this study distinctive? For starters, it targets references rather than allusions: works that quote Marvell's poem verbatim, often at length. Rather than seeking similarities of subject matter, plot, character, or setting *and only then* claiming them as allusions to Marvell, it investigates those elements only when invited by direct quotation.<sup>13</sup> Second, while there has been significant work on Marvell's reception in the political and high-cultural realms,<sup>14</sup> virtually no one studying literature after 1900 has

<sup>11</sup> Building on Darko Suvin's magisterial *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, I define *science fiction* as a narrative that creates an otherworld different in scientific and technological ways from the author's own objective world at the time of writing, usually an otherworld of the future. See Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), viii, 7–8. Cf. Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 4, 7–8. For most SF critics, science fiction includes alternate history (e.g., Westlake's *World Enough*), even though its otherworld may not differ significantly from that of the author in scientific or technological respects and may even lie in the past. *Fantasy*, by contrast, creates an otherworld different from the writer's own in terms of magic rather than science, often in a setting resembling our past (e.g., medieval Europe). Cf. Attebery, "Romance." Around the time of Grierson's and Eliot's lionization of Marvell, the latter's affinity with fantasy was signaled by the inclusion of a passage about fairies from "Damon the Mower" (stanza 8) in an anthology of "fairy poetry": *The Book of Fairy Poetry*, ed. Dora Owen (London: Longmans, 1920), 161.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *World Enough and Time: A Romantic Novel* (New York: Random House, 1950).

<sup>13</sup> To put the problem into perspective, take the following passage from Sinclair Lewis's anti-fascist near-future dystopia: *It Can't Happen Here* (1935). One character tries to convince a man to have an affair with a woman: "There's not going to be much time for coyness and modesty," says the former. The narrator describes the man's half-hearted agreement as a result of his being "depressed at seeing a little more of his familiar world slide from under his feet as the flood [of fascism] rose." See Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935; New York: Signet/Penguin, 2014), 128. Do the words "coyness," "modesty," and "flood" signal an allusion to Marvell's poem? Possibly. But without some broader hint in the form of Marvell's name or an uninterrupted quotation of a phrase or couplet from "To His Coy Mistress"—or even in the form of significant sections of the novel being devoted to erotic matters, which is not the case—it seems doubtful. Likewise, it seems incidental that the protagonist of Judith Merrill's short story "That Only a Mother" (1948) (in *The Future Is Female!*, ed. Lisa Yaszek [New York: Library of America, 2018], 88–100) is named Margaret Marvell.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas von Maltzahn, "Marvell's Ghost," in *Marvell and Liberty*, ed. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (Houndmills: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 50–74; idem., *An Andrew Marvell Chronology* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 219–82; Nigel Smith, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 334–6; idem., "How To Make a Biography of Andrew Marvell," in *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*, ed. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 196–200; Annabel Patterson, "Marvell the Patriot," in *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 746–55; idem., *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7–8, 53, 187–9, 208–9; idem., *Nobody's Perfect: A New Whig Interpretation of History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 139–62; idem., *The Long Parliament of Charles II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 248; Michael O'Neill, "Marvell and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Wordsworth to Tennyson," in *Oxford Handbook of Marvell*, 756–72; Steven Matthews, "Marvell in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," in *Oxford Handbook of Marvell*, 756–92.



looked beyond the poetry of Eliot, Ashbery, MacLeish, and company at pop-cultural prose genres such as science fiction and fantasy.<sup>15</sup> Third, while broader study of the reception of early modern English texts in Anglophone SF/F is in its infancy, some work has been done on Shakespeare,<sup>16</sup> a little less on Milton,<sup>17</sup> but, as we've seen, none on Marvell. By comparison, there seems to be no existing work on Donne and SF/F.<sup>18</sup> Finally and implicit in the previous points, I capture many more SF/F works than have previous studies of early modern authors' reception: not just a single work or writer but an entire field of Marvell's respondents.

In the interests of treating the texts within illustrative categories while placing them on a spectrum that acknowledges the messily analog nature of reality, what follows is a survey organized in order of increasing engagement, beginning with Category 1 (Superficial Engagement), continuing with Category 2 (Modest Engagement), and ending with Category 3 (Substantive Engagement). The same principle holds *within* categories, moving in Category 1, for example, from most superficial to least superficial. This taxonomy, rather than a chronological or thematic one, has the advantage of privileging Marvell's influence and reputation rather than the workings of SF/F, while allowing room within and between categories for consideration of chronological change and thematic continuity. The Conclusion argues that these texts implicitly treat "To His Coy Mistress" as a thought-experiment not unlike those of science fiction—and sometimes even as proto-science fiction—raising questions about intertextuality, de-metaphorization, realism, and science in both early modern and modern literature, along with the survival of the former in the latter.

### Category 1: Superficial Engagement

If texts and authors have a *Nachleben* or afterlife, it seems appropriate in the nuclear age to consider their half-lives, full-lives, and even quarter-lives in SF. Category 1 consists

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<sup>15</sup> We should also note that C.S. Lewis addressed a fine poem "To Andrew Marvell," *Poems*, ed. Walter Hooper (1964; New York and London: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 82.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., the recent issue of *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 48.3, no. 134 (2019) on Shakespeare and SF.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Laura Knoppers and Gregory M. Colón Semenza, eds., *Milton and Popular Culture* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Lara Dodds, "Death and the 'Paradise within' in *Paradise Lost* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 115–150; Ryan Hackenbracht, "Galactic Milton: Angelic Robots and the Fall into Barbarism in Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Series*," *Milton Studies* 57 (2016): 293–321.

<sup>18</sup> This is surprising given the even greater attention to the cosmos in Donne's poetry, a likely source of "To His Coy Mistress." See, for example, William Empson, "Donne the Space Man," *Kenyon Review* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1957): 337–99. At this writing it remains an open question whether SF writers have simply not responded to Donne or whether literary critics have not caught up with those who have. For one clear evocation of Donne, see Philip José Farmer, *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* (New York: Putnam, 1971).

of quarter-lives: stories quoting Marvell in paratexts such as titles and epigraphs but nowhere else. Most works in this category spotlight love and time, neglecting “TCM” and assuming that “world enough and time,” if taken literally, implies a hyper-longevity or immortality with an attached love story. Except for their titles and this general assumption, they fail to engage more deeply with the poem’s details or subject matter. At the upper end of the category (least superficial engagement), the authors register the awe and wonder of a narrative unfolding over such a vast scale, while beginning to question the bliss of immortality.

Sean O’Brien and Gustavo Bondoni only quote “TCM” in their titles. O’Brien’s short story “World Enough and Time” (1997) imagines love without longevity or immortality. In a mildly dystopian future city, two awkward teens fall for each other against all odds.<sup>19</sup> The Argentinian Bondoni’s speculative short story “But World Enough” (2011) imagines the opposite: immortality without love. The Devil offers a Hollywood actor a Faustian bargain: if he manages to seduce a woman who appears to be a reincarnation of the Virgin Mary, he will live forever; if he fails, his soul will belong to the Devil for eternity. He fails.<sup>20</sup>

A group of other SF/F tales tackles both love and immortality. Aaron Sapiro’s self-published erotic fantasy novel *World Enough and Time* (2018) does little more than depict love and sex among a family of immortal gods and mortals, headquartered at Princeton of all places, with trips and reunions across the continent and universe but no more specific thematic affinity with Marvell’s poem. In this case, however, one of the mortals has the good fortune to be turned into an immortal.<sup>21</sup> Like O’Brien and Bondoni, Sapiro appears to imitate other SF writers rather than Marvell himself. As do Gillian Horvath and Donna Lettow, who published a series of outtakes from *Highlander*, a fantasy TV series from the 1990s featuring the adventures of a handsome Scot and his fellow immortals. In the 1995–6 season, these two members of the show’s writing team produced extra, unfiled material, verging on soft porn, that chronicles the love life on present-day Earth of one of these immortals (Methos) and his mortal lover (Alexa), who soon dies. They dubbed these works “World Enough and Time,” “World Enough and Time II,” and “World Enough and Time III”<sup>22</sup> for no apparent reason other

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<sup>19</sup> Sean O’Brien, “World Enough and Time,” *The Leading Edge* 34 (February 1997): 49–59.

<sup>20</sup> Gustavo Bondoni, “But World Enough,” *Involuted Tales Magazine* 1 (May 2011): 68–71.

<sup>21</sup> Aaron Sapiro, *World Enough and Time* (self-published e-book, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Gillian Horvath and Donna Lettow, “World Enough and Time,” “World Enough and Time II,” and “World Enough and Time III,” in *Highlander the Series: Evening at Joe’s: Fiction by the Cast and Crew*, ed. Horvath (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 2000), 95–108.



than that Marvell's love poem also has a seduction narrative and it sounded classy to reference it. A similar situation of love between mortal woman and immortal man obtains in another fantastic genre: horror. *World Enough and Time* (2015), the sixth and final installment in V.M. Black's bestselling Cora's Bond vampire series, neither quotes "TCM" nor engages specifically with its subject matter, other than the general idea of a heterosexual couple overcoming significant obstacles. It chronicles the relationship between a female college student and an effectively immortal billionaire vampire as they prepare for their wedding, replete with sex scenes and the kidnapping and rescue of her best friend from the clutches of an evil group of rival vampires. Cora remains young as long as her lover sucks her blood.<sup>23</sup>

Marginally higher on the scale of engagement stand texts that pay greater attention to Marvell. Ben Jeapes's young adult novel *Time's Chariot* (2000) is a fairly conventional time-travel yarn in which good and bad factions in a time-police organization do battle in the past(s) and one pair of lovers makes it through obstacles to marriage. A second, unmarried couple—a pair of time cops—braves various adventures, solves an apparent murder mystery, and makes it back to the future. Some of the time police appear immortal insofar as they live briefly and discontinuously over millennia, but all that really distinguishes *Time's Chariot* from works discussed in previous paragraphs is the novel's epigraph: lines 21–4 of "TCM": "But at my back I always hear ... Deserts of vast eternity."<sup>24</sup>

If a number of tales hint at troubles caused by the mismatch between mortal and immortal, others warn more directly of the discontents of love-cum-immortality. As the first to sound this alarm, John B. Rosenman's short story "World Enough, and Time" (1993) (with careful comma) merits higher placement in Category 1. Rosenman imitates Swift (with his immortal but miserable Struldbruggs) by positing that having enough world and time might, in fact, be too much. In his story a man rendered immortal by technology is miserable and rude to his mortal wife and son because they are only the latest in a long string of families he has outlived and mourned. He can't operate with anything short of a hard emotional shell.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> V.M. Black, *World Enough and Time: Cora's Bond—Book 6* (Washington, DC: Swift River Media, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Ben Jeapes, *Time's Chariot* (Oxford and New York: David Fickling Books, 2000). For other SF novels with epigraphs from "TCM" but little more, see Donald M. Kingsbury, *The Moon Goddess and the Son* (Baen Books, 1986), 402 (epigraph to chapter 61); Greg Bear, *Moving Mars* (New York: Tor, 1993), 253 (epigraph to Part Three); Damien Broderick, *Transcension* (New York: Tor, 2003) (epigraph to chapter 1).

<sup>25</sup> John B. Rosenman, "World Enough and Time" (1993), in *More Stately Mansions: The Collected Works of John B. Rosenman* (Portland, Oregon: Dark Regions Press, 1999), 86–103. For the Struldbruggs, see Book 3 of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Erica Ruppert's "World Enough, and Time" (2018) (again with comma) displays the problems of immortality *sans* lover or mind. A new anti-aging technique makes people effectively immortal by using stem cells to program the body constantly to renew itself. However, this technique borders on cancerous cell growth, and many who opt for it undergo brain damage and become vegetables, but without vegetable love. The protagonist falls in love with and then abandons one of the victims when she becomes one.<sup>26</sup>

While not otherwise quoting Marvell amidst its many literary references (such as chapter titles from Shakespeare, Swift, and Proust), Joe Haldeman's *Worlds Enough and Time* (1992) deserves separate and longer consideration because, as the third volume of an excellent trilogy about humanity's expansion into space and the community of intelligent life forms, it plays out the story of a charismatic female protagonist over sublimely vast and romantic expanses of space and time. The author of *The Forever War* (1974), a humorous and moving indictment of the Vietnam War, Haldeman clearly knows the literary tradition.<sup>27</sup> The title's Marvell quotation builds on those of the previous two volumes (*Worlds* and *Worlds Apart*), suggesting that the narrative grows to something of great constancy and complexity. *Worlds Enough and Time* highlights the sublime romance plot that is Marianne O'Hara's life and afterlife as founder of a new religion. Born on a large space station orbiting the Earth, called New New York—so large as to be called a "World" along with its forty fellows—O'Hara travels down to Earth for a university education in the final days before nuclear war destroys most of humanity. Making it back to her intact World above the world, she is separated from her new husband. In the ensuing events, she and the other New New Yorkers survive religious fanatics and escape on a new artificial World streaking out to the stars and weathering the usual problems in a generation–starship narrative: scarcities of various sorts. Among the stars O'Hara encounters more powerful alien races, one of which subjects her to a series of trials that transport her instantaneously across the galaxy, including back to Earth. By the end of the trilogy she has inadvertently founded a new religion and is hagiographically biographed by an effectively immortal AI copy of herself. The Marvell tag in the novel's title calls attention to both the sublime vastness of the setting's space (the galaxy) and time (a narrative taking place over more than a century) and to the various romance plots, involving journey–quests and reunions. The

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<sup>26</sup> Erica Ruppert, "World Enough, and Time," in *Future Visions: Volume 1*, ed. Brian J. Walton (n.p.: Camtom House, 2018), 135–51.

<sup>27</sup> Joe Haldeman, *Worlds Enough and Time* (New York: Avon, 1992).

satellite Worlds are separated from Mother Earth and each other by nuclear war and interstellar travel, eventually reuniting via communications and via the aliens' new planet-hopping technology. O'Hara is separated from and reunited in various ways with a series of lovers and husbands, most of whom she outlives, as well as with her daughter; her political mentor, Sandra; and her AI counterpart: Marianne' (Marianne Prime). Perhaps most important, humans are at first separate from but then united with other sentient beings, who shepherd them into species-level adulthood in a galactic confederation.

An outlier in this category is Sarah Hoyt's vaguely alternate history/fantasy short story "But World Enough" (2007), in which Hannibal's rise and fall are explained by recourse to the following supernatural explanation. In his drive to conquer Rome, the goddess Tanit strings him along with the equivocal promise that he "*will create a great empire, an empire that will mold all of the future ... you will be remembered forever. Immortal.*"<sup>28</sup> She fails to say that the empire (the "enough" of a "world" in the title) will be Scipio's Rome rather than Hannibal's Carthage. To the extent that there is love here, it is Hannibal's love for the goddess and, thus, for empire— nothing more. A greater outlier because tagged to a different line in "TCM" is "Before the Flood," Toby Whithouse's script for a 2015 episode of the sci-fi series *Doctor Who*. It takes place in a valley *about to be flooded* and features the effectively immortal Doctor (a galactic time traveler) and his companions, but with no other similarity to "TCM" or its lines about loving from "before the flood [...] Till the conversion of the Jews" (8–10)—hence, no love or separation, only a bit of time travel.<sup>29</sup>

## Category 2: Modest Engagement

Category 2 consists of Marvell's half-lives: modest engagement involving in-text quotation advertising "TCM" as a prominent narrative element. In 1986 a short-lived

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<sup>28</sup> Sarah Hoyt, "But World Enough," in *Fate Fantastic*, ed. Martin H. Greenberg and Daniel M. Hoyt (New York: Daw, 2007), 36 (italics in the original).

<sup>29</sup> Toby Whithouse, "Before the Flood," *Doctor Who*, new series, Season 9, Episode 4, BBC (aired 16 October 2015). One might not even think of the title as a Marvell quotation were it not for the BBC's advertising it as such on its official website: "World Enough and Time: The Fact File," <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4qPv0k9HTJ5ftWByX5gqf10/world-enough-and-time-the-fact-file>, and "Dr. Who: Before the Flood," <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06j59bk>. Cf. the mention of Marvell in a *Doctor Who* script written by the comic SF writer Douglas Adams (author of *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) for the 1979 season but prevented by a strike from airing in more or less complete form until 2017. In the opening of "Shada" the Doctor and his companion punt along the Cam near the Backs while the Doctor recalls Cambridge luminaries such as Newton and Marvell: Douglas Adams, "Shada," *Dr. Who* (BBC, 16 December 2017). See also the official novelization of the episode, which retains Adams's dialogue: Gareth Roberts, *Doctor Who: The Lost Adventure by Douglas Adams: Shada* (New York: Ace Books, 2012), 20.

and feeble sitcom on the BBC, *Comrade Dad*, satirically imagined a rundown near-future Britain that the Soviets have invaded and turned into a communist puppet state rife with inefficiency, corruption, and material privation—perhaps a Tory riposte to anti-Thatcherite SF like Alan Moore’s graphic novel *V for Vendetta* (1982–9). One episode, titled “Vegetable Love,” features the proletarian protagonist’s teenage son falling in love with a flute-playing girl at school, Comrade Dad himself *in flagrante delicto* with his wife, and scenes from the collectivist community garden where he works, replete with potatoes and other vegetables.<sup>30</sup> Because this silly comedy only makes a half-hearted attempt to take on Marvell’s subject matter in a marginally SF/F setting by depicting humans in love among the vegetables, rather than some more literal sense of “vegetable love,” I discuss *Comrade Dad* before more substantive works in this and the next category.

To my knowledge, the first SF novel to quote Marvell in-text was John Wyndham’s disaster novel: *The Day of the Triffids* (1951).<sup>31</sup> As indicated earlier, Howell Davies had used Marvell’s name as a pseudonym in 1938 but without other quotation. For many writers, Marvell has embodied not just literature but civilization itself (a point to which we will return), and in *The Day of the Triffids* the sign that humanity has survived an onslaught of carnivorous plants is someone’s ability to recite “To His Coy Mistress”:

Coker climbed out of his cab. He stood in the middle of the road, listening and looking around him.

“And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.”

he murmured.

Not only can Coker recite it, but he can be *recognized* as reciting it: the novel’s protagonist, a biologist, replies, “Now you quote Marvell to me.” The episode also hints at the opportunity the disaster provides to begin with a blank slate and rethink “the English caste system.”<sup>32</sup> Coker is a proletarian class-climber with a patina of education, not quite our sort in comparison with the university-educated narrator.

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<sup>30</sup> Ian Davidson & Peter Vincent, “My Vegetable Love,” episode of *Comrade Dad* (BBC, 17 February 1986).

<sup>31</sup> However, if we consider SF as beginning with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in 1818, the honor of being the first to quote Marvell would go to her apocalyptic novel *The Last Man* (1826), which freely quotes lines 43–4 of “TCM” (“*Snatching their pleasures with rough strife/Through the iron gates of life*”) and may provide a model for Wyndham. See Shelley, *The Last Man*, 3 vols. (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1826), II:175.

<sup>32</sup> John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids* (1951; New York: Modern Library, 2003), 133–4.

If these first two works quote Marvell without advertisement in a title, Michael Westlake quotes him in both title and text. *World Enough* (2009) offers a quietly good alternate history of the twentieth century, created by historical inflection points<sup>33</sup> at which the novel's world branched off from our own: 1) a comparatively low sea level makes it possible to travel on land from England to France; 2) Jesus-based Christianity never catches on, only Mary-based "Virginity." As a result of these and other forks in the time-stream, an Anglophone United States of *Africa* replaces our USA as the dominant superpower, competing with a capitalist rather than communist Russia; and an American war of independence in the 1940s replaces World War II, with Japanese, French, and German colonizers kicked out of North America. The late appearance of certain technologies—petrol, electricity, nuclear weapons—makes this on balance a better world than our own, at the very least a "world" good "enough" in its own right. Westlake may also suggest his alternate world as "enough" for readers in some sense—substantial, thought-provoking, satirical of our own world. In creating it, Westlake pays silent tribute to alternate histories like Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1963), Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* (1969), and John Crowley's *Great Work of Time* (1989).<sup>34</sup>

In the final paragraph an oblique echo of "TCM" hints at these meta-generic issues of alternate history and time travelers potentially changing past and future. Instead of an omniscient narrator, the novel consists entirely of the points of view of the four protagonists (two white women from Russia, two black men from Africa). In the novel's final sentences, the troubled but poetic narrator Padua Latrosian, a famous *chanteuse* reminiscing in her old age, sums things up thus:

Lately, in the run-up to this journey, I've been inclined to think of our past as delta country, where the fast upstream current turns sluggish, an intricacy of branching channels between shifting banks, neither land nor water, a domain of undecidability in which nothing is ever quite what you remember it as being. Not a forgetting exactly, more like a ceasing to care. Mood counts for a lot. [...] The future will take care of itself. *Time's* on our side, in this floating *world. Enough*.<sup>35</sup>

With only one other exception, the book barely refers to its title, mostly via our (by now familiar) romance plot on a sublimely vast scale.<sup>36</sup> That scale encompasses most of the twentieth century (ca. 1938–2009), and time is played with and prolonged in

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<sup>33</sup> See David Langford, "Jonbar Point," in *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, [http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/jonbar\\_point](http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/jonbar_point).

<sup>34</sup> Westlake, *World Enough*, 240.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 349 (my italics).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 333–7.

a certain sense, because one of the four narrators, the biologist Katerina Latrosian (Padua's sister), discovers an age-defying drug called Freeze that prolongs life almost indefinitely. However, when it emerges that the side effects include infertility and dementia, the drug is banned. The vast geographic scale is the whole globe—"world enough" in that sense—amid constant shifting of the geopolitical tectonic plates.

The romance structure includes the four protagonists (the two Russian sisters, the two African best friends) falling in and out of love with each other in various combinations, having kids, separating, and reuniting multiple times as they traverse four continents. The men come between the sisters, and vice versa. The spy- and chess-master Nick Quaque (pronounced "quake" to emphasize potential geopolitical earthquakes) is the partner of both Padua and Katerina, with the latter of whom he has two daughters. Katerina loses Nick to Padua in Israel and doesn't see either of them for ten years; he is eventually murdered by Israeli spooks.<sup>37</sup> Million M'Loy, his fellow African spy, has a son with Padua. But in the closest approach to a "TCM" moment, Million asks Katerina to marry him. Although they have known each other for more than fifty years, she demurs, "I need to think about it. It's a little sudden." He teases her, "Sudden? [...] Half a century, sudden?," warning that if she waits any longer, she will be "shacked up with an ambulatory vegetable" because he will soon succumb to Freeze-induced dementia. This would be the downside of "vegetable love": only loving like a vegetable. Still teasing, Million tells her, "All the time in the world, my love." However, before she agrees to marry him, Katerina is gunned down by "anti-Freeze" activists and dies in his arms.<sup>38</sup>

To emphasize the sisters' bond, the novel begins with the narrative of one (Katerina) and, after her death, ends with that of the other (Padua). In a sense, the sisters' love constitutes the most important relationship within the love square—with fights, betrayals, separations, and difficult reconciliations. That this is a form of family romance is made clear by the fact that Padua considers it (almost) "incestuous,"<sup>39</sup> with their common husband, Nick, as the man passed between women. As suggested above, Million is also passed between them, but without marrying Katerina. By novel's end, only two of the four protagonists survive—Padua and Million—the latter having lost most of his mind to Freeze. The final pages of the book describe Padua journeying to see Million in North America.

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<sup>37</sup> In this world Israel is located not in the Levant but in Germany.

<sup>38</sup> Westlake, 335–6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.



What sets our next two works apart is their wider diffusion. The largest audiences for a reconsideration of Marvell in an SF setting may well have been the viewers of two TV series: *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*. In a 2017 episode of *Doctor Who* entitled “World Enough and Time” (Episode 10.11), a spaceship gets stuck near the event horizon of a black hole—too weak to pull itself away, too strong to be sucked in. Since the vessel is a 400-mile-long, 100-mile-wide cylinder, relativistic time-dilation effects make time pass far more slowly at the top of the ship near the black hole. Years pass at the bottom of this 1100-floor colony ship, away from the black hole, while only minutes pass at the top. In a jam-packed and moving narrative that sprawls over this and the next and final episode of Season 10 (Episode 10.12), the Doctor tries to rescue the ship, only to lose his longtime companion, Bill Potts, her humanity extinguished when she is turned into one of the original Cybermen (a longtime menace in the *Doctor Who* franchise). When Bill is at first wounded and being whisked off by unknown enemies, the Doctor tells her, “Wait for me,”<sup>40</sup> like the male suitor of Marvell’s “TCM.” Ten years later, after being turned into a Cyberman, Bill tells the Doctor accusingly, “I waited for you,” but you never came.<sup>41</sup> More importantly, it turns out that the person who helped create the Cybermen is an earlier incarnation of the Doctor’s nemesis: a fellow Timelord known only as the Master—formerly male, but now in female form and called “Missy.” The Doctor and Missy have reunited in a parody of a lovers’ reunion, and it turns out that they have been attracted to each other for some time now. The two hold hands and dance. As the Doctor puts it, “She was my man-crush”; “We had a pact, me and him. Every star in the universe, we were going to see them all.”<sup>42</sup>

In the next, equally affecting episode, just as Missy is about to reject evil and help the Doctor, an earlier male incarnation of the Master appears and kills his later female self before she can join the Doctor to fight the Cybermen—but not before this reunion of the Master’s two selves is cast as similar to that of lovers. Missy refers to the Master as “Dearest,” and the latter admits to having a hard-on for her.<sup>43</sup> Yet just when the Doctor has reunited with the Master, and the latter’s two incarnations have reunited with each other, all goes to hell. Fortunately, although the Doctor has also lost his other beloved, his dear friend Bill, to the Cybermen process, they are briefly reunited when Bill’s alien girlfriend, Heather, appears from nowhere and turns her back into a human, whisking her off somewhere (probably to Earth). All of this heralds the imminent regeneration

<sup>40</sup> Steven Moffat, “World Enough and Time,” *Doctor Who*, new series, Season 10, Episode 11 (BBC, aired 24 June 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Moffat, “The Doctor Falls,” *Doctor Who*, new series, Season 10, Episode 12 (BBC, aired 1 July 2017).

<sup>42</sup> Moffat, “World Enough and Time” and “The Doctor Falls.”

<sup>43</sup> Moffat, “The Doctor Falls.”

of the Doctor in a female body for Season 11, with the thirteenth (and first female) actor playing the Doctor in the decades-long history of the show. The “World Enough and Time” title of Episode 10.11 points to all the pyrotechnical separations, deaths, and reunions of five pairs of loved ones within the romance structure: the Doctor and Bill; the Doctor and Missy; Missy and the Master; Bill and Heather; the twelfth Doctor and the thirteenth.

More important because of its meta-generic hints about romance, the other TV episode entitled “World Enough and Time” (2007) appeared in the fan-created Web series *Star Trek: New Voyages*.<sup>44</sup> The somewhat involved plot features the beloved actor George Takei as Captain Sulu, the former ensign on the *USS Enterprise* in the original *Star Trek* series in the 1960s, now commanding his own ship: the *Excelsior*. An announcement that a shuttle has arrived and Captain Sulu will “have time” for something (as yet explained) prompts him to remember an incident on the *Enterprise* years earlier, most of the episode consisting of a flashback that campily pastiches the original series. In the flashback the *Enterprise* is trapped in a “transversal rift” between universes. Ensign Sulu and an attractive young computer scientist named Chandris are sent on a mission to the wreck of a nearby Romulan ship in hopes of finding data that will help the *Enterprise* escape. In the wreck they find the data, but an accident occurs that sends Sulu and Chandris to another universe, where time passes more quickly than in our own. For thirty years, they are marooned on an abandoned planet that they dub Caliban, where they fall in love and raise a daughter. Fifteen years in, Chandris dies. Meanwhile, time has passed more slowly in our universe, and when the *Enterprise* tries to beam Sulu and Chandris back aboard from the Romulan derelict, only Sulu arrives, now thirty years older. Eventually, the *Enterprise* manages to beam his daughter, Alana, aboard as well, though only partially, since she was born in and ultimately cannot leave the other universe. A way is found to recover the data from the Romulan ship, but it can only work if Sulu agrees to allow himself and his daughter to be destroyed: his earlier, younger self, with a memory of the Romulan data, must be recreated from the transporter’s memory banks, but with no memory of the thirty years with wife and daughter on Caliban. Sulu and Alana do the noble thing and sacrifice themselves, and the *Enterprise* regains the data and escapes the rift.

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<sup>44</sup> Scripted by Marc Scott Zicree and Michael Reaves (veteran *Star Trek* writers both), it was nominated in 2008 for a Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form) but lost to an earlier *Doctor Who* episode. See The Hugo Awards Committee, “2008 Hugo Award Nominees,” [www.thehugoawards.org/2008/03/2008-hugo-award-nominees/](http://www.thehugoawards.org/2008/03/2008-hugo-award-nominees/) and “2008 Hugo Award Results Announced,” [www.thehugoawards.org/2008/08/2008-hugo-award-results-announced/](http://www.thehugoawards.org/2008/08/2008-hugo-award-results-announced/), both accessed 16 August 2020.

Back in the present, after Captain Sulu finishes remembering what he can of these events, news arrives that his daughter and newborn granddaughter have just arrived by shuttle on the *Excelsior*—a different daughter from a different wife, since his previous wife and daughter disappeared in the recovery of the Romulan data thirty years before. Sulu reunites with his current daughter and granddaughter as, effectively, substitutes for his lost family: they christen his new granddaughter “Alana” after his lost daughter.

The episode’s Marvellian title highlights Sulu’s acquiring two wives and two heteronormative families over great expanses of space and time—a delicious irony given George Takei’s well-known homosexuality. The romance structure of the story (and thus of the story many SF writers glimpse in “TCM”) is thrown into relief by references to *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s best-known romance. It turns out that in her youth, Sulu’s first wife, Chandris, had acted in a production of that play, which became her favorite. Hence her naming the planet Caliban. Raising Alana there with Sulu, Chandris had taught the play to her daughter, and the family had acted it out many times, with Sulu as Prospero, and Alana, surprisingly, as Ariel, rather than Miranda, as one might have expected. Perhaps Chandris reversed roles and played Prospero’s daughter? In any case, Captain Jim Kirk now flirts with Alana as if he were Ferdinand to her Miranda. At the end of the *Enterprise* sequence, when Alana and the previous Young Sulu are disappearing as the ship prepares to escape the rift, father and daughter both recite Prospero’s “Our revels now are ended” speech and “melt into air, into thin air.”<sup>45</sup> The whole episode obviously nods to the 1956 remake of *The Tempest* as a sci-fi film, *Forbidden Planet* (a precursor of *Star Trek*), and thus to romance as a precursor of SF. But what connects the episode to “TCM” and “world enough and time” is that we have just seen all the main features of the romance genre: fantastic adventures in space and time; loved ones separated and reunited. Sulu reconnects with both of his families, the crew of the *Enterprise*, and his earlier and alternate selves.

If time travel, physical or mental, figures in many of our texts, the manipulation of time involved in time travel is related to that involved in relativistic time dilation à la Einstein. In a self-published comic novel from 2019 that imitates the tone and plotting of John Scalzi’s work—cf. his Hugo-winning *Redshirts* (2012)—Edmund Jorgensen’s *World Enough (and Time)* puts a heteronormative couple on a starship making a two-year cruise at 94% of the speed of light, where because of relativistic time dilation, two years on the ship amount to twenty on Earth. Katherine, an employee on the ship, has

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<sup>45</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 3rd ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2016), 4.1.148–58, p. 3255.

lived for more than a century but remains young because she has stayed on the ship traveling at near-light speed for most of that time. Jeremiah Brown, another employee, falls in love with her and, when the current cruise ends, asks her to return with him on yet another cruise and by implication be his love/wife. But like Marvell's poem, the novel ends before we hear her answer. However, the story suggests that she might well accept. At one point in their courtship, Katherine and Jeremiah are forced to hide together, shoulder to shoulder, in a supply closet while someone else, unaware of them, recites, "World enough and time, my lady ... World enough and time."<sup>46</sup>

"TCM" plays a larger role in Audrey Niffenegger's bestselling slipstream novel, *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2003), translated into film in 2009.<sup>47</sup> A Penelope-like artist, Clare, lives through a passionate and tempestuous marriage to her modern Odysseus: Henry, a curator at the Newberry Library whose time-traveling gene causes him to be jerked away from and returned to her, repeatedly and unexpectedly sending him naked to all sorts of places in the Midwest, past and future. So repeated are the separations and reunions—literally dozens of them—that the novel comes close to parodying romance's episodic structure while managing to preserve its affective charge. Their final but brief reunion comes at the end of her long life, after a gap of 46 years. When they first sleep together in Henry's apartment, a volume of Marvell presiding over them from a bookshelf, Henry prefaces it all with a toast "To virginity" (she has saved herself for him) and recites the opening line of "TCM."<sup>48</sup> "World enough and time" reappears in a second toast at the novel's center. Making a pilgrimage with Clare at Christmastime to the family home in Michigan, Henry asks her parents for her hand. In a toast she stands up and pledges "To happiness. To here and now," and he "gravely replies, 'To world enough and time.'" Clare's "heart skips," and she wonders "how he knows, but then" she realizes that "Marvell's one of his favorite poets and he's not referring to anything but the future."<sup>49</sup> In other words, Henry has traveled there and knows they will be married for sixteen years. Years later, as Henry vanishes before their eyes for the final time, he tells both Clare and their daughter, "Love you ... Always ... World enough ... And time."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Edmund Jorgensen, *World Enough (And Time)* (n.p.: Inkwell and Often, 2019), 79.

<sup>47</sup> For slipstream see John Clute, "Slipstream SF," in *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, [http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/slipstream\\_sf](http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/slipstream_sf).

<sup>48</sup> Audrey Niffenegger, *The Time Traveler's Wife* (Orlando: Harvest/Harcourt, 2003), 19, 423.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 515.

If Niffenegger's time-traveling hero lacks time, the next two short stories return to the SF trend of assuming that there is "world enough and time," although the immortality they promise seems flawed because virtual. The comic SF/F writer Terry Pratchett's "#IFDEFDEBUG + 'WORLD/ENOUGH' + 'TIME'" (1990) features a VR-environment designer and his wife who attain immortality by uploading themselves as viruses into the cyber-world. Written before the internet arrived in full force in the late 1990s, this story presupposes a society with a smaller version than we have today, but with many people isolated in their homes playing various sorts of video games and running VR simulations that require potentially hackable software. The arresting title translates the mathematical logic of Marvell's "Had we but world enough and time" into something resembling the computer programming language known simply as C. As the computer scientist Aaron Block describes it, software designers using C

would make two versions of their [new] program: a "release" version and a "debug" version. The "debug" version would typically run slower than the "release" code but [...] include additional information for the developer to help them track down mistakes. To indicate that a particular segment of code was for the "debug" version[, ] they would include the line #ifdef DEBUG before the debug code. They would end the segment with the line #endif.

Pratchett's title also "mixe[s] in another technique from [...] C called 'String concatenation,'" which "lets you combine multiple strings of characters together to produce one giant string. You join them together by using the + symbol." But since this command could not run as an actual computer program or subcommand, the whole title constitutes a species of techno-babble.<sup>51</sup>

As playful computerese, however, "#IFDEFDEBUG + 'WORLD/ENOUGH' + 'TIME'" boils down to a mathematical or geometrical version of the major premise of the syllogism implied by the poem ("If + space + time" or "If there were enough space + time"), setting up a program to run in which two people have enough space and time to go through all the motions of love. The "#IFDEFDEBUG" command makes it a better "debug" program: a slower, more thorough, more interesting, and better version of the original one, the "release" program that is real life, in which two people *hope* they have enough space and time to flirt and court before consummation. The lack of the expected "#endif" at the end of the string means that the program never stops running and the couple

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<sup>51</sup> Aaron Block, personal email, 13 January 2020. Cf. Brian W. Kernighan and Dennis M. Ritchie, *The C Programming Language*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall: 1988), 77, 191–2, 198.

never stops pursuing and loving each other. The debug feature makes it possible for the program not just to keep running, but to be infinitely updated and improved. The erotic hunt would never get old, and the bodies of the lovers would never age because they would be virtual. Essentially, the fantasy involves staying within the parameters of the first and third verse paragraphs of “TCM” without taking in the second.

While Pratchett only hints that the designer and his wife have been translated to immortality in the virtual world, the Welsh writer David Vickery’s “World Enough and Time” (1996) makes its virtual immortality more patent. Like other specimens of cyberpunk SF, this story dances at the edge of self-parody. A gang of cybercriminals tries to break through a virtual gateway into cyberspace and steal some credits, only to be killed by an automated guard. Three of them then wake up, as it were, in a virtual world reminiscent of the shoreline VR scenario in William Gibson’s paradigmatic cyberpunk novel: *Neuromancer* (1986).<sup>52</sup> In other words, their original human bodies have died or been otherwise left behind, but virtual copies have been saved to cyberspace, which “looked like a completely free choice. Time and space.” Having waited for some time in real space, the hacker protagonist and narrator now lands his dead boss’s girlfriend in the “almost impossibly vast” environment of cyberspace, living happily ever after: “I’ve got Freya, whose secret self is [...] elusive. [...] But I’ve got much longer to seek it out here: all the time I need, in fact.”<sup>53</sup>

The final work in Category 2 involves significantly more engagement with Marvell’s poem without making it or him as central as do the works in Category 3. The first SF novel to use “world enough and time” as a title was James Kahn’s *World Enough, and Time* (1980) (with comma). An ER doctor and script writer for *Star Trek* and *Xena*, best known for his novelization of *The Return of the Jedi* (1983), Kahn technically produced a hybrid of SF and fantasy in *World Enough, and Time*, which takes place in a post-apocalyptic California of the twenty-fourth century populated by vampires, centaurs, cyclops, cyborgs, and humans. It looks like a world of magic and fantasy until we learn that the vampires and centaurs were genetically engineered, the products of the same technologically advanced but morally degenerate civilization that produced cyborgs as well as genocidal bacteriological and nuclear warfare in the twenty-first century—in other words, an SF setting. The plot involves two men—Beauty (a centaur), Joshua (a human)—going on an *Odyssey*- or *Hobbit*-like quest down the California coast to rescue their human wives from vampires and cyborgs who use the women for blood, neurons,

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<sup>52</sup> William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984; New York: Ace Books, 2000), 225–36.

<sup>53</sup> David Vickery, “World Enough and Time,” *Beyond the Boundaries* 9 (1996): 32–4 (quotations on 33 and 34; my ellipses).



and slave labor. On their way south, Joshua and Beauty, who, incidentally have a vaguely homoerotic relationship, team up with a 300-year-old cyborg, Jasmine, who enlists the help of an equally ancient vampire, Lon. Jasmine's reminiscences and history-telling extend the backstory to the 1960s. The novel's setting thus recalls the romance genre insofar as it encompasses the entire planet over almost four centuries. The plot recalls romance in that both Joshua and Beauty rescue and reunite with their wives—Joshua only briefly, since his wife Dicey dies soon thereafter from the consequences of her Stockholm-Syndrome-like sexual slavery to the bad vampire, Bal. The cyborg Jasmine reunites with her friend and former partner-in-crime, Lon, who dies while rescuing the men's wives. She also reunites briefly with her friend and former lover, another cyborg woman named Sum-Thin, who soon falls prey to the environment's endemic violence.

Marvell's poem provides not just the title for this quest and reunion story but is quoted at suitable intervals to remind us of its relevance, sometimes in subtly gruesome ways. For example, the evil vampire Bal cements his abusive relationship with Dicey by seductively reciting the final lines of "TCM":

He was speaking quietly; passionately,

*'... Thus, though we cannot make our sun stand still, yet we will make him run.'*

He stopped speaking. She continued staring at him, waiting for more words, magic words, book words; but none came. He was silent. She felt his power when he spoke these words to her from the poetry books; but she felt it tenfold when he stopped the flow of words, kept the words from her. It made her neck tingle, the way it tingled just before his lips touched it. She thought she must be going mad.

"How old were those words?" she asked him.

He smiled distantly. "Six hundred years. And still potent."

The warm flush around her throat spread down to her breast; lower. She could feel her breath quickening. She brought up her hands, circled his powerful biceps with her fingers. Involuntarily, he flexed. She continued hanging on. They continued walking.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, he courts her successfully, using Marvell. But unlike Marvell's coy mistress, Dicey (as a slave) has no right of refusal. Gone are the truly mutual pleasures most SF/F writers have seen in the poem. Now it becomes the instrument of slow murder: Dicey will soon be drained of blood and life.

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<sup>54</sup> Kahn, *World Enough, and Time*, 183–4 (italics in the original).

The poem reappears during another jaded and miasmic quicksand of an episode. In a digression of sorts, a group of self-identified sirens entraps the three questers in a ruined city for what seems like a night but turns out to be three months. In the course of it, Beauty commits passionate adultery with Jasmine—cheating on his wife and in a sense on his best friend, Josh. Near the end, a semi-malevolent cyborg named Janus uses Marvell to seduce all three of them into staying in this pocket of time and reality, replete with hallucinogenic drugs. But Jasmine resists:

“Stop being so coy,” Jasmine snapped. “We’re leaving. Now. With Joshua.”

“Coyness is our prerogative in this universe—here there is *world enough, and time*, for all things.”

He bowed slightly. He walked away.<sup>55</sup>

In effect, this episode stays true to the romance genre as a whole, in which questers are sometimes sidetracked by seductive women, though the genders are reversed here. It is also true to Marvell’s poem, with its refusing addressee: Jasmine refuses a man’s advances. In the end of “TCM” we don’t know whether the woman gives in; and here, acting on behalf of herself and two men, she certainly doesn’t.

### Category 3: Substantive Engagement

We experience the full life of the Marvell isotope in Category 3: extended, meaningful, self-advertised quotation and examination of Marvell’s poem and of Marvell himself. Two subcategories nest within Category 3: “vegetable love” stories and Marvell tribute stories. As for the former, while sublime time and space constitute aspects of nature, nature also includes life, especially vegetable life. More ambitious than *Comrade Dad*, a handful of works cast Marvell as poet of both love and nature by taking literally “TCM”’s lines about a “vegetable love” growing “Vaster than empires and more slow.”<sup>56</sup> Following the lead of stanzas 3–4 of “The Garden,” where the speaker and the gods desire plants rather than women, they gleefully ask what if “vegetable love” meant not a love *like* vegetables in some way, however ribald, but a love *for* vegetables or even *between* vegetables? One variety of “vegetable love” features humans literally in love or lust with plants and vegetables, sometimes physically uniting with or even

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 203 (my italics).

<sup>56</sup> For an SF writer who makes use of Marvell as a nature poet with a touch of eros, see Frederick Turner’s 10,000-line blank verse epic on the terraforming of Mars: *Genesis: An Epic Poem* (1988; Spokane Valley, Washington: Ilium Press, 2011), p. 320, 5.2.334–9: “The fuckflight of sweet Marvell’s coupled tercels, / Made every place a lover’s rendezvous / And every time the date of assignation. / And for a brief time so it was. This planet [Mars] / In its virgin loveliness would offer / The choice scenario for scenes of flesh.”

becoming them. The other consists of sentient plants communicating and uniting with each other. Our four tribute tales offer extended meditations on and wrestlings with “TCM” and its author.

An example of the first variety of vegetable love stories, Henry Gee’s flash fiction “Bordeaux Mixture,” originally published in the journal *Nature* in 2000, sports a strain of alluring tomato plants genetically engineered to give off pheromones that turn humans on sexually.<sup>57</sup> In the same vein is the flower fetishist of Allison Lonsdale’s 2010 story, “Vaster than Empires,” published in a collection from an erotica press entitled *Best Erotic Fantasy and SF*. In this story the narrator, a VR-environment designer, falls in love with a flower fetishist and, in an attempt to achieve some kind of sexual union with him, creates a giant artificial white orchid that she wears as a dress and is wired to stimulate her clitoris. However, things go dreadfully wrong when the fetishist moves from kissing and licking the silicone and metal orchid to *eating* it, dying within moments. The narrator mourns him by erecting a gravestone that quotes Marvell (“My vegetable love should grow / Vaster than empires and more slow”) and Shakespeare (“Where the bee sucks, there suck I”: Ariel’s song from *The Tempest*)—both quotations honoring the deceased’s love for and literal sucking of flowers.<sup>58</sup>

In a less violent example of “vegetable love,” Dora Knez’s “Vaster than Empires” (2000), a botanist/plant-nursery employee creates a second garden/nursery in her own apartment that turns into a kind of magic forest, into which she disappears and is possibly absorbed.<sup>59</sup> She resolves the conflict between loving her plants and loving her boyfriend by inviting him into the forest with her. Thinking of people as plants and vice versa, the story draws not just on “TCM” but on “The Garden,” as well as on the licking and clasping plants of the forest sequence in “Upon Appleton House” (590, 608–16).<sup>60</sup>

Cherry Wilder’s lightly comic “Double Summer Time” (1976), a mash-up of a country-house comedy of musical beds and a country-house murder mystery, features a group of shape-shifting aliens who arrive in England via meteors and are befriended

<sup>57</sup> Charles Dexter Ward (a “Lovecraftian pseudonym” for Henry Gee), “Bordeaux Mixture,” in *Year’s Best SF 6*, ed. David Hartwell (New York: Eos, 2000), 398–401.

<sup>58</sup> Allison Lonsdale, “Vaster than Empires,” in *Best Erotic Fantasy & Science Fiction*, ed. Cecilia Tan & Bethany Zaitz (Cambridge, MA: Circling Press, 2010), 26.

<sup>59</sup> Published in a chapbook, Knez’s short story seems less likely than Le Guin’s better-known *Vaster than Empires and More Slow* to be a source for Lonsdale.

<sup>60</sup> Dora Knez, “Vaster than Empires,” in *Five Forbidden Things* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Small Beer Press, 2000), 29–42, esp. 38 (“I was standing in a green embrace: ferns touched my face in papery caresses, prickly-soft Norfolk pines patted my shoulder, glossy philodendrons in their hundred varieties rubbed against my legs like cats”). Knez’s version of “a green shade” in Marvell’s “The Garden” is “the cool green fern-filtered light” (32).

by Verity Latham, a recent PhD in “Marvell studies” who devotes her spare time to Greenpeace-style activism. While helping her slightly mad scientist of a father and his team investigate the meteors, she shelters one of the aliens, who assumes the form of a tree outside their Nun-Appleton-like country house.<sup>61</sup> The latter then assumes human form, donning the name “Andrew Green” in a clear nod to Marvell and his green world and thoughts. Green goes on to become President of the eco-group Greenworld (with a sly pun on Northrop Frye’s “green world” of Shakespearean comedy),<sup>62</sup> an organization staffed with the other shape-shifting aliens. Romance blossoms between Verity and Andrew as she rescues him from a CIA agent posing as one of her father’s assistants. As part of his cover, the agent memorizes Marvell’s “The Garden” and recites the familiar lines from “TCM” in an attempt to seduce her, even though he thinks that “this Captain Marvell was some kind of a green freak.” With Andrew Green still in tree form, Verity reads botany books and recites Marvell’s poetry to him. Poems quoted in the story include not just “TCM” but “The Garden” and “The Definition of Love,” as well as Dylan Thomas’s Wordsworthian “Poem in October,” which contains nature, gardens, and two instances of the verb “marvel.”<sup>63</sup>

If Wilder’s heroine falls in love with a plant-like alien, the protagonist of Lisa Tuttle’s “Vegetable Love” (2017) *becomes* one—a plant, that is. Somewhat lonely and isolated from her husband and grown-up kids, this middle-aged Londoner falls in love with the smell and look of a fast-growing weed—*Fallopia Japonica*, Japanese knotweed—and one fine day sits down in her garden and is completely taken over by the plant as it sprouts out of and around her body. Soon she *is* the plant, in a union superior to the community of women at an earlier meeting in a church basement, where one of the women seduces her into being interested in the weed.<sup>64</sup>

But the *pièce de résistance* in the “vegetable love” group is Ursula K. Le Guin’s novelette *Vaster than Empires and More Slow* (1971), combining sentient plant-to-plant contact and human-to-plant contact and arguably kickstarting the Marvell-in-SF movement (a decade after Beagle and three decades after Davies) because of its author’s high profile as a writer—like Aldiss, Vêa, and Moorcock—of literary fiction

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<sup>61</sup> Wilder, “Double Summer Time,” 15: “Hewby Hall was old; it had grown by accretion over several hundred years.” Nun Appleton had similarly “grown by accretion.”

<sup>62</sup> Northrop Frye, “The Argument of Comedy” (1948), in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 85.

<sup>63</sup> Wilder, “Double Summer Time,” 22, 25–6, 34, 38, 40–41; Dylan Thomas, “Poem in October,” in *Selected Poems 1934–1952* (New York: New Directions, 2003), ll. 38, 71, pp. 107–9.

<sup>64</sup> Lisa Tuttle, “Vegetable Love,” in *Improbable Botany*, ed. Gary Dalkin (e-book: London, Wayward: 2017).

in and outside the SF community.<sup>65</sup> Winner of multiple Hugo and Nebula awards, author of the beloved *Earthsea* trilogy in the fantasy realm and the gender-bending SF masterpiece *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin offers a moving homage to Marvell. The novelette takes the lines from Marvell's poem as a point of departure. What if the only life on some planet were a single network of sentient plants? What if a human joined that network? The core of the tale is Le Guin's plan to literalize or un-metaphor lines from both "TCM" and "The Garden," including the latter's "green thought in a green shade" (48).

This comic but profound tale imagines a band of misfit scientists sent by the League of Worlds to survey life on a distant planet. After they arrive, the biggest misfit of all, the empath Osden, finds himself increasingly drawn to its plants, and it soon emerges that the latter form a single sentient network, a single being with many roots and branches.<sup>66</sup> Le Guin's precedent is Stanislav Lem's celebrated novel *Solaris* (1961), in which the entire ocean-like surface of a planet comprises a single organism. Osden eventually abandons the human community to become one with the plants; the physical particulars are never given. Does he eventually die, with his atoms recycled into the soil and plants? Or is he a separate but attached supplement, hooked into the network? We never find out. Whatever the case, the story quotes "TCM" in the penultimate paragraph:

The people of the Survey team walked under the trees, through the vast colonies of life, surrounded by a dreaming silence, a brooding calm that was half aware of them and wholly indifferent to them. There were no hours. Distance was no matter. *Had we but world enough and time ...* The planet turned between the sunlight and the great dark; winds of winter and summer blew fine, pale pollen across the quiet seas.

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. the quotation of "TCM"'s "Time's winged chariot" in Le Guin's Hugo Award-winning Vietnam-protest novella: *The Word for World Is Forest* (wr. 1968-9; pub. 1972), in *The Hainish Novels & Stories*, ed. Brian Attebery, 2 vols. (New York: Library of America, 2017), II:33. On Le Guin's interest in Marvell, see Darko Suvin, "Parables of De-Alienation: Le Guin's Widdershins Dance" (1975), in *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988), 149. Suvin's own anthology of SF from communist countries, *Other Worlds, Other Seas*, ed. Suvin (1968; rpt. New York: Berkley, 1970), with its title and epigraph from Marvell's "The Garden" (43-6), which appeared in print *before* Le Guin's *Vaster than Empires and More Slow* and *Word for World*, may also have contributed to the Marvell-and-SF movement. For another work of criticism that uses a Marvell tag as its title, see the anthology of essays on the subject of time in SF/F: *Worlds Enough and Time: Explorations of Time in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Gary Westfahl, George Slusser, and David Leiby (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> For another race of intelligent plants described in Marvellian terms, see Nancy Kress, *Crossfire* (New York: Tor, 2003), 168, with its extended quotation of the same stanza from "The Garden" (41-8). Cf. Donald M. Hassler, "The Relation of Story to Idea: The Vines of Nancy Kress and Other SF Women," *The Yearbook of English Studies: Science Fiction* 37, no. 2 (2007): 126.

In the final words of the story, Osden is “left as a colonist,” yes, but the planet has really colonized him.<sup>67</sup> His crewmates lack the openness and courage to take the same leap into embracing and merging with the truly other: a different species.

In addition, Le Guin has lovingly rethought “The Garden”’s famous crux: “Annihilating all that’s made / To a green thought in a green shade” (47–8), lines in which Marvell achieves an overwhelming plenitude of meaning that defies paraphrase. They mean everything one can reasonably posit, and at the same time none of it. As such, they create a subject-object problem similar to that in “TCM”’s phrase “vegetable love” (love for a vegetable, or a vegetable’s love of something else?). Is the “green thought” *about* green things and greenness (with “green” as the object of “thought” — what a thinker thinks about)? Or is the thought *itself* green in some way, a subjective lens through which to perceive objects in the world? Le Guin opts primarily for the latter, but in true Marvellian fashion includes both.

For when the survey team decamps to a continent on the other side of the planet, the team members notice that the plants seem aware and afraid of them here too. Only then do they realize that the plants form a single, trans-oceanic network connected by spores and water:

“It’s all one,” Osden said. “*One big green thought*. How long does it take a thought to get from one side of your brain to the other?”

“It doesn’t think. It isn’t thinking,” Harfex said, lifelessly. “It’s merely a network of processes. The branches, the epiphytic growths, the roots with those nodal junctures between individuals: they must all be capable of transmitting electro-chemical impulses. There are no individual plants, then, properly speaking. Even the pollen is part of the linkage, no doubt, a sort of windborne sentience, connecting overseas. But it is not conceivable. That all the biosphere of a planet should be one network of communications, sensitive, irrational, immortal, isolated. ...”

“Isolated,” said Osden. “That’s it! That’s the fear. It isn’t that we’re motile, or destructive. It’s just that we are. We are other. There has never been any other.”

“You’re right,” Mannon said, almost whispering. “It has no peers. No enemies. No relationship with anything but itself. One alone forever.”

“Then what’s the function of its intelligence in species-survival?” [asked Harfex.]

“None, maybe,” Osden said.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, *Vaster than Empires and More Slow*, in *The Hainish Novels & Stories*, I:973–4 (my italics; Le Guin’s ellipses).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 969–70 (my italics; Le Guin’s ellipses).



Ironically more alive than some of the humans, the plant network is mostly green as subject of thought, the consciousness doing the thinking. But since up till now the network has never encountered any life separate from itself, the superorganism has, in effect, only been able to perceive its own green self. Until the human investigators have arrived, there has only been a single subject and object; and this fundamental narcissism recalls that of “The Garden,” “TCM,” and other parts of Marvell’s involuted poetry.

Thus, the network is truly “Vaster than empires, and more slow”: planet-wide and therefore bigger than any of the empires on Earth in Marvell’s time; slow-growing and slow-perceiving, but stable. Apropos communicating with it, the ship’s psychologist asks, “What can a single human brain achieve against something so vast?” The commander replies, “A single human brain can perceive pattern on the scale of stars and galaxies ... and interpret it as Love.” And who is its lover if not Osden? The commander “look[ed] at Osden’s face, the ugly white mask [of its skin] transfigured, eager as a lover’s face.”<sup>69</sup> That’s why he stays, paradoxically able for the first time to connect fully with another being, beyond the mental din created by his own ability as an empath, which makes him unable to shut out others’ thoughts. Better still, Osden and the network are effectively immortal. In words we have just seen: “There were no hours. Distance was no matter. Had we but world enough and time ... The planet turned between the sunlight and the great dark; winds of winter and summer blew fine, pale pollen across the quiet seas.”<sup>70</sup> Winter or summer, the network is here to stay. There is an almost infinite dilation of time—comparatively infinite as perceived by a normally short-lived human; and the scale of the physical space is vast enough for a stationary human and set of plants confined to one planet. Osden has given up spacefaring and even humanity in return for immortality—physical immortality, not virtual or literary immortality.<sup>71</sup>

If Wilder and Le Guin offer tribute stories that sympathetically analyze and extend Marvell’s *oeuvre*, our final four works also pay tribute without slavishness, but move beyond the boundaries of mere vegetable love. We begin with *A Fine and Private Place* (1960), the debut novel of the fantasy writer Peter Beagle, best known for *The Last Unicorn*, because as the first fantastic novel to use a tag from “TCM,” it focuses, like Aldiss, on that poem alone, rather than both “TCM” and Marvell himself, as our

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 970–1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 973–4 (Le Guin’s ellipsis).

<sup>71</sup> This eternal union is signaled by Le Guin’s slip in the introduction she wrote for the novelette in 1975. Marvell’s phrase in “TCM” is “My vegetable love” (11), but Le Guin misremembers it as “Our vegetable love,” eschewing individuality for community: *The Wind’s Twelve Quarters: Short Stories by Ursula K. Le Guin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 148.

next two works do. An otherwise realist novel set in contemporary New York but with accents of fantasy and Gothic (a talking raven, a man who communicates with the dead), *A Fine and Private Place* provides the sole example of an SF/F title quoting this phrase from “TCM.” Its affinities with our SF works lie in the following. Quoting the whole couplet in the novel’s epigraph (“The grave’s a fine and private place, / But none, I think, do there embrace,” [31–2]), Beagle treats Marvell’s lines as a challenge: how can I prove him wrong and write a story about people literally embracing in a grave? Beagle cheats slightly by imagining not a grave but a graveyard in the Bronx, and by imagining a person (Jonathan Rebeck) who hides there for almost twenty years, never going outside its walls and, significantly, its iron gates (cf. Marvell’s “iron gates of life” [44]). For untold reasons (this is fantasy, after all), he can talk to the souls of the newly buried dead, as well as to a hilariously cantankerous raven (shades of Poe) who cracks jokes and steals food for him—simply because that’s what ravens do.<sup>72</sup> So much for “private.” The cemetery is “fine” because it houses beautiful Greek revival mausolea where Rebeck sleeps every night, dodging cemetery staff.

All this time, the spiritually dead Rebeck “embraces” no one, missing World War II, until a recent widow, visiting her dear departed, strikes up a conversation and they gradually fall in love. By the end of the novel, Gertrude—an uncomplicatedly ebullient and comic version of Shakespeare’s remarrying widow in *Hamlet*—convinces a reluctant Rebeck to exit the cemetery through its iron gates and come back to life. In addition, a head-over-heels young couple comes to “embrace” or make out in the cemetery for a few hours in the middle of the night. And two newly dead people comprise a third couple. Michael and Laura (cf. Petrarch) fall in love with each other, described by echoes of “TCM,” and *try* to embrace. As he at first lies in his grave, Michael thinks, “I’m in this *worm* Automat for the duration [...] and in a few minutes I will turn over and draw *eternity* up around my neck and go to sleep.”<sup>73</sup> Michael muses that “he could just sit by the roadside [the cemetery’s internal road] for the *next few million years*, if he felt like it. And he did feel like it.” He later tells Laura, “I like us sitting here and talking, watching the mist burn off and trucks in the streets [of the city below]. I suppose in a *hundred years* or a *thousand years*, I’ll be weary unto death with it.”<sup>74</sup> The lovers’ vast timescale obviously recalls “TCM.”

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Elijah’s helpful ravens in 1 Kings 17.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Beagle, *A Fine and Private Place* (1960), rev. ed. (San Francisco: Tachyon, 2006), 14 (my italics).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 187 (my italics).

But their time together proves limited because Michael's body will soon be exhumed and transported to another cemetery, and since the whimsical and unexplained rules governing this quiet, unhurried novel dictate that the spirits of the dead can only communicate with each other within the bounds of a single cemetery where their bodies are buried, this news leads to a full-blown crisis, declarations of love, and many failed attempts to wring spiritual hands. In the end Rebeck and Gertrude conspire with a cemetery guard to move Laura's body to accompany Michael's in the new cemetery. All is well, even though Michael's and Laura's souls still can't physically embrace.

As serious literary fiction like *A Fine and Private Place* and Le Guin's *Vaster than Empires*, Alfredo Véa, Jr.'s *La Maravilla* (1993) constitutes both a tribute and a debut novel; and in a fashion reminiscent of Renaissance *imitatio*, both Véa and Beagle began their literary careers by imitating this most imitative of Renaissance poets. Whether magical realist or not,<sup>75</sup> this autobiographical novel with hints of fantasy, by a Mexican Yaqui Filipino-American criminal-defense attorney who majored in English and physics at Berkeley and who also writes SF, contends with Moorcock's *Whispering Swarm* for the status of jewel in the coronet of fantastic Marvelliana. Its name literally means *The Marvel*, essentially naming the poet (*The Marvell*) and suggesting that one of its main agendas is to update him in an American-borderland setting. Its virtually undeclared general source is the Mower poems with their focus on various kinds of labor—virtually undeclared because while “TCM” and other lyrics such as “The Nymph Complaining” are quoted and alluded to multiple times, “The Mower against Gardens” surfaces only once.<sup>76</sup> A georgic or pastoral-georgic, *La Maravilla* celebrates the lives of poor, mainly agricultural laborers in a *colonia* named Buckeye Road near the desert west of Phoenix. The title also puns on the Spanish word for marigold, whole bunches of which are placed on the graves in Mexican cemeteries, as well as on the name for a dog that in Yaqui Indian myth miraculously leads the recently departed to the land of the dead.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Some critics refer to the novel as magical realist: Patricia Murray, “Myth,” in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature*, ed. Verity Smith (London and New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2013), 420; The Arizona Historical Society, “Arizona 100: A Centennial Gathering of Essential Books on the Grand Canyon State,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 53, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 119. Yet the author himself resists the label, pointing out that there is no magic in the novel: Alfredo Véa, Jr., personal phone call, 17 August 2020. Cf. Erin G. Carlston's discussion of the problem in “‘Making the Margins Chaos’: Romantic and Antiromantic Readings of *La Maravilla*,” *Aztlan* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 113–15.

<sup>76</sup> Alfredo Véa, Jr., *La Maravilla* (New York: Plume, 1993), 165 (“TCM” [1]), 264 (“TCM” [1, 8]), 267 (“The Nymph Complaining” [119–20]), 270 (“TCM” [21]), 271 (“A Dialogue, Between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure,” title), 277 (“TCM” [44, 8]), 281 (“She read aloud ‘The Mower Against Gardens’”), 285 (“TCM” [21]).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 278, 186–7, 208–9.

It is surprising that no critic has, to my knowledge, fully excavated the importance of Marvell to the novel. To be sure, Erin G. Carlston acknowledges that “Marvell’s verse subtends the novel [...] weaving through the characters’ dialogue and stitching together the name of the canonical English poet with the *Maravilla* of the novel’s title,” but she goes no further.<sup>78</sup> Instead, critics have focused on its Latinx and indigenous identity issues, including carnivalesque borderland *mestizaje*.<sup>79</sup> However, the novel places Marvell front and center when its protagonist is quizzed about the poet after reading Volume M of an encyclopedia:

“Andrew Marvell,” [Harold] said finally. ...

“He was an English poet. [...] ‘To His Coy Mistress,’” said the boy. “Wysteria Maybelle knows every line by heart, and I heard her reciting ‘The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn.’ She says that one when one of her dogs gets run over. All this time I thought she was saying crazy nonsense, then I read that part of the book again after seeing her the other day. [...] It said that he defended Oliver Cromwell, remember him from volume C? That poor king with the stutter.”

“He raped Ireland,” muttered Manuel.<sup>80</sup>

In the contact zone that is Buckeye Road, that boy is a Mexican Yaqui American named Beto (short for Alberto, similar to the author’s name) who grows up in an adobe house on a site once inhabited by an Irish couple named Maybelle (like Marvell) whose husband read Marvell’s poems to his wife. When he died, Wysteria Maybelle burned down the house, leaving little except the charred cover of Marvell’s collected poems.<sup>81</sup> In the adobe house built on its ruins, the at times difficult relationship between Beto’s Spanish grandmother (Josephina, a witch) and his shaman-like Yaqui Mexican grandfather (Manuel, another name similar to Marvell) involves a love described in terms of “TCM,” which engages the whole romance complex we have seen at work in other Marvell adaptations. Beto’s *abuela* desires a time dilation like that in “TCM”’s imagined courtship, which would extend her time with her husband—or rather her experience of that time, its intensity—before his inevitable death. As Manuel is dying, Josephina leans over and tells him, “*Cielo* [Heaven] [...] I know we will embrace there. [...] You by the Yaqui and I by the Tagus or by the desert wash, ages beyond the flood. [...] *Espérame*, wait for me. I am only moments behind you”—an imitation of lines 5–8

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<sup>78</sup> Carlston, “Making the Margins Chaos,” 121.

<sup>79</sup> Stacy Alaimo, “Multiculturalism and Epistemic Rupture: The Vanishing Acts of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Alfredo Véa Jr.,” *MELUS* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 166–73; Ariel Zatarain Tumbaga, *Yaqui Indigeneity: Epistemology, Diaspora, and the Construction of Yoeme Identity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 132–5, 150–69.

<sup>80</sup> Véa, *La Maravilla*, 206–7 (my italics).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 232, 48.

of “TCM.”<sup>82</sup> After Manuel has been dead for some time, she senses that he has returned in the form of a hawk and asks, “But is he accessible to me? He’s back already. He’s supposed to wait for *the conversion of the Jews*.”<sup>83</sup>

Mostly set in the *colonia*, a liminal space devoid of government, plumbing, and electricity but filled with a glorious mixture of races, cultures, and genders—the novel features apparent trips through space and time, as well as the supernatural (magic and spirits), and, most important, families separated and reunited.<sup>84</sup> In terms of trips and the supernatural, both sides of Beto’s heritage involve visionaries who “travel” in spirit to past and future, and in the case of his grandfather, to other places south of Arizona. In a peyote-fueled coming-of-age ceremony, Beto himself appears to morph into a hawk flying over the desert. Like a prophet, Josephina travels in time to see her own and others’ futures. As for families separated and reunited, there are many instances in Beto’s nuclear family. For most of the book he is brought up by his grandparents—until his mother (Lola) shows up after Manuel’s death to take Beto away to work in the fields of California (more of the georgic). The mother-son separation of Beto’s early years now gives way to a grandmother-grandson separation, Beto never reuniting physically with his *abuela*, though he does spiritually to a certain extent. As for *abuela* herself, marriage has separated Josephina from her own family in Spain, which disowns her for marrying an Indian. Finally, even within that marriage lies a kind of separation (and reunion): the cultural gulf between Manuel and Josephina yawns so wide that the former sleeps outside the house in the open air for most of the book, and only after his death does she fully acknowledge his worth and her love for him, becoming a veiled widow in black for the rest of her days—in effect, a nymph mourning her fawn like Wysteria Maybelle.

The latter, an Irish widow and madwoman whose words consist solely of Marvell’s poetry or iambic verse inspired by it, is separated from her Marvell-reading husband by death and mourns him by naming all of her gaggle of dogs after figures in Marvell’s poetry: for example, Thyrsis and Dorinda from the eponymous dialogue. As she and her canine entourage pass by, Beto hears her mutter, “‘World enough and time.’”<sup>85</sup> Once again, just as Wysteria’s surname recalls the poet’s, her given name sounds vaguely pastoral and thus appropriate to a writer of so many pastorals and meta-

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 238 (Véa’s italics).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 253 (my italics).

<sup>84</sup> On the liminal, see Carlston, “Making the Margins Chaos,” 117, who also cautions that the novel is *both* romantic (by which she means nostalgic for the semi-utopia that is Buckeye Road) and anti-romantic (113). On the kind of ontological uncertainty or “hesitation” that marks these and other events in the novel as fantastic, see Todorov, *Fantastic*, 25, 33, 157.

<sup>85</sup> Véa, *La Maravilla*, 267, 110, 165. Wysteria Maybelle’s Irishness also recalls the “Horatian Ode,” discussed at several points in the novel.

pastorals. Another woman with a pastoral name, Vernetta (little green woman), has been separated from her nuclear family in Arkansas and her Afro-Filipino American fiancé, J.B., after her father and brothers lynch him (cf. the victimized Job and his later manifestation in MacLeish's play *J.B.*). She escapes from her family but then leaves her and J.B.'s mestizo child, Danny, with his father's relatives in Louisiana. If Wysteria's and Josephina's marriages are suffused with the language of "TCM"'s love and "The Nymph Complaining"'s mourning, the account of Vernetta's brief union with the astrophysicist manqué, J.B., draws on the mathematics and science of "The Definition of Love." Only after many years working as a prostitute in Buckeye Road does she reunite with and raise their son in Arizona.<sup>86</sup> Vernetta is thus separated at various points from fiancé, son, and mother (whom she meets at the end of the book).

But the main Marvellian subtext, as Nigel Smith has suggested,<sup>87</sup> is the Mower sequence. After all, this carnivalesque *colonia* on the edge of a vast southwestern desert is a place where dirt-poor agricultural workers live and play in their few spare hours, and where there is also work done by the people who serve them: food-truck workers, bar and general-store owners, prostitutes, the minister, and wives. This reference to the Mower poems' georgic world of work, love, and love *as* work manifests itself most clearly in Beto's mother removing him to California, not to liberate him from agricultural work and poverty and educate him in hopes of a better life, but to transfer him to another scene of agricultural exploitation—only a slightly better one with higher pay, pursued from crop to crop. Suffusing this world is Andrew Marvell's ambiguous presence: both seductive and oppressive; the sign of rich white Anglo culture *and* of the ethnic and racial subalterns in the US who act as the counterparts of Marvell's subalterns—the mowers, the shepherds, the Irish "raped" by Cromwell,<sup>88</sup> the children like T.C., the women with and without voices, the fawn, and perhaps even the patronage-seeking poet himself. However, in the vibrant mix of cultures that is Buckeye Road, the English and Irish diasporas are just two out of many.

After working in the fields of California in his teens, Beto is drafted into the Vietnam War, does a tour of duty (reuniting there with two childhood friends from Arizona: Claude and Louie), and then returns to the US. When he finally makes it back to Arizona years later, the *colonia* has vanished, swallowed up by the suburbs of Phoenix. He only

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<sup>86</sup> The prostitutes in Buckeye Road (Vernetta, Potrice, et al.), who service the agricultural workers, are like the female beloveds of the Mower poems—not entirely accessible, not fully in love with their yearning men.

<sup>87</sup> Nigel Smith, personal email, 19 December 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Véa, *La Maravilla*, 207.



reunites with his grandparents by placing marigolds (*maravillas*, marvels) on their graves—a fine and private place? Beto’s entry into the cemetery is described with quotations from “TCM” that essentially place him in the position of Marvell’s lover, and his grandparents in that of the beloved: “He walked through the *iron gates* and down the narrow sidewalk, following the compass. He slowly walked inside for only the second time in his life—for the first time since before the war and since *before the flood*.” “Flood” here is literal since an earlier flash flood in the desert has washed away most of the family’s possessions, including Josephine’s beloved piano. It is described earlier thus: “If there had been *time enough* to contemplate a flood, the boy would certainly have been more frightened. But it seemed to have come upon them instantly, with no warning.” Later, as Beto places the *maravillas* on their graves, he imagines a shamanic Yaqui ritual of the kind Manuel would have led: “There blithely came sweating, stamping deer dancers and a *pascola* [ritual clown] *at his back* to mock him.”<sup>89</sup> One or both of his grandparents have presumably been led to the land of the dead by the Yaqui canine spirit-guide, the marvelous *maravilla*.

One of the comics Beto sees in the *colonia*’s general store is *Captain Marvel*,<sup>90</sup> which brings us to our last and perhaps most startling tribute novel and the only work that makes Marvell a character. In his insider’s history of science fiction, *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How SF Conquered the World* (1998), Thomas Disch quips that “Even when [an SF] tale’s protagonist is not a legal minor, his or her attitudes, actions, and audience appeal are more likely to be in the spirit of Captain Marvel than of Andrew Marvell.” The second Marvell with an extra L apparently “produce[d] art that is ever more mature and responsible and ponderous,” not young, revolutionary, and “playful” like SF.<sup>91</sup> Some of us know better, including both Vía and the prolific Michael Moorcock, who offers us a character named “Captain Marvell”—possibly in cheeky reference to Vía and Wilder.

Moorcock’s *The Whispering Swarm* (2014), with which we began, offers perhaps the best indication of Marvell’s continuing relevance to writers of fantastika because it refuses to confine itself to quoting or examining his writings, but makes Marvell one of its principal characters, featuring him quoting or formulating his own poems, principally “TCM” and the “Horatian Ode.” For example, when questioned about his

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 277, 264, 285—quoting “TCM” (21), possibly mediated by *The Waste Land*, with its burlesques of “TCM”: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ed. Michael North (New York and London: Norton, 2001), p. 11, ll. 185–6, 196–7.

<sup>90</sup> Vía, *La Maravilla*, 74.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Disch, *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How SF Conquered the World* (New York: Touchstone, 1998), 5.

politics, Captain Andrew Marvell admits to being “a Parliament’s man” but offers a measured, judicious assessment of Charles I worthy of the author of the “Horatian Ode”:

Fool that he is, like all Stuarts, possessing more arrogance than sense, he persists in betraying his word and making war on his own subjects. He honestly believes he’s God’s chosen. And I choose not to question God. Yet there’s still some hope of his finding nobility and sanity within that sea of hard-headedness, self-doubt and boyish need he calls a mind, but I fear it will not be. A hardhead he’ll remain *until the conversion of the Jews!*

Yet Marvell quotes “TCM” rather than the “Ode.” Or rather, this off-the-cuff comment may represent material eventually to make its way into “TCM,” just as the rest of the speech will be versified after the Regicide as the central section of the “Ode.”<sup>92</sup> Later in the novel, Moorcock describes Marvell as someone “able to see and use the silver roads” of time and inter-dimensional travel, someone who “talked about everywhere around us being *deserts of vast eternity*. I thought his vision a bit bleak.”<sup>93</sup>

Moorcock’s Marvell is very, perhaps deliberately different from the historical figure, in part to make him a suitable alter-ego for Moorcock himself, as well as a characteristically ambiguous Moorcockian hero. To step back and provide a bit of background: the book’s premise is that since 1253 a pocket of unreality has lurked at the heart of London—a district called Alsacia. Initially a Carmelite abbey, Alsacia eventually became a sanctuary for criminals and refugees from the law. (Early modernists will think of Thomas Shadwell’s 1688 comedy, *The Squire of Alsatia*.) But Moorcock’s secret history reveals that, in fact, Alsacia has really been a nexus point joining different times and universes.

The protagonist, named Michael Moorcock and living a life the details of which appear to track closely those of the author’s from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, has a rare gift that allows him not just to perceive the existence of Alsacia but to enter this enclave of otherness in the otherwise swinging city of London. “Master Moorcock” finds himself increasingly drawn into Alsacia with its cobblestoned streets, Carmelite abbey, and Swan with Two Necks tavern, encountering figures real and apparently real from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries—sometimes all at once. But the predominant

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<sup>92</sup> Moorcock, *Whispering Swarm*, 323 (my italics). Cf. “TCM” (10). Lines 33–4 of the “Horatian Ode” are slightly misquoted on page 293 of *The Whispering Swarm*.

<sup>93</sup> Moorcock, *Whispering Swarm*, 451 (my italics). Cf. “TCM” (24).

period is Civil War England, in which Marvell and Charles I's nephew Prince Rupert are commanding presences, each representing a side: Cavalier or Roundhead.<sup>94</sup> The book climaxes in the Prince's plot to save Charles from the axe, a plot that fails only because the King refuses to be rescued, going nobly to his death—the wisest decision of his life. Since Moorcock as author/protagonist tags his own writing in the genres of science fiction and fantasy as hardly different from the historical romances he wrote in his youth, Prince Rupert's Cavaliers in 1648–9 are the natural object of loyalty for the romance semi-anti-hero Moorcock, not unlike his own earlier ambiguous heroes Elric of Melniborné and Jerry Cornelius (both referenced in the novel, since it recounts Moorcock's life as a writer and editor). Moorcock is thus caught up in the conspiracy to rescue Charles, even as his modern sensibility rebels against Cavalier ideology: Moorcock identifies himself repeatedly as a republican and sees Cromwell as a harbinger of modern English democracy. In a possibly deliberate fudging of history, consistent with the novel's constant breaching of the boundaries between fact and fiction (and thus genres), Parliament's side is said to be headed solely by Cromwell as “Protector” in late 1648 and early 1649, long before his historical coup in 1653. This is of a piece with the kind of simplified, distorted history that replicates, even if it misreads the simple binary between Charles and Cromwell in the “Horatian Ode.”

Be that as it may, Andrew Marvell cuts a rather unlikely figure in *The Whispering Swarm*, different from that envisaged by Marvell scholars today: as a military captain commanding a regiment of redcoats. This is hardly the Marvell whose attempted pistol-whipping of a German peasant backfired on the trip back from Russia.<sup>95</sup> A swashbuckling, romantic figure out of central casting, armed with swords, pistols, long hair, and boots, Captain Marvell has served as a mercenary in the West Indies and now spies for Protector Cromwell and the Puritans. How villainous! Most important, he travels through time and alternate universes, evidence of which allegedly appears in his poetry.<sup>96</sup> He knows whereof he speaks when he descants on “ruining the great work of time” and on lives lived over millennia and continents. Captain Marvell is an ambiguous character and thus an alter-ego for Moorcock, the genre-mixer and creator of ambiguous heroes, because not only does he do all this with a knowing “irony” and “self-mockery,” but in the climactic final scene he saves Moorcock's life by snatching

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<sup>94</sup> Probably an homage to and deconstruction of Poul Anderson's SF/F novel *A Midsummer Tempest* (New York: Ballantine, 1974).

<sup>95</sup> Smith, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon*, 180–1.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Vêa, *La Maravilla*, 209: Beto's house is “like a wormhole in recognizable space where dimensions met and contorted with each other behind foreheads.”

him from the clutches of Cromwell's men back into the safety of Alsacia, and eventually back to his wife and kids in 1970s London.<sup>97</sup> We are told several times that Moorcock and Marvell resemble each other: as literary ironists, time travelers, and universe-switchers. Moorcock admits that "I had liked and admired Marvell. I had seen him as someone to emulate"—perhaps a reference to his own 1978 novel, *Gloriana or the Unfulfill'd Queen, Being a Romance by Michael Moorcock*, set in an alternate Elizabethan England and, as the afterword admits, influenced by Marvell, Spenser, and Defoe.<sup>98</sup> Not only that, but Moorcock and "Marvell [...] had bonded in our view of the world. He had seemed so generous, so friendly. I had been certain he liked me as much as I liked him." As Captain Marvell puts it, linking arms with Moorcock and leading him across the frozen Thames to safety, "Master Moorcock, I know you for an honest fool. You would doubtless have helped Cromwell's cause, had I drawn you into our company first. [...] You have a friend in me"—partly because, as he says, Moorcock is "a hothead but he's neither villain nor traitor." As the latter admits, this was "Not something I could easily argue against."<sup>99</sup>

In effect, Moorcock identifies with Marvell as the poet of ambivalence and ambiguity in the "Horatian Ode" and a precursor of modernity—at the very least of modern politics as a Cromwellian republican, but also as a mercenary who will change sides and fight for the highest bidder. This Captain Marvell is really an amalgam of the poet and of the fantasy-spinning writer who grew up admiring the Marvel Comics character. "Ironically," says Moorcock, "'Captain Marvel' had been my favourite US comic book hero when I was a boy!"<sup>100</sup> The novel thus manages to be *both* a cheap setup for this pun *and* a more extended meditation on history, on seventeenth-century Britain's relationship to the present, as well as on the way in which romance and fantastika play fast and loose with history and other matters. The same consciousness that can appreciate the apparently incompatible Captain Marvel, Andrew Marvell, and the marvelous plots of SF/F—Michael Moorcock's consciousness—is their product.

Finally, Brian Aldiss's whimsical short story "Marvells of Utopia" (2001) provides a meta-literary key to almost all of our works. Punning on "marvels" and "Marvell," the title highlights one of the marvelous aspects of an utopian future of humanity on multiple planets: longevity bordering on immortality. It also signals the story's

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 432–3.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Moorcock, *Gloriana or the Unfulfill'd Queen, Being a Romance by Michael Moorcock*, ed. John Davey (1978; London: Saga, 2016), 388.

<sup>99</sup> Moorcock, *Whispering Swarm*, 430, 388, 455, 477.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 409.

rewriting of Marvell's poem, since its two unnamed lovers are the "Marvells" in question, apparently a once-married couple with the last name Marvell. It is the year 3000, and the couple appears to have lived for almost a millennium because of "nanoservants in their blood"; but now, for undisclosed reasons, they are "becoming ready for euthanasia."<sup>101</sup> Before they die, they reunite before some form of TV camera:

They had been lovers centuries ago. Circumstances had caused them to part for different regions of the galaxy. [...] But something in their love was timeless. [...] So now the two aged lovers were called upon, from their different regions of the system, to converse together for the peepers. They met and embraced—not without the trace of tears. Millions watched.<sup>102</sup>

They have thus separated to different parts of the galaxy rather than "TCM"'s Earth, now embracing not in the grave but on Mars.

Then the lovers quote the poem to each other, hinting perhaps that it played a part in their earlier courtship and relationship:

"I admit I had forgotten you for a whole century," she said. "I regret it. Forgive me!"

"A hundred years should go to praise thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze," he quoted, with a smile.

She gave her old creaking laugh. "An age at least to every part, And the last age should show my heart."

"What marvellous memories we have!"

"Marvellous indeed!"<sup>103</sup>

Note the alteration of "your heart" to "my heart," and the repeated punning on Marvell's name: "marvellous" (with double "l"). The story ends with more slightly altered lines from the poem:

"And what," she said, and her voice faltered slightly, "what will our descendants make of *us* in another million years?"

He cast his gaze downwards, showing a sign of weariness. "Ever at my back I hear Time's winged chariot drawing near ..."

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<sup>101</sup> Brian Aldiss, "Marvells of Utopia," in *Supertoys Last All Summer Long and Other Stories of Future Time* (London: Orbit, 2001), 189.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–90.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

“‘Yonder all before us lie Deserts of vast eternity’. It’s a consolation really, my love.” She leant forward and stroked his cheek, in an ancient gesture of affection between women and men.<sup>104</sup>

Besides the quotations from the poem and the Marvells in the title and elsewhere, what makes this so clearly a meta-tale referencing both “TCM” and the romantic SF/F stories it spawned are the following remarks. The woman calls their relationship “a glorious and grand story, very surprising to those who were alive to play a part in it.” The man suggests its link to the “glorious and grand” story of humanity’s expansion to the stars, which took place over the same thousand-year period: “‘Breaking away from Earth helped the process of clarification,’ he said. ‘The Earth was supposedly haunted by—oh, ghouls and ghosts, elves, gnomes, fairies, angels ... All those fantasy creatures besetting early human life. I suppose they were born of dark forests and old houses, together with a general lack of scientific understanding.’”<sup>105</sup> In the new galactic utopia, science and science fiction have replaced fantasy, fairy tales (“dark forests”), and the Gothic (“old houses”). In effect, the genre of science fiction is a species of utopia. With a smile the story parodies the trend of writing Marvell-titled SF stories with the same romance formula.

### Conclusion: “Six Hundred Years and Still Potent”

Although his history is off by a century, the twenty-fourth-century vampire in Kahn’s *World Enough, and Time* gets something right when he brags that Marvell’s seductive words are “Six hundred years” old and “still potent.”<sup>106</sup> In witnessing the generative power of Marvell’s most famous lyric after almost four centuries, this survey of major and minor writers of science fiction and fantasy has identified a new subfield by bridging two different areas of study: Marvell/early modern studies on the one hand and science-fiction/fantasy studies on the other. By way of conclusion I hazard a few remarks about both sides of the divide as well as the bridge itself. While I concentrate on science fiction, much applies to fantasy as well.

First, the Marvell side. We have watched one interpretive community reading an early modern poem. This is not so different from studies of readers’ marginalia in Shakespeare folios or early editions of *Paradise Lost*—or, for that matter, of Restoration adaptations and postcolonial performances of *The Tempest*. Authors of SF/F are readers before they are writers, and their co-optations of “TCM” collectively offer an

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 191 (italics and ellipses in the original).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 190–1 (italics in the original).

<sup>106</sup> Kahn, *World Enough, and Time*, 184.



interpretation that privileges the poem's content over the poet's biography and that emphasizes romance, the Sublime, and, I would add, imperialism. After all, "TCM" contains the word "empire," assumes the existence of empires smaller than a planet, and joins the "Horatian Ode" and "Tom May's Death" in thinking about empire. Many of our SF tales (e.g., *Star Trek* and *Le Guin*) accept this invitation and assume human expansion to the stars, implicitly justifying that expansion by proposing it as an exciting adventure of exploration underpinned by humanity's awe at the size, age, and complexity of the universe. Romance and sublimity underwrite empire, and a number of our fantastic plots explicitly evoke empire: Crowley, Westlake, Hoyt, Kahn, Vea ("Cromwell raped Ireland"), and even *Comrade Dad* (the Soviet Empire). In effect, our writers identify aspects of "TCM" that current Marvell criticism has underappreciated. Others include space, time, nature, longevity, immortality, materialism, and science itself—as well as iconoclasm of a non-literary sort.

As for iconoclasm, we have grown used to calling the poem innovative in terms of literary history, on which it performs a number by going meta- about genre and tradition. But our SF writers notice something else: the maneuver the poem performs by adding space to time in the recipe for *carpe diem*. By adding space and multiplying both space and time, Marvell does trump predecessors by spying a bigger picture (the genre and its limitations) and indicating that something might lie outside it. But for SF writers, his speaker's imagination seems limited, in turn, by merely thinking on a planetary and Christian scale. There are other planets and galaxies out there, and much longer timescales on which to visit and interact with them. Science and scientific thinking far outweigh literary and religious competition.

SF writers may consider Marvell a kindred spirit because the twentieth-century academy designated him, along with Donne and company, as a Metaphysical poet with interests in the New Science.<sup>107</sup> Even though recent criticism might regard the Metaphysical as a problematic category because insufficiently historicized, our writers may be justified for another reason in seeing affinities between "TCM" and their own work. Adam Roberts has argued that SF emerged (or re-emerged) in the seventeenth century because of the convergence of the New Science and Protestantism, both of which turned a skeptical eye toward previous metaphysical and religious claims about the nature and workings of the universe. Crucial to his argument are Protestant

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Martin Dzelzainis's properly historicized "Marvell and Science," in *Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, 180–205. Moreover, a 1958 anthology of math-related poetry included stanza 7 of Marvell's "Definition of Love" under the heading "Mathematical Love": *Fantasia Mathematica*, ed. Clifton Fadiman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), 270.

countries like Britain and texts like Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638), which Marvell recalls in his reference in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* to Godwin's moon-bound geese.<sup>108</sup> If "TCM" trails clouds of the New Science's glory—less obviously than, say, "The Definition of Love"—it contributes to Roberts's case by asking us to see the poem as proto-SF. To be clear, "TCM" isn't SF or proto-SF, but our SF writers effectively treat it as an ancestor of their work. Certainly, its deep structure of logical, geometrical proof displays proto-scientific reasoning of a whimsical sort. The "if" is crucial here. SF writers have found "TCM" welcoming because at a fundamental level it performs a thought experiment, a "what if?"; and thought experiments are the substance of SF. What if a man and woman could flirt for centuries across the entire planet? What would be the consequences? Which leads to my next point.

This meeting of Marvell and SF also reveals something about the latter: about SF's tendencies toward literalization and intertextuality. In "TCM" our writers sense an implicit challenge, saying essentially, "Marvell, you presented vast space-time as fiction, whimsy, metaphor, surmise; we will take you on by taking you seriously and making that space-time real, non-metaphorical." Rosalie Colie showed us long ago that Marvell's poetry literalizes metaphors, un- or de-metaphoring language by turning hyperbole and conjecture into physical fact.<sup>109</sup> "TCM" does some of the same, seizing upon the idea of time as a subset of the metaphorical barrier or distance between lovers (of space, in other words), and then imagining a literal space between them as they take up positions on different sides of the planet and delay sex. This has proved irresistible to SF/F writers, who run riot with literal suns, planets, space, and time, playing out narratives of love, war, and expansion against their backdrop. But literalization also beckons because of its centrality to the genre, in a way not true of others, such as epic, pastoral, lyric, comedy, tragedy, and the realist novel. Literalization is a tool in the kit of each of those genres, to be sure, but by no means the only or essential one. By contrast, science fiction and fantasy are premised on making the speculative real—the speculative including the imaginary, the fictive, the hyperbolic, and the metaphorical. While Tzvetan Todorov has shown that literalization of metaphor and other figures

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<sup>108</sup> Roberts, *History of Science Fiction*, vi: "SF [...] is the direct descendant of the Reformation"; "SF begins around 1600, as a distinctly Protestant kind of 'fantastic' writing that has budded off from the older (broadly) Catholic traditions of magical and fantastic romances and stories, responding to the new sciences, the advances in which were also tangled up in complex ways with Reformation culture"; Marvell, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, in *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, 2 vols., ed. Annabel Patterson et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), I:82.

<sup>109</sup> Rosalie Colie, "My Ecchoing Song": *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 79, 84, 93, 111, 160, 173, 242 ("metaphor becomes fact"). Thanks to Jane Donawerth for reminding me of Colie.

of speech is an important ingredient of fantastika in general, Samuel Delany and Seo-Yung Chu have made the same point about SF,<sup>110</sup> and writers who use Marvell in both superficial and substantive ways demonstrate that SF's literalization is an important part of this apparently future-oriented form's description of the present (and past) through allegory and satire.<sup>111</sup> Literalization and the refusal of circumlocution and flowery language characterize much scientific discourse, and while much SF presents techno-babble and pseudo-science, its outlook is resolutely materialistic, scientific, realistic. Moreover, it's a question not just of de-metaphorization or de-figuration but of de-fictionalization. The larger tendency to de-fictionalize, to make fiction real is also present in narratives, such as Dick's *Counter-Clock World* and Kahn's *World Enough, and Time*, that insist on treating "TCM" as a genuine tool of seduction. "TCM" has to have been part of a successful seduction in the past, they think, and must be quoted in future ones. The coy mistress will continue to give in.

Insight into SF's intertextuality is our other gain. We are more than prepared to regard this variety of genre fiction, rather than mainstream literary fiction, as *internally* intertextual, referring to earlier texts *within* the genre, but not so much to those outside. Questions of value pervade considerations of Marvell and SF, and so much of the academy's previous contempt depended on a mischaracterization of SF as formulaic and lightweight, written by simple, comparatively uncultured authors for simple, uncultured, and young readers. Part of the case against reading and studying SF rested on the claim that its alleged ignorance of the great works of the Western canon signified its anti-intellectual, escapist immaturity. Not only did SF supposedly refuse to place itself in conversation with those earlier works and thus the real world; in spinning weird tales of tentacled aliens menacing weak, busty women, it ducked weightier questions.

We know better. Our Marvelliana demonstrate that SF has also displayed an *external* intertextuality, engaging with texts outside the borders of SF, in sometimes significant ways. This matters because one account of SF has proposed that it depends on what Damien Broderick calls the "megatext," the tradition of previous SF texts from the 1920s on (and even from Mary Shelley on, if we accept another critic's account).<sup>112</sup> According

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<sup>110</sup> Todorov, *Fantastic*, 76–7; Samuel Delany, "Science Fiction and Literature<sup>2</sup>—or, The Conscience of the King," in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, ed. James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (1968; Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 103–5; Seo-Young Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?: A Science Fictional Theory of Representation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>111</sup> For SF as representational, see Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 3–15; Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?*

<sup>112</sup> Damien Broderick, *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xi, xiii, xvi, 3,

to Broderick, the latest SF text is only comprehensible to readers with knowledge of the genre's conventions: the tropes and mindset of previous SF. Indeed, what sets SF apart from earlier genres, he thinks, is its dependence on its own intra-genre tradition—in a way that epic, tragedy, pastoral, the realist novel, and co. are not. His case loses steam if epic becomes the genre of comparison, or even pastoral; but he makes a good point about SF's insular tendencies. Nevertheless, our texts cast the genre as not quite so insular. SF has and does engage meaningfully with outside, non-SF texts. In fact, its focus on openness in general (the openness of the scientific method to new data and ideas; the openness of the human species to expansion outside our planet) should and does find a correlative in an intertextuality open to texts outside the genre, especially Marvell's semantically open and evocative lines. That said, more of this external intertextuality and thus greater engagement with Marvell appears in self-consciously literary writers like Le Guin, Wilder, Aldiss, Beagle, Vêa, and Moorcock; and more of it in our British writers considered as a group.

How does SF/F's use of Marvell compare to its use of Shakespeare and other early moderns? Before answering the question, we should acknowledge that while Shakespeare and Milton have probably had a greater impact than Marvell on SF/F, the short lyric that is "TCM" has punched far above its weight and approached the influential status of one of the Bard's plays. From the vantage point of Marvell studies and Marvelliana, SF/F's use of Marvell differs in degree rather than kind from its use of Shakespeare. The principal difference is that SF/F seems at least as, if not more interested in the author than his works: Shakespeare as a person vs. *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In SF/F that engages his work, Shakespeare turns up more often as a character, and SF/F obsesses about finding the "real" people and stories behind his writings, showing an exact arrow of causation between people and situations Shakespeare personally encountered and their appearance in thinly veiled form in his dramas.<sup>113</sup> Yet the fact that Moorcock's *Whispering Swarm* provides the lone example of

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21, 37, 57–63, 67–8, 93, 115, 144–6. In some ways Broderick simply updates and narrows the scope of Eliot's argument in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood* (1920; London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 47–59. For Shelley as the starting point of SF, see Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (1973; New York: Schocken, 1974), 3, 7–39.

<sup>113</sup> The conceit of Poul Anderson's *Midsummer Tempest*, for example, is that Shakespeare was no fiction writer but rather an historian in all of his plays: Caliban, Prospero, Oberon, and Titania really exist. See also Isaac Asimov, "The Immortal Bard," *Universe Science Fiction* (May 1954), 97–9; Clifford Simak, *The Goblin Reservation* (1968; New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993); Neil Gaiman, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1991), in *The Sandman: Dream Country* (Burbank, California: DC Comics, 2018); Gregory Benford, "Not of an Age," in *Weird Tales from Shakespeare*, ed. Katharine Kerr and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Daw, 1994), 277–91; Harry Turtledove, *Ruled Britannia* (New York: New American Library, 2002) and "We Haven't Got There Yet" (2009), <https://www.tor.com/2009/03/19/we-havent-got-there-yet/>; Jonathan Barnes,

a similar engagement with Marvell the person<sup>114</sup> indicates that SF/F tends to focus on Marvell's text—a text timeless and revelatory of nature and human nature.<sup>115</sup>

To the extent that SF/F writers have cared about Marvell himself, other than to see him as a representative Renaissance love poet, it's all about his name. The simple fact is that *marvel* is a synonym for *wonder*, that category and effect so important to SF.<sup>116</sup> Thaumaturgy is, of course, a facet of much Renaissance literature; Shakespeare's romances arguably depend upon it. But it is the central draw of SF and, for many, of science. Musing in 1927 on religion, science, and humanity's future, the biologist J.B.S. Haldane observed:

one of the essential elements of religion is an emotional attitude towards the universe as a whole. As we come to realize the tiny scale, both temporal and spatial, of the older mythologies, and the unimaginable vastness of the possibilities of time and space, we must attempt to conjecture what purposes may be developed in the universe that we are beginning to apprehend. Our private, national, and even international aims are restricted to a time measured in human life-spans.

‘And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.’<sup>117</sup>

Haldane instinctively turns to Marvell to describe wonder and the Sublime.

Finally, a word about method: the bridge between Marvell and SF/F that facilitates all my previous remarks. Imagine an alternative universe where this essay appears in the journal *Science Fiction Studies*, bearing a title like “SF and Marvell” or “Captain Marvell: SF's Co-optation of a Renaissance Poet.” In other words, my corpus could

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“On the Twelfth Night,” in *Monstrous Little Voices: New Tales from Shakespeare's Fantasy World*, ed. David Thomas Moore (Oxford: Abaddon Books, 2016), 239–88. Cf. Erica Jong, *Serenissima* (New York: Dell, 1987); Dan Simmons, *Ilium* (New York: Harper Voyager, 2003).

<sup>114</sup> Insofar as they adopt a version of Marvell's persona as the incorruptible MP and opponent of absolutism, Howell Davies's books engage with Marvell the person rather than his works, but they differ from the many SF tales that make Shakespeare a character and speculate about how he might have composed his works or might react to the future when drawn there by time travel. Wilder's alien “Andrew Green,” while drawing on his “green” poetry and suggesting that its implied author was a nature poet, is not really a portrait of Marvell.

<sup>115</sup> There is a similar case to be made about Milton in SF/F, with writers paying more attention to *Paradise Lost* than to its author. Peter Ackroyd's alternative history/biography, *Milton in America* (London: Vintage, 1996), is probably the exception rather than the rule—a rule better represented by Ursula K. Le Guin's *Paradises Lost* (2002), Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995–2000), and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAdam* trilogy (2003–2013), especially *The Year of the Flood* with its rooftop garden.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. David G. Hartwell, *Age of Wonders: Exploring the World of Science Fiction* (New York: Tor, 1996).

<sup>117</sup> J.B.S. Haldane, “The Last Judgment,” in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays* (1927; London: Chatto & Windus, 1930), 311. I thank Max Grober for calling my attention to this essay.

have been approached from the other direction in an exercise of source rather than reception study—the two sides of intertextuality’s coin. What if? Had I viewed it from the opposite direction, I would have placed SF front and center and discussed Marvell as just one material in its mighty weave. From this perspective his name and poem might shout to be heard above the voices of Shakespeare, Milton, and others—early modern and modern, in and outside fantastika—as well as other seemingly less literary concerns: for example, the place of history and politics in SF.

But once again, questions of value raise their heads, and in this universe, in this place and time, I have chosen to privilege Marvell over SF. I have assessed the relevance of this spectacular poet to two comparatively low-cultural prose genres in the twentieth century and beyond. This involves adjacent questions about the relevance in our highly presentist day not just of our guy, Andrew Marvell, or of early modern England, but of literature and English themselves. Wyndham and Kahn are right: at times civilization itself seems at stake. This is one of the reasons why I care about relevance and engagement. With any luck, in 2250 someone other than a vampire will celebrate “TCM” as “six hundred years old and still potent,” and her song will echo many times down through the millennia. At the very least, almost four hundred years after Marvell’s birth I hope to have opened up a conversation about the scientific realism, romantic sublimity, and proto-imperialism of “To His Coy Mistress,” as well as SF and its strategies of representation and extrapolation.

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