The Dissertation Committee for Eliot Briklod Chayt Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Disaster, Dystopia, and Exploration: Science-Fiction Cinema 1959-1971

Committee:

Joseph Straubhaar, Supervisor

Janet Staiger, Co-Supervisor

Thomas Schatz

Ann Reynolds

Susan McLeland

Disaster, Dystopia, and Exploration: Science-Fiction Cinema 1959-1971

by

Eliot Briklod Chayt, B.A., M.A.

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Disaster, Dystopia, and Exploration: Science-Fiction Cinema 1959-1971

Eliot Briklod Chayt, PhD
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Supervisor: Joseph Straubhaar
Co-Supervisor: Janet Staiger

Exploring the products of diverse cinematic modes of production—including Hollywood as well as art and experimental contexts—and their surrounding production and reception discourses, this dissertation reveals the ways in which science-fiction (sf) provided a pervasive influence in the film culture of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan throughout the sixties. In this era, three sf plot-types—disaster, dystopia, and exploration—were mobilized as cultural frames for analyzing contemporary social and technological change, frequently evoking socially critical and/or progressive horizons of interpretation. As such, sixties sf cinema provides an antithesis to the flights of fancy and conservative parables that often epitomized the genre

in the fifties.

In this era, therefore, Disaster stories called into question nuclear proliferation rather than warning against some intruding alien force. Likewise, Dystopia could be found in Western bourgeois praxis as well as in communist totalitarianism. Exploration, rather than merely promising a hegemonic vision of outer space to be achieved through flag-planting galactic imperialism, could represent the hope for new conceptual and social norms.

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Introduction: Rediscovering Sixties SF Cinema

During my high school years I counted *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) as my favorite film and so, when I graduated in the year 2001, it seemed only appropriate to me that I should suggest to my school's graduation committee that Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* be played at some point during the graduation ceremony. The response was one of enthusiasm partly, I imagine, because playing the theme to *2001: A Space Odyssey in* 2001 indicated something significant to the baby boomer administrators on this sentimental occasion: the future had now arrived and the newest generation was being sent out on their own odyssey of discovery (corny, but, then again, at such events sentimentality reigns). At the last minute, however, the plans were changed without my knowledge and the *Star Wars* (1977) theme was played instead. For the teacher who had inherited the job of sound engineer, this theme was no doubt personally meaningful and more adequately expressed the triumphant mood of the occasion. I was no fan of *Star Wars*, and my knee-jerk response was that the substitution of John Williams for Strauss (and *Star Wars* for *2001: A Space Odyssey*) was philistine. Besides, what did the year 2001 have to do with *Star Wars* anyway?

Although this story is especially anecdotal, it nevertheless nicely illustrates the frequent linking and association of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and

Star Wars within the popular imagination as the two most memorable science fiction (hereafter, sf) films of New Hollywood. Yet, if *Star Wars*, together with the sf films of Steven Spielberg, is agreed to have paved the path for subsequent sf blockbusters, it is more difficult today to situate *2001: A Space Odyssey* within a film industrial production and reception context based in the consideration of genre. *2001: A Space Odyssey* stands out as the "significant" sf film of the sixties both popularly and critically.[1]

This situation is no doubt at least partially due to the film's scholarly and critical canonization, which has had the effect of privileging it over and above all other sf films of the period. That *2001: A Space Odyssey* overwhelms sf film criticism as such further exacerbates the situation. Stanley Kubrick's film is often surrounded by grandiose claims that it provides the unique

[1] For instance, *2001: A Space Odyssey* is number 3 on the aggregator site They Shoot Pictures Don't They? List of the "1000 Greatest Films" (www.theyshootpictures.com, as of 2/13/2014), number 15 on the AFI's Top 100 List (www.afi.com/docs/100years/movies100.pdf, as of 2/13/2014), number 19 on the IMDB's "Top 250" movie list (www.imdb.com, as of 2/9/2014) and is also included in Steven Jay Schneider (2003)'s popular *1000 Movies You Must See Before You Die*, Roger Ebert (2002)'s "The Great Movies" series, Jonathan Rosenbaum (2004a)'s list of "Essential Films," the *New York Times' Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made* (Nichols 1999), and the National Film Registry (www.loc.gov/film/registry_titles.php, as of 2/13/2014).

exception to the rule that sf cinema represents a poor excuse for intelligent entertainment, compared for instance to literary sf.

Sf scholar Carl Freedman, for instance, claims that although most sf aficionados consider sf genre films as "frankly escapist" "lightweight mass entertainment," *2001* is the only real instance of a serious and substantial sf film (1998, 300-31). For Joan Dean, likewise, *2001: A Space Odyssey* created the possibility for "artistically sound Science Fiction films" (1979, 33).[2] Such rhetoric is not purely post-facto but is also evident in the contemporaneous criticism of the film. A notable *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece by scientist Walt Lee, for instance, claims that "2001: A Space Odyssey" is the "first science-fiction motion picture to reach [a] level of intelligent speculation" (1968, C14).

This evaluation and canonization itself reveals three larger tendencies in film criticism. The first tendency is an emphasis on industrial histories, which privilege the production cycles of the Hollywood majors. Even within

[2] Dean claims that whereas *2001* "raised the genre to its apogee," *Star Wars* merely "raised box-office receipts to theirs" (1979, 32). Jonathan Rosenbaum likewise claims that *Star Wars* is the "anti-*2001*," a symbolic return to the "giddy space opera" sf mode of "*Flash Gordon*" (1997, 105-108). Robin Wood similarly coined the "Lucas-Spielberg Syndrome" to describe a blockbuster Hollywood ideology predicated on "childishness," "special effects," "imagination," and "nuclear anxiety" (1986, 162-174). For Freedman, *2001: A Space Odyssey* had "transcended" "classical narrative," while both *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) return the genre to the "lightweight mass entertainment" of the fifties cycle (1998, 301-304).

histories of the genre, the sixties is disregarded as a merely "transitional" period between the fifties cycle of Hollywood B-movies and a second cycle of films which emerged after the unexpected success of *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and culminated in earnest after the even greater successes of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977).[3] Thereupon, the modern sf blockbuster became a staple of New Hollywood. Drawing conclusions about the genre from existing historical film scholarship could easily lead one to the impression that very little sf material emerged in the sixties. Mark Harris's judgment that sf was "more than a decade out of style" at the time of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is possible only by focusing solely on the limited scope of the major studios' increasingly diminished A-output (2008, 285).[4]

The second tendency is the prejudice against considering art films within the context of genre. The exceptions to this rule are of course the auteurist New Hollywood films of generic "demythologization," which may be considered art films but which the industry marketed as genre films. The third is the choice to use genre in a purely evaluative sense and therefore eschew the consideration of genre's internal discourses. Doing so relies

[3] A prominent example is Manfred Nagl (1983)'s sf genre trajectory.

[4] Even then, Harris's judgment remains curious, considering the substantial presence of Hollywood sf on television and the persistence of the sf spectacle from the likes of George Pal and Irwin Allen.

instead on the notion of the sf film genre itself as a rhetorical category representing a universal exception to the significance a film such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* is said to provide.

Research Question

If a side effect of the canonization of *2001: A Space Odyssey* has been the obscuring of all other sixties sf films from the scholarly imagination, the research question of the present work is therefore: Can the sixties be said to provide a distinct *period* of sf cinema marked by specific overriding artistic tendencies (and of which *2001: A Space Odyssey* is an example)? If so, what frameworks and discourses define this period?

It should be established at the onset that at the very least (and contrary to scholarly acknowledgement) a large number of sf films were produced throughout the sixties not only within B-production contexts, but also *especially* within commercial prestige and art cinematic production. Rather than claiming Kubrick's film as the unique instance of inspired sf, I will instead argue that *2001: A Space Odyssey* was a relative latecomer in what had been a decade of artistic renewal for the genre. A film such as *On the Beach* (1959), which portrayed in detail the social and psychological effects of the world on the brink of utter extinction by radiation, provided a basis for considering a serious and intellectually challenging engagement

with the genre.[5] François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), which depicts a sterile and repressive future self-consciously composed of recognizable twentieth-century hallmarks—provides auteurism, art cinema narration, and genre subversion—avoiding sf clichés in favor of high modernist forms of distanciation to stress the genre's potential for thoughtful allegory. And if Jonathan Rosenbaum claimed *2001: A Space Odyssey* as a "contemplative" exploration of "intelligence" that resonates with the most recent films of Jean-Luc Godard (1997, 105-108), it should be recalled that Godard himself crafted two sf films in the sixties, *Il nuovo mondo* (a segment of the portmanteau film *Ro.Go.Pa.G* [1963]) and *Alphaville* (1965).

The sf sixties field contains a range of films from the auteurs of art cinema—including Chris Marker's *La jetée* (*La Jetée* or *The Jetty*, 1962), Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Tanin no kao* (*The Face of Another*, 1966), and Alain Resnais's *Je t'aime je t'aime* (1968), to name a few—as well as such significant oddities as *Barbarella* (1968), Richard Lester and Spike Milligan's *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969), and the speculative cycle of Cold War anxiety films including Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) and its companion *Fail-Safe* (1964), *The Bedford Incident* (1965), and Peter Watkins's pseudo-documentary of nuclear

[5] *On the Beach* was released in 1959. However, it has more in common with the sf films of the following years than those of the preceding.

catastrophe *The War Game* (1965). Italy also produced several remarkable sf films during this era, including Ugo Gregoretti's *Omicron* (1963), Elio Petri's *La decima vittima* (*The Tenth Victim*, 1965), and Marco Ferreri's *Il seme dell'uomo* (*The Seed of Man*, 1969). Sf looms large in films of the sixties: *Je t'aime Je t'aime* was to have opened the 1968 Cannes Film Festival. Furthermore, entirely absent from the scholarship is an acknowledgment that the Underground filmmakers were experimenting with sf sources and tropes in films including Mike Kuchar's *The Sins of the Fleshapoids* (1965) and Andy Warhol's *Vinyl* (1965).

But although a diverse number of sf films were certainly produced, this alone does not guarantee the existence of a coherent body of works with significant commonalities. Indeed, considering the diversity of the above list, it is perhaps unsurprising that the prevailing attitude has been to consider the sixties films as resistant to such aggregate classification. For instance, in tracing the development of commercial sf films from the 1900s to the early 1980s, sf scholar Manfred Nagl calls the sixties field a uniquely "heterogeneous body" (1983, 268). John Baxter likewise claims that the sixties cinematic sf field "presents a confused face to the world . . . generally adher[ing] to traditional concepts and approaches, but mixed with those of other fields" (1970, 195).

Answering the question of whether the sixties sf films are in any way

"united" by common visions does more than fill a gap in the scholarship on the history of sf cinema. It also holds significance for understanding the broader intellectual and aesthetic culture of which these films are a part. If works conceived within the auspices of the speculative sf genre are often considered documents of the fears and desires of their time of creation, then understanding sixties sf will help to enlighten further the ideological frameworks from within which filmmakers and audiences perceived an especially transformative historical period marked by rapid social and technological change. Furthermore, the answer to this question will provide an illustration of the value in evaluating films that elicit genre categories in emphatic ways but which are nevertheless ignored as generic products due to the discursive (industrial, taste-cultural, etc.) associations of a "genre" framework.

Sixties Genre Contexts

Considering even *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) within the context of genre is no simple matter since genre is an elusive category with competing models. Underlying this debate is that a genre is not a stable formal or archetypal category but rather an *ad hoc* descriptive category with a range of functions. Drawing from the work of several genre scholars including Andrew Tudor, Tom Gunning, and Rick Altman, Janet Staiger (1997) for instance

presents many such models. Nevertheless, one overarching function of generic classification within cinema is the practical aim of standardizing and differentiating formulaic products and marketing techniques in a Fordist mode of production like Classical Hollywood (Staiger 1997, 11). But beyond market differentiation, genres also provide a set of formal and narrative possibilities the emerging patterns of which open up a horizon of expectations for producers and viewers. The study of genre can therefore encompass the dynamics of the industry's production as well as the forms that emerge, including the wealth of generated discourses.

Focusing on the industrial definition of genre, Bradley Schauer has attempted to chart the increasing growth of sf from a B-level to A-level genre in the years 1950-1986. In doing so he has relied on the notion that prior to *Star Wars* (1977) sf consistently functioned as an "exploitation" genre due to a failure "to establish sf [sic] as a viable A-level genre in the 1950s (2010, 23)." Within the industrial context of Schauer's argument, high-profile films including *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) must remain exceptions to this rule. However, I argue that the Hollywood's big-budget production patterns hardly provide a sufficient context for understanding these sixties products within the context of genre. Doing so ignores the broader cultural position of sf and cinema. Not simply exceptions to a rule, films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Fahrenheit 451* are

emblems of a period in which both cinema *and* sf most clearly gave themselves to special artistic and critical attention. I argue that this is the clearest context for understanding the rise of a range of prestige, art, and experimental sf films.

Shyon Baumann has for instance claimed that the sixties in particular represented a multi-front effort to legitimate the cinematic medium in America by turning the film field of production into an "art world" (2007, 3).[6] According to Baumann, factors contributing to this development included the "growth of art house theaters," "the relaxation of film censorship," a shift toward a "director-centered system" and, especially, the "creation of a discourse of film as art," which he links to the influential position of film reviewers during this period (2007, 3). Indeed, film buffs certainly belong to "high culture" by the mid-seventies, according to American sociologist of taste Herbert Gans (1999, 115). Peter Cowie has claimed that the sixties wrought an international film "revolution" sparked by a "European filmmaking frenzy" that had gradually increased in the post-war years and which reached a watershed with the 1959 Cannes Film Festival's presentation of the French New Wave to the international film community (2004, 47). Through his discussion of the U.S. financing and production of the Euro-American art

[6] This argument draws on the theories of Howard Becker (1982), who posits "art worlds" as sub-cultural networks.

film, Peter Lev (1993) has shown that American institutions increasingly played a key role in the international film movement that followed. Similarly, American cinephiles participated in international film culture by cultivating simultaneous tastes for the many flavors of art cinema—including independent, experimental, and foreign films—especially in the largest urban centers such as New York and Los Angeles. *New Republic* film reviewer Stanley Kaufmann famously dubbed the critically inclined and youth-dominated audience of the era "the film generation" (Cowie 2004, 47).

This change in the cultural position of cinema that occurred in the sixties mirrored a similar shift in the field of literary sf during the same decade. Edward James for instance points out that by the time sf coalesced internationally as a recognized magazine genre around 1960 it was a polyglot cultural form like "the Hollywood movie" (1994, 54). But James claims that a push away from magazine publication toward novels in the fifties and sixties represented a move "toward greater literary respectability" (1994, 62). The sixties, therefore, seems to represent a cultural crossroads for sf between the magazine era represented by the flagship publication *Astonishing Science Fiction* and the respectable sf represented by the publication of an increasing number of "literary" novels just as it represents a crossroads for sf cinema between fifties exploitation films and films such as *Fahrenheit 451* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

During the sixties and seventies sf would further gain academic prominence due in part to its relationship with the left. This tendency would be epitomized by the theoretical writings of Darko Suvin, who claims that sf marries a *novum* (a speculative, anticipatory element driving the plot) with a form of "cognitive estrangement" in a manner fashioned after a Russian formalist understanding of *ostraneniye* (1979, 1).[7] Suvin's treatment of genre reminds us that central to modern film genre criticism is the notion that genre's schematic function extends beyond formal coherence into the realm of meaningfulness: generic conventions and expectations generate a horizon of interpretation. Meanings are embodied in iconography and formulas, which are structured by ideology.[8]

In cinema, the cultural mythos surrounding the American "frontier" habitually informs the Westerns. Sf likewise concerns the notions of enlightenment and progress. While the Western draws attention to history, sf often draws attention to considerations about the future and to interpretative

[7] Simon Spiegel (2008) considers Suvin's theorization of "cognitive estrangement" unfortunately imprecise. However, more pertinent perhaps is the long-standing *historical* alignment between leftists and Utopian thought as well as with sf literature, which includes Suvin.

[8] Wood (2003) provides the relevant treatise of this interpretation of genre.

frames based upon speculation and Utopian anticipation.[9] Suvin's linking of sf to both constructivist aesthetics and to the Marxist-inspired Utopian theorizations of Ernst Bloch further serves as a reminder that the writings and production culture of the sf "Golden Age" itself often provided fundamentally socialist alternatives to capitalist ideology [as noted for instance by Charles Elkins (1979, 25)]. Such overtly political aesthetic tendencies would also re-appear in the sixties, during which twenties and thirties aesthetics were recuperated to become a major trend in the visual

[9] The sociological analysis of sf cinema goes back at least as far as 1965 when, in "The Imagination of Disaster," Susan Sontag described the sf cinema since 1950 as a form of fantasy sublimating contemporary sociological and psychological concerns—notably the fear of the bomb—into visual spectacle. Although Sontag's essay is a sly appreciation of the popular genre, as an ideological critique her argument remarkably prefigures Fredric Jameson's more transparent adaptation of Frankfurt School arguments for cinema as a mass-culture force of reification in "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (1979) which utilizes as its primary example *Jaws* (1975). *Jaws*, with its band of masculine professionals banding together to route the film's nearly supernatural super-shark, contains, of course, more than a passing thematic and narrative resemblance to the sf invasion and monster films of the fifties, particularly *War of the Worlds* (1953) (which director Steven Spielberg later re-made himself in 2005). Peter Biskind (1983; 1985) further brings out this narrative commonality with his claim that fifties sf narratives are concerned with challenges to the social order rather than scientific anxieties *per se*, and Adam Knee has subsequently argued at length that the fifties films "narratively exemplify [the era's] containment culture' in their preoccupation with trying to observe and clarify borders of various kinds—conceptualized in gendered and racial terms" (1997, 20).

and performing arts.[10]

Within sixties sf, this overtly political context returned in the feminist and countercultural "new wave" sf literature as well as within prominent examples of sf cinema.[11] *Fail-Safe*, *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, and *The Bedford Incident* all have a history of reception as prominent progressive post-Cuban Missile Crisis social problem pictures (and are duly included in Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner's [1988] pantheon of Hollywood left-wing films of the era) but are not often considered within the context of the sf genre, despite being examples of speculative fiction relying on a narrative logic rooted in nova and various estrangement techniques.

The recuperation of sf cinema as a viable form of social critique was linked to the unsettled position of the film medium within the cultural hierarchy. In the sixties, filmgoing could offer a counter-cultural experience based in what Rosenbaum calls "the melting-pot": a cinema culture in which a cross-influence among avant-garde, European, and commercial American

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[10] Philip Glahn discusses of the significance of Bertold Brecht, for instance, throughout the "American arts community of the 1960s" (2007, 44-45).

[11] Rob Latham (2006) provides a history of the mid-sixties split in sf literature and fandom between "old" and "new." Christopher L. Leslie claims that the label "New wave" was a self-conscious attempt to link new trends in sf to the cinematic *Nouvelle Vague* (2007, 50).

films was rampant and all encompassing (2004b, 131; see also Hoberman and Rosenbaum 1983). "In New York," Cowie writes, "the passion for 'foreign movies' blended somewhat with the city's yen for experiment—documentary, and formal experimentation" (2004, 47). Film's potential to offer an activity of critical engagement, spectatorial experimentation, and a site for cultural and public exchange became more accepted, with an engaged "film generation" excited to partake in art films and Roger Corman films with equal voracity (Monaco 2003, 45). Overt generic manipulation is a frequently noted feature of this "melting-pot" context, as auteurist re-interpretations and inversions of generic tropes function in concert with the perverse spectatorship of savvy audiences already accustomed to reading films "against the grain."

While it is often claimed that even within Classical Hollywood, genre could prove a usefully malleable system,[12] when the opportunity arises to create a film outside the context of genre, the playful interrogation, undermining, and mutation of generic expectations remain key cinematic authorship strategies. However, when considering the difference between *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars*, it is hardly sufficient to note simply

[12] See for instance, Staiger (1997). This notion is also the basis for Andrew Sarris's (1996) brand of auteurism.

that both films provide examples of auteurist and potentially revisionist sf.[13] What is missing from this equation is a dynamic framework to account for the various ways in which genre formulas may be invoked within their historical production and reception contexts. Investigating genre subversion as an element of alternative or oppositional practice even within the commercial system provides the basis for a sincere critique of claims that the sixties hybrid forms provided resistance to commercial and ideological norms, that is, aside from their incorporation of taste-connoted markers representing alternative practices. Genre subversion would seem to allow for impurity even at a film's most apparently commercial, conformist level. If a film such as *Star Wars* would seem to de-radicalize the use of sf to a greater extent than *2001: A Space Odyssey*, this judgment can become clear only through systematic comparison of the services into which each film conscripts the sf genre, as the films' most readily apparent "code." Likewise, a broader historical genre context is needed to take into account the defining discourses

[13] The Western is perhaps most associated with sixties and seventies genre revisionism, yet both *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars* invoke the Western notion of the "frontier" (reconfigured as the frontier of space). However, whereas *2001* concerns the notion of a "frontier" to represent the traversal of both material and paradigmatic boundaries through scientific advancement (thereby indicating a meta-generic movement rather than a true genre subversion), *Star Wars* merely utilizes the space frontier as a "threshold" of the hero's journey.

a genre engages and mediates within a given historical period.

The sixties historical context almost demanded an evolution of the sf genre, a coming-of-age. Rocketship stories, for instance, were suddenly transforming from flights of fancy to prophetic predictions of the rapidly accelerated space race following the Sputnik launch. At the same time, nuclear disaster stories personalized the threat of catastrophe.[14] Therefore, I maintain that in the sixties, the sf genre existed not only as a horizon of interpretation but also as a broader media frame (Goffman 1986) for the intrusion of these preoccupations into the hermeneutics of everyday life.

Thus, the body of sixties sf films can be understood not merely as an industrial cluster but as a partial map of the terrain of popular myths and daydreams the sixties generated. After all, going beyond the context provided

[14] During the sixties, overlapping popular scientific and sf cultural tropes saturated the industries of popular culture, turning up with increasing ubiquity as they became established within the cultural repertoire: In *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965-1970), for instance, Captain Nelson (Larry Hagman) is an astronaut. And even Disney's 1961 film remake of the 1903 Victor Herbert operetta *Babes in Toyland* now featured a raygun with "molecular discharges." *Quisp* cereal, introduced in 1965, featured a space alien as its cartoon mascot, following in the tradition of thirties and fifties children's sf advertisement. In 1962, a series of advertisements by electronics manufacturer Carson-Roberts, Inc. had featured sf stories "written expressly for the campaign by well-known science-fiction authors" based on the premise that "the science fiction angle should vastly increase readership of the ads"—presumably, by adults interested in "advanced electronic equipment" (*New York Times*, May 1 1962, 47).

by formal film genre criticism and film scholarship, it seems clear that the connections between sf and sixties pop culture are multiple and extend to the far reaches of North American and European culture: the Apollo missions should be noted first and foremost, but also evident should be the popular futurism exemplified by Expo '67, the advertising industry's embrace of tropes from sf and the "space age," the still-resonating cultural impact of the fifties sf film boom, the growing legitimation of sf literature and theory, and the sf-inflected futurist rhetoric of American cultural "visionaries" as diverse as Marshall McLuhan, Alvin Toffler, and Timothy Leary. Donal Henahan's contemporaneous review of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, for instance reveals that for at least some critics of the era, Kubrick's film was seen as part of a general popular body of works that melded *avant-gardism*, modernism, futurism, and futurology (1968, D11).

In the sixties, space travel often represented a Utopian attitude toward progress mirroring the hippie movement. For Fredric Jameson, "the sixties" itself denotes a "sense of freedom and possibility" which existed objectively as a function of generated surplus consciousness (1984, 208).[15] The pervasiveness of sf in the era may be used to reflect on this claim. In more concrete terms of material progress, philosopher Nicholas Rescher points out

[15] It was also an illusion, he claims, which emerged from the "play" of the superstructural movement into postmodernism.

that the general sixties Utopian feeling was escalated by economic and technological advancement which led to the sense that people were living in a "high-tech era of nuclear power, space exploration, computerization, and robotization" (1997, 97-98). Arthur Marwick further elucidates sixteen cultural "developments" which occurred beginning after 1958-1959 but ending ca. 1973 which were marked by "a high element of willed human agency" as well as "economic, technological, or demographic imperatives [that] were of greatest importance" (2012, 15-18). Sf can therefore be understood as a venue in which to explore futuristic developments and their discursive resonances. Reflecting this timeline, Brian Aldiss (2004) notes that by 1975 sf could no longer indicate the zeitgeist. For instance, "Project Apollo was mothballed, and the space race was over. With it went a substantial reason for the existence of science fiction, for which space travel was an article of faith" (Aldiss 2004, 510).[16] This dissertation attempts, therefore, to broadly locate the sf cinema which seemed to emerge and dissipate along with the "sixties" moment.

[16] Aldiss further links a mid-seventies re-orientation in the genre with the renewed success of *The Lord of the Rings* novels (2004, 510). Together, these two influences seem to me significant as a cultural background for the creation of *Star Wars*.

Sample of Films

For the purposes of this dissertation, the texts contained under the broad heading of "sixties sf cinema" will be represented by a diverse sample of one hundred-fifty films I viewed over a period of approximately two years, amounting to approximately one-quarter of the total number of sf films produced in Europe, Japan and the United States during the period 1959-1971.[17] Because I am re-casting sf as a broad cultural frame invoked and adapted to various modes of production, I have sought a sample of films more diverse than it is statistically representative. That is, I have included a range of films from producer/genre and director-centered production ventures large and small—the total field of commercially exhibited films—but at the expense of a large number of Italian and Japanese B-productions (as these countries dominated the genre's B-production during these years) which in any case tend toward the most formula standardization and repetition. By no means will B-productions be ignored. Rather, one of my goals will be to consider whether generic resonances can be observed across modes of production.

While it may seem odd to focus the analysis of sf across various

[17] Even then, if my secondary literature is considered, an even larger number of films were considered. This is true also of the body of fifties films, of which I viewed fifty for the purposes of this project and encountered dozens more within primary and secondary production and reception literature.

distinct modes of production, and while sf is hardly the *only* frame within which many of these films may be considered, all of the films under consideration nevertheless reveal contemporaneous reception (and usually, production) histories referencing them as "science fiction" and/or "sci-fi." It is for this very reason that the sixties sf films seem ripe for broad aggregate analysis in order to determine which horizons of meaning these descriptors entailed.

I may however note a number of more specific blind spots in my sample. Both spy genre films [e.g., the James Bond franchise] and broadly comic family films [e.g., *The Absent-Minded Professor* (1961) and *The Nutty Professor* (1963)] are excluded despite their general relevance to the topic of sixties sf culture, largely because both groups entail substantial corpuses the principle frameworks for which are only tangential to sf.[18]

Additionally, the present dissertation will not provide an extended discussion of sixties sf television. Looking in-depth at television in the present analysis would greatly enlarge the project's scope while also altering the principle dynamics of the present project—that is, the relation between sixties International film culture and sf and its significance across the West in various modes of production. It would for instance necessarily bias this

[18] *PlayTime* (1967), which may be considered an example of the second type, is however included due to focus on modernist urbanization.

project toward American production due to the relatively limited availability of non-U.S. sf television from this period (with a few notable exceptions including the surviving episodes of *Doctor Who*). I have however included two exceptions to this rule: the BBC telefilms *The War Game* (1965, which was shot on film and ultimately shown theatrically rather than broadcast) and *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968), neither of which are, in any case, serials.

Exploring sf television in a comprehensive way may further beg the question of sf literature, theater, comics, and so on. The genre context this dissertation attempts to provide in the domain of cinema may in the future inform a broader analysis of sf across sixties media.

Findings and Chapter Outline

Despite the supposed heterogeneity of sixties sf, the films—as well as a significant number of available primary and secondary reception materials and the production materials available for *On the Beach* (1959) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1966)—lead to the conclusion that the diverse period of sf film production beginning in 1959 (and corresponding with the beginning of a large "gap" in major Hollywood film production) was indeed a fairly coherent period marked by critical, intellectual engagement with three overarching themes of widespread social and cultural significance. These themes, which

correspond to the three "new" faces of sf literature Raymond Williams outlined in 1956, are Disaster ("Doomsday"), Dystopia ("Putropia"), and Exploration ("Space Anthropology").[19] Although these themes also tended to dominate the fifties sf cycle, the sixties films re-imagined each sub-genre in ways that deviated significantly from their fifties determinants.[20] After discussing the evolution of these forms in Chapter One, I will provide critical surveys of each sub-generic type in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Throughout, I consider the textual and discursive parameters of each sub-genre in relation to these overarching sub-generic themes.[21]

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[19] Although Williams's context is sf literature (short stories, novellas, and novels), he is concerned in the broadest possible sense with the contemporaneous utopian and dystopian discourses seeming to structure (and indicated by) this corpus. His analysis of sf literature is therefore as much an analysis of the state of the popular cultural imagination generally as it is a broad review of the literary sub-categories of the pulp sf field. For this reason, I find it reasonable to use his categories—so borne out paradigmatically in the sample —as a scaffold for the current project. Indeed, this approach became an elegant solution to the problem of "grouping" sixties sf cinema's major tendencies.

[20] I supplemented the research of my primary objects by viewing and reviewing reception materials and secondary literature on fifty films from the years 1950-1958.

Throughout my research, I discovered that sixties sf cinema rarely seemed to express a naïve form of Utopianism. Rather, sf is often as much about dystopia and the horrors of science as it is about the hope for progress. For this reason, sixties sf seems to share with the theorists of the Frankfurt school a sense of Jewish messianism. Just as the nostalgia of the loss of the temple always tempers the hope for the messiah, the promise of Utopia is always tempered by its impossibility, encapsulating the dialectic of enlightenment and the logos of death-drive.

In Chapter Two, I therefore begin with the era's nuclear disaster stories, which focused on the threat of total nuclear annihilation, in prestige films such as *On the Beach* (1959), *Fail-Safe* (1964), and *The Bedford Incident* (1965). These films incorporated the social drama and psychological thriller formulas. European existentialist treatments such as Godard's *Il nuovo mondo* (1962) and Ferreri's *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969) meanwhile translated nuclear disaster into art cinema. I also discuss cases in which the nuclear

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[21] In the present work, I do not therefore pursue extended analysis of individual films on the isolated aesthetic levels of visual design, score, etc. This is not to say that these dimensions of analysis are either unimportant or unrelated to the films' generic horizons. The present work is concerned rather with broad generic classification on the basis of narrative themes and the relation of these sf themes to the larger culture. For this reason, I will note the films' aesthetic tendencies only to the extent that are overt and/or reveal an overt connection to sixties stylistic flashpoints (such as Pop art).

scenario is infused with absurd comedy, including Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), Lester and Milligan's *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969), and Corman's *Gas! – Or It Became Necessary to Destroy the World in Order to Save It* (also known as *Gas-s-s-s*, 1970). Finally, I consider these nuclear disaster forms within the context of Utopian negation.

In Chapter Three, I examine the era's wide range of future dystopia stories as articulations of the era's Huxleyian imagination. Films discussed include Godard's *Alphaville* (1965), Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), George Lucas's *THX-1138* (1971), Petri's *La decima vittima* (1965), and Ferreri's *Marcia nuzale* (*The Wedding March*, 1965), all of which paint a portrait of a tragicomic dystopian future, impersonal and anodyne, combining features of communism and modern bourgeois life. I also note cases in which an estranged present-day scenario is presented as dystopian, including Jacques Tati's *PlayTime* (1967), Gregoretti's *Omicron* (1963), Teshigahara's *Tanin no kao* (1966), and John Frankenheimer's *Seconds* (1966). Finally, I situate the era's future dystopian fables that comment on youth counterculture, either as a force of good or ill, including *Work Is a 4-Letter Word* (1968), Peter Watkins's *Privilege* (1967), Robert Harris's *Ice* (1970), Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and the infamous *Wild in the Streets* (1968).

Finally, in Chapter Four, I examine films relating to Williams's "Space

Anthropology" and exploration of various sorts. In films including Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* (1968), Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964), the figure of the astronaut provides an avatar of human progress. Meanwhile, films including the French time travel stories such as Marker's *La jetée* (1962), Resnais's *Je t'aime Je t'aime* (1968), and Robert Benayoun's *Paris n'existe pas* (*Paris Does Not Exist*, 1969) are more concerned with the traversal of "inner" space. In *2001: A Space Odyssey,* as well as Corman's *X, the Man With X-Ray Eyes* (1963) and David Cronenberg's *Stereo* (1969), progress is considered within the frame of human evolution.

Chapter One: The Rise of Sixties SF Cinema

In this chapter, I will present three essential background elements for the analysis of sixties sf films. In order to isolate the historic moment of sixties sf, its specific structures and features, its iconography and formulas, its interpretative horizon, and, broadly, the hermeneutic frame it provides, I will provide a brief history of sf before ca. 1959—when I claim a change in the genre's trajectory became apparent. I will then discuss a few specific changes that led to the sixties sf cinema's specificity, including broad cultural and political transitions and taste-cultural and industrial organizational realignments in both film and sf. Finally, I will describe the dimensions of sixties sf cinema the further analysis of which will comprise the subsequent chapters.

Sf is of course a broad category of cultural, for example literary, forms with a long history. A precise top-down definition of the genre is difficult, but one can at least say that contemporary sf is commonly understood as a particular narrative combination of speculation, "hard" science, and "space opera," which can be traced in the U.S. to its dispersal through the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*. Sf historian Edward James claims that although the term "science fiction" was first used as early as 1929 in this context, contemporary sf as such did not emerge as a clear genre distinct from either

Utopian fiction or fantasy-adventure until the late thirties in America, when *Astounding* editor John W. Campbell made a self-conscious effort to avoid outright fantasy (1994, 56).[1] In the stories of sf's "golden age," wonder was therefore married with speculation based in scientific possibility.

Brian Aldiss enriches the notion that sf is a hybrid of Utopian scientific

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[1] Sf writer and historian Thomas Disch looks back as far as proto-sf author Edgar Allen Poe to reveal an earlier example of the scorn that America's conservative highbrow critics heaved onto "fantasy": "though Poe was read by his own countrymen, he was read grudgingly" (1998, 35). But what is most remarkable about the criticism of Poe is the way in which its rhetoric seems to remain consistent with later middle-class attacks on sf. T.S. Eliot, for instance, wrote: "That Poe had a powerful intellect is undeniable: but it seems to me the intellect of a highly gifted young person before puberty. The forms which his lively curiosity takes are those in which a pre-adolescent mentality delights . . . " (cited in Disch 1998, 35). Of course, Poe was quite popular among the literari of Britain and Europe. As I read Eliot's criticism and imagine the ideal reader with a "pre-adolescent mentality," I cannot help but be reminded of the "man child" prevalent in fifties and sixties media depictions: characters like Jerry Lewis's Eugene Fullstack from *Artists and Models* (1955)—emotionally stunted and obsessed with sci-fi and comics. Indeed, in the fifties, sci-fi seems to have fit into a whole cultural constellation of maladjusted male adolescence that represented the cheap magazine's immediate descendents: adventure, sf and horror stories in print, on celluloid, in the comics, and on the television screen. And by the fifties, many of these forms were under attack from the guardians of American middle-class culture. Comic books most famously came under the attack of psychologists such as Frederic Wertham, whose *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) spurred a Congressional investigation into the anti-social tendencies of crime and horror comics, leading to the industry's self-regulatory Comics Code.

literature and of Fantasy, or Romance, by claiming that sf literature occupies a spectrum between the "Wellsian" impulse of productive speculation about the real world (based on reasoned reflection upon existing and possible science) and the "Edgar Rice Burroughsian" impulse of speculation about some daydream world (based on fantasy extrapolation of a flight of fancy). These two impulses represent the "thinking" and "dreaming" poles of the genre (Aldiss 1974, 9). In cinema, one can see equivalent proto-sf cinema of both Utopian and space fantasy types. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and *Die Frau im Mond* (*The Woman in the Moon*, 1929) and the British *Things to Come* (1936) are prototypical of the "thinking pole," while the cosmic/futuristic serials such as Universal's *Flash Gordon* (1936) and *Buck Rogers* (1939) represent the genre's "dreaming pole."

For many scholars (including Richard Hodgens, Vivian Sobchack, Bradley Shauer, and others), genuine sf cinema did not however emerge until 1950, when the release of *Destination Moon* bolstered the popularization of the concept of a "science-fiction film." And indeed, *Destination Moon* (based on a story by pulp sf writer Robert Heinlein) balances these generic tendencies in the manner of a travel documentary, continually shifting attention between scientific details of a trip to the moon and marveling at the

feat.[2]

A nascent prestige sense of sf parallels the appearance of sf cinema as the literary genre saw a general rise in popularity and US middle-class acceptance between 1940-1960 marked by the growth of a market for paperbacks by authors including Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury.[3] During this period, leading respected mainstream authors around the world, including Vladimir Nabokov, Kingsley Amis, Kobo Abe, and Italo Calvino, also began to praise and adapt the genre to their own work.

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[2] This combination of didacticism and visualization provides a link between sf and documentary. Steven Spielberg memorably evokes this tendency in *Jurassic Park* (1993) when an animated film is used to describe the *novum*.

[3] Nevertheless, even in 1960 the reticence to embrace sf as a legitimate cultural form is evident, for instance, in Robert Plank's article "Science Fiction," published in *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Plank, a clinical social worker at the Mental Hygiene Clinic of the Cleveland, Ohio, Veterans Administration, is a great fan of the socially reflective powers of Utopian literature and some "high-brow science-fiction" but remains skeptical of the genre. Although "we know that there is highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow science fiction," Planks writes, "we do not know what weight to assign to each, and we do not know to what extent we can assume that changes in style pioneered by leading magazines will filter through to the rest of the field" (1960, 804). Plank maintains that the sf is often marked by an "oddity" that attracts psychiatric patients (1960, 799).

Cinematic SF in Transformation

As is often noted, the fifties sf films, almost exclusively B-movies, were often seen to represent the worst tendencies of the genre. They often raised the ire of critics and audiences, who soon grew tired of their predictable formulas. After *Rocketship X-M* (1950) and *Destination Moon* established the space exploration formula, Hollywood adapted notable sf stories, many of which cemented additional narrative types. Twentieth Century-Fox's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) (based on 1940's "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates), Paramount's *War of the Worlds* (1953) (based on the proto-pulp novel by H.G. Wells), Universal-International's *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), and RKO's *The Thing from Another World* (1951) (based on John W. Campbell's 1938 *Astounding* story "Who Goes There?") established a trend of alien visitation stories. Warner Bros.'s *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1952) (based on Ray Bradbury's 1951 "The Fog Horn") and *Them* (1954), with its massive mutant ants, created a predictable atomic monster formula, which was soon adapted internationally by, for instance, *Gojira* (*Godzilla*, 1954). Though they adapted stories from the sf landscape, these films existed in the proto-sf category of the "weirdie," an industry term Thomas Doherty claims denoted "offbeat" tales based in something bizarre and ominous: a monster, an alien, an affliction, a mutation, invading into the modern American world

(2002, 119).[4]

Even the U.S. critics who admired sf literature rejected the Hollywood sf weirdies due to the perception that they were anti-scientific in emphasis and too rigidly followed exploitation formulas. For instance, in the 1959 essay "A Brief, Tragical History of the Science Fiction Film," Hodgens claimed that sf in the cinema was stuck in a low-brow pulp stage of evolution and was unable to advance because of the visual and narrative limitations provided in its cinematic form (1959, 37). A notable comparison between literary and cinematic appraisals of sf can be drawn between Campbell's story "Who Goes There" and its adaptation as RKO's *The Thing from Another World*. Concerning the source story, James writes:

> The plot was relatively standard pulp, but the treatment was not. Apart from the fact that the author provided a grittily realistic setting, with a highly effective sense of tension and suspense, the crux of the story was the premise which was to fuel more modern sf: that the laws of science are universal, and that problems can be solved by using

[4] It is possible that Doherty overemphasizes the industry usage of the term "weirdie" as I have been unable to find consistent use of the term in the industry press (as opposed to, for instance, "sci-fi.") and most subsequent sources using the term cite Doherty. However, I will continue to use the term for the sake of expedience as it is a remarkably useful category for discussing the overlapping use of "uncanny" conventions in horror, sf, thrillers, and melodramas in the post-war years.

the logic of science. (1994, 50)

Hodgens cites *The Thing from Another World*, by contrast, as a prime example of the ways in which film adaptation mangled sf. Whereas the horrific creature of the story was presented as a true enigma, the film inserted the pat and fashionable explanation of a flying saucer. The creature itself became merely a combination of Dracula and Frankenstein's monster, "reduced to this strange combination of familiar elements in the belief that the original idea—the idea which made the story make sense—was too complex" (Hodgens 1959, 34). Furthermore, "the most stupid character in the film is the most important scientist . . . And the film ended with a warning to all mankind: 'Watch the skies' for these abominably dangerous Flying Saucers" (Hodgens 1959, 34). In other words, it seemed as though both the iconographical and formula expectations of *horror* replaced the intelligent speculation and hard science that characterized the earlier story. Reflecting this position, Joan Dean claims the goal of the extraterrestrial cycle of the fifties is "the creation of fear, pity, horror, suspense or awe in the audience" rather than intellectual engagement (1979, 33).[5]

Doherty (2002) explains that fifties sf films are weirdies first, and sf second, as many of the films of the fifties sf cycle had indeed been concocted

[5] *The Nation* critic Robert Hatch especially lauded *2001* for straying from melodrama, which he called "the natural habitat of science fiction" (1968, 74).

as part of a larger strategy to corner the teenage (and pre-teen) horror exploitation film market. Doherty claims that as teenagers became the largest film audience, producers provided them with the rock n' roll cycle, the juvenile delinquent cycle, and fifties horror and sf cycle. After all, as sf had been established as a popular genre in pulp magazines, comics, radio, and serials over the preceding decades, it was a natural choice for cinematic adaptation—especially to compete with television, which had begun adapting sf as early as the forties.

By the middle of the fifties, however, the sf weirdie had seemed to have already exhausted its plot possibilities, and producers, critics, and audiences began to sour on the increasingly prolific genre. In a later, historical evaluation, Douglas Menville would claim that "the year 1956 produced quantity but little quality in the way of science-fiction," and this criticism bears out in contemporaneous reviews and articles in *Variety*, which had become increasingly hostile to sf—although this hostility is evident earlier, based for instance on the scathing reviews received by the juvenile robot film *Tobor the Great* (1954) (1975, 119). By 1957, the apparently frivolous field was entitled "sci-fi"—a new disparaging term of fad-commodification. The minor studios and independents had come to dominate the genre by quickly producing and exploiting bad, inexpensive sci-fi pictures, leaving the majors scrambling to develop bigger and better sf films but afraid that they could not

compete with the independents at their own game. By the autumn of 1958, both the majors and the independents had begun to slow their production (McCann 1977, 38).[6]

In keeping with an industry-wide trend toward "frank" pictures dealing with "adult subjects," exploitation producers were moving from the fifties teenpic genres into the territory laid out by Hollywood's Tennessee Williams adaptations. In November of 1958, for instance, the small Nacirema studio announced a switch from "horror-sci-fi-teenage" films to "controversial, problem films" as the former was "drying up" (*Daily Variety* November 6, 1958, 6). As the industry changed, Universal executive Jack H. Harris claimed to "[see] a dim future for sci-fi pix" (*Variety* December 4, 1958, 1).

But sf would soon be revitalized as a new form of prestige sf product emerged. George Pal's contract with Columbia was ended only to find the director hired by MGM. Whereas Pal's MGM project *The Time Machine* (1960) would continue to embody the traditional Hollywood visual

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[6] United Artists reported that it would end production of sf, citing "disgust" with the standards of the genre (*Daily Variety* August 6, 1958, 1). Even AIP, for whom sf films directed by Roger Corman [such as *Not of This World* (1957)] had become highly lucrative, began having problems, assuring exhibitors that they would be providing more "planning, production values, and novelty" in their future products (*Daily Variety* September 8, 1958, 6).

presentation of quality,[7] both *On the Beach* (1959) and the less-successful nuclear disaster film *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959) are deep-focus black and white social-problem pictures.[8] Here, I do not wish to claim that these were the first films to take these stylistic or thematic directions. Rather, a few years earlier, films such as Jack Arnold's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) and Walter Wanger's production of Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) had each attempted to enrich the earlier tradition of the so-called "weirdies" with introspective and hard-hitting screenplays, but these works were not successfully differentiated as prestige or adult films by Hollywood or the critics. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, considered in retrospect a classic, arrived in 1956 with little fanfare and almost no press. At that time, only the earlier prestige mode of

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[7] This occasioned an interview in *Variety*:

> Admitting there seems to be no particular decrease in the smaller sci-fi pic, producer said there probably always would be a public for this type, since many want to be among the first day's audience to catch these films. However, he pointed out, these generally play out after only mediocre returns with the heavy grosses accruing to those pix which have been made with sincere intention, rather than with the pitch merely for a fast buck. Pal likened the sci-fi classification to the western: Both must be made as important features if they are to enjoy heavy public reaction. (*Daily Variety* January 1, 1959, 10)

[8] The differences between the two are indicative of the distinction between the "two forms of prestige" described by Chris Cagle (2007).

color spectacle was understood as acceptable for a prestige sf mode and was vigorously pursued with *Forbidden Planet*. But *On the Beach* provided the expectations for future "adult sci-fi" (*Daily Variety* March 17, 1959, 2) [as did *The Twilight Zone* (1959)].

Ironically, several elements of the earlier fifties films would prove significant for this new type of socially relevant prestige product. After all, it was the fifties sf films that first capitalized on plots ripped from the headlines and the pages of *Popular Science*—taking advantage of a vogue for science and following from a narrative-standard established by the first film of the cycle, *The Flying Saucer* (1950). This led to the generic association of sf with the present rather than the fantastic extreme future scenarios of the previous Utopian and space fantasy films.[9]

A second, and related, reason is that a few Hollywood filmmakers had pioneered the use of the introspective, complex story as a variation on the social problem picture, to produce films that "meant something." Peter

[9] A "realistic" black and white look was also pioneered by the fifties cycle. Critic Moira Walsh of *America* opines that *Them* "furnishes the basis for the best science-fiction film since *The Thing*. The reason is simply that everything about the picture except its premise is perfectly logical and normal. Its cast goes about the fearsome task of destroying the ants in absorbingly detailed *semi-documentary* style" (1954, 367). Likewise, the *Newsweek* review notes that "its clear, realistic photography is in prosaic black and white; its characters have an everyday credibility. And so the way is prepared to make its ghastly developments more or less believable (*Newsweek* June 7, 1954, 56).

Biskind for instance characterizes *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *It Came from Outer Space*, both of which featured alien messengers urging pacifism, as examples of Hollywood "left-wing" sf, "imagin[ing] a Utopian alternative to the [ideological] center,"[10] and indeed, director Robert Wise claims that he chose *The Day the Earth Stood Still* project due to its strong anti-war message (1985, 157).[11]

However, it was not until near the end of the fifties that American sf was truly combined with the style and formulae of the liberal social problem picture, and this trend began not in film but on television with Rod Serling's "The Time Element" (1958), which used the *novum* of time-travel to address the problem of psychological trauma incurred by decades of modern warfare. In this hour-long story for *Westinghouse Desilu Playhouse*, a man, played by William Bendix, visits a psychiatrist, played by Martin Balsam, claiming that his recurring nightmare of the invasion of Pearl Harbor is too realistic to be a dream, and therefore he must be going back in time. The analogical quality of

[10] *It Came from Outer Space* producer William Alland, who called the film "the most political I ever got" (Buhle and Wagner 2003, 78), had been a member of the Communist Party "intermittently from the late 1930s to the late 1940s" (Buhle and Wagner 2003, 78).

[11] At least, according to the director's recent recollections, captured in the interview/commentary on the currently available DVD. Mark Jancovich goes even further, claiming that as a body sf films of the fifties can be viewed as "critical texts" (1996, 30).

this narrative framework simply bubbles over with implications. Contrasting romanticized tableaux of pre-WWII Hawaii with a stark urban present, "The Time Element" insinuates that the seventeen-year period since the war represents a collective nightmare. Subtle and overt references to Cold War anxiety abound.

The Twilight Zone followed "The Time Element," compressing its theme and others in a new novum of the week. Gerald Duchovnay (2008) points out the subtle subversion of such a strategy: Serling turned to fantasy and sf only after being criticized for social realist plays such as *Patterns* (1953), for which he was labeled a "communist." The turn to sf can therefore be seen as a strategy for indirectly articulating critical content, shielded by the genre's ostensible claims to innocuous entertainment, as well as the ambiguous form of analogy the genre provides.[12]

Following *On the Beach* and *The World*, *the Flesh, and the Devil*, the films *Fail-Safe* (1964), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), and *The Bedford*

[12] Similarly, M. Keith Booker (2001) claims that the Golden Age of sf fiction can be seen as forming a part of this trend of socialist futurology although popular U.S. leftism became increasingly veiled in Red Scare-era America. Nevertheless, works such as Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series can be analyzed as Marxist parables. However, Booker reminds his readers, "If Asimov, Pohl, Vonnegut and Barzman leaned heavily to the Left, it is also the case that major figures such as Ray Bradbury, and especially, Heinlein leaned to the right" (2001, 48).

Incident (1965), all noted by Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner as examples of Hollywood's "creeping leftism," retain a speculative frame and treat the technology leading to destruction as a *novum* (1988, 3). Of course, at this time the historical convergence between "mere" speculation and scientific actuality was no doubt responsible for a continually rising interest in sf, which surely began to look more like future history. With the Cold War developments of Sputnik and mutually assured-destruction, once purely fantasy scenarios seemed not only possible, but all too probable. After the Cuban missile crisis, such parallels would no doubt seem only clearer. And so the possibilities for sf continued to expand as its iconography and formulas came to represent a genre of potential social criticism.

Outside of the United States sf was also becoming established as a medium of the avant-garde.[13] Aldiss for instance notes that for decades "well-known [British and European] authors occasionally wrote futuristic or satiric or surreal tales that could be construed as science fiction" (2004, 510). By the sixties, French theorist Michel Carroughes positions sf within a constellation of "anticipatory literature [*literature d'anticipation*], a genre which includes

[13] The discursive relationship between sf and high modernist practice can be noted at several points in the sixties even in the United States. In 1964, *Variety*'s theater reviews labeled a stage version of *The Martian Chronicles* "a kind of sci-fi Harold Pinter or Samuel Beckett" (*Daily Variety* October 16, 1964, 6). Indeed, Beckett's own *The Lost Ones* (1966) is sometimes interpreted as sf (Dowd 2007, 125; Poruch 1986, 87-98).

sf as well as Utopian fiction, surrealist poetry and the writings of such authors as Raymond Roussel and J.L. Borges," while sf writer and theorist Jacques Sternberg, who wrote the scenario for Alain Resnais's 1968 time-travel film *Je t'aime Je t'aime* is able to present sf as the heir "of [Alfred] Jarry's 'Pataphysics' and of Surrealism" (Fitting 1974, 173-176).[14]

In Italy, so-called *fantascienza* became an alternative for writers and filmmakers who wished to retain their focus on social parables while branching out from the established style of neo-realism (Marwick 2012, 149).[15]

Emerging amid the meteoric rise of European art cinema, the increasing vogue for sf in Great Britain, France, and Italy created the

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[14] Michael Ashley notes that when magazine sf began to appear in Japan in the fifties the form was understood "as a sideline of surrealism and was thus highly regarded" (2005, 318). The relationship between surrealism and sf (especially those sf stories of an explicitly critical variety) can be traced back as early as the 1917 roots of surrealism as *surnaturalism* in the writings of Guillaume Apollinaire. Apollinaire claims a *constructed* reality of "superior naturalism" as paradoxically closer to reality than traditions founded upon principles of realism. Apollinaire claimed that the "truth" of nature could be more easily found in non-mimetic representations that utilized the form of allegory or fable (Fer, Batchelor and Wood 1993, 63; see also Bohn (1977).

[15] Italo Calvino's *Le Cosmicomiche* (1965) is perhaps the most prominent example.

conditions for a cycle of "art house" sf production in Europe, represented by the foundation of the Trieste Science Fiction Film Festival in 1963. By December of 1964, Jean-Luc Godard decided to make *Alphaville* and eight months later it won both the Berlin Film Festival and the third Trieste Science Fiction Festival, revealing a critical willingness to accept sf—art cinema productions as exemplars of both categories.[16] By the end of the decade, dozens of additional sf art films would be produced. Like the emerging Hollywood prestige films, sf art films would reflect the three sub-generic sf types Raymond Williams detected: nuclear disaster, dystopia, and exploration.

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[16] The British *The Mind Benders* (1963), which won the grand prize, was reviewed not only as "a sharp contrast to the 'mass market' product usually associated with American International" but even as "a novel and adult approach to sci-fi that makes the film more suitable as an art house candidate than for general release" (*Daily Variety* March 1, 1963, 3). Second Annual Trieste winner *The Damned* (1964) was also lauded for its artistry and creativity (*Weekly Variety* July 29, 1964, 5). In September 1963, a report appeared that Samuel Bronston Productions has purchased the rights to *Brave New World* "originally considered a hi-brow sci-fi fiction work, 'World' has since become a literary classic" (*Daily Variety* September 3, 1963, 2). By 1968, *2001* would be mentioned alongside such other high-brow sf products as *Alphaville*, *Fahrenheit 451*, Michael Cocoyannis's *The Day the Fish Came Out* (1967), Alain Resnais's *Je t'aime Je t'aime*, Ingmar Bergman's *Skammen* (*Shame*, 1968), and Peter Hall's *Work Is a 4-Letter Word* (1968) (*New York Times* November 19 1967, 137).

Three Interlocking Discourses: Disaster, Dystopia, and Exploration

If the thirties had been the golden age of Utopian sf futures on the screen from the grand modern technology-driven social experiments of *Things to Come* (1936) to the seemingly endless miraculous technological solutions of the *Flash Gordon* (1936) serial, the fifties turned decisively to disaster and dystopian scenarios. In this era, the mythic spectacles of Biblical wrath, going back to the hubris of Moloch's worshippers in *Metropolis* (1927), reached an apogee in film in the alien invasion and planetary disaster cycles. In his study of the fifties sf cultural context, Adam Knee has argued that the fifties Hollywood films "narratively exemplify [the era's] 'containment culture'" in their preoccupation with trying to observe and clarify borders of various kinds—conceptualized in gendered and racial terms" (1997, 20). In keeping with this claim, space anthropology films concerned aliens who provided profound *others,* and dystopia in fifties sf is most frequently explored through human protagonists' encounters with crumbling alien civilizations.[17] Often, these alien societies, through the rule of intelligence and with the help of unemotional robots, were thinly veiled figures of Soviet communism whose "central planning" bore the rhetorical brunt of the criticism of science gone

[17] These were frequently on the planet Mars, based on a long history of cultural mythology.

"too far." The apparent centrism of these uses of disaster, dystopia, and exploration may be contrasted with the uses of the same sub-genres in the years following ca. 1958.

1957 had seen the launches of both Sputnik and the first Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and therefore demarcated a new stage in the Cold War as well as the popular speculative imagination,[18] ignited by the fears of the Eisenhower-era policy of "massive retaliation" and the increasing potential for "Mutually Assured Destruction." A prominent wave of post-atomic-apocalypse novels appeared, including Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), Mordecai Roschwald's *Level 7* (1959), and Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowiz* (1959), further spurring this imagination. The films that arrived beginning with *On the Beach* (1959) benefitted from this increased politicization as well as some members of the film industry's tendencies toward bucking censorship and promoting openly

[18] Doherty notes that 43 new space films were put into production as a result of Sputnik's launch (Doherty 2002, 43).

left-leaning Hollywood projects.[19]

Unlike the second cycle of post-apocalyptic nuclear destruction films that emerged in the eighties (a series of action-adventure melodramas of "survival" based in part on popular Reagan-era information campaigns about a post-blast "nuclear winter"), the majority of these sixties films tapped into the era's progressive political attitudes, as well as the softening of the sci-fi formula in favor of a field benefitting from the decade's cross-fertilization of prestige, exploitation, experimental, and art cinema. The films that emerged were often critical (and even philosophical) in tone and deliberately provocative. A screen-filling mushroom cloud punctuates many a finale, including those of *The Bedford Incident* (1965) and *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). In Kazui Nihonmatsu's nihilistic *Konchû daisensô* (*Genocide*, 1968) for Shôchiku, a drug-addicted American airman (Chico Roland) experiences a horrific military flashback and crashes a bomber harboring a nuclear weapon. When the American

[19] Stanley Kramer, the left-leaning director-producer of *On the Beach,* had been instrumental in the re-integration of blacklistees back into the Hollywood mainstream. After casting "guilty bystander" Marsha Hunt in *The Happy Time* (1952) (McGilligan and Buhle 1997, 307), he knowingly hired blacklistee Nedrick Young to co-script *The Defiant Ones* (1958) and *Inherit the Wind* (1960) (albeit under the pseudonym "Nathan Douglas"). Peter Buhle and Dave Wagner speculate that Young may have also provided uncredited contributions to the screenplay for *On the Beach* (2003, 156).

government discovers the mishap, they decide to detonate the bomb over Japan rather than allow it to get into enemy hands or reveal their blunder. The film is thereby bookended by mushroom clouds—the first a common convention of the genre going back to the first fifties sf films, representing the "atomic age," the second finishing the job the first started (mirroring the dual 1945 attacks) [Fig. 1.1]. According to many of the era's tales of total or near-total atomic annihilation stoked by the American-Soviet nuclear arms race, including *Planet of the Apes* (1968), the French *La jetée* (1962), and the Italian *Ecce Homo* (1968), there can be no rebuilding after World War III. In these films, modern civilization, even perhaps life on Earth, is made untenable.

While the sixties contained a few notable Utopian visions of the future, especially in *Star Trek* (1966-1969), which sees humanity establishing an intergalactic federation based in the principles of liberal social democracy and international diplomacy,[20] pessimistic future scenarios greatly outnumbered such visions. If the nuclear disaster films tended to use the bomb as evidence of the social interpenetration of irrationality, then the

[20] If *Barbarella* (1968) provides a later, slight return to the serials' marvelous flights of fancy, it resonates as much as a high camp burlesque on the very notion of a Utopian future, even evoking the comic "planet of women" motif of films from the thirties through the sixties by intermingling avatars of male adolescent wish-fulfillment.

dystopian films turned to the dangers represented by scientific rationality itself. That is to say, unlike the nuclear scenarios, which isolate in the bomb the contradictions of modernity, these tragicomic dystopian fables, including *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *THX-1138* (1971), and other variations—the dystopian being the most prolific and internally coherent sub-genre of the era— describe a future society that manages to survive without recourse to nuclear war (or manages to survive or regroup from such a war in the same highly ordered, technological manner as before), and yet remain bleakly oppressing. The crucial distinction between the sixties dystopias and nuclear disasters, therefore, is that the banality of experience in dystopia is conspicuously unhinged from the melodrama of destruction epitomized by the final, mad, "too late" horror of the bomb—as though the two are equal and opposite reflections of a world gone wrong. Often, there is no bomb, so that the dystopia asks us to interrogate our understanding of progress and see the potential horrors even in the world gone "right."

Williams contrasts "Doomsday" and "Putropia" (dystopia), which he also associates with conservatism and anti-intellectualism, with "Space Anthropology" stories. "Here," he writes, "for once among the limitless claims of sf we find a work of genuine imagination, and real intelligence" (1988, 360). However, the fifties space anthropology films as a rule provide further

disappointment in this regard, the depiction of *The Thing from Another World* (1951) being a case in point. The fifties astronaut films predominately concern white males and thereby provided the fodder for a consideration (and potential inversion) of hegemonic sexual and racial assumptions, and it is not uncommon for these films to represent naturalized gender contrasts as the major source of narrative fascination. In the sixties, however, the "alien" increasingly became less a metaphor for that which lay purposely "outside" but as a limit to be crossed. Likewise, the bending of sexual mores became a frequent structuring metaphor for journeys of exploration and expanding paradigms. In these years of social strife (the Cannes Film Festival's opening screening of *Je t'aime je t'aime*, along with the entire festival, would be cancelled due to the Mai 68 protests), the exploration of human limits would be increasingly allegorized through liberatory discourses circling around themes of race, gender, sexuality and "consciousness expansion."

In the sf cinema of the sixties, therefore, science and the nature of progress are re-interpreted from a politically engaged critical framework. Notably, this process proceeds somewhat sequentially. The nuclear disaster films are most prominent in the years 1959-1964, while art cinematic dystopias predominate by the mid-decade, and art cinematic exploration stories proliferate more and more by the decade's end. In this way, the confrontation with progress begins with the bomb itself, is followed by a

consideration of the bomb-producing society as a whole, and is finally directed toward the exploratory pursuit of a technologically and conceptually enabled alternative.

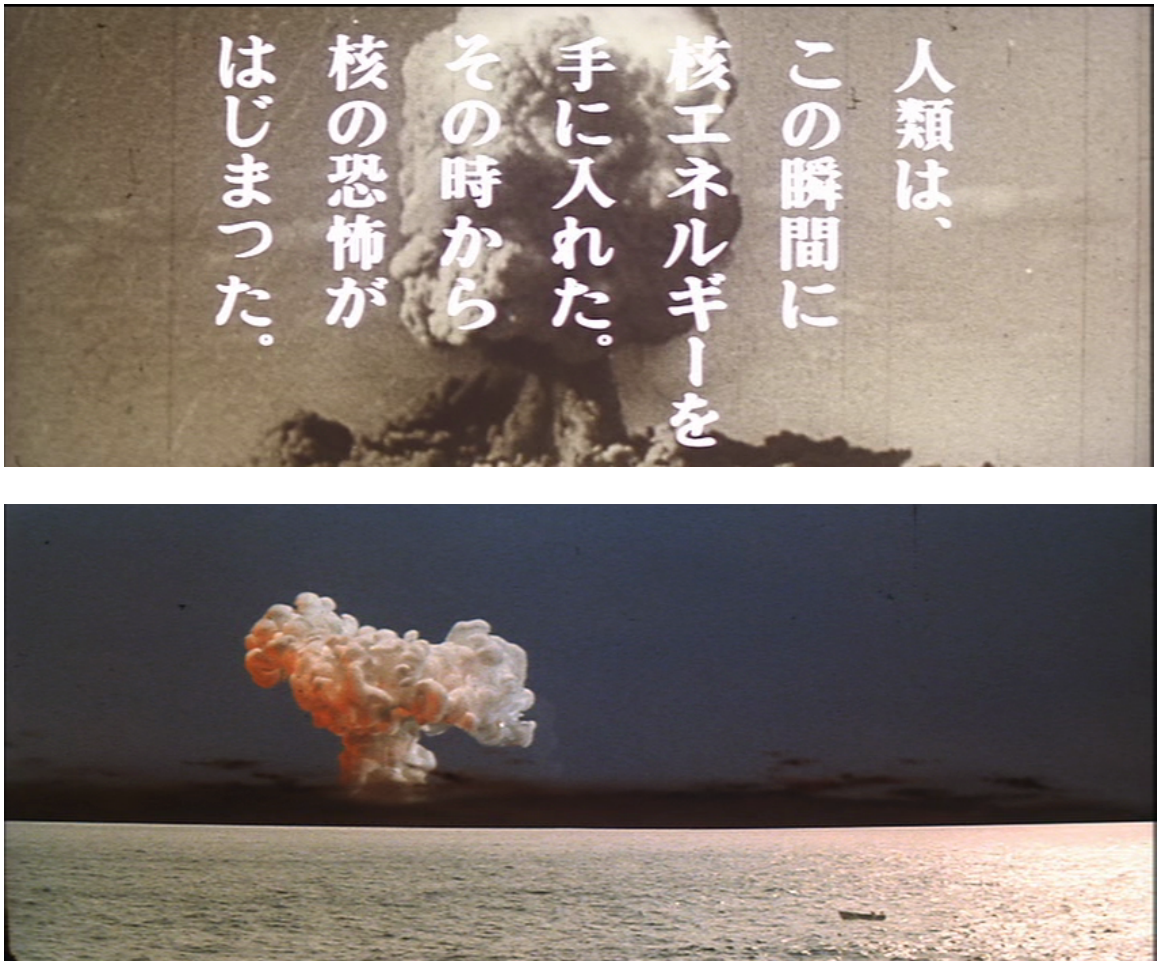

Fig. 1.1: *Konchû daisensô* (1968) begins and ends with a mushroom cloud, the first actual and the second imagined.

Chapter Two: Disaster

> The Editors of *Figaro*, December 1959:
>
> *On the Beach* might easily be taken for an anticipation film (science-fiction). You know what this word connotes: a product of the imagination which scientific progress has made plausible before the fact. Long ago, back in the days of Wells, one could tell, in these works, the share of fiction. Nowadays, we wake up each morning to find ourselves facing what, only last night, still belonged to the realm of imagination. Moreover, the authors of *On the Beach* do their anticipating only in terms of elements furnished to them by the present. The film, in the final analysis, is therefore less one of anticipation than of prediction, or better, of warning. (Dec. 3, 17)

> The Port Huron Statement:
>
> Our work is guided by the sense that we may be the last generation in the experiment with living. (Hayden 2008, 38)

Peter Watkins's British *The War Game* (1965), which won the 1966 Academy Award for Best Documentary, displays in documentary fashion the impact of a nuclear attack on Britain modeled on actual newsreel footage of

the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the firebombing of Dresden. First, the futility of preparation is revealed, with ordinary people often ill-informed or forced to make do with half-measures due to financial barriers. Then the horrible consequences are put on display, with mass death, radiation burns, and radiation sickness depicted in graphic detail [Fig. 2.1]. Although *The War Game* was a remarkable, unique film directed in the striking, vérité-inspired style Watkins pioneered with *Culloden* (1964), *The War Game* also participated in the broader trend toward realism in the era's new disaster films, inaugurated six years earlier by the film adaptation of *On the Beach* (1959).

In the previous chapter, I described the rise of a new breed of prestige and art sf films, emerging from within a late fifties/early sixties cultural context defined by formal experimentation and a renewed focus on progressive subject matter. Films such as *Fail-Safe* (1964), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), and *The Bedford Incident* (1965) all have a history of reception as prominent progressive post-Cuban Missile Crisis social problem pictures but are not often considered within the context of the sf genre. In this chapter, I will consider the formal narrative characteristics utilized in the creation of a body of films treating nuclear scenarios as nova largely inspired by speculations concerning an impending atomic "World War III."

Fig. 2.1: *The War Game* (1965) depicts victims of a nuclear catastrophe that strikes Great Britain.

After presenting a prominent *social realist* type, in which disaster was presented in the form of a dramatic realism combining features of social and psychological realism, I will describe a range of *art cinematic* treatments in which the nuclear disaster scenario was also presented as a modernist form of stylized melodrama and as an occasion for ironic absurdity. Genre and narrative mode were mutually reinforcing, with sf scenarios focused on theoretically plausible disaster scenarios providing a prescient form for

narrative analogy in both realistic and aesthetically stylized modes.

If contemporaneous critical appraisal of many of these films was positive, at the time producers and critics often downplayed their relationship to sf, a cinematic genre that was widely considered aesthetically debased and politically retrograde.[1] Susan Sontag's "The Imagination of

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[1] These films were frequently described as "political films," which is not to say sf did not remain a pervasive alternative context. Bosley Crowther for instance reviews *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* in the *New York Times* as a "very adroit and horrendous politico-science-fiction burlesque" (1964, X1) with *Fail-Safe* also "in the science-fiction realm" (1964a, 36), and *Vogue* reviewer Henry Geldzahler furthermore labels *Fail-Safe* "*cheap*…science-fiction" (1964, 100) [italics mine]. Nevertheless, the vicissitudes of the sf designation are further tied up with the larger context of Cold War rhetoric. While "political," these films' ostensibly fantastic (and often, overtly satirical) approaches would provide the basis for plausible deniability on the charge of genuine subversion. In doing so, however, they opened the door for official rebuttal on the basis of self-evident incredulity. During a congressional hearing concerning *On the Beach*, for instance, Utah Republican senator Wallace F. Bennett claimed "it is important that those who see it should accept it for what it is—an imaginative piece of science fiction, a fantasy, and not a dramatization of what would probably happen in the event of nuclear war" (Congressional record of the Senate, January 11, 1959, Stanley Kramer Papers Box 24). As the production of such films continued, Washington (and the defense department, in particular) would become increasingly hostile. In 1964, former deputy defense secretary and soon-to-be Chairman of the Task Force on Nuclear Proliferation Roswell Gilpatric would publish an editorial in the *New York Times* claiming that such speculative scenarios as *Seven Days in May* and *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* were "not likey" and that "there should be no concern on behalf of the American people" (1964, SM15).

Disaster" is in this regard representative of the prevailing critical attitude toward sf disaster films, which were viewed as both anti-realistic and ideologically conservative. Sontag describes the disaster's prominent spectacle formula ("in Technicolor and on a wide screen") as a passion play of grand set-pieces including "the arrival of the thing"; the declaration of "a national emergency"; "massive counterattacks . . . with brilliant displays of rocketry, rays, and other advanced weapons [which] are all unsuccessful"; and, finally, an "ultimate weapon" that vanquishes "the monster or invaders" once and for all (1965, 43). For Sontag, the "erotics" of this form is linked intrinsically to the eventual cathartic overcoming of the deadly threat, anticipating Frederic Jameson's analysis of *Jaws* (1975) as a "socially symbolic" centrist "allegory of alliance" between powerful social forces of control (1979, 144), with the genre's "last-minute happy endings" necessarily seeming to divert any truly radical critique (Sontag 1965, 44.). The disaster films of the period therefore "reflect worldwide anxieties, and . . . *allay them*"(Sontag 1965, 44).[2]

Although such an analysis can certainly be supported from films such as *When Worlds Collide* (1951), *Them* (1954), *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956), and even the "progressive" *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1950), in the late fifties the Hollywood sf disaster genre evolved beyond the confines of

[2] Italics mine.

this earlier, pulpier iteration of the genre into a form which frequently eschewed or re-interpreted these spectacular set-pieces.[3] Thereby, I argue, the spectacular disaster formulas Sontag describes progressively found assuredly anti-nuclear "answer films" in the very period she was writing. And as the bomb is increasingly allowed to play itself, several of Sontag's claims—that contemporary films feature "extreme moral simplification"; that all these films do is "exorcise" trauma; that "we are rarely inside anyone's feelings"; and that they contain "absolutely no social criticism, of even the most implicit kind" (1965, 45-48)—speak therefore not to the contemporary sixties form of sf disaster but to an idealized low cult-object version of the genre.

I do not want to downplay the role of the bomb in Sontag's presentation of the genre, as it looms over her analysis:

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[3] The abundant Japanese disaster films of the late fifties and early sixties remain spectacles of destruction but contain clear anti-American, anti-military, and anti-capitalist sentiments as well. Mark Siegel has claimed that these films embody the complex Japanese reaction to World War II, which would "neither accept total guilt for the war, nor help but feel shame for losing it" (1985, 255). One may at least note that in Ishirô Honda's *Chikyu Boeigun* (*The Mysterians*, 1957), the invading aliens demanding control of Japanese territory are thinly veiled American colonizers, and in his *Mosura* (*Mothra*, 1961) a Western entrepreneur's greed is to blame for the moth monster's retaliatory attack. Mothra is however a beneficent creature, associated with Christianity (its symbol is the cross), leading Chon Noriega to argue that the monsters and their battles represent an ongoing dialectical reconciliation of the post-war Japanese and American cultures from a Japanese perspective (1987, 70-71).

> . . . the trauma suffered by everyone in the middle of the 20th century when it became clear that from now on to the end of human history, every person would spend his individual life not only under the threat of individual death, which is certain, but of something almost unsupportable psychologically—collective incineration and extinction which could come any time, virtually without warning. (1965, 48)

However, whereas Sontag delineates a conflicted sf presentation of this trauma, I would like to appreciate the ways in which the atomic disaster films progressively addressed these themes after *On the Beach*. These films together describe a loss of faith in the ability of modern society to free itself of increasingly horrific forces of domination and express the unwillingness to trust that things "get worse before they get better." Translated into a Frankfurt School critical-theory perspective, the bomb comes to encapsulate the Dialectic of Enlightenment, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's Marxist articulation of the double-edged impact of human progress since the Enlightenment: the machinery of capitalism, which produced greater wealth *and* impoverishment than were previously possible, to the modern state, which simultaneously provided the heights of Western philosophical, scientific, artistic, and social achievement and the previously unimaginable

horrors of fascism, Stalinism, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. As Adorno writes, "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb" (1973, 320). In the iconic short-range V-2 rocket is the Nazi weapon of the London Blitz as well as the basis both for Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and twentieth-century's initial conquest of space.[4] The atomic disaster films of the sixties suggest that the tremendous achievement of reason and progress also contain the key to their own apparent dissolution. Although social alienation had been central to the era's modern dystopian films (to be addressed in Chapter 3), these disaster films also highlight the "depersonalizing conditions of modern urban society" (Sontag 1965, 42), a theme as old as both the sf genre and the cinematic medium. The key tendency of the atomic films is thus to reveal these fears as two sides of the same coin, inseparable and mutually

[4] Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), which occupies an ambiguous position between the historical novel, postmodernist formal experimentation, and literary sf, prominently explores the overdetermination of the V-2 bomb. See Leo Bersani (1989) for a discussion of paranoia and *Gravity's Rainbow*.

reinforcing—together representing the "dark side" of progress.[5]

The Social Problem Melodrama

On the Beach (1959) depicts a catastrophe of worldwide death by radiation poisoning. Whereas the scientific scenarios of increasingly rare spectacular disaster scenarios of the era offended common sense, this new wave of social problem disasters often took the form of social melodramas, defined by a strong emphasis on character psychology, social awareness and scientific plausibility as well as verisimilitude in the domain of mise-en-scène (in contrast to *The War Game* (1965)'s approach, which was more reflexive and estranged). If *The War Game*, meticulously researched by the BBC, was a

[5] Paranoia (especially concerning Communist infiltration) has been a prevailing rhetorical framework for addressing fifties sf invasion and monster films, as not only the apparent *theme* of such films as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) but also as the premise of these films' critique, which has frequently centered on the symptomatic "sniffing out" of a coded paranoid message embedded within a paranoid text. To this end, both Peter Biskind (1983, 1985) and Bruce Kawin (1984) have independently utilized symptomatic textual criticism to distinguish between the codes of supposedly conservative [*The Thing from Another World* (1951)] and progressive-leaning (anti-war, especially) [*The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)] films of the fifties cycle. Mark Jancovich (1996) has, however, convincingly argued that the exact opposite interpretations can be easily drawn from these self-same techniques, revealing the radical polysemy of supposedly coded texts, whose very obscurity seems to act as a Rorschach text for the fears and desires of the interpreter.

high-point of the tendency toward scientific accuracy, *On the Beach* had confidently begun this trend not only by shooting on location in an authentic Navy submarine but by relying on the help of myriad military, scientific, and medical advisors (which distributor United Artists prominently trumpeted in press releases).[6] Indeed, the premiere featured a panel of scientific experts, including Dr. Linus Pauling, as well as many University of California and Stanford faculty members, reading statements concerning the horrible possibility of nuclear catastrophe, piggybacking on an information campaign surrounding the negative effects of Strontium-90 radiation (the film's principle subject).

Set in the year 1964, *On the Beach* presents Australia as the last haven of human life after the destruction of an unspecific World War III has left the globe saturated with ever-approaching radiation. The cast mirrors that of a cliché atomic monster movie, with representatives of the military (Gregory Peck as American submarine captain Dwight Lionel Towers and Anthony Perkins as Australian Lieutenant Peter Holmes) and science (Fred Astaire as Julian Osborne), as well as civilian love interests (Ava Gardner as

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[6] Although the Navy had participated in the production of *On the Beach*, the pentagon refused to allow official co-operation in the productions of *The Bedford Incident* and *Fail-Safe* (*New York Times* August 20, 1964, 36) due to the official furor that *Seven Days in May* and *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* had caused.

Moira Davidson, who experiences a brief affair with Towers, and Donna Anderson as Holmes's wife Mary). However, contrary to the formulas described by Sontag the plot focuses on the complexities of characters' social and emotional lives, charting their gradual acceptance of their imminent demise as the radiation from the war will soon arrive and finish the job of nuclear holocaust. Many of the film's situations revolve around the practical mundane details that punctuate the survivors' final days, which "end not with a bang but with a whimper." No coffee remains, but they have plenty of sherry to drink from the cellars. The ethical quandaries that arise are psychologically horrific but likewise pragmatic, such as the decision of whether or not to euthanize the children.

As an ensemble film, the narrative focuses on each character's psychological response in turn, in the manner of a psychologically centered melodrama. Dwight, apparently in profound denial about the death of his family in the destruction of the United States, speaks of his wife and children as if they are still alive—even discussing future prospects. Eventually, he begins to take on Moira as a surrogate wife, even calling her by his wife's name. Donna refuses to accept her eventual fate and hurtles toward a neurotic breakdown when Peter calmly broaches the topic of suicide pills. Both Julian and Moira are alcoholic, and Julian also engages in a particularly reckless run of the Australian Grand Prix. However, unlike more

familiar post-apocalyptic exploitation scenarios which relish social disintegration as an occasion for the cathartic expression of lawless violence [as in the contemporary *Panic in Year Zero!* (1962) and the later *Mad Max* (1979)], the characters of *On the Beach* maintain the semblance of pre-disaster society by performing their existing roles and duties. What emerges is a fatalistic banality and obvious denial of reality that results from a society with "no future," epitomized by situations including Tower's sudden promotion from submarine captain to Admiral of the U.S. Navy (as its highest ranking survivor). Instead of presenting a stark picture of the horrors of war in all its immediacy, as in *The War Game*, *On the Beach* provides an image of "waiting for the end to come" congruent with the banality of ordinary experience.[7]

[7] In a letter to director Stanley Kramer, the novel's author Nevil Shute admonishes the film's attempts at "realism": "When Paxton introduces realism and shows the unpleasant side of characters he degrades them" (Letter from Shute to Kramer August 21, 1958, Stanley Kramer Papers Box 23). However, the depiction of the survivors' state of denial concerning the "end" (as well as their succumbing to alcoholism) prefigure Robert J. Lifton's later research on the physical mechanisms observed in response to presence of a nuclear threat (1979, 7).

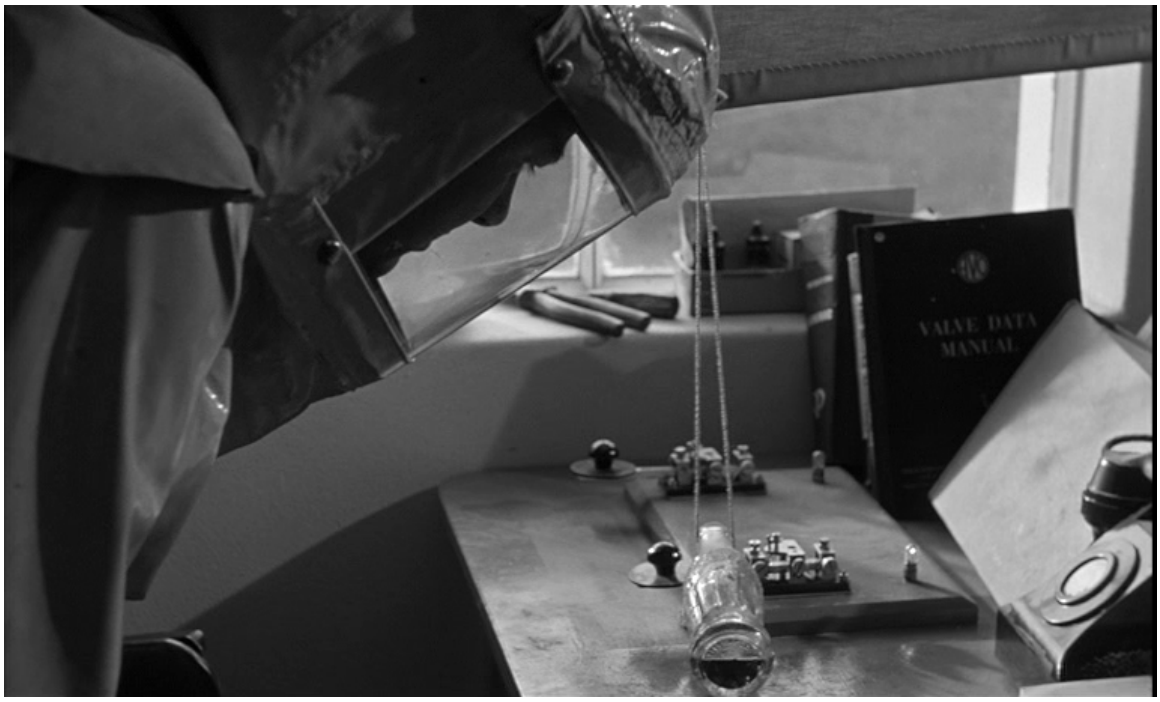

Fig. 2.2: In *On the Beach* (1959), a Coca-Cola bottle provides the last hope for the human race.

A key sequence of melodramatic visual excess epitomizes the film's profoundly critical attitude [Fig. 2.2]. When a Morse code signal is heard coming from San Diego, Towers travels from Australia to California to investigate, accompanied by tremendous images of civilization's peak including the submarine itself and an entirely abandoned San Francisco. The mystery of the code's transmission is solved when the crew arrive to find the height of modern civilization: an absurd Coca-Cola bottle, in all its ingenuity, simplicity, beauty, cheapness, and allure, which is the only "survivor" of

nuclear catastrophe, bumping against the telegraph key.[8] In scenes such as this one, and in an often-mocking hubris-ridden treatment of its characters representing power and social responsibility (from captain to scientist), *On the Beach* is a clear indictment not only of the bomb but also of the culture that created it.[9]

If *On the Beach* reveals the horrifying conclusion of a possible nuclear catastrophe, two films produced by Columbia, *Fail-Safe* (1964) and *The Bedford Incident* (1965) [which contemporary reviewer Peter Bart noted for

[8] A bullet-riddled exploding Coca-Cola machine also punctuates the skirmish between Mandrake and Guano in *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1965) and Stan Vanderbeek's *Science Fiction* (1959) would further collide the coca-cola bottle with the V-2 rocket. In the post-apocalyptic landscape of Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006), a Coke bottle would appear as a key moment of transcendent beauty.

[9] Shute had hoped the story would retain a somewhat optimistic tone with the surviving Australians rising to the occasion, claiming, "In times of intense stress and disaster people prove to be far stronger than they think that they would be themselves. That is the underlying emotional idea of *On the Beach*" (Letter from Shute to Kramer July 14, 1958, Stanley Kramer Papers Box 23). That this representation seemed unfeasible in the film bears witness not only to the political differences between Kramer and Shute but also to the change in public attitudes represented by the information campaign accompanying the film's release. Notably, Shute's attitude mirrored that of the Eisenhower administration, which in response to the film reported: "It is inconceivable that in the event of nuclear war, mankind would not have the strength and ingenuity to take all possible steps toward self-preservation" (Boyer 1984, 824).

its "stark, almost documentary tone" (1965, X7)] provide additional speculative, though formally naturalistic warnings to the audience by depicting a nuclear disaster's potential beginning. In the well-known *Fail-Safe* scenario, reused for *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964, also Columbia), an unforeseen and unavoidable nuclear attack on Moscow is caused by Cold War defense systems, despite the best efforts of the sympathetic President (Henry Fonda). In *The Bedford Incident*, news reporter Ben Munceford (Sidney Poitier) boards an atomic submarine to observe and becomes embroiled in a battle of wits with Captain Eric Finlander (Richard Widmark), an overzealous nuclear submarine captain, when a dangerous potential conflict emerges with a Soviet sub. However, in a reversal of the typical Poitier formula, Ben's presence on the ship fails to overcome the Captain's hawkishness, instead catalyzing his paranoiac tendencies into a destructive re-action that culminates in a terminal mushroom cloud. In each of these cases, atomic disaster is presented as profoundly plausible, even inevitable.

If such films represent the social problem melodrama at its strongest, strengthened as they are by realistic settings and scenarios, even the period's films of fantasy spectacle would often combine realistic settings and anti-bomb polemics borrowed from the problem formula. A notable example is the independent British production *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961). Shot

in a quasi-documentary fashion in and around a newspaper office, it remains for its first hour a starkly realistic, procedural drama in the fashion of *On the Beach*. Somewhat similar in plot to the ludicrously unscientific *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (1962) of the same era, it contains as a novelty an ambiguous ending: Earth may have been saved, but *perhaps not*.[10]

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil (1959) provided another attempt at a post-apocalyptic social problem film. But like the independent precursor *Five* (1950) it closely resembles, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* utilizes an end of the world scenario to rehash apocalyptic religious clichés, tempering its message of warning with a final note of renewal as the survivors of the nuclear catastrophe walk off into the sunset hand-in hand.[11]

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[10] The potential subversiveness of *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* may be compared with *On the Beach* because, as I. Q. Hunter notes, the film relies on a "questioning of 'the Dunkirk Spirit' and [a] cynicism toward the governing class as a whole" (1999, 103).

[11] An intriguing variant on the "renewal" scenario of *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959) is present in the British apocalypse *These Are the Damned* (1964). Middle-aged American tourist Simon Wells (Macdonald Carey) shares with two British youth (Teddy Boy King, played by Oliver Reed, and his sister, played by Shirley Ann Field) the horrible discovery of a colony of radioactive children being groomed for survival in a post-apocalyptic milieu. Through their mutual discovery, the unlikely group is brought together through a common "nuclear consciousness."

Horror and Paranoia

In the previous section, I described the atomic disaster films following *On the Beach* (1959) as strongly opposed to the version of sf disaster films described by Sontag: strikingly pessimistic in their anti-nuclear attitudes rather than Utopian and reliant on modes of realism—psychological, social, scientific, and visual—rather than outright fantasy. However, despite the surface differences between these and the fifties sf films, earlier "weirdies" such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) share many of the elements that contribute to the nuclear problem films' rhetorical power, including their tone of pessimism, preference for "realistic" black and white photography, mundane social settings, and alienated, paranoid protagonists. These fifties films, produced at the cusp of this new direction in sf—share with the later films a powerful ability to transform difficult, uncanny concepts and experiences into pregnant symbols and ineffable experiences.

Fifties critic Richard Hodgens claims that the paranoid atomic fears in sf films are mobilized purely to enhance a film's horror appeal: "the filmmakers have simply attempted to make their monster more frightening by associating it with something serious" (cited in Hodgens 1959, 37). Bradley Schauer (2010) likewise argues that the driving force behind increasingly big-budget sf production in Hollywood has been an attempt to overcome the "pulp

paradox," that is, how to satisfy the public demand for "pulp" entertainment by wrapping it in socially acceptable garb. I argue that producers radically blurred the lines between pulp and art by producing ultimately polysemous texts that increasingly satisfied the aesthetic and social expectations of both forms.

If the prestige and success of *On the Beach* seems to distinguish it from traditional fifties cinematic sf, Steven Sanders argues that even *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is notable primarily for its transposition of "noir paranoia on [a] science fiction scaffolding" (2008, 55). Wheeler Winston Dixon likewise includes fifties horror sf as a form of noir paranoia (marked by "perpetual threat and contestation") (2009, 4). However, suspicion may be raised and then ameliorated [as in Sontag's analysis (1965, 43)] or sustained and deepened. Hodgens's and Sontag's criticisms reveal the apparent practical difficulty of attempting "message-based" sf films before the release of *On the Beach* (1959); thus, it is noteworthy that the successful social realist, message-based films that did emerge in its wake followed the lead of films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) by mobilizing a paranoid form imbuing uncanny horror into the mundane—and further sublating into the form of paranoid horror such "realist" features as scientific facts and socially plausible scenarios.

For instance, an ostensible "thriller" film such as *Fail-Safe* depicts the

paranoia of a protagonist spontaneously discovering himself trapped in a horrific thought-experiment. Confounding his trouble, he often has difficulty convincing others that anything is amiss (as occurs in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* or the beginning of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*). In John Frankenheimer's paranoid, speculative scenarios *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and *Seven Days in May* (1964), Maj. Bennett Marco (Frank Sinatra) and Col. Jiggs Casey (Kirk Douglas), respectively, must singlehandedly unravel conspiracies to take over the government, signaling WWIII, from the Communists in the case of the former or right-wing hawks in the case of the latter. In *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), a comic take on the *Fail-Safe* scenario, this role is given to the befuddled Col. Mandrake (Peter Sellers), who in a particularly exasperating scene cannot convince Col. "Bat" Guano (Keenan Wynn) of the importance of reaching the president (also Peter Sellers) to deliver the fail-safe codes that will return the bombers from the U.S.S.R. to America.

As early as *The Incredible Shrinking Man,* paranoid horror is already profoundly psychological—represented in that film by the main character's visualizations and interior monologue as well as the narrative's focus on the psychodrama of the relationship between the shrinking man and his normal-sized wife. But the shrinking man's visualizations are not far removed from Blackie (Dan O'Herlihy)'s recurring nightmare of a "flayed bull" in *Fail-Safe*.

As in the Hollywood "psychological" tradition,[12] epitomized by *Spellbound* (1945) [in which the protagonist John Ballantyne (Gregory Peck)'s repressed memories are represented by parallel lines and the "color white"], the "weirdies" foreground their anxieties in conspicuous and oppressive symbols. The conclusion of *Planet of the Apes* (1968) provides the most famous example. After George Taylor (Charlton Heston) tries again and again to convince the apes of what he knows, he realizes that he has been wrong all along about the superiority of man to ape when he sees the ruins of the Statue of Liberty, an image that symbolically consolidates the film's structural dyad of rocket and bomb.

With their prominent use, on the level of cinematography, of deep focus and distorting lenses, these films fabricate impressionistic nightmare tableaux to present the modern-as-uncanny. Vivian Sobchack describes the uncanny transformation of the characters' environment as one element of sf poetics (1999, 114-117). *On the Beach*'s iconic scenes of an abandoned San Francisco provide an orthodox example of this tendency within the nuclear anxiety films. But whereas *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Incredible*

[12] *On the Beach* screenwriter John Paxton had notably somewhat specialized in "psychological" films featuring depictions of states of neurosis and psychosis, including *Murder, My Sweet* (1944) and *The Cobweb* (1955). As a director, Kramer had previously depicted mental illness in the military in *Home of the Brave* (1949).

Shrinking Man, without explicit targets for progressive critique, are forced to focus on the psychological horror of paranoia itself (related to social and sexual anxiety), the atomic anxiety films securely attach this uncanny horror to present and future scenarios spurred by progress, with the realistic situations of the social problem picture replacing the earlier films' fantastic and obscurely metaphorical scenarios.

The Incredible Shrinking Man's focus on the mundane nevertheless sacrifices verisimilitude in order to enhance through expressionistic techniques its underlying castration theme. Through grotesque manipulations of visual effects, the atomic paranoia films also revealed a battery of explicitly reflexive anti-naturalist effects. *The Bedford Incident* ends with an artistic representation of the whole crew being vaporized (translated into the reflexive language of the immolation of the celluloid itself) [Fig. 2.3]. In *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, the plaintive "We'll Meet Again," freighted with nostalgia for the longed-for end of World War II, provides ironic commentary on the footage of the film's ultimate doomsday explosions. In *The War Game*, voice-over narration and a generally didactic tone provide distanciation alongside a continual breaking of the "fourth-wall" as characters stare painfully directly into the camera.

Fig. 2.3: The celluloid itself burns up at the conclusion of *The Bedford Incident* (1965).

Andrew Tudor argues that the popular cinematic trend toward paranoid horror in early sixties began due to the influence of *Psycho* (1960) (1989, 184). However, the influence of paranoid sf-horror films (that is, weirdies) on this trend seems worth considering as well. Likewise, if Charles Ramírez Berg isolates in *The Manchurian Candidate* such formal elements as "composition-in-depth," "extended montage dissolve" and "complex mise-en-scène" as directorial signatures (2011, 32-39), these techniques are also indicative of a set of generic norms in that they are related to a larger

paranoiac stylistic vocabulary mobilized by sf horror.[13]

Modernist Melodrama

If the bulk of American and British nuclear disaster films were social problem melodramas, albeit with the occasional intrusion of horror paranoia, international art cinema directors also adapted the topic of total destruction, further displacing the scenario's fantastic and broadly melodramatic elements in favor of a more abstract style of treatment that András Kóvács labels "modern melodrama" in his description of the early sixties films of Michelangelo Antonioni. For Kóvács, what is "at stake" in the modern melodrama, "is *understanding helplessness*":

> Modern melodrama is a type of melodrama in which the protagonist's reaction amounts to searching for a way to intellectually *understand* the environment, which precedes or replaces physical reaction. The main cause of the protagonist's emotional distress in modern melodramas is not a concrete natural, social, or emotional catastrophe. No matter what concrete event triggers narrative action, it is but a superficial manifestation of a deeper and more general crisis for which no immediate physical reaction is possible. The only

[13] Further, as indicated above, Expressionism filtered through *noir* is perhaps the progenitor of all such trends in post-war American filmmaking.

> adequate immediate reaction is a passive intellectual response of searching for comprehension of the "general crisis" that will lead to a choice that can result in a physical reaction.
>
> . . . The "bigger power" in modern melodrama is represented by something that is stronger not by its presence but by its *absence* . . . In terms of existentialist philosophy this invincible power is called *Nothingness*. (2008, 89)

Within the realm of nuclear disaster, Jean-Luc Godard's pastiche of post-apocalypticism in *Il nuovo mondo* (1963) truly achieves such Modernist heights by colliding pulp with European existentialism.[14] An obtuse parody of the post-apocalyptic "mutation" scenario of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954)[15] and the uncanny "pod people" of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), Godard's film focuses on the subtle and ongoing dehumanizing transformation of Parisians following the apparent detonation of a nuclear explosion over the city (the evidence of which is limited to a single newspaper headline), as narrativized by its effects on a young couple's disintegration. Here, in distinction to Hollywood norms, there is not even the indication that

[14] Here, the "pod people" scenario can be seen as heavily evocative of Sartre's notion of the pervasiveness of *mauvaise foi* (bad faith) in social transactions.

[15] Richard Brody notes a meeting between Godard and producer André Michelin in 1964 in which Godard wished to cast Eddie Constantine in an adaptation of *I Am Legend*. This project would later become *Alphaville* (Brody 2008, 223).

the paranoid *noir* side of modern existence is set up to be vanquished, as occurs in even the most evocatively symbolic Classical horrors from the supernatural *Cat People* (1942) to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* itself. Here, rather, the horror persists as a thinly estranged commentary on present "estrangement."

Gradually, the population is rendered more and more "pod-like," even developing a habit for narcotizing tablets [possibly in a nod to *Brave New World* (1932)'s Soma]. As in the paranoia films discussed above, the unnamed Husband (Jean-Marc Bory) is seemingly aware that something is profoundly amiss in his environment, but he cannot put the pieces together or solve the mystery. Rather, he must helplessly watch his wife Alexandra (Alexandra Stewart) and the rest of Paris fall away from him into increasing passivity. *Il nuovo mondo* thereby provides a variation on Kóvác's example of *La notte* (1961) "where the characters' passivity throughout the story is due to a purely mental state of being un-aware of the reason for their marital crisis" (2008, 89). In *Il nuovo mondo*, likewise, the characters are rendered passive by their seeming inability to acknowledge the significance of the apparent nuclear attack, which is narratively transformed into the guise of a banal urban existence, thereby condensed into a single "primal" scenario of modern alienation.

In keeping with Kóvács's claim that "the main cause of the

protagonist's emotional distress . . . is not a concrete natural, social, or emotional catastrophe," no clear exegesis explains the causal relationship, if any, among explosion, pills, passivity, or the growing estrangement between the Husband and Alexandra, which expresses the broader physical and social disintegration of the lifeworld on the level of intimate relationships—in contradistinction to a more classical "weirdie" such as the British *The Day of the Triffids* (1962), in which a more obvious sudden change in the population (mass blindness) is explained as the result of a meteor shower which subsequently affects the growth of motile carnivorous plants. If *Triffids*, with its series of weird, unnatural, and seemingly incomprehensible events clearly evoking/displacing twentieth-century urban war anxieties in general, and the London bombing blitz in particular, is a Sontagian example of the disaster, *Il nuovo mondo* then renders this sci-fi scenario more subtle by presenting modern alienation as the essence of the weird rather than presenting weird elements as aberrations from the everyday modern.

A similar case is found in Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1962), a post-apocalyptic story in which a time-traveler ("The Man," Davos Hanich) finds himself trapped in a closed time-line that loops perpetually from the horrific post-atomic present back to the past, in an attempt to prevent eventual destruction. The Man is driven to return to a particular memory, but at the film's conclusion he finally discovers its elusive "meaning": he was the man

he had seen shot on an Orly airport runway (jetée) as a child (killed by another time-traveling assassin). As in Kóvács's discussion, the goal of understanding drives the protagonist, who is eventually confronted by the apparent impossibility of true agency.[16]

As in *Il nuovo mondo*, Marco Ferreri's *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969) contains an oddly passive young couple at the center of its post-apocalyptic story. Here, Cino (Marco Margine) and his partner Dora (Anne Wiazemsky) are an impassive Adam and Eve amid a post-apocalyptic Eden. The couple wanders, punctuated by encounters with symbolic and allegorical fragments representing destruction—an Italian Renaissance painting covered in sand [Fig. 2.4]; a Pepsi-Cola balloon just out of grasp; a beached whale. As in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959), which utilizes a sexually provocative love-triangle to represent lawlessness, *Il seme dell'umomo* would spice up its narrative a bit by presenting the lovers' responses to an intruder (Anne Girardot). However, whereas in the earlier film this led to a thrilling battle of wills, in Ferreri's film Dora coldly murders the intruder and the story moves on. The Italian *Ecce Homo* (1968) would more closely repeat also the formula of *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* albeit in a more "realist" manner.

The prominence of the beach as a setting in both *Il seme dell'uomo* and

[16] As Paul J. Nahin notes, such time-travel paradoxes are exceeding common in sf literature, even amounting to an official sub-genre of magazine sf (and thereby representing the intellectual pole of the genre) (1993, 245-354).

Ecce Homo as well as its use in the finale of *Planet of the Apes* further resonates as an art cinema cliché. A beach, representing the borderline between the facticity of landbound social life and the seemingly limitless flux of the sea, is for instance charged with meaning throughout Ingmar Bergman's *Det sjunde insglet* (*The Seventh Seal*, 1957), at the beginning of Michelanglo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) and at the conclusion of Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960), evoking the tendency toward analogical fabulist structures in both art cinema and sf. I. Q. Hunter argues that the myriad Jawsploitation films that emerged in the wake of this later (similarly liminoid beach party's) success, were the result of a "narrative structure of surpassing elegance and simplicity" paired with a prêt-a-porter exploitation formula (2009, 20). Applying the same logic to *Det sjunde insglet* in particular, one may note that the re-use of elements of its "formula" may amount to a readymade strategy for the uncanny confrontation with contemporary atheistic apocalypticism within a variety of narrative genres and modes, thereby providing a model for allegorical estrangement in its framing story of the game with death. This element provides not only the frame of the fantastic but also an intrinsically uncanny-paranoid motif that parallels both the film's ongoing argument concerning the existence of God while simultaneously providing the model for an existential Godless universe of radical freedom, dialectically linked via the evocation of medieval "fate"

and further imbedded in the film's agonistic mise-en-scène. *Det sjunde insglet*'s rocky beach recapitulates a Romantic theater of uncanny catharsis already found in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1872), and Sartre's *Nausea* (1938). *Il seme dell'uomo* and *Planet of the Apes* would further retain its iconic imagery of a "knight" on horseback.

Fig. 2.4: In *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969), a painting on the beach symbolizes global destruction.

Comedy, Absurdism and Bricolage

In Bergman's *Nattvardsgästerna* (*Winter Light*, 1962), Chinese nuclear tests finally indicate once and for all God's absence. But if *Nattvardsgästerna*

provides a deep and somber philosophical and theological frame for the consideration of the atomic age, Godard and Ferrerri's sf pastiches meet the absurdity of the nuclear paradigm with a consciously absurd response.[17] The central conflict of *Il seme dell'uomo*, raised obliquely throughout, lies in Cino's attempt to convince the traumatized Dora to have his child. But each time he inarticulately suggests children, she inarticulately opposes. At the film's conclusion, Cino discovers a "solution." After mixing a poisonous anaesthetizing plant into her food, he rapes her in her sleep. Later, when she begins to exhibit signs of pregnancy, Cino taunts her in a final childish display on the beach, shouting, "The seed of man is sprouting! Lots of children! The children of children! I impregnated! The seed of man is sprouting! A thousand children! Lots of children! The children of children! A thousand million kids! A million, a billion kids!" before another bomb falls, wiping both out. This sequence is simultaneously horrifying and comic, marking an absurd tonal break with the prior, distracted passivity of the film's characters and replacing the Romance of the "loss of innocence" with a single perverse gesture of simultaneous (excessive) creation and destruction, seemingly representing the contradictions of progress.

This tone of comedy also emerges in *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned*

[17] Sungook Hong (2007) notes that the "irrationality" and "schizophrenia" of the bomb were put forth not only by critical theorists but also by prominent psychologists, included Robert Adler and Erich Fromm.

to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964), *The Day the Fish Came Out* (1967), *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969), and *Gas-s-s-s* (1970) and thereby presents the third major tendency of sixties sf disasters after the deployment of a more straightforwardly melodramatic narrative impulse and the starkest anti-naturalistic "modern melodrama" present in both *Il nuovo mondo* and *Il seme dell'uomo*. In *The Bed-Sitting Room,* for instance, some time has passed (three, or perhaps four years) since a nuclear holocaust resulting from a war that lasted exactly two minutes and twenty-eight seconds. Surreal reversals of sf clichés proliferate. Instead of mutating into monsters, for instance, victims of radiation literally fall victim to reification by transforming into mundane objects, including a chest of drawers and the titular "bed-sit." Here, we once again find the trope of a crystallized interpenetration of bourgeois "banality" and horror, implicating bourgeois ideology in the logic of nuclear Armageddon.

In a contemporaneous review of *The Bed-Sitting Room*, Michael Dempsey notes that film's aesthetic simultaneously "tries for a visual style that . . . combines two approaches." Location shooting "spreads . . . scenes across a vast landscape" while artificial sets "[insist] on the play's theatricality":

> . . . the film's post-nuclear world makes these artifaces seem quite realistic, in a way. They suggest well-known images of urban pollution—the

> oil-fouled Santa Barbara beaches, junk yards, filthy waterways. Furthermore, since this postwar setting is happily something that we can still only dream about, the theatrical stylization blends with the realism to form a dream image. The rubble-strewn canyons, the huge mounds of old shoes, the fields of shattered crockery, while never ceasing to resemble stage sets, also embody what we have imagined the world would be after an atomic conflagration. The lighting can be either theatrical spotlighting and atmospherics or poison gas, air pollution, radiation. The locations, even when most stagy, are both naturalistic and reminiscent of "real" settings in other movies—the jungles and hills of *Fire on the Plain*, the searing vistas that stun the astronaut in *2001*. (1971-72, 33)

A tendency toward realism in both *The Bed-Sitting Room* and *Il seme dell'uomo* may be seen as an extension of the dense, deep-focus compositions evident in for instance the Frankenheimer films, populating the frame with a baroque constellation of objects apparently pregnant with meaning. In a post-apocalyptical context, however, the objects of the modern world evoke very different meanings "before" and "after" the nuclear fall. At the very least they provide signifiers in a modern form of *vanitas*, in which a wealth of luxurious goods reminds the viewer of the brevity and emptiness of worldly life and in a

more subversive sense as former commodities reduced to their raw use-value after having been wrenched from their ordinary cultural determinations. These films' ornate visions thereby provide an avant-garde uncanny reminiscent of the achievements of the fantastic illusionist tradition in Western painting going back to Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel (for whom there was also a vogue in the sixties) (Wagner 1973, 13).[18]

In addition, however, the obvious "staged" theatricality of their cultural detritus further suggests the evocation of the avant-garde *assemblages* of the early sixties associated with artists including Arman and the also-filmmaker Bruce Conner [Fig. 2.5]. Anna Dezeuze notes that for William Seitz, who curated the 1961 *Art of Assemblage* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, the significance of assembled materials was in their *purloined*, rather than strictly autonomous, materiality:

> The fact that the *bricoleur* speaks *through* things, as well as *with* them, points, furthermore, to the sociopolitical ramifications of assemblage in the early 1960s Europe and America. As Jaimey Hamilton's essay on Arman . . . demonstrates, assemblage presented itself as the privileged

[18] See, for instance, Robert L. Delevoy, which suggests that Bosch's work belongs to a drug-induced "world of dreams" which places him in common with "Rimbaud, Huxley, Artaud and Michaux in our own time. . . ."Far from impairing the creative faculties," Delevoy writes, "drugs can stimulate them" (1960, 76).

> expression of a new consumer subject whose very identity was defined through an increasingly accelerated cycle of acquisition and disposal of objects. (2008, 32)

Dezeuze further notes that the assemblages emerged on the intellectual scene contemporaneous to the emergence of a broader interest in the re-purposing procedures of *bricolage* inaugurated by the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La Pensée sauvage* (1962; translated in 1966 as *The Savage Mind*). The post-apocalyptic films' focus on crafting environments from cultural debris suggests a similar strategy, especially combined with other tropes of visual fragmentation (evident especially through eclectic production design and off-kilter shot composition) and universally episodic narrative forms.[19] In the *aktion Study for the End of the World, No. 2* (1962), staged at the site of a previous above-ground nuclear test in Nevada, Swiss artist Jean Tinguely utilized robots to detonate a sculpture assembled "from odds and ends rummaged at Las Vegas scrap yards"

[19] The least critically successful of the nuclear comedies was easily Michael Cacoyannis's *The Day the Fish Came Out* (1967), which used the broadest possible caricatures in its all-out farce of a horrific nuclear accident. *Vogue* reviewer Ann Birstein notes the film's weird patchwork aesthetic, highlighting "the naïve comic-strip colour of [Cacoyannis's] settings," "a directorial approach which veers between Greek neo-realism and some kind of 20's expressionism," and the film's "Buck Rogers costumes" (1967, 68).

(Boettger 2012, 125), leaving a pile of "post-apocalyptic" wreckage.[20]

Fig. 2.5: The mise-en-scène of *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969) evokes the era's artistic *assemblages* as well as Land art/Environments.

Jameson writes that a primary function of sf is "not to give us 'images' of the future" but to "demonstrate and to dramatize our incapacity to imagine the future" (1982, 152-153). In keeping with this dictum, the bricolage aesthetic allows symbolic and allegorical fragments of the past to "stand-in" for an unimaginable future while also reminding the viewer of the uncanny hold the present and past provide. Fellini evokes this sense of sf in his

[20] Remarkably, this was documented by NBC and aired on *David Brinkley's Journal* (P. Lee 2004, 85).

discussion of *Satyricon* (1969), which is both contemporary to the films in question and also akin to their visual logic, which he calls "mosaic": "In *Satyricon*, I show a time so remote from our own that we can't even imagine it . . . It was like speculating about life on Mars, but with the help of a Martian [Petronius], so *Satyricon* satisfied in me some of my desire to make a science-fiction film" (Chandler 2001, 171-172).

The Imagination of Negation

By relying on settings closely related to actually existing social situations and nova based on probable atomic technology, the social problem melodrama is rooted in the progressive traditions of social realism, while a counter-form of irreverence is found in the absurd films (which may also indicate that absurd social and political institutions can be altered when unveiled as unnecessary).

Although these sf films hardly "allay" anxieties surrounding the bomb, they nevertheless continue to portray the "imagination of disaster" as a form of textual pleasure. If disasters express anxieties through "the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc, making a mess" (Sontag 1965, 44), the power of this negation is not intrinsically a form of *plaisir* over and above *jouissance*, to use Roland Barthes's distinction between the comfortingly formulaic and the form of "writerly pleasure" that "discomforts . . . unsettles

the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (1975, 14).[21]

If Darko Suvin further demands for sf an overtly political form of Brechtian estrangement (1972, 374) (and as well as an underlying Utopian kernel), Tom Moylan notes that the key to the progressive dystopia ultimately lies in the resistance of mythological or ideological closure" as a form of "militant pessimism" (2001, 65). I argue that this dissatisfaction extends to the various anxieties the films reveal, which resonate as an expression of discontent, deliberate textual provocations, and an index of dystopia: an imagination of negation.[22]

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[21] Incidentally, 1965 coincides with Sontag's interest in Georges Bataille.

[22] Each doomsday film follows Suvin's prescription for estrangement while also retaining clear *nova*—whether a gas [as in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959) and *Gas-s-s-s!* (1970)], a nuclear doomsday machine [as in *Fail-Safe* (1964) and *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964)], an overabundance of radiation [as in *On the Beach* (1959)], or a mysterious post-atomic disease [as in *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969) and *The Omega Man* (1971)]. Perhaps these *nova* are too realistic or too non-descript to be truly Suvinian (as the *novum* is meant to be a radical novel, rigidly scientific plot-catalyst radically at odds with contemporary reality). Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., however, argues against a rigid notion of a *novum* in favor of a "ludic" *novum* "more ecstatic than disciplinary" (2008, 55).

Chapter Three: Dystopia

Raymond Williams, from "Science Fiction" (1959):

> . . . Stories of secular paradise of the future reached their peak, perhaps, in Morris's *News from Nowhere* [1890], and since then have been almost entirely converted into their opposites: the stories of a future secular hell. (1998, 357-358)[1]

François Truffaut, from "A Fable of Our Epoch" in the press book for *Fahrenheit 451* (1966):

> . . . The action takes place on our planet [as opposed to outer space], but with a slight anticipation in time, so that one might almost say *Fahrenheit 451* takes place *where* and *when* each individual viewer wishes. Within this atmosphere—deliberately strange rather than extravagant—the story has a simple postulate: it deals with a society in which it is strictly forbidden to read, or even to own books. In this society, the

[1] H. Bruce Franklin provides a similar sentiment in 1966: "Today the capitalist world's literary visions of the future are almost all nightmares. Anti-Utopia seems to have triumphed . . . The most widely-read survey of the science fiction of the "free world" bears an apt title: *New Maps of Hell*. In this slough of despondency the dominant nineteenth-century American views of the future may seem laughably quaint and naïve" (391).

> function of the firemen is not to put out fires, but to track down the books that still exist, and publicly burn them.[2]

In the previous chapter, I noted that although the initial British and American prestige disaster films, including *On the Beach* (1959)*, The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959), *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961), *Fail-Safe* (1964), and *The Bedford Incident* (1965), evince the formal and narrative characteristics of the social problem picture (that is, melodrama enhanced by appeals to social and psychological realism, and the movement to realistic rather than fantastic nova), they are eventually joined by explicitly anti-naturalistic narrative modes. Distanciation effects in the social problem films gave way to the more vérité approach of *The War Game* (1965) and finally to art cinematic adaptations as European auteurs joined the subject matter of nuclear disaster to elements of modernist melodrama [especially in *Il nuovo mondo* (1962) and *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969)]. Borrowing the European cinema's tendency toward stark portraits of modern alienation, the atomic scenario thereby increases in gravitas while shedding its tendency toward

[2] Lewis M. Allen Papers Box 1, Folder 7.

overblown sci-fi jeremiad.[3] In addition, the genre increasingly adopts formal reflexivity in addition to a broadly critical attitude, especially prominent in the use of a fragmentary (structurally episodic and visually creative and allusive) aesthetic that presents so-called Western progress as the increasing accumulation of literal and figurative detritus [prominent especially in *Il seme dell'uomo* and *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969)].

This trajectory strengthens the Suvinian relationship between the sf genre and a Brechtian form of critical theater. In this chapter I will continue my investigation into sixties sf cinema by examining the ways in which the era's filmmakers took on the most explicitly critical of the popular sf sub-genres: the dystopia. Dominated by overtly experimental products (primarily in the domain of International art cinema),[4] the era's dystopian films

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[3] A prominent if obtuse example can be found in an exchange from Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959), in which earthman Jeff Trent (Gregory Walcott) confronts alien visitor Eros (Dudley Manlove) concerning the potential destructive force of an imagined "Solanite bomb." "So what if we *do* develop the Solanite bomb? We'd be an even stronger nation than now."" Stronger. You see? You see? Your stupid minds! Stupid! Stupid!"

[4] Although a production for Paramount by Lewis Allen, *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) was artistically controlled to a large extent by Truffaut. For a time in 1963, Samuel Bronston was set to produce an adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1936), but this never came to fruition (*Daily Variety* September 3, 1963, 2). As a consequence, *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and the much-maligned Ray Bradbury adaptation *The Illustrated Man* (1969) remain the only Hollywood studio dystopias of the era prior to the advent of the ecological dystopias of the early seventies.

continue the genre's tendency toward increasingly anti-naturalist conceptual experiments, re-invigorating the common critique of enlightenment implicit in earlier literary forms including dystopian fiction, travel narrative, and picaresque satire.[5]

Scholars of sixties culture note that although the era seems to represent a high-water mark in technological and scientific optimism [or, from a counter-perspective, "the last moment that many Americans entertained much hope for the future" (Combs 1993, 69)], a counter tendency tempered this optimism by what Timothy Moy calls "the broad-based critique of the value of [science and technology]" (2001, 305). In addition to concerns surrounding nuclear weapons (which had been supported and then protested by public intellectuals), Moy notes the popularity of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) (which led to a popular backlash against the use of the pesticide DDT) and the influence of Thomas Kuhn's commentary on scientific authority *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) (from within the realm of scientific authority itself) as establishing the parameters for this assessment (2001, 305-310).

Likewise, the emergent field of future studies, of which a major early figure was the Marxist-inspired Ossip Flechtheim, abandoned the earlier

[5] Stacy Burton (2014) provides a discussion of the relationship between modernism and the travel narrative.

futurists' unbridled technological and scientific optimism in favor of a critique of the role of scientific knowledge, paralleling the assessments of the more explicitly Marxian critics Jacques Ellul and Herbert Marcuse (Andersson 2012, 1412-1413). Marcuse, for instance, characterizes the "famous neutrality of pure science . . . as an illusion, because neutrality disguises, in the mathematical-ideational forms, the essential relation to the pre-given empirical reality," that is, the ideological character of scientific knowledge (quoted in Gandesha 2004, 193).[6] Moy calls this trend the "counter culture critique of technocracy" and also includes in it Lewis Mumford and Theodore Roszak (2001, 305). Jenny Andersson claims that for these writers, who still largely reflected a Marxian and Ernst Blochian optimism for progress, the tremendous freeing potential of science and technology was far from actualization and could only be solved through an understanding of the future "as an object of human imagination, creativity, and will" (2012, 1413).

In the conclusion to the previous chapter, I described the nihilistic atomic disaster scenario as a dramatization of Utopian negation. The bomb's symbolic representation of the dialectic of enlightenment however reminds us that the negation disaster provides may also represent the disavowal of a complicity between enlightenment Utopian values and a potentially

[6] This position again parallels surrealism, which also offers as its source of subversion the critique of "objective reality" (and for which André Breton substitutes "objective chance") (Breton 1969, 60).

dystopian future. I will describe the ways in which sixties sf dystopias thereby provide an inversion of accepted narratives of continuous technological progress through a dystopian reading through a reading of the marvelous modern Utopia as dystopia.

Sixties filmmakers infused their dystopian future visions with byzantine concatenations of sf critical conceits from the Western cultural tradition, producing outright adaptations [in the cases of *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)] as well as films [such as *Privilege* (1967) and *THX-1138* (1971)] which both reference contemporary cultural criticism and pastiche elements from the tradition of literary dystopias extending from the earliest proto-sf to the more recent literary blueprints of *Brave New World* (1932) and *1984* (1949). In my presentation of this sub-genre, I will however focus on the two narrative tendencies that appear most frequently amid the sub-genre's broad inclusiveness of sf critical themes: the rejection of banal bourgeois society as a Huxleyian (and Marcusian) form of dystopia, and the double-edged potential of youth counterculture. In doing so, I will highlight the various interpretive inversions that the era's cinematic dystopian visions provide.

The Huxleyian-Marcusian Imagination

Just as *On the Beach* (1959) heralded the beginning of the sixties

nuclear disaster films, the starkly sf, overtly anti-communist Columbia Pictures film adaptation of *1984* (1956) established a precedent for the explicit use of sf cinema to critique an imagined totalitarian scientific-rational future. However, the films that followed *1984*'s lead moved past its alarmist fifties critique of science-in-the-service-of-communism toward a broader counter-cultural evaluation of the threats to liberty latent within Western bourgeois praxis itself.[7] The sixties dystopian films are therefore evocative of the era's broader counter cultural critiques, which Douglas

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[7] Mark Jancovich interprets this implicit aspect of the fifties formula as its *key* structural feature:

> If the alien was at times identified with Soviet communism, it was also implied that this was only the logical conclusion of certain developments within American society itself. The system of scientific-technical rationality was impersonal, and it oppressed human feelings and emotions. It did not value individual qualities, but attempted to convert people into undifferentiated functionaries of the social whole, functionaries who did not think or act for themselves but were ordered and controlled from without by experts. It is for this reason that even in the most pro-scientific of 1950s invasion narratives, the scientists often display a respect for, and a fascination with, the aliens which, it is stressed, represent their "ideal" of a society ordered by scientific-technical rationality (1996, 26).

Kellner (1984) indicates represent a significant achievement in "conceptualizing the historical stage *after* [George] Orwell's totalitarian societies." For Marcuse, "the synthesis of capitalism and technology" constituted "a new form of social domination":

> *One-Dimensional Man* provides an analysis of. . . a totalitarian society which uses technology, consumerism, media, language, the state, and culture and ideology as new instruments of social control and domination. Marcuse's use of the admittedly loaded and rhetorical term "totalitarianism" to describe advanced capitalist societies is a conscious attempt to remold and reconstruct political discourse so as to take a term that is used to attack fascist and communist societies and apply it to capitalist societies. In doing so, Marcuse, I would suggest, implicitly provides a rebuttal to those who use the term to attack communism, or to equate communism and fascism, and is also able to suggest parallels between the worst features of "totalitarian" fascist and communist societies and contemporary technocapitalism. (Kellner 1984)

Mark Decker claims George Lucas's *THX-1138* (1971) is a "Marcusian critique," noting the film's collapsing of communism and capitalism into a single model of "industrial society" (2009, 425). However, whereas *THX-1138*

consolidates this vision into an ordered, claustrophobic world of overtly totalitarian repression similar to*1984*, earlier sixties films including *La decima vittima* (1965), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) and *Privilege* (1967) had more subversively blurred the distinction between a "totalitarian" future scientific dystopia and the material prosperity Cold War containment strove to protect, with "the good life" re-configured as a form of sociopolitical repressive middle-class affluence and consumerism.[8]

In doing so, these films illustrate James Combs's claim that the ascendant dystopian vision of the sixties sf was the "[Aldous] Huxleyian scenario" of *Brave New World* (1932), which inverts earlier Utopian technological visions of a future free from alienation by "posit[ing] an elite that believes itself to be benevolent ruling through the manipulation of behavior based in the technology of pleasure" (1993, 76). Indeed, Kellner (1984) and Peter Firchow (2007) discuss a number of specific similarities between Huxley and Marcuse, which is no doubt predicated on the influence

[8] At the root of sixties dissent, Todd Gitlin nominates "affluence and its opposite, a terror of loss, destruction, and failure" (1987, 19). See Detlev Claussen (2004) for a discussion of Frankfurt School roots of this critique.

of the former upon the latter.[9]

> Marcuse follows Huxley's vision in his analysis of how mass consumption produces false needs that integrate individuals into the consumer society, how sexuality is manipulated to produce social conformity, and how an entire system of education, indoctrination, and noncoercive social control produce tendencies toward conformity, submission, sameness. (Kellner, 1984)

If this Huxleyian vision predominates, permeating even the Orwellian *THX-1138*, the sixties nevertheless may be superficially divided between films that strongly retain the fifties emphasis on contemporary settings and those that follow the tradition of works such as *Brave New World* and Yevngeny Zamyatin's novel *We* (1921) by extrapolating from present social

[9] In 1942, Marcuse gave a paper on *Brave New World* (later published in 1955) at the Institute for Social Research as part of a larger conference on Huxley, which also contained contributions from Adorno and Horkheimer (Claussen 2004, 53). Adorno claims that the Huxleyian position described in *Brave New World* should be seen fundamentally as a European bourgeois-intellectual reaction to "American civilization" [that is, the "new world" represents America] (1967, 99). (If the negative presentation of mass culture in *Brave New World* were not enough, books representing European culture in particular are forbidden.) This reading would seem helpful in explaining the post-war return to Huxley, paralleling the rise of America as a world power.

tendencies nightmarish future visions. Both tendencies share a stylistic vocabulary rooted in contemporary sixties culture and closely engaged with the Pop Art visual paradigm the British Independent Group artist Richard Hamilton calls the "corny future" (Petersen 2009, 39-44). This involves the self-conscious burlesque of a utopian sf future by exaggerating the futurist optimism found in popular science literature, comic books, pulp sf, advertising, and government propaganda [especially that of previous decades (retro-futurism)]. The sixties constellation of sf dystopia often reveals this self-conscious Pop sensibility (and evocation of the present) within a film of ostensibly *future* dystopia.[10]

Alphaville, the opening film at the Third New York Film Festival in September 1965, was the first serious sixties cinematic foray into this class of dystopian vision, "an attack on the over-organized, hyper-intellectual world of

[10] This avant-garde tendency is also found for instance in René Clair's earlier *Paris qui dort* (1926), which re-imagines the Eiffel Tower as a mad scientist's laboratory in manner similar to Chris Marker's and Jean-Luc Godard's estrangements of contemporary Paris in *La jetée* and *Alphaville*. Chris Darke provides a history of commentary on the computer in *Alphaville*, which is often considered a parody of or comment on the estranged modern car radio of Cocteau's *Orphée* (*Orpheus*, 1950) (2005, 94-96).

modern man" (J. Thomas 1966, 48).[11] According to Richard Brody, Jean-Luc Godard envisioned the film as an adaptation of elements from *I Am Legend* (1954) [as in the earlier *Il nuovo mondo* (1963)] along with Brian Aldiss's *Non-Stop* (1958), which depicts life in a city-sized spaceship (2008, 223). Godard himself described the film in print in December 1964:

> A secret agent will arrive in a city, Alphaville. He will at first be bewildered, then he'll understand, from certain signs, that the inhabitants, the Literates, are mutants . . . .Constantine, my Illiterate, will notice that certain words have disappeared . . . Anna [a Literate] will not know the word "to love" . . . The Literates will not know the word "handkerchief" either, because they won't know how to weep . . . I will show a thought that tries to combat this, and which to some extent succeeds. Anna will finally be able to weep. (Brody 2008, 225)

[11] A few dystopian-structured atomic parallels did, however, precede it. *The Lord of the Flies* (1963) places amid a World War III scenario a dystopian microcosm of English schoolchildren trapped on a Robinsonian island in a manner very much in keeping with the "social problem" style. *The Time Machine* (1960), produced meanwhile in the lavish George Pal style, had somewhat transformed Wells's original dystopian vision of a class-divided humanity devolving into separate species through time and natural selection by inserting a nuclear war and thereby converting an otherwise purely socialist parable into a story of post-atomic mutation.

This gloss provides a basis for comparison with the standard evaluation of a scientific-technological society, especially as the explanation for the new social order in *Alphaville* is a form of "computer programming." However, Truffaut's contemporaneously produced *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) brings this criticism of technocratic administration closer to the Marcusian vision by implicating consumerism and media control in the future's banal, conformist police state, where books are banned for the good of all. In a contemporaneous review of *Fahrenheit 451* for *Film Quarterly*, George Bluestone brings out the narrative's critique of bourgeois consumerism:

> Linda, Montag's wife, lives among her objects, not in them, and her experience is literally skin-deep. Her frozen dinners and televised judo demonstrations represent the world of what Daniel Borstin calls the "pseudoevent," which Truffaut carries to its absurd and sinister conclusion. (1967, 3)

Elio Petri's satirical *La decima vittima* (*The Tenth Victim*, 1965) (based on Robert Sheckley's 1953 short story "Seventh Victim") also features a world dominated by television and comic books in which the pursuit of consumer pleasures and outlandish sexual games are the only goals. Unregulated violence has been entirely abolished, not through repression, but because individuals with violent tendencies are allowed to participate in a legalized

murder game, alternating between hunters and hunted. Survivors are rewarded with money, especially if they can arrange for a sponsored, televised killing. A sexual dimension is added as Caroline (Ursula Andress) and Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) easily transform their hunter-hunted relationship into a game of sexual conquest. Set at a television station which produces pornography and "food porn" to placate the society's majority class of "low-drives," Nigel Kneale's BBC television film *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968) [Fig. 3.1] would further bring out the era's tendency (also especially evident in *Fahrenheit 451*) to link television with mindless consumption.

These examples together reveal a Huxleyian constellation of concerns each presented by inverting scenarios of formal scientific Utopianism into familiar dystopian forms. Rather than provide freedom, the technocratic society manifests a spirit of conformism that threatens individual freedom, while the narcotizing, de-sublimating influence of consumerism and the media fills increased leisure time rather than enriching personal or collective life. The protagonists of *The Year of the Sex Olympics*, *Alphaville*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *THX-1138* each challenge dominating prohibitions and prescriptions on love before finally escaping the confines of their technological cities, often to venture out to a pre-modern agrarian existence evocative of William

Morris's Utopian socialism.[12] In this inversion, tremendous technological achievements fail to provide a sense of "wonder," which is instead a mysterious quality only available through the re-immersion into the "life-world" of pre-modern culture, as in Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Island* (1962).[13]

This tendency of inversion can also be found in the films' visual and narrative stylization, which often evokes a sense of structured semiotic inversion in keeping with these inverse re-interpretations of scientific Utopia. As in earlier filmic visions of the future, the cinematic medium provides an opportunity for the depiction of the future's modern wonders through spectacle and attractions [going back to the initial proto-sf *The Airship Destroyer* (1909)] (Baxter 1970, 16). The dystopian films turn this convention on its head—that is, just as future Utopia is inverted into dystopia, the

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[12] Adorno had found Huxley's evocation of Utopian socialism bourgeois and "reactionary" in its false choice between "the barbarism of happiness and culture as the objectively higher condition that entails unhappiness" (1967, 112).

Fahrenheit 451's rather Robinsonian iteration would see further repetition as an aspect of political dissent in Godard's *Weekend* (1967), which alludes to the earlier film's "Book People" by populating the countryside with literary characters representing intellectual tradition.

[13] Only *Planet of the Apes* (1968) would attempt to portray the perils of a future retreat from science, leading to the re-establishment of a theocratic state. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970) would however reverse this strategy by rewarding with nuclear destruction the apes' return to scientific inquiry.

modern-marvelous is reconfigured as the modern-banal. In Sontagian terms, the nuclear disaster films depict the banality of horror while the dystopian films present the horror of banality.

Fig. 3.1: *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968)'s "The Hungry Angry Show" mixes food and violence.

An example of the modern-banal can be found in the choice to depict far future settings through a constellation of familiar modern visual icons is almost universal. Contemporaneous critic Bernard Beck sees the strategy of

assembling a dystopian future from images of the present as producing a mode of futurism unequivocally based in the extrapolation from the present (1971, 62-63). Truffaut complicates this claim somewhat by indicating that his choice to deviate from a far-future vision should be seen as a response to the aesthetic infusion of futurism within popular culture (including James Bond and the "space age" designs of Courrèges) that already appeared to him banal. The eclectic production design he eventually chose seemed more "strange and abnormal" and therefore the effect more powerful when transformed to the "banal": "It was [ultimately] a question of treating a fantastic story with familiarity, by making strange and abnormal everyday scenes look banal" (Truffaut 1966, 13).[14]

[14] A series of statements reveal that Truffaut aimed at renewing the genre's potential for cognitive estrangement with a number formal alienation strategies: He desired "a period piece" (Truffaut 166, 13), "a film about life as children see it" (Truffaut 1966, 22), "a science fiction in the style of *La Parapluies de Cherbourg"* (Truffaut 1967, 11), and something unlike "an American left-wing film" (Truffaut 1966, 22). David Anshen argues that *Alphaville* should be viewed within the context of Italian Neo-realism, noting that estrangement can be elicited through a form of parable-like storytelling and an aesthetic that attempts to "capture the reality of a historical moment in all its strangeness" (2007, 101). Allan Thiher argues that *Alphaville* presents the contemporary urban environment "as [a] crucible in which language is ground up, altered, emptied of meaning, and, finally, placed in the service of totalitarian repression" (Thiher 1976, 949) by pointing especially to the film's saturation with intertexts from popular culture as a prescient avatar of cultural brutality.

What emerges is an aesthetic of disappointment, de-spectacularization, and dysfunction. In *THX-1138*—as opposed to the perfect, technologically ordered society of "The Veldt" section of the Ray Bradbury adaptation *The Illustrated Man* (1969) [Fig. 3.2], in which psychological ennui is the main concern[15]—the totalizing technological society is a bureaucracy marked by incompetent administrators and technologies that frequently break down, leading to an ongoing series of industrial accidents,[16] including one accident which is presented in prosaic detail during the film's exposition [Fig. 3.3]. Similarly, *La decima vittima*'s killing game is divorced of its shocking quality as characters treat its rules and conventions with detached familiarity [Fig. 3.4]

[15] Compared with the other contemporaneous dystopias mentioned, *The Illustrated Man* almost parodies itself in the manner of Woody Allen's *Sleeper* (1973).

[16] Cinematic precursors to this trope may be found in *Metropolis* (1927) and *Modern Times* (1936).

Fig. 3.2: Claire Bloom and Rod Steiger face future ennui in *The Illustrated Man* (1969).

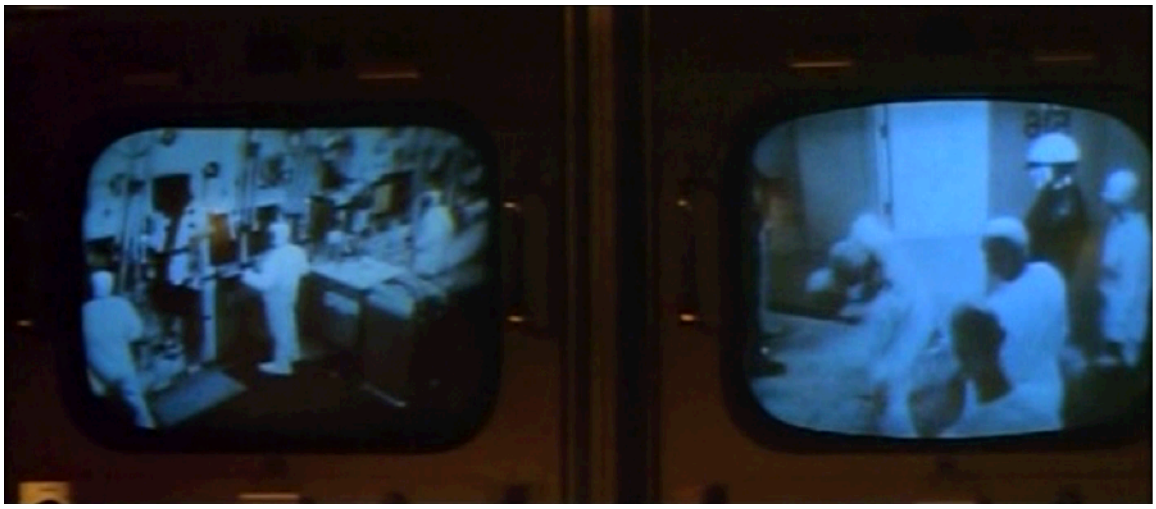

Fig. 3.3: The accident that begins *THX-1138* (1971) is revealed on surveillance monitors.

Fig. 3.4: *La decima vittima* (1965): "You can't shoot in bars."

Self-consciously camp futures are less ambiguous in their use of semiotic inversion, achieved through the parodic exaggeration of Utopian futurist optimism—represented by a constellation of low culture and sf fantasy—with the ironic intent of parodying the short-sightedness of "space age" confidence in science and the masquerade of bourgeois ideology as material and intellectual progress. This exaggerated form of semiotic inversion can be seen especially in films of the American and European avant-garde and the collages of the British Independent Group (Petersen

2009, 21).[17] As Rob Latham (2011) notes, similar collages (in the tradition of Situationist *détournement*) were also common in the pages of new wave sf magazine *New Worlds*. In cinema, Stan Vanderbeek's experimental "collage film" *Science Friction* (1959) comes perhaps the closest to this paradigm (as described by David E. James):

> . . . The debris from print advertising and popular press functions . . . [as] the major source of imagery by which the satire on the confrontational aspect of the cold war, the arms race, and modern technology in general is articulated . . . [And] it is itself the

[17] Aldiss claims that in Europe "there was no pulp phenomenon" (2004, 510), thereby indicating that it was thereby free from a negative association in the countries that created highbrow sf literature. However, Edward James notes that imported American sf formed a part of a broader constellation of American consumer culture, allowing it to represent Americanization more generally (1994, 54). Carlo Pagetti likewise claims that this association with American culture ultimately harmed the reputation of sf in Italy in the fifties and sixties, identifying the genre with "American mass culture and its cheap mythology of technological triumph" (1987, 263). Pagetti further describes the 1962 translation of Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* as a turning point toward the Italian critical popularity of sf (1979, 321).

The larger avant-garde artistic relationship to sf is epitomized by Dutch Situationist Constant Nieuwenhuys, who worked on an architectural proposal for an anti-capitalist Utopian future society called New Babylon between the years 1959-1974. His essay "Another City for Another Life" contains the following sf framing statement: "We crave adventure. Not finding it on earth, some have gone seeking it on the moon. We prefer to wager first on a change on earth" (Andreotti 2000, 56).

> object of satire, the manifestation of a logical connection between the materialistic obsessions of advertising and the permeation of the texture of everyday life by technologic overdevelopment. Newspapers turn themselves into missiles, and rockets are constructed out of pictures of the tail fins of fifties automobiles. (1989, 140)[18]

A more modest détournement is most apparent in the opening of Lucas's *THX-1138*, which takes the form of a modified trailer for *Buck Rogers* (1939), reconfigured as "Buck Rogers in the 20th Century":

> Buck Rogers in the 20th Century! Buck Rogers, now adventuring in the amazing world of the 20th century. By turning a little dial to project us ahead in time, we're able to be right with Buck and his friends, in the wonderful world of the future, a world that sees a lot of our scientific and mechanical dreams come true. And, you know, there's nothing supernatural or mystic about Buck. He's just an ordinary, normal human being who keeps his wits about him.

[18] Other avant-garde films alluding to pulp sf include Bruce Conner's *Cosmic Ray* (1962), the film of Claes Oldenburg's Happening *Ray Gun Theater* (1962), Ron Rice's *Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man* (1962), and Paul Shartis's *Ray Gun Virus* (1966).

While this introduction deviates significantly from *THX-1138*'s overall tone of modernist melodrama, the underground 16mm *Sins of the Fleshapoid*s (1965) acts out an extended romantic space melodrama which parodies tropes plucked by the handful from dime novels, pulps, comics, serials, and fifties B-movies. Visually oriented in a far-off exotic hodge-podge space locale, *Sins of the Fleshapoids* [Fig. 3.5] lampoons the dystopian trope of a future prohibition on love as well as the Utopian impulse represented by its overcoming (as in *1984*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *THX-1138*) by portraying the rebellious love of a pair of clunky robots (Bob Cowan and Maren Thomas) who murder their philandering, hedonistic masters in their pleasure domes and produce as their lovechild the most vulgar of commodities representing the future: a cheap, metallic toy robot.[19]

[19] *Sins of the Fleshapoids*'s soundtrack is taken from Hollywood soundtrack records including Bernard Herrmann's *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1957), providing another example of direct re-purposing.

Fig. 3.5: A human (Gina Zuckerman) celebrates freedom from toil while her Fleshapoids, including Xar (Bob Cowan), serve her hand and foot.

In the future sequence of Marco Ferreri's *Marcia nuzale* (*The Wedding March*, 1965), the ironic depiction of a rebellious future love culminates in absurdity as love in the late twentieth century "reach[es] the ideal Utopian society" consisting of "the manufacture of artificial men and women, created exclusively for marriage. . . . Thanks to machines, we shall arrive at so

complete an 'automation' that all is available, as in Eden" [Fig. 3.6].[20] The result is that, in this future paradise, men and women all travel around with nude, full-sized (and rather unconvincing) human dolls in whose arms they spend countless carefree hours (that is, finally freed from the "alienation" of human social relations and allowed to commune fully with their commodities).

Fig. 3.6: In *Marcia nuzale* (1965), marriage is "solved" via the creation of android "spouses."

[20] My translation from the original Italian

Present as Future

Several other dystopian films entirely eschewed the pretense toward "future visions" in order to imbed further a dystopian future into the fabric of the present. For instance, in Jacques Tati's *PlayTime* (1967), the inscrutable marvel of contemporary Paris is presented in dystopian fashion with an emphasis on its most futuristic and disorienting aspects. An affectionately comic stereotype of a traditional Frenchman, M. Hulot (also played by Tati) had provided a marked contrast to the hurly-burly of perpetually busy urban-dwellers in *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (*Mr. Hulot's Holiday*, 1953) and *Mon oncle* (1958) by reveling in simple pleasures and frequently taking time to observe and inhabit his surroundings. In the modern, futuristic world of *PlayTime* (1967), Hulot—now often only a speck in a densely packed 70mm frame [Fig. 3.7]—has completely lost his place. As in *THX-1138*, *PlayTime* reveals the challenge modern urbanism poses to traditional forms of social being through the spatial confusion of its characters, who struggle to find their way around the city's initially impressive-looking buildings, evoking Walter Benjamin's presentation of "great cities" as an expression of "the boundless maze of indirect relationships, complex mutual dependencies and compartmentalizations into which human beings are forced by modern forms

of living" (2002, 90-91).[21] As in *La decima vittima*, *PlayTime* strikes a stance of satiric irony, as the characters face annoyances but ultimately retain their common optimism for all things modern despite the obvious drawbacks of a continual alienation from their surroundings and each other.

Fig. 3.7: *PlayTime* (1967) visualizes compartmentalization.

In one evaluation of the sf genre, Fredric Jameson claims, "technological change has reached a dizzying tempo, in which so-called 'future shock' is a daily experience," so that "[sf] narratives have the social function of accustoming their readers to rapid innovation, of preparing our

[21] David Cunningham and Jon Goodbun (2006) provide a concise history of the Marxist critique of urban architecture. (In fact, many of *PlayTime*'s massive sets ["Tativille"] were constructed especially for the film.)

consciousness and our habits for the otherwise demoralizing impact of change itself" (1982, 151). Sf therefore takes on the function (described by Benjamin) of "the big-city modernism of Baudelaire [which] provided an elaborate shock-absorbing mechanism for the otherwise bewildered visitor to the new world of the great nineteenth-century city" (Jameson 1982, 151). Such an interpretation is certainly apparent in *PlayTime*, which crystallizes into comic scenarios the traumatic character of modern "big-city" existence. It would also provide an explanation for the film's turn to a "happy ending," in which a number of urban dwellers ultimately find a way to connect to one another by throwing a boisterous party in a terrible mismanaged restaurant. Suddenly, the city appears as a colorful carnival. While other "dystopian" films set in the present may provide comparable catharsis, their ostensible pessimism edges out *PlayTime*'s final glimpse of optimism.

Ugo Gregoretti's proletarian satire *Omicron* (1963) finds yet another ironic variation on the "pod people" scenario of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), now self-consciously based in a pun on the Marxist concept of "alienation."[22] In *Omicron*, factory worker Angelo (Renato Salvatori) dies as a result of an industrial accident and is inhabited by the titular extraterrestrial assigned the duty of scouting out the Earth for a possible

[22] Though not evincing an explicitly sf narrative form, Gregoretti's earlier *Il pollo ruspante* (*Free-Range Chicken,* 1963) had used similar estrangement techniques to provide a fabulistic satire of bourgeois affluence.

future invasion. Alongside the general satire resulting from the anthropological inversion of a rational outsider's point of view ("Damn, we've discovered a prehistoric species!"), Marxist proletarian allegorical elements abound. At first, for instance, Omicron is unable to activate Angelo's thought and language centers but can control his motor centers to reproduce and learn physical movements. When his factory bosses at the auto lubrication plant discover the speed and ease of his mimicry, they rehire the resurrected Angelo who is quickly able to out-produce all other workers at the factory with speed and precision. The factory's efficiency experts then plan to "analyze, isolate, and reproduce" his "brain damage" ("for scientific purposes, only"). When Omicron reports back to alien superiors in space, he notes that the Earth has a "closed cycle" of class and that they need only to take over the bodies of the bosses in order to completely control the planet [Fig. 3.8]. However, a flaw in this plan is revealed when a twinge of Angelo's class-consciousness begins to interfere with Omicron's control, and he begins a strike against the factory bosses. Eventually, the aliens do take over the bodies of the ruling classes. However, in order to counteract the dangers of class-consciousness, they propose the "prohibition of love, of speaking and of thinking . . . ideas [and] emotions." "Whoever insists on thinking will be punished with amputation of the head," they agree, exhaling enormous puffs of tobacco smoke.

H2S (1969), a Pop Art-resonate sixties dystopian Italian comedy from 1969 for Paramount, although set in the future, features a similarly explicit form of Swiftian satire. In one scene, a group of the three dignitaries of the ruling class (decked out in fancy costumes and wigs) discuss what to do with the single unruly youth (Denis Gilmore) the film has followed. The technocrat's answer: "Repression. It is necessary to insist on the path of repression. The boy's behavior is a threat to the collective order. He suffers from individualism? Then, the solution can only be of a scientific kind. Take the brain of a submissive . . . Transplant it in the boy's head. See him, from now on, grateful, smiling, obedient.

Fig. 3.8: In *Omicron* (1963), alien visitor Omicron has the power to see through class relations (and clothing).

In Hiroshi Teshigahara's contemporarily set dramatic art film *Tanin no kao* (*The Face of Another,* 1966), professional worker Okuyama (Tatsuya Nakadai) is also in an industrial accident, now involving chemicals, which he survives, but is horribly disfigured. His estrangement from his wife leads him to pursue a therapy that centers on the sf novum of a completely lifelike face/mask—the titular "face of another"—which provides a temporary fantasy-solution but cannot solve Okuyama's ennui, ultimately leading to his murder of his wife.

In addition to the theme of ego-identity and its relation to self-image, *Tanin no kao* explores the social marginalization around deformity, as Okuyama's story is paralleled with that of a young female *hibakusha* (atomic-affected person, played by Miki Irie) disfigured by the Nagasaki bombing and eventually driven to suicide. The parallels between the two stories suggest a broader analysis of the inadequacy of instrumental rationality to forecast and solve the modern sources of physical and psychological trauma. Furthermore, the plight of the film's victims reveals the banality and fragility of a bourgeois existence that stigmatizes the victims of science and technology, thereby training the total population as agents of the "banality of evil."

As with *Omicron*'s alien(ation), *Tanin no kao* literalizes estrangement through the focus on the transformative, estranging psychological effect of trauma. Like Omicron, Okuyama exists in a marginal space from which to

observe the bourgeois sphere of illusions and disguised social relations. In one stylized scene in a bustling German expatriate bar, the audience is treated to disconcerting flashes of Nazi military insignia, revealing a paranoid awareness of the horror hidden below prosperity's seemingly benign surface.

John Frankenheimer's *Seconds* (1966) also evokes bourgeois ennui through the novum of radical plastic surgery. This medical achievement, the product of a corporation called only "the company" in a Kafkaesque transposition of state power onto modern American corporatism, enables Arthur Hamilton (John Randolph)'s futile attempt to leave a loveless marriage and unrewarding banking position to start over with a new identity (and a new face, provided by Rock Hudson). Although *Seconds,* like *Tanin no kao*, follows the narrative formula of a mad scientist story rather than a futuristic dystopia, the dystopian potential it suggests is clear. Both tales rely on the conceit of instrumental technocratic solutions' inadequacy in the face of modern spiritual dispossession. Despite their fantastic scientific, technological, and organizational achievements, the technocratic experts of "the company" cannot provide Arthur with the means to find happiness even as a painter, a social role of his choosing rooted in the promise of individual liberty and expression. Rather, Arthur chafes against the confines of this social role as well, which seems an even more superficial existence typified by vapid cocktail party conversations and frequent hedonist injunctions from his

bohemian girlfriend Nora (Salome Jens).

The Perfect Prescription

If the dystopian films following *1984* (1956) appear strongly countercultural, their interpretative inversions also contained a variety of prescriptions. While many of the films appear to follow Horkheimer and Adorno's bleak conclusion that a closed ideological system of bourgeois society contains no exit, a number of the Huxleyian types posit a Utopian possibility of individual freedom even if the narrative only allows for a glimmer of this impossible freedom to emerge before the film's abrupt conclusion. In its scene of snow falling on the brotherhood of Book People, *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) probably goes the farthest toward providing images of freely chosen solidarity [Fig. 3.9], but like the similar scenes of fantasy communism at the conclusions of *Gas-s-s-s* (1970) [Fig. 3.10] and *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969), it contains no sense of social reality and is furthermore profoundly backward looking.

While the atomic disaster films can be criticized for offering "no solution," in the dystopia a solution often appears in the self-same bourgeois values the film seemingly attempts to invert—from the return to Enlightenment values represented by the literature in *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) to the sentimental, redemptive power of love in *Alphaville* (1965) and of

human connection in *PlayTime* (1967). Even American critics responded negatively to Godard's apparent sentimentality in *Alphaville*, with Bowsley Crowther for instance claiming "Mr. Godard's conclusion that love—good old love—conquers all is a curiously disappointing finishing for such an initially promising film" (1965, 49), and John Thomas bemoaning the "weak spot in Godard's message," that "he can offer as an alternative . . . nothing more than a return to the past" (1966, 50-51).

Fig. 3.9: A Book Person from *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) returns to freely chosen manual labor.

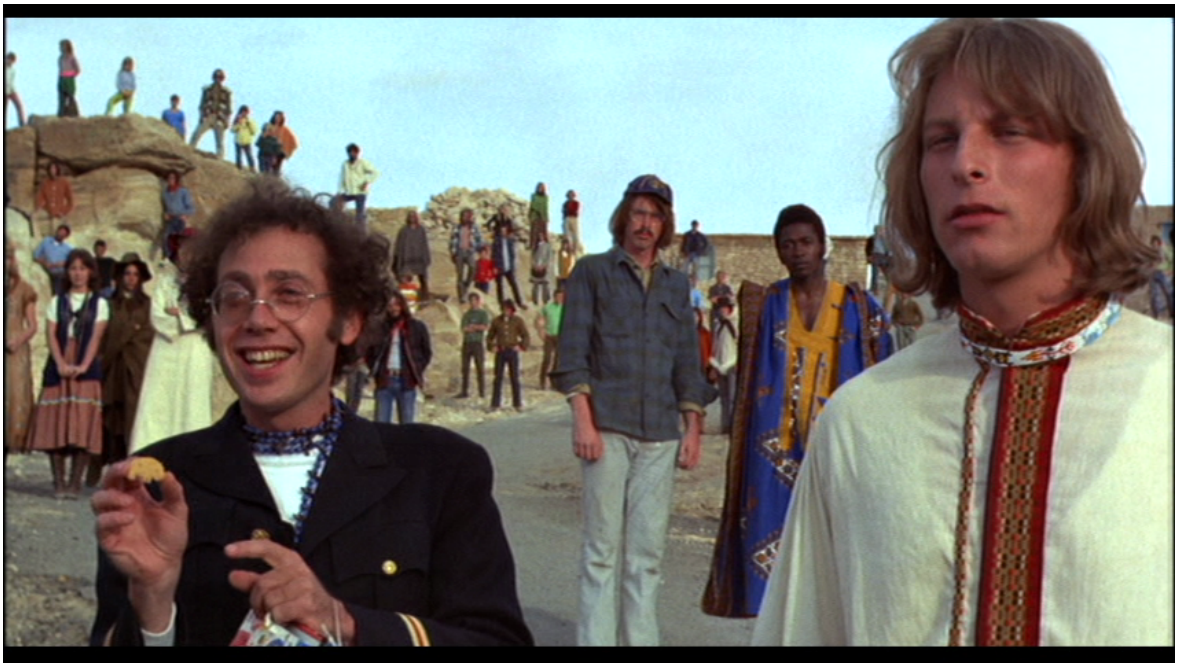

Fig. 3.10: In *Gas-s-s-s* (1970), worldwide catastrophe ends in hippie communalism.

Contrary to these accusations of sentimentality, I find the "solutions" offered in these films far more complex and contradictory upon further thought, in keeping with the satirical tradition of Utopian fiction [which, as Simon Dentith notes, may "shift rapidly in and out of (irony)" (1995, 139)]. In *Fahrenheit 451*, for instance, books (in all their fetishistic wonder) ironically break the spell of commodification in *Fahrenheit 451* when the Book People repurpose canonical literary classics freed from canon (as literal "textual poachers"). Whether or not Godard's romanticism can be considered entirely sincere (or whether the love he advocates is "good old love"), the apparent substitution of naivety for "concrete solutions" this "love" represents would

increasingly emerge as a theme in the dystopian films as images of the sixties youth counterculture began to enter their purview. If, in *Seconds* (1966), the bohemian artists and revelers surrounding Tony (the transformed Arthur) [Fig. 3.11] appear to represent a naïve anti-intellectual hedonism, a cartoonish caricature of hippies, youth, and counterculture figures would escalate after the so-called Summer of Love in 1967.

In yet another future of conformity, consumerism, and precise rational control, *Work Is a 4-Letter Word* (1968) (from Royal Shakespeare Company's artistic director Peter Hall) tells the story of Valentine Brose (David Warner), an oddball iconoclast who cannot even seem to manage his half-hour a day janitorial job, instead creating outrageous bungles and placing his superiors in embarrassing situations. In the film's conclusion, similar to the endings of *The Bed-Sitting Room* and *Gas-s-s-s*, representatives of each institutional culture he has offended (including the management, the middle-management, science, the church, and the family) converge on Valentine in a giant, old-fashioned chase scene that culminates in a mass exposure to the hallucinogenic spores of Valentine's "giant Mexican mushrooms." The mushrooms affect an immediate about-face in this small microcosm of society, which degenerates into a hedonistic mushroom-eating orgy of laughter. Their final act is the destruction of a giant computer, which the party applauds. As in the other films with escape endings including *Fahrenheit 451*, the

conclusion features Valentine and his wife Betty (Cilla Black) venturing off into a forest, representing a return to the "natural world."

If youth culture often represented a "danger" in British popular culture, *These Are the Damned* (1964) had united members of a rebellious motorcycle gang as part of the film's final "nuclear family." Peter Watkins's *Privilege* (1967), by contrast, portrays the ease with which even "normal" and political engaged youths become the willing sheep of a media-concocted false messiah espousing conformism as long as he provides a steady stream of vapid pop music and fits in with appealing youth fads and fashions. (A contemporary review in *The Christian Science Monitor* found Watkins's satire plausible: "a thoughtful look at today's super-adoration of pop-music singers makes director Watkins' [sic] chilling premise more believable" [Sweeney 1967, 6]). AIP's hippiesploitation satire *Wild in the Streets* (1968) would further explore the threat (or exciting promise) of irrationality within an ascendant and fashion-driven mass youth culture, as a 15-year-old voting age results in "re-education camps" of compulsory LSD for the over-40s and the establishment of "the most truly hedonistic society the world has ever known."

Fig. 3.11: In *Seconds*, Tony Wilson (Rock Hudson) finds a literal Bacchanal no less alienating than his old life as banker Arthur Hamilton.

If these films collectively satirize the notion of a countercultural solution to the Huxleyian dystopian future, New Left filmmaker Robert Harris's *Ice* (1970) provides an overtly political countercultural response to the dystopian future from within the Movement, depicting the role of a Newsreel-type radical media collective in the struggle against a repressive future state. While distinct from the film's commercial future dystopias, *Ice* nevertheless provides a formal and visual strategy that resonates with the earlier films, including the use of contemporary New York City as a stand-in for the future, which reveals the fascist character of many contemporaneous

situations including depictions of police brutality. In addition, the narrative is broken up by a number of Brechtian estrangement techniques, including on-screen text [Fig. 3.12] and negative images [Fig. 3.13].

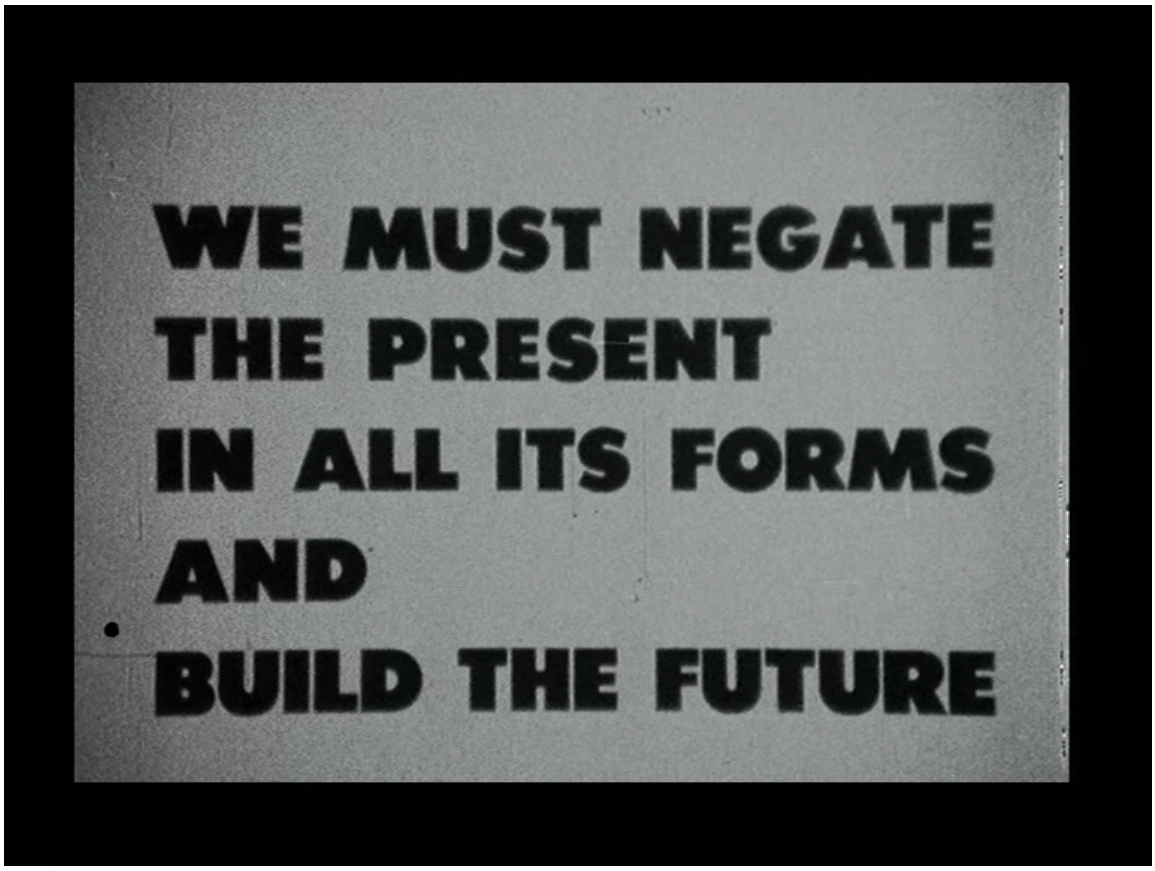

Fig. 3.12: An explicit statement of Marxist Utopian negation in *Ice* (1970)

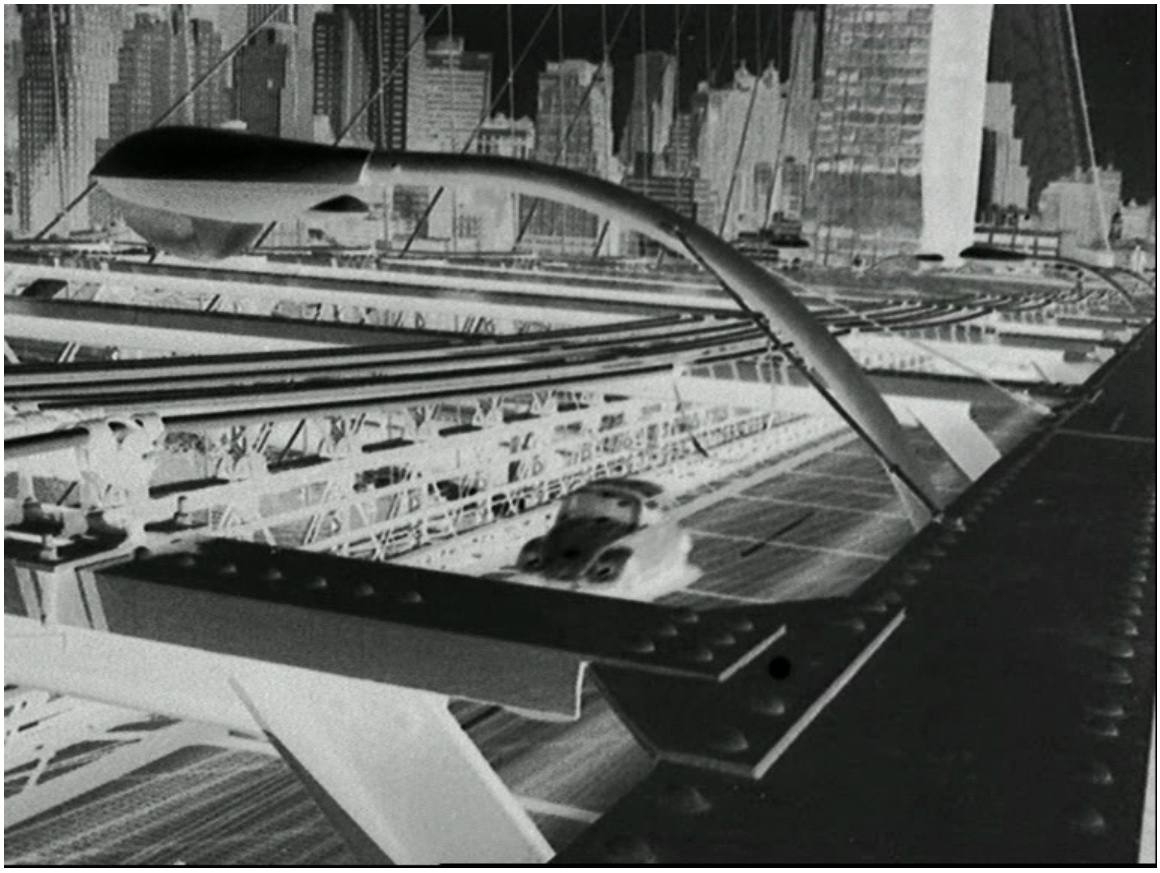

Fig. 3.13: In *Ice* (1970), negation is also represented formally through the use of negative images.

Techniques such as these clearly mobilize sf cognitive estrangement to marry political theater to the rhetorical appeals of technological Utopianism. However, in doing so the film also moves away from the decade's meticulously developed Huxleyian future of soft rational-scientific control (delineated above) in favor of the obviously repressive, imperialist police state of *1984* in which a clear struggle can be outlined between a mass proletarian population (of "whites" aligned with blacks, women, and "Spanish-speaking

peoples" as well as the occupied country of Mexico) and a ruling-class imperialist state. This opens up the space for a renewed critique of scientific-technological rationality, as Amos Vogel's *Village Voice* review, suggests: Vogel notes that as the film goes on, "all talk about ideas and causes has been superseded by discussions of tactics and terror, as if the revolution was merely a matter of efficient technology" (1970, 57). In this way, the revolutionaries may even appear to represent the technocratic avant-garde.

In a more ambiguous (though equally estranged fashion), David Cronenberg's early films *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) further present a future rational-technocracy (seemingly modeled after figures such as Marshall McLuhan and Timothy Leary) in the service of "free[ing] energies, possibilities, and new forms of human relationship never dreamed of," including communities of telepaths (in *Stereo*) and a society transformed by a mutant sexually transmitted disease that functions like a drug (in *Crimes of the Future*).[23] Equally ambiguous would be the more celebrated and notorious *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), which utilized graphic sex and violence to pose the question of what constitutes a radical

[23] Because of the relative obscurity of these films it is unclear how they were viewed in the era, though in a review of Cronenberg's *Rabid* (1977) for *Screen International* Geoff Brown notes the director's exploitation films become "more palatable" if they are considered as "diluted" commercial variations of the earlier films' "concerns with man's physical nature and tamperings of science" (1977, 18).

countercultural act in a Huxleyian future,[24] while also serving to challenge (or at least complicate) the radical individualist libertarianism that had united Orwell, Huxley, and Marcuse in its vision of youthful freedom decayed into anomic "ultraviolence."

As Janet Staiger's (2000) study of *A Clockwork Orange*'s U.S. reception reveals, central to the film's near-universal controversy was the question of the film's ultimate "meaning" and what it advocated. I suggest that *A Clockwork Orange* reveals how liberal-consensus over the bomb, which had dominated sf half a decade earlier in films such as *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, had given way to fragmentation amid the larger question of optimism toward progress, represented by the decade's trend toward films of Huxleyian dystopia. In doing so, however, *A Clockwork Orange* appears to fracture the notion of a hegemonic ideology—at the very least, its own reception provided an ideological battlefield on which the opposing ideologies viewers read into its text could contend. *A Clockwork Orange*, like *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and other films of the late sixties and early seventies seemed finally to wrench Enlightenment notions of progress and evolution from their ideological determinations in order to interrogate

[24] *Vinyl*, Andy Warhol's earlier 1965 adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange,* also raises this question by drawing out parallels between "control" and sexual sadomasochism.

critically whether history, if it is a meaningful concept, can ultimately be understood at all.

Jameson asks us to imagine an alternative in which the "Utopian future has in no other words turned out to have been merely the future of one moment of what is now our own past" (1982, 152). This perspective provides an insight into the strangely *furtive* movements toward Utopia represented by *Alphaville*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *THX-1138*'s profoundly unimaginative "final escapes," as well as the dystopias with no solution at all, including *A Clockwork Orange*. The inability to imagine the future receives perhaps its clearest possible representation in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, with the monolith beacon representing an almost literal "blank spot" in the frame.

Chapter Four: Exploration

If today it has become a cliché to describe the cinema of the sixties as "revolutionary," few critics think of this claim in connection to the spirit of political revolution. Peter Cowie does so when he begins his *Revolution! The Explosion of World Cinema in the 60s* (2004) by rooting the May '68 protests in the milieu of the French New Wave and the controversy surrounding the dismissal of Henri Langlois from the Cinémathèque Française. David E. James (1989) presents the experimental films of the American Underground as radically iconoclastic and representing a formal and ideological challenge to the sociopolitical order. More often, however, the sixties film "revolution" may be seen as representing the end of an "old" and the beginning of a "new" commercial cinema represented by both the European New Waves and New Hollywood.[1]

[1] Mark Harris for instance elicits this sense of "revolution" with the title of his history of the 1967 birth of New Hollywood *Pictures at a Revolution*. For Harris and others, the mid-sixties creation of films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Graduate* (1968) represented not only the industrial re-organization and "death" of the studio system but also a period of artistic success through which Hollywood pushed past an era of censorship, in the process incorporating the non-Classical techniques, narrative modes, and stylistic tendencies pioneered by the post-war European art cinema and cinematic avant-garde, even perhaps advancing and perfecting them on a technical level.

When assessing the New Hollywood from a critical studies standpoint, however, this "revolution" can begin to appear by contrast as a meaningless coup d'état by a new generation of culture-savvy marketers and executives. For Thomas Doherty, for instance, films such as *The Graduate* and *Easy Rider* (1969) may be seen as products resulting from an adjustment of the teenpic exploitation formula, cynically designed to meet a burgeoning counterculture market (2002, 191-192).[2] For James, the use, or appropriation, of alternative film practices within this commercial setting ultimately had the effect of co-opting and therefore de-radicalizing their potentially radical impact. Mark Even Harris's own narrative of the period reveals the precarious and seemingly arbitrary ebb and flow of the era's aesthetic preoccupations and trends (Harris 2008, 136-137).

In Chapters Two and Three, I described sixties films that exemplify the two socially critical sf sub-genres Raymond Williams calls Doomsday and Putropia. In "Science Fiction," Williams remains skeptical of both these types, considering the novels *1984* (1949) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) politically regressive myths first and foremost. Because "Humanism is discarded in the very affirmation of the familiar contemporary myths of

[2] The growing legitimation of genres previously deemed exploitation might also be seen as indicative of a general upgrading of the cultural status of the film medium in America (Bauman 2007).

humane concern," Williams claims, "Much SF is really anti-SF" (1988, 359).[3] His analysis of these sub-genres is therefore something of a precursor to the slightly later critiques of sf cinema offered by Richard Hodgens and Susan Sontag, for whom sci-fi is symptomatic of the culture's intellectual banality rather than an oppositional response to it.

I have, however, suggested a Utopian interpretation of these forms, derived from Fredric Jameson and Tom Moylan. In the doomsdays, the bomb's negation banishes the anti-Utopian status quo and opens up the conceptual possibility of renewal. Dystopias, by contrast, provide a useful critical complication to this premise by unmasking the constitutive imaginative impoverishment entailed in such a purely negative interpretation of the "technological" present. As Jameson theorizes:

> . . . [W]hat [sf] is indeed authentic about, as a mode of narrative and a form of knowledge, is not our capacity to keep the future alive, even in imagination. On the contrary, its deepest vocation is over and over again to demonstrate and to dramatize our incapacity to imagine the future, to body forth, through apparently full representations which prove on closer inspection to be structurally

[3] Statements such as this in "Science Fiction" (as well as Williams's very use of the term "Putropia" which, unlike "dystopia," contains "Utopia") reveal Williams at his most dialectical, re-affirming the theoretical relations between sf theory and Hegelian-Marxist critique.

> and constitutively impoverished, the atrophy in our time of what Marcuse called the *utopian imagination*, the imagination of otherness and radical difference; to succeed by failure, and to serve as unwitting and even unwilling vehicles for a meditation, which, setting forth for the unknown, finds itself irrevocably mired in the all-too-familiar, and thereby becomes transformed into a contemplation of our own absolute limits. (2005, 289-290)

Inasmuch as the disasters and dystopias dramatize the squandering of humanity's technological and scientific progress, they do not attempt the sincere confrontation with the absolute limits of science, technology, or humans. In this way, Williams is correct to claim that both sub-genres are "anti-sf." Nevertheless, the dystopian gesture provides a movement toward the consideration of "limits" by revealing a limited imagination as symptomatic of squandered human potential.

Williams contrasts these two conservative forms with the progressive Space Anthropology stories "which consciously use[s] the SF formula to find what are essentially new tribes, and new patterns of living" (1988, 359). In the late sixties, after a period dominated by dystopian stories (Booker 2001, 83; Fitting 2010, 140; Franklin 1966, 391), Utopian sf would begin to re-emerge in the literary field, and this tendency was paralleled in cinema. The

prestige disaster films I have described aggregate around 1959-1964, art cinematic dystopias dominate the mid-decade, and art cinematic exploration stories increasingly emerge during the heyday of the counterculture in the late sixties. By 1968 when Alain Resnais's *Je t'aime je t'aime* was set to open the Cannes Film Festival (but was ultimately interrupted by Mai '68 in all its historical immediacy), it was a film of this third type.

In this chapter, I will therefore examine the era's exploration films as a final test of the revolutionary potential of sixties sf cinema, i.e. order to consider the confrontations with "our own absolute limits" (Jameson 205, 289). In these years of social strife, the exploration of human limits would be increasingly allegorized through liberatory discourses circling around themes of race, gender, sexuality and "consciousness expansion." After describing the fifties space exploration sub-genre as an especially ideological form centered on the establishment of outer space as a hegemonic space, I will note two progressive sixties counter-tendencies. I will begin by exploring films that address the notion of an "expanded consciousness" that seeks to burrow behind the ideological limits of surface reality. In the next section on "space camp and sexual evolution" I return to the topic of gender representations in order to bring out the ways in which the undermining of assumptions about gender ultimately provided the more profitable framework for exploring "new tribes, and new patterns of living." If drugs represent the notion of an

expanded paradigm on a theoretical level, sex represents the practical laboratory within which this expansion is tested.

Hegemonic Space

The prolific and formulaic space exploration plot had begun in the fifties with the rocket ship films *Destination Moon* (1950) and *Rocketship X-M* (1950) but continued throughout the sixties, albeit often as fodder for International "B" production in Italy (the films of Antonio Margheriti) and Japan (Kinji Fukasaku).[4] Hollywood studios pursued a few large prestige space exploration films, despite a general reluctance to do so (Harris 2008, 285). *Robinson Crusoe On Mars* (1964), a large production by independent producer Aubrey Schenk for distribution by Paramount, was solidly in the established George Pal style of family films such as *Conquest of Space* (1955) whereas *Countdown* (1968) and *Marooned* (1969) would also remain faithful to the fifties formula while predicting the seventies tendency to re-imagine the sub-genre in a more realistic, less fanciful style. *The Martian Chronicles* was to have been a large production for Universal by producer Alan Pakula and director Robert Mulligan, collaborators on a series of social dramas including *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), and thereby may well have provided

[4] Low-budget sf production also began to dominate filmmaking in countries largely outside the sphere of Hollywood such as Mexico and Spain.

a better analogue to the newer sf types such as *On the Beach* (1959) or even *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) (V*ariety* June 28, 1965, 11). Arthur Jacob's troubled production of *Planet of the Apes* (1968) seems to have been pitched as a full-fledged social satire replacing modern cities with ape denizens in the manner of its French source novel but consequently had difficulty finding full funding until it was a given a chance by Richard Zanuck (by which time its scenario had been greatly compressed) (*Variety* March 25, 1964, 3; Russo and Landsman 2001, 2-3). Although still dominated by the bomb, and therefore evocative of all three of sixties generic types, *Planet of the Apes* deviates from the fifties space exploration cycle by making its focus the elaboration of the ape society.[5] In this way, it prefigures a series of large budgeted seventies "Spaceship Earth" films including *Silent Running* (1972) and *Soylent Green* (1973) that would evolve past a fixation on atomic fears in order to consider human progress through appeals to nature and multiculturalism but always from within a pessimistic framework informed by a growing awareness of environmental crisis and degradation.

I consider *Barbarella* (1968) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) the key space exploration films of the era because they most boldly invert the fifties

[5] Joe Russo and Larry Landsman reference a memo from Jacobs to Blake Edwards reading "I absolutely concur with you that the last scene should end with a nightmare quality—no hope—that Thomas [later, Taylor] should not say: 'This is Earth,' but that we should see it in the last shocking shot (2001, 20)."

genre expectations through the use of art cinematic and avant-garde technique. In doing so, they reveal the extent to which the space exploration film can be understood as "the astronaut film" because they focus on the character of the astronaut as the avatar of space conquest. In the sixties, therefore, the confrontation with progress began with the bomb itself, was then followed by a consideration of the bomb-producing society as a whole, and finally concluded in the consideration of the astronaut.

The fifties astronaut films had predominately concerned white males and thereby provide the fodder for a consideration (and potential inversion of) hegemonic sexual and racial assumptions. In the domain of gender roles, the rocket itself is a rather obviously phallic contraption penetrating the unknown depths of space, but it is not uncommon for these films to represent gender contrasts as the major source of narrative interest, as the presence of a female scientist or girlfriend often complicates the Hawksian male camaraderie of the rocket's masculine realm. In these films, the women are either a source of comic relief, frivolous and vain, or else frustratingly cool, unfeminine, and inscrutable, as in the case of scientist Lisa Van Horn (Osa Massen) in *Rocketship X-M*.

Although it combines the space exploration formula with that of a "weirdie" monster scenario,[6] the British-produced *First Man Into Space* (1959) epitomizes the astronaut films' gender relations. It begins *in medias res* at a naval base in Albuquerque with a rocket launch into the ionosphere, meticulously detailed in the film's opening ten-minute sequence. Hotshot navy test pilot Lt. Dan Milton Prescott (Bill Edwards) attempts to control the rocket Y12 out past the ionosphere, attentive to the directions of his brother, Cmdr. Charles Ernest Prescott (Marshall Thompson) and the pensive German scientist Dr. Von Essen (Carl Jaffe) on the ground. Dan is alternately wrung with pressure [Fig. 4.1] and elated at his achievement. He then appears to falter and even briefly loses consciousness before safely ejecting himself and finally making it out alive.

[6] A similar variation is found in *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and *Terrore nello spazio* (*Planet of the Vampires*, 1965).

Fig. 4.1: A pensive Lt. Dan (Bill Edwards) on the verge of becoming the *First Man Into Space* (1959)

As Dan recuperates, his brother chastises his missteps during the mission. However, due to popular and official pressure, it is clear that Dan will be piloting the next rocket mission in only a few weeks. Dan's Italian "scientist in a skirt" girlfriend Tia (Marla Landi) distracts him from his preparation, but as the second launch approaches he appears to be physically and mentally rejuvenated. During the launch, however, Dan decides again to disobey his brother's orders and to strike out into outer space without

permission. Then something weird happens, and a thick cloud of "meteorite dust" begins to assault the X13 rocket.

At this point, Dan is presumed dead. But two more weird situations emerge for the remaining company. When the capsule returns to earth, it is covered with a strange alien coating that even X-Rays cannot penetrate. If this is not strange enough, a vampiric monster has begun to terrorize the New Mexican countryside, upsetting the region's poor Mexican farmers by slaughtering cattle before moving on to murder and ravenously thieve blood banks. Of course, the monster was Dan all along, transformed by the alien dust [Fig. 4.2], which protects anyone and anything in the vacuum of outer space but in doing so significantly alters its host. Weak from oxygen deprivation, Dan had reverted to an animal bloodlust. Before finally collapsing, Dan gives an impassioned, disconnected final speech. Despite the awful anxiety of "groping [his] way through fear and doubt," he "just *had* to be the first man into space." His brother eulogizes the fallen astronaut with the sentiment that "The conquest of new worlds always makes demands of human life, and there will always be men who accept the risks."

Fig. 4.2: Lt. Dan (Bill Edwards) post-transformation in *First Man Into Space* (1959)

If *2001: A Space Odyssey* emblematizes the era's movement toward the aesthetic traditions of "art cinema," *First Man Into Space* is fairly straightforward post-Sputnik "B" sci-fi. In all of the ways *2001: A Space Odyssey* seems ambiguous and complex, *First Man Into Space* is clear and deliberate. However, *First Man Into Space* offers something of *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s formula scaffolding in all its radical banality and cheesy obviousness. Both focus on the figure of man flung into the future through the exploration of outer space. Both also see man evolve through literal

transformation. Finally, in both cases, "man" is unequivocally an Anglo-American male, paralleling the era's dominant ideology. Invoking the common phrase "the future of 'mankind'," Jenny Andersson notes that this sixties paradigm was hegemonic, monolithic, and unfettered by "global cultures, development and peace, and women and minority groups" (2012, 1413).[7] Furthermore, as Michelle Reid notes, colonialism is often seen as a fundamental component of several seminal sf stories. John Rieder for instance sees sf as intrinsically linked to a colonial "myth of destiny, agency, and progress" while Istvan Ciscnery-Ronay Jr. claims that sf further helps to justify "the project of a global, technoscientific empire" (Reid 2009, 258).

Gene Youngblood calls *2001: A Space Odyssey* "a technical masterpiece, but a thematic mishmash of nineteenth- and twentieth-century confusions, which demonstrates that it is not so much a film of tomorrow as a trenchant reflection of contemporary sentiments solidly based in the consciousness of today" (1970, 139-140). Nevertheless, Youngblood views this consciousness as fundamentally techno-Utopian, isolating in the film "a new nostalgia" for the sacred and existential, that is, a new Romanticism seeking inner as well as outer exploration (1970, 142-146). As a product of nineteenth

[7] Andersson claims that it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that this paradigm opened "as a wide range of questions from feminism, peace studies, and environmentalism entered into the futurological field" (2012, 1423).

and twentieth-century ideological structures, however, it should come as no surprise that the legacy of Eurocentric patriarchy would color this vision so that, for instance, *2001: A Space Odyssey* reveals through their structured absence a dearth of non-white, non-male human perspectives. Likewise, although it can be easily read as a critique of technocracy (after all, the technocrats are in the dark throughout), *2001: A Space Odyssey* additionally frames space exploration from a largely imperialist perspective. After all, the Übermenschen from Jupiter and beyond appear to plant their monolith like a flag on the moon and impart their wisdom via a form of benevolent paternalism. Youngblood notes that the film is rich with Romantic sexual symbolism, but I would add that its "insemination" symbolism is hardly gender neutral:

> Encompassing the whole is the sexual/genetic metaphor in which rockets are ejaculated from the central slit in Hilton Space Station No. 5, and a sperm-shaped spacecraft named *Discovery* (i.e., *birth*) emits a pod that carries its human seed through a Stargate womb to eventual death and rebirth as the Starchild embryo. (1970, 140)[8]

[8] Judith A. Spector (1981) gives a counter-reading of *2001* as an example of "womb-envy."

Of course, *2001: A Space Odyssey* remains an eminently polysemous art cinematic text due to its marriage of narrative and tonal ambiguity with a ceaseless parade of portentous if enigmatic symbols. In *First Man Into Space*, by comparison, the vision of space travel as an extension of white male dominance is completely transparent, beginning with its initial Janus-like characterization of gender. Astronaut Lt. Dan is a dashing, driven, domineering playboy, while Italian "scientist in a skirt" Tia submissively delights in her pursuit. Additionally, a racial hierarchy is established, with Mexicans stereotyped throughout as inferior, underdeveloped racial others. For instance, a Mexican official (Roger Delgado) objects to the Navy's rocket project because part of Y13 falling from the sky interfered with a ceremonial bullfight. The scientists specify that the bloodsucker has attacked "a Mexican cow," which is revealed to be the property of a sombrero-wearing wretch (Barry Shawzin), and even though Lt. Dan is the murderous killer and monster responsible, his transfiguration is justified as ultimately necessary for "the conquest of new worlds" and as being, after all, only a "natural" expression of "the instinct to stay alive."

Robinson Crusoe On Mars (1964) is also staunchly beholden to the mythos of white male dominance, combining features of the rugged American pioneer tale with the benevolent white savior myth. As the name suggests, *Robinson Crusoe On Mars* is a story of survival through human ingenuity on

Mars, where astronaut Christopher "Kit" Draper (Paul Mantee) and his pet monkey Mona are stranded when a meteor collides with an American rocket ship. After Kit learns to survive on an improbably plentiful Mars, evoking the myth of the American frontiersman (with its "forgetting" of thousands of Native American cultivators) he discovers that the planet is the site of mining operations by an advanced interstellar alien civilization who use as their slave-labor aliens who resemble stereotypical Natives [Fig. 4.3]. One such fugitive slave (Victor Lundin) easily becomes Friday to Kit's Robinson Crusoe, and never is there any doubt that Kit will be Friday's master nor that "Friday" will be forced to learn English rather than vice versa. Almost immediately, Friday willingly gives his undying allegiance to Kit, even withholding his oxygen pills so that Kit can have more in an almost Griffithian moment of Old South melodrama. Likewise, in *Planet of the Apes* (1968), the gagging of astronaut George Taylor (Charlton Heston) is presented as a form of torture, yet the screenplay ensures his love interest Nova (Linda Harrison, also dressed in Native regalia) is made completely mute. In both examples, progress and masculine domination are presented as mutually constituting.

Both Jameson (2005, 289) and Peter Fitting (2010, 143) have suggested that the influence of feminist-inspired sf literature such as Ursula LaGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) was largely responsible for the return of a

Utopian impulse in literary sf in the late sixties. However, within the cinematic field, a feminist impulse is not especially apparent as a countertendency to the popularity of the male-dominated astronaut genre. Female astronauts were still more absent from sixties sf film than in the fifties cycle. Only *Barbarella* provides a counterpoint, along with a number of feminist constituents, including a future without penetrative sexual intercourse (and with sexual release for all). However, both Lisa Park (1999) and Barry Keith Grant (2006) dispute its status as a feminist text, with Grant claiming that it epitomizes the sf tendency of privileging "the patriarchal gaze and objectification of the female body" (2006, 85). Although the patriarchal gaze is a feature of Classical filmmaking generally, it can also be seen as an extension of the sf genre's tendency toward visual colonization, which Vivian Sobchack calls the "'I came—I saw—I conquered visual movement" (1999, 98).[9] In this reading, *Barbarella* and *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* would appear to abide by the same formal logic of domination, only to different degrees.

[9] Another example would be Raquel Welch's interchangeability as scientist in *Fantastic Voyage* (1966) and cave girl in *One Million B.C.* (1966), both of which for some reason dictate skin-tight garments.

Fig. 4.3: Freed from slavery, Friday (Victor Lundin) willingly offers his services to American Kit Draper (Paul Mantee) in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964).

Although *2001: A Space Odyssey* provides the coordinates of masculinity, logocentrism, and colonization rather more ambiguously than *First Man Into Space* and *Robinson Crusoe On Mars*, a critical attention to the film's identity politics nonetheless marked its reception. Concerning race, for instance, a contemporaneous letter to the editors of *The Los Angeles Times* notes, " . . . All the characters are white. Stanley Kubrick is certainly not presenting us with a completely utopian view of the future" (Stapenhorst 1968, C4). In her *New Yorker* review of the film, Penelope Gilliat similarly remarks, "There are no Negroes in this vision of America's space program" (1968, 150). Relating this absence to the film's evolutionary trajectory, Adilifu Nama argues the reading that the "structured absence of blackness presents

a clear binary coding of race and suggests that nonwhites are primitive simian predecessors of modern humanity" (2008, 12).[10]

Gender provides an especially visible context for the film's critical reception, with a "gender gap" even apparent in its contemporaneous reviews.[11] While Kubrick claims in promotional material that in *2001: A Space Odyssey* "all human mythology—which certainly expresses the yearnings of mass psychology—reaches [an] ultimate state" (Kubrick, quoted in Kloman 1968, D15), *New York Times* reviewer Renata Adler sees only "the apotheosis of the fantasy of a precocious, early nineteen fifties city boy" (1968, 58):

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[10] One may speculate that the cultural influence of *Star Trek* (1966-1969) encouraged audiences to expect a diverse cast of astronauts. However, while *Star Trek* may be considered a "confrontation" with the lone-male astronaut, many fans were left starved for an even more minority representation (Nama 2008, 3). Despite the limited multiculturalism of *Star Trek*, Lynn Spigel argues that the space race was itself "predicated on racist and sexist barriers that effectively grounded 'racially' marked Americans and women in general" (1997, 47-48). Spigel claims that this racism was epitomized by the "white flight" of the *The Jetsons* (1962-1963), which dreamed of "expanding white suburbia and its middle-class, consumer-oriented life into the reaches of outer space" (1997, 49). Nevertheless, Spigel notes even in *The Jetsons* a potential for subversion in that "the space age family was often represented in ways that made the traditional rules of family life seem oddly out of step with the times" (1997, 57).

[11] R. Barton Palmer's 2006 study of the film's critical reception considers reception divided on the basis of a "generation gap" alone and does not note this gender gap.

> The whole sensibility is intellectual fifties child: Chess games, body building exercises, beds on the spacecraft that look like camp bunks, other beds that look like Egyptian mummies, Richard Strauss music, time games, Strauss waltzes, Howard Johnson's, birthday phone calls. In their space uniforms, the voyagers look like Jiminy Crickets. When they want to be let out of the craft they say, "Pod bay doors open," as one might say "Bomb bay doors open" in every movie out of World War II.

Washington Post reviewer Richard L. Coe's contentious response is found in his second review of the film, entitled "'2001' Flings Man Into Space":

> As we came out of *2001: A Space Odyssey* [sic], my wife remarked: "Now we've seen a movie about how the moon is made of green cheese."
>
> Still reeling from my marvelously exciting journey through space and time, I didn't grasp the depth of her import. She is a bright girl given to saucy nutshells but her tone suggested she meant it as a critique.
>
> . . . [H]ers proved the first of many cracks and I have yet to find a woman who shared my enjoyment of Stanley Kubrick's spectacular and

> wonderful adventure . . .
>
> Mrs. Martin proved cool, Miss Ohliger caustic and Miss Beale sniffed in outrage: "Stuff for seven-year-olds."
>
> Now as it happens, two ladies have just taken over film reviewing for two of our most influential journals. At this writing Pauline Kael's views have yet to appear in *The New Yorker* [sic], but Renata Adler, characteristically found an ingenious line of contempt in *The New York Times* [sic]. "2001," she snipped, seemed to her the product of someone brought up in the 1950s.
>
> I do find that as devastating a remark as Mrs. Coe's about green cheese. (1968, E3)

I have reproduced long portions from this review if only because Coe's response seems to underscore rather than refute the limited, adolescent male perspective Adler sees underlying Kubrick's grandiose "human mythology."[12] Ultimately, Kael would in fact pan *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

In a 1968 interview for *The East Village Eye*, Kubrick would finally weigh in on the film's lack of women: "Well, you obviously aren't going to put

[12] Coe even patronizingly "advocates" for female critics in face of those who think it is not "cricket" (1968, E3).

a woman on the crew" (Kohler 2002, 250). Nevertheless, several subsequent analyses would attempt to present *2001: A Space Odyssey* as largely critical of gender norms. Grant, for instance, argues that Kubrick's film "purposefully undermine[s]" a "sensibility of masculine mastery, as conveyed in popular culture's representations of space travel" (2006, 80) by subjecting sf tropes of phallic power to systematic visual disorientation and narrative irresolution. Ellis Hanson similarly notes that the design of many of the film's symbols (including the *Discovery* and monoliths) can be read as both masculine and feminine (1993, 142-143) and that "despite the triumphant tone of the final frames, Kubrick's attempt at narrative closure remains troubling and ambiguous," thus potentially queer (1993, 149). Finally, Friedrich Kittler provides an analysis of the film in which the violent colonial imperative of the film's alien gods should properly be re-imagined in the form of a viral infection, in keeping with William S. Burroughs's dictum that "language is a virus from outer space" (2012, 423).

Hanson notes an astonishing number of specifically gay interpretations of the character HAL (voiced by Douglas Rain) in prominent critical sources (1993, 140). For instance, *Newsweek* reviewer Joseph Morgenstern cheekily claims that the film's Discovery sequence provides "a long, long stretch of very shaky comedy-melodrama in which the computer turns on its crew and carries on like an injured party in a homosexual spat" (1968, 100). While

Hanson and Dominic Janes (2011) attempt comprehensive interpretations of the film's queer resonances,[13] the sixties critical consensus of HAL's queerness (described as everything from "ambiguous" to "hysterical" to outright "faggoty") seems to me above all based in his fulfilling audience expectations of coded gay representations (Hanson 1993, 140). HAL thereby resonates with Harry Benshoff's description of horror and sf characters that "[ooze] a gay camp aura" (1997, 50).[14] I would further argue that those critics who read HAL as "hysterical," "fussy," "androgynous," "rejected," and "like a mother" (Hanson 1993, 140) could easily be describing the icy Lisa Van Horn of *Rocketship X-M*, that is, responding to the generic expectation that space exploration pertains to gender contrasts. Although "you obviously aren't going to put a woman on the crew," her presence is still needed. HAL

[13] Hanson attempts an extended psychoanalytic reading of the film as queer based in the "narcissism inherent in man's love for his own machinery" that Bowman attempts to deny by murdering HAL (1993, 148). Janes (2011) provides a litany of queer resonances in *2001: A Space Odyssey* predicated on an understanding of Arthur C. Clarke as gay. Yet another queer reading can be found in the chapter concerning *2001: A Space Odyssey* in Patrick Webster's monograph on Kubrick (2010, 44-66). Margaret DeRosia (2003) discusses of a homosexual subtext in *A Clockwork Orange* and George Linden (1977) unpacks a sexual subtext in *Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* that including a veiled homosexuality.

[14] According to Benshoff, the gay monster (coded by necessity) is posited as a needed "other" within cinema's straight, sexist ideology but ultimately becomes a figure for a vicarious identification due to the "lure of the deviant" (1997, 13).

therefore again calls attention to the centrality of gender and identity politics in the space exploration sub-genre.

Outer and Inner Space

If the anxious consciousness of HAL's coded queerness marked *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)'s critical reception, the notion of "consciousness expansion" through drugs provided perhaps the most overt popular cultural frame for considering the film's extraordinary explorations. Such rhetoric was reflected, for instance, in the advertising that sold *2001: A Space Odyssey* as the "ultimate trip," a campaign which Benshoff claims began "after the studio became aware that some audience members were getting high and/or dropping acid in order to experience the film in a heightened sensory state" (2001, 32).

Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to show the cultural and formal links between sf allegories and the twentieth-century aesthetic methods of estrangement (which attempted to make ideological obfuscations manifest, most prominently within Brechtian theater). Timothy Leary's hippie utopianism similarly relied on the notion of psychedelic hallucinatory drugs as a subversive estrangement-agent ("Turn on, tune in, drop out"). That is, if "consciousness expansion" functioned in the sixties context as a default framework for expanding conceptual horizons, psychedelics became

an easy representational proxy for the ongoing process of conceptual revision (as metaphorically unlocking the "doors of perception" to use Aldous Huxley's phrase). In *THX-1138* (1971), a retinue of Soma-like drugs provides the basis for social control. In *Work Is a Four-Letter Word* (1968) and *Gas-s-s-s* (1970) liberatory hallucinogens act as a panacea, liberating individuals to see through their ideological blinders.

In several of the era's sf films, a drug provides the story's *novum*. In Roger Corman's *X: The Man with X-Ray Eyes* (1963), eye drops provide Dr. James Xavier (Ray Milland) with superhuman vision that allows him to eventually see "an eye that sees us all" at the center of the universe. And if Dr. X would rather blind himself than confront such limits, Paul Groves (Peter Fonda) of Corman's later *The Trip* (1967) is more ambivalent about the experience of LSD, reflecting the changing times. In *The Trip*, Paul often seems to venture through an imagined past. In Robert Benayoun's *Paris n'existe pas* (1969), however, the film's protagonist Simon (Richard Leduc) seems to become literally "unstuck in time" [like Kurt Vonnegut's protagonist Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)] after smoking marijuana, venturing back and forth between the past, present, and future.

Whereas 20th-Century Fox's *Fantastic Voyage* (1966) would explore "inner space" by literally shrinking a crew of doctors and scientists to save the life of a comatose doctor (Jan Benes), *Paris n'existe pas* (1969) and *Je*

t'aime je t'aime (1968) would delve into the exploration of mental states in order to address the more elusive topics of free will and being-in-time. In doing so, both films update Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1962), as the *novum* of time-travel is now presented as a form of expanded consciousness.

The story of *Je t'aime je t'aime* concerns a suicidal young bourgeois (Claude, played by Claude Rich), who is chosen to participate in a time travel experiment that will take him back to a moment from his past. Instead, the experiment malfunctions and he finds himself randomly bouncing back and forth in between past instants, many of which focus on his relationship with Catrine (Olga Georges-Picot). Through a paradoxical structure in which sequences resonate simultaneously as fixed memories and opportunities to "re-live" the past, we learn that Claude has attempted suicide as a response to Catrine's death, for which he may or may not have been responsible. In a deviation from standard space and time travel films, which tend to treat the explorer in a positive light, Claude's re-living of the past increasingly reveals him as condescending, petty, and chauvinistic toward Catrine. However, it is unclear to what extent his own self-recrimination colors his vision of the past, especially since his travels are transformed by hallucinations and surreal juxtapositions. Ultimately, Claude's progressively more disorienting time jumping terminates in a second, successful, suicide attempt, the cause of which is again ambiguous. In traveling back to the moment of his suicide,

Claude *may* have inevitably repeated the action by virtue of some immutable necessity. Or else, his journey back into its initial causes may have represented the renewed impetus for voluntary suicide when the opportunity again presented itself.

If space exploration stories such as *First Man Into Space* (1959) rely on a radical presentation of individual agency in the pursuit of scientific progress, *Je t'aime je t'aime* invokes through the estranging context of time travel a science that renders volition itself rather abstruse. Claude cannot be sure of which of his actions may have contributed to Catrine's death nor is it clear to what extent his return to random moments from his past may provide the opportunity for the reversal of potentially fatal errors. Although the contours of Claude's philosophical enigma are rendered tangible through a time-travel context, his out-of-time experience provides a framework through which even such apparently natural phenomena as love, memory, and time itself confound the possibility of radically autonomous individual agency. Both Claude and Catrine are products of their experiences, largely "controlled" by their individual emotional failings. An expanded consciousness therefore serves to reveal individuals not as self-determining agents but as fragile subjects swallowed up by time and historical

contingency.[15]

Paris n'existe pas provides an additional complication of expanded consciousness by calling into question even its potential for subversion. Modernist "visionary" painter Simon (Richard Leduc) is in the midst of a crisis of inspiration motivated by his dissatisfaction with the contemporary art world: "Art galleries have become laboratories, discotheques, space rockets," he claims, "But in their attempt to conquer outer space they've lost track of their inner space." After coming home from a cocktail party where he laments to his friend Laurent (Serge Gainsbourg) and fights with his girlfriend Angela (Danièle Gaubert), Simon begins to experience flashes of temporal distortion he attributes to a drag of "tea." Eventually, however, these distortions transform into extended "visions" of the past and the future.

While Simon's "future vision" initially appears as a surreal literalization of his role as artist, his "visionary" power paradoxically puts an end to his productivity and further estranges him from his lover and friends. In *X: The Man with X-Ray Eyes*, Dr. X's x-ray vision provides far more information than can be controlled or even schematized, perhaps expressing an anxiety at the rise of a scientific culture of data unmoored from meaningful frames of interpretation. Likewise, in *Paris n'existe pas* Simon

[15] American examples of time-travel paradoxes in this period include *The Time Travelers* (1964) and *Journey to the Center of Time* (1967), both of which also feature their characters caught in uncanny (and unbreakable) time-loops.

can predict when a vase and milk bottle will break but cannot prevent them from doing so. As in a futurist painting, he begins to see moment overlaid upon moment, as his flat's present shape becomes overlaid within its image as it appeared in the 1930s [complete with its unknowingly exhibitionistic tenant (Denise Péron)]. However, this spectacle of this power incapacitates him with confusion and marvel instead of providing some kernel of hidden knowledge just below the surface of appearances. Simon's power does not therefore provide a practical justification for the traversal of "inner space." Entranced by his power, he ignores his political friends. When the power disappears as easily as it came, it remains to him a fundamentally unexplainable enigma without apparent lessons. If *Je t'aime je t'aime* uses the notion of expanded consciousness as a means to question the most basic epistemological and ontological assumptions, *Paris n'existe pas* asks whether the achievement of expanded consciousness is sufficient to establish new practices or social forms.

The enigmatic ending of *2001: A Space Odyssey* provides a triumphant counterpoint to both French New Wave films by retaining the art cinematic focus on the astronaut Dave (Keir Dullea)'s incomprehensible experiences. The screenplay's co-author, Arthur C. Clarke, intended the film as propaganda for the space program, hoping that broader support for science would emerge: "If the conquest of space served no other purpose, it would give

us the new mental and emotional horizons which our age needs more desperately than most people yet realize" (1968, D1). In promoting the notion that such enigmas represent abstract Utopian horizons, *2001*: *A Space Odyssey* therefore relies as much on the allure of an enigmatic Siren call as it does on definable philosophical questions.

Contrary to Clarke's intentions, however, Kubrick suggests that such advances in concrete knowledge are ultimately irrelevant to the inevitable, all-encompassing process of human evolution:

> What happens at the end of [*2001: A Space Odyssey*] must tap the subconscious for its power. . . . To do this one must bypass words and move into the world of dreams and mythology. This is why the literal clarity one has become so used to is not there. But what is there has visceral clarity. It is for this reason that people are responding so emotionally. The film is getting to them in a way they are not used to. Obviously, in making the film we had to have some specifics in order to design, build and shoot. This has no value to the viewer even if he thinks otherwise.
>
> . . . In the Jupiter orbit, Keir Dullea is swept into a stargate. Hurtled through fragmented regions of time and space, he enters into another dimension where the laws of nature as we know them no longer apply. In the unseen presence of

> godlike entities, beings of pure energy who have evolved beyond matter, he finds himself in what might be described as a human zoo, created from his own dreams and memories.
>
> He sees himself age in a time-mirror, much as you might see yourself in a space-mirror. His entire life passes in what appears to him as a matter of moments. He dies and is reborn—transfigured; an enhanced being, a star-child. The ascent from ape to angel is complete. (Kubrick, quoted in Weiler 1968, D19)

The framework rests on the spiritual (rather than scientific) notion that inner space (the "world of dreams and mythology") and outer space (the Jupiter orbit) provide two vantages on the same mysterious story of evolution. If, unlike *Je t'aime je t'aime* or *Paris n'existe pas*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* appears to conflate evolution with "necessary progress," recall that in the section above on "Hegemonic Space" I noted that Kubrick's film is subject to a diversity of conflicting readings. In the next section, I will return to both gender representations and counter-hegemonic depictions of evolution in a number of films in order to bring out the ways in which undermining social assumptions of gender ultimately provided a more generative framework in the sixties for exploring "new tribes, and new patterns of living."

Space Camp and Sexual Evolution

If reading HAL as gay provides fodder for a camp viewing of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), "camp" is invoked in nearly every contemporaneous review of *Barbarella* (1968). Camp space stories have provided a privileged alternative viewing position for quite some time. In Chapter Two, I described the tendency toward increasing objective and subjective realism as an evolution of tropes within the fifties paranoid "weirdies." Likewise, the explicit invocation of camp in *Barbarella* (and perhaps *2001: A Space Odyssey* as well) can be seen as an extension of an earlier tendency toward camp and burlesque within fifties space exploration films. If homosexuality in Classical Hollywood is often identified with ethnic exoticism,[16] then it is perhaps not surprising that the Hollywood depiction of extraterrestrials as radical "others" has simultaneously tended to invoke both categories. As early as *Just Imagine* (1930), for instance, Earthling travelers to Mars encounter a kingdom dominated by an exotic queen (camp figure Joyzelle Joyner)[17] and her gay royal retainer (Ivan Linow), leading to the exchange "She's not the Queen, *he* is!"[18] In the fifties, space camp is identifiable especially in a cycle

[16] Adrienne McLean (1997) addresses the overlapping codes of exoticism and homosexual camp in Hollywood.

[17] Richard Barrios (2003, 90) profiles Joyzner within a camp frame.

[18] David Lugowski notes the Studio Relations Committee files on the film contain the request to "make it appear that he is 'queer'" (1999, 22).

of independently produced films based around the notion of alien worlds controlled by domineering women, often threatening to colonize or destroy the Earth and seeking to subjugate Earthmen.[19] As in the female vampire model, the alien women are often coded as lesbians[20], especially in *Cat-Women of the Moon* (1953) in which a group of "cat-women" control the Earth ship's female navigator through a program of interstellar mind control and "moon worship." As soon as the men arrive, however, the Amazons immediately succumb, flirting and flocking to respond to their sexual

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[19] This story is told in slight variations in *Cat-Women of the Moon* (1953), *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953), *Fire Maidens from Outer Space* (1956), *Missile to the Moon* (1958), and *Queen of Outer Space* (1958), among others.

[20] Benshoff discusses lesbian vampire motifs (1997, 149), which these films repeat. For instance, the "amulet" is a common feature of space Amazon films. Benshoff also notes the trope of secret homosexual societies within popular culture (1997, 99). An additional narrative theme these films have in common is the fifties dystopian scenario of an ancient, fallen or failing civilization. In *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*, the alien world discovered on the 13th moon of Jupiter is the colony of "New Atlantis." Like the Krell society of *Forbidden Planet* (1956), these falling or fallen societies are quasi-Utopian, doomed by one crucial flaw: but this time, it is the lack of men. In *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars*, the Venusians have figured out how to live forever. But in most cases, the women cannot be too intelligent if they cannot figure out that their society is doomed without procreation. In most cases doom comes indirectly. In *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*, the last man is dying out and the women just cannot figure out how to kill the monster that threatens them. In *Cat-Women on the Moon* and *Missile to the Moon,* the moon is running out of oxygen. The sex and procreation problem is thus only one aspect of these films' disaster theme. In these films, the societies are doomed because women cannot rule.

advances. Eventually, the "good" girls go with the male conquerors [Fig. 4.4], while the "bad" ones perish.

Fig. 4.4: Professor Konrad (Paul Birch) captivates the Venusian women in *Queen of Outer Space* (1958), a prototypical "space camp" film.

While anti-feminism (perhaps ambiguously mingled with masochistic male fantasies) certainly provides a cultural framework with which to understand this sub-cycle of astronaut films, their focus on exaggerated gender characteristics and role reversal nevertheless provides the basis for the ironic viewing position Jack Babuscio calls "camp irony" (Babuscio 1999, 120). This is because films depicting an alien society with a "topsy-turvy" sex hierarchy create exaggerated theatrical inversions of gender, which help to undermine the narratives' apparent ideological normativity. In *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953), for instance, the voluptuous queen briefly allows

Lou to play king, only to reveal how foolish a Costello king would look in a world of beautiful statuesque females [Fig. 4.5]. In a further sequence featuring posing male fitness models, it is revealed that the "old" King of Venus, despite his rippling physique, was incapable of "pleasing" the queen, providing a winking gay subtext ripe for camp viewing.

Fig. 4.5: Lou Costello makes an unimposing king of Mars in *Abbott & Costello Go to Mars* (1953).

A female-directed burlesque on this formula can be found in Doris Wishman's "grade Z" exploitation film *Nude on the Moon* (1961) (which also provides the unique example of the female-directed sixties space exploration film). Although *Nude on the Moon* begins as typical space exploration, the film's first scenes also set up as a romance b-story centered on the plain lab assistant Cathy (Marietta)'s lovesickness for astronaut Jeff (Lester Brown). Cathy commands the scenes she appears in and is given a running voice-over commentary in which she describes her desire for Jeff's affections. When the male astronauts reach the moon, they soon discover a naturist paradise. As in the earlier films described, they find a Queen of the moon (also Marietta) with whom Jeff quickly falls in love. Unlike the earlier films, however, there is no conflict between the astronauts and aliens. Instead, the astronauts return to Earth, where Jeff realizes that Cathy is the spitting image of the Queen. Expectations are repeatedly reversed: Cathy pursues Jeff rather than vice versa, a Queen of the moon reigns serenely, and the overtly feminized Queen is eventually identified in the visage of an average assistant.[21]

[21] Pamela Robertson argues "for the crucial role of heterosexual women as producers and consumers of camp" (1999, 271). Wishman's work for instance calls attention to ways in which "camp's appeal [for feminists] resides in its potential to function as a form of gender parody" (Robertson 1999, 272). Although an exploitation director, her films provide a wide-ranging exploration of sex relations. For feminist appreciations of Wishman see Moya Luckett (2003) and Tania Modleski (2007).

The mid-sixties New York Underground filmmakers would frequently dabble in space anthropology films and, in doing so, would explicitly invoke such a camp reading of aliens, androids, and monsters. Andy Warhol would frequently claim the "B" *Creation of the Humanoids* (1962), with its androgynous and emotionless android "humanoids," as his favorite film (Fujiwara 2004, 153). Mike Kuchar's *Sins of the Fleshapoids* (1965) would provide a catalog of space camp figures by populating his *Flash Gordon*-inspired tale of perverse android love between "Fleshapoids" Xar (Bob Cowan) and Melenka (Maren Thomas) with the gay Prince Gianbeno (George Kuchar), his extravagant wife Princess Vivianna (Donna Kerness), and her beefcake boyfriend Ernie (Julius Middleman).[22] Although (as I noted above) a number of fifties sf films leant themselves to camp readings, *Sins of the Fleshapoids* is especially indicative of the growing importance of camp, parallel to the impact of Sontag's "Notes on Camp" (1964) on mainstream critical discourse, as a broad trend within sixties film culture [and one which mediated that culture's appreciation of both avant-garde and trash cinema [(Rosenbaum 2004b, 131; Monaco 2003, 45)]. As *Vogue* noted in 1968, "Even films that would once have been esoteric film society fare, like George

[22] Carlos Kase notes "The Fleshapoids make love by exchanging electricity and shooting lightning from their fingertips, a visual detail that perhaps confirms the popular rumor that the film was a considerable influence on [*Barbarella*]" (1999, 160).

Kuchar's *Hold Me while I'm Naked*, or his brother Michael's *Sins of the Fleshapoids*, are in public theaters now" (Alloway 1968, 186).[23]

Flanking both exploitation and underground cinema was gay experimental filmmaker Curtis Harrington's *Queen of Blood* (1966), produced for AIP, which contrasts a corny heterosexual coupling with, for instance, a campy starring turn from Basil Rathbone. Notably, in a contemporaneous interview in *The Los Angeles Times*, Harrington would claim the work of Josef von Sternberg (both Sontag's and Babuscio's leading exemplar of camp cinema) as his main stylistic influence on the film (K. Thomas 1966, C15).[24]

The plot of *Queen of Blood* provocatively re-iterates familiar sf themes. After an extraterrestrial vessel lands on Mars, American astronauts (including John Saxon and Dennis Hopper) travel to the planet in the hope of making contact. While they find the ship abandoned, they eventually discover a lone survivor in an escape capsule on one the planet's moons. This survivor is a mysterious green-skinned, mute woman (Florence Marly) [Fig. 4.6],

[23] Greg Taylor claims that the tendency toward the appreciation of camp represented a cultural rejection of established cultural standards without the sacrifice of connoisseurship (1999, 79). Ultimately, while camp within its initial context of queer urban experience could express a critical distance toward repressive social order, camp appeals to bourgeois sensibilities because it encourages a viewing position of critical detachment (Bourdieu 1987, 28).

[24] In "Notes on Camp," Sontag writes, "Camp is the outrageous aestheticism of von Sternberg's six American movies with Dietrich, all six, but especially the last, *The Devil Is a Woman"* (1966, 283).

whom the astronauts discover to be a vampire. When she is scratched in a struggle, however, she quickly dies after bleeding out green blood in Grand Guignol fashion ("A hemophiliac. Perhaps she was some sort of royalty where she came from . . . a queen"). In the end, they discover she "*was* a queen, a queen bee" when they discover her royal egg sacks "hidden all over the ship" [Fig. 4.7]. The film concludes back on Earth with Dr. Farraday (Basil Rathbone) smiling over a tray of the quivering eggs.

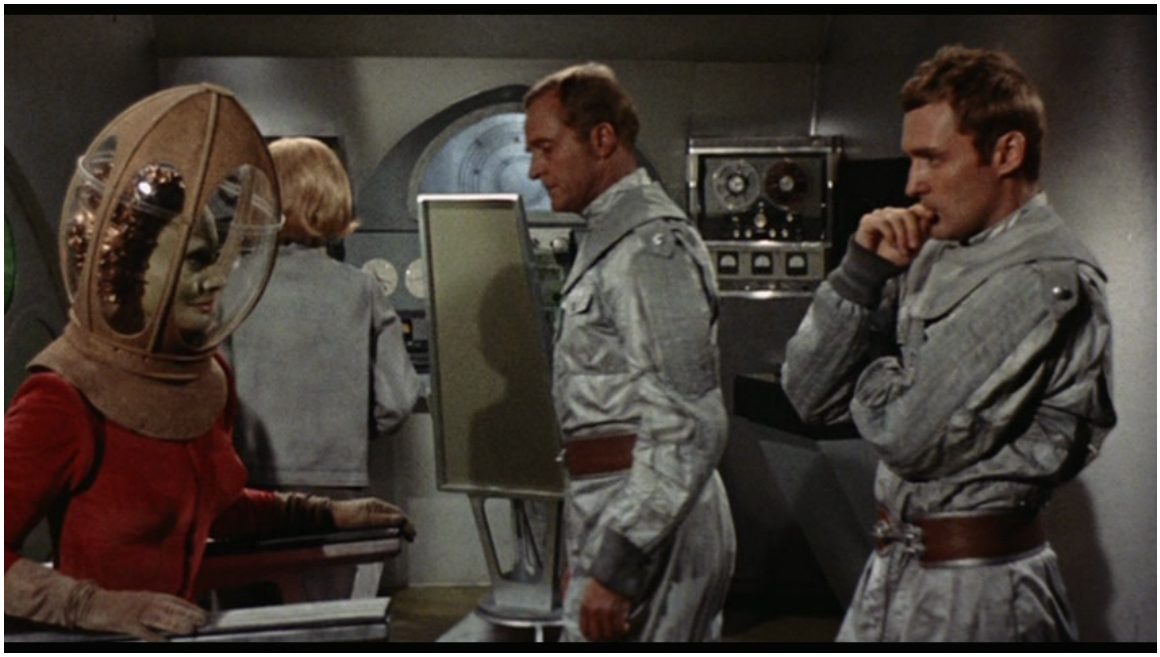

Fig. 4.6: The Martian "queen" (Florence Marly) is a puzzling sight in *Queen of Blood* (1966).

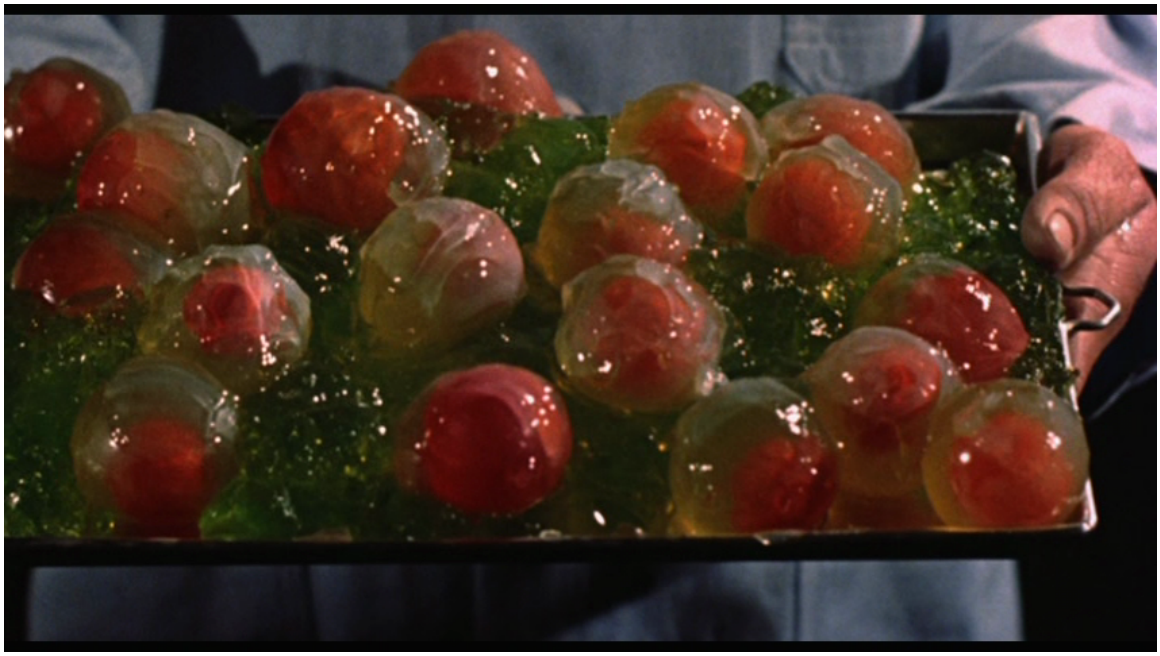

Fig. 4.7: Martian eggs represent exciting future possibilities in *Queen of Blood* (1966).

It is hardly difficult to draw out a camp reading of this story as an ironic take on the McCarthy-era pop cultural association between homosexuality and "alien monsters," especially with the film's final association of its two coded "queens." However, *Queen of Blood* also invites a mainstream camp reading on the level of form by overloading its narrative with "corny" exaggerations of sf conventions from the thirties through the fifties (terrible dialogue, "modernistic" music, overblown modern costumes and sets, cheesy scientific optimism). In addition, it is assembled by combining newly shot footage with existing footage from a Soviet film, thereby adding a further layer of irony and distanciation.

Lisa Parks claims that *Barbarella* raises the specter of a "female astronaut who [is] sexy, single, and political" in order to "immerse [her] in an excessively feminized and campy mise-en-scène," resulting in a parodic narrative that "ridicules the viability of the female astronaut" (1999, 261). However, the film's ironic camp frame precisely complicates such a reading. Cynthia Baron and Mark Bernard for instance claim that "Jane Fonda's performance . . . was a cult favorite, not because connoisseurs saw moments of authenticity, but because cult audiences enjoyed the film's camp qualities" such as "scenes of Fonda peeling off extravagantly campy costumes in outrageous, overblown sets like her fur-lined spaceship" (2013, 272). In other words, if Barbarella is excessively feminized, her feminine excess calls attention to gender as a series of performances that can be individually shaped and molded within a fluid Utopian space.

A distinction may however be made between *Barbarella*'s evidently Utopian avatars (which includes a literal angel in the form of John Philip Law's Pygar) and the abject figures of the vampiric Queen, awkward Fleshapoids, and horribly disfigured Lt. Dan from *First Man Into Space* (1959). In *Planet of the Apes* (1968), the audience is frequently reminded that for the apes, Charlton Heston's Taylor is "so damn ugly." Unlike Barbarella, these figures represent radical difference as a form of monstrosity resistant to visual and ideological assimilation and thereby provide the opportunity for

audience cross-identification with social outcasts, as Benshoff (1997) has suggested.[25]

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explicitly elicit this sense of monstrosity as a form of revolutionary agency in their claim that "the vampire, its monstrous life, and its insatiable desire has become symptomatic not only of the dissolution of an old society but also the formation of a new" (2005, 193). In the films discussed in this chapter, this monstrosity is linked especially to the transgressing of sexual and gender norms, which becomes a recurrent metaphor for transgressing and surpassing the essential limits of the human.

Gaylyn Studlar claims that even "though midnight movies often revel in breaking sexual taboos through homosexuality and inverted sex roles or cross-dressing, these elements suggest a contemporary 'sexual revolution' that does not necessarily question the hierarchical status of gender or the patriarchal power imbalance in sexual practice" (1991, 141-2). Not necessarily, but unlike other generic forms, I would argue that sf *does* seem often explicitly to question these practices and hierarchies as a form to evolve

[25] Viewer identification with monsters is also a longstanding concern of a psychoanalytic approach to spectatorship, as in Carol Clover's reading (1992). Subsequent pop cultural representations of "queer aliens" [such as David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and Dr. Frank-N-Furter from *The Rocky Horror Show* (1975)] would however reverse this trend in favor of Barbarella's glamour.

past. If Mark Gallagher (2010) suggests a consistent wariness in the sixties LSD film "against the possibility of a polymorphous male sexuality" in films such as *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Performance* (1970), then it should be remembered that an especially large number of sf films from the period [including *Sins of the Fleshapoids*, *Vinyl* (1965), *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and especially the later *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1973)] have elicited a significant number of queer readings.[26] It is within this reception context that Janes's otherwise outré notion of the star-child as "queer rebirth" (2011, 72) suddenly comes into focus.[27]

The genre not only increasingly allowed for such an alignment but also elicited it. Kubrick's 1968 *Playboy* interview, which uniquely matches Jameson's exuberance for the radical confrontation with "limits," even seems to privilege such a reading:

> Through drugs, or perhaps via the sharpening or even mechanical amplification of latent ESP functions, it may be possible for each partner to

[26] *Star Trek* has especially elicited a number of queer readings. P.J. Falzone (2005) situates this phenomenon within a Utopian context.

[27] Even still, the analogy of queerness with alienness is perhaps mundane when compared with the confrontation of the more radical forms of otherness found in literary sf. *Star Trek* often attempted such more radical presentations of alienness, as in the episode "Devil in the Dark" (1967), which depicts a "silicon-based lifeform."

> simultaneously experience the sensations of the other, or we may eventually emerge into polymorphous sexual beings, with the male and female components blurring, merging and interchanging. The potentialities for exploring new areas of sexual experience are virtually boundless. (Kubrick, quoted in Agel 1970, 346)

It seems to me highly probable that David Cronenberg's *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) derive their plots from this or similar statements by Kubrick. At the very least, they both explore changes to the social and biological function and behavior of sexuality alongside the influence of drugs and ESP [Fig. 4.8].[28] However, as I have shown, a preponderance of the era's exploration and evolution films attempt to consider the expansion of social limits by calling into question the social (and biological) determinations of sex and gender. Sexual difference, like the Queen of Blood, seems to provide an initially powerful yet ambiguous force but is ultimately anemic. The same can be said of most assumptions, which are rendered ambiguous and amorphous in this most Utopian of sixties sf sub-genres.

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[28] That being said, exceptions can easily be found. In *Charly* (1968), for instance, a surgery that increases the intelligence of the mentally handicapped title character (Cliff Robertson) has the added effect of increasing his aggression and sexual interest, leading to sexual promiscuity and rape.

Fig. 4.8: Expanded consciousness and liberated sexuality intermingle in *Stereo* (1969).

Conclusion

This dissertation has followed a number of developments within sf cinema throughout the sixties period, tracking in particular the establishment of a body of progressive and intellectually and artistically provocative films from within art, experimental, and prestige production categories. In doing so, I have exposited three popular sub-genres—disaster, dystopia, and exploration—through which cinematic practitioners and audiences engaged several of the era's Utopian (and Dystopian) discourses. Throughout, I have described the remarkable variance of the sixties films from their fifties antecedents.

In the fifties sf cycle, planetary and alien disaster films such as *When Worlds Collide* (1951) and *War of the Worlds* (1953) had provided grand set-pieces to display American military might shielding post-war American prosperity from any imagined catastrophe, no matter how far-fetched. Set amid the increasing U.S. and Soviet proliferation of thermonuclear weapons, the realistic disaster films that followed *On the Beach* (1959) provided the opportunity to address the true horrors of total devastation modern warfare potentially enabled. In fifties films such as *1984* (1956) worldwide Communism represented the ultimate future dystopia. But by the mid-sixties, however, dystopian films such as *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) depicting a "corny future" would challenge even the basic ideological substrate of the

Cold War—that is, the dichotomy between Communism and the "free society"—by positing a form of oppressive "unfreedom" coextensive with post-war American and European prosperity. Finally, throughout the fifties, beginning with *Rocketship X-M* (1950), Cold War jingoism, sexism, and colonial-imperialist attitudes marked the space exploration genre. By the end of the sixties, paralleling the rise of the popular counterculture, even this "space conquest" genre mutated into a multi-faceted Utopian exploration of expanded ideological paradigms, evidenced by the profoundly "open texts" of films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

This work has both supplied the necessary historical groundwork and the specific arguments to make these previously un-synthesized claims glaringly apparent. Indeed, now that I have laid out this evidence and argumentation it seems to me remarkable that this period of sf cinema has not previously received an extended analysis along these lines. Above all else, this is no doubt because a large number of non-U.S. films remain largely unseen and are often unfortunately relegated to "cult" status despite their many provocative appeals. A number of the films I have noted throughout [including *Il nuovo mondo* (1963), *Omicron* (1963), *Marcia nuzale* (1965), *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969), *Paris n'existe pas* (1969), and *Stereo* (1969)] are almost entirely absent in discussions of sf and exist mostly in critical discussions of their authors, genre, or era, while others are seldom discussed on any

grounds. A significant number remain commercially unavailable.[1] If nothing else, then, I hope to have demonstrated that *2001: A Space Odyssey* was indeed not the only—or only significant—sf film of the period. I also hope to have shown that a generic context can add tremendously to the appreciation of certain auteurist works, which emerge as powerful interventions into the popular discourses genres help to frame. This rule seems as true of films from director-centered modes of production as in genre-centered modes (e.g. *film noirs* within which auteur and genre are already critically entwined).

If this project's aggregation of a wide number of films from within a "sixties sf genre" context has therefore yielded a previously obscured wellspring of intriguing projects, additional research is nonetheless necessary to establish further the parameters of the demonstrated sf-sixties conjunction as well as its larger significance. When considering to what extent my findings correspond to the total field of "sixties sf" the question of my sample selection is of primary importance. Initially, I intended to look specifically at discourses on taste surrounding films that were simultaneously "sf" and "art" films. In order to do so, I planned to focus precisely on the sf art films produced between 1965-1970, the years during which sociologist Shyon Baumann found a popular "high art" peak in the cinematic field (2007, 123).

[1] That is, in the decades following their initial release. They were each circulated internationally, including in the U.S., in the 1960s.

As I realized that the subversive appeals of these films outweighed their status as "art objects," I decided to broaden the scope of my project to align with the "sixties" as a progressive era [as defined by scholars including Jameson (1984) and Todd Gitlin (1987)]. I then became aware that an apparent gap in sf film history (encompassing the period between the "market saturation" of the late fifties cycle and the return to various larger-budget Hollywood cycles in 1970) overlapped almost precisely with the period of explicitly anti-war atomic disaster films (which began in 1959 and trailed off after 1971). I decided, then, that 1959-1971 would provide my "sixties sf" period. Despite its practicality, however, this 1971 cut-off now seems too early.[2]

In seeking out a variety of films from this 1959-1971 period, I viewed approximately one forth of the nearly 600 feature-length sf films produced internationally, as well as fifty films from the years 1950-1958 in order to achieve a sense of genre expectations elicited by the fifties cycle. Nevertheless, I should admit several specific gaps in my viewing. Notably absent were a large number of additional Italian and Japanese films,

[2] *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972) continues to re-imagine 20th-century cycles of trauma and war as *time paradox* in the vein of "The Time Element" (1958) and *la jetée* (1962), while Louis Malle's *film d'anticipation Black Moon* (1975) provides an even more abstract depiction of a war between men. *Sleeper* (1973) may be the key comic cinematic visualization of a Huxleyian future dystopia, while *Flesh Gordon* (1974) represents a full flowering of the internal contractions of space camp.

especially from "genre auteurs" including Ishirô Honda and Antonio Margheriti, which I will attempt to rectify at some future point. More glaringly, in limiting my project to the U.S.-dominated West, I ignored the tremendous number of Soviet Bloc sf productions and reception contexts (which would no doubt provide an important alternative presentation of the same historical period from the cultural perspectives of the Soviet world). Finally, in focusing entirely on film at the expense of sixties sf literature and television, I no doubt missed several significant narrative commonalities and differences in sf across media which will likely make more complex any claims about the relations of these films to social, cultural, and political contexts. Domestically produced Hollywood television in particular would seem to provide a useful counterpoint to the auteurist co-productions produced abroad, though the contemporaneous *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) and *Star Trek* (1966-1969) seem to abide largely by the critical genre parameters I have noted. Indeed, as argued by Peter Frase (2010), *Star Trek* may come the closest to a popularly imagined Utopian Communist future within all of popular culture (that is, it depicts a "post-scarcity" economy).

If these considerations would no doubt help further to fill-in the understanding of "sixties sf" I have already begun to establish, they would not necessarily amount to the claim that sixties sf cinema represented a *uniquely* progressive, intellectually and aesthetically significant period for

either the genre or popular cinema more generally. Recall that I began from a consideration of the canonization of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, with the relationship between *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars* (1977) in particular frequently representing in criticism and scholarship the distinction between the earlier Hollywood and the post-*Jaws* (1975) period Thomas Schatz has described as the industrial move "from renaissance to retrenchment" (2004, 11). David E. James gives a more elegiac description of the same perceived phenomenon: if, in the sixties, a faltering Hollywood system had allowed artists and audiences to resurrect the cinematic form from the artistic lifelessness of a through-and-through commodity by reinterpreting its "advanced technologies; its ability to represent both superficial, physical details and interior states of tension; the universality of its appeal; and finally its youth" from within a generational context of "social urgency" (1989, 347-348), in the interceding years a re-established conglomerate-Hollywood had brought the medium back into the fold of the "totalized industrial system" (1989, 350-1). "If any function remains for these [sixties] films," James writes, "it will not be separable from that of breaking open this closure with invocations of other forms of social life" (1989, 351). That is to say, the re-encounter with the sixties experiments seems to provide a Utopian space within which that which is today barred within mainstream popular culture was amazingly once allowed entry. A pertinent example in

my case is that the basic conceit, style, and premise of *Je t'aime je t'aime* (1968), once a tragedy, returned in the "indie sub-division" Hollywood hit *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) (now a Romantic comedy amended by a happy "boy-gets-girl-back-again" ending).

I have only begun to answer the question of whether the sixties production atmosphere was either uniquely quasi-Utopian or one of a number of such epochs, but I imagine the answer is more complicated than either alternative—just as the conventional wisdom that *2001: A Space Odyssey* was the only significant sixties sf film now seems entirely erroneous. The next step will be, therefore, to keep tracing the provocative engagement with the Utopian in sf cinema as it has continued to evolve. This pursuit will necessarily be defined by both hope and skepticism: if I have learned nothing else from this project, it is that the discovery of subversive Utopian works is often unforeseen and invariably provokes a frisson of disbelief as one is struck by the fantastic expressions of what would otherwise seem "impossible" from within the myriad constraints of a popular medium.

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