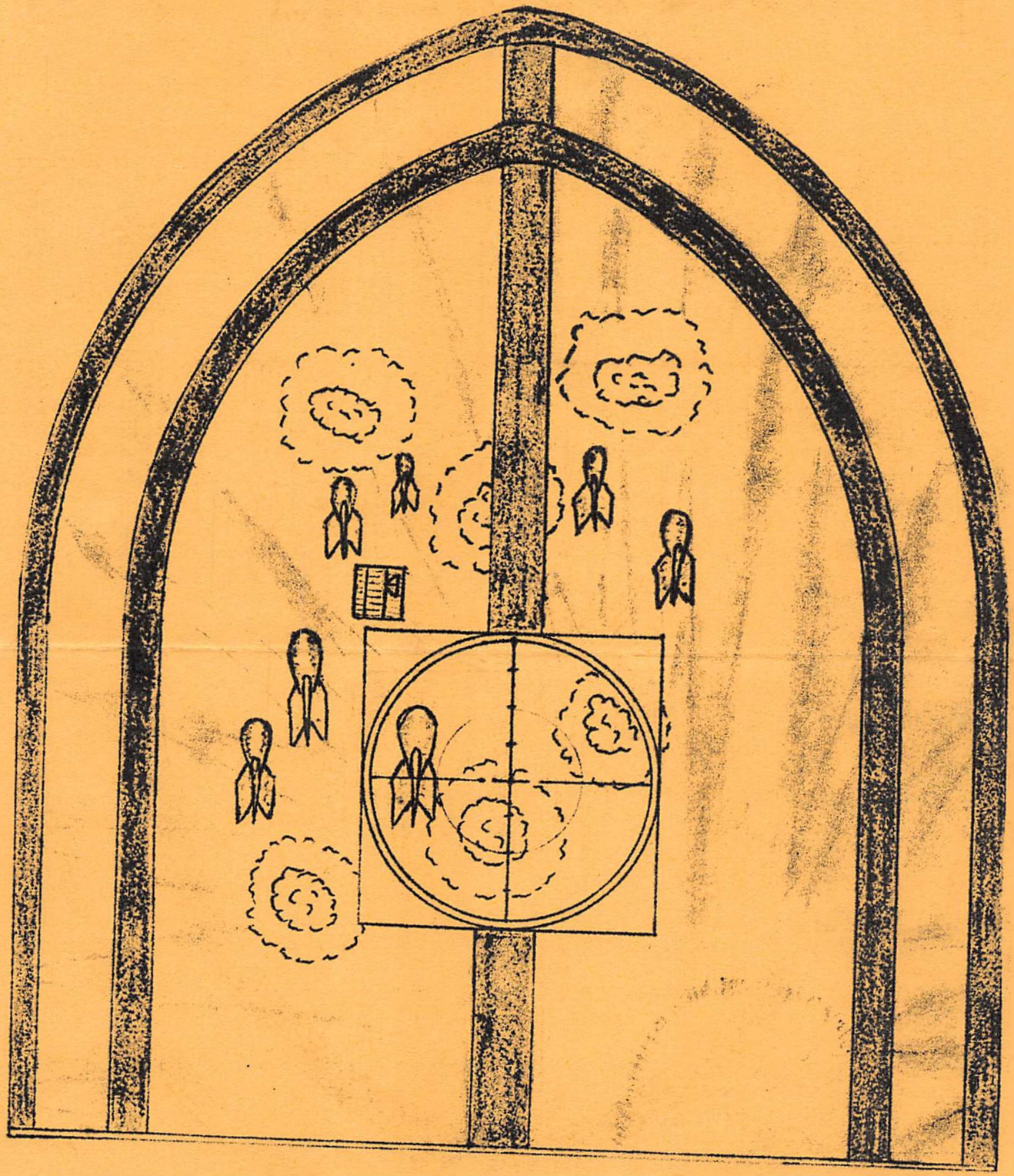

S F commentary 16

And now, from the home town of smog and Charlie Brown, NEW YORK, we present.....

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OCTOBER 1970 MONTHLY $3 FOR 18 ($7 AIRMAIL)

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All letters of comment should be sent to Ararat. Review copies, bombs, and junk mail should be sent first to Barry. We will exchange.

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AMERICAN AGENT: Charlie Brown, 2078 Anthony Avenue, Bronx, New York, 10457, U S A. Rates as above. ENGLISH AGENT: Pete Weston can't take the job (he needs the 72 hour day; not just the 48 hour day the rest of us want), but this position is being arranged. 30/- cash for 20, surface mail, or 70/- airmail, will find me okay.

COVER: Leigh Milvain; doctored by the Normal Editor. Don't blame Barry Gillam - he's blaming me. NEXT ISSUE: Very good; material from Dick, Shaw, etc.

AUSTRALIA IN SEVENTY-FIVE : We had more success than we hoped for, but we still have to hear the full story from Robin Johnson and convince the Swedes they're damn nuisances. But that slogan still applies.

I AM AGENT FOR: LOCUS, the biweekly newsmagazine, published by Charlie Brown (as above). 10 for $3, airmailed to me and relayed to you via those highway robbers called the postmen. Indispensable, especially for Heicon, fanzine and book-publishing reports; SPECULATION, the world's best available magazine of critical commentary on s f, and reviews. (QUARBER MERKUR is better, but it's in German). 50 cents an issue, and the editor is Peter R Weston, 31 Pinewall Ave, Masshouse Lane, Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, England.

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RAISON D'ETRE

JE T'AIME

JE T'AIME

OR

WHERE DOES

ALL

THE TIME

GO ?

I thought I was just filling up one of those large blue aerogrammes I send Bruce from time to time. Just mentioning, Yes, I've thought of putting out a fanzine. But the work . . . And back comes an offer to edit an issue of SFC. Well yes, I would like to edit an issue.

From therewith to herein: A wave of his hand, a twirl of his cape, he spins and faces the audience again to find several months have passed. I worked in the post office here (New York) this summer and by one of those peculiar twists was assigned to the Parcel Post truck that delivers to my college bookstore. Where, a couple of weeks later, I carried out some of the books I had carried in.

A pass of his wand . . . As indicated by the makeup of this issue, I am as much a film buff as an s f fan. This summer there were almost too many films being shown. Included were two series from the Cinémathèque Française, which will open a branch here next spring. Oh, come spring . . .

So, as the New York Film Festival diminishes to what can only be 8mm. in the vastness of Philharmonic Hall, I have seen Alain Resnais' latest film, JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME (1968). The plot might, just might, be described as follows: A man leaving a hospital (having been patched up

after an attempted suicide) is recruited as the human guinea pig to be first to take a trip back in a newly developed and still secret time machine. One of the scientists mentions that Claude has been chosen because he is the only one to have come through it. Claude is duly indoctrinated and placed in the brain-like time machine. He is to relive one minute, a year before. He does but then he relives other things, flickering at times back to the present of the time machine. Segments are repeated, but also varied: past or memory? We are given hints as to the larger facts of his life, but the very non-linear form of the film hampers the viewer's grasp of these facts. Towards the end, the editing develops a rhythm that sustains thesometimes baffling, but always intriguing images. Finally, Claude relives his suicide and it is then that he fully returns to the present, the bullet wound freshly bleeding. He is being rushed to the hospital as the film ends.

I liked JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME.

And I'd like to see it again.

But that's not likely.

A little history: 20th Century Fox has held the U S distribution rights for two years. Now, after the Film Festival showing -- and some derogatory reviews -- it is reported that they have no plans to release it. I can quite understand why: they just don't know what to do with it. And I don't think most audiences will either.

What I can say about the film is inevitably tentative. There seems to be too much material to digest in one viewing. Resnais has given us a man who can go back and relive anything from his past. What does he do? Claude relives seemingly random pieces of flotsam and jetsam: just what has lodged in his memory. Included are: the night he thinks he caused his girlfriend's death, many little, banal moments in their time together (whimsical discussions and discoveries) and also his suicide attempt. One thinks of Everett Sloane's recollection in CITIZEN KANE: The girl in a white dress he caught a glimpse of, years ago. A windy day and she was just getting off a ferry as Sloane's pulled out. "And you know, probably a month hasn't gone by since that I haven't thought about that girl."

The dialogue contains the ordinary, silly talk that one exchanges with friends. (Resnais, though, is not trying to make another MY NIGHT AT MAUD'S.) But he has caught the gentle atmosphere and not-quite-thinking themes one goes to, in an effort to utter the sounds. Their tones and sense of comfort are the real communication. Resnais goes on to make these banalities as irritating to the audience as they become to Claude. He wants to end his liaison but is unsure how. The "accident" that ends his girl's life is too neat. He worries. He looks at the emptiness of his life and -- attempts an exit.

There are some paradoxes, little incidents which serve as parallels to the larger circle that the film describes. We see Claude at his desk in the advertising agency he works for. Once, he mentions that there is never a pencil on his desk and once a co-worker tells this to someone else. We then see him holding a pencil at the desk and only later does he explain: I never have a pencil here but there is a depression designed especially for pencils and it I don't put one there the desk will not be functional but . . . (it goes on but I don't remember it all).

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 25)

CRITICANTO : BOOKS

DUNE MESSIAH

by FRANK HERBERT

First publication: 1969

Putnam :: $4.95

Berkley :: 95¢

Reviewed by Ronald Bleker

Frank Herbert might do well to heed the warnings he gives in his latest novel, DUNE MESSIAH. For just as the noble but savage Fremen of his award-winning novel DUNE are corrupted by their attainment of galactic power, so the success of DUNE seems to have weakened Herebert's writing of its sequel.

DUNE was a novel of growth - specifically, that of Paul Atreides, who, in his attempt to regain the fief taken from his father, develops new powers within himself to become the prophet, Maud'dib. DUNE MESSIAH is the story of the destruction of Paul Atreides and of his Jihad (holy war) as it succumbs to the lures of power and of civilization. The years of greatness, the period between Paul's defeat of the Imperial and Harkonnen forces at Arrakeen and the formation of the Tleilaxu conspiracy against him, occur in neither novel. Paul, who knows that once the Jihad is begun the result must be slaughter and self-destruction, has apparently failed to use his time of power to alter the direction of events.

In this failure he shows how completely he has become the prisoner of Time. Paul's prescience, his ability to see the Future as the Past, has made him an incurable fatalist, for he fears that to go against the sequence of events he foresees would be to produce even more horrible consequences for those around him. The very Sophoclean sense of tragedy which dominates DUNE MESSIAH was foreshadowed in the earlier novel, although there Paul's concern seemed to be more with the people who would be killed in his name, whereas in this novel he learns that the Jihad has side-effects which destroy its creators as well.

If one accepts the premises of Paul's development in DUNE, then DUNE MESSIAH follows his story to its logical conclusion. And while the themes and plot devices which Herbert uses here are scarcely original, the universe which he so painstakingly created in the earlier work is rich enough to absorb a second novel. What bothers me about DUNE MESSIAH is a variety of technical problems with the story which appear so marked here because of their absence from DUNE.

DUNE MESSIAH is a much shorter novel than its predecessor, both in terms of number of words and in its scope. Things develop more leisurely and fully in DUNE; in DUNE MESSIAH everything is frenzied and full of double and triple meanings to be uncovered later, as if the pace could not be slowed to let the reader fully see things as they happen. This need not be a bad thing (many mysteries successfully employ this device), but the impression I received in reading this novel was that the author was too hurried to put a literary finish to his work. The emotional level of DUNE moved up and down quite satisfactorily; whenever the monotony of desert travails began to become a bit much, the scene was properly shifted to Harkonnen intrigues and then back again. DUNE MESSIAH is written at a constant pitch of boiling emotion. Moreover, Fate or cosmic awareness lose their awe when they are too often exhibited; their constant presence drains them of any dramatic effectiveness at all.

Another problem is Herbert's over-reliance on his own plot devices. It is endurable to have one major character who is not only prescient but physically and mentally super-human. But when even minor characters show up with these powers or when "spheres of prescience" protect one group from being foreseen by another, then we are back to the collisions of super-people with super-weapons that clutter Doc Smith's books. Of course one can argue that only super-weapons can stop a superman; but Paul is human too, and while the Tleilaxu make much of destroying him through his humanity, everything is still done with gadgets, be they biological or nuclear. In DUNE, Paul learns to be a "human" (in Herbert's special sense of the word) through his very human experiences with Stilgar's tribe; DUNE MESSIAH would have been an intellectually more interesting work if these qualities, rather than other superpowers, had been placed in opposition to Paul's Empire and, as they partially are, to his own powers. The most serious example of this is the Bene Tleilax, who do not figure at all in DUNE although their powers and influence would seem hard to ignore. Rather than growing out of DUNE, as the best things in this sequel do, the Tleilaxu, like one of their own creations, seem to have been fabricated merely to serve as a plot device.

The characters of DUNE MESSIAH are generally either inferior to the characters of DUNE or their potentialities have been ignored. There is never an antagonist as subtle and deadly as the Baron Harkonnen or his nephew. There is no one to admire like Duke Leto. The Lady Jessica, Paul's mother and perhaps the best character in DUNE, never enters the

sequel and Alia, her daughter and the sharer of her consciousness, somehow lacks the depth to replace her. The old Emperor and his friend Count Fenring are spoken of as possible threats, but like the Lady Jessica they are not brought back into this novel. Stilgar remains a successful character, but of the new characters only two are even partly successful. Scytale, the Tleilaxu, is first presented as Paul's shrewdest opponent, but Paul sees through every move he makes. The dwarf, Bijaz, is interesting because of his clever, punning speech pattern, but he enters late and is quickly disposed of. Perhaps Herbert means us to think that, having seized the center stage of history, the Atreides and their entourage have become characters rather than remaining people. Prescience and its resulting consciousness of history remove free will and leave the players nothing but impotent private emotion. Yet it is Paul, who should feel this most, who comes across as the most realistic character.

In DUNE, Frank Herbert concentrated on creating a universe, and he did it with such success that his themes and characters developed naturally from it. In DUNE MESSIAH, Herbert concentrates on making a point, and in his attention to theme he loses much of the credibility with which his earlier novel was endowed. In reviewing the parts of DUNE which I felt were most effective I think of scenes like the Atreides' early days on DUNE, of Feyd-Rautha's gladiatorial contest, of Jamis' funeral. By contrast, the Battle of Arrakeen suffers from many of the flaws of DUNE MESSIAH. Herbert seems to write better of the small things in life, while the sweeping panoramas elude him. DUNE MESSIAH should have been a panoramic novel, but in trying to verbalize the cosmic stirrings of the Atreides and their enemies, Herbert has neglected the attention to detail which brings a situation or character alive. For this reason, DUNE MESSIAH fails as a novel. Since Frank Herbert is so obviously imaginative and capable of good writing, I can only hope that he will not again allow his desire to express a theme to obscure, like some literary Dune Tarot, his vision and his art.

STAND ON ZANZIBAR

by JOHN BRUNNER

Doubleday :: 1968
507 pages :: $6.95

Ballantine :: $1.65

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

". . . like 1984, but that was so long ago."

2010 is uncomfortably close to us. Its problems are ours. Brunner's extrapolation of contemporary conditions is actually an examination of them. 1984 has already happened. The vision is stale. It is an almost idealistic non-utopia, a day-dream of repression. STAND ON ZANZIBAR, by its very form, is designed to cover more ground than the single viewpoint of 1984.

But it is with Dos Passos' books that STAND ON ZANZIBAR asks to be compared. Its chapters are divided into four categories: "Context" provides background on how the world has landed in its present state. "The Happening World" is a capsule report of current events. "Tracking with Closeups" focuses on different minor characters. And "Continuity" forms the main line of the narrative. Needless to say, these definitions are simplified. Indeed, one is immediately struck, in comparing Dos Passos

and Brunner, at the latter's sophistication.

Brunner writes of MIDCENTURY (in EXTRAPOLATION 11.2, May 1970),that "it covers a period, unlike that of the USA trilogy, where I can judge the success of his methods by comparison with my own recollections." This is only one of the problems with Dos Passos' books. Brunner, in projecting a future world, has to explain everything. The headlines Dos Passos uses may be evocative for those who remember the period, but I don't. The books mean something to me only because of chance cross references -- songs and films of the times. Brunner admits that MIDCENTURY is not Dos Passos' best work, but even so, it is very disappointing. It smacks of tawdry 50-word-per-minute journalism; it reads like a series of "human interest" stories written by some journeyman reporter: the whole is infested with opinionated Americana. Which is not to say that it may not capture the "mood of the times." But, as John Leonard wrote about another such book, reality isn't enough.

Brunner gives us something better than reality: invention. One element of which is verisimilitude. The book teems with items that one identifies immediately, before the explanations, because they are so true of the context. 1966, 1967: We are the context for STAND ON ZANZIBAR, for 2010. When we first read of the muckers in The Happening World (THW) 1 we realize that this is a brief glimpse into something with greater portent. (I thought at once of Sturgeon's AND NOW THE NEWS.) Here Brunner hits one of the open sores a society always has. It is like that line in the Stones' YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT: "I knew she was going to meet her connection." These are both symptoms of a deeper malaise in the society. The Stones' line, especially, is like "a tedious argument of insidious intent." As with the end of Silverberg's PASSENGERS, the horror is not in the act itself, but in how the act is accepted. It has become matter of fact.

THW 5 is a poem, "Citizen Bacillus." The first two lines are: "Take stock, citizen bacillus,/Now that there are so many billions of you." I hear Grace Slick snarling, more disdainful and angry than frightened: "Oh, there are so many of you." Context 10: "'And if there'd been eugenic legislation back /then/ . . . they'd have been forbidden to have children and I wouldn't be here now. Don't you understand? I wouldn't be here!'" "I wouldn't be here," Pete Seeger said recently, "I was my mother's third child and if this Zero Population Growth had been in fashion then I wouldn't be here. But we still have to think about tomorrow." These resonances and cross references, to be found throughout the novel, are appropriate in that STAND ON ZANZIBAR is a simulacrum, a sadly similar society. THW 7: "Macbeth of Moonbase Zero by William Shakespeare and Hank Sodley." The credits of one film adapting a play of the Bard's read: "By William Shakespeare. With additional dialogue by Sam Wood." THW 8: "'This marvellous recording of the Ninth which puts you right in the middle of the choir -- when the Ode to Joy lets loose it's like an earthquake.'" A few months ago the Ode to Joy was released by a Mexican pop group. Context 16: "'What do you think of Beninia then?'/'The Everywheres will tell me but I don't know when.'" This has the same fatalism, though not the same humor, as Joe Cocker's COCAINE: "Cocaine is for horses, not for men. They tell me it will kill me but they won't say when."

There are also witty extrapolations: Picasso, Pollack and Moore signify Norman House as a "good steady type." An ad: "Never be bored by the popperade Tonvaria makes them over in the style you love from Bach to Beiderbecke to Bronstein to whoever." The "Bronstein" fits in so perfect-

ly. And: "Stomp That Roach! Beware of Fire!" Brunner's broad humour is one of the novel's greatest assets.

In one of his letters, Raymond Chandler wrote:"The literary use of slang is a study in itself. I've found that there are only two kinds that are any good: slang that has established itself in the language, and slang that you make up yourself. Everything else is apt to be passé before it gets into print." One of the prime virtues of Chandler's work is its timelessness; it might be set today. Brunner invents his slang and uses it in a surprisingly natural way (as Anthony Burgess does in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE). That is, it is used from the beginning to the end and somewhere in between it is explained.

The same is true of the larger facts about Brunner's future. THW 1 presents the personalities and themes of the book in much the way the Sirens chapter of ULYSSES presents its motifs as the first section of a fugue. The effect is the same: these fragments are essentially meaningless when one first encounters them in the overture but they gain relevance when read later in context. Almost everything interlocks in a multi-level tesselation. Tracking With Closeups (TWC) characters may appear at parties, as guests or in small talk. Or they may be friends of the major characters, in which case the plot is furthered in TWC as well as in Continuity. But the plot here is as much an examination of 2010 as it is narrative.

It has been remarked that the Continuity would make a good novel alone but what Brunner has done is to tell the story using all sections. This results in a unified structure whereas, if one got lectures alternating with plot (like all too many s f novels), the book would probably have failed. Each subsequent chapter gives the reader more information about the events and people of 2010 and therefore the book progresses. The plot is not put down and picked up; one is not impatient for action.

When Brunner does lecture it is through Chad Mulligan. And you're not getting an Anderson recap of the history of an alternate universe that you can forget when you finish the story. Nor some private, or, for all one cares, public theory about odd behavior in protons. YOU'RE AN IGNORANT IDIOT, YOU: BEAST. Brunner/Mulligan is writing about the reader. The sociology is valid and the problems of 2010 are projections of present day syndromes. And Mulligan is the kind of lecturer you <u>wish</u> you had had in college. None of the information is of the kind in 1984: dense unreadable chunks.

Brunner's characters, as always, are simple though not superficial. The background he gives them have the feel -- and the chill -- of reality. A case in point is Bronwen Ghose, from India, a widow at 21: "My husband was a doctor. He was killed by a mob who found out he was using vaccines made from pig serum. He was thirty-three.'" Brunner has a feeling for people in that he well understands the role superstition plays in many people's lives and acknowledges religions, fanatic and otherwise. People will not change, basically, any more in the next hundred years than they have in the last hundred.

One of his achievements here is to give the many minor characters sufficient color and individuality to impress them on the reader's mind. In fact, Brunner gives the reader several tests in STAND ON ZANZIBAR which are actually tests of the book's effectiveness. Almost like the questionnaire midway through Donald Barthelme's SNOW WHITE, we have the

party at Guinevere Steel's in THE 8. Much of what has gone before is mentioned or alluded to. And surprisingly, you make the connections. Surprisingly, because s f writers have (with only one or two exceptions) so notoriously misused the form of the large novel. There is another, more obvious display in THW 13, which is entitled "Résumé."

But Brunner puts reader and novel to the test in other ways. Context 13: "The Old Newspaper": "'Boy Shoots Five Dead In Beauty School. Mesa, Arizona, 12 November. Five People, including a mother and her three-year-old daughter, were shot dead by a boy . . . .'" The chapter category, Context and not THW, should tip us off but it seems to be a part of 2010. We read on: "'It was the third mass murder in the United States in four months. In August a sniper shot dead 15 people in Austin, Texas, and in July eight student nurses . . . .'" Our eyes flick to the source: "London OBSERVER, 13th November 1966." This is one of the most frightening chapters -- how close we are to the 2010 of STAND ON ZANZIBAR.

There are two important scientificgimmicks in the novel (aside from many small items like the Karatand, etc.). One, the eugenic optimisation of children, is plausible and a valid extrapolation. The other, the Beninian "happiness gas", while also based on the current state of scientific knowledge, comes off as unreal. It doesn't satisfy us. But Brunner is wise enough to make Donald's escape from Yatakang the real climax and thus mask this anti-climax. Among other objections, abortion does not seem to be an alternative in Brunner's world. But perhaps this is over-easy hindsight: One still cannot quite believe that the stuffy New York legislature has let something possessing so much common sense get past its many, busy hands. And, after all, where abortions are really needed -- in India and South America -- the chances of such legislation are nil.

The last page, the last Context ("This non-novel was brought to you by John Brunner using Spicers Plus Fabric Bond . . . .") is annoying and unnecessary. Brunner is clearly standing behind the whole work and his bows are more appreciated by this reviewer when he takes them two pages earlier in THW 16:"Obituary", by summarizing the ends of a number of his characters. And then one more Shalmaneser joke. That's the way it should end. But his faults are minor in the creation of his stfnal INTOLERANCE. This is not the best novel of the last ten years; it wasn't even the best novel published in 1968. Brunner's range of invention and his virtuosity do not match, for example, Delany's or Lafferty's, but, having said so, one has only to enjoy Brunner's writing for its (very considerable) merits.

ENGLAND SWINGS SF

Edited by Judith Merril

Doubleday :: 1968
406 pages :: $5.95

Ace :: $1.25

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

A review of ENGLAND SWINGS SF is an occasion for several things. Statements are in order on: the "New Wave", how representative is this anthology, how good is this anthology and, finally, how good are the stories? These are all really necessary to a review of ESSF because one must know the reviewer's bias on the "New Wave" before one can understand his judgements on these anthologist-proclaimed examples. In this way, Robert Coulson's comments

on "New Wave" s f are valid (if not particularly helpful) because he first states that he dislikes the type of s f usually branded as such.

I am basically sympathetic to this "New Wave". In fact, the first difference I discerned was simply that the stories were better written than the "Old Wave". But it goes deeper than that. The new writers have a literary consciousness which means that they are aware of something called style, that there may be more than one level to a story, etc. The traditional writers -- Asimov, Heinlein, Simak, Clarke -- used variations on one basic, pragmatic narrative style. Of course there were exceptions -- Sturgeon, Leiber, Bradbury -- who were called stylists because they were the only ones trafficking in this rare commodity. Then, in the sixties, a group of writers emerged who developed highly personal, colorful styles: Delany, Zelazny, Lafferty. At the same time there was a metamorphosis of several other authors: Disch, Aldiss, Spinrad and Ballard, the last two especially. They continued in a straight line thematically, but found new octaves for their voices, much enriching the possibilities of their work. Some, of course, found the new style as difficult as the old and still strayed off key. But the achievements of Disch, Ballard and Aldiss are undeniable. CAMP CONCENTRATION is, in my opinion, the first truly "New Wave" novel and, more importantly, one of the very best s f novels ever written.

There is a lot of junk in NEW WORLDS (as in any other s f magazine) but what it lacks in "readability" it often makes up in interest. Unfortunately, ESSF contains many stories that I couldn't find any reason to finish when they first appeared in NEW WORLDS. The anthology may be representative, but what one wants from an anthology is the atypical. An anthology truly representative of any writing movement will be bad: Sturgeon's Law.

After that blast I will tell you that there are six superior stories and as many more (out of a total of twenty-eight) deserving honorable mention. But I cannot forgive Miss Merril all that dross. I am afraid that she has lost that golden touch which served her so well through twelve glorious volumes of THE YEAR'S BEST SF. Miss Merril has expanded her practice of talking about the stories by placing short biographies and the comments of each author after their stories. This is admirable, but most of the stories still don't deserve critical comment.

I found my self seeking some justification for these stories. Are John Calder's winged men (SIGNALS) those of Leonard Baskin? Are John Clark's aurae (SAINT 505) derived from that in Sturgeon's A SAUCER OF LONELINESS? It really doesn't matter one way or another. These fleeting images do not redeem the stories they grace. Because of this, I will discuss at length the really good stories rather than knocking over cardboard targets.

The anthology contains three excellent examples of Ballard's "condensed novels." One of the immediate problems in judging his work is the awful amount of nonsense on both sides of the issue: Ballard has not made obsolete all previous s f but neither is he unintelligible. These are rich, almost mystic stories that brilliantly concentrate the elements of this contemporary world. ("What I feel I've done in these pieces of mine is to rediscover the present for myself.") He sees the crises of man in the plastic age, in the advertising age. Space becomes an untouchable heaven, worshipped with precise, gleaming machines. Aldiss, I think it was, said something about Ballard's "cool metaphysical wit." Most readers are straining too hard: They want to be able to synopsize in two prose sen-

tences what the story is about, the way people ask what a poem means. They miss the cool humor that Ballard infuses because he understands what he is doing and how ridiculous this age is and how undeniable it is: the accoutrements of science, numbers like stations of the Cross; advertising creating prefabricated myths.

John Leonard wrote, reviewing NORMA JEAN: "It is the MM legend that compels us, as though she had somehow been converted into a sort of Marilynbad -- a fleshscape of cooled libidinal lava and Freudian cliches -- through which we wander rather smugly troubled by the ambiguity of it all." This is Ballard's vision.

In many ways Ballard is the Godard of s f: toying with the medium that he was once a part of and now looks back on. He seems to push his genre one step further with each new work, but he never loses control. At the same time, he is providing salutary shocks to the complacent.

In YOU AND ME AND THE CONTINUUM Ballard examines the interaction of personal awareness and mass communication. Where and how does news and advertising enter and become a part of one's thoughts, one's pool of information? If Francis Bacon is the Twentieth Century experience transmuted into art, is Fellini closer to the Ad industry? Jacqueline Kennedy's face is next, in our minds, to Gala Dalí's. The story spirals out from the immediate: "She lay quietly on her side, listening to the last bars of the scherzo . . . " Plot in Ballard's recent works advances not by narrative but by apprehension of relationships. Using references to current culture, he enriches his moods with the reader's experience of these paintings, musical works, current events. He recalls Eliot in his phrasing of the last paragraph: "the unrequited ghosts of Malcolm X, Lee Harvey Oswald . . . lost integers in a hundred computer codes, sand grains on a thousand beaches, fillings in a million mouths."

It has been said that the effect of art should be to make us aware of what we experience but take for granted. It should heighten our sensing of reality. Ballard is presenting those too often seen events, become rocks of permanence and ambiguity in the irrevocable past of documentation and memory. Here, he displays THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY CONSIDERED AS A DOWNHILL MOTOR RACE. People still remember, thirty years later, where they were when they received the news of Pearl Harbor. For my generation it was Dallas which suddenly impinged on those private, self-centered worlds of grade school pupils. One thinks of the first lines of George Barker's TO ANY MEMBER OF MY GENERATION: "What was it you remember -- the summer mornings/Down by the river at Richmond with a girl,/And as you kissed, clumsy in bathing costumes,/History guffawed in a rosebush." Barker is talking about World War II, but the idea is always applicable. Ballard ends the story: "Without doubt Oswald badly misfired. But one question still remains unanswered: who loaded the starting gun?" The Stones answer: "I shouted out: Who killed the Kennedys? Well, after all, you know it was you and me." We live in such an age: The song was, as written, "Who killed Kennedy?" But at the recording session, upon hearing that Robert Kennedy had been shot, they changed the number.

Of PLAN FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF JACQUELINE KENNEDY, Ballard says: "The story is about the popular image of Jacqueline Kennedy, as translated through all the television, newspaper and magazine media. The images of public figures become mixed up and reverberate with each other." The mass audience thinks in a certain way which influences the shape of the

image on their television screens. Ballard mentions cars as sexual symbols in advertising and in the minds influenced by that advertising. (eg. in middle American slang the phrase "he's got wheels" ten years ago was almost equivalent to "he's got balls.") In this environment the women who are photographed and filmed also become symbols. This questioning and affirming of public myths is the concern here. Ballard never claims to say anything new. But his enactments of the public and private dilemmas are moving in a way that Marshall McLuhan's lectures will never be.

THE SQUIRREL CAGE is one of Thomas Disch's best stories. A man is imprisoned in a cell, with only short term memory of his life there. This devilish vacuum is completed by a typewriter and each day's NEW YORK TIMES. He imagines life in the world described by the TIMES. He writes a poem about Grand Central, a story about a visit to the zoo, etc. He describes small marine animals, "pogonophores", from a news story. "The pogonophore does not sleep. He climbs to the top of the inside passage of his shell, and, when he has reached the top, he retraces his steps to the bottom of his shell. The pogonophore never tires of his self-imposed regimen. He performs his duty scrupulously and with honest joy. He is not a fatalist." Man, Disch says, fulfills himself in living. The narrator imagines freedom: "One would be so busy running around -- from 53rd St. to 42nd St., from 42nd St. to the Fulton Street Fish Market, not to mention all the journeys one might make crosstown -- that one wouldn't have to worry whether life had a meaning." That is what a man imprisoned thinks and of course it isn't so. But in a way this is the key to Disch. All of his characters question. All seek to know what purpose there is to life. Well, there is none that is external or pre-existing. A man must justify his existence to himself, no one else can do it. This is one basis for exposition in all his novels, including THE PRISONER. Like most of his work, this story is an allegory. It is superb, though, and there is nothing wrong with allegory when it is well done. THE SQUIRREL CAGE makes almost all the other stories here look petty in comparison.

P. A. Zoline's THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE has been greeted by some as a women's magazine story on the trapped feelings of a young mother, with science tacked on. But it is a dynamic, unseamed whole. This is the situation: "Housework is never completed, the chaos always lurks ready to encroach on any area left unweeded, a jungle filled with dirty pans and the roaring of giant stuffed toy animals suddenly turned savage. Terrible glass eyes." We see: the general law (entropy) and the specific instance (dust); the objective (a definition of light) and the subjective (how it makes dust seem the most visually precious thing in a room); the external (a list of what she has bought: one of every kind of cleaner the store sells) and the internal (hysteria). The humor is bright and shrill, desperate, tinged by that hysteria.

HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE partakes of: Hamlet's horror at seeing his world not a system learned at Wittenberg but "an unweeded garden that grows to seed"; the college education that provided her with this allusion but that the world expects her to forget when she gets married and raises children; Philip Dick's sharp portrayals of chaos encroaching on the ordered world, complacency and habits of men who suddenly find themselves lost, cut loose; one of Edward Gorey's vignettes (THE FATAL LOZENGE, GB: THE GOREY ALPHABET): "The Drudge expends her life in mopping,/In emptying and filling pails;/And she will do so, never stopping,/ Until her strength entirely fails." This is a splendid story that shares many of its strengths with Sladek's MASTERTON AND THE CLERKS; both might

be called tagedies of the ridiculous: a sane mind in an insane world. Moorcock says he cried when he first read THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE. I can believe this as I could not of practically any other story.

Brian Aldiss' STILL TRAJECTORIES, his autobahns, seem the 1970 equivalent of the fateful railroad tracks in THE HUMAN BEAST (LA BETE HUMAINE, Renoir 1937) and HUMAN DESIRE (Lang 1954). They are the physical and mental projections of a despair that moves through a sort of manic depressive state into violence. The story is told mainly from the point of view of a "Speed Supervisor," Jan Koninkrijk, with shifts in voice to various people surrounding Colin Charteris' cavalcade. As a result, the punning portmanteau words are kept to a minimum, if the main themes are one with the other stories in the series. Aldiss' psychology appears here in a father-complex that Marta, Jan's wife, has, but the other characters are well drawn.

Aalter, the town the Koninkrijks live in, is being obliterated by "the seismological eruptions of the European psyche" attending the recent Acid Head War. These eruptions here take the form of a massive renovation of the autobahns. As Jan travels through Europe at 160 km/hr., he wonders about a pretty bar maid he met in Holland. His wife sits at home, motionless, watching on a kind of closed circuit TV the other rooms of the house, all empty. This psychotic state was precipitated by the War and now she awaits "a secret someone to crush her up into life." Aldiss explains: "Both in their frail beds, a gulf of fifty-seven point oh nine centimeters between them." Colin Charteris, a newly proclaimed messiah, and his "crusade motorcade" travel across the continent. He says to his followers: "I see us speeding into a great progressional future which every blind moment is an eight lane highway." They hurtle desperately, accelerating "towards Aalter and the infinite," towards their "speed death." And accidents occur daily. After one near Aalter, Koninkrijk persuades Charteris to come and see Marta. She rouses and goes with Charteris in the pattern of Tommy's cure. Now free, Jan will be driving up toward Holland. What makes this special are Aldiss' irony and his modulated moods. While not one of his best stories, it is still indicative of his mastery of the short story form.

And, at last, the We-Also-Heard-From notes: Keith Roberts' MANSCARER has a fine image-laden prose although I disagree with its point (artists need adversity or they cease to be artists). ALL THE KING'S MEN by B. J. Bayley is well done historical fiction plus aliens, with a nice sense of personal-cum-national tragedy. Roger Jones in THE ISLAND does well with Beckett-derived prose and logic (especially a list of questions one character addresses to himself over and over, pruning the list like Murphy working on some problem). And Charles Platt has a nice ordinary gadget story in THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE KICK. There is one line in Michael Butterworth's THE BAKED BEAN FACTORY that bears quoting: "The man felt attacked by the images of the entire histroy of earth." I don't doubt it will some day serve as epigraph to a study of the "New Wave."

Conclusion: If you have not read the extensively discussed stories, but especially THE SQUIRREL CAGE and THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE, the paperback is worth the price. Otherwise . . . not.

CRITICANTO : FILMS

GILLAM ON GODARD

ZEMAN ON GODARD

GILLAM ON ROMERO

ALPHAVILLE

Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. Produced by André Michelin. Script by Jean-Luc Godard. Photography by Raoul Coutard. With: Eddie Constantine, Anna Karina, Akim Tamiroff, Howard Vernon. Distributed by Athos-Films. US: Pathé Contemporary Films. 1965; 98 minutes.

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

"There are times when reality becomes too complex for Oral Communication. But legend gives it a form by which it pervades the whole world." These are the first words spoken in ALPHAVILLE. They follow the titles, which are presented in a stylized computer readout. A flashing light then takes up the full frame; there is the foreboding music we associate with detective pictures. We see Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine) standing beneath a billboard showing one of Goya's engravings from THE DISASTERS OF WAR. Like a flash title, like the comics' bubble-tailed balloon of what he is thinking: Anguish. Next comes a shot of a double helix -- a model of DNA.

In this short overture Godard has enunciated all the themes to be developed in ALPHAVILLE. There is first the computer society with its binary logic. Into this comes Lemmy Caution with all the attributes of his genre. He is the typical outwardly tough but really sentimental and

feeling private eye. And in a visual equation anguish, outrage, feeling is necessary for life. It gives life meaning.

Godard has been particularly successful is adapting the conventions of forties genre films to his own uses: BREATHLESS (1959) with its ambivalent hero (Belmondo is not the French Bogart, he is a commentary on Bogie); LE PETIT SOLDAT (1960) in which one man internalizes the Algerian torment; BAND OF OUTSIDERS (1964), the somber, bittersweet comedy; ALPHAVILLE (1965) with its existential Philip Marlowe in 1984; PIERROT LE FOU (1965), the hymn -- mutedly joyful, mutedly despairing. Almost always the surface is allegory for the subject. BAND OF OUTSIDERS and PIERROT LE FOU both equate the outlaw with the outsider, l'étranger. LE PETIT SOLDAT shows the Algerian conflict as a modern gangster story.

Godard understands the function of the past in art. Andrew Sarris wrote: "BREATHLESS renders the gestures of the gangster movie without providing the gestations of the motivations." We are not interested today in the Dickensian plot behind events. Things happen: this is sufficient. But the gestures are lovingly rendered.

After the opening detailed above, Lemmy Caution is shown at the wheel of his car, driving at night. He lights a cigarette, illuminating his face and checks his gun (a direct quote from Robert Aldrich's KISS ME DEADLY (1955), a Mickey Spillane adaption). Lemmy enters a hotel and true to the genre, when each of three attendents -- a porter, a bellhop and a maid -- offers to take his case, he peremptorily pulls it out of their reach. The combination of the assumption that he will do so and the way he unthinkingly reacts is very funny. Throughout the film one finds parodies of the genre as well as a dedication to it.

In his hotel room, he taps the walls and looks for hidden microphones. The maid informs him that she is a Seductress, third class. He refuses: "I'm a big boy now and old enough to find my own dames, so just beat it!" From out of the bathroom comes a man who demands to know why Lemmy doesn't want her. There is a fight, in which the intruder dives through three glass doors, as Lemmy closes each in turn. And at one point we watch the battle through a window, without sound. This is a favorite device of Hitchcock's, although he usually shows us conversation with a transparent but sound proof barrier between subject and viewer. Having shot the man as he tried to escape, Lemmy lies on the bed, reading THE BIG SLEEP, Raymond Chandler's first and probably toughest novel. We then learn Lemmy's mission: As Alphaville is soon to declare war on the Outerlands, from which he comes, Lemmy must destroy Alpha 60, the computer which runs the city. He is also instructed to bring Professor von Braun, its creator, back to the Outerlands. And, if von Braun will not come, to kill him.

Natasha von Braun (Anna Karina) arrives amidst a swell of romantic strings. She talks in a low, unemotional voice but the music undercuts her manner. Lemmy fires a shot which lights the flame of his Zippo. He lights her cigarette. In this scene another theme of ALPHAVILLE is brought out: the depersonalization of the city. Natasha doesn't understand the word "love". All the servants -- the seductress, the man at the desk, the bellhop, Natasha (who has been assigned to accompany him during his stay in Alphaville) -- say automatically, "I'm very well, thank you, not at all." Everything they say has been approved, has been said before to all the other transients. The very small distance from

reportage to parody is one of the points being made here. The buildings we are shown from the outside are all examples of that modern box architecture: a facade consisting mainly of windows, regular rectangles of light, all indistinguishable, like the cells of a bee's comb.

Lemmy next goes to a hotel (12 rue Enrico Fermi), where he meets his contact. It is a rundown, dirty building (the only one of its kind we see in the film) and Henri Dickson (Akim Tamiroff) is an alcoholic. He is unshaven and without money to pay his next week's rent. As Lemmy and Dickson walk up the rickety stairs, Dickson talks of the many suicides. This is intercut with neon signs: $E=mc^2$, $E=hf$. There are naked light bulbs casting a harsh light. Dickson, with his racking cough, tells Lemmy: "Here at Alphaville their ideal is a pure technocracy, like those of the ants and termites." Dickson is the perfect model of a secret agent down on his luck, too old to do anything else, rotting because he cannot move. But if the character is conventional, he is no less moving. He dies and gasps, finally, "Conscience, make Alpha 60 destroy itself, tenderness, save those who weep."

Lemmy goes to Natasha's place of work (14 Radiation Avenue). She is listening to a lecture from Alpha 60: "No one has lived in the past and no one will live in the future. The present is the form of all life." It goes on with this brainwashing, dead logic. But what we see are drawings and Anna Karina's face in flashes of light. There is one Saul Steinberg sketch that shows a balance: one side holds a large question make and the other a small geometric figure. In other words, Steinberg is making fun of the very type of thinking that Alpha 60 represents. "Why" is forbidden in Alphaville, only "because" is sanctioned. For Steinberg uncertainty (life) is just as valid as the totally certain and predictable (geometry). There are also the planes and shadows of Anna Karina's face which belie all the logic of the machine. "Men destroy themselves by their acts. I, Alpha 60, am simply the logical means of this destruction."

Natasha takes Lemmy to "a sort of water ballet." It turns out to be an execution. The condemned walk to the end of the diving board where they are shot. Girls dive in to finish the job with knives. Their crime is having acted illogically: one wept when his wife died. The contradictions here are rampant: Beautiful girls perform precision water stunts (like a sequence out of Leni Riefenstahl's OLYMPIA) and become agents of death. It has a flavor of Hitler's Germany. Godard tips us off: the floor as indicated on the elevator is "SS". All the women in Alphaville -- and one supposes the men as well -- have numbers stamped on their forehead or neck. And there is Professor von Braun's omnipresent picture. We remember that other man at Peenemunde. Godard elaborates when von Braun tells Lemmy: "Nosferatu no longer exists." NOSFERATU was the title for Murnau's pirated 1922 Dracula. Here in Alphaville his picture hangs on all the walls (here in America his namesake is interviewed for all the Sunday supplements), he is no longer the Leonard Nosferatu who was banished from the Outerlands for his inventions.

As in all his films, there are Godard's little inventions (so annoyingly imitated by Susan Sontag in her DUET FOR CANNIBALS). Lemmy passes a row of vending machines. "Deposit a coin" says one. Lemmy does and out drops a plaque saying, "Thank you." And more importantly, there is the Bible, revised daily. It is actually a dictionary and Natasha explains: Nearly every day there are words which disappear because they are no longer allowed. It is something out of 1984. Godard provides another sequence

which features Karina's face in fading and brightening light. It is easy to understand, beyond all polemics and assignments, why Lemmy will risk his life to save her. The end of the scene is a splendid shot: Natasha looking through a window; she holds Paul Eluard's THE CAPITAL OF PAIN. Reflected in the window is Alphaville.

Lemmy is brought before Alpha 60 for interrogation. But he gets the upper hand: he gives the computer a riddle whose answer, unstated, is life, emotion, love. Lemmy says: "If you solve it you will destroy yourself because you will have become my equal, my brother." ("Mon semblable, mon frère, hypocrite lecteur") By solving it, Alpha 60 will become culpable for its murders and wrongs, its repression of the people. Lemmy already realizes his predicament in having to kill some people to free others. A lesser man would commit suicide, but Lemmy lives with his anguish. This is the meaning of the parallels between the computer's callousness and Lemmy's.

Lemmy breaks out of the building, shooting down three or four men in the process. He forces a man in a car to take him to Professor von Braun. When the scientist rejects a suggestion of returning to the Outerlands, Lemmy kills him. Escaping from that building, he runs over the head of a man he steals a car from. The computer is gibbering now: "Time is the material of which I am made . . . it is a tiger which tears me apart . . . yet I, too, am the tiger." Lemmy rescues Natasha from the Alpha 60 building where she was being held and together they drive away. Many of the inhabitants of Alphaville will die from the malfunctioning of facilities, says Lemmy. But those who live will be free. Natasha finally manages to say, "I love you", the last words in the film and with a flourish of romantic, hopeful music, the car recedes down the highway, out into the night, and away from Alphaville.

This lengthy rehearsal of ALPHAVILLE will, I hope, have given you some idea of how it works. The last time I saw it in a theatre, a fair-sized audience watched through the whole picture with no more than one or two people ever laughing. This is what is wrong with a great deal of Godardian criticism: It doesn't have a sense of humor. And Godard has such a fine sense of humor.

Godard's Alphaville is Paris: we are given an almost documentary look at the city and it is only what goes on inside the buildings that changes the year. All these familiar buildings and boulevards, all these literary conventions: they mean something else. They are the past become the present. The future will bear just this relation to the present.

I might mention a problem that inevitably comes up with Godard. He is such a intellectual director that one finds critics reviewing his conceptions rather than the executions of his ideas. For instance, the idea for ONE PLUS ONE (the creation of a song paralleled by the workings of the "revolution") is so good that no one but Godard could carry it off. And he doesn't quite. But his themes represent such a treasure house that his intent rather than his product is sometimes judged. The converse applies to viewers. Godard's films are unabashedly intellectual, and if you will notaccept that you cannot judge the work, because you then disagree with a premise basic of it.

On the surface Godard's style appears to be jangling. And it is far removed from its slick Hollywood references. But the current of his ideas places him in a romantic tradition derived more from Hawks and Ford than

from Renoir. Godard has Lemmy mine Jules Furthman's tradition of uncommunicability with women. Lemmy continually pushes them around and at one point he uses a pinup for target practise: making bull's-eyes of the model's breasts. "Not bad for a verteran of Guadalcanal!" comments Lemmy. He calls Natasha "Princess", unable to state his emotions. And we feel his unexpressed anguish when he sees that even Natasha has a number, at the nape of her neck. Eddie Constantine's pockmarked face never changes expression. The camera evinces the emotion in the viewers.

If it is one of his clearest films, ALPHAVILLE is a few notches from being Godard's best. (One critic has called it his best film <u>because</u> it is his clearest.) But, if one assumes it to be s f, there are only a few others on its level. Those include 2001 and Chris Marker's LA JETEE and I really can't think of anything else.

<u>ALPHAVILLE</u>

Reviewed by <u>Marvin Zeman</u>

Cesare Pavese had written that although science and science fiction prophesy that the future will be controlled by machines (for benefit or woe), since all that has happened until now has progressed in a rather continuous manner, we shouldn't expect to have a future radically different from the present. Jean-Luc Godard, in ALPHAVILLE, argues somewhat similarly, but with a cynical twist: the future may turn out as badly as some prophesy, but it will be no worse than the present and the past that it succeeded.

The battleground of ALPHAVILLE is occupied by Lemmy Caution,"brother" of Philip Marlowe with his trusty automatic and successor of Dick Tracy and Flash Gordon, and Henri Dickson on one side and Professor Leonard Nosferatu (shades of Murnau's Dracula), alias von Braun with his all-encompassing, all dictating computer, Alpha 60, on the other side. Godard himself has characterized the film as "Tarzan versus IBM."

Of course, there can only be one outcome. Lemmy Caution kills von Braun, destroys the computer and then escapes with von Braun's brainwashed daughter, Natasha. Thus, on the surface, it would seem that the good again triumphs over the evil and all will be well. But is Lemmy Caution's physical victory quite the moral victory that it seems to represent? Is Tarzan more civilized because he is "primitive" or is he just a more personal and human representation of the impersonal and mechanical "IBM"? In Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY we are shown that man in the twenty-first century touches the monolith with the same wonder and bewilderment as the ape. Kubrick implies that there really isn't much difference between twenty-first century man and the ape; Godard seems to say that the ape is no better than the twenty-first century man.

The first hint we receive that the above is true is when we see the set of ALPHAVILLE; it is just present-day Paris. Godard never actually left Paris to find Alphaville, the city of the far future. Alphaville is all around us if we just look for it, Godard implies. We receive another clue when we first visit Alpha 60. It is stored in a building whose corridors resound with the words "busy . . . free." These words refer directly to the sign that had appeared on the entrances of the Nazi Concentration Camps: "Work will make you free." Other references to Nazi Germany include the number tatooed on Natasha's back -- Concentration

Camp inmates had a number tattooed on their wrists, and the elevator button marked "SS". Von Braun existed in Nazi Germany of the "wonderful" past and von Braun exists in Alphaville of the "inhuman" future. There will always be a von Braun among us.

During the film, Lemmy Caution talks with anyone who will listen -- with Natasha, Henri Dickson, Drs. Heckell and Jeckell (no relation to the magpies), and the computer, and even to some who won't listen -- von Braun, for instance. Godard uses Lemmy Caution and his adversaries to disseminate his own ideas (and he has plenty of those). Godard (via his characters) tells us at one point that birth and death are on the same circle of life. At another point, we hear (or rather, we read in the subtitles if "we" don't speak French): "Time is a circle, the descending arc is the past, the ascending arc the future, there is only the present." When man traces out the circle of life, he returns to where he had started; birth and death occupy the same point on the circumference of existence. But what is birth, but the past? And what is death, but the future? Alphaville, the future, is the same as Paris, the present and past.

Alphaville (both the city and film) is full of labyrinths. We see Lemmy Caution walking endlessly along corridors, forever turning corners (Godard conveys the feeling of endless time with his jump-cuts -- while Caution is walking, the corridors keep changing in the background) and ascending and descending winding stairs. Alpha 60 itself seems to lie at the center of a labyrinth.

The philosophical implications of these labyrinths are, of course, enormous. The labyrinthic theme can be discussed on many levels. For instance, Godard implies that life itself is labyrinthic. We "forever" look for the golden rainbow, always seek the unattainable and at the end, when we finally come out of the labyrinth of life, we find ourselves back at the entrance.

Another approach is reminiscent of THE THEOLOGIANS, a short story written by Jorge Luis Borges, the author of LABYRINTHS. The story is an account of two philosophers who are forever quarreling. Finally, one of them succeeds in framing the other who is then put to death at the stake. As the first philosopher lives on, many of the events that had happened to the dead philosopher occur again to him. Finally, the philosopher realizes that he is reliving his rival's life. He <u>is</u>, in effect, his rival. At the end, he dies by being burned by lightning. Godard, in a sense, does the same thing. He equates Alpha 60 with Lemmy Caution. As Caution seeks Alpha 60 through the labyrinth, we find that Alpha 60 and Lemmy Caution are just opposite sides of a two-headed coin.

We witness an Alphaville "execution." The condemned man is put on the diving board of a swimming pool and after he is shot into the pool, girls dive into the water to retrieve him (and finish the job, if necessary) to the applause of the spectators. But we also witness Lemmy Caution in action. He knocks down a guard (from whom he steals a car), places him strategically, and drives the car (a Ford Galaxy, naturally) right over his head. (We only see the car going over a bump. The rest is left to our imagination.) Where Alpha 60 arrives at his decision of execution logically (a computer is always "logical") Lemmy Caution as he himself states, shoots first and asks questions later. Between them, the the film is littered with corpses.

Although Lemmy Caution murders his way through ALPHAVILLE, Godard does present a favorable side of him. As a matter of fact, most of the audience usually "sees" only this side. (We will disregard a friend of mine who has suggested that I am the one who is "seeing" all the sinister aspects of Lemmy Caution.) Caution is a curiously intellectual roughneck (reminiscent of the many literate tough-guys in the films of Preston Sturges). When Henri Dickson, who has preceded Caution, dies, Caution extracts from under the dead man's pillow a book called CAPITALE DE LA DOULEUR (The Capital of Sorrow), the most renowned book of Paul Eluard, one of the finest modern love poets and one of the founders of Surrealism; Lemmy Caution quotes from the book a number of times in the film.

The surrealists encompassed both love and anarchy. They were capable of tearing the place apart after a particularly pungent performance. (After the showing of Luis Bunuel's L'AGE D'OR at the Studio 28 in Paris, they caused a riot leading to the banning of the film -- a ban which, incidentally, has still not been lifted almost forty years later.) These two contradictory traits are quite inherent in ALPHAVILLE.

Godard also has a love-hate relationship with the U.S. (One must remember that Lemmy Caution is distinctly American; Eddie Constantine, who plays the role, is an expatriate American.) Godard loves American films (or at least, he did during the making of the film. Now, the only films he likes are those made by the Red Chinese. Griffith is a fascist -- along with Robinson Crusoe. Chaplin and Keaton are no good. Jerry Lewis, an American surprisingly, is the only comedian worth seeing). The directors who had especially struck his fancy were the more "right-wing" directors (politically, and the political message at times enters their films): John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks and Samuel Fuller -- who even made a short appearance in Godard's PIERROT LE FOU. He also like the films which starred John Wayne -- the most ardent exponent of the right in the cinema. But at the same time, Godard has attacked U. S. policy, especially in Vietnam. He has become the most ardent exponent of the left in the cinema. Godard himself has commented on this dichotomy in his journal, part of which was published in CAHIERS DU CINEMA in 1966: "Mystery and fascination of this American cinema. How can I hate McNamara and adore SERGENT LA TERREUR, hate John Wayne upholding Goldwater and love him tenderly when abruptly he takes Natalie Wood in his arms in the next-to-last reel of THE SEARCHERS."

At the end, Lemmy Caution succeeds in blowing up the computer. As he drives to "freedom" with Natasha, he teaches her the conjugation of the verb "to love". But a curious thing happens on the soundtrack. The voice that represents Lemmy Caution in the narration suddenly begins to recite statistics and becomes perilously similar to the voice that had represented Alpha 60. The two sides of the two-headed coin become one. The coin turns out to be mobius.

One last comment on fiction in general and science fiction in particular. When an author (or director) creates a period story (or interpreting one), he attempts to imbue his characters with traits and mannerisms which he feels are consistent with the period at hand. In a story taking place in the past, the author has something to go on, while in a story of the future the author feels free to use his imagination. However, in both cases I feel that since the author's sensibility is that of the present, this sensibility often invades the work and the characters exude traits which place them irrevocably in the present. This is understandable since a person can best create what he knows most about. This

occurs in unlikely cases. One critic, for example, saw in Laurence Olivier's HAMLET (1948) a typical forties hero. Thus Godard who has Lemmy Caution and Alpha 60 act similarly differs little from other creators of science fiction who imbue, perhaps unconsciously, their futuristic characters with traits of the present.

THE NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Directed and photographed by George Romero. Produced by Russell Streiner and Karl Hardman. Released by Continental. Screenplay by John Russo. With Duane Jones, Karl Hardman, Judith O'Dea. Distributed by The Walter Reade Organization. 1969; 96 minutes.

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

It is an overcast autumn afternoon when a man and woman in their twenties, brother and sister, arrive at an out-of-the-way cemetery to place a wreath on their parents' grave. They argue because, having left late, they will be making the long return trip at night. As they walk through the leaf strewn graveyard, the brother jokes: I wonder what happens to the wreaths we leave each year? Do you suppose there's a little man who comes and takes them? It must be quite a collection by now. He jokes about his sister's superstitions; she is irritable and tries to shush him. Then, as they turn to go, a gaunt old man appears, walking through the graveyard. The brother jumps at the opportunity: They're coming to get you. His sister walks to the newcomer to apologize but as she is about to speak he grabs her, like an automaton. She screams and her brother comes to fight the old man. In the struggle the brother is thrown down, hitting his head on a stone. The girl is free, but running hysterically, without any objective or plan. The old man comes after her now, like a parody of zombies in forties horror films.

In this swift, giddy pivot at the beginning of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, joke has become real, dreary afternoon has yielded nightmare. From here on there will be no digressions, no subplots. A straight line is the backbone of the film. And NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is certainly one of the best horror films ever made.

The girl finds a farm house, where she takes shelter. Shortly, a young man drives up in a truck and forces his way in. He finds the girl in a state of shock. Ben, the hero, is practical (he starts at once boarding up the windows), capable and intelligent. Later, five people come up out of the cellar, where they had been hiding. Through the night the living dead, like Hitchcock's birds, gather outside and stage assaults on the house. The film essentially focuses on the night these people spend together, quarrelling, fighting off the zombies and watching television newscasts.

As if in some newer version of the formula used by Murnau (THE LAST LAUGH, TABU) and Mizoguchi (THE LIFE OF OHARU, A STORY FROM CHIKAMATZU), each turn of the plot is downwards. Here the hero is more ingenious, resourceful and level-headed than one has a right to expect in any such situation. He makes all the right decisions. But no matter: he is always defeated, like the hero of TABU. Murnau's shadowy Fate becomes pernicious chance, becomes hopeless luck. These are the striving elements: our total agreement with what the hero does (one never says to this one,

"Hey, do this," "You forgot to do that.") and his defeat at each point. The film concentrates on the details, showing us Ben's improvised carpentry, and, at one point, the making of some Molotov cocktails to ward off the living dead, who are afraid of fire.

Have you ever heard someone call out in their sleep for help? This moaning, almost a mewing, is one of the most terrible human sounds, because the only way one can help the sleeper is to wake him and take him out of the nightmare. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is the kind of nightmare I imagine someone calling from. The movie is insular: it is totally self-contained. The screen rivets one's attention and enlarges into a world. But at the same time, this world is deliberately and oppressively claustrophobic. This can be partly explained by the following: For lighting purposes, most Hollywood sets of "interiors" do not have ceilings and the walls also are often pushed away to allow for camera placement. The result is a lack of closeness -- one does not sense the room. In John Frankenheimer's BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ this is apparent: one is never cramped in those supposedly small prison cells of Lancaster. Frankenheimer saw this fault and in THE FIXER he filmed the prison cell in a "real" room.

This is typical, for NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD derives much of its effect from its very rawness. The actors are amateurs and the camera is obviously handheld and it jerks and wobbles. The sets are real; the house was an old farmhouse intended for demolition that the production company bought, to be able to do with as they wished. In this, the film follows the tradition of Murnau rather than THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and its spawn. For here all the surfaces are real, not painted, and we sense the fact. We identify with the reality and the immediacy of the situation. When the girl runs from the cemetery to the farmhouse, the camera follows her closely. We do not get steady, omniscient, observer's view pans from the side of the scene. We do not see her run through a clearing and then the zombie. The camera breathlessly focuses on the girl and this provides one of the movie's best sequences. Romero deliberately used film not of the best stock and the grainy quality gives NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD a cinema verité veneer.

There is a strange -- and successful -- sequence in the middle of the film in which we watch a local television newscast, reporting the events. The effectiveness again is due greatly to how closely the recreation follows the actual. One watches the early reports that incredulous commentators give: "Apparently there is some kind of mass epidemic sweeping the eastern seaboard." Eventually we are given a largely perfunctory explanation of the living dead: a space probe to Venus has brought back unknown radiations, the effect of which is to reanimate the recently dead. These living dead proceed to attack all living creatures. A further gruesome detail is added in a moment typical of the coverage. A newsman, unsure of himself and his item, says: "Yes, it has been definitely established that the reanimated are /he gulps/ eating their victims." This partakes of a kind of skittish parody. The television is reporting a large amount of useless data, every once in a while letting slip a fact about the living dead that may save the lives of the people trapped in the house. But the newscasters are unaware of real conditions and we, the trapped, we, the viewers (the TV image is matted in and takes up the whole screen) are constantly frustrated in getting the clue that we believe will save us. The parity of the humor is the disassociation between the fact we had been seeing and this spic and span newsroom cut off from the world. It is funny and frightening because of the very

banality and stupidity of the newsmen. This is like any time you are at the scene of some newsmaking event and then return home to see the amazingly off focus account of it on the six o'clock news.

The ghouls themselves seem something of a joke. Except for their rigidity, they are ordinary people. And this is another frightening aspect of the film. For Romero's living dead are not the anonymous crowds of Welles' THE TRIAL, they are familiar, friends, people you see in the streets, in the subways. We see them when the trapped look through the cracks in the walls. They stand about waiting, as more come to join them from the woods. At one point, when it seems the house will not hold the ghouls out all night, a scheme is hatched to leave in the truck for a nearby town. But first it must be filled with gas from the pumps outside the house. A system of torches and molotov cocktails is arranged to keep away the living dead, and all seems to be going well -- but, inevitably, the gas catches fire and the young couple who had gone out are killed. There follows the most grisly sequence in the movie. The bodies are torn apart and pieces of flesh are eaten by the ghouls. In the house the menace consisted of grabbing arms but we have now passed into a surreal landscape of dissheveled figures devouring their portions of the kill. One cannot call this nightmare because the camera's eye is unrelenting and clear. The vision is intensified by the dim, harsh night lighting.

This "overkill" is annoying and one is only partly reassured to learn that Romero's original version wasn't nearly as bad. The distributor asked for more. There are other lapses. One is minor and admittedly picky. A corpse was found on the second floor of the house at the beginning of the film and just moved off into one of the other rooms. Why didn't it awake and come upon the people in the house? I waited for this for quite a while. A more important objection is about the acting. It is clumsy and, in one or two scenes, embarassingly bad. But this only adds to verisimilitude in the film. Pauline Kael has said that all horror films are slightly silly. I think this is perhaps because we ourselves are so unsure -- and so afraid -- of how we would behave in such a situation. In any case, Ban and one of the people from the cellar, a man with his wife and daughter, are at loggerheads over the strategy and leadership of the band. The scenes between them have a dramatic force that is undeniable.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is derivative, not merely in its general use of the genre but in specific instances. We find Hitchcockian motifs: At the top of the stairs is the partly eaten corpse mentioned above. During one murder we hear shrieks suspiciously like those in the shower scene of PSYCHO. The seige of the house, with the dwellers huddled inside, parallels THE BIRDS. Andweren't those grasping arms from the walls original with Cocteau in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST? We followed them in Polanski's REPULSION and here they are again.

There are also some metaphors in the film worth noting. The hero is black and his badgering by the redneck father and his final destruction by the white community may be considered allegory. Also, the next morning when the ghouls are being routed by local police forces we are reminded of another war. For the whole operation -- the helicopters spotting the enemy from the air and the scouring of the woods by men with rifles -- is ca lled "Search and destroy."

WARNING: I have seldom seen one of those "not-for-the-faint-hearted" notices that need to taken seriously. But, I will say that, having been

scared once I have no desire to see the picture again. It does not partake of the world-wide, history-deep horror of NIGHT AND FOG, but its immediacy is almost as terrible, and one viewing has sufficed me -- for both.

(JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

And there is a curious incident one afternoon. Claude stops a man on the street to ask if he remembers Claude. The man turns away but Claude persists, Yes, you supplied me with false documents in the war. No, the man says, you couldn't have known me: I had false papers too.

As I said, this is tentative, although I doubt I'll have a chance to verify my memories of the film or confirm my conclusions for a while. So it goes.

JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME: Directed by Alain Resnais. Produced by Mag Bodard. Screenplay by Jacques Sternberg. Photography by Jean Boffety. With: Claude Rich, Olga Georges-Picot, Anouk Ferjac. Production company: Parc Film-Mag Bodard/Fox Europa. Distributed in the U S by Twentieth Century-Fox.

One last bit of business: send all letters of comment to Bruce and he'll see that I see them.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Ronald Bleker graduated last June from Columbia Engineering and this fall entered the Columbia Law School. His avocation is history.

Marvin Zeman is working towards a Ph. D. in Math at New York University. A long essay, "The Suicide of Robert Bresson", will appear shortly in CINEMA.

Barry Gillam is a junior at the City College of New York. He majors in English but this is actually an affair of convenience designed to provide him with enough time to go to the movies every day. Which he does.

MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE (S F COMMENTARY 16 CHECKLIST)

brian w aldiss: STILL TRAJECTORIES (page 14) * j g ballard: general (11-13) * j g ballard: THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY CONSIDERED AS A DOWNHILL MOTOR RACE (12) * j g ballard: PLAN FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF JACQUELINE KENNEDY (12-13) * j g ballard: YOU & ME & THE CONTINUUM (12) * george baker: TO ANY MEMBER OF MY GENBRATION (12) * b j bayley: ALL THE KINGS MEN (14) * j l borges: THE THEOLOGIANS (20) * charlie brown (ed.): LOCUS (2) * john brunner: STAND ON ZANZIBAR (7-10) * michael butterworth: THE BAKED BEAN FACTORY (14) * raymond chandler: general (9, 16) * robert coulson: reviews (10-11) * thomas m disch: CAMP CONCENTRATION (11) * john dos passos: MIDCENTURY (8) * jean-luc godard (dir.): general (12, 15-22) * jean-luc godard (dir.): ALPHAVILLE (15-22) * edward gorey: THE FATAL LOZENGE (13) * frank herbert: DUNE (5-7) * frank herbert: DUNE MESSIAH (5-7) * roger jones: THE ISLAND (14) * john leonard: general (8, 12) * judith merril (ed.): ENGLAND SWINGS S F (10-14) * michael moorcock (ed.): NEW WORLDS (11) * charles platt: THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE KICK (14) * alain resnais (dir.): JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME (3-4, 25) * keith roberts: MANSCARER (14) * the rolling stones: lyrics (8, 12) * george romero (dir.): THE NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (22-25) * robert silverberg: PASSENGERS (8) * theodore sturgeon: AND NOW THE NEWS (8) * orson welles:(dir.): CITIZEN KANE (4) * peter r weston (ed): SPECULATION (2) * p a zoline: THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE (13-14) *

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