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### Alphaville (1965) and its uses of textuality

I decided to explore David Marshall's intertextuality of technology from old media to new media. Marshall explains that intertext can be used for industry-related consumers and while this is true, I would like to expand on that. For instance, director [Jean-Luc Godard](#) takes Marshall's theory of textuality and uses it not for consumer or commodity related intentions but rather for artistic and creative intentions. What Godard brilliantly achieves in his 1965 film *Alphaville* is form a linkage of intertextual boundaries by cross-referencing several different genres that exist in the medium of cinema.

Like most of the films we have been viewing for class, *Alphaville* is a story that explores the subtle uses of futuristic technology. And yet unlike most of those films, Godard purposely uses no special effects, props or a single constructed set and instead shoots entirely in and around Paris. Godard meshes the old textuality of the noir genre which occurred throughout the 30's, 40's and 50's, and transitions such visual aesthetics into the new textuality of 1960's science fiction. Since film noir was a genre that unsurprisingly didn't involve science fiction, technology or the future Godard was still able to effectively link the two intertexts together and with the use

of creative invention, created a technological future that isn't visually futuristic but rather more simplistic and visually abstract.

*Alphaville* presents pulpy hard-boiled character's who constantly speak about several different galaxies and societies and yet Godard specifically never shows us these fantastical worlds, and instead keeps much of the settings claustrophobically indoors and within modern environments. The story revolves around a Sam Spade-like character named Lemmy Caution, a beautiful and mysterious woman who states that she does not understand the meaning of love, and a dictating computer named Alpha 60 that is in complete control of the city of Alphaville.

*Alphaville* seems to be less about science-fiction, technology and special effects and more a political allegory about a fascist totalitarian society which controls the free-thinking minds of its citizens. Knowing much of Godard's other works, the corporate drones that seem to favor the logical, bureaucratic and industrial world over such things like love, poetry and art seem to really represent Godard's feelings of the motion picture industry at the time, and the mindless producers who obey the every demand of the powerful studios in charge.

With the simple cinematic aesthetics of stylized sound effects and mise-en scene, Godard creates a way for *Alphaville* to successfully link intertextuality of both technology and media. For instance, the various sounds of beeps, buttons and muffled voices through an intercom or the visual shots of symbols, blinking lights, and mathematical equations that quickly flash onto the screen, are just some of the aesthetics used throughout the film. Godard also seems to derive the intertexts from the earlier styles of Orson Welles, [German Expression](#) and the avant-garde of Jean Cocteau. In one of the most stunning sequences of the film, several citizens are blindly

staggering through a labyrinth of corridors trying to cling on to walls, which seems to be an homage to Cocteau's dream-like film *Orpheus* (1950).

And that's exactly what I believe Godard's intentions were when making *Alphaville*. It is simply an intertextual matrix of several different cultural forms that were created to represent the history of film. Godard creates several distinct styles which seem to range from American film noir, science-fiction and the French New Wave, to surrealism, Dadaism and also slight touches of parody and satire. Like most of Godard's work, *Alphaville* and its intertextual references are clearly intended for people who love Godard's intellectual political allegories, but it is also for the people who simply love the art of movies.