Dear Tony,

Apologies for not acknowledging you in my thesis - I was put off inserting an acknowledgement page by the guidelines' insistance on seriousness.

Thank you very much for all your help, it was much appreciated and I'm afraid I may have recomended you to rather too many 3rd years for your liking.

Cheers Hong.

Tony Fitzmaurice.

National College of Art and Design,

Fine Art Print,

Invasions and Infiltrations:

American science fiction cinema.

by

Henry Seward.

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Introduction

Science fiction film essentially established itself as a cinematic genre in the United States from 1950 onwards. Although science fiction films had been produced previously; for example Metropolis (1926), or Things to Come (1933), the release of Destination Moon and Rocketship X-M in 1950 sparked off a decade of prolific sci-fi film production in Hollywood. Most of these films were low-budget B-movies featuring little known actors and poor quality special effects. Generally they had a totally incredible premise and little narrative logic, but occasionally science fiction films appeared that were well made, entertaining in their own right and imaginative. These films, as well as spawning countless inferior reproductions throughout the fifties, were often remade twenty or thirty years later, and it is three of these films, and their remakes, that will be dicussed in this thesis.

The films in question deal with the possibility of an alien, or aliens, arriving on Earth, and the subsequent action that it takes or is taken against it. The films are: The Thing (also known as The Thing from Another World) (1951), The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951), and Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956). Apart from The Day the Earth Stood Still, the other two films were remade under the same titles in 1982 and 1978 respectively. The Day the Earth Stood Still has not been directly remade, but The Man who Fell to Earth (1976), in terms of plot, politics and central themes, is clearly related to the earlier film and as such can be regarded as its remake.

The films will be compared with their remakes in terms of how the alien/s are treated by the people of Earth, how they react in turn to the people of Earth, how the film-makers portray the alien/s on screen, what they might represent, both in terms of a psychological point of view, and

in terms of social/political events and attitudes, and, finally, what the political stance of each film is.

Psychologically the alien seems to belong in one or other of two categories. One category is the alien representing a creature of the id, the part of the subconcious mind that knows no judgements of value, no good or evil, and has no morality, thus concerned only with its own survival and reproduction. The second category is the alien representing a creature of the superego, a part of the concious mind that is detached from emotion, but takes care of judgement and morality, superior to the ego, or, indeed, the id, which posesses only instinct and cunning.

What the alien might represent socially/politically will be established from connections made between the content of the film and the social/political events and attitudes of the era in which the film was made. Elements of the social/political situation of the fifties that will be disscused are: the Cold War, with its fears of communism and of the witch-hunting anti-communists, fears that civilisation has run amok and is about to destroy itself, the sense of insignificance and despair that the individual feels in face of the massification of society, fears of the latent barbarity of man, and fears of atomic power. Elements of the social/political situation of the late seventies and early eighties that will be disscused in relation to the remakes are: the controlling power of the media, the fear of technology in the electronic age, fear that people are becoming too self-absorbed, the threat to individuality due to the continuing growth of society, and the fear of loss of control over the human form, through infection or contamination, combined with an absense of moral certainties.

Although these three films are from a sub-genre of science fiction cinema (an alien, or aliens, arriving on Earth) they do, between them, encompass many of the themes common to science fiction cinema: replication of the human form, invasion by hostile alien/s, the alien from a

dying planet, the superior intelligience/technology of an alien society, utopian Earth, dystopian Earth, unemotional aliens, and mad science (the deranged scientist, the indestructable robot).

Chapter One.

In the Howard Hawks/Christian Nyby film The Thing from another world (1951), the main conflict occurs not between the alien and humanity (as might be imagined from the title) but between the leading scientist of an arctic research laboratory, Dr. Carrington (Robert Cornthwaite), and the representives of the Air Force, led by Captain Hendry (Kenneth Tobey), who has been sent up to the research centre in order to investigate a crash landing in the area. Dr. Carrington is soon exposed as a man who "doesn't think like us", an egghead, a dissenter, and thus, an outsider. His cold demeanor, Lenin style goatee and fur hat further alienate him, as in physical terms he becomes the obvious contender for the about-to-be-exposed-as-a-Communist role. Although this doesn't actually happen, no-one is truly surprised when he turns in his icy superiority for the much more entertaining part of manic alien-sympathiser, becoming the first in a long line of alien-admiring scientists about to come to a sticky end.[1] Carrington's folly is that he believes too strongly in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, and will allow nothing to stop this pursuit, even at the risk of the lives of himself and his colleagues.

The film's mistrust of the intellectualism of the scientists is blatant -

[1] This genesis reaches an apex in the figure of Ash, the android scientist, of the film Alien (1979), who is so capitivated by the alien, who is "without remorse, conscience, morality....a survivor", that he betrays the crew of the spaceship Nostromo in order to preserve the alien for further scientific analysis. His betrayal is punished by his destruction, but unlike Carrington he does not repent when he has seen the monstrosities of the alien. The representative of the company in Aliens (1986), Burke, plays a similar role to that of Ash, betraying the members of a rescue expedition in order to bring back an alive alien, but he is neither an android nor a scientist, and betrays his companions for finacial gain. However, in the remake of The Thing (1982), the scientist, Blair, so much less of an intellect than either Carrington or Ash, is scared silly by the very qualities of the alien that the previous scientists admired - its desire to survive at all costs. His end is as ignominious as his hysterical manner would suggest - after reeking havoc in the camp, he is confined to the tool shed and is taken over by the alien.

Hendry is offered scientific mumbo-jumbo instead of a rational explanation when he first arrives at the arctic base and enquires about the nature of the reported crash, and, later on in the film, the splitting of the atom is held up as a great scientific acheivement, only to be shot down by the sarcastic reply from one of Hendry's men - "That sure made everybody happy". This mistrust further pushes viewer identification away from Carrington, so that although we accept the scientific diagnosis of the Thing as a "Super-carrot", coming as it does from the scientists as a whole, Carrington's lone assertion that the Thing is far superior to us does not carry as much weight as it might. He maintains that the Thing's superior intelligence, displayed in its ability to build a spaceship, combined with the emotionlessness and asexual nature of a being that has evolved from a vegetable origin, make the Thing a far superior being. From Carrington's description of the Thing, one would expect a creature straight from the superego, like the Krel in Forbidden Planet (1956) or Klaatu in The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951), something calm, collected and smoothly dome-headed. The actuality is somewhat different, but more about that later - Carrington's celebration of the Thing for its lack of emotion, sexual desire and morality, is essentially a celebration of a lack of humanity that he himself appears to embody to a worrying degree, and since a lack of humanity in whatever form is invariably the enemy in science fiction film, it soon becomes obvious that he is walking a dangerous path. The vast intelligence suggested by the presence of the spaceship is never fully emphasised by the film - all we ever see of it is a tail fin, so its significance is lessened by its visual understatement - while the Thing itself displays nothing more dazzling than an animalistic cunning. What ultimately negates Carrington's theory about the alien is the alien's behaviour and appearance, and its final rejection of the scientist who just wants to be its friend.

1. Captain Hendry (right) and his men prevent the Thing from entering the main building.

2. At the end of the film Scotty, the journalist, makes a report on the battle between mankind and the alien, and warns the world to "Watch the skies, keep watching the skies!".

In purely physical terms, the Thing in Hawks' film is simply a large man wearing a tight suit and big boots, sporting a pair of thorny hands and who has, according to the script, rather piercing eyes. He is surrounded by a radioactive glow (never a good sign) and has a tendency to loom. His actions are jerky and somewhat Frankensteinian; lots of lashing out of arms and aimless roaring. Clearly the Thing is a representation of a monster from the id, nature run rampant, and not the embodiment of the superego that Carrington supposes. It is plain to us that the Thing has been a victim of hype (its physical lack of 'otherness' can be put down to a lack of confidence on the part of the film-makers in the ability of the viewers to understand anything more complex), and that although he is a menace in his own right, there is no real concern that the Air Force boys won't be able to handle the Thing once they devise a plan of action. Clearly Carrington is wrong in wanting to study such a dangerous alien. He is not, however, completely beyond redemption; his inhuman attitude is rationalised by his lack of sleep and his frustration over the puzzle of the alien. He is described as a "kid with a new toy", and like a child, is permitted to make mistakes. Once he has learned his lesson (by being swatted by the Thing), he is brought back into the group as if nothing ever happened - Scotty, the newspaper man, includes Carrington in his report of their epic struggle, to the approval of the other members of the group - "Good for you, Scotty".

The Thing represents an attack of nature on culture, it is basically similar to the monsters in the "Creature" films of the Fifties: Tarantula (1955), Them! (1954),or The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954), where something from the wilderness attacks civilisation, and is eventually conquered. Once the scene has been set - alien spaceship crashing into the ice, the frozen alien defrosting and escaping - the film follows along the lines of a classic horror film. Except for its cosiness, the Artic base could be a transylvanian castle, what with that blood-sucking

monster prowling around outside. The film is loosely based on John W. Campbell jr.'s short story "Who goes there?", but disregards the essential element of the story - the alien that assumes the appearance and personality of the being that it destroys - the central question in the story being "who has been taken over?" rather than "how are we going to persuade the scientist that he is wrong about not killing the Thing?". The film seems to indicate that the Thing may represent more than just the wilderness gone out of control, there are hints that the Thing might be connected with the Russians: Carrington's association with it for one (Lenin style beard and fur hat), and Hendry's remark early on in the film that the Russians are "all over the Pole like flies", but the actions of the Thing indicate that it is merely a token monster. However, a communist parallel does creep in with Carrington's split with the rest of the community. Although he is not actually revealed to be a communist, a person with subversive views in a community which, aside from its setting, is representative of 'Everytown', USA, in an era of rabid anti-communism, can only be read as a metaphor for the communist living next door. The positive message being that a person such as Carrington can be re-integrated into the community once he has realised the error of his ways. The community in this film is confident in its own ability to succeed, both in the battle against the alien and in the battle with Carrington's subversive views.

The only real obstacle in the film is the bureaucracy of the Air Force, which prevents Hendry from taking action until he realises that he must make his own decisions. This is one of the central themes of the film, with Hendry holding back from making any important moves until he has contacted his superiors, but finally, through necessity, deciding he must follow his own judgement. In spite of this, the air of nonchalance that pervades the film generally dispels any tension that may arise, the sense of community being strong enough to conquer any real concern about

either Carrington or the Thing. The arctic base, instead of being claustrophobic, is safe, a "fortress of human warmth", even with the Thing running around and through it. Manufactured means safety, while emptiness is bad - it's where the Thing came from. Inside the base there is no panic and little tension, the wise-cracking dialogue keeps going even in the most dire of situations when the heating is turned off by the Thing from the outside. Even the most chaotic of the few action sequences is understated and matter of fact; when the Thing charges through a fiery assualt from Hendry and his men (they have decided to 'cook' the wayward vegetable, with buckets of petrol and a Very gun) and escapes through the window. Nobody panics in this scene, and in the aftermath no-one is in shock or noticably upset by the sight of an eight-foot burning monster who has just run through their common room. The air of confidence that pervades the film dispels any chance of creating and maintaining tension for anything more than a few seconds: this is just another adventure for those all-american boys of the miltary, reflecting Hawk's confidence in the conformist ideology of the time, stressing group work and group thought over individual acts of heroism.

The Thing takes a politically centrist standpoint - the validation and celebration of the status quo - and the two most revealing elements of the film's political attitude appear at the end of the film, after the Thing has been destroyed. The first is the re-acceptance of Carrington by the group. His stance and behaviour with regard to the Thing has been forgiven, and will be covered up for the outside world: "the center closes ranks before the world" (Peter Biskind, Pods and Blobs, p.130). The community is not prepared to admit that there is, or was, dissension amoungst its members and presents a united front to the world media, thus affirming the centre's stability and validity - it attacked, they defeated it. The second is the culmination of the relationship between Hendry and Carrington's secretary, Nikki (Magaret Sheridan), which, beginning with a rather

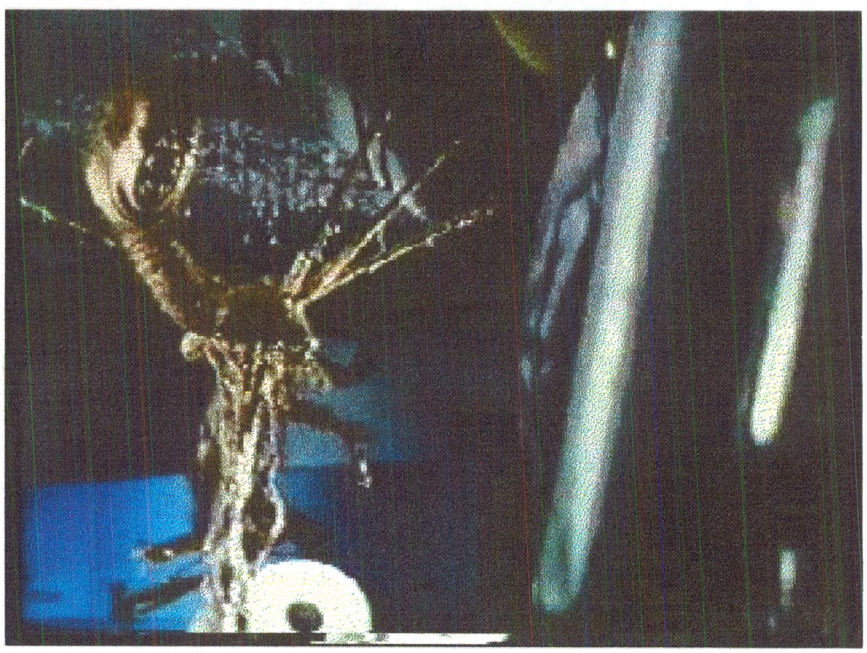
unusual courtship (at its most bizarre in the scene where Hendry pretends to have his hands tied behind his back in order to have a drink with Nikki without the danger of him groping her), ends in the jokey but inherently serious dicussion of Nikki giving up her job and marrying Hendry - "How much do you think he makes a year?" she asks one of his subordinates, "Not enough for two," Hendry interrupts, but he's not really serious and marriage is definitely on the cards. The film makes sure that the traditional marital arrangement of non-working, child-producing wife and money-earning husband is super-imposed over a relationship of a fairly radical (that is, equal) nature. The film sticks close to the well known: traditional horror plot, traditional social values and opinions, and along with the amusing dialogue, is a thoroughly amiable film which did very well, both critcally and commercially, when it was first released. Today the credibility of the alien is somewhat diminished, but back in 1951 a blood-lusting, eight-foot high, vegetable monster was considered to be quite a novel idea, unless one had read John W. Campbell's story (which wasn't well-known), in which case the film might have been a bit of a disappointment.

John Carpenter's version of The Thing (1982) was a re-interpretation of Campbell's original story, rather than a remake of Howard Hawks' 1951 film, shifting the focus of the film to the battle between the humans and the creature, and attempting to capture the nature of Campbell's shape-changing alien. However, although well-intentioned, the second film also fails to realise the focus of the original story which is neither the internal struggle of the community as in the first film, nor the struggle between the humans and the Thing as in the second film, but who amoung the humans had been taken over. In many ways the second film is the opposite of the first, favouring action over dialogue, and individualism over group action. Its setting is an American scientific research base in Antarctica (as in the original story) and its pre-credit sequence depicts a spaceship crashing on Earth some hundred thousand

years ago (twenty million in Campbell's story, though in 1951 the alien was freshly frozen). A group of Norwegian scientists have liberated the alien from the ice and have accidently blown up its spaceship in an attempt to remove it from the ice, and it has all but destroyed the Norwegian camp when we reach the American base at the beginning of the film. The last two remaining Norwegians, who are pursuing the Thing (in the form of a dog) in a helicopter, die as soon as they reach the American base; one through accidently dropping a grenade, and the other at the hands of Captain Garry , the leader of the group, who shoots the second man because he appears to be shooting at the Americans.

This is how the Thing arrives in the American camp, and just as our suspicions are aroused by the arrival of the dog, we also begin to realise that something is amiss within the American group. This is no Hawksian community of joviality and solidarity: there is obvious discord, or, at the very least, apathy within the men in the base. There is an obvious parody of the community of the first film in the form of this dysfunctional group in the second, but if Carpenter's film had meant to extend this parody by stressing the individual over the group, it fails, because the characters in the second film are as underdeveloped as those in the first, and are much less appealing. Given that there is no community spirit even from the very beginning, and that the characters are bland and indistinguishable, it is hard to work up an interest in their fate, or be in any way shocked when MacCready (Kurt Rusell) concludes on his dictaphone report that "nobody trusts anyone any more". This lack of trust is not shocking since it didn't exist in the first place, a basic failure in Carpenter's film, since the film should have been concentrating on the effect of the invasion on the community, that is, its complete breakdown. Even the hero of the film, MacCready, is only identifiable as the hero (within the context of the film) by the fact that no-one else manages to consistently put forward anything of useful or logical content (even though his input isn't exactly inspired, it

3. A man's chest opens up into a gaping hole with jagged teeth and bites off the hands of the doctor who is trying to resusitate him.



4. One of the many spectacular eruptions of the alien in The Thing (1982).

is at least sensible).

One of the interesting differences from the first film is the way the leading scientist of the film, Blair (A. Wilford Brimley), is portrayed in comparison to Carrington. Carrington is presented as seriously intelligient, a Nobel Prize winner, and although his credibility is diminished by his misjudgement of the Thing, he is always treated like a professional. Blair, on the other hand, is presented as a bit of a clod; he formulates his views on the Thing from the conclusions of his computer, and instead of thus dealing with the situation in a cool, professional manner, he completely loses control of himself and runs around the base smashing up equipment. When he is finally captured and confined to the tool shed. Blair's character becomes comic, while Carrington, even at his most manic, is treated with respect.

The alien in John Carpenter's film becomes an opportunity for some truly incredible special effects. Beginning with the premise of the alien in the original story, an alien who will not reveal himself unless absolutely nessesary, the Thing in Carpenter's film is also a shape-changing being that has the ability to absorb the physical and mental characteristics of the beings it attacks, making it almost impossible to detect who has been taken over by the Thing. This disease-like alien waits its opportunity to take over the whole camp, and then, presumably, the world. This creature is a million miles away from the humanoid monster of the first film and would seem to resemble Campbell's alien in theory, but visually its appearances in the film are nonsensical and seem to exist purely as spectacle for spectacle's sake. The effects are bizarre, and the reason for their presence at any particular time is not clear. The one joke of the film betrays a self-conscious knowledge of the excessive nature of the effects, when one of the characters, Palmer, exclaims "You've gotta be fucking kidding" at the sight of a man's upturned head scuttling along on spider-legs after escaping from the burning torso which had just bitten off a

man's hands before errupting into a special effects extravaganza of lashing tentacles and a distorted head and neck. Aside from the visual pleasure created by these effects, they certainly present the Thing in terms of physical otherness to an extent that the first film failed to do, but they do fail to define clearly the nature or meaning of the Thing.

The process of infection by the Thing, the subsequent inability of the community to distinguish the infected from the uninfected and the blood test used to determine who is infected, echo a similarly fatal disease that was sweeping Hollywood at the time that the film was made, yet was not diagnosed until the year after the Thing was released. However, it is hard to say whether or not the makers of this film took into account the spread of the unknown disease that was AIDS when making The Thing, or if they were just representing a basic human fear of infection in the terms of the spate of 'Body Horror' films that had recently become popular in the late seventies and early eighties, films like Cronenbergs' Rabid (1976), and The Brood (1979), and of course the unnatural conception and birth of the alien in Ridley Scott's Alien (1979). However, unlike the classic horror film (for again, the remake of The Thing is as much a horror film as a science fiction film), all the violence in Carpenter's film is directed against the male body, rather than against female sexuality, as is common in most horror films, for example, in Carpenter's own film Halloween (1978). There is an apparant absence of any female characters in The Thing, but if one regards the Thing as female there is an immediate extension of the formal simplicity of the film, somewhat like the role of the 'female' ship's computer, Mother, toward her 'masculine' crew in the film Alien, that is, an everpresent, but often invisible, opposite, who eventually attempts to destroy her charges. Did Carpenter see his shapeshifting creature as a woman? Interpretation of the Thing as female would be an excessive representation of a male fear of female sexuality and female genetalia, but then the film itself is

excessive, and one particular scene from the film contains a body opening up into a toothed vagina-like opening which bites off the hands of the doctor who is trying to revive the patient. Whatever the Thing represents in Carpenter's film, it certainly poses a much larger threat to the security of the world than the Thing of thirty years before.

The Thing (1982) captures the sense of isolation and claustrophobia that is missing in the first film, it manages to create a certain amount of tension in spite of the thin characterisation, and the action sequences are spectacular in the truest sense of the word. Its dystopian community contrasts a diminished social confidence with the nonchalence of the original film, and its uncertain outcome is far more satisfying than its conclusive predecessor. Nevertheless, it is a far inferior film than the Hawks/Nyby version, with poor dialogue, underdeveloped characters, and confusion concerning the nature and meaning of the Thing. Its attempt to revert to the original story was well-intentioned, but in fact the film Alien (1979) would have been a much more successful remake of The Thing from Another World. The "super-carrot" would be replaced by a plausibly terrifying alien posing a real threat to humanity and the rest of the Universe. (The clicking Geiger-counter of the first film is actually echoed in Aliens (1986), the sequel to Alien, with the beeping body heat detector that indicates the approaching presence of the aliens). The community of the spaceship 'Nostromo' would be suitably dysfunctional and unfriendly in order to parody the Hawkisian community of the arctic base. The cold inhuman Carrington surpassed by an actual android, and the cosy world of patriarchy inverted with the alien raping and impregnating the Hendry character.

Chapter Two.

Don Siegel's film Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) begins with the hero of the film, Miles Benell (Kevin McCarthy), incarcerated in a hospital protesting his sanity. Given a last chance to prove that he is not insane, a psychiatrist listens to his story which is told in the form of a flashback. Miles has to persuade the psychiatrist that he is telling the truth so that the psychiatrist can organize some resistance against the strange invasion Miles claims he has encountered. Until the psychiatrist is convinced of the truth of Miles' story in the last minutes of the film, Invasion of the Body Snatchers is the story of a man losing his mind. It is also the story of a small community losing the values of a small tight knit society and taking on those of an urbanized, massified, alienated state under totalitarian rule. It is a film that probes the fears of the era in which it was made, and offers a right-wing critique of that era. At the centre of that critique are the 'pod-people' of the film, the people who have been taken over.

Miles, a General Practitioner, had returned home from a medical convention to find that the people of Santa Mira were not as he had left them. A colleague of his, a pyschiatrist, maintains that an epidemic of mass hysteria was sweeping the town; people were claiming that their relatives/friends/spouses were not really themselves, but imposters. Even more mysteriously, this epidemic appeared to be dying down as quickly as it had started; on his first day back in town Miles encounters only two cases of the epidemic, while six patients suddenly cancel appointments. Although slightly perturbed by all this, Miles soon turns his attention to other matters, namely Becky Driscoll (Dana Wynter), who, recently divorced, is back in town. However, their dinner date is interrupted before it can begin by an urgent summons to Jack and Teddy's house (friends of Miles and Becky). Once there they are shown an almost completely

formed body lying on Jack's pool table. The body bears a stong resemblence to Jack, and seeing this Miles begins to realise what is happening to the inhabitants of Santa Mira: People are being duplicated, and their emotionless copies are taking their places. Growing from huge seed pods, these aliens replace humans while they sleep, copying them in every detail, adopting their physical appearance, personality and memory, but living without a trace of emotion or feeling. Their only instinct is to survive, and they exist as part of a collective, conditioned by the example of their peers. The pod-people are conformists, who become tranquil and obedient as soon as they are "reborn into an untroubled world, where everyone's the same", as Jack tells Miles after he has been taken over. The loss of emotion and desire is portrayed as the loss of humanity in this film[2]. Although there will be no more hate or fear if Miles and Becky succumb to sleep and become Pod-people, there will be no more love or passion either, and that, more than the loss of individuality, is what makes Podism such a terrible fate.

At the time of its release, the film's representation of an infiltration of American society by a state of mind where there is no free will or moral choice was interpreted as a metaphor for Communism. In the earlier half of the decade, what America feared most, in spite of recently emerging victorious from a world war, was internal subversion at home. By the time Siegel's film was released in 1956, much of the bombastic public anti-communism had subsided; McCarthy and the HUAC had gone, Stalin was dead, and the Korean War ended, but the fear remained. The image of the robotic, unfeeling communist was still imprinted in the mind of the average American and thus Invasion of the Body Snatchers was seen as anti-communist. What Siegel was actually trying to criticise was the state of mind that Podism represents more generally, and primarily in the

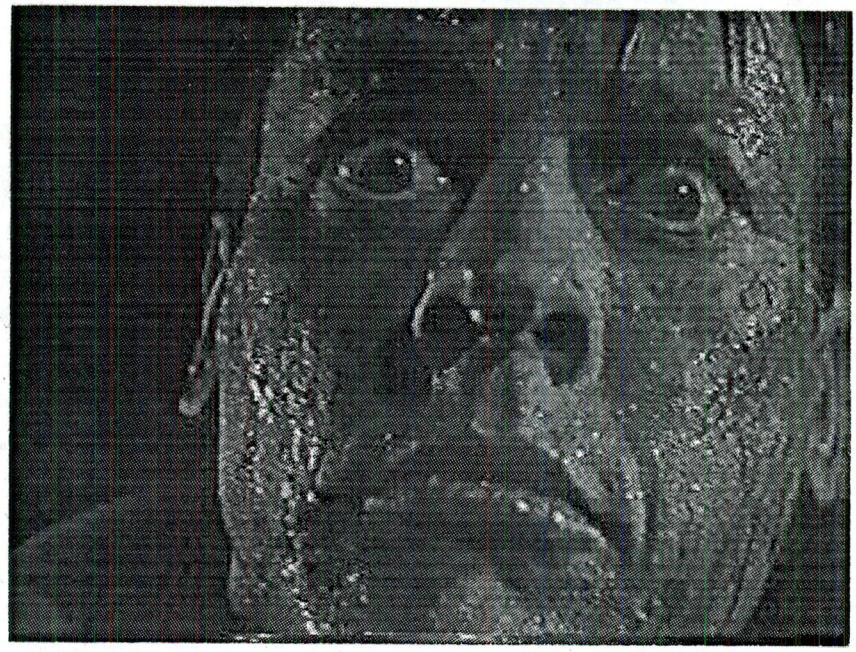
[2] This is the defining quality of humanity in traditional Science Fiction: Humans never meet more emotional creatures than themselves.

Americaof that time, the state of mind that conforms with the crowd, that feels a compulsion to always be in harmony with others at the expense of individuality. In response to the threat of atomic annihilation that suddenly arose after the War, and as a strategy to deal with living within a modern, urban, technologically bureaucratized society, American society became conformist. In conformity lay security. General social needs were more important than individual desires. In the films of the time group action was the ideal, while individual acts of heroism were suspect (The Thing (1951) is a good example of this). Once one was within the group one could enjoy a superficial complacency, but outside the group one was subject to the persecution of people like McCarthy and his followers. This is what Siegel was really attacking in Invasion of the Body Snatchers - conformity and the banality that accompanies it.

The horror of the film is that the small cosy town of Santa Mira has been transformed practically overnight into a cold impersonal place - like a big city. One of the results of the impending growth of society, the dehumanisation and depersonalisation that occurs subsequent to massification, has been concentrated into a period of days rather than years. An example of this is the motor-bike policeman, who went to college with Miles and Becky, who drives off with only a curt reply to Miles's enquiry about his health. Later in the film, when it is clear that the whole town, excepting Miles and Becky, has been taken over, there is a scene where the distribution of the pods by the townspeople is organised by the 'authorities' of the town, the police, who using loudspeakers, order the robot-like pod-people around like a scene from Orwell's 1984. Shortly after that, the entire town is mobilised by sirens to go and capture the escaping Miles and Becky - the small town has become a totalitarian state.

As a hero, Miles Benell is restrained and sensible. As the local doctor, he is a professional but not a specialist. As he says of himself -

5. Miles (right) examines the strange body that is lying on Jack's pool table.



6. Realisation: "The girl that I loved had turned into an inhuman enemy bent on my destruction".

"I'm just a *General* Practitioner", and while he could offer Becky some "scientific mumbo-jumbo" as an excuse for her cousin Wilma's strange behaviour, he admits its not in his field. He is a solid, law-abiding citizen but he thinks with his heart and declines to conform with his peers, thus becoming an outsider. In another film of the period he would be doing the wrong thing by going it alone, but in this film he's doing the right thing, and at the end of the film his struggle is validated when the psychiatrist becomes convinced that he is telling the truth. Siegel originally wanted to end the film with Miles screaming at the cars on the highway, but the studio insisted on a happier ending, so Siegel placed the film within a framing device and at the end Miles is saved from insanity whilst the world, presumably, is saved from the pods. As a right-wing film, Invasion of the Body Snatchers is in the business of validating individual vision over that of the community, on the basis that the power of the individual to do good may be greater than that of the collective. This right-wing opinion exists in opposition to the persistent American myth of Natural Harmony - the notion that anything an individual desires within American society is attainable within the system, and that an individual acting out of self-interest will invariably further the interests of society as a whole. This notion would have it that an individual who appeared to be acting against the wishes of society must be doing so due to personal shortcomings because a society of abundance offered opportunities to everyone. This myth maintains that people are basically good and that those who become alienated by society are personally incapable. Incidently, Don Siegel later went on to make Dirty Harry (1972), an extremely right-wing vigilante film, that was certaintly in the business of validating individual vision over that of the community. Right-wing films also favoured the heart over the head; emotion and instinct were virtues, while detachment and logic were frequently portrayed as inhuman traits. Unlike a film such as King Kong (1933), where the threat to humanity was an eruption of

nature, the threat in Invasion of the Body Snatchers is that man could be turned into an emotionless robot.

The alienation of Miles is described through the representation of the ordinary as unusual, the strange lighting that illuminates objects while it casts shadows over people's faces, the low camera angles and crooked shots. People are framed by doorways and windows, and their bodies are bisected by diagonals and horizontals. In this the film takes on some of the stylistic devices of film noir, and, in fact, also has a thematic affinity with film noir through the notion of the community being transformed into the impersonal large city of the film noir genre. The probability that there is a conspiracy going on in Santa Mira is encouraged by the all the hints that the normal is deceptive. Noises, which in a different context would seem perfectly normal, take on an eerie significance in this film, encouraging paranoia. Paranoia thus becomes the logical alternative to pod-like conformism, questioning everything instead of questioning nothing.

The banality of the two main characters, Miles and Becky, does not inspire viewer identification, but the advantage of this is that, when watching the film one tends to worry more about the fate of the rest of the world outside of Santa Mira than the fate of the principal characters, and thus the film seems to be about to affect us, the viewers, personally. This is one of the main reasons that the film is so chilling, coupled with the fact that the film relies upon psychological rather than physical horror. The special effects are deliberately kept to a minimum, and don't present us with anything that is visually incomprehensible, so the suspension of disbelief rests with the ability of the actors to act as if they are acting as humans.

One of the differences between Siegel's film and Philip Kaufman's remake of Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978) lies in the treatment of the two main characters. In Siegel's film, Miles and Becky, old college

sweethearts, have been both recently divorced, but inspite of this have no qualms about fighting the pod-people to maintain a love that they know may not last. Their affair is passionate but their partnership in their battle against the pods is unequal, Miles spends much of the second half of the film dragging an insipid Becky behind him. In Kaufman's film the love between Matthew Bennell (Donald Sutherland) and Elizabeth Driscoll (Brooke Adams) is understated, the film concentrating more on their combined efforts to discover what is wrong with the people around them. Elizabeth is a much more spirited heroine than Becky, it is she who works out that people are being duplicated and how the process takes place and she who advises that Matthew and herself take amphetamines to stay awake. They work in partnership, while Miles and Becky fit into the more stereotyped roles of the hero and the girl. Obviously this is a reflection of the change in social roles and attitudes between 1956 and 1978, but it promotes identification with the main characters in the later film - they are more interesting characters than Miles and Becky. The plight of Matthew and Elizabeth also lacks the heroic dimension of that of Miles and Becky: Miles and Becky seem likely to make a difference in the small town of Santa Mira, they may well save the world (and, presumably, Miles does this by persuading the pyschiatrist of the invasion), whereas Matthew and Elizabeth are much more insignificant figures against the populace of San Francisco and at best seem likely to only save themselves. The viewer thus becomes more concerned about their fate than one would about the fate of Miles and Becky, and less concerned about the fate of the rest of the world as one would when watching the original.

The shift of locale in Kaufman's remake is significant - the small community of Santa Mira is transposed to the large city of San Francisco. The alienated community that Santa Mira becomes in the original film is already established in San Francisco. In this film people are alienated to begin with, from the beginning of the film people are constantly stopping

7. Jack's double opens its eyes as soon as Jack (Jeff Goldblum) falls asleep.

8. The final frame of the film: Matthew shrieks at Nancy, revealing that he too has been taken over.

to stare at Elizabeth, even though the full infiltration of the pod-people has yet to come. This softens the shock of finding out later on in the film that the entire city has been infiltrated, but establishes the nature of the horror of the film - in the first film the horror is that the trust and close-knit nature of the small community is shattered by the infiltration of the pods, while in the second film the horror is that the pods can fit in so easily into the big city. The invasion is represented almost as an urban disease in Kaufman's film, people are willing to try anything in the San Francisco of 1978 - the most liberal city in the United States and the centre of hysteria and faddism. People are represented as so easily dissatisfied with their lot that they will try anything in their search for personal fulfilment. Unlike the first film there is little argument in favour of pod-ism (although the loss of love and emotion isn't as heavily stated as in Siegel's version) but unfortunately people seem to accept it with the minimum of persuasion. More prominent than in Siegel's film is the fear that pod-ism could well be the next stage in human evolution: the slightly suspect character of Dr. David Kibner (Leonard Nimoy - who, due to his role as Dr. Spok, an alien, in *Star Trek*, has been typecast as an alien in the minds of many people) tells us that "people are changing", and the root cause of the growing dissatisfaction that he sees around him is that "people are stepping in and out of relationships too fast". The implication being that podification will ensure stability in one's life. Kaufman maintains the association between psychology and brain washing that exists in the original film, the distrust of the glib solutions of the psychologist coupled with the fact that in both films the psychologists are among the first to succumb to the pods.

Although Kaufman's film lacks the political subtext of Siegel's film, having little relevance to Cold War issues or Communist witchhunting, it is concerned with what Kaufman saw as a disorientation after the political awakenings of the sixties. Similar to Siegel's concern about the conformism of the American people of the fifties, Kaufman was concerned

about the opposite extreme that he saw in San Francisco - the culture of self-involvement and narcissism.

The remake of Invasion of the Body Snatchers is a more commercial venture than the low-budget original. Its special effects, faster cuts and colour photography give it a different style from its quasi-film noir predecessor. Essentially though, it is very much a remake of the first film, rather than a re-interpretation of it. The remake remains close to Siegel's plot and even features cameos from both Kevin McCarthy and Don Siegel, although the move to San Francisco changes some of the themes of the film: for example, the isolation theme of the first film could hardly be carried into the context of a major city. One of the most haunting scenes from the second film is taken straight from the original and is even more effective in its updated version: hiding near the docks with Elizabeth, Matthew hears the sound of Amazing Grace being played on bagpipes and runs off to discover the source of the music. He discovers it is only a radio playing on the deck of a huge tanker, and that the tanker is being used to transport pods to other parts of the world. Returning to Elizabeth he finds that she has sucumbed to sleep, and her old body crumbles in his arms. Her naked copy pops up out of the undergrowth nearby, and pursues him through the pod nursery. (The only thing that the original scene has over this one is this classic line - "A moment's sleep and the girl I loved had turned into an inhuman enemy bent on my destruction").

The ending of Kaufman's film is much closer to the ending that Siegel had wanted for his film. Siegel had wanted the film to end with Miles on the highway screaming "You're next" directly at the camera and at the audience. The studio stepped in and insisted on a less pesimistic ending, hence the framing device (the studio also insisted on the B-movie title, 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers', over Siegel's preferred 'Sleep No More'). Kaufman's ending is a trick; the fate of Matthew is unknown (has he been taken over, or is he just pretending?) until the very last scene

when he is confronted by Nancy (Veronica Cartwright) who has managed to evade the pod-people up until now. He turns to her, eyes wide and emotionless, and screams the rasping scream that the pod-people scream at humans, glaring at her and down the camera at the audience.

The remake of Invasion of the Body Snatchers is an enjoyable film, the characters are more entertaining than those in the original, and it is much more of a visual experience. However it does not match up to the original in terms of psychological horror and the feeling of paranoia that the first film evokes. Don Siegel's film remains a classic that has influenced many other films and even inspired a third remake (by Abel Ferrara in 1993), but has not been surpassed.

Chapter Three.

Robert Wise's The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) presents Earth as a dystopian society; needlessly aggressive and uncivilised. A visitor from Outer Space, Klaatu (Michael Rennie), arrives in Washington to deliver a warning to the people of Earth: that the aggressive nature of Earthlings coupled with recent experiments with atomic weapons make Earth a considerable worry to the other peaceful planets of the Universe. He offers Earth an ultimatum - "Join us and live in peace, or pursue your present course and face obliteration!". However, it takes time and effort for Klaatu to deliver this message, the "unreasoning nature" of Earthlings obstructs him at every turn, and the main bulk of the film concerns his struggle to deliver his message.

Klaatu, as an alien, falls into the category of those who look like us. He is tall, slim and is "surely the best behaved, most polite alien who ever hopped across hyperspace" (Peter Biskind, 1983, p.151). Klaatu comes straight from the superego, uninfluenced by the materialism of Earth and its "petty squables". He is cool-headed, polite, serious, intelligient, pompous, moral and self-righteous. There are strong associations between Klaatu and Christ in this film. Klaatu is a messiah figure, he appears from the sky to save the world, and is shot down twice and resurrected twice. He goes amoung the people, in order to find out more about them, and calls himself 'Carpenter'. He is betrayed by Tom Stevens (Hugh Marlowe), the boyfriend of Helen Benson (Patricia Neal), for finacial gain. He even refers to an "Almighty Spirit". But for all his virtues, Klaatu remains po-faced, and even though he is in the right, he is a little too emotionally detached to be a really charismatic alien.

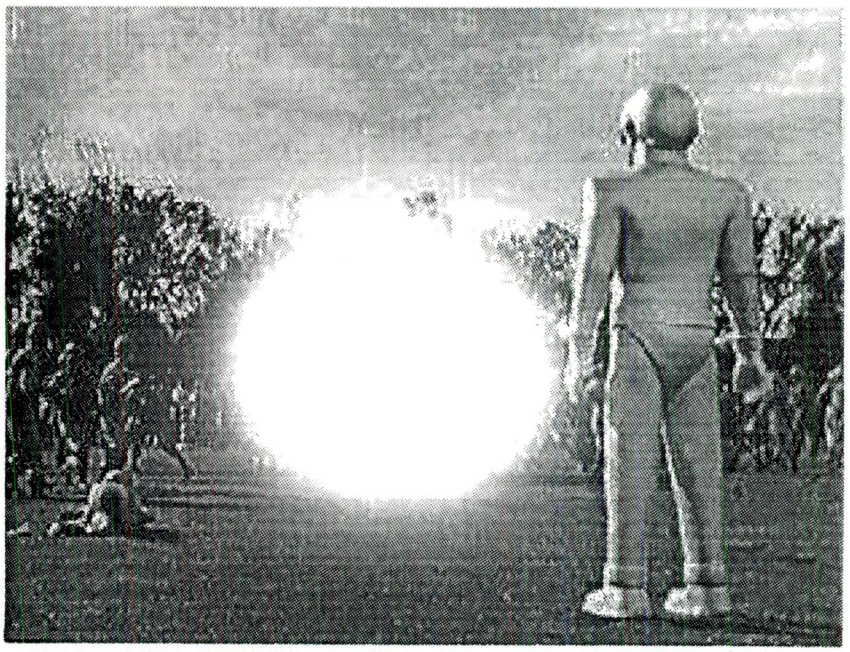
Helen Benson and her son Bobby befriend Klaatu when he comes to stay in the boarding house that they live in. They are a symbol of hope for the universally unpopular Earth, although the people around them are

bigoted and stupid. Helen defends Klaatu before she has even met him, saying that maybe he did come here in peace, like he said he did, and anyway, wasn't it he who was shot as soon as he stepped off his spaceship and not any of us? Bobby helps Klaatu to find Professor Barnhardt (Sam Jaffe) - "the smartest man on Earth" - and it is Professor Barnhardt who organises a meeting of all the brilliant scientific minds of the world. Of course, in order to convince these scientists that he means business, Klaatu must demonstrate his powers, so at noon the day after meeting Professor Barnhardt, he makes every thing in the world come to a halt, hence the title of the film.

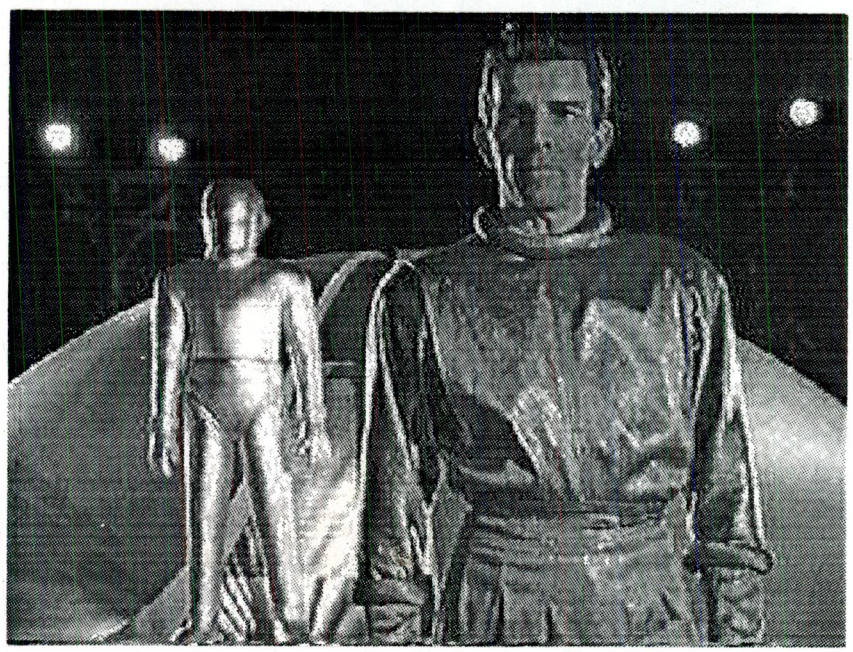
The Day the Earth Stood Still takes a politically left-wing standpoint, portraying the society of Earth, or more accurately, that of America, since that is what we are shown, as dystopian. The alien in question comes not from a 'dying planet', but from a more highly evolved society than that of fifties America, a peaceful society that has harnessed atomic energy for peaceful means rather than for making war. In 1951, only the Russians were talking about using atomic energy for peaceful means, and suggesting that America, along with the rest of the world, was woefully underdeveloped and uncivilised, was a view well to the left of centrist ideology. The film's respect for intellect makes heroes out of the villains of centrist films like The Thing (1951), the scientist and the alien. Klaatu and Professor Barnhardt, who looks very like Albert Einstein, are a long way from the suspicious Carrington and the menacing Thing. At one point in the film, Bobby takes Klaatu to see his father's grave and Klaatu sees the Lincoln Memorial and reads the message of peace beneath it, he wishes out loud that he could have met him, Lincoln obviously being the kind of man that he could communicate with. In left-wing films such as this one the aliens become more human than the humans themselves, relegating most of the humans (excepting, perhaps, those who are in some way alienated from society) to the status of nature running rampant,

unchecked by morality. Interestingly, Helen's boyfriend, Tom, was played by Hugh Marlowe, who starred in Earth vs. The Flying Saucers (1956). In The Day the Earth Stood Still he betrays the whereabouts of Klaatu to the authorities, and because of this he is the most despicable person in the film. However, five years later when he reveals the existance of the aliens to the authorities in Earth vs. The Flying Saucers he is firmly established as the hero of the film, the difference being that the later film was made from a centrist viewpoint, in which the aliens are most definitely the baddies, while the authorities know exactly what has to be done for the good of mankind. Other left-wing S/F films of the fifties include It Came from Outer Space (1953), where friendly aliens have stopped on Earth for repairs, only to be attacked by the narrow-minded citizens of the Mid-West, and When Worlds Collide (1951) in which a group of scientists build a spaceship that will save a small group of people, before the Earth's destruction from a runaway comet, in order that they may build a new world on another planet.

The Day the Earth Stood Still is notable for its expensive special effects; the spaceship that Klaatu arrives in (costing $100,000 to build) and the destructive powers of Gort, his robot policeman/travelling companion who has the power to destroy all the Earth with the laser beam that issues from his visor. On Klaatu's 'death', Gort breaks his bonds and prepares to destroy the world that obviously would not heed his master's warning. Helen manages to defuse Gort with the magic words "Klaatu Barada Nikto" (which Klaatu had entrusted her with earlier), but only after Gort has menaced her into a corner. After she has instructed Gort, he carries her off into the spaceship, and leaves her there while he goes to fetch Klaatu. There is an obvious parallel between this behaviour and that of King Kong towards Fay Wray in King Kong (1933). This is even indicated in the publicity material for The Day the Earth Stood Still, with a huge Gort, towering over everything else, pictured



9. Gort destroys a tank with a laser blast.



10. Klaatu delivers his ultimatum to an assembly of scientists from around the world.

holding Patricia Neal in his arms while fighting off some unseen foe with his laser beam. Obviously King Kong symbolises the danger of unchecked nature, while Gort is a symbol of advanced technology, but this film shows that technology can be just as dangerous as nature if allowed out of control. Of course, the film also says that where Gort comes from he is a loyal and trusted servant because there is no needless aggression there, unlike on Earth, and if we learned to become a peaceful planet, we too would have nothing to fear from technology.

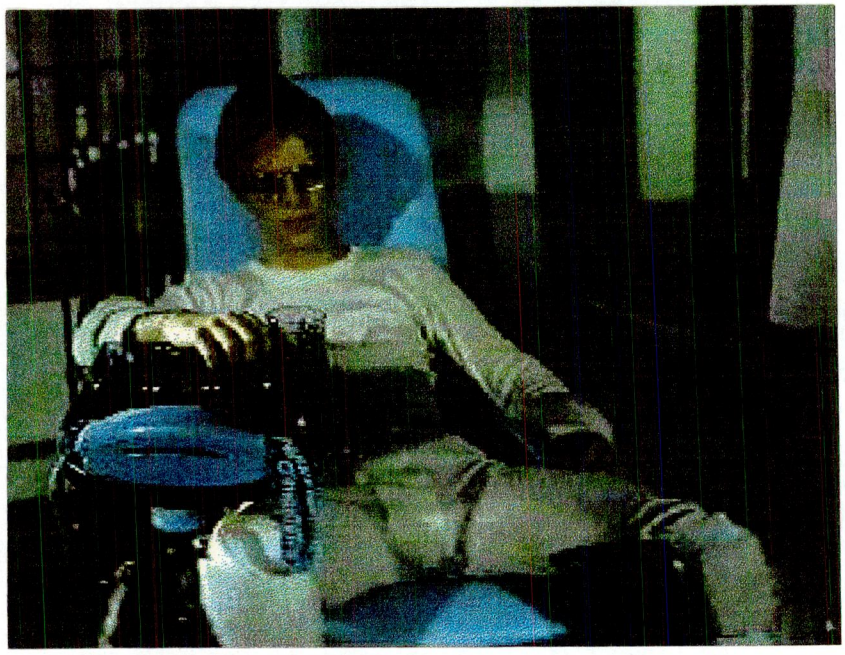
The Day the Earth Stood Still is a very well produced film, one of the few high-budget sci-fi films of the fifties, and did well commercially. It is interesting that a film with such a controversial message would have such financial backing at a time when film-makers rarely went out on an ideological limb. Although it never had a direct remake, the basic premise of the film is the same as that of Nicolas Roeg's film The Man who Fell to Earth (1976). A British production, The Man who Fell to Earth starred David Bowie, Rip Torn and Candy Clark and was shot and based in America. Based on Walter Trevis's novel of the same name, its structure and central themes are very close to that of The Day the Earth Stood Still. An alien visitor (David Bowie) lands in a pond in New Mexico. Taking the name of Thomas Jerome Newton, he makes his way to New York and employs a patents lawyer to develop nine revolutionary patents. Befriending a small-town hotel attendant, Mary-Lou (Candy Clark), he becomes a wealthy, but reclusive tycoon living out in the New Mexico countryside. He begins a private space program with the aim of returning to his home planet which, along with his wife and children, is dying of a lack of water. A chemical engineering professor, Dr. Nathan Bryce (Rip Torn), becomes obsessed with Newton and his corporation, and eventually is employed on the space program. When he subsquently discovers that Newton is an alien and confronts him with this knowledge, Newton tells him of his plan. Before he can return home, however, he is

kidnapped by a rival organisation headed by a Mr. Peters (Bernie Casey), having been betrayed by Bryce, and is experimented on until his clairvoyant powers are destroyed. He is released after a time, and after many years is discovered by Bryce through a record that he recorded anonymously. He is an alcoholic but has not aged.

Newton is intellgient, sensitive, introspective and clairvoyant. In the terms of the society that surrounds him, he is marked out as different, but in fact is more honest and emotional than those around him. The qualities that, in this film, define him as an alien - sensitivity, emotion, shyness, gentleness, vunerability - are the very qualities that are normally used in science fiction as the defining qualities of humanity. He is more human than the humans in the film, and the audience identifies with him, similar to the way that the audience of The Day the Earth Stood Still identifies with Klaatu, but to a greater extent. As the man who fell to Earth, he shares the name of the man who discovered gravity. He is vunerable while Klaatu is not, a travel-sick traveller. Visually, David Bowie as Newton makes a very convincing alien. His bright orange hair, pointed teeth, different coloured eyes and pale, chiselled features, give him the look of an alien while still being acceptably humanoid. There is a certain irony in the fact that this is all just a suit that he wears over his smooth alien body - in practical terms there is no need for him to have different coloured eyes or orange hair. But while this is a clever take on an oft-mocked element in science fiction film of a man in a costume as an alien, it is also very much linked to the persona of David Bowie. His career as a rock star was as much based on his appearance and performance as on his music. His first alter-ego was that of Ziggy Stardust, intergalactic rock star, and after that came the equally elaborately attired Aladdin Sane, glam/glitter rocker. So while, in terms of feasibility, there is no need for Bowie to be made look extraordinary in The Man who Fell to Earth since he is effectively in disguise anyway, it would be hard to see Bowie in such

an acting role looking anything less than unusual. His persona as pop star becomes linked to the character of Newton when Newton makes a pop record at the end of the film. Bowie was responsible for opening up questions of sexual identity which had previously remained closed, emphasing escape and freedom, and promoting sexual ambivalence and experiment. He brings some of this liberalism to the character of Newton, who is willing to have sex with Mary-Lou even though he dreams of a different form of sex with his wife back on his home planet. At one point in the film he removes his human skin and reveals his true form to Mary-Lou in an honest, trusting, but ultimately unappreciated gesture. He is willing to indulge in 'Earth sex' whilst Mary-Lou is not sufficiently liberated to try the gooey alien version.

The world, or at least American society, is a dystopia, as in The Day the Earth Stood Still, though the nature of this dystopia has changed - commercial greed has taken over from needless aggression. Instead of going to the world's greatest scientist for aid, Newton employs a lawyer, Farnsworth (Buck Henry), this film's equivalent of Professor Barnhardt, whose greed for money ensures that Newton soon becomes immensely wealthy. (Like Klaatu, Newton demonstrates his superior intelligience to get the full attention of his aide). The world has become more cunning and more corrupt than it was in The Day the Earth Stood Still. Man, however, is still trying to reach the stars, in spite of Klaatu's warning, concentrating on this rather than on trying to improve the world, which Newton sees as a potential paradise. The focus of the world's aggression has moved from territories to the market place, and it is in a consumer society that Newton himself finds relative contentment. He becomes a television addict, similtaneously developing a taste for gin, and surrounds himself with televisions, absorbing the media culture of America. Newton ponders on the unreal nature of television, fascinated by the grip that it has on him - "Strange thing about television is that it doesn't tell you



11. Newton watches his multiple televisions.

12. Newton's wife and children back on his home planet.

everything. It shows you everything about life on Earth, but still the mysteries remain. Perhaps its in the nature of television.". Television invades his mind, a voluntary form of mind control, unlike the enforced mind control through television of George Lucas's THX 1168 (1969), but equally as powerful. Newton feels a force emanating from television, a force which he eventually tries to fight, shouting at his multiple screens - "Get out of my mind, all of you ... Stay where you belong!". One of the greatest fallacies that television presents Newton with is that of one of his own adverts for a camera: it shows Newton, with wife and children celebrating the kind of day out that Newton can never have, since his own wife and children are billions of miles away, dying of thirst.

The family unit in this film is connected to Newton. Aside from Mr.Peters, whose reward for keeping 'America modern' (as ordered by the organisation that he works for) is a beautiful wife and children, the only family in the film is Newton's family, even in the camera commercial. Through association with Newton, Mary-Lou and Bryce not only begin to believe in themselves but actually form a family unit themselves (although Newton never knows this). In The Day the Earth Stood Still Klaatu also forms a temporary family unit with Helen and Bobby. He becomes Helen's partner and Bobby's father, passing on his wisdom to Bobby as they walk around Washington. In these films it is the aliens who reaffirm the traditional human values of love and togetherness.

Unlike the uncomplicated storyline of The Day the Earth Stood Still with its straightforward symbolism, The Man who Fell to Earth contains a large amount of seemingly symbolic imagery which combines to offer the audience a composite picture of the meaning of the film that is actually less than the sum of its parts. The film prefers to emphasise specific elements or occurrences which are irrelevant to the plot, while declining to offer clear explanations for several swings in the plot. Typical of the film in this way is the scene between Bryce and Newton when Newton takes

Bryce to see the spaceship that he is building. Newton asks Bryce to ask him the question that he has been wanting to ask ever since he first met him. At this point, Bryce, who has followed Newton's career with interest for a long time, and has his suspicions about Newton, could have dozens of pertinent questions to ask. (Newton possibly does this in an attempt to deflect or postpone Bryce's suspicions) Instead what we get is - "Are you Lithuanian?". Newton answers "I come from England", but we knew this was his story already, and the tension in the scene is instantly defused in quite an amusing reversal of expectations. The vagueness of the film toward the issues that commanded attention in The Day the Earth Stood Still, such as; who betrayed Klaatu, how Klaatu escapes, who is keeping him captive or, even, how his spaceship works, serves to make The Man who Fell to Earth an enigmatic film. However, this vagueness, coupled with an insistant focus on detail, emphasises the trivial and banal nature of the world around Newton, and the dysfunctional nature of the people he deals with.

The film creates an atmosphere of nostalgia, largely through its use of warm, golden colours and repeated shots of blue sky and countryside, though also through the old movies that Newton watches on his televisions. At one point in the film, Newton has a vision of some pioneers camping in the countryside, seeing man as he once was, in a purer state. Physically, Newton does not alter throughout the film; while the people around him age, he remains outwardly static, decaying only on the inside. A sense of autumnal decay permeates the film: neglected small towns in New Mexico, shacks in the desert and the sense of abandonment that exists in the house in which Newton is incarcerated, where the trees are just a mural on the wall. This is in direct contrast to the style of The Day the Earth Stood Still, which is often shot in a darkly lit, film noir style, and never leaves the city except to step into Klaatu's clean and clinical spaceship. The Man who Fell to Earth is more of a visual film than The

Day the Earth Stood Still, but is much less linear, and needs to be regarded as the sum of its parts rather than as a direct narrative. Stylistically they are completely different films, but are structurally and thematically similar, the essential difference being the success of one alien and the failure of the other.

Both aliens fall under the category of those who look like us; Klaatu just happens to, while Newton fakes it, hiding under a fake skin and different coloured eyes, but he is the more human of the two. Both aliens are more human than most of the people in the films, and the fact that the audience identifies with the two alien characters is indicative of this. In these films respect for intellect (the former) and sensitivity (the latter) makes aliens into heroes and alienates the humans. Both aliens have the knowledge to help the Earth; Klaatu in his warning to become a peaceful planet, and Newton in his experience of the decline of his own planet. Klaatu has the strength to deliver his message and leave, despite being betrayed, while Newton, who came so close to completing his space project, is betrayed and is unable to leave, or save, the Earth. He cannot regain control of his corporation and thus cannot hope to restart his space program: he must resign himself to the death of his wife and children and the death of his planet. At the end of the film, Newton, when asked if he feels bitter about the way he has been treated, admits that his planet would have treated a visitor no better. The Man who Fell to Earth, although not a direct remake, takes on the fundamental elements and politics of The Day the Earth Stood Still and transforms them into a sensual and haunting film.

Conclusion

Hollywood had worked through a genre system from the beginning of its importance as a film producing centre. Certain categories of film were labelled; the Western, the Gangster film, the Detective film, etc., and were established as film genres. The genre system was one that allowed Hollywood to anticipate the audience's response to any particular film by working to the audience's expectations. The studios were able to calculate what the audience desired to see in a film through an analysis of preceeding films in a particular genre, highlighting the common denominators of the commercially successful films. Through this system Hollywood was able to maintain a knowledge of what the cinema going public liked to watch, and hence, pay to see. Although this awareness of the audience's preferences would not be a constant, analysis of the latest films would show, to an extent, the changing trends of the time. While this was obviously not an exact system of predicting the commercial success of a film, it allowed Hollywood to approximate certain aspects of a film that might influence the film's commercial success: what actors suited what roles, which plots were best received, or what film styles were most popular. In this way Hollywood was able to exert a certain control over its fortunes.

By the late sixties the genre system had run its course, people were no longer satisfied with predictable films and Hollywood happy endings. People were faced with a political system that no longer inspired trust and they began to reject its ideologies. This lack of trust extended to the promises and platitudes of the Hollywood genre system: civil rights marches, political assainations, economic recession, involvement in foreign wars, and the development of the counter-culture were the realities that Hollywood avoided in its production of genre films. Hence films of the late sixties and early seventies began to play with genre,

parodying it, reversing expectations and combining several genres in one film. These films were more commercially successful than other, more conventional, films of the period. Examples of these films would be: Bonnie and Clyde (1967), The Wild Bunch (1969), Blazing Saddles (1974), Chinatown (1974), or Taxi Driver (1976). This left Hollywood without any satisfactory means of predicting a film's success, and before adopting a new method , several classic films, from the forties and fifties, were remade throughout the seventies and early eighties. Between 1978 and 1982, Invasion of the Body Snatchers and The Thing were directly remade. Obviously the film-makers themselves did not remake these films for entirely commercial means. They had artistic reasons for remaking the films, but very few directors can make a film without the commercial backing of a studio, and for the studios these remakes were a sound investment, having been shown previously to be commercially successful films. The Day the Earth Stood Still has not been directly remade, but by looking at it as a existing basis for The Man who Fell to Earth to build on, it too can be seen as a commercial preceedent for a second film.

The contemporary Hollywood system of exploiting the commercial success of a film or a film formula came into its own in the eighties. Although sequels to films had been made in the seventies (Examples being The French Connection 2 and the Dirty Harry sequels), it was in the eighties that the system really took off. Hollywood began making sequels to most of its successful films, utilising established characters and iconography in a similar way to the old genre system, that is, without having to re-educate the audience in each film. Most sequels, although rarely as artistically successful, are as commercially successful as the originals, and sometimes more so. In this way Hollywood has established a method of exploiting a successful film.

While this explains the commercial imperative for remaking The

Day the Earth Stood Still, The Thing and Invasion of the Body Snatchers, these films would not have been remade at all were there not film-makers who wished to remake them. A clear distinction should be made between the artistic reasons that lay behind the production of these inspirational remakes and the more opportunistic motivation that underlies most sequel production. Individually, the films were made for different reasons. Philip Kaufman remade Invasion of the Body Snatchers because he felt that the people of America had become too self-absorbed and individualist. He felt that the malaise of seventies narcissism was equally as worrying as the opposite malaise of fifties conformity that concerned Don Siegel, and that the awakenings of the sixties had been squandered by the self-involvement of the seventies. John Carpenter's remake of The Thing was an attempt to honour the source material of the original film, John W. Campbell Jr.'s short story 'Who goes there?', to reverse the liberties that Hawks' film took with the original story, and also to parody the happy-go-lucky community that Hawks creates in the original film. Nicolas Roeg's The Man who Fell to Earth modernised the themes of The Day the Earth Stood Still, showing how an alien who came to Earth would cope with the materialism and corruption of American society, and concludes with the failure of the alien rather than success of the alien in the first film.

The three original films are examples of classic fifties science fiction, and were themselves highly influential in the genre, helping to establish the genre as we know it today. Science fiction cinema has altered little thematically since the fifties. The most notable evolution within the genre has been in the area of special effects. Concern about the dangers of technology is still evident: the implications of Gort's behaviour in The Day the Earth Stood Still are fully realised in The Terminator (1984) (via Dr. Strangelove (1969)), where machines have taken over the world and aim to eradicate mankind. Time travel is still being represented on screen: for example Back to the Future (1985) and

the more recent Timecop (1995). Friendly aliens are still visiting the Earth, even though they are still largely misunderstood, in films such as E.T. (1982), Starman (1984), and Cocoon (1985).

However, the genre has become more focused on the fate of the individual, rather than the fate of humanity as a whole. Films such as Blade Runner (1981), Robocop (1987), Total Recall (1990), and Johnny Mnemonic (1996), deal with issues of loss, alteration or replication of identity as a result of technological advances. Another group of films deal with fears of infection or mutation of the body. 'Body Horror' has drifted into the genre from the Horror genre; it is a feature of science fiction films from Alien (1979) onwards: The Thing (1982), The Fly (1986), Aliens (1986) and Alien^3 (1992) being but a few examples. Although many of these films feature a threat to humanity as a whole, either directly or by implication, the emphasis lies primarily on the individual's struggle to survive.

Generic hybridisation has also marked the genre to an extent; Star Wars (1977) and Outland (1981) are basically Westerns set in space (Outland is a futuristic remake of High Noon (1952)). More recent films, such as Universal Soldier (1992) or Demolition Man (1993), combine the genres of Science Fiction, War and the Western. Mel Brook's Spaceballs (1988) is a direct parody of the genre, specificly focused on the Star Wars series of films.

Overall the genre has not altered to a great extent, and although special effects have improved to the point where a film is worth seeing solely for its effects (examples range from Jaws (1975) to T2:Judgement Day (1992)), the same themes and plots reappear time after time. Unfortunately all too many recent films pay more attention to their special effects than to plot or dialogue. An example of a big-budget sci-fi film that falls into this trap is Species (1995): a hybrid of I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958), Alien and Carpenter's The Thing. Films such as

Blade Runner, Alien and The Terminator have raised a certain amount of critical interest in the genre, but the majority of films are still regarded as mere escapism and are not deemed worthy of serious critical attention. Like these three films, which are held up as examples of 'contemporary' cinema, the fifties films that are now 'texts' were not written about in the fifties, but were only critically discovered one or two decades later. Since science fiction is critically unfashionable, what criticism there exists is of a secondary nature and does not keep up to date. In fact many of the ideas that emerge in science fiction films are inspired by current concerns and acheivements, representing extrapolations from the present to the future, but unless the standard of science fiction film improves in general the genre will continue to be passed over by critics.

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