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| Final Paper |
| History of Film |
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Throughout the history of film underlying messages have continue to develop, ultimately bringing awareness to its audience; whether it is in relation to current events, economic, political or cultural structures, and issues within society. Oliver Hirschbiegel’s 2007 film *The Invasion* is the most recent interpretation of Jack Finney’s 1955 science-fiction novel, entitled *The Invasion of Body Snatchers*. Hirschbiegel’s film allows its viewers to question the many issues concerning the cultural climate during which the film was made.

The first film was directed by Don Siegel in 1956. Following the storyline of Finney’s novel, Siegel’s film *The Invasion of Body Snatchers* was about Dr. Mile Bennell who learns that the people of his hometown, in Santa Mira, California, have been experiencing odd personality changes. Within a few days of his arrival, Dr. Bennell discovers that the people are being replaced by alien duplicates. Explaining why the several patients are in a panic because they believe that their relatives and friends are no longer themselves. Dr. Bennell’s becomes suspicious after his encounters with people who claim that their relatives “aren’t the same.” For example, in the beginning of the film when Dr. Bennell almost runs over frantic young Jimmy Grimaldi, who was running away from his mother claiming that his mother isn’t his mother. In the scene, we can clearly see the anxiety and worry expressed on Jimmy’s face by the way that he is running and crying “don’t let her get me”. Jimmy clearly wants to stay away from his mother because he is frightened by her. After many strange events, Dr. Bennell comes to understand that the people are being cloned by alien formed “pods.” When Dr. Bennell realized that the majority of the people in his town had become infected he tried warning people and calling the FBI, yet his attempts failed. Dr. Bennell only had one choice, which was to get the woman he loves, Becky Driscoll, and himself out of that town to safety. Unfortunately, as they escaped Becky fell asleep and thus she transformed into a different and emotionless person. After the transformation, Becky tried to convince Dr. Bennell that transforming was the right and best thing to do. Dr. Bennell responded, “In my practice, I’ve seen how people have allowed their humanity to drain away. Only it happened slowly instead of all at once. They didn’t seem to mind...All of us - a little bit - we harden our hearts, grow callous. Only when we have to fight to stay human do we realize how precious it is to us, how dear.” Dr. Bennell managed to escape from Santa Mira into the city where he is arrested and sent to a local hospital's psychiatric ward. Dr. Bennell explains to his doctors what has happened in his hometown, yet the doctors don’t believe him and consider him as delusional as they plan his treatment. In the ending scene, an ambulance brings in a truck driver who had been in an accident who truck was full of unusual *pods*, and had been on the road from Santa Mira. Realizing Miles is telling the truth, the doctor’s calls take matters into their own hands. In Siegel’s 1956 film, the fate of the human race is left undetermined. Siegel’s film reflects a clear impression of Cold War anxieties, and tension between USA and Russia (Booker, 2006).

Oliver Hirschbiegel’s 2007 film version of *The Invasion* is slightly different from Siegel’s film, yet it sticks to the Finney’s main focus in which the people undergo a total loss of all emotion and personal identity. Hirschbiegel’s film is the third and most recent interpretation of Finney’s novel. *The Invasion* is also the most suspenseful and unique film of the three. For starters Hirschbiegel changed the name of the story by dropping the words “body snatchers” and keeping the title simple and short. There are many other factors in *The Invasion* which are different from *The Invasion of Body Snatchers.* For example, there are no clones growing from the plants, instead the people catch the virus by spitting it to one another. Most importantly, in Hirschbiegel’s version of the film the protagonist is a woman, as opposed to the previous films in which the protagonists have always been male.

*The Invasion* focuses on psychiatrist Carol Bennell who struggles throughout the film to stay awake in order to keep herself from losing her humanity. It all began when a space shuttle crashed in Washington D.C. containing alien life form, threatening the safety of the people. One of the first people on the scene of the crash was government official Tucker Kaufman whom works for the CDC, and it is his responsibility to investigate the accident. Tucker was the first to get infected with the alien life virus and he used his official job to spread the disease. Tucker Kaufman is the ex-husband and father of Carol Bennell’s son, Oliver. In one of the early scenes, as Carol walked the busy streets of Washington D.C she notices how people are in a frantic. For example, there was a young girl running cross the street crying out loud. It was because of her patients that Carol realized that there was something wrong with the people around her. For example, one of Carol’s patients, Mrs. Lank, who was worried because she believed that “her husband was not the same” after he began acting emotionless because of the virus. Although by this time the government officials, already infected, caused a major spread of disease, having the virus disguised as mandatory public vaccinations, taking away the people’s humanity and turning them into emotionless pod people. There was a strong sense of anxiety amongst the people, everyone rushed to get the vaccine in order to avoid getting contaminated with the “flu bug.” Little did people know that the government was infecting them in order to turn everyone into pods*.* With the help of her love interest and fellow doctor Ben Driscoll and Ben's friend Galeano whom is a biologist, Carol discovers that the virus take effect when the body of the infected is in REM sleep and that the only possible cure comes from those whom are immune to the alien life virus. Immune to this virus are those who previously suffered diseases that affect the brain. For example Carol’s son Oliver, having suffered from symptoms of scarlet fever/chickenpox as a young child is immune to the virus. Once Carol realized that her son was immune to the virus, she knew his life was in danger. When Carol tried to get her son from Tucker, she was attacked by him and his colleagues. Tucker is convinced that this virus will give them a “better way of living.” After getting contaminated with the virus, Carol fights to stay awake as she looks for her son. Once reunited with Oliver they hide out in a pharmacy where Carol ends up taking pills to keep her awake in order to protect her son. Ben Driscoll finds his way to Carol at the pharmacy, and to Carol’s surprise he has already been contaminated with the virus. Like Tucker, Ben tries to convince Carol that with the virus they could have a better life. Carol is able to stay awake and escape from Ben and all the other pod people, then getting rescued by Galeano. Galeano was able to find an airborne cure for the virus using Oliver’s blood. A year later and cured from the infection, not one victim has any memory of what took place as if they had been asleep the whole time. As opposed to Siegel’s film, *The Invasion* gives the audience a concluding ending, where all the people are cured and life goes back to what we know as “normal.”

There are many underlying messages in Oliver Hirschbiegel’s 2007 film *The Invasion*. At first glance the film raises awareness on, what if a world with no emotion is a better world? Wouldn’t a world without war, crimes, genocides and poverty be a better world? In his film, Hirschbiegel feeds from political conflict across the world and the crash between humanity and “being human” in the light of civilization. Throughout the film, those who were infected continuously claimed that the virus is what the world needs; because the virus takes away all the anxiety and driven emotions that people have. Taking into consideration that after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 the United States was under a lot of stress; when Hirschbiegel’s film was released in 2007 there were many current events that tied the film to the cultural climate during that time. Besides the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, President Bush announced a plan to station 21,500 additional troops in Iraq, former chief judge of the Revolutionary Court is executed by hanging in Iraq, a Muslim gunman shoots and kills five people in [Salt Lake City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_Lake_City), [Utah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah), a [Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban) suicide attack at Bagram Air Base while Vice President of the United States [Dick Cheney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Cheney) is visiting kills 23, but he is not injured. There were many more ongoing social, political, and economic issues that can rely to Hirschbiegel’s film *The Invasion*

In conclusion, Hirschbiegel’s film *The Invasion* had many important underlying messages in relation to issues concerning social, political, and economic structures. Most importantly, the film highlighted issues within society. During the last scene of the movie, an over voice clearly stated that “a world without war, without poverty, without murder and without rape… a world without suffering” is a better world; but does that mean that an alien like virus is what’s needed to make the world a better place? The many ongoing issues around the world during the time the film was released prove that Hirschbiegel’s was trying to bring awareness to how big of an impact social, political, and economic issues have on our society.

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