

Invasion of the Body Snatchers Scene Analysis (75:03 - 78:09)

Modern-day Americans, or citizens of any country, feel a very “real” fear of foreigners with foreign ideas coming to infiltrate and corrupt their seemingly perfect society and lives. This fear may haunt many in today’s world, but this fear isn’t modern and is far from figurative in the film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. This film puts those fears into reality when an alien species of human duplicates, grown from plant pods, take over the small town. During the time of the film, 1956, American conservatives were scared Russian communists were going to take over the country, also known as the Red Scare. On the other hand, liberals of the time viewed the “pod people” as unemotional and mindless robots who were giving into the suburban hell of conformity, commonly known as McCarthyism. Regardless of political beliefs, the film does an excellent job, through Mise-en-scene, cinematography, and editing, to create a paranoia of ‘others’ infiltrating one’s security and safety and a fear that the monster may be inside us, or human.

One of the most Iconic scenes in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is when the last two people to survive the invasion, Becky and Dr. Bennell, who are previous lovers, run into a tunnel to escape the pod people chasing them. Dr. Bennell leaves to investigate human-like voices singing in the distance, and Becky succumbs to sleep which is when one is most vulnerable to the transformation. The Dr comes back and holds Becky in his arms but discovers she’s not who she once was. When Becky awakes in the doctor’s arms, there is an extreme closeup shot to draw specific attention to Becky’s eyes. From what the audience can hear and see, Becky is the same but her eyes tell another story.

The film is warning the audience that people may not be who they seem. Without words, it is clear to the audience that Becky has become one of them. The Dr says, “[he] didn’t know the real meaning of fear . . . until [he’d] kissed Becky.” What terrifies him is that the kiss never happens. Now transformed, Becky is emotionless; a shot/reverse shot shows Becky blankly staring past Dr, followed by his look of terror. This cinematography is also accompanied by an intentional and effective score. When the Dr embraces Becky the score gradually increases in intensity until it reaches the instrumental climax when we see Becky’s eyes. The climactic music when we see Becky’s eyes suggests to the audience how this is one of the most terrifying moments for the Dr. and that Becky is no longer who she once was.

After the Dr. escapes from “pod Becky” and the rest of the pod people, there are several wide-angle shots of the Dr. running that sets the mood for the audience. These angles create an exaggerated perspective of the town of pods chasing him. This part of the scene also has Mise-en-scene effects because everything in these shots appears to be normal, including the people. Everything seems so normal, but the audience is well aware that things are far from normal. This creates an uncanny feeling for the audience that this could be happening anywhere and no one would ever know. This scene is set in a small town in America, which should create a feeling of normality and security. At the same time, the Dr is running from his small town to the city/interstate because the audience has discovered the truth that the ordinary environment is just a cover-up of what is truly hiding beneath the curtain.

In the last minute of the scene, the Dr. acknowledges the existence of the audience and speaks to them directly, breaking the fourth wall. This shows how this

fictional film gives way to the reality of the time, suggesting that they are “already here”. But the audience, pedestrians, and city doesn’t even know it yet because the monster is within and undetectable. After running into the highway to inform everyone they are next, the camera angle zooms out to show the hustle and bustle of the city life, suggesting you are not safe anywhere, not even in the city, the monster is human and humans are all around us.