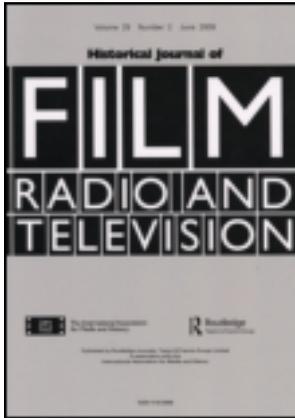


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Invasion of the Body Snatchers

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Other factual errors include calling VistaVision a ‘dual lens’ process (p. 110); identifying Robert Adrian (rather than Adrian Scott) as one of the Hollywood Ten (p. 162); and botching the name of the Motion Picture Association of America as the Motion Picture Production Association (p. 17) and Motion Picture Producers Association (p. 25). Nevertheless, *Runaway Romances* deserves recognition for calling attention to a fascinating cycle of films—many of them undeservedly ignored or not well known—which shed much light not only on postwar Hollywood, but also on America’s shifting position in the world.

JAMES I. DEUTSCH
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Invasion of the Body Snatchers

BARRY KEITH GRANT

London, British Film Institute - Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

111 pp., illus., bibliography, £10.99 (paper)

Largely ignored upon its initial release in February 1956, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* has since become one of the quintessential films of the 1950s. Its chilling tale of alien seedpods that replicate themselves in human form has been interpreted not only as a cautionary parable for both Communist infiltration and right-wing authoritarianism, but also for postwar alienation and other-directed conformity. Moreover, as Grant maintains in the book’s introduction, ‘*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was the first postwar horror film to locate the monstrous in the normal, four years before *Psycho* (1960), thus marking a pivotal moment in the history of the genre’ (pp. 7–8).

In keeping with the quality of other volumes in the BFI Film Classics series, Grant is able to pack a great deal of useful information about the film—including roughly five dozen screen images—into just over one hundred pages. He devotes chapters to the larger cinematic context of the 1950s; the career of director Don Siegel (including two television episodes Siegel subsequently directed for *The Twilight Zone*, which bear some thematic similarities to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*); the film’s genesis, production, and distribution (including the contributions of original author Jack Finney, screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring, and producer Walter Wanger); its generic hybridity (with elements of horror, science fiction, and film noir); its various political and cultural interpretations (in a chapter playfully entitled ‘politics of the pods’); its representation of gender and sexuality (including a fascinating deconstruction of the strapless gingham dress worn by Becky Driscoll, the female lead, and its effect on Miles Bennell, the male protagonist); and finally the story’s transformation via three subsequent remakes: 1978 by Philip Kaufman, 1993 by Abel Ferrara, and 2007 by Oliver Hirschbiegel.

Grant, a professor of film studies and popular culture at Brock University and the author or editor of some two dozen books, has thoroughly researched the topic. In addition to the relevant secondary literature, he has delved into the Walter Wanger Collection at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, files of the Production Code Administration, and even archives in the small town of Sierra

Madre, California, where several scenes were shot. Grant's prose is always clear and direct, with just a few small errors noticeable; for instance, the last names of Leiningen and Khrushchev are misspelled (pp. 23, 64), and the title of the film, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959), is rendered incorrectly (p. 93). Throughout the book, Grant demonstrates a sharp eye for visual details—noticing, for instance, that framed posters in the background of one shot contain the words 'mirror noir' and 'femme fatale' (p. 51); and that Becky Driscoll kneeling by a pool of water resembles the trademark of White Rock beverages.

Moments after Becky Driscoll kneels by the pool comes the scene that viewers of the film invariably recall with a shudder: the alternating close-ups of Becky and Miles after he realizes she has succumbed to sleep—and thus alien possession. As Grant observes, 'Becky's refusal to be seduced by Miles's kiss makes her nothing less than a monstrous embodiment of the more independent woman in postwar America' (p. 89). Indeed the scene is so startling that most viewers ignore the 'narrative illogic' of Becky's transformation at a time when her designated seedpod cannot possibly be in her immediate vicinity (p. 87).

I wish that Grant had similarly cited my own favorite moment from the film—when the avuncular psychiatrist, Danny Kaufman (already a pod person), rationally tells Miles why he should no longer resist the inevitable: 'There's no need for love', Kaufman explains. 'You've been in love before. It didn't last; it never does. Love, desire, ambition, faith—without them, life's so simple. Believe me'. Grant's contribution is a most welcome addition to the BFI Film Classics series, offering a wealth of information for cinema scholars, historians of the 1950s, and inveterate fans of the film. Believe me.

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Cold War Femme: lesbianism, national identity, and Hollywood cinema

ROBERT J. CORBER

Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011

x+225 pp., illus. and index, \$23.95 (paper) \$84.95 (cloth)

Corber's latest book acts as a companion piece to his earlier work, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: resistance and the crisis of masculinity* (1997). As the title indicates, in this new book Corber focuses on lesbianism in the Cold War period, particularly the emergence of the femme as a new and elusive threat to the American way of life. Corber argues that the figure of the femme became prominent in homophobic discourse during the Cold War period, interacting with older explanations of the single woman to justify the threat of lesbianism, which the author then traces out in some of the classic Hollywood films of the 1950s and early 1960s.