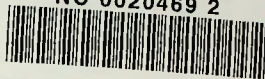


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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

'I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE':
SEXUALITY IN SCIENCE FICTION FILMS.

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INTRODUCTION

Science fiction encompasses the fantasies of future worlds; worlds predominantly ruled by technology. Man and technology as the two dominant presences, are shown to be forged by the genre. Simultaneously women and sexuality are suppressed by the genre. I have interpreted their absence as significant. By psychoanalysis I have attempted to interpret what is there but represented as absent. I have put forward concerns and preoccupations, some of which are reflected in society, others which originate in our pasts, which are unleashed by the 'blind imagination' of science fiction - by the black hole of space.

CHAPTER 1

Most science fiction films tend to disguise, and thereby reveal more schematically, the social or psychological preoccupations of the moment.

Written by Gerald Mead and Sam Appelbaum in a review of Westworld (1973) (it appears in Kuhn 1990, p.16). The disguise referred to is the genre itself. The very codes and conventions of science fiction film assert a fantasy in which the wishes, hopes, fears and inner conflicts of man are addressed. Issues of actuality may even be revealed. In the fantasy realm of future worlds, technological advance, monstrous aliens and masculine dominance, I propose to discuss how issues of sexuality are addressed in the overt and covert content of the narratives.

There is no denying the long-lasting popularity of science fiction. We need only recall the recent successes of Total Recall (1990) and E.T. (1982); the latter which became the biggest box office hit of all time. A popularity which extends to the science fiction novel and comic book. However, it is in the science fiction film, in its visual representation of the extraordinary, by its images and sounds, that we can best participate in the fantasies of the future worlds.

The history of the science fiction film is almost as long as the history of cinema itself. In 1926 Fritz Lang's Metropolis was released, only to be rereleased almost sixty years later. In the intervening years we have witnessed the progression from the black and white B movies of the 1950's, to the big budget, colour, spectacular extravaganzas of the 1980's. Special effects of sound and vision have added increasing credibility to depictions of imaginary worlds. Yet where does the fascination with the genre lie?

Annette Kuhn, in her introduction to Alien Zone poses the view that genre films can be understood in terms of expectations - expectations on the part of audiences that films will provide the security of generic conventions. That is the security of theme, plot, narrative and iconography. Let us look at the codes and conventions particular to science fiction that provide the attraction.

Initially we have the recurring images of landscapes and cityscapes of future worlds. Metropolis, as the first archetypal image of the future, is Utopian in its depiction of the triumph of progressive technology. Yet this 'wonder city' is also revealed as a potentially destructive force to human nature. This conflict between science and technology on the one hand, and human nature on the other, is a recurring theme in science fiction. Contemporary cinema draws on and reworks this old theme; though critics have proffered the view that recent depictions of future worlds are increasingly nihilistic. The power behind these societies is usually invisible but all-pervasive. As Kuhn (1990, p.9) says 'Institutional rather than personal, corporate rather than governmental'. Here we can relate the fascination with advanced technology, to the assertion of power, control and authority. According to Hugh Ruppersberg (Kuhn, 1990, p.32) technology is the means that can 'lift humanity out of the mess of its own biological imperfections'. Does this include the 'imperfections' of biological sexual activity? Alternatively, technology is revealed as flawed and ultimately destructive. This notion is explored in Metropolis, 2001 (1968), Bladerunner (1982) and many more. The desire for technological enterprise can be seen as an assertion of male control and dominance. The conflict that arises, as technology is revealed as destructive, may point to an ultimate dependency on nature and natural

processes. Does the ancient connection between nature and women, point to an ultimate dependency on women?

This leads us to the recurring narrative of what Kuhn (1990, p.8) refers to as, 'the preoccupation with masculine mastery over nature'. Can we interpret a masculine mystery of nature and women, as the reason for this attempt at mastery? Anne Dickson (p.179) suggests that 'the earth has always been viewed as alternately nurturing and uncontrollable: a woman's body has been viewed as either motherly or dangerous'. In the light of this, man's obsession with space travel can be seen as a search for control and autonomy. The creation of rational technological enterprise can be seen as a disaffiliation from human biological activity. The values are placed on production and creation rather than reproduction and procreation.

Kuhn further indicates that in this attempt at masculine mastery, lies the obsession with the technological ability to create higher forms of life. This has progressed from the monster created in Frankenstein (1931) to the almost human robots and replicants of Alien (1979) and Bladerunner respectively. We may wonder at this decision whereby technology not woman is the creator of life. This concept of alternative 'birth processes' is taken to the extreme in Alien when one male character actually "gives birth".

Another dominant convention of science fiction is the establishment of 'otherness'; and usually the horror of otherness. This lies in the differentiation between human and non-human. This 'otherness' is represented in the figure of the alien, martian, monster; by other worlds and the destructive capacity of the technological

machine. Primarily 'otherness' is represented by the sexual woman, by her predominant absence from science fiction narratives. In many of these films the threatening or destructive force is invisible and only hinted at; can we relate this to the 'invisibility' of women in science fiction?

In earlier films the differentiation between man and 'other' was more obvious as in The Thing (1951) and The Thing from Another World (1951). Indeed socially, the difference between man and woman was easier to assess. As in society, in contemporary film it is increasingly hard to tell the difference - the humanoids, robots and replicants are almost human. In Bladerunner, the replicants display depths of emotion lacking in their human counterparts. This differentiation is further hindered by the genre's convention to closely wed the human with the 'other'. In The Thing (1982) and The Fly (1986), both remakes, Kuhn (1990 p.8) infers that 'the human body itself is constituted as other or as potentially monstrous'. This union of human with monster, alien, machine, (woman?) occurs with disastrous consequences and recurs throughout the genre.

The concept of time travel is another feature of the genre worth mentioning. The notion of returning to the past or arriving in the future seems to be an obsession. In The Terminator (1984), the hero, John sends his friend Kyle into the past to ensure the safety of his mother Sarah. In the course of events we see that John has ensured his own conception and birth, as Kyle falls in love with Sarah and reveals himself to be John's father. Constance Penley in her essay Time Travel, Primal Scene and Critical Dystopia (Kuhn 1990) points out that within the fantasies of science fiction

John is permitted to orchestrate his own conception. He chooses Kyle to return to the past and as such chooses his own father. The notion of returning to the past to have an affect on one's origins, echoes Freud's theory of the subconscious desire to alter the history of one's origins. In Penley's essay (p.121), she quotes Freud's The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms (London: Hogarth Press, 1958, p.368), 'a child uses fantasies to disguise the history of his childhood'. Daniel Dervin (1985, p.184) points out that the journey forward in time as in Time after Time (1979) can be seen as a reversal of those concerns originating in the past.

In addition to recurring themes and narratives, contemporary science fiction also draws on and reworks the iconographic motifs of earlier films. We are all too familiar with the recurrence of robots, computers, space ships, aliens, future worlds and alien planets. Vivien Sobchack in her essay Sex and the Science Fiction Film (Kuhn 1990) argues the recurrence of the ideal hero in the shape of the 'virginal astronaut'. This is not meant literally but as the epitome of the archetypal male protagonist. It is necessary to take a close look at him as the characteristics and qualities he imbues, form a significant and dominant presence in science fiction film.

Sobchack refers to our heros' great physiques, wooden movements, hollow cheerfulness and banal competence. She speaks of them as cool, rational, competent, unimaginative, male and sexless. The characters of Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers and Superman come to mind. However the persona of Arnold Schwarzenagger, who appeared in the over 18's film Total Recall might also apply. Though exceptions exist, the characteristic of sexless would most notably still apply. It would apply on account of the predominant

absence of human sexual women from the narratives. No sexual rivalry can exist between the men; male camaraderie has taken its place. Sobchack argues this situation centres around the male desire to break free from the biological dependence on women. By the suppression of their sexuality, the denial of women, they hope to achieve autonomy.

At this point I have predominantly voiced the wishful-filment aspect of fantasy. However, science fiction is equally noted for raising fears and anxieties. Again I ask, where does the attraction lie? In Kuhn (1990, p.152) we read that 'according to Andre Bazine the fundamental principle of film is a kind of visual desire what he terms "our obsession" or "appetite for illusion"'. J.P. Telotte in his essay The Doubles of Fantasy and the Space of Desire (Kuhn 1990), points out that we are attracted to images drawn from the 'blind space of imagination'. He draws on psychology to warrant this attraction. Psychology tells that both dreams and the impulse to fantasize are not a frustration of desire but a necessary accommodation to it. Telotte also raises the issue that science fiction offers not only an alternative reality but 'significant, desired, and even necessary images of our involvement in the world' (Kuhn, 1990, p.153). At what level can science fiction be seen to mirror, reflect, and express man's involvement in the world around him - and indeed his sexual position?

We have already touched on the codes and conventions of science fiction and suggested some of the preoccupations which are disguised. All arguments exist within the bounds of the patriarchal society we live in. Dervin (1985, chapter 6), in his psychoanalytical study of cinema, shows how the conventions of this genre impinge

on traditional patriarchal myths. He proposes that this occurs in two ways. Initially there are those myths of a sexual union between humans and beasts, often gods in animal forms. Such figures as centaurs and minotaurs spring immediately to mind. However Dervin proffers the union of Leda and the swan; Zeus as a bull ravaging Europa; Demeter as a mare and Poseidon as a stallion. These unions depict at varying levels the union of humanity with nature. Science fiction can be seen to vary this myth in its depictions of the unity between humanity and the machine - robots in the shape of humans for example. The technological machine is the force which initiates space travel, time travel, visits to alien planets and the creation of the 'wonder city' of the future. Men's association with technology is forged by the genre. The absence of nature, women and sexuality is noted. Dervin further points out that patriarchal mythology interferes with and reverses the natural birth processes. He exemplifies this with Athene springing from the fertile brow of Zeus, Dionysus from his thigh and Eve from Adam's rib. In science fiction we are given numerous alternatives to the natural processes of birth and conception. The majority of these are brought about by scientific and technological devices. In Demon Seed (1977), Julie Christie becomes impregnated by a computer; itself an attempt to emulate the natural origins of life by technology.

Technology is the means by which man attempts to assert power and authority. It is the means to assert control over 'mother earth'. Does women's close alliance with nature point to a similar assertion of control over them? The fact is that sexual, vibrant women are given little or no place in science fiction films. Women's sexuality is seen as a potent and threatening force. It is seen as an attempt to undermine man's

technological genius. Man ultimately depends on women for life. The absence of women and the dominant presence of our heros' asexuality are a concrete confirmation of sexual denial in science fiction.

In Chapter 2, I will look at how women and sexuality are represented as absent in science fiction. I will look at how their connection with sexuality has been denied both visually and through the action of the narratives. Theories will be proposed to elucidate the reason for this repression. Furthermore I will draw on psychonalysis and the unconscious act of repressions; how similarities can be drawn between the ways in which the mind works to repress and how science fiction works to repress. Psychoanalysis shows how the mind works to conceal 'objectionable ideas'. Yet ideas lying dormant in the 'reservations' of our minds are shown to return to science fiction narrative in disguise. It is through the enlightenment of psychoanalysis that I will uncover the presence of sexuality in science fiction films.

In Chapter 3, I will take up Barbra Creed's examination of the film Alien (Kuhn 1990, Chapter II) and relate it specifically to Freudian theory. I will examine how the narrative action of this film can be seen to mirror Freudian theories of infantile sexual investigations. I will look at how the imagery and action is suggestive of birth, separation from the mother, sexual discovery, intercourse and birth again - concepts which are denied any voice at the overt level of the narrative.

CHAPTER 2

In Kolker (1988, p.87), Stanley Kubrick, maker of 2001 claimed that 'sexuality is a thing of loathing and a weapon'. In a male-conceived genre, the heroes of the science fiction film set out to explore and conquer other worlds or achieve the most sophisticated life by technological advances. Their exploration of the universe, is more often than not, without sex, biology and women. They have rejected women and sex in order to concentrate on the technological. Whether this repression is deliberate or unconscious, at such an overt level of the narrative, the absence of women and sexuality is significant.

Do the male-dominated, action-orientated narratives of science fiction point to a search for male autonomy and separateness? The denial of the influence of mother and Other (woman as a sexual being), would indicate this. Vivien Sobchack (Kuhn 1990 .109), states that women as 'mothers, wives, girlfriends - arouse male need, demand and desire' (and dependency). The desire to break free from this biological dependence would account for the repression of women and their biological difference in science fiction. The very presence of women, in their power to originate life, points to the lesser potency of technology. As such female human sexual presence within the narratives is almost non-existent.

Human biological sexuality and women representative of this are conventionally linked in the classical film narrative. However in science fiction, women and sex are concurrently repressed. When they do exist they tend to be separated. Biological sexuality is rarely linked to human women, and they in turn are rarely perceived as sexual. Sexual drama and heterosexual relations are rarely important

to the development of plot and narrative. The relationships that do exist are merely hinted at, and we the audience, are never invited beyond what is merely suggested on screen.

Alongside these muted heterosexual relations exists the narrative overt deemphasis on women's sexuality and the biological sexual functions of intercourse and reproduction. This is attempted visually in the deemphasis of the bodily difference of woman. It is a common occurrence to see women in lab coats and all-concealing bodysuits, whereas aliens are very often scantily clad. In Bladerunner the female replicant Chris, was 'devised for pleasure only' and is subsequently barely clothed throughout the film. Annette Kuhn (1985, p.52), holds that 'clothing serves as an outward mark of difference, of a fundamental attribute to the wearer's identity'. This biological coverup is specific to the science fiction genre. This attempt to diffuse the difference between men and women also occurs in the action of the narrative.

In Alien, Ripley is the most dominant female and human presence in the action of the narrative. However, she is deprived of any connection with her sexuality. The original script for Alien was written with the idea that the characters could be played by either sex. Her difference as a woman is negligible. Visually she is denied any difference, wearing the same suits as the other male astronauts. Kuhn (1985 p.52) states,

Cross-dressing may be understood as a mode of performance in which through a play on the disjunction between clothes and the body - the socially constructed nature of sexual difference is foregrounded...

The qualities attributed to Ripley are her toughness, bravery and smartness. She is not marked as a woman or

as sexual except for the climax at the end of the film. At this point she undresses and her bodily difference is revealed. In (Kuhn 1990 p.107), Sobchack argues that Ripley 'takes on the configuration of male need, demand, desire and fear'. What we can draw, is that such emotions are evoked by the presence of blatant female sexuality. And that an attempt has been made to repress this by her functional clothing and asexual occupation as an astronaut.

In (Kuhn 1990 p.109), the psychoanalytical definition of repression is quoted as 'the active process of keeping out and ejecting, banishing from consciousness ideas and impulses that are unacceptable to it'. Can we conclude that science fiction's repression of the sexual woman and bodily and biological differences is because they are unacceptable ideas? The psychoanalytical notion that sexual wishes are tabooed and hence repressed into the unconscious would suggest this.

In Sobchack's essay (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 9), she equates these unacceptable ideas with the 'instinct-presentation'. This is a psychoanalytical term to denote a painful or emotionally charged experience. Psychoanalysis tells us how it is possible to reduce the effect of the instinct-presentation by breaking it into two parts - the idea and the effect. Within the context of Alien this is done by breaking down the connection between Ripley and her human biological sexuality. Furthermore, the psychiatric dictionary quoted by Sobchack (p.109), tells us that,

When the entire instinct cannot be successfully repressed either the ideational or affective part may be. If the idea is repressed, the affect with which it was associated may be transferred to another idea (in consciousness) that has no apparent connection with the original idea. Or, if the affect is repressed, the idea, remaining, so to speak, alone in consciousness may be linked to a pleasant affect.

In relation to Alien, our heroine Ripley is the female presence (the idea) but devoid of her sexual potency (the affect) - her femaleness is inconsequential and of no threat. Furthermore, if the idea and Ripley's womanhood are repressed the affect associated with it may be transferred to another idea. Having established that the affect of human biological sexuality evokes unconscious and painful ideas, we can suggest they have been transferred to that same fear of the alien. The alien in its reproductive mode co-relates with human sexual and procreative functions. Juliet Mitchell (1984, p.250), in her essay on Freud and Lacan states that,

Sexuality can never be equated with genitality nor is it the simple expression of biological drive. It is always psychosexual, a system of conscious and unconscious human fantasies involving a range of excitations and activities that produce pleasure beyond the satisfaction of any physical need.

The psychiatric dictionary quoted above, also tells us that if the entire 'instinct-presentation' is repressed, it may return to consciousness in the form of a symbol. Regarding Alien, if human sexuality and women representative of this are repressed, they can return to the narrative in the symbolic disguise of the alien and its connecting imagery. Sobchack (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 9) looks to the unconscious processes of condensation and displacement to unveil how such a transformation takes place. Condensation is the psychoanalytical process whereby 'a single word, idea or image is made to contain all emotion connected with a group of ideas or an experience' (Kuhn 1990, p.111). In Alien and other science fiction films we are looking at imagery that is not obviously meant to be seen as metaphorical. Yet in the light of condensation, the imagery becomes charged with various emotions and emerges as imagery of the repressed.

Using the monster in Alien as an example, at the denotative level of the narrative, it is a visual representation of a monstrous alien. However for the crew, this visual representation carries great emotional charge beyond the fact that it is trying to annihilate them. It represents other ideas and associations. In Barbra Creed's essay Alien and the Monstrous Feminine (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11), she refers to the alien as the reproductive, generative archaic mother and also as the treacherous oral sadistic mother. Moreover she is a mother and as such signifies the origins of life. Man in his technological enterprise of space travel has abandoned 'mother earth' and all that she represents, only to be reminded of his origins in the configuration of the alien.

Similarly displacement emerges as an expression of the repressed. Displacement is 'the transference of the emotions from the original ideas to which they are attached to other ideas'. (Kuhn 1990, p.112). Psychoanalysis tells us that these ideas may be totally unrelated. In Alien, the emotions experienced by the crew members have many different meanings attached. In the beginning when the crew awake aboard the mothership, we recognise that she is present as their life support. The ship offers security and comfort. But she also evokes a sense of confinement, powerlessness and dependency. The crew's task is to go in search of energy supplies but they are also anxious to explore the unknown mysteries of space. What they do discover is the horror of the monstrous alien. The emotions evoked by these experiences enact the separation of child from mother, the child's investigations of origins and the discovery of origins. The crew leave the mothership, cautiously explore the alien spacecraft and discover the horror of the alien. Freud intimates that the child's discovery of adult sexual activities arouses horror.

Displacement can also involve transference at the level of body. The psychiatric dictionary quoted in (Kuhn 1990, p.112) states that

The instincts shift, for example, from the oral to the anal or to the genital zones or to any other erotogenic zone. In conversion hysteria a psychic complex may be displaced upon a potentially organic structure. Or, all the issues connected with genitality may be displaced to the oral zone. Displacement "from below upward" is a common phenomenon.

In Alien one of the sequence of images shows one of the crew, Kane, being 'taken over' by one of the aliens. Kane is lowered into a womb-like chamber where rows of eggs are hatching. Kane touches one and it opens revealing organic flesh. It attaches itself to Kane's helmet where its tail penetrates his mouth, in an attempt to fertilise inside his stomach. Kane's head, narratively the place of reason, has become the representation of the vagina. His stomach the womb, and the tail of the creature the penis. What exists at the narrative level as an alien invasion can be seen as a displacement of sexual activity.

Through the processes of displacement and condensation the real affect of the instinct-presentation is repressed. That is, female sexuality and what it represents - human sexual functions, is repressed. The fear of difference that the sexual woman represents, and the emotions it involves, have been displaced and condensed onto alien forms and images. However, by these processes, the fear and emotions become overarticulated and the difference between crew and alien, man and 'other', is heightened.

Concurrently, Constance Penley in her essay Time Travel, Primal Scene and the Critical Dystopia (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 10) argues that science fiction, besides offering a heightened sense of difference also offers the reassurance of difference

itself. A difference which she argues is crucial to the classical film narrative. By the narrative logic of classical film 'the nature of masculinity, the nature of femininity, and the way in which those two can be complementary rather than antagonistic' (Kuhn 1990, p.123) should be established by the film's closure. She points out that men and women are increasingly less differentiated in terms of clothing, occupations and ambitions. And that this fact is reflected in contemporary cinema.

Science fiction remains capable of supplying the sexual differences required by classical cinema. It works to dissolve that fear of the same, to ensure a difference. As Raymond Bellour maintains, 'in the nineteenth century men looked at women and feared they were different, but in the twentieth century men look at women and fear they are the same'. (Kuhn 1990, p.124). Furthermore in Juliet Mitchell's essay, Lacan states that desire itself, and with it sexual desire can only exist by virtue of its alienation. If the practical differences between a man and a woman are less evident, there exists enough difference between a human and an alien. The question of sexual difference, no longer self-evident is displaced onto the difference between human and alien ('other'). This questioning of difference between human and 'other' is sexual in nature and can be seen in the way science fiction reactivates infantile sexual investigations. I will discuss these investigations in relation to Alien in the third chapter.

In the classical cinema the romantic couple are a product of a long process of narrative differentiation. If the nature of contemporary society disallows that differentiation, science fiction offers us an extreme version of sexual difference. Penley (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 10)

states that this sexual difference coincides with the requirements of the 'erotic formula', that which describes the fantasy of absolute difference and absolute complementarity. In Bladerunner the romantic couple of human and replicant are clearly marked as different from the beginning. When human Rick Deckard and replicant Rachael kiss, the absolute difference between them imparts an added charge in the romantic context of the narrative. As such, science fiction supplies us with a sharper notion of sexual difference.

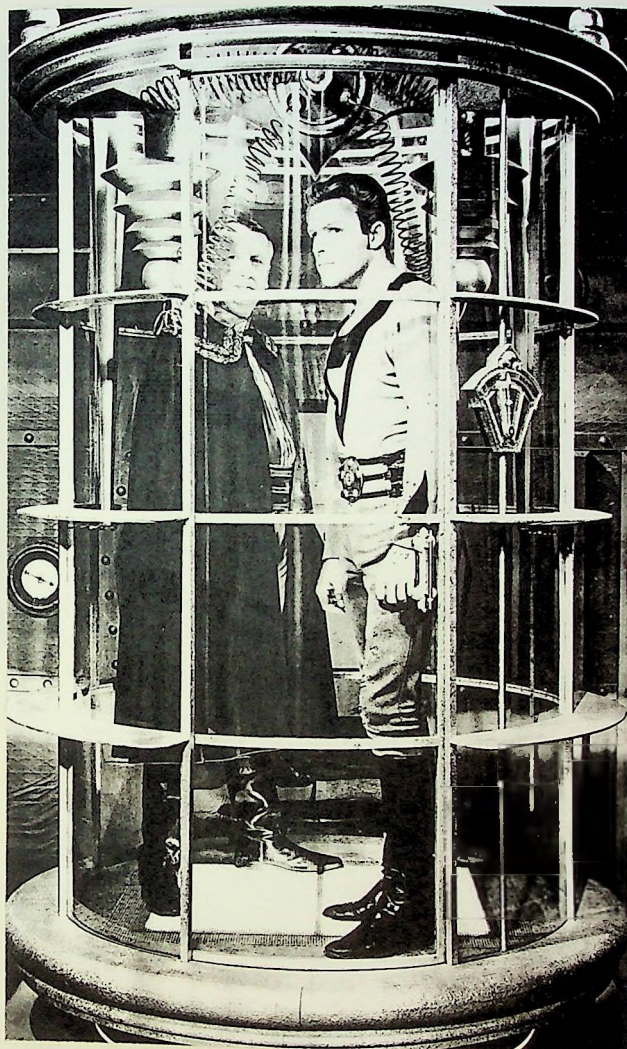
It is rather ironic that the science fiction film, which at the onset is a sexless genre, can supply sexual difference in the configuration of the alien. The significant absence of women and sexuality at the overt level of the narrative, point to an unconscious repression. This repression requires interpretation. Psychoanalysis has been the means to reveal how repressed ideas can return to the narrative in disguise. In Chapter 3, I will look at how erased memories of infantile sexual investigations are reactivated in the film Alien. However, it is the very codes and conventions of the genre which permit this interpretation.



Lizard-skinned alien has the baby of Dennis Quaid in Enemy Mine (1985).



Robot Ash decapitated in Alien (1979).



Wooden-faced Buck in Buck Rogers (1939).

Sobchack's 'virginal astronauts' in 2001 (1968).





Robot Maria in Metropolis (1926)

Alien woman, Farrah Fawcett in
Saturn Three (1980)



Alien



The suggestive form and shape of the alien spacecraft.



Three of the crew enter one of the alien structure's entrances.



The awaking of the crew aboard the Mothership.



Ripley's flight from the exploding Mothership.



The alien penetrates Kane via the mouth.



The baby alien explodes from Kane's stomach.



The crew look on in horror and disbelief as the baby alien is 'born'.



The all-devouring, 'oral-sadistic' alien.



Ripley in Aliens (1986) as in Alien marks herself as the toughest and bravest of the crew.



Ripley's womanhood is reasserted as she undresses.

CHAPTER 3

In science fiction, women and the human biological functions they come to represent, lie second to the all-male narrative of space exploration. Women in their biological difference have come to represent difference itself. Juliet Mitchell, in her essay on Freud and Lacan (1984, p.257) points out that Freud has been accused of producing phallo-centric theories - 'of taking man as the norm and woman as what is different therefrom'. Similarly in science fiction, man is represented as the norm and woman as different. According to Freud 'if psychoanalysis is phallo-centric, it is because the human social order it perceives refracted through the individual human is patro-centric'. (Mitchell 1984, p.275). In other words Freud's theories exist within the bounds of the patriarchal society we live in. For this reason I can apply his theories to the patriarchal bounds which exist in science fiction. I set out to apply his theories of infantile sexual investigation to the narrative action and imagery of science fiction.

Lying at the very core of science fiction is the establishment of two very different settings. One is reliable and familiar, whether it be the mothership or mother earth; the other is mysterious and unpredictable, represented by the alien planet or the alien itself. What occurs in science fiction is the passage from one setting to another. Drawing on psychoanalysis, we can look at this voyage as the separation of child from mother. Barbra Creed in her essay Alien and the Monstrous Feminine (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11) takes this angle. In the context of the pre-oedipal mother - the mother as protective and suffocating, the child may be searching for autonomy through space travel. 'The need for autonomy fuels space travel; curiosity pilots them'. (Dervin 1985, p.166). However,

within the oedipal configuration of the mother as the object of sexual desire, and the fear of castration this incurs (parental prohibition), the child is obliged to search for a substitute. As Freud suggested 'the sexual drive was a direct outgrowth of the first satisfying relationship with the mother'. (Mitchell 1984, p.261). Freud also maintained that the first attachment to the mother is deeply repressed and returns in the unconscious. As such, in science fiction the search for Mother and Other (woman as a sexual being) is represented by space travel and exploration.

Daniel Dervin (1985, p.166) describes the two settings aforementioned, as an analogy 'with early development [the child's] from awareness of the maternal organism as a breast-face configuration to a vaginal-womb complexity'. In other words the discovery of adult sexual activities and reproduction. In Alien the voyage of the crew into unknown territory can be viewed in this manner. Furthermore, their discovery of the horror of the alien can be seen as an enactment of the horror of sexual discovery, as Creed (Kuhn 1990 , Chapter 11) suggests. According to psychoanalysis the horror of sexual discovery is the horror of the primal scene. The primal scene exists whereby every child either views or entertains fantasies of parental intercourse. Freud argues the experience arouses anxiety in the child. This is explained by the fact that it is experienced through a psychosexual phase and is interpreted accordingly. As Freud (Freud, p.742) says,

We are dealing with a sexual excitation with which their [children's] understanding is unable to cope and which they also no doubt repudiate because their parents are involved in it, and which is therefore transformed into anxiety.

Concurrently what results is the child's distortion of the sex act as an attack or beating. In one case history

of an anxiety dream (Freud, p.742), Freud says that the patient,

had subsumed what happened between his parents under the concept of violence and struggle; and found evidence of this in the fact that he had often noticed blood in his mother's bed.

In short, Freud argued that children 'adopt what may be called a sadistic view of coition'. (Freud, On the Sexual Theories of Children quoted in Kuhn, 1990, p.128). To the child sex is a monstrous act. The child's association of sex with violence turns sex into a danger zone.

Freud maintained that the child's initial attachment to the mother returns in the unconscious. In reality the child grows and separates from its mother and goes in search of its origins. Penley (Kuhn, 1990, p.123) confirms this with the child's eternal questions, "Where do I come from?" The search results in the horror of the primal scene - or a distorted view of adult sexual behaviour. So the child separates from its mother (its origins) only to confront its origins, by witnessing the parental act of intercourse. Creed (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11) proposes that this is what occurs in relation to the narrative action of Alien. Dervin (p.177) suggests that the 'fallopian tube imagery' of the alien spacecraft in Alien, and the crew which enter it, are suggestive of the child's regressive urge to seek refuge in the safety zone of the maternal body. Furthermore, Freud (Freud, p.699) suggests that a 'temporal regression' can be seen as a 'harking back to older physical structures'. Let us look at precisely how the action in Alien can be seen as an analogy of these concepts.

In Alien, sexual interests are suppressed and give way to the exploratory enterprise of the crew's mission.

The crew, on a mission for energy resources, land on an alien planet and explore a spacecraft-type structure. They have abandoned 'mother earth' and the mothership and landed on the planet of origins. There they encounter the horror of the alien which instills both dread and fascination. Similarly Derwin (p.181) says the maternal body is the site of conflicting desires. They have returned to what Creed (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11) refers to as, the archaic mother, represented by the alien's generative dominance; but also to the 'oral-sadistic' mother, represented by the alien's all-devouring mouth. In Alien, the crew have escaped their origins by leaving mother earth, only to meet with them on the alien planet in the disguise of the alien and the accompanying imagery.

At this point there is little evidence to make a correspondence between the primal scene and the action in Alien. Derwin (p.168) says that 'experiments of science fiction often interface with the infantile distortions of adult sexuality and are presented as "fait-accomplis". By this he refers to the child's riddle, of adult sexual reproduction and the adult's reluctance to enlighten. He further argues that by the time the truth is revealed to the child, it has already been converted by the creative imagination, into alternative modes of procreation. Concurrently, according to Creed (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11), the configuration of the alien monster and the emotions it arouses concretises the child's infantile sexual fears and theories of sex as a monstrous act. Moreover Freud (Freud, p.524) claimed that the 'act of birth is the first experience of anxiety, and thus the source and prototype of the affect of anxiety'.

Using this knowledge, we may infer in several instances, a primal scene correspondence in the action of Alien. Creed in her essay (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11), draws several

instances of this correspondence. I will look at three of these and relate them specifically to Freudian theory. The first instance we are given of the birth scene is at the beginning of the film. It occurs aboard the mother-ship in a room with the awakening of the crew of seven astronauts. In Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, (p.471) he reasoned that 'hollow objects, ships and vessels of all kinds; rooms in dreams are usually women'... 'boxes, cases, chests, cupboards and ovens represent the uterus'. As such, the computer (named Mother) who is the life support for the crew, becomes the mother. The enclosed box-like room in which the rebirth scene occurs, becomes the womb. It is the computer-Mother who activates this rebirth scene, which is a clean, controlled painless affair. The crew simply emerge from glass-encased boxes as if awakening from a drugged sleep. There is no blood or terror; the crew are born fully developed, no sexual activity has precipitated.

Freud believed there existed '...a valid sexual meaning behind the neurotic child's intolerance of blood, or raw meat or his nausea at the sight of eggs'. (Freud, p.463). This mental inhibition would impart a wishfulfilment element to the rebirth scene mentioned above. In The Thing (1951) this repugnance is echoed and summarised by one character who exclaims at the Thing's ability to reproduce, by its hand - 'No pain, pleasure, emotions or heart. How superior'.

The second primal scene Creed refers to occurs aboard the unknown spacecraft-type structure on the alien planet. Three of the crewmen enter the spacecraft into a long corridor. In the world of dreams 'penetrating into narrow spaces and opening closed doors are among the commonest sexual symbols'. (Freud, p.521). In this context can we assume the entrance is the vaginal opening? Two long

corridors made of semi-organic material, horseshoe-shaped, lead to a chamber-vault area. As the crew touch the walls, Lambert exclaims 'Oh God! What is it?' Though anxious and eager to return to the mothership, the crew persist in their investigations. Freud (Freud, p.524) says

A large number of dreams often accompanied by anxiety and having as their content such subjects as passing through narrow spaces....are based upon phantasies of intra-uterine life of existence in the womb and of birth.

One of the crew members, Kane, is lowered into a womb-like chamber where rows of eggs are hatching. Repulsed, though curious, Kane touches one of the eggs which opens to reveal living flesh. It attaches itself to Kane's helmet, while its tail penetrates Kane's mouth to fertilize inside his stomach. Two of the crew look on in horror. Later aboard the mothership, the baby alien monster is born as it explodes through Kane's stomach. The entire crew look on in horror.

The action surrounding Kane's takeover recalls Freud, who claimed the most extreme primal scene was observing intercourse while an unborn baby in the womb (Kuhn 1990, p.130). Freud further claims that a patient can consciously fabricate such a scene because it has been operative in his/her unconscious. Two of the crew watch as Kane 'is violated in an act of phallic penetration'. (Kuhn 1990 p.130). This violation occurs via the mouth. Freud believed that 'sexual repression makes use of transposition from a lower to an upper part of the body'. (Freud, p.463). Rather than the usual vagina, Kane's mouth is the penetrated orifice. Dervin (p.179) claims that this action echoes 'the most primitive distortions of the primal scene buried in the child's psyche' - that is the action is transposed from the genital to oral zones.

Here the primal scene is restaged as a monstrous violent act as Creed and Dervin have proffered. Kane having landed on the alien planet and penetrated the alien spacecraft, has gone in search of the riddle of his origins. Complying with the child's distortion of the primal scene, it becomes the danger zone Kane senses it to be. However Dervin (p.177) points out that Kane is guilty as he attempted to witness the forbidden act of conception. He has been found out as the alien's eye moved and looked at him. As such, his punishment for participating in the primal scene is to become the penetrated object.

Sobchack (Kuhn 1990, p.110) suggests that an alien invasion of a planet mind or body is an enactment of the fear of femaleness. A femaleness which is 'all-consuming, castrating, possessive and potent (having the power of breast and penis)'. Indeed for the child, the alien possesses both breast and penis. Freud (p.476) says. 'In childhood the distinction between the genitals of the two sexes is unknown and the same kind of genitals are attributed to both of them'. On the one hand the takeover of Kane's body would represent what Sobchack (Kuhn 1990, p.110) says, 'the negative, passive, vulnerable and female side of penetration, represent "being screwed" rather than "screwing".' Kane as the penetrated object takes the place of the mother/woman. Following this the action poses the female alien as an aggressive (male?) presence. Creed (Kuhn 1990, p.130) raises the question, is Kane's violation 'by the father or phallic mother?'

Barbra Creed in her essay Alien and the Monstrous Feminine, directly relates the primal scene to the monstrous feminine theory as perceived within a patriarchal ideology. In addition low patriarchal ideology works to deny the difference of woman in her cinematic representation.

Indeed the highlighted features of the alien, are its voracious, gaping, devouring mouth and 'castrating' teeth. Freud (p.463) argues it is possible by transposition 'for all kinds of sensations and intentions to be put in effect, if not in relation to the genitals, to other unobjectionable parts of the body'. In effect, the face of the alien becomes the genital area. Lips relate directly to the labia and as such the mouth becomes the vagina. Regarding the teeth, Freud (p.463) says,

The one structure which affords no possibility of an analogy is the teeth; and it is precisely this combination of similarity and dissimilarity which makes teeth so appropriate for representational purposes when pressure is being exercised by sexual repression.

In one case history Freud directly relates teeth to the male genitals (p.513). Thus the repression of sexual interests at the overt level of the narrative finds their release in the unconsciously metaphorical action, drama and imagery of the film.

Creed in her essay on Alien argues that all reworkings of the primal scene raise the question of incest. Psychoanalysis tells us the unconscious contains 'wishes that cannot be satisfied and have therefore been repressed. Predominant among such wishes are the tabooed incestuous desires of childhood'. Mitchell on Freud, 1984 p.251). Further more Freud (p.742) says,

At a still earlier period of life sexual excitations directed towards a parent of the opposite sex have not yet met with repression and as such are freely expressed.

Kane's participation in the primal scene has directly involved him in parental intercourse. Recalling Freud's theory that the child is unable to distinguish between the genitals of the two sexes, follows the theory of the

child's ability to identify with both parents bisexually, in the primal scene. Similarly Kane's ability to identify with the alien as possessor of breast and penis (bisexually) orchestrates what Freud (Mitchell, 1984 p.259) terms a 'fundamental wish for incest'.

Within the science fiction genre, certain conventional features can be applied as re-enactments of the birth scene. Creed (Kuhn 1990, Chapter 11) suggests we witness such conventions when smaller craft or bodies are ejected from the mothership into outer space. When this occurs in Alien, we sometimes glimpse the life-life of communication. May we interpret this as the umbilical chord? Creed proposes that these ejections, expulsions, which usually take place after last minute fighting or attacks, are representative of the birth after intercourse. We are given two instances of this occurrence in Alien. Initially Kane's body is ejected from the mothership which has become hostile to Kane's alien-invaded body. Later, Ripley in a small shuttle is expelled from the underbelly of the mothership. This latter action was necessitated by the mothership's imminent destruction. Simultaneous to what Creed refers to as, Ripley's 'birth', the mothership explodes. Both of these instances were precipitated by violent action.

What we have witnessed in these primal scene correspondences, is the reworking of the primal scene, in relation to the representation of other forms of procreation. They can all be seen, one way or another, to contain wish-fulfilment. More obvious is the antiseptic rebirth scene of the seven crewmen, aboard the mothership. However, with Freudian interpretation, Kane's 'take-over' can be seen as an enactment of incestuous desires. Yet these interpretations of wishfulfilment are only reasoned after intense examination. What element of wishfulfilment is played out for the audience? Most obviously, we would think of the death of the alien and the simultaneous, comforting,

configuration of normality, as Ripley is revealed to us unclothed at the end of the film. She is the reassuring pleasurable side of womanhood as against the 'oral sadistic' alien. She reassures a mode of normal bodily functions. But in fact, if we take a closer examination of the film's ending, we discover that Ripley's reassurance of pleasurable woman has already been made. She impractically risks her life to save her cat, Jones. It may have been her child she was rescuing - she exhibits an almost maternal love for this cat. We take this as a reassurance of her femininity. Freud (p.474) infers that 'beasts which are used as genital symbols in mythology play the same part in dreams....cats'. In this way Ripley has reasserted her sexuality.

In this chapter I have looked at how the narrative action of Alien reactivates infantile sexual investigations. This has encompassed the child's initial attachment to the mother, the separation from mother, search for origins, and distortion at the discovery of the sex act. These are ideas and concerns all originating in the past. They are denied any expression in our adult lives, as sexuality is denied any expression at the overt level of the narrative. The hidden content I have exposed in Alien has been the means to unleash these preoccupations. Similar to dreams, we find the child and the child's impulses living on in the narrative.

CHAPTER 4

It is impossible to understand men and women as sexual beings without reference to the culture from which they come. A mixture of religious, social and political trends over the past 2000 years has provided us with a cultural background. I have already mentioned the patriarchal myth of Adam and Eve. Eve seduced Adam by consorting with the devil and thus brought damnation to humanity. On the one hand sex was envisaged as the devil's tool awaiting temptation by women. Alternatively, the devil and sexuality were believed to reside in a woman's body. As such, women were to be avoided and this avoidance is played out in the overt narratives of science fiction films. At the covert level of the narratives, an attempt has been made to tackle these concerns which originate in the past.

However is it conceivable to use the story of Adam and Eve as a blueprint for the attitudes towards, and feelings about, sexuality today?

Women's sexuality brings another issue into play - the ability to reproduce; the power to originate life. This fact challenges the notion of Eve as the evil seducer. Man was once part of a woman's flesh, he is biologically dependent on her. In relation to science fiction, the presence of women reminds man of his dependency and his own mortality and thus must be repressed. Yet there is the opposing beliefs of women's bodies as potentially evil, and a necessary social vehicle. Anne Dickson (1985, p.118), proposes that this conflict 'creates a stress which can only be alleviated by constructing another image that incorporates both elements at once'. The mother alien in Aliens (1986) is a configuration of this image; both in its generative and 'oral-sadistic' modes.

In science fiction women and their sexuality are repressed by the conventions of the genre. Equally, men are denied any connection with their sexuality. Sexuality lies second to technology - to the narrative enterprise of space and travel and scientific advance. I have pointed out that this narrativity can be seen as a search for male autonomy and separateness; an assertion of control and dominance. Women as wives, girlfriends, mothers, arouse male need, desire and dependency. Does fear of the alien relate to fear of these emotions?

Down through the ages and today our culture has set standards and qualities necessary to becoming a 'real man'. He must be master of his feelings and any challenge that comes his way. He learns to show aggression in the face of fear. Strength, invulnerability, action and achievement are qualities stereotyped as necessary for man's sexual behaviour as well. In science fiction he has chosen to avoid all issues of sexuality. Another way to overcome this monstrous alien is to bury. His tool is repression. He successfully denies his bodies desires and everything that emerges from them. Transcendence through technology is the way to salvation. He repudiates all sexual pleasures and pursuits of the flesh. Barry Norman, in his interview with Francis Ford Coppola, asked of Coppola's use of technological gadgetry that he uses in his work. Coppola replied that 'technological knowledge is power'. Is this the attitude of western man?

In science fiction the fantasy of space travel and advanced technology has replaced sexual desire. I have shown in Chapter 3 that fear and horror surround the child's initial discovery of the sex act. Science fiction, at the overt level of the narrative, is the fantasy of a world void of sexual horrors. These fears and horrors return

and are tackled at the covert levels of the narrative. Does the genre fulfil what Freud terms the wishfulfilment aspect of fantasy? Science fiction films are noted for the terror, horror, tension and anxiety they arouse. These emotions are those of anxiety dreams and Freud (p.244) argued anxiety dreams:

are distorted and the wishfulfilment contained in them disguised to the point of being unrecognisable precisely owing to the repugnance felt for the topic of the dream or for the wish derived from it and to an intention to repress them.

I have suggested in relation to Alien that the terror of the alien is an enactment of the horror of sexuality. However, we cannot apply this same terror to every member of the audience who watches these films. Most of the critics who have written on science fiction have used psychoanalysis to interpret it. I would argue that primarily the imagery and secondly the narrative action, is conducive to such an interpretation. Is the imagery and action *more* than ironically metaphorical? Indeed, we would need assurance from the film makers or the novelists who inspired the films, to ascertain the truth.

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