



Kane's son: Males and masculinity in 'Alien'

Rebecca Schuster

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Since Alien first appeared on screen in 1979, there have been many studies about it, covering every imaginable interpretation possible. There was a focus especially on gender theory and femininity studies – essays on a lesbian point of view, the abject mother and monstrous femininity. Even about male homoerotic aspects, obviously with special emphasis on Alien³.

Astoundingly enough there is far less material about a male heterosexual approach to the movies.

Therefore, my task in this essay will be to look at the Alien movies – with a main focus on the original and the second part – from a different point of view.

(...)

1.1 ALIEN AND THE UNCANNY

Why is it that some things scare us, whereas other things do not bother us at all? One may look and find a possible answer to this question in Sigmund Freud's treatise on the uncanny.

One aspect that might help is Freud's assumptions that people always "experience the feeling [of the uncanny] in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts."

This notion becomes important when one takes a closer look at the Alien's body. H.R. Giger's creation consists to a great part of (humanlike) bones. The Alien's chest looks like an uncovered human ribcage, while the legs look as if they just consist of muscles and veins with the outer skin stripped of (Fig.1).

(...)

2. THE MASCULINE ALIEN

All of the Alien movies – with a possible exception of Alien Resurrection – are full of metaphoric images. Many of them are due to artist H.R. Giger, who was mainly responsible for the creation of the foreign planet, spaceships and the Alien itself.

Most of those images are sexual connoted allegories. The chair-like construction of the alien pilot, for example, resembles an erect penis.

The same is true for the Alien itself, but although we find allegories for both genders throughout the movies, most of the theorists who wrote about them cling to the notion, that the foreign – the alien/Alien – is female.

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