

# Reading response sf 2

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Literature 7 June Akira. Science Fiction. Reading Response Science fiction is often stereotyped as a genre reflecting the male outlook on the futuristic world of technology. Among the most characteristic features of the ‘masculine’ focus of science fiction is the “embodiment of male immaturities” in the concepts of physical prowess, war, excitement, and adventure (Roberts 72). If understood broadly, all of the mentioned components in the science fiction film refer to the patriarchal role of a man in society. In this view, science fiction films portray the development of the male character as his passage into adult manhood (Cornea 115). In this process the bodies of the male characters become visual metaphors of masculinity. The ‘machine-like’ bodies or the bodies transformed by the technology provide the signs of masculinity in crisis as the viewers attempt to subconsciously cling to the traditional notions of gender. What is more, the trials the characters face are based on their internal conflicts: the passage into manhood depends on the ways in which the character embraces his patriarchal power, but not on the techniques he uses to disrupt the existing world order (Cornea 116). In this view, Akira redefines the concept of post-apocalyptic reality by portraying masculinity through adolescent’s struggle with the physical and psychological changes of growing up.

Akira lays foundation for the new form of masculine identity that can be described as marginal and different. Early in the anime the viewers encounter the two friends, Tetsuyo and Kaneda, who belong to a youth motorcycle gang. While Kaneda’s masculinity is established in his position of the leader of the gang, Tetsuyo is struggling to find his place in the world of adult men. It becomes evident in the scene showing Tetsuyo’s failed attempt

<https://assignbuster.com/reading-response-sf-2/>

to start Kaneda's motorcycle. The latter has double symbolism. On the one hand, the bike is the phallic symbol of male authority and power. On the other hand, the bright red motorcycle represents the agent of change. It symbolizes male physical prowess as opposed to the static background of the futuristic urban landscape. Inability to control the motorcycle represents Tetsuyo's dependency and weakness.

What is more, the fact that Kaneda is protective of his friend symbolically transforms the former into the father figure. Thus, the conflict between two friends takes on the rhetoric of "an assault on established patriarchal power structures, but a related attack on traditional family" (Cornea 116). The episode makes viewers reminiscent of Oedipal complex linked with male adolescent's hostility towards his father. Henceforth, the motorcycle scene symbolizes Tetsuyo's mixed feelings of dependence and resentment towards Kaneda and masculinity.

Later in the film growth of Tetsuyo's telekinetic power triggered by his encounter with a psychic child represents the changing adolescent's perception of his own abilities, body, and role in the traditional patriarchal structure. It should be noted that Tetsuyo both rejects and accepts his changes. In particular, as soon as Tetsuyo embraces his power and uses it to transform himself from the figure of importance to that of absolute power. At one instance, he cries to Kaneda: "I don't need your help anymore!" (Akira). Yet, struggling with the power he at times fails to control, Tetsuyo undergoes physical metamorphosis. The latter symbolizes the protagonist's inner conflict with the concept of masculinity. At one point Tetsuyo's inability to grasp the notion of manhood symbolically manifests itself in the transformation of the character's arm into pink substance as pink color is

traditionally associated with femaleness. What is more, later the arm becomes a gigantic baby disrupting the gender stereotypes associated with male and female roles. In the end of the film Tetsuyo's failure to come to terms with his new identity of a man is shown in the character's transformation into a gigantic baby who feels dependent on his former friend as earlier in the story.

As it has been noted, the struggle of the main character with his power is the symbolic opposition of the adolescent male to the patriarchal order represented by his friend and more broadly the authorities. The grotesque and horrifying physical changes the character undergoes represent the youth's search of his male identity. In this view, the disruption of physical integrity of a human body symbolizes the breach in the human identity.

#### Works Cited

Akira. Dir. Katuhiro Otomo, 1988. Film. Web. 7 June 2014.

Cornea, Christine. Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality. Edinburgh University Press, 2007. Print.

Roberts, Adam. Science Fiction (The New Critical Idiom). Routledge, 2000. Print.