

Feminism in aliens

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



Having carried their gender as a burden for years, woman have now grown to have a massive and essential influence in worldwide cinema.

Feminist film theory challenges audiences to understand the source of gender inequality. Predominantly a masculine industry, early film have been said to contain the " male gaze," where the audience is placed in the shoes of a heterosexual male and woman are a merely objects to be viewed or damsels to be saved. Thesciencefiction and horror genres are no stranger to this technique often putting women in a helpless situation against monstrous forces until the big hero comes. Aliens, written and directed by Oscar winning James Cameron, turns this gaze around presenting its strong female heroine, Ripley. In Lynda Bundtzen's article, " Monstrous Mothers," she states the film as being " a profoundly disturbing allegory about contemporaryfeminism...

woman'sculturevs. her culture making aspirations," (Bundtzen 11) Aliens expresses its major analysis of both genders, but emphasizes female empowerment making it a driving force for feminism in film. It is undeniable that one of the many themes presented in Aliens is that the female gender is far from inferior. In writing the dialogue, Cameron expresses the behavior of a male brute, yet showing their inevitable downfall. During Act I of Cameron's script, our protagonist, Ripley, is wrongfully thought to be hysterically crazy when warning a room full of men about the dangers of the alien species. The male soldiers share this same flaw undermining the female and expressing their dominance. During the drop of the LV-426 ship, Hudson boasts, " I'm ready, man, check it out.

I am the ultimate badass! State of the badass art! You do not wanna fuck with me. Check it out! Hey Ripley, don't worry. Me and my squad of ultimate badasses will protect you! Check it out! Independently targeting particle beam phalanx. Vwap! Fry half a city with this puppy. We got tactical smart missiles, phase-plasma pulse rifles, RPGs, we got sonic electronic ball breakers! " (James Cameron, dir. , 1986). Along with a tough front, Hudson also expresses his arrogance asking Vasquez, " Hey Vasquez, have you ever been mistaken for a man? " she replies, " No, have you? " (James Cameron, dir.

1986). Not only does Cameron write for Hudson to be ignorant, the female soldier Vasquez seems equal in physical strength, but superior in wit and confidence. The story moves forward, and all the characters begin to show their true selves as the trials wane down their fronts. Aliens begin to close in on the team's position and Hudson seems weaker as if a scared child screaming, " Oh dear Lord Jesus, this ain't happening, man... This can't be happening, man! This isn't happening! " (James Cameron, dir.

, 1986). The trials brake down this man once filled with superiority into a now inferior being. With experience and wisdom, Ripley seems more calm and collected in handling the situation. Not even the little Newt now seems as much of an infant as the soldier Hudson. As the film moves, more and more do the triumph of the female characters overcome the inferiority of the " masculine" soldiers; Cameron explores the power of the relationship between mother and daughter or just mother and its offspring. Acting as a motherly figure, Ripley faces almost certain death to save the little girl Newt

(an action the males in this film would never execute) . Just as the rays of hope begin to shine on the lives of Newt and Ripley, Cameron's thematic narrative brings back the true enemy.

The only thing standing between them and life is the mother alien herself. The mother is shown as the largest and strongest of the breed with the ability to implement embryos in its victims, or in other words, create life. The "defeat" and escape of this massive mother is "only provisional and temporary," (Bundtzen 11). *Aliens*, written and directed by a male, is a film that yells for the strength of every type of woman. The innocent child Newt, the tough and admirable Vasquez, the deadly and powerful mother alien, and the heroine of all, Ripley are all glorified in some way. In glorifying the woman, the film simultaneously emasculates the roles of men and expresses a different viewpoint on genders. No longer will the male hero be required to save the day, Ripley shows strength, honor, and bravery in a time when all else fail aspire.

Though not a ideological feminist character, Ripley shows the traits of the strong feminine movement. 1. Bundtzen, Lynda K. "Monstrous Mothers: Medusa, Grendel, and now Alien. *Film Quarterly*. Vol. 15, No.

3. p. 11-17. 1987. 2. Cameron, James, dir. *Aliens*.

Feature Film. Twentieth Century Fox, 1986. *Aliens Collector Edition*, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003. 3. Doherty, Thomas. "Genre, Gender, and the *Aliens* Trilogy." *The Dread of Difference*.

Barry Keith Grant, Ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. p. 181-199. 4.
Creed, Barbara. " Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: An Imaginary
Abjection.

" Screen 27. 1 (1986): 44-70. Rpt. As " Alien and the Monstrous Feminine. "
In Kuhn, Alien Zone (1990): 128-144.