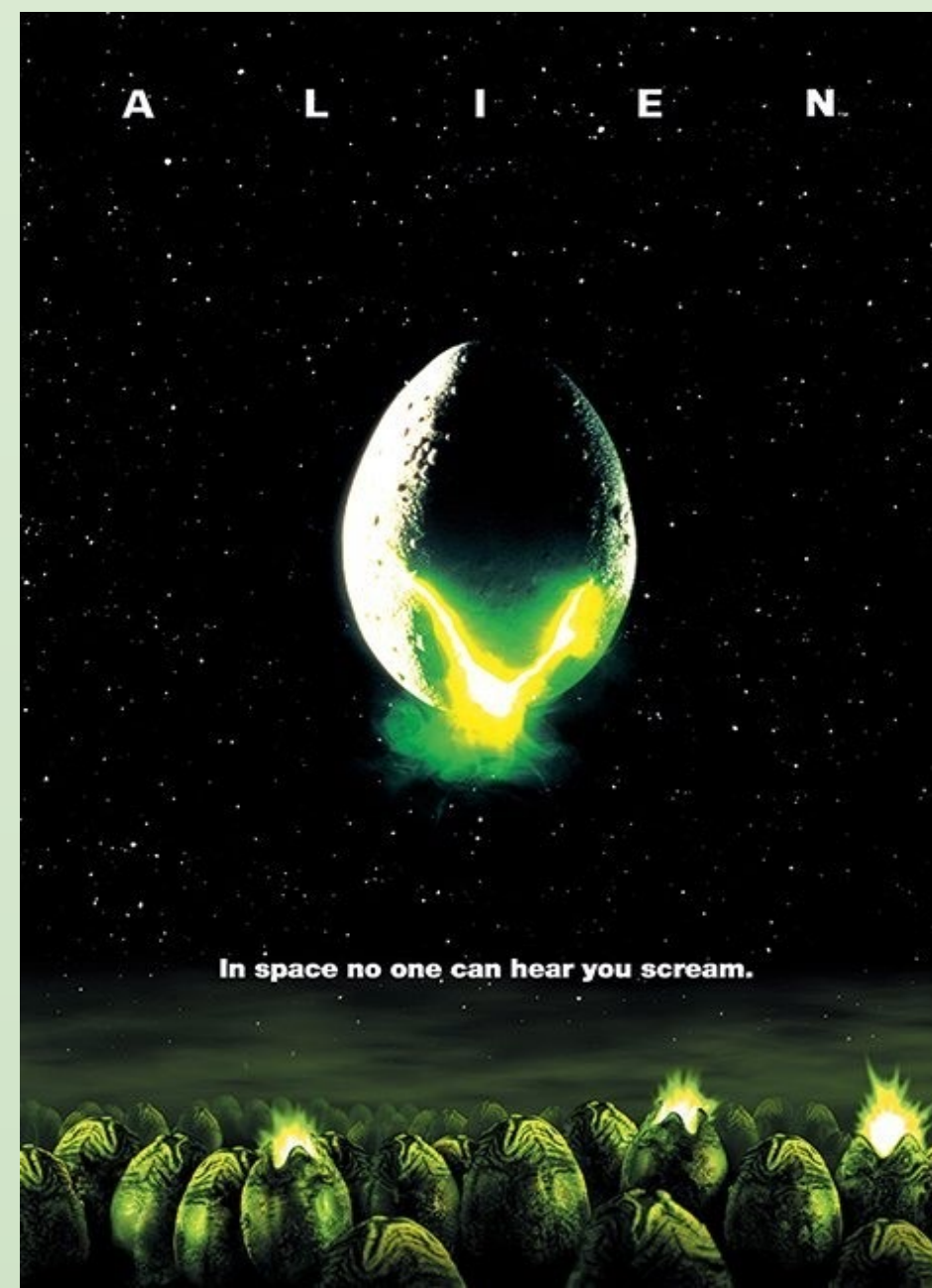


Monsters, Marines, and Feminism in the 1980s: A Look at Ellen Ripley from *Aliens*



Thesis

In James Cameron's *Aliens*, Ripley's journey throughout the film parallels the ever shifting nature of gender roles in the 1980s with the increase of women in the workforce and the forgoing of traditional values.



Masculinity

- Ripley is thrust into an 'alien', unknown world, which represents the conflict between the working women and the current gender roles at the time, specifically within the workforce (traditional vs. newer values).
- The marines exemplify the ideal masculinity of the time: the macho stereotype depicted in film & media.
- Ripley is put down due to the fact she doesn't belong in this world and she has to prove herself in order to surpass these lowered expectations of her.

Ambition

- Ripley represents the increase of women in the workforce during this time, and the effort women had to go through in order to 'prove' themselves in a man's world.
- Ripley, because of her experiences with the aliens, is able to adapt and succeed where masculinity and the culture surrounding it doesn't apply.
- Once the marines and Ripley enter the colony, the marines immediately are out of their element and their 'skills' are not as useful, since the enemy is not as easily fought head-to-head.

Motherhood

- Ripley's motherly relationship with Newt partly represents the transitional period of gender roles in the 80's as well as Ripley's divergence from other male heroes.
- The alien mother - being trapped by her role as a reproductive vessel (gender role of women being caretakers) while Ripley chooses to raise a single child, but also has the ability to be mobile (the working mother role)
- Ripley's character—just like a growing number of women in 1986—were no longer bound to having one child after another.

Conclusion

Ripley's active and strong-willed behavior (as well as her maternal instincts) directly paralleled the cultural and economic changes facing women during that era; in particular, she reflected both the gains women enjoyed and the challenges they faced as they entered the workforce in record numbers.

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