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The Other in the Eye:
A Transgeneric Approach to the Neo-Baroque Monster

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Abstract

My purpose on this degree dissertation is to examine horror creatures in English-language fiction. To achieve this, three different texts have been selected: Arthur Machen's short story ““The Great God Pan”” (1890), H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and Ridley Scott's film *Alien* (1986). The main goal of this paper is to analyze the meaning given to these neo-baroque monsters, whether it is conscious or not. The transgeneric approach of this paper proves to be especially useful in that allows me to compare and contrast different manifestations of this aesthetic model. In order to carry out this project, I have employed a poststructuralist theoretical framework, including Linda Hutcheon's theorization of postmodern literature. By means of close-reading, I tease out the postmodern aspects of the neo-baroque according to the taxonomies developed by authors such as Alejo Carpentier and Tzvetan Todorov. These taxonomies and post-structuralist theory, in turn, allow me to apply Lacanian psychoanalysis to these works.

Introduction

My first contact with the neo-baroque as a literary mode happened while attending a subject I took at USC. The subject was *Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teoría Literaria y la Literatura Comparada*, and the relationship between modernism, postmodernism and the neo-baroque conformed its first chapter. Although that subject managed to ignite the spark of my interest in the topic, it would not be until I returned to the UDC when I first got the idea of focusing on the neo-baroque monster for my essay. Last year's subject *Filosofía e Literatura* made me re-examine fundamental concepts about language and our conception of reality through it, and I gained an understanding of the fundamental schools of literary criticism through *A Literatura Inglesa e a sua Crítica*. Working with post-structuralist and psychoanalytical theory was a relatively easy task, considering I had studied these schools of criticism in the past. Remembering the theory behind the neo-baroque and its relationship with literary criticism, however, involved a degree of investigation, self-teaching and a certain degree of original thought. In fact, I was expecting to find more information about some of the selected texts and I was surprised to find out that this was not the case. While Ridley Scott's *Alien* enjoys an enormous popularity and has garnered much critical praise to the point of becoming a textbook example of successful science-horror films, I scarcely found any scholarly publications on Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan", or even about H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*. While it is evident that the work of their canonized contemporaries is at times more refined or original as far as literary discourse is concerned, I considered the ideas behind the works and their execution worth of analysis, if only to try to uncover what they might reveal about the society of their time, about the individual authors or about humanity as a whole.

It is precisely this lack of information what led me to choose these texts, together with the absence of science-fiction texts in the syllabi of the subjects of this degree. With a couple of notable exceptions such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, neither science fiction nor horror are especially prominent when dealing with the literature of any given period. Since film scholarship seems to be slightly more open to these science-horror, neo-baroque works—clearly due to their extremely visual nature—, it is interesting to compare the literary examples of the neo-baroque with their cinematic counterparts in the search for common symbolism, imagery and aesthetics. The first chapter of this paper tries to establish this comparison by defining the neo-baroque in literature and film. An exercise in close-reading is exerted in the second chapter to establish the relationship between neo-baroque and postmodernism so as to introduce the psychoanalytical interpretation of the third chapter.

The key word for the close-reading of these texts is perception. No matter if we speak of the hyper-assimilating neo-baroque descriptions, the doubt in the mind of the characters when confronted with the supernatural or the ineffable characteristics of the creatures, every aspect of these narratives can be linked to perception and the knowledge—or lack thereof—obtained by it. The reality created by humans out of a combination of language and their sensorial experiences is destabilized by the creatures in these texts, a fact that anticipates many of the twentieth century's conceptions of language. With this in mind, my goals in this paper are to showcase the evolution of the neo-baroque monster from examples in horror texts from the last third of the nineteenth century to its transition to contemporary cinema. Throughout this examination, I will analyze the symbolism of these figures in an attempt to discover why they have become so prominent in horror and science-fiction works in current times.

Chapter 1. Defining the Neo-Baroque

1.1. Baroque and Neo-Baroque

The common thread between the works I have selected for this essay can be summarized in one word: neo-baroque, and neo-baroque applied to creatures of fiction. The term, however, is not without its own set of problems. Obviously enough, it refers to re-imagining or, at least, revisiting the baroque. This naturally leads us to the question, for what purpose? “Neo-Baroque” is a term much more ingrained in the literature of Spanish-speaking countries than in English literature, but none of the texts included in this paper belong to the Spanish literary tradition. To narrow the distance between the UK and Spain, we have to turn our sights towards American literature and examine it as the junction where both traditions meet, largely due to Latin American influence. Along with the fact that it is an older work, this is the reason why, as we will see in the second chapter of this essay, the only British text selected, Arthur Machen's “The Great God Pan”, has the fewest neo-baroque traits.

To understand this connection, Alejo Carpentier's essays “Marvelous Real in America” and “The Baroque and the Marvelous Real” will prove to be of vital importance. In these texts, the author examines what he considers a defining element of Latin American art: its relationship with the baroque understood not so much as a historical style, but as what he calls a “spirit.” Official definitions of the baroque notwithstanding¹—for, as Carpentier claims, they tend to attribute negative qualities to the greatest works of art of a particular historical period (90)—, the author mentions the idea previously developed by Eugenio d'Ors that “what the

1 The Oxford English Dictionary defines the baroque as “highly ornate and extravagant in style,” with “extravagant” possessing the connotation of “exceeding what is reasonable or appropriate.” This connotation is also present in the Spanish definition.

baroque displays is [...] a creative impulse that recurs cyclically throughout history in artistic forms [...]. There is a baroque spirit, just as there is an imperial spirit” (90). The aforementioned pejorative attributions of the baroque—as a seventeenth-century attitude—, particularly its excessive ornamentation and lack of empty spaces, are born from a reaction against the characteristics of architectural classicism, in Carpentier's opinion. In contrast with classicism, the baroque embraces a “horror of the vacuum, [of] the naked surface” (93). We can easily observe through canonical works how much focus the baroque places on movement as well: Bernini's sculptures are characterized by a liveliness conveyed entirely through detail, posturing and the illusion of movement. Carpentier mentions the lack of a central axis in *The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa* (95), an example of the natural disorder through detail that the baroque tries to convey.

However, in contrast with other historical styles such as Gothic art—and similarly to classicism—, the baroque has surfaced, disappeared and returned not only through different periods of time, but across distant cultures as well.² Carpentier mentions India as an example of a culture in which “the baroque has flourished in all ages,” despite the fact that the baroque has originally been interpreted as a Mediterranean attitude towards art. Understood as a futuristic spirit, its appearance marks “the summit of a civilization's culture,” be it, as exemplified by Carpentier, the Italy of Bernini, the France of Rabelais or the England of Shakespeare (96). In the case of America in particular, Carpentier reverts to the sculptures of the native Aztec populations to inspect how this Baroque spirit makes its appearance. The mixture—*mestizaje*, as he puts it—of both straight and curved lines in the same piece and the absence of empty spaces near their temples act as unmistakable traits of this American

2 It could be argued that every previous style, no matter when or where it first appeared, resurfaces at times, effectively blurring the distinction specified here. The distinction, Carpentier argues, responds to the nature of this reappearance. While it is possible to write a Gothic novel or build a Romanic cathedral in this day and age, this is not motivated by the ideas and societal conventions of the time when these styles were conceived. Plainly speaking, such art would constitute a “retro” work. Classicism and baroque exist outside of this distinction because of their more universal and more adaptable nature.

baroque (98). The fear of empty spaces in particular, when applied to animated³ creatures in works of fiction, can be linked to the uncanny, the “fear of life” and the Other. These are concepts that can be clearly seen in the corpus, and that I will develop in subsequent chapters. For the time being, it is necessary to emphasize that the apparition of these baroque traits in pre-Colombus America consolidates the baroque as a “spirit” rather than a style. Carpentier doesn't limit this *mestizaje* to the arts, however, nor to the native population of the New World. Far from it, this mixture that “engenders the baroque” permeates everything:

The American baroque develops along with *criollo* culture, [...] with the self-awareness of the American man, be he the son of a white European, [...] of a black African or an Indian born on the continent [...]: the awareness of being Other, [...] of being a *criollo*; and the *criollo* spirit is itself a baroque spirit. (100)

The *criollo* spirit that the author mentions has grown exponentially in current times. Due to the multicultural nature of the population of the United States, it is not difficult to imagine how this distinction between “me as opposed to the Other” is now more important than ever.⁴ Due to the hegemonic nature of the United States as the global transmitters of mass media, it could explain the rediscovery these authors have recently enjoyed, especially—but not exclusively—in “younger” media.⁵

Concerning the boundaries between different—yet seemingly comparable—genres, Carpentier's thoughts about the marvelous real can be linked to these works due to their

3 In the sense of being able to move on their own.

4 This attitude can be linked to racist behaviors. The racial undertones of *At the Mountains of Madness* are more subtle than those in other works by H.P. Lovecraft. His most obvious example of this, his novella *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, deals directly with this notion of *mestizaje* in America—couples of mixed ethnicity—. While that text isn't analyzed in this paper, *At the Mountains of Madness* also includes similar topics.

5 *Alien's* influence in contemporary science-horror movies can hardly be contested when examining movies such as *Event Horizon* (1997), *Pitch Black* (2000) or *Pandorum* (2009). Lovecraft's influence in film is more limited, the most prominent example being John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1986). In the realm of videogames, however, his influence is easily traceable. Games like *Eternal Darkness* (Silicon Knights, 2002) or *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (Headfirst Productions, 2005) prove the vitality of these “Lovecraftian aesthetics” in this medium. Machen's influence, on the other hand, is not as prominent in visual media.

“marvelous” nature, following Todorov's classification as we shall see in the next chapter. Carpentier argues that, unlike what occurs with magical realism, the marvelous real is presented “in its raw state” (104). Compared with Surrealism, the marvelous appears as a natural element of the world, without pretending to be grandiose or shocking. Carpentier exemplifies his interpretation by pointing at the “manufactured mystery” found in surrealist paintings in comparison with the amazement of the Spanish *conquistadores* when they laid eyes upon Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Montezuma empire, ten times larger than the area occupied by Paris at the time. The marvelous sight left the men speechless, which, as the author mentions, is “a dilemma that we [...] would confront centuries later: the search for the vocabulary we need in order to translate it all” (104). The way in which the marvelous exposes these gaps in language attracts the baroque spirit, as both use this larger-than-life approach to—for a lack of a better word—“marvel” the reader. Through close-reading I will detail examples of these “gaps in language” in all three works, including the visual equivalent of the concept in the film *Alien*.

By presenting the marvelous naturally, through discovery, these works walk a fine line between the “manufactured” nature of surrealism and the natural reaction that the marvelous provokes.⁶ An examination of the marvelous element of each text on subsequent chapters will allow us to link them even further to this neo-baroque spirit.

⁶ William Spindler later expanded upon this distinction with his taxonomy of magical realism. Following his model, the traits of Carpentier's marvellous real can be found under the label “anthropological magical realism.” The narrator of this literary mode displays the events to the reader through a double “narrative voice”: one following a rational point of view and another which supports magical explanations. The presence of these antithetical voices is resolved by the author through “myths and cultural background” (Simal 126).

1.2. From Victorianism to Postmodernism

As mentioned in the previous section, the baroque shows its cyclical nature by reappearing during the beginning of the twentieth century. This is hardly surprising when we stop to consider how many radical changes the world suffered in a very small time frame. The overarching industrialization, the expansion of the global economy, the revolution of the physical sciences, the international trauma caused by the Great War... The modernist works of the avant-garde movements alone display very clearly the complete change in perception occurring at the turn of the century. Although the importance of these events must not be underestimated, the changes that began to erode the Victorian values can be traced back as early as the second half of the nineteenth century. By exposing some of the central ideas of Victorian culture, we can appreciate how, through a more post-Victorian than proto-modern counter-reaction, the baroque spirit makes its appearance.

In his essay “Towards a Definition of American Modernism,” American author Daniel Joseph Singal examines how Modernism acts as a direct but diametrically opposed answer to American Victorian society.⁷ At the center of Victorian ethics stood a set of values “based on a radical dichotomy between that which was deemed 'human' and that regarded as 'animal’” (4). In other words, morality was based on the belief that humans were completely different from animals, with civilization—understood as the conjunction of “education, refinement, manners, the arts, religion, [...] loyalty and family love” (4)—being the defining element of human nature. This anthropocentric view of the world was supported by Puritan beliefs, which reinforced the Victorian status quo and acted as a safety net against—in their view—the moral

⁷ Even though American society independized itself from the British crown before Queen Victoria's reign, the country naturally inherited a large portion of their world view from British society. Half a century later, the differences between the mentality of both countries were not significant enough to warrant a distinction here, since most of the cultural views explained here could be interchanged between both societies. As such, we can speak of a overarching Victorian mindset than permeates the social imaginary of both societies.

corruption symbolized by hedonism. Any impulse that “threatened self-control” had to be contained, especially if those impulses were sexual in nature. While Victorians did not reject sexuality as part of the human life, they held the firm belief that it was an animal impulse in origin, and that the progress achieved through technological advancements would collapse were people to succumb to their most instinctual pleasures (4).

Dichotomies such as this one are another defining trait of the society of the time, a binary system that worked by compartmentalizing each of its poles. Singal quotes Victorian literature specialist Masao Miyoshi's studies to exemplify this reality of pairs⁸ (5), which extends beyond gender roles and living beings to everything in their immediate reality: ethnicity and social class being major examples. As Singal puts it, what the Victorians tried to achieve was a “radical standard of innocence” (5) obtained through extreme compartmentalization. This “over-civilized” society of the time “was stultifying the personality” of the individuals (5-6) and, as soon as some of its fundamental values began to be challenged by science, these binary dichotomies began to crumble. A clear example of this can be seen in Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, which revolutionized the realm of biology dramatically and obliterated the strong separation between humans and animals. Works such as *The Island of Dr. Moreau* by H. G. Wells can definitely be read as reflection of the tensions in the status quo of the time. While clearly crafted to attack these Victorian dichotomies, the topic of “the dangers of modern science” is showcased without shame in the novel. Due to this fact, it displays both sides of the ideological conflict. In the same vein, “The Great God Pan”—which predates Wells' book by six years—deals with similar topics related to the limits of science and what is deemed correct in society. Unlike *Moreau*, it doesn't make the dangers of science its main focus, but, as we shall see, opts for anchoring its message in religion and (female) sexuality instead.

8 The following chapter will be heavily dedicated to exploring how these oppositions are blurred in the corpus.

The authors of the so-called “weird fiction” from the first third of the twentieth century largely follow the macabre topics first seen in Edgar Allan Poe and consolidated by the likes of Wells, Machen or M. R. James.⁹ As Lovecraft mentions in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” “Poe did that which no one else ever did or could have done; and to him we owe the modern horror-story in its final and perfected state.” (20). Unlike the purely modernist authors, who were more concerned with—in the words of Ezra Pound—“making it new,”¹⁰ the output of these authors is largely imitative. The tradition can be seen as an evolution of the ghost stories, the gothic novel and the science-horror fiction of the nineteenth century.¹¹ A defining characteristic of this weird fiction—perhaps the only one, given how dissimilar one work can be from another—is the mixture of genres. To blend horror, science-fiction and fantasy proved to be a popular formula, one to which Lovecraft adhered vehemently. Again we find that *mestizaje*, Carpentier's *criollo* spirit, when sided with the non-conformist topics—from a Victorian perspective—of these works, serves as the perfect broth for the neo-baroque spirit to appear.

The involvement of science in putting into question what at the time were considered to be universal truths also influenced these authors and their works extensively. The structure of the atom, radioactive energy and Einstein's space-time continuum were just some of the examples that shook the foundations of the rational beliefs of the time. Singal states that “the new science had little use for the rigid, dichotomous categories that the Victorians had relied upon to organize their world; it was as enamored of dynamic process and relativism as the new philosophy and art” (8). In the author's opinion, this revolution of the scientific fields

9 While Lovecraft popularized the term after the publication of his essay *Supernatural Horror in Fiction*, the origin of the term has been attributed to Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. A similar coinage can be seen in the title of his compilation of stories *A Stable for Nightmares; or Weird Tales*.

10 The phrase has been taken from his 1935 book *Make It New!*, a collection of essays.

11 Different authors specialized in different aspects of the umbrella term “weird fiction.” The early writings of Lovecraft resemble Poe's stories. M. R. James' writings have more of a Gothic inclination. Others, like Robert E. Howard—author of *Conan the Barbarian*—, wrote about “sword and sorcery,” fantasy settings with little to no relationship with the Gothic novel at all.

imbues the new modern society with a sense of curiosity and the need to experience every facet of life. Which is to say, to see reality for what it is, in its multiple interpretations, paying no mind to whatever contradictions or painful truths might arise from this process (13). The texts chosen for analysis embrace these ideas distinctly, a fact that shows the ideological continuum that they traverse.

1.3. Postmodernism, the Neo-Baroque and Entertainment

In the final section of this chapter, I will try to compile what are the characteristics of the neo-baroque when applied to postmodern visual media. Examining the relationship between postmodernism and cinema in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon contends that postmodernism “works to underline and to undermine the notion of the coherent self-sufficient subjects as the source of meaning” (109).¹² She develops this idea further in her analysis of parody, a mechanism through which intertextuality is introduced. Parodic strategies often serve the purpose of critiquing and making political statements. In a way, the neo-baroque's polycentric approach acts as a similar mechanism. If postmodern films are “obsessed with history and with how we can tell the past today” (114), neo-baroque polycentrism offers us a similar retelling of the past presented as something new.

Angela Ndalians's *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* proves to be a very useful tool for gaining a broad vision of the neo-baroque across different artistic expressions, not just film. In a way, Ndalians is unable to take any other approach, since the all-encompassing nature of the neo-baroque prevents it.

¹² In *Uncertain Mirrors: Magical Realisms in US Ethnic Literatures*, Jesús Benito enumerates some of the characteristics that he considers postmodern fiction and magical realism share, such as “the crisis of representation, the rejection of Western empiricism [...], the denunciation of binarism and the preoccupations with borders, mixing and hybridity” (67). Some of these traits are also shared by Carpentier's marvelous real.

Similarly to the Aztec sculptures from Latin America, the neo-baroque “combine[s] the visual, the auditory, and the textual in ways that parallel the dynamism of seventeenth-century baroque form” (5). The author’s main goal is to demonstrate how the changes in technology, industries and economic models have opened the gates to the neo-baroque. Ndalians expands upon the idea of the label “baroque cinema,” which has been used to denote the “austerish” quality of film directors such as Tim Burton, Tod Browning or James Whale, among others. The use of the term implies that the “formal quality [of the films] flows 'freely' and 'excessively' [...], it implies losing control” (26). To simplify this: the “baroque” label has been traditionally used in film studies to classify those works that include an excessive amount of a particular quality, beyond what the canon deems “conventional.” As Carpentier mentioned in his essay, this definition corresponds to the “decadent” perception of the baroque, in contrast with the more ordered classicism. Despite this perception, those previously mentioned “baroque” films have enjoyed abundant popularity in current times, becoming clear examples of what Ndalians defines as polycentric, serialized products. The overabundance of merchandising, computer games, comic books, television series or even theme park attractions based on franchises such as *Edward Scissorhands* or *Alien* prove that popular culture has assimilated this initially extravagant creations within itself. This expansion, however, is a natural element of the neo-baroque in entertainment media and its relationship with space. By using the *Star Wars* franchise as an example, Ndalians examines the relationship the cinematic neo-baroque possesses with this unit, and its “lack of respect for the limits of the frame” (41). The allusion to the rise of an empire and a resistance movement is only narrated through scrolling text, effectively hiding the beginning of the narrative from the spectator. The openness of these narrations causes the appearance of the “expanding

polycentrism” that allows this cross-media approach to entertainment (42).¹³ This characteristic is also shared by the *Alien* franchise.

The current state of Hollywood production favors this intertextual approach to narration. Ndalianis makes an extensive comparison between the money-driven status of the film industry and the rise of capitalism and bourgeois mass-media during the baroque period of the seventeenth century, paying special attention to how the increased social mobility, the higher literacy rate or the spread of print texts due to “urban culture” made possible a more “serialized” approach to entertainment (Ndalianis 61).¹⁴ The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have become the culmination of this economic infrastructure thanks to mass-markets and globalization, which in turn has allowed Hollywood to promote franchises even further in recent times. Nevertheless, a certain degree of intertextuality and focus on serialization has always accompanied Hollywood's output. Even during the earlier days of cinema, film studios such as Universal tried to promote this interrelationship between the worlds of different films. Its series *Universal Monsters* is a perfect example of this, and acts as yet another example of the baroque applied to the marvelous, the grotesque and the macabre.

It is interesting to add as well that these changes in the economic infrastructure have caused an alignment between what is neo-baroque and what is postmodern. When viewed in a vacuum, the mass-produced, entertainment-driven pieces of these cultural products might seem derivative and heavily marketed. However, it is important to understand that this repetition of patterns is fundamental for the “neo-baroque aesthetic of repetition” (Ndalianis 50). The artistry in these works is paradigmatic in nature: it is based on the variation of “key

13 It cannot be overstated that what differentiates neo-baroque polycentrism from regular serialization is the paradigmatic nature of its key iconographic features. Neo-baroque serialization preserves icons instead of characters, as explained further on the essay.

14 Some Restoration comedies can be seen as examples of this. When not written as direct sequels, some of them feature characters from other works by the same author, hinting at the shared fictional world that extends beyond the plays themselves, e.g., John Vanbrugh's *Love Last Shift* and *The Relapse*.

iconographic features,” such as Ripley-like heroines in *Alien* media (68). These elements conform the identity of a work larger than the sum of its parts: by mixing the grandiose spirit of the baroque with the hyper-inclusive characteristic of postmodernism, the focus switches from each individual work by itself to the whole they constitute when put together: a neo-baroque polycentric universe. As we will see on a smaller scale, the design of the neo-baroque monsters is also a reflection of this desire to include many different fragments in a single whole that becomes all of them but none at the same time.

Chapter 2. The Fantastic and Postmodernism

Having established the neo-baroque nature of the texts at hand, my focus on this chapter will switch to see how the neo-baroque and postmodern characteristics appear in the texts themselves through close-reading. Using Tzvetan Todorov's analysis on fantastic discourse, as developed in his appropriately titled work *The Fantastic*,¹⁵ I will classify these works attending to the taxonomy proposed by the author. At the same time, by focusing on the wording, style, signs and meaning of these texts, I'll try to put on display their postmodern characteristics as a preparation for a psychoanalytic reading in the last chapter of the essay.

Todorov defines the fantastic as a space that exists between the genres of the uncanny and the marvelous. The author details the very peculiar modalization of the genre and the degree of hesitation in the narration caused by the appearance of what appears to be supernatural.¹⁶ Depending on the resolution of this ambiguity, the text can be described as uncanny or marvelous: it either explains rationally the events at hand or rewrites the laws of nature to fit them in the regular world (41).¹⁷ The distinction is not clear-cut: a text could be described as fantastic-marvelous if, for example, it manages to maintain its ambiguity until its ending. I have already mentioned how Carpentier links the neo-baroque with the marvelous real in the previous chapter, a fact worth remembering since this acts as an important middle step in the relationship between the neo-baroque and the fantastic. The genre of science-fiction complicates these ideas even further, especially when it deals with scenarios that,

15 While *The Fantastic* is rooted in structuralist, not post-structuralist, thought, it is nevertheless a useful tool through which we can analyze these text in order to point out their similarities and differences.

16 This definition, however, is not without problems. As Gerard Hoffman mentions in *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, "it restricts the fantastic to certain topics and motifs within the realm of the supernatural" (227). The supernatural nature of the selected texts averts this problem entirely.

17 It is worth commenting now that the marvelous in this texts, following Jacques Lacan's triad of psychoanalytical orders, is a result of the irruption of the Real—which by definition defies representation—in the Symbolic order. These concepts will be further developed in the next chapter of the essay.

while not impossible, are improbable to the point of suggesting the supernatural.¹⁸ This distinction can cause difficulties in classifying a text as uncanny or marvelous. Determining the relationship of each text with those genres will help establishing what is neo-baroque about them while unveiling some of their postmodern traits in the process.

As stated before, Arthur Machen's text does not feature as many neo-baroque characteristics as the other two. This does not mean, however, that we cannot find, *sensu stricto*, postmodern traits in its content. Looking no further than the first chapter, we observe that a discussion about the true nature of reality and objective knowledge occupies the absolute center of the introduction. Dr. Raymond's claim about sensorial perceptions being “shadows that hide the real world from [our] eyes” (1) falls in line with the post-structuralist attitude toward scientific thought, especially when taking into account the central, almost dogmatic role that science occupied before the *fin de siècle*. Contrary to what the quote might suggest, the character, unlike Foucault or other post-structuralist thinkers, does not reject the ability to really know the world.¹⁹ By own admission, his ultimate goal is to examine this newfound level of reality. As if it were conceived by a postmodern critic, this “real word” can only be found in the space that lies between a binary opposition, it is an in-between concept: “I stood there and saw before me the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profoundly between two worlds” (1).²⁰ Machen's characters use language to describe something that defies utterance, that effectively exists, untainted, *outside* of the text. Pure signified devoid of expression. The paradox resembles the main criticism post-structuralism applies to

18 The label “speculative fiction” has become more prominent in recent years as an umbrella term in which genres like science-fiction, fantasy or alternative history can be included. Some authors, like Margaret Atwood, have embraced this term to avoid the pejorative connotations of the “science-fiction” label.

19 This rejection of objective knowledge is, for Hans Bertens, one of the main ideological differences between postmodernism and other ideologies, particularly those related to liberal humanism (118). In fact, many postmodern characteristics can be linked to the abandonment of objective knowledge: irrationality, immanence, hybridity, parody, pastiche and deconstruction (Hoffman 36-38)

20 The text never specifies which two worlds Dr. Raymond refers to. A possible interpretation, considering the events of the rest of the chapter, could be that he is referring to the real and the oniric worlds.

structuralism: nothing about language can be said outside of language.²¹ Similarly, Clarke's dream sequence during that same chapter confronts him with an entity impossible to describe by any means other than a negative definition: "that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form" (4). A parallel encounter occurs at the climax of the work, in the examination of Helen's body:²²

I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself,
and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the
beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go
down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle
of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the
outward form changed. (29-30)

The excerpt can be read as another example of the erasure of binary oppositions by postmodernism or magical realism, even if—unlike future examples—Machen crafts a being that only jumps from one pole to the other. It can also be interpreted as an allegory of post-structuralism's views on the verbal sign: due to the relational and differential nature of meaning, the signifier is in a constant state of fluidity and transformation.²³ There is no knowledge to be learned from the encounter, as there is no formal relationship—not even arbitrary—between what the characters perceive and what the creatures are. Helen and Pan can be interpreted as allegories symbolizing the arbitrariness of signs:²⁴ by rejecting differential meaning entirely—being everything and nothing at the same time—, they

21 cf. See Derrida 227

22 The exact moment of her death is elided. The previous chapter ends with Villiers about to offer Helen the choice of hanging herself if she is unwilling to turn herself in. The final chapter, entitled "The Fragments" due to the nature of the narration, includes excerpts of Dr. Robert Matheson's autopsy report.

23 Peter Barry mentions that post-structural description of language is characterized by "a rather obsessive imagery based on liquids" (62), a fitting metaphor for Machen's description of Helen's physiognomy.

24 Or, in Saussure's terms, the "unmotivated" character of the sign.

destabilize the societal centers of reference to place the marginal elements—what constitutes “the Other”—in focal position.

Concerning the themes of the work, it is necessary for the goals of this paper to examine what Todorov calls the “themes of the other.” In Todorov's opinion, the supernatural, due to its superlative nature, can often be connected to extreme sensorial experiences or desire (127). Desire and sexuality as a whole constitute one of such “themes of the other.” This topic permeates the three main works of this essay, as we shall see. In Machen's text, the author establishes a topical connection between the main female character and these themes. Helen and her mother Mary encompass all the feminine presence that can be seen—and never heard—in the text. This dimension of her character is vital to understand her design: she is crafted to break every Victorian conviction. There is an emphasis on her strange beauty—even her pseudonym Beaumont points at that—, which is quickly used as another element of her diabolical nature. Helen's macabre conception—she is born out of the union of Mary and Pan through Dr. Raymond's experiments—is reflected in her appearance and behavior:

She was described to me as being [...], very handsome [...]. I should think the worst den in London far too good for her. The person from whom I got my information, as you may suppose, no great Puritan, shuddered and grew sick in telling me of the nameless infamies which were laid to her charge. (26)

This demonization of female sexuality, while nothing out of the ordinary for the Victorian mindset, is only exacerbated by the beast-like nature of Helen and connection to the Greek god Pan. By diluting the Victorian dichotomy “man-beast” while adding a sexually free female to the mix, Machen explores a central characteristic of these “themes of the other.”

Attending to its form, we can see that the text's mode does not present the verbal characteristics that Todorov relates to the fantastic: generally speaking, there is not an extended use of the imperfect tense as a tool used to create ambiguity (38). On the contrary: even when the narrator exposes the events through the eyes of non-reliable witnesses in reported speech, their absolute certainty about what they saw, no matter how unbelievable, distances the text from ambiguity and from the fantastic.²⁵ The frame story, which involves Clarke reading the book in which he has compiled Helen's case, presents the reactions of many characters in direct speech, not in hindsight: "Why man, if such a case were possible, our Earth would be a nightmare" (9).²⁶ These are the only instances in which a degree of ambiguity is presented, although the character's reactions are closer to incredulity than hesitation. The lack of a plausible explanation for the events of the story, no matter how small, aligns "The Great God Pan" with Todorov's definition of the marvelous. While the murder-mystery structure of the text would bring it closer to the uncanny, the mystical nature of the supernatural events effectively rules out any logical explanation.

Similarly, *At the Mountains of Madness* presents traits of both genres while considerably approaching the fantastic. Comparatively speaking, the character of William Dyer is a much more introspective narrator than Clarke.²⁷ His subjective testimony suits the fantastic discourse, since it allows Lovecraft to expose the hesitation present in the fantastic: "for a second *it seemed* that the composite sound included a bizarre musical whistling" (522). Exaggeration to the point of suggesting the supernatural, another of Todorov's features of the

25 Trevor, the child that sees young Helen in the forest with Pan, is a good example of such a witness. His erratic behavior after the event hints at a very explicit connection between Helen and the supernatural, which removes all ambiguity that the text could have introduced after the first chapter.

26 The metafictional element of Clarke compiling Helen's story through newspaper clippings, despite not being a focal point of the narration, can be linked to the hyper-assimilating nature of the neo-baroque, Carpentier's concept of *mestizaje* and the postmodern *pastiche*.

27 Despite not being fully named in this work, the character reappears in another of Lovecraft's stories, *The Shadow Out of Time*. While the author does not write direct sequels to his stories, creatures and characters do reappear in occasionally. The interconnected world of his writings can be interpreted as an example of neo-baroque serialization, of the narrations of his works expanding beyond the limits of the original text.

fantastic discourse (77), is ever-present in the novella. Given the objective of the expedition to the South Pole, exploring an exotic locale, the marvelous real, which feeds the fantastic, permeates the novel whenever the landscape becomes the focus of attention: “Mountains surpass anything in imagination. [...] Highest peaks must go over 35,000 feet. Everest out of the running” (492). Just like in Carpentier's example involving Spanish conquerors and the Montezuma Empire, the view invokes the sublime and the marvelous real as the explorers stare in awe at the sight of a civilization that surpasses anything conceivable: “The effect was that of a cyclopean city of no architecture known to man [...], with vast aggregations [...] embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws” (508). The city's impossible architecture cannot be described in detail, just by using geometrical shapes.²⁸ In spite of this, the narrator emphasizes on the gargantuan size of the structure, which reflects the “horror of the vacuum” of the neo-baroque: “the implied scale of the whole was terrifying and oppressive in its sheer gigantism” (509). The only mechanism by which Dyer can simplify the description is through a comparison with the paintings of Nicholas Roerich.²⁹ Through the text, similar comments are made by Dyer evoking works by other authors. Lovecraft establishes these connections for two main purposes: to add verisimilitude to Dyer's narration through other sources and to expand the interconnected world of his writings beyond the novella. This is another example of the neo-baroque aesthetics manifesting through the resources of self-reference and intertextuality.³⁰

28 Lovecraft inserts non-Euclidean geometry where Euclidean should be found—particularly in the description of cities and ruins—to display how the marvelous rewrites the laws of reality through the supernatural.

29 The reference has been carefully selected by the author, since the Russian painter was also known for his interest in the occult, particularly hypnosis. By picking Roerich in particular, Lovecraft hints at the supernatural characteristics of the city through relational meaning.

30 The most prominent references would be those to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. *At the Mountains of Madness* shares a number of motifs with Poe's novel, such as the South Pole acting as a safe haven for an undiscovered civilization. Other references include mentions to William Scoresby's expeditions to the Arctic or allusions to other works by Lovecraft. In the case of *Arthur Gordon Pym*, a connection is made by the narrator between the fictional Poe in the novel and the supernatural events happening in the South Pole. By effectively reinterpreting both the text and its origin, Lovecraft creates a strong relationship between the texts through an intertextual reference.

The descriptions of the Old Ones also possess a certain neo-baroque aesthetic to them. We can find plenty of details in the two pages dedicated to their physiognomy. Furrows that hide wings with serrated edges, expandable tentacles and tendrils, branched stalks, grills, and five mouthed-tubes surrounding a central eye. The overwhelming description makes it almost impossible to conceive the creature as anything but conglomerated fragments, it defies representation. No part of its body is devoid of detail, which reflects the neo-baroque's fear of empty spaces. The appendages described, due to their locomotive nature, indirectly suggest to the reader the neo-baroque's obsession with movement. In sharp contrast, the appearance of the shoggoth features no concrete elements whatsoever: the full image of the creature is lost in language due to its fluid, more abstract signifier:

[...] for shoggoths and their work ought not to be seen by human beings, or portrayed by any beings. The mad author of the *Necronomicon* had nervously tried to swear that [...] only drugged dreamers had ever conceived them. Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes – viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells – rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile - [...] (575)

Through these creatures, the text expands upon the previously mentioned theme of approximating human and animal, only inverting the efforts seen in late nineteenth century literature.³¹ What we find in Lovecraft's text is not the animalization of man, but the humanization of the monster:

Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being [...]. They had not been ever savages [...] poor Lake, pook

31 See the comparison between *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and “The Great God Pan” in the previous chapter.

Gedney ... and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last – what had they done that we would not have done in their place? (576)

The descriptions of these creatures can be classified according to Jean Baudrillard's analysis of hyperreality.³² Baudrillard states that the sign follows a series of steps before becoming completely detached from meaning. A first stage involving faithful representation of a “profound reality” is followed by a second one that encapsulates a perverted reality. To this stage belongs the character of Helen, since she hints at an obscure reality not represented by the sign—her partially non-human nature—. The signs of the third stage try to disguise that there is no whole reality to represent, only fragments. Unconnected images are suggested as a way to represent the characteristics of the sign, but they do not conform the representation of the whole, since they can't be seen as a cohesive entity. The Old Ones belong to this order, as their chimera-like physiognomy showcases the inability of the scientists to describe it, more than what the creature actually is: “It looked like a radiate, but was clearly something more. It was partly vegetable, but had three-fourths of the essentials of animal structure” (503). Finally, the fourth stage consists of pure simulation, signs completely devoid of meaning, those “that bear no relation to any reality at all” (Barry 85). In other words, signs just reflect the presence of other signs. The description of the shoggoth illustrates this stage well, since its mutable nature suggests a complete lack of reality to be represented.³³

In a similar vein, the design of the creature in Ridley Scott's *Alien* can be seen as an evolution of the topics covered so far. The concept of the creature was based on the works of the late Swiss painter H. R. Giger. In particular, his piece *Necronom IV*³⁴ was the main pillar on which the alien seen in Ridley Scott's film was based, albeit toned down for the final

32 Although the French sociologist developed this categorization as a way to analyze mass-media and social communication, it is still useful for establishing the differences between these neo-baroque monsters.

33 The shoggoth is also described during Dyer and Danford's escape from the city: “shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and un-forming as pustules of greenish light” (581). This description also emphasizes its mutable nature.

34 See figure 1. The title is a reference to the fictional grimoire *Necronomicon* seen in Lovecraft's stories.

product. It constitutes a good example of Giger's "biomechanical" style,³⁵ and another example of how binary barriers are blurred in neo-baroque aesthetics. Attending to Baudrillard's classification, the design seen in the film would fit somewhere in between stages three and four: it is detailed in excess, but those details get lost in the frame due to aesthetic choices like cinematography and lighting.³⁶

Through the film, the xenomorph³⁷ is not shown in its entirety, only through fragmented images.³⁸ Besides the useful effect of creating anticipation before showing it in its entirety, this narrative choice has the objective of concealing the essence of the creature. From a character perspective, it reflects how unfamiliar and inexplicable the monster is, similarly to Lovecraft's lengthy descriptions. This lack of understanding is an example of the previously mentioned post-structuralist idea about positive thought (Bertens 118). The fragmentation of the monster effectively constitutes the visual equivalent of a "gap in language," like those experimented by the characters in previous works. The shock caused by the encounter with a creature that defies representation limits their expression:³⁹ language fails its purpose as a communication tool. The design of the creature supports this claim, since its biomechanical nature effectively camouflages its presence whenever it is actually shown in full.⁴⁰ Its sexually predatory behavior alongside its feminine—albeit phallic—design carries the purpose of alienating the characters—and viewers—from the creature even further. Much like in the case of the Old Ones, this hyper-assimilation of opposed binary characteristics is another reflection of the ever-expanding nature of the neo-baroque, which permeates the *Alien* franchise as a whole.⁴¹ The creature is also represented as a mutable signifier through the process of

35 Term adopted from the title of a series of his works.

36 See still 1.

37 The in-world term for the alien creature in the film.

38 See stills 2 and 3.

39 These ideas will be further expanded in the next chapter, in which a psychoanalytical analysis will be conducted in order to expose possible hidden meanings and interpretations of these neo-baroque monsters.

40 See stills 4 and 5.

41 Ndaliansis dedicates a section of her book to examine how the neo-baroque blurs the distinction between

metamorphosis. It starts as an egg, from which the “facehugger”—the spider-like creature—hatches, then it becomes an embryo—“chestburster”—that matures into the better-known, adult design. The director's cut version of the film offers an extra turning point in the movie concerning the discovery of the origin of the eggs by the main character, Ellen Ripley. She finds two of the missing crew members in the process of being wrapped into a cocoon-like structure with similar traits to the eggs first seen in the alien spaceship at the beginning of the movie, hinting at the possible human nature of the xenomorph.⁴² By establishing this connection, the film offers a literal, physical interpretation of the “animalization of humans” motif I have mentioned in previous pages. The effect that this motif tries to cause is related to the concept of the abject and the complex sexual imagery and gender dynamics at play in the film. These concepts, which are present in the three works examined, constitute the main focus of the analysis of the following chapter. Due to its similarities with *At the Mountains of Madness*, the film *Prometheus*, part of the *Alien* franchise, will also be commented upon.

To summarize, the close-reading of these texts has allowed us to see how traits of neo-baroque aesthetics and postmodern culture appear intertwined, especially when examining descriptive passages and the visual imagery present in these works. As we shall see in the next chapter, the categorization in genres following Todorov's taxonomy will be a useful starting point from which to begin this psychoanalytical perspective.

fictional space and reader space through the *Alien* franchise. The paradigmatic configuration of fragments such as Ripley-like heroines or xenomorph-like hybrids results in an open form that invites serialization. An extreme example of this is the *Aliens/Predator* comic book series (Dark Horse Comics), which offers “a narrative flow or exchange [between franchises] across media borders [film and comic book]” (63).

42 The sequel *Aliens* attributed the existence of the eggs to the insectoid role of the xenomorph queen, erasing this scene from the continuity of the series entirely.

Chapter 3. The Other and the Unconscious

In the previous chapter, we established a relationship between the neo-baroque traits of the texts examined and their postmodern characteristics. One of the main ideas from that section of the essay is how the lavish details in the descriptions of the monsters clear their signifier of any unified meaning whatsoever. The monsters act as empty signifiers, defined by this very lack of concrete meaning. Despite this fact, it is possible to examine these examples further with the tools provided by psychoanalysis. Key concepts put forward by Jacques Lacan will act as the backbone of this chapter's close-reading.

3.1. Subject Formation, the Symbolic and the Real

Lacan's theory of how the subject—understood as a being in continuous reconfiguration capable of establishing boundaries between its self and others—can be applied to these texts. In the development of a child, the French thinker establishes a series of steps every person needs to follow to develop a functional personality. Lacan designates these stages with the terms the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. We will deal with the Imaginary and its “mirror stage” later, when we apply this theory to film. The second step, the symbolic order and the formation of the unconscious, is of more immediate concern.

Lacan envisions the unconscious as a process of signification outside of the subject's control. In Sean Homer's words (44), it is “the language that speaks through us rather than the language we speak,”⁴³ or the discourse of the Other. This Other, with capital O, is the fundamental rival of the subject, that which stands in opposition to it. However, this

43 For Lacan, the unconscious is structured by language through an endless process of signification. Lacan proved this by linking Roman Jakobson's concepts of metaphor and metonymy to condensation and displacement, Freudian concepts that deal with the creation of dreams (43).

distinction between the Other and the self cannot appear unless the subject enters the symbolic, or the realm of language. This, in turn, can only be achieved by resolving the Oedipus complex which, as in Freudian theory, is “the primary structure that defines our symbolic and unconscious relationships” (53). The concept of the phallus, as the primary signifier, is central to this resolution.

As a mutable signifier, the phallus represents different concepts depending on which stage it appears. In the Imaginary, the phallus represents “what the child assumes someone must have in order for them to be the object of the mother's desire” (55). Lacan affirms that, despite knowing it is a symbol of the mother's desire, the child isn't fully aware of the connotations of the phallus: “I do not know the desire of the Other: anxiety, but I know its instrument, the phallus” (*Identification* 164). Out of his wish to re-establish the primordial union with her, the child identifies with the phallus as the object her mother has lost.⁴⁴ The resolution of this complex transpires due to paternal authority and the child substitutes the signifier of the phallus for the Name-of-the-Father as objects of the mother's desire.⁴⁵ Because of this, the child enters the symbolic order of representation, as he realizes he can never obtain the phallus, for it is “the signifier of absence” (Homer 56). This occurs due to the concept of lack which, in Lacanian theory, is the centerpiece of subject formation and signification. Due to the mother's lack of a penis, the penis—as an actual object—becomes metonymically linked to the concept of lack. Because of this relationship, the castration anxiety is redefined in Lacan as acting in two different levels: the fear boys have of losing their genitalia and the symbolic process of giving up the idea of the phallus due to paternal influence, or the Name-of-the-Father. Once children give up on the idea of possessing the

44 It should be noted that, despite its roots in the castration complex there is a strong divide in Lacanian theory between the phallus as a signifier and the penis as an actual object. More metaphorical than physical, the phallus is both the recognition of the penis as an object and the recognition of its absence, all in one signifier.

45 Similarly to the concept of phallus, Lacan separates the “real life” father figure from the elements that exert authority over the child to cut this incestuous impulse. He denominates this third element that divides the mother-child dyad the Name-of-the-Father.

phallus as an imaginary concept, it becomes an out of reach signifier in the symbolic order and a link “between desire and signification” (59).

It can easily be seen that the concept of the Name-of-the-Father, as a prohibitive element of authority, is what kindles the fire of the unconscious. After that, the law of the Father substitutes the phallus as the dominant element in the signification process. That which is not accepted by the law of the Father can only be signified—repressively—in the realm of the unconscious. Before continuing, let's see how the Oedipal triangle factors in *At the Mountains of Madness* and *Prometheus*, since both works share common themes.

The main motivation behind the expeditions in both works can be read in a Freudian way: a group of people travels to uncharted territories to find the origins of life on Earth itself. Their purpose is imbued with this pre-symbolic desire of reuniting with the mother figure, which happens to be non-terrestrial. In the case of *Prometheus*, a first moment of recognition—by humanity—with the Other—the Engineer—is replaced by the aggressive rejection of this recognition through the Name-of-the-Father that, in this case, falls onto the figure of the Engineer itself.⁴⁶ In *Mountains*, on the other hand, we do find this primal reunion with the (m)Other figure, since the expedition examines the bodies of the Old Ones front to back and inside out in order to know their secrets—an intrusion in the boundaries of the self, the body—. Recognition happens in this case at the moment when Dyer is able to recognize humanity—himself—in the creatures, as seen in the previous chapter. The appearance of the shoggoth fuses both these—metaphorically speaking—incestuous feelings of self-recognition in the Other with the reprehension symbolized by the Name-of-the Father.⁴⁷ Given this duality, we

46 The reason why the Engineer reacts with such aggression towards the android David (Michael Fassbender) is not made entirely clear in the film. One possible explanation could be that, given the religious overtones of the film, the Engineer interpreted humanity's deed of creating artificial life as an act of arrogance toward his own species, humanity's original creators.

47 In Freudian theory, the superego is governed by two opposite but complementary father-like figures. Juxtaposed to the father that transmits the law to his child—and is too subordinated to it—, we find the figure of the tyrannical primal father that “aggregates to himself the women and wealth of the primal horde by expelling his sons and rivals” and lives outside the law (59). This duality represents the double facet of the

can see the creature as a symbol for both facets of the unconscious: it keeps the child—humanity—away from its mother—the Old Ones—by keeping it for itself. The ritualistic manner in which the shoggoths devour the “head” of the Old Ones shows their will to assimilate their mother figure into their own being. The shoggoths, fully embracing this perversion of the Oedipal complex, act as a stand-in for the repressed unconscious. We examined in the previous chapter how the apparition of these neo-baroque monsters as empty signifiers creates a gap in language due to their ineffability. For Lacan, the unconscious “manifests itself at those points when language fails and stumbles” (Homer 68). In his own words, “when the unconscious comes to make itself heard is where we see the problem between this unconscious and this preconscious” (*Identification* 63). These gaps in language are caused by the tension between preconscious and unconscious thought. We also saw in the previous chapter how the neo-baroque monsters fall out of the symbolic order—that is, linguistic representation—due to the non-contrastive nature of their signifier. This characteristic is related to the third Lacanian order: the Real.

The Real is best defined as the pre-symbolic matter, unconsciously repressed, that intrudes into the symbolic reality in the form of need. These needs are often represented through the example of hunger: it can only be tamed, but never entirely satisfied. As such, “the real is thus closely associated with the body prior to its symbolization” and, at the same time, “[it] *does not exist*, as existence is a product of thought and language and the real precedes language” (Homer 82-83, emphasis in the original). The irruption of the Real into the symbolic, as happens in the human-creature encounters of these works, is often linked to psychic trauma. Due to its unassimilable nature, a confrontation with the Real—such as premature encounters with sexuality—cannot be put into words, and the trauma “fixes the subject in an early stage of development” (84). Repetition of the traumatic memory is a superego as the place in which both the rules of society and the unconscious taboos coexist.

symptom of the attempt to include the Real into the symbolic order through language. An example of this traumatic reaction to the Real can be found in the character of Danforth in *Mountains*: “South Station Under – Washington Under – Park Street Under – Kendall – Central – Harvard... The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel [...] in New England.” (581). The character's only way to symbolize the image of the creature that chases them is through the use of a metaphor as a link between the Real and the symbolic.⁴⁸ Later in his career, Lacan would adopt the Real and the resolution of these traumatic encounters as the centerpiece of psychoanalytic thought. He would elaborate the concept of fantasy as “a defense against the intrusion of the Real into everyday experience” (89). *Traversing the fantasy*, as the process is called, involves “subjectifying the trauma,” or interiorizing it and assuming responsibility for the *jouissance* felt.

3.2. *Jouissance* and Abjection

The concept of *jouissance* is related to Freud's concept of drive, or those fundamental cravings that can never be satisfied in full.⁴⁹ Unlike Freud, Lacan conceives the drive not as a duality of sexual and death drives—Eros and Thanatos in Freudian theory—, but as a single unified drive that includes aspects of both concepts (Homer 76). The purpose of life, in Freudian theory, is to find the correct path *to* death.⁵⁰ Lacan reformulates this stance by claiming that life is driven by the changes provoked by loss and desire and that we are driven

48 The Freudian concept of displacement is worth remembering here. When applied to dreams, displacement occurs when meaning is transferred from one sign to another, as happens with anxiety dreams (43). This process, due to its origins in dream theory, is linked to the unconscious and to Lacan's symbolic order.

49 There is a distinction between the physical *needs* and the *drives* that cause them. Hunger can be classified as a need, while libido can be seen as a—if not *the*—drive, but not vice-versa.

50 Freud exposes this idea in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: “self preservation, self-assertion and [...] mastery [...] are component instincts whose function is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death (33)

by death. The most extreme manifestation of the subject's drive, due to its placement in the limits of the symbolic, can be found in *jouissance*.

Jouissance as an emotion involves the combination of both pleasure and pain—“or, more accurately, pleasure *in* pain” (89, emphasis in original)—. Homer exemplifies it through two concrete examples: patients that seem to find pleasure in their illness through compulsive repetition and, as exemplified by Lacan through Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, an experience of mystical ecstasy (89). While a drive replaces its signifier of focus with another after consumption, *jouissance* is absolute and immutable. Since fulfilling our desires to the point of complete satisfaction is impossible, “we always have the feeling that there is something more, [...] we *believe* there must be something better” (90, emphasis in the original). In truth, *jouissance* is not something that can be achieved, we as subjects only believe it is there due to the void created by our unfulfilled drive.⁵¹ We reconcile its intractability through fantasy and, precisely because it is out of our reach, we attribute its possession to our rival as subjects: the Other.⁵²

Bernini's sculpture can be used to represent a “feminine” *jouissance*, in opposition to the “masculine” one. It is an example of the *jouissance* that, when obtained, fulfills the drive completely, effectively making a subject whole. “Masculine” *jouissance*, on the other hand, encapsulates the void felt by this unfulfilled drive. While the phallic—as in, symbolic—*jouissance* can be experienced by both males and females, Lacan argues that, due to gender differences in the formation of the subject, males can only enjoy one type of *jouissance* or the other, while females have access to both (*Encore* 161). To establish the presence of this

51 The emergence of the subject into the Symbolic after giving up the phallus can be seen as the realization of the unattainable nature of *jouissance*. The primordial state of the pre-symbolic cannot be replicated once the subject comes into being, the Real and the phallus become out of reach beyond the boundaries of *jouissance*.

52 In his essay, Homer establishes a relationship between the attribution of *jouissance* to the Other and the emergence of racism and misogyny. The author, elaborating on Žižek's ideas on these concepts, establishes that for racism to appear, the enjoyment that the Other possesses has to be presented as something deserved by the common folk that has been stolen by the alien community (63).

concept in the texts, we now need to examine the role of Heather in “The Great God Pan”. I mentioned in the previous chapter how Todorov established a relationship between the supernatural and extreme sensorial experiences, and *jouissance* is the centerpiece of that relationship. The main struggle of the protagonists of *Pan* is centered around exposing the supernatural element of Helen Vaughn's sexuality. The short story implies that the multiple cases of suicide mania are directly related to Helen's prostitution in Soho (26). The sexual connotations of the suicides, which involve hanging oneself from the bedpost, can be linked to the feeling of *jouissance*, as they evoke the practice of bondage and the thrill of erotic asphyxiation. These characters, after experiencing the Real through intercourse with Helen, could have willingly hanged themselves in order to avoid the trauma of confronting the Real, or in order to relive a similar thrill. After all, *jouissance* is the limit between the symbolic and the Real, or between life and death. While nothing of this is explicitly told in the text, Helen's suicide, which replicated that method, strengthens the connection between these ideas.

A more favorable reading of Helen's character would affirm that her demonization is not only caused by her origins, but because of the sexual freedom she displays. In Julia Kristeva's essay *Powers of Horror*, the author examines the concept of *jouissance* and, using women as a junction point, creates a tie between it, the Other and the concept of abjection. Because of the sexual difference they display in relation to *jouissance*, women constitute the big Other in the eyes of men. Kristeva sees in the rituals of defilement an attempt made by society at large to codify the principal taboos: death and incest (58). To avoid them, sexual prohibitions—particularly those established by religion—are used to separate the sexes (70). Blood as a signifier is intrinsically related to female sexuality but it is also related to death and murder, and as such it is demonized both by patriarchy (70) and in societal expressions such as religion (96). The condemnation of female sexuality, as a signifier of both taboos, is

twofold. Kristeva uses the example of the Bemba people to display the *power of pollution* attributed to female sexuality. If a Bemba woman undergoing her period touches fire, “food cooked on that fire makes her ill and threatens her with death” (78). Should we apply this theory to Helen, her condition as a part human, part animal creature can be linked to the roles of Eve and the serpent as the primordial entities of sin and to the traditional Judeo-Christian condemnation of female sexuality. The suicide mania she causes through her sexuality—again, the union of sex and death—can be seen as an expression of Helen's own *power of pollution* affecting society and, on a larger scale, to the symbolic—and phallic—order that allows it to be created in the first place.

The justification behind this repression of female sexual practices is also related to the concept of *abjection*. Through a phenomenological approach, Kristeva defines abjection as “becoming an other at the expense of [one's] own death” (3). Abject is that which tries to erase the line that separates a subject from an other. This can be exemplified through bodily functions related to decay, such as suppurating wounds or fecal matter. The abject was once a part of the self, but has since then been expelled from it. Like the *tabooized* female sexuality, it has been relegated to the space beyond the Symbolic. A corpse, having been a subject itself once, becomes the ultimate abject since there is nothing left to be expelled (4). For Kristeva, the encounter with an abject is not violent due to its uncleanness, but due to how it disturbs the “identity, system, [and] order” of the symbolic (4). Abjection is what lies between the subject and the Other, the Real defying symbolization. “The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” are all examples of what constitutes an abject, which brings back the idea of the neo-baroque's trait of erasing the separation between binary elements, its inherent *mestizaje*.

Just like Helen, *Alien's* title creature encompasses a large amount of the characteristics of abjection. The aggressive way in which it is born, out of a living subject, mimics the

maternal anguish felt by the emergence of the subject into being. The process is reversed: while the formation of a regular subject includes the abjection of that which is maternal—or Other—, the emergence of the xenomorph into being “abjects” its mother figure—the carrier—not only out of itself as a subject, but out of the symbolic order entirely. Its more instinctual behavior reflects its animality and its focus on “sex and murder,” a realm of culture cast away by primitive societies through abjection (12). While the expeditions of *At the Mountains of Madness* and *Prometheus* symbolized the Oedipal drive of the human characters, the roles are reversed in *Alien*. The forced pregnancy to which the creature subjects its victims during its “infant stage” can be read as the fulfillment of the Oedipal fantasy through reverse-rape.⁵³ At the same time, given that the impregnated character of the film is a male, the resulting body horror constitutes an example of an abject destabilizing the identity of a subject to the point of attributing him qualities that it doesn't have, such as giving birth. This ties directly to the fear of generative powers inherent to female sexuality, which Kristeva links to the “archaic mother” and the aforementioned power of pollution (77). The very design of the alien creature, with its mixture of phallic imagery and feminine—yet skeletal—figure, is deeply intertwined with the Lacanian Real trauma created by an early sexual encounter. This sexual encounter, interpreted by the child as an act of violence, is denominated *primal scene* in Freudian terms. The abject, in Kristeva's view, “*would thus be the 'object' of primal repression*” (12-13). The uncanniness created by the abject, when mixed with the concept of *jouissance*, explains this interrelationship between sex and death in the creatures of these works.

⁵³ Furthermore, if we remember the deleted scene in which the crew of the *Nostromo* are being transformed into xenomorph eggs, this Oedipal fantasy becomes all the more clear, and an additional motivation—reuniting with its human self again—can be attributed to the “facehugger” creature.

3.3. The Mirror Stage and the Pleasure of Recognition

The aforementioned first step in Lacan's formation of the subject, dubbed the “mirror stage,” involves the identification by the child of his own image as another object. At this time, the infant's control of its body is not completely developed: its self-awareness is conditioned by the fragmented perception of its body. It is for this reason why being able to see its own body as a whole and command it as he wishes in the reflective surface pleases the child. The identification “anticipates the mastery of the infant's own body” (Homer 25) and, because of this, *alienates*⁵⁴ the subject and *displaces* its ego: the child's sense of self is found in the image that he/she identifies with. This creates a conflict in the child, but its resolution marks the first step in the creation of an autonomous conscience.

The main idea we should keep in mind is that subject formation is, in this first stage, intrinsically linked to the pleasure of visual recognition. Lacan rejected Merleau-Ponty's conception of the subject as an entity that gazes upon the world. On the contrary, Lacan defines the subjects as a being more concerned with their status as “beings that are looked at” (Homer 125). In *Film After Jung*, Greg Singh examines what this idea means when applied to film through the theory developed by scholars such as Louis Althusser or Laura Mulvey. Departing from the idea of looking as a source of pleasure—scopophilia in Freudian terms—, cinema establishes a separation between the fantasy projected on the screen and the audience. The film feeds the voyeuristic fixation with the private by remaining unaltered under the gaze of the observers. At the same time, its focus on, in Mulvey's words, “the human face, the

54 The concept of alienation can be traced back Hegelian dialectics. Hegel used the master-slave relationship to examine how selfhood came into being. While the slave has both his work and his recognition by others as such to support his identity, the master's identity depends entirely on the slave recognizing his authority. Kojève read this as “a struggle of desire and recognition” (Homer 24) in which, despite their symbiotic relationship, the parts involved are in conflict with each other. In Lacan's view, these dialectics of recognition permeate the relationship between the subject and others.

human body, [...] the visible presence of the person in the world” (100) is the root of this pleasurable viewing, which is achieved through a recognition similar to that of the infant during the mirror stage. This aspect in particular, when used as a weapon against the audience, creates the necessary cognitive dissonance that makes horror films like *Alien* so effective. The relationship between abjection and sex in the neo-baroque monster can be established not only by looking at its design, but at the way in which it is represented on the screen as well.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the creature is gradually introduced by showing small snippets of its body parts. This has fundamentally two purposes: to conceal the creature as a whole and to confuse the audience's feelings through their familiarity with cinematic language. To understand this, a consideration of the cinematic male gaze is necessary. Using Laura Mulvey's theory, Singh claims that, historically, the female form has been eroticized through editing and framing, “leading to a fetishized emphasis on particular body parts,” and that this objectification is nothing but “an aspect of the phantasy of the Real”: seeing the body as pieces in the same way an infant perceives his own body during the mirror stage (102-103). The fragmentation of the creature, alongside its conceptual roots in sexuality, toys with this cinematic strategy to great effect. By establishing an abject as the object of the audience's “desire” through cinematic language, director Ridley Scott creates cognitive dissonance in the audience, forcing them to misidentify themselves with the creature on the screen. In my opinion, not every frame of the creature tries to cause this reaction primarily, at times it is more of an after-effect. Nevertheless, this impact can be felt in frames in which displaying aggression, instead of pseudo-sexualization, is the main objective of the shot, as in the well known shot of the second alien mouth. In short, the concept behind the creature and its appearance on the screen through framing can be defined through the use of the term *syzygy* in Jungian contexts: “[a] conjunction in opposition of the sexes [...] that is both

overwhelmingly other and yet utterly reasonable” (Singh 147). Through the inclusion of binary oppositions such as masculine-feminine or birth-death in neo-baroque aesthetics, Scott's film forces the audience to face their unconscious and the limits of primal repression.

Conclusions

Through the paper, the connections between neo-baroque aesthetics, post-structuralist theory and psychoanalysis have been examined in the texts at hand. For this purpose, applying the theories and taxonomies put forward by Carpentier, Todorov, Lacan and Kristeva has proven to be a productive endeavor. The varied background of these thinkers—both geographically and academically speaking—creates a sturdy theoretical framework through which these texts can be analyzed. In my study, I firstly explored the boundaries between different literary modes for the purpose of determining how to categorize the texts themselves. In carrying out that task it transpired that the neo-baroque aesthetics is not limited by the boundaries of singular genres such as the fantastic, the marvelous or the uncanny. And yet, it also proved that the marvelous genre favors the appearance of these aesthetics. In fact, examining the marvelous real exposed by Carpentier in the first chapter shed new light on a thematic connection I had not considered when planning the essay: how the neo-baroque appears in narratives that deal with discovery as one of its main topics.

A progression in time can be appreciated as well. While the neo-baroque traits of Machen's text might seem faint during a first reading, some elements that anticipate or are also reminiscent of postmodernism can be perceived, the most obvious ones being transformation and the erasure of binary oppositions. Lovecraft's text displays its neo-baroque elements in a much more “visual” manner, through descriptive passages, the modality of the fantastic and the “horror of the vacuum”. The visual traits are, obviously enough, even more present in Scott's film. Nevertheless, far from just presenting these same traits on the silver screen, we have seen how the film supports this connection between neo-baroque aesthetics and the post-modern tradition through its own language: cinematography. This does not mean, however, that the film abandons the topics we established in the other two works. As we saw in the sec-

ond chapter, the themes of the animalization of humanity and the otherness associated with creating life are present in all three works.

It is in the third chapter in which I touched upon these topics using a variety of psychoanalytical theories. Lacan's triad of orders allowed us to define these creatures as the Other opposed to the subject and as the Real emerging into the symbolic order through the unconscious. With the aid of Kristeva's theory of abjection and Lacan's own concept of *jouissance*, I have examined the sexual elements of the texts and how this complex relationships intertwine with the postmodern characteristics present in the neo-baroque. Jung's analytical psychology, when applied to film, supports Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage" and the misidentification necessary for an abject to "succeed". We can see through these concepts that the Other, as an abject, is an aggression to the subject's psyche. This, I argue, is an instrument used by these writers to make their stories—as well as the design of their creatures—more effective.

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Appendix 1 – Plot Summaries

1. Machen's "The Great God Pan":

Dr. Raymond invites his friend Clarke to witness an experiment he plans to perform on a young woman named Mary. The doctor plans on expanding the woman's mind through microscopic brain surgery so she can access another level of reality. He learned this process from archaic ritualistic practices, in which this was called "seeing the great god Pan." After the experiment, Mary awakens with a sudden fright that disturbs her psyche.

Some time after that, Clarke examines the story of a child named Helen Vaughn. Adopted by a distant relative, the girl spends more time than usual in the woods. Two incidents between Helen and the children of the village occur. The first one involves a boy named Trevor, which saw her dancing in the woods with a "strange naked man." Three months later, the boy sees a recently dug statue of a satyr's head, which causes him a panic attack that leaves him mentally handicapped. The second incident concerns a young girl named Rachel. Helen and her become friends, and Rachel occasionally goes with her to the woods. After one such trip, Rachel's mother hears her weeping and finds her half undressed upon her bed. Soon after, Rachel vanishes in the forest, not to be seen ever again.

Years later, a character named Villiers stumbles upon Charles Herbert, a college acquaintance, who has since then become a vagrant. When asked about what happened to him, Herbert blames his wife Helen Vaughn who, in the year their marriage lasted, ruined him physically and spiritually by revealing horrible things to him. A few days later, Austin, a friend of Villiers, tells him that, some time ago, the body of a gentleman had been found in front of the old Herbert house. The man had died from sheer terror after peeking into the house. Villiers breaks into the abandoned house and, after being overwhelmed by its oppressive atmosphere, flees with a drawing of Mrs. Herbert's face. He meets his friend Clarke to tell him what he knows and shows him the picture. Clarke recognizes Mrs. Herbert's as Mary's daughter. Villiers reveals that the name of the girl is Helen Vaughn, and Clarke confirms his suspicions.

Villiers then meets Austin some time after to tell him everything he has found out about the case, including a letter he received from Clarke trying to discourage him to inquire any further. Walking down Piccadilly, they pass the house of a Mrs. Beaumont, who has just come to London from Buenos Aires. A painter named Arthur Meyrick, Villiers acquaintance, had died some time before that. Austin mentions that the gentlemen that had visited Mrs. Beaumont only had praise for her house, claiming that is one of the most pleasurable locales in London. Villiers then shows Austin a belonging of Meyrick, a book of sketches which he had managed to secure after the painter's passing. In it, images of fawns and satyrs can be seen, alongside a portrait of Helen Vaughn.

A series of suicides occur shortly after Mrs. Beaumont's arrival. Three gentlemen had hanged themselves by tying one side of the rope to their bedpost, a running noose to their neck and simply falling forward. More follow after those, including a common friend of Villiers and Austin. Villiers mentions that he saw him enter Beaumont's house the night of his death, and that a man with "all hell within him" opened the door to Beaumont's place. Some days after that, Villiers also sees Mrs. Beaumont enter a Soho brothel, and he receives information of her nameless infamies from an unknown source. Austin, on the other hand, has

information about the entertainment Mrs. Beaumont offered her guests, which he links with pagan rituals related with Pan. Villiers plans to write Clarke about his findings and, together, confront Mrs. Beaumont with the choice of either handing herself in to the police or committing suicide.

A Dr. Robert Matheson then practices an autopsy on Helen, only to see her change form, nor human nor animal and from one sex to another. Clarke writes to Dr. Raymond explaining his findings, and he replies that he had already found out shortly after the child was born, and that's why he sent her away.

2. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*:

An archaeological expedition to Antarctica organized by Miskatonic University leaves American shores, led by professor Lake. William Dyer, a geologist, is included among the crew of the ship. Upon their arrival, they set camp and survey the area with a plane. Two groups are established: Lake and others form the expedition while Dyer and the rest establish the base. Lake tells the camp that the height of the mountain region exceeds everything imaginable.

Using a drilling device invented by professor Pabodie, the expedition begins to search for fossils. They find a strange star-shaped ichnite, and some time after the creatures to which it belongs. Fourteen specimens of a creature unknown to science are found. Their physiognomy defies any previous taxonomy. They include characteristics from both flora and fauna, marine and aerial creatures, and their skin proves hard to dent. The creatures also challenge the established evolutionary theory due to their age: their developed features are much too advanced for the period in which geological studies places them. Wilmarth, a member of Lake's expedition, finds similarities between these creatures and the ones described in the *Necronomicon*, a grimoire in the library of the Miskatonic University. The members of the base plan to reunite with the expedition the next day, but nobody on Lake's camp answers their radio calls. When Dyer and his colleagues arrive at the camp, they find it devastated. Most members of the expedition are found dead, as well as most of their dogs. The bodies of men and dogs alike appear to have been dissected, and, since only a man named Gedney is missing, the crew assumes he has suffered from homicidal mania. The specimens seem to have vanished too, but they find six of them under improvised, star-shaped snow graves.

Dyer and a student named Danforth use one of the planes to inspect the area and, while approaching the mountains, they notice protrusions upon the mountain's surface: quartzite formations, geometrical in shape, suggesting deliberate carving by someone. Beyond the mountains, they find a plateau with a colossal city formed by these geometrically shaped stones. Dyer compares the city to mythical megalopolis like Atlantis or Lemuria. The characters land the plane and prepare for a foot journey. The city itself, too, is prehistoric. Upon analysis, Dyer notices that the structures and decorations seem to favor designs based on five points, either star-shaped or pentagram-like. As they explore the city more deeply, they find mural sculptures detailing the story of the city. These frescoes detail how the creatures found in the camp created life on Earth as a source of food, as well as their scientific knowledge and their conflicts with other races. They also show how they created an unknown kind of malleable organism, the shoggoths, as slave labor to build cities such as the one on the mountains. Dyer, having read the *Necronomicon* too, identifies these creatures as the shoggoths that Abdul Alhazred, its author, spoke about. The "Old Ones," as Dyer calls the creatures found by Lake, kept the shoggoths at bay through a kind of hypnosis, but the creatures kept evolving, imitating the voice of the Old Ones to communicate with them

and slipping past their control. The expeditioners also see that the mountains found by Lake are not the highest, since the sculptures of the Old Ones reveal, with disgust and fear, mountains that dwarf those found by the group. Images of something that was washed down by a river from those mountains into the city can be seen in the murals. The “thing,” however, is not represented, only the reaction of the creatures to it. The last records show how their civilization was swept away by the Ice Age, remaining in stasis until the present day.

Following a trail of items from the camp, the explorers find the bodies of Gedney and the missing dog. Eventually, they notice an entrance to a tunnel and, following the pipe-like sounds attributed to the Old Ones, descend through it. In there, the explorers find new mural similar to those carved by the Old Ones, only much more decadent. Dyer and Danforth find the specimens of Lake’s camp, dead by decapitation. Sucking the corpse of one of them, they find a shoggoth. The explorers make their escape to the plane as the creature chases them while uttering the language it learned from the Old Ones. They manage to make it outside of the city and, on their way to the plane, they notice the forbidden mountains the Old Ones feared. While flying back to the camp, Danforth’s curiosity betrays him and looks back at the mountains. What he sees makes him utter scream of terror and deeply traumatizes him.

3. Scott's *Alien*:

The *Nostramo*, a commercial spacecraft, returns to Earth after a mining operation. On it, its seven-member crew are awakened from stasis by Mother, the ship's computer, due to the detection of a transmission of unknown origin. The crew has a debate over whether to find its origin or continue their route, but the policy of their company forces them to find if it is a distress signal or not if they want to keep their pay.

Following the source, the crew lands on the nearby planetoid. Three crew members, Dallas, Kane and Lambert, head out to the source of the transmission. They discover the signal's origin comes from a crashed, “U” shaped spacecraft of biomechanical design. They decide to venture inside, and they see the fossilized remains of a large humanoid (an Engineer), dead from the eruption of something out of its chest.

On the lowers levels of the alien spacecraft, Kane finds a chamber filled with mist and containing strange eggs. After determining that the mist is not dangerous, he approaches the translucent cocoons. Detecting a life source nearby, an egg opens, and the creature inside attaches itself to Kane's face through the helmet.

The group reunites with the rest, bringing a comatose Kane back with them, creature still attached. Due to potential biological contamination, Ripley refuses to let them in, but Ash, another crew member, defies her orders and lets them enter. They transport Kane to the medical bay and, after removing his gear, try to find a way to remove it. Ash deduces that they can't remove the creature without its tail snapping Kane's neck, so they try to cut it down first. After making a small incision, its corrosive blood comes out and dissolves the ship's hull through multiple floors. There doesn't seem anything left to do to help Kane, but the creature eventually dies on its own and Kane awakens from the coma.

The crew reunites around the table to eat before resuming their course and going into stasis. While Kane seems healthy, he suddenly starts choking and convulsing in pain. A small creature fractures his sternum from the inside, eventually emerging through his chest. The creature rans away from the crew while they stand in shock. Their main priority is now capturing the creature, since killing it could cause its blood to compromise the

integrity of the ship. Armed with electric poles, nets and flamethrowers, they separate to cover more ground. Brett, one of the mechanics of the ship, is the first to encounter the creature, which has shed its skin to metamorphose into a large humanoid. This creature attacks him, and both disappear through the vents. Knowing it's using them as a way to move around the ship, the rest of the crew devises a plan to jettison the alien out of the ship. Captain Dallas enters the vents to force the creature into an airlock, but the alien ambushes him from behind. With Dallas gone, Ripley is the first in command, and she decides to keep the plan going.

Seeking Mother's advice, Ripley finds a secret directive in the computer's ship. The orders come from their company, and are directed to Ash. He must bring the creature back to Earth, no matter what happens to the crew. Ripley confronts Ash who, finding himself cornered, answers with violence. Hearing the fight, Parker appears and bashes Ash's head out of his body, revealing he is an android. Ripley interrogates Ash's head for any information, and he confirms what Mother had shown Ripley. With only three crew members left, Ripley, Lambert and Parker decide to self-destruct the Nostromo and escape in a shuttle. Ripley goes on her own to activate the self-destruct sequence while Parker and Lambert gather supplies to survive the journey back to Earth. The alien, however, finds them and kills them. Ripley, after activating the self-destruct sequence, sees the creature blocking the path to the shuttle. She tries to stop the self-destruct sequence to no avail and goes back to the hangar. The creature is gone, so she flies away from the Nostromo before it blows off.

Appendix 2 – Figures and Stills

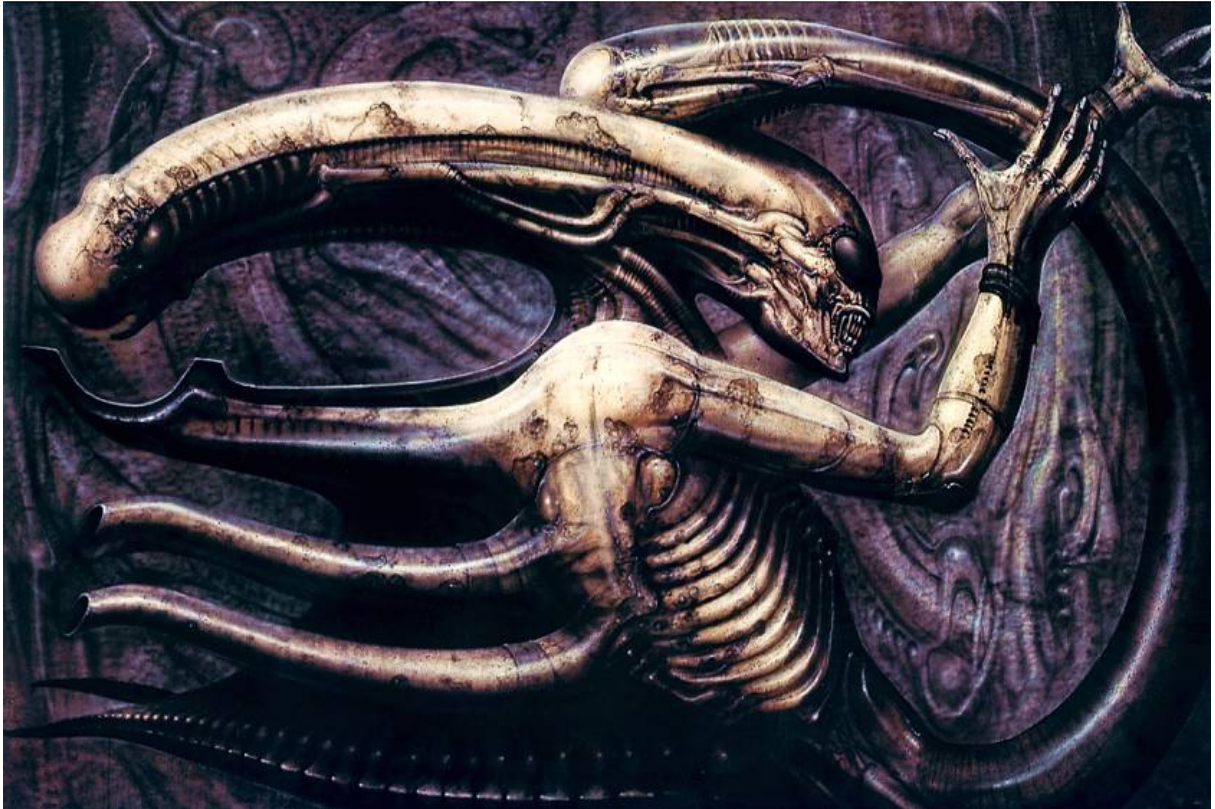
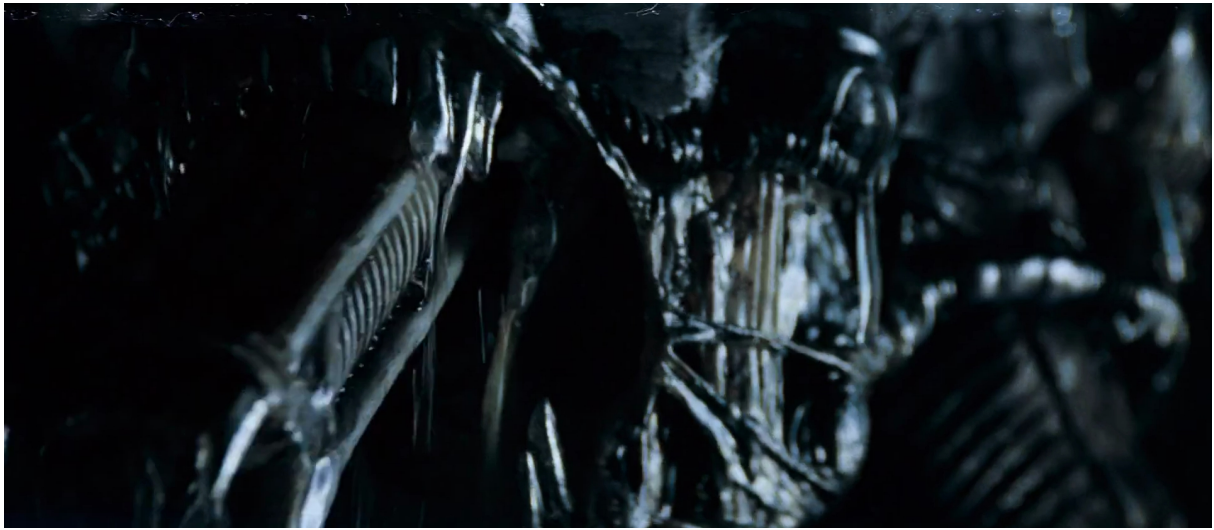


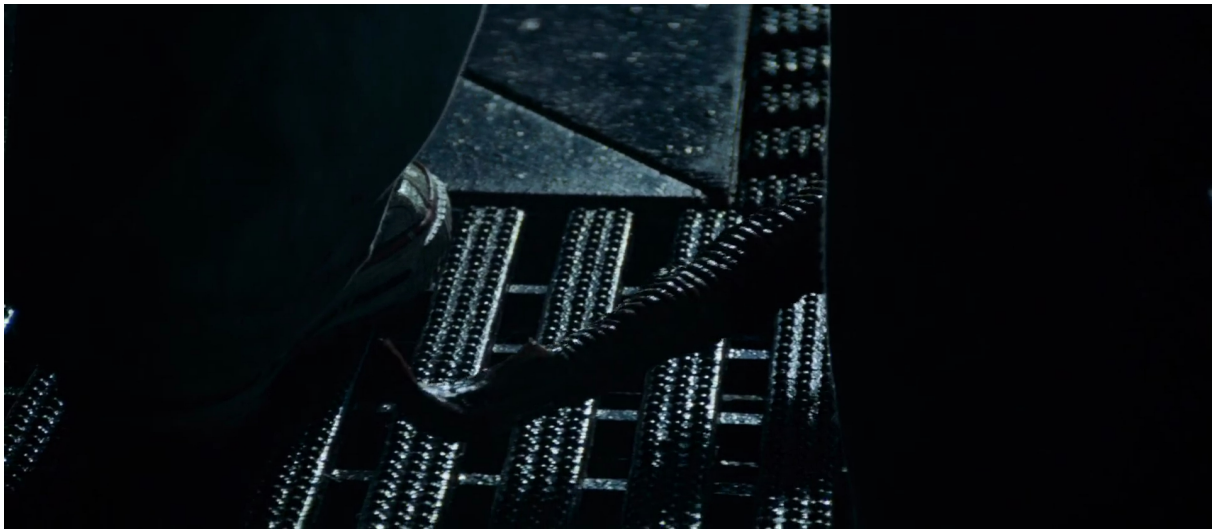
Figure 1. *Necromorph IV* by H. G. Giger.



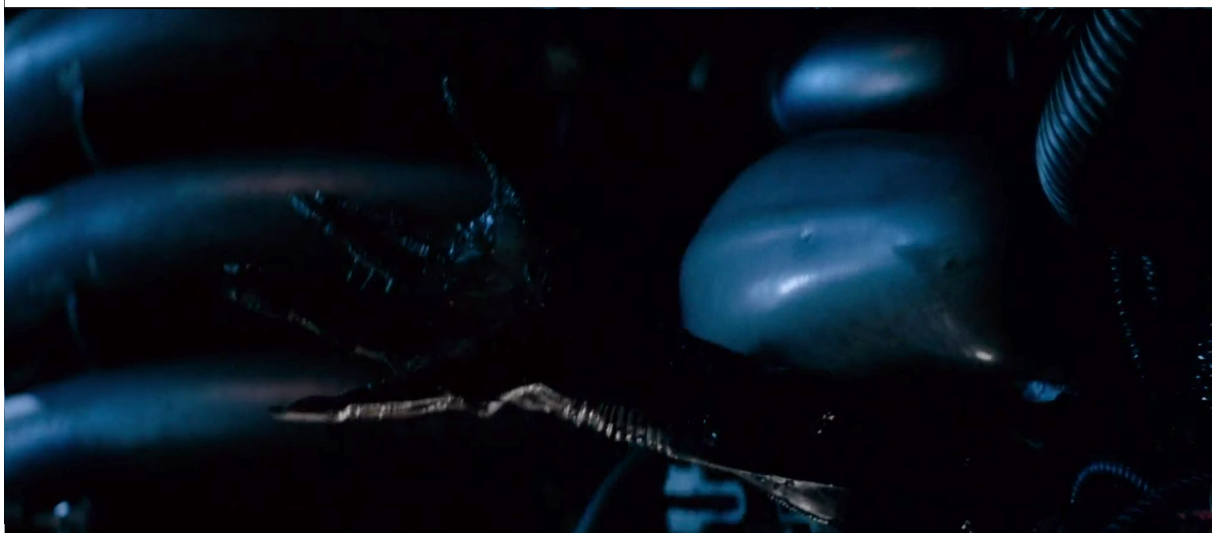
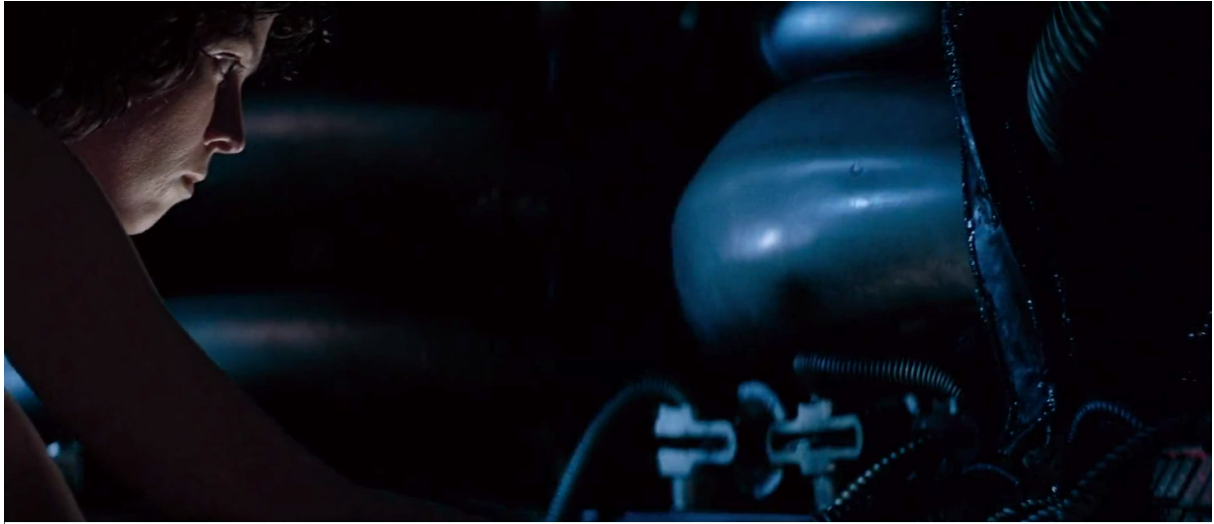
Still 1. The light of Dallas' flamethrower reveals a glimpse of the creature.



Still 2. Sudden close-ups of the alien's mouth are common through the film.



Still 3. An example of sexual imagery achieved through fragmentation.



Still 4 and 5. An oblivious Ripley gets too close to the hidden xenomorph's scalp.