

## Document Citation

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## Ridley Scott Directs:

### Alien 7:30

Dr. Glen O. Gabbard is the author, with Krin Gabbard, of *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), a two-fold study of the image of psychiatry in cinema and of psychoanalytic film criticism. The Gabbards offer psychoanalytic interpretations of films by Woody Allen, Robert Altman, Alfred Hitchcock and others, including Ridley Scott's *Alien* and Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy*, which Glen Gabbard will introduce with discussion tonight and tomorrow night, respectively. Saving Dr. Gabbard's observations for the discussion, the notes which follow are our own.

Dr. Gabbard is on the staff at the C. F. Menninger Memorial Hospital in Topeka, Kansas, and a faculty member at the Karl Menninger School of Psychiatry and Topeka Institute for Psychoanalysis. His brother, Krin Gabbard, is assistant professor of comparative literature at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a film critic.

With a space-ship computer called Mother who definitely was *not* programmed by Spock, *Alien* invites psychoanalysis from the word go. The ship Nostromo, a workaday commercial vehicle, is on its way back to Earth when a cute little crab-like being becomes attached (literally) to one of the crew members. The alien grows more terrifyingly obscure as it increases in size: The Horror is that one never knows how or where it will manifest itself next. Monstrous fertility, men "giving birth," and a woman (Sigourney Weaver) as Daddy are among the more challenging aspects of the *Alien* psyche. TV-commercial-trained Ridley Scott directs for style (the future is alternately baroque and archaic), shock, and sustained hysteria. But the new horror film is like the Pompidou Center of Old Dark Houses: it wears its innards on the outside. For those of us who still prefer our Guignol grand, not gooey, recent films by Carpenter and Cronenberg (*The Thing*, *The Fly*, et al) like *Alien* seem to have crossed a sacred boundary: the skin that holds our viscera in place. The Gabbards' psychoanalytic treatment of *Alien* in *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, if not comforting, helps to explain the fascination with alienating the human body.

• Directed by Ridley Scott. Written by Dan O'Bannon. Photographed by Derek Vanlint. With Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Ian Holm. (1979, 117 mins. Color, 35mm. Print from Films Inc.)