



Alien Theory: The Alien as Archetype in the Science Fiction Short Story

Patricia Monk

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From the early days of pulp magazines to contemporary works of science fiction, the subject of the alien has been a fertile and enduring—if not also *the* most vital element of the genre. In *Alien Theory*, author Patricia Monk asserts that the creation of the alien in short fiction contributes substantially to humanity's understanding of its present status and future potential in the universe. By employing a Jungian and archetypal approach to these stories, Monk attempts to direct the attention of readers to the significance of the vast body of imaginative fiction about the alien, arguing that studying the alien will reveal why this archetype is necessary in the development of humanity's understanding of its own intrinsic nature as a sapient being.

When a science fiction writer writes about aliens, Monk asserts, he or she is saying something that can—and *should*—be taken seriously by readers. Furthermore, it is being expressed in a particular story-telling mode that deserves to be treated with respect. By discussing the creation of the form of the science-fictional alien, its psyche and the context in which aliens and humans interact, Monk brings into focus a topic that has not been given the rightful discussion it deserves.

In addition to examining the alien in the science fiction short story, novella, and novelette, Monk evaluates its role in pre-postmodernist and postmodernist criticism and theory. The author also draws on relevant writings by editors, writers, and fans—including editorial letter columns and reviews—to place the stories in the context of science fiction. By drawing on all of these sources, *Alien Theory* brings into focus a topic that will be of interest not only to academics and students, but also to the general reader.

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