CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF CINEMATIC CLONES:
FROM THE FILM-PHILOSOPHICAL TO THE FEMINIST POSTHUMAN

By

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ABSTRACT

What do cinematic fictions of human clones tell us about ourselves and our relations with others? What does this proliferation of the self say about biological and cinematic reproduction? These are my dissertation's driving questions, which engages with film-philosophy, feminist science studies, and posthuman theory to investigate four films in which the protagonist encounters her/himself in the form of a clone: *Moon* (Jones, 2009), *Alien: Resurrection* (Jeunet, 1997), *The 6th Day* (Spottiswoode, 2000) and *Annihilation* (Garland, 2018). Cloning and cinema emerged as co-conspirators, as both 'technologies of reproduction' problematize notions of artificial replication, while destabilizing normative conceptions of a stable self.

My main argument hinges on the idea that clonal subjecthood encompasses a *paradigmatic relation of the self* versus the more conventional *syntagmatic relation of the self*. Conceptually, cloning's paradigmatic relations overthrow the self's intuitive syntagmatic relation, as it smears conventional subjectivity out to a point where we no longer can constitute this self as unified and unique. My introduction draws on the evolution of cloning and cinema to form a working definition of what cinematic clones are. Each film is treated as a thought experiment that opens up discourses on how we can understand our human selves in our highly technologized world, while problematizing hegemonic conceptions of how the relation between mind and body operates.

In chapter one, *Moon*'s prolonged, ongoing clonal encounter serves as a benchmark for what is at stake in conceptualizing cinematic clones. Drawing on Landsberg's 'prosthetic memory' (1995), Hume's "On Personal Identity" (1740), and Battaglia's 'replication problematic' (2001), I argue that these clones share a 'continuous consciousness'. In this paradigmatic relation, the clones are different spatio-temporal dimensions of one another, each one implying and supplementing the other, connoting the idea of 'the multiple are one'. I also analyze the clones through 'the unattained

but attainable self' as reworked by Cavell (2004), fostering what I call a 'remarriage of the self'.

Chapter two shifts us from a continuous consciousness to a 'continuous corporeality'. I place the questions of gendered embodiment, biological reproduction, and female hybridity that *Alien: Resurrection* raises into conversation with Stacey's idea of cloning as 'the relations of excessive sameness' (2010), Mulhall's reading of the *Alien Quadrilogy* (2016), Kristeva's abject (1982), Creed's *Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) and Braidotti's metamorphosing monstrous (2002). During this clonal encounter, which I read as a reversal of the Lacanian mirror stage, an absorption of the cloned embodiments occurs, connoting the paradigmatic relation of 'the one is multiple'.

The 6th Day illuminates how the self's syntagmatic relation might be altered by cloning, while cultivating a problematic denial of the other self. Cloning is presented as a method for escaping death: when you die, you get cloned, you continue to live on as your 'syntax of existence' is prolonged. Stacey's reworking of Benjamin's notion of 'aura' into the concept of 'bio-aura' (2010) forms this chapter's most prominent interlocutor, while I also engage with Hauskeller's 'postmortality' (2015) and Sobchak's SF reworking of Foucault's similitude versus resemblance.

Lastly, *Annihilation*'s 'refractive' clonal encounter provides a prism for tracing how the clone is posthuman. Braidotti's 'difference as the principle of not-One' (2013), Haraway's concept of 'kin and kinship' (2015), Barad's 'diffraction' and 'the agential cut' (2008), and Batchelor's *Chromophobia* (2000) are this chapter's most important interlocutors. The way this film's refractive clonal figures are visualized through its striking color-scapes, challenges us to reorient our humanist thinking, as it synthesizes an allegorical critique of our anthropocentric biases. The prescience of cinematic clones lies in how these figures reconfigure a relation of sameness with alterity, a bodily kinship that extends the self into the other, by acknowledging continuities between persons, while cinema opens up avenues of empathizing with this clonal otherness.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Magda van Tilburg and my father Hans Boon.
Thank you both for strengthening my heart with courage, creativity, compassion, and curiosity.

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Introduction: Technologies of Reproduction – Clones in Science & on Screen

Encountering the Self

A recurring trope within the science fiction of human cloning involves the scenario of encountering one's own duplicate: what might happen when a cloned person is faced with herself? Disquieting questions arise. Can I consider you, this other person that is not myself, to be me? Do we experience life in the same way? Are your memories mine and my memories yours? Do we share a consciousness? Is your body my own or is my body yours? Am I still unique? Are we me or am I you? Asking these philosophical questions is intriguing and important, for they allow an examination of what it means to be an individual – an exploration of our own sense of self.

Nevertheless, all the possible answers to these existential questions of subjectivity remain hypothetical, as actual human cloning has not seen the light of day. Yet, there is a way to presently venture into this subjectivity-reshaping terrain on a more palpable level, by exploring the way cloning has been envisioned within the cultural imaginary of the cinema. The medium of film is often hailed as a dream machine, one that gives flesh to imagination by means of visualization, helping us dream up possible worlds. With the rise of scientific research within the field of genetics in the mid-twentieth century the figure of the human clone appeared in films all around the world.

Cloning and cinema have emerged as co-conspirators, as both 'technologies of reproduction' inherently problematize notions of artificial replication, while destabilizing conventional conceptions of a stable self. The science fiction of cloning, of a simulated self, of a copy questioning the original human's status, is an emblematic *posthuman* trope. For it is a trope where apparent fixed identities and unique selves are virtually yet viscerally challenged, as it may dismantle a certain presupposed exceptionalism of the individualized 'rational' human subject. Furthermore, the phenomenon of human cloning is a distinctly cinematic and philosophical topos.

Derived from science, this clonal topos exists in a specific cultural imaginary – a 'genetic imaginary' (Stacey, 2010) that increasingly pervades our discourses on the self, memory, and identity. This genetic imaginary, which thrives most fully in the cinematic dream-machine and of which cloning is a prominent part, "unsettles conventional teleologies of gender, reproduction, racialization, and heterosexual kinship" (8). Cinematic envisionings of clones provide a lens, at a moment in time "where the mutability of the body coincides with the mutability of the image", through which we can investigate and interrogate these teleologies which structure our perception of selfhood (16). In our current condition, where a confluence of metaphorical clones on the internet and actual clones in science (as the practice of 'copying' things that are alive) is occurring, an examination of the figure of the human clone becomes increasingly more crucial.

Although full-fledged human clones are currently not realized, animal clones (breeding horses and livestock), organoids (organs cloned from human DNA) and 'digital clones' are decidedly part of our world today. And this world is becoming ever more technologized, mediated, and complex. As human beings we are intimately entangled in a ubiquitous yet abstruse techno-cultural matrix. The digital 'I' contains multitudes. We all create virtual versions of ourselves online. We encounter past selves in Facebook memories, we enhance our image through Instagram filters, we construct numerous profiles for each social-media platform we mediate ourselves through. Our human selves are becoming increasingly more dispersed, fragmented, networked, and expanded.

In a time where anything can and will be artificially reproduced – not only the image, but also the body itself – it is paramount to probe our rapidly evolving technologies of reproduction, such as the biotechnology of cloning and the medium of cinema. The ways in which cinema and cloning intersect and the ways in which we reproduce ourselves through them warrant a critical exploration. This dissertation's analysis of cinematic clones is driven by the following central

questions: What do cinematic fictions of human clones tell us about ourselves and our relations with others, and in particular about the normative construction of our human subject-position? What does this proliferation of the self say about biological and cinematic reproduction?

My project engages with film-philosophy, feminist science studies, and posthuman theory to investigate four films in which the protagonist saliently encounters her- or himself in the form of a clone. By undertaking close readings of my selected case studies, consisting of the arthouse sci-fi film *Moon* (Jones, 2009), the iconic body-horror film *Alien: Resurrection* (Jeunet, 1997), the Schwarzenegger-blockbuster *The 6th Day* (Spottiswoode, 2000) and the 'weird' cli-fi film *Annihilation* (Garland, 2018), I trace the ways in which these films render their so-called 'clonal close encounters'. What remains of our normative sense of self if the other that the self encounters can be discerned as another self? How might this non-normative relation of self to self challenge how we have conceptualized human subjectivity?

In contemplating the philosophical ramifications of cinematic clones, its most distinctive marker is this *relationship of self to self*. Hence, the most important commonality in selecting my case studies is the fact that all these texts hinge on an actual encounter with the self in the form of a clone. By an 'actual encounter' I mean a diegetic confrontation between the multiplied selves, visually rendered in a two-shot. Nonetheless, many cloning films only use the trope of cloning as a sensational but shallow backdrop. As they shy away from depicting a substantial confrontation between their cloned selves, these films do not fully engage with the conceptual ramifications of clonal consciousness, embodiment, memory, and subjectivity.

My selection of cloning films, on the other hand, explicitly deals with the notion of an encounter with one's own self, where each film gives way to a different yet kindred delineation of the relation of self to other self. Still, most cloning films eschew bringing their multiples in close

physical proximity to one another. Next to the technical difficulties of rendering one and the same actor as two or more clones together on screen (even in the age of computer-generated imagery), it seems that conceptually the clonal close encounter is marked as sheer taboo for another, less practical, reason. Yet, this reason is not only distinctive to the figure of the clone.

The encounter with the self in general namely generates a certain innate dread that is as ephemeral as it is existential. Traditionally within cultural expressions – be it in literature, art, comics, television, or film – an encounter with the self is conjured up in the form of the well-known figure of 'the double'. In addition, audiovisual fictions have also been known for invoking encounters with the self through the device of time travel in significant instances, where often it is explained that this sort of confrontation would tear through the very fabric of our universe. Either way, a staged facing of self and self somehow unsettles the boundaries of our existence.

But an encounter with the self in the form of a clone even further problematizes especially the classical double's rendezvous with itself. While the double has been invoked in discourses as wide as Freud's Uncanny, Hitchcock's obsession with doppelgängers, and German Expressionism's automata, the cinematic clone bespeaks an even more particular anxiety about shattering the uniqueness of the self. Not only does this figure arise from a more proximate technological possibility, but the clone's ability to multiply beyond a single copy complicates familiar narratives of ego and alter ego and double consciousness as well. As a double you are one of two, but the figure of the clone entails a potential endless multiplicity.

This brief sketch of what is conceptually at stake in cinematic clones forms this dissertation's main framework. My case studies taken together form this project's larger philosophical thought experiment on the malleability of our sense of self by closely discerning the cinematic figure of the human clone as it is conceived of in these four films. The bulk of this project deploys a case study

method, read through a film-philosophical lens. Since cinematic clones reproduce evocative alternative frameworks for human subjectivity, I am particularly interested in the feminist and vitalist implications of these posthuman potentialities, reading the clone as an instance of an 'embodied and embedded', as well as an expanded and relational or 'intra-connected' sense of self.

But before we can start our analysis of these clonal case studies, we need to understand the historical context of cinematic clones in general more fully. Hence, this introduction will succinctly sketch out the evolution of cloning and cinema, seen as technologies of reproduction. Tracing parallelisms between audiovisual representations of clones and scientific breakthroughs in the biotechnological field of cloning, it delineates how the first clones appeared in cinema, while pinpointing several shifts in the audiovisual representations of clones considering advances in the field of genetics. Furthermore, to form a working definition of the category of 'cinematic clones', I also touch upon the differences between the figure of the human clone and its historical predecessor of sorts, namely the well-known figure of the double, also known as the doppelgänger, while comparing it with other 'posthuman' others such as replicants, androids, and cyborgs.

Tracing the Evolution of Clones in Cinema

Ever since Dolly the sheep was cloned in 1996, remarkable innovations within the field of genetic engineering have occurred. Smaller and larger animals have successfully been duplicated by means of cloning. Nevertheless, the technical potential of cloning outstrips the legislative responses of many countries when it comes to allowing this practice to be implemented. Still, at the present stage in science, after the completion of the Human Genome Project amongst other innovations, it would seem feasible for contemporary scientists to technically clone an entire human being. But the strict legislations a majority of the world deploys when it comes to maturing cloned cells prevent this scenario from happening.

Regardless of the legislative restrictions, the very real prospect of cloning humans does give rise to a plenitude of existential questions that we can already explore – questions that are readily *being* explored in the domain of science fiction and especially in the realm of cinema. The concept of human cloning has taken up many different forms over the course of history and the variety in which the cinematic figure of the clone has been imagined is vast. Depictions of this figure in early cloning films range from identical looking impostors in the form of plant-like aliens who invade the earth in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956), to human clones that are used as so-called 'organ body bags' in *Parts: The Clonus Horror* (Fiveson, 1979), to cloned Führers complete with duplicated socio-environmental conditions in *The Boys from Brazil* (Schaffner, 1978).

In more recent years the cinematic clone's portrayal varies from clonal evil twins with differentiating traumas in *Star Trek: Nemesis* (Baird, 2002), to the covered-up cloning of the remainder of humanity to ensure its survival in *AEon Flux* (Kusama, 2005), to organ back-ups not only restrained by a false consciousness but also endowed with false, prosthetic memories in *The Island* (Bay, 2005), to the nefarious, racialized government conspiracy of *They Cloned Tyrone* (Taylor, 2023). Even the iconic replicants in *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and the intricate bodily identity performance to be able to pass as a genetically superior double in *Gattaca* (Niccol, 1997) can be mentioned in relation to the notion of cinematic clones, as both these films deal with a genetic replication of identity.

This list only represents the cinematic tip of the cloning iceberg.[1] Yet, this short list does provide a glimpse of the very broad representational spectrum of clones in film and illustrates that there has been a vigorous interest in the cinematic depiction of this posthuman figure across the

[1] Referencing my appendix, which conveys a personal search of film and television titles that are related to cloning until 2020, there are at least 106 audiovisual representations of cloning. A recent IMDb search (Febr. 2024) even shows 249 titled associated with the keyword 'cloning' (hyperlink: Sort by Year - Latest Movies and TV Shows tagged with keyword "cloning" - IMDb).

decades. Although changes in the audiovisual representation of human clones in particular and the biotechnology of cloning more generally can be considered through an array of different yet interrelated lenses – changing geopolitical inflections, developments in critical film theory or technological changes in the medium of cinema itself – a first, productive step towards analyzing cinematic clones is to trace parallelisms between these representations and scientific breakthroughs in the field of cloning, while pinpointing when the first clones emerged in film.

To start my overview of the evolution of cloning and cinema, we turn to the work of Haran, Kitzinger, McNeil and O'Riordan (Haran et al. hereafter): *Human Cloning in the Media: From Science Fiction to Science Practice* (2007), in which they offer "a longitudinal analysis of the diverse strands in the genealogy of cloning and a set of reflections about cloning in the contemporary cultural imaginary" (14). This book is one of the most extensive and complete research projects that deals with the intersections of audiovisual representations of human cloning specifically and the developments of cloning in the scientific field.

Haran et al. state that "there is no single origin story of human cloning but also that there are no neutral accounts of this field", and that there have been "important shifts in the meanings of [cloning] during the past decade[s]" (11). Keeping this 'warning' in mind, they trace back cloning's genealogy to the late 1800s: "The lineage [...] begins with Hans Driesch's work in the late nineteenth century on sea urchin embryos, which he successfully split and then allowed to develop into multiple (four) individuals" (16). But before we continue historicizing the technology of cloning, it is important to situate this practice in its larger scientific field, as the history of cloning cannot be considered separately from the interrelated biotechnologies of genetic engineering and genomics.

Cloning is namely "the third player in a trio of modern biotechnologies that have arisen since the early 1970s" and should not be seen "as an isolated technology, single-mindedly directed

at replication of livestock or of people" (13). Furthermore, cloning involves a "complex intersection of technoscientific developments, within genetic engineering, the Human Genome Project (HGP), and assisted reproductive technologies, all of which can be subsumed under the more general title of biotechnology/ies" (14). The first official scientific usage of the word 'clone' already occurred in the early twentieth century, when in 1903 Herbert Webber of the United States Department of Agriculture coined the term "to describe a colony or organisms derived asexually from a single progenitor" (14). What cloning is considered to entail varies from period to period, and even within certain periods the term does not enjoy a stable definition.

There exists a vast number of (sometimes only slightly) differing definitions of cloning in the scientific field. Feminist science studies scholar Kate O'Riordan also alludes to this fact in her article "Human Cloning in Film: Horror, Ambivalence, Hope" (2008). She argues that the "discourse of human cloning is a site where meaning has been under constant revision. There has been a particularly acute period of instability over the last decade[s], since the existence of Dolly the cloned sheep (born in 1996) was verified and made public in 1997" (145). Nonetheless, to begin to answer a question like 'when does the first clone appear in cinema?', it is fruitful to provide *some* definition for the word 'clone' early on in this project.

The basic definition Haran et al. provide stems from the *Chambers Dictionary*:

> *n* a group of two or more individuals with identical genetic makeup derived, by asexual reproduction, from a single common parent or ancestor, *orig* applied to plants, but later applied much more widely; any of such individuals; a person or thing closely similar to another, a copy or replica (*colloq.*). – *vt* to reproduce as a clone; to produce a clone or clones of…{Gr. *klon* shoot}. [1993:324]. (13-14)

What this *Chambers Dictionary* definition from 1993 and Webber's definition, nearly a century before, have in common is the fact that in both descriptions the clone's conception is necessarily

predicated upon some form of asexual reproduction, while stemming from a single common parent, ancestor, or progenitor, i.e. that the clone is 'copied' from an original.

Haran et al. contend, however, that these definitions are inadequate, as cloning accrued "a new set of meanings, associations, imagery and iconography" in the early twenty-first century (14). They argue that a certain "set of genealogies" in which the different components are "all important in the history of the recent cultural imaginary of cloning", which include:

> the history of experimentation in animal embryology; the developments in new human reproduction, particularly IVF in the late twentieth century; the trajectory of excitement and controversy that has shaped the Western cultural imaginary of cloning; the literary and filmic traditions of representing cloning, particularly in the genre of science fiction; and recent examples of naturalising or normalising discourses. (Haran et al. 14)

This quote reflects that the scientific history of cloning has been a multifaceted development, which in part found its animation through the intimate interaction with fiction.

Haran et al. even forward the notion that late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century developments in the biosciences are "challenging ideas about what is fact and what is fiction. Breakthroughs in this area of science are variously characterised as 'tearing up the textbooks', 'rewriting the book of life' and 'turning science fiction into fact'" (7). This tendency is especially important considering the particular way cinema and cloning are intertwined. Haran et al. explain that "in attempting to shift human cloning from science fiction to science practice, the scientific establishment has emerged as a 'dream machine' comparable in many ways to Hollywood" (7). Just as the medium of film gives proverbial flesh to certain imaginations, the scientific domain has given literal flesh to certain genetic inventions by prospectively dreaming up possible future worlds. The histories of cloning and cinema are inextricably interwoven with one another, and it would be hard to consider the scientific history of cloning without taking media discourses into account.

Continuing their argument about the mutual influences both technologies of reproduction have had on each other, Haran et al. flag that the technoscientific domain has "been populated by protagonists who continually cross and re-cross any fact/fiction divide" (7).[2] Media and digital culture scholar Jose van Dijck advances a similar argument in *Imagenation: Popular Images of Genetics* (1998). She claims that popular "representations of genetics are not simply constructed 'inside' journalism or popular culture, or 'outside' science, but the shifting boundaries between those domains add in a major way to the signification process" (11). Cinema and cloning, seen as technologies of reproduction, both probe our sense of self by simultaneously disturbing and delineating our foundations of what it means to be human.

The cinematic site itself can be seen as an arena where identity politics are played out and where a sense of self is being formed and reshaped: "the body is made and remade in both science and cinema, with both the image world and the world of science engaged in the process of visual and narrative (re)constitution of subjectivity itself" (Bishop 353). Cloning's blurred scientific and science-fictional histories might explain why certain correlations exist between breakthroughs in the field of genetics and transformations in the depiction of clones in audiovisual media. The most noticeable shift is a quantitative one and occurred in the mid-nineties of the previous century.

A direct interrelation surfaces between the number of audiovisual representations of clones and the successful cloning of the first mammal named Dolly the sheep. After the cloning of Dolly in 1996, the production of cloning films especially took off.[3] In comparison to the decades before,

[2] Here Haran et al. allude to conceptualization of scientists as "pioneers, dreamers, charlatans, mavericks or fallen heroes" as well as to the fact that certain celebrities transgress the fact/fiction divide in the cloning field (7). Two examples of such celebrities are Superman actor Christopher Reeves who became a front man for stem-cell research and Arnold Schwarzenegger (*The 6th Day*'s cloned protagonist) who was the governor of California, "a US state that has developed pro-active stem-cell policies" (7).

[3] If we take Dolly as a demarcating line within the 106 audiovisual representations of cloning I was able to find until 2020 (see appendix), we see that pre-Dolly 27 titles exist, whereas post-Dolly there are at least 79 titles. And in recent years this has only increased, as note 1 of this introduction shows.

the 2000's and 2010's saw a quadruplication. But still, before the nineties the idea of genetic manipulation and cloning already entered our cultural imaginary, albeit not in such a prominent fashion as during the so-called 'post-Dolly' era. The emergence of the first clones in film can likewise be linked to developments in the field of human biosciences.

Technological advances made in the late sixties through the mid-seventies brought the idea of duplication or multiplication through genetic engineering into our vision. Haran et al. state that in 1966 "Oxford biologist Sir John Gurdon produced cloned frogs using cell nuclear transfer" and in 1975 Derek Bromhall experiments with cloning rabbits (186-7). In 1972 "Willard Gaylin, co-founder of the Hastings Centre initiated public debate on cloning in *The New York Times Magazine* in a bid to win social prominence for bioethics" (186). Hence, before the seventies almost no audiovisual representations of cloning seem to exist, apart from a hand full of films.

Haran et al. do flag *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, for example, as being among "earlier films which were important for their representations of cloning", as they list this film from the fifties alongside two films from the late seventies, namely *The Boys from Brazil* and *Parts: The Clonus Horror* (7). But *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* seems to be the only cloning film of importance that was produced before the technological advances of the late sixties and mid-seventies. Now that we have pinpointed some of the most important parallelisms between audiovisual representations of clones and scientific breakthroughs in the biotechnological field of cloning, let us move on to an attempt to differentiate the clone from other figures that have informed its cinematic envisionings.

Defining the Clone: From the Double to the Multiple

The unstable definition the technology of cloning retains in the scientific field, seems to seep through in its audiovisual representations, producing a multiplicity of possible definitions for what clones might be. Yet, if we do try to delineate what 'the clone proper' is, to trace cinematic clones'

evolution, we might describe this figure as a biological entity that is multiplied in design by means of genetic replication in particular, and necessarily based on the DNA of an original. Clones can hence be seen as genetic 'copies' of certain humans, usually produced in a scientific laboratory; an artificially created 'twin' which might be multiple.

Sometimes these cloned constructs are fabricated so that they have altered life spans, while they might also have enhanced DNA in comparison to their originals. Then cinema also envisages certain clones who are endowed with a so-called 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg, 1995). "Cloning, as it is sometimes imagined in science-fiction, takes the notion of continuity further. It promises progeny who share not just the complete genome and exact appearance of their progenitors, but also their consciousness and memories of lived experiences" (Eberl 28). In this kind of clone, the mind is cloned as well, for the 'personality' of the 'original' is transferred into the cloned body.

It is this type of cinematic clone that this dissertation analyzes in my four selected case studies, so that I can execute my proposed thought experiment of encountering one's own self in the form of a clone. In the first chapter we dive deeper into the notion of prosthetic memory and its philosophical ramifications. But what we can take away from this brief survey now is that the ways in which cinema envisions the figure of the clone are quite diverse. Thusly it becomes difficult to definitively pinpoint *the* first clone in cinema, as we can continuously contest what 'counts' as a clone. Still, this introduction tries to provide a preliminary overview of the first clones in film.

If we take a film that features one or multiple characters which are designated in its diegesis itself as clones, by explicitly *naming* them 'clones', then the first occurrence of a cinematic clone was in 1973. This film even prominently features the word in its title: *The Clones* (Card & Hunt). However, the 1971 film *The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler* (Wynn), starring Leslie Nielsen, does feature 'actual' clones already, if one deploys the kind of dictionary definition provided above (i.e.

a group of two or more individuals with identical genetic makeup derived, by asexual reproduction, from a single common ancestor). In *The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler* the clones are termed 'somas', which amounts to artificially grown bodies from the original DNA of the titular character.

Although it is relevant to scrutinize the pre-Dolly representations, it can be argued that human cloning most fully entered the cultural imaginary after her birth. Haran et al. state that "the inference drawn by the media […] confronted by Dolly's birth was that it made the cloning of humans a genuine and probably imminent technological possibility" (18). The news of Dolly was taken "as an indication of the imminence of human reproductive cloning" (O'Riordan 145). The more feasible prospect of human cloning, which produced plenty public anxiety, most likely ignited the increasing number of representations of clones. We can presume that the hyped news coverage of the cloning of Dolly all over the world in the mid-90s has indeed kindled the imagination and imaging of clones considerably, especially during the last two decades.

Yet, if we take a closer look at those two decades separately, we might consider the 2000s as *the* decade of the clone. The number of audiovisual representations I found in the 2000s does outstrip the 2010s, albeit by quite a small number (39 versus 32). It might also be the case that representations of cloning in the 2010s and the 2020s has become more diffused, as it becomes increasingly more difficult to designate which films and television series deal with 'clones proper' and which ones only take up a kind of 'partial' cloning logic, even more so than in the decades pre-Dolly. *What Happened to Monday?* (Wirkola, 2017), for instance, features 'identical septuplets'.

This sci-fi film's plot revolves around the premise that world hunger and overpopulation has prompted the extensive genetic manipulation of all food crops, which resulted in genetic reproductive defects in humans, making the occurrence of septuplets a commonality. This only worsened the problem, so a strict 'one child policy' was enforced accordingly. All 'access' siblings

are to be ‘stored’ in cryo-sleep until the problem of world hunger and overpopulation is ‘solved’. However, in actuality these children are secretly incinerated instead.

What this example shows is that, although the protagonist septuplets might not strictly be considered as being clones, this film does cut into some kindred problematics, such as genetic manipulation and the notion of multiple genetic ‘identicals’, which the film visualizes through various scenes in which the septuplets spectacularly engage in battle together against the villains. Maybe *What Happened to Monday?* does not fall under the clone proper category, but a kind of clonal logic does govern this film.

Moreover, the slipperiness of defining what cinematic clones entail, is also complicated by a host of related fictional figures that can be seen as being kindred to clones. In which ways do clones differ from other fictional artificial forms of life, be it biological, organic, mechanic, robotic, synthetic, electronic, computational, or otherwise, and where do we draw the line? Can we, for instance, consider ‘replicants’ (i.e. artificially created carbon-based humans) to be clones too? The distinction between the figures of the replicant and the clone is explained more fully in this dissertation’s first and third chapters. Another fictional figure that could be seen as akin to the clone is the android. We might designate androids as synthetic beings which are seen as more ‘human-like’ robots than actual robots.

But here we seem to open up another can of artificial worms, invoking the related notions of automatons, embodied AIs and other variations. All these fictional figures also potentially hybridize, and their sorts of representations are myriad in our cultural imaginary. Most of these ‘uncanny’ figures often allude to certain Faustian paradigms and regularly invoke the monster of Frankenstein as well. This leads us to another important figure: the doppelgänger. The double is

recurrently hailed as a quintessential uncanny figure, in the Freudian sense of 'Das Unheimliche', seen as something familiar that has been made strange and returns as a mark of the repressed.

The double has a long history within fictional narratives, and it forms a pervasive trope not only in cinema, but in literature and art too. "Whether the theme of the double is expressed in literary or in cinematic form, it has, in modern times, been consistently subjected to a particular kind of critical analysis. In general, it has been read as a symbolic discourse expressing psychic conflicts, wherein dual characters represent facets of the unified self" (Fischer 173). Doubles thus usually deal with split selves. Regularly the double can be seen as a dual material manifestation of one and the same unified entity, often reflecting a darker side.

In *The Besieged Ego: Doppelgängers and Split Identity Onscreen* (2013) Caroline Ruddell states that "usually in narratives that centre on the double, the protagonist is guilty of some form of immoral behaviour or activity which is then exaggerated and played out further by the dark double, or monster within" (3). She explains that the "emergence of the dark double or monster within is therefore deeply linked to our sense of humanity, morality, ethics, and often plays out in fictional form cultural fears surrounding our capacity for monstrous or unacceptable behaviour, our sense of self and, importantly, self-worth" (3). This last statement resonates well with some portrayals of cinematic clones, insofar as clones too challenge our sense of humanity, morality, and ethics, and most of all, our sense of self.

Doubles in general, be it 'genetic' clones, 'time-travel' doubles or multiverse versions, 'normal' twins or evil twins, doppelgängers or uncanny doubles, all prompt intricate conundrums which can be related to the medium of film specifically. Cinema has responded over time with increasingly sophisticated technological and metaphorical solutions. Ruddell also comments upon the double's connection to the moving image: "The double, or doppelganger, is no stranger to

fictionalised forms but it has thrived in the age of the moving image and this is due to several key points" (3). According to her there are three main reasons why this is the case.

Ruddell claims that "illusions afforded by cinematic technology lend themselves well to tales that draw on the supernatural (though it should be noted that the double is not confined to genres that centre on the supernatural)" (3). She continues that "it is in the visual image that the double has power or holds sway [as] arguably the uncanny visibility of the double is located distinctly in the visual which is the very premise of film and television" (3). In conclusion Ruddell forwards that "it is in the generic nature of (mainstream) film and television that familiar tales are told and retold, and the double has an allure that continues to fascinate viewers; the deeply unknowable nature of identity is transformed on-screen into a spectacle that makes the theme of fragmentary identity a tangible force" (3). A certain air of spectacle can also be designated within the visualization of cinematic clones, across its entire history.

We can argue that the uncanny visibility of the clone too is distinctly located in the visual, perhaps even more so than the double, for cloning as a narrative theme is deeply entangled with the medium of cinema. The clone namely seems to thrive most fully on screen and not on the page. Although books, novels and comics about human cloning do exist, the number of audiovisual representations of clones exceeds its literary counterpart by far.[4] But to continue our comparison with the doppelgänger, cinematic clones also differ from the figure of the double in significant ways, especially when it comes to both their respective conceptual workings.

[4] Referencing my appendix there are at least 106 audiovisual representations of clones, whereas in print this number is much slimmer. Most lists I found referencing novels about cloning do not contain more than a dozen titles and for comics about two dozen. The most well-known literary titles dealing with cloning are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late The Sweet Birds Sang* (2012, first published in 1976). The latter one has never been adapted for film, but the first one was made into a TV-movie in 1998 and many films adapt elements from this text. Furthermore, *Brave New World* is considered to be one of the first novels to feature the idea of cloning humans. This film and only three other titles in my appendix are adaptations from literary works. Most notably are Michel Houellebecq's *Possibility of an Island* (2006), on the basis of which Houellebecq himself directed a film in 2008, and Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go* (2005), adapted in 2010 by Mark Romanek.

Cinematic clones decidedly go beyond the notion of the dark double, as clones usually are not conceptualized as mere dichotomies, with a good and a bad half. The double's rationale of duality becomes in the figure of the clone a logic of potentially infinite multiplicity and seriality, exhibiting salient differences within a kind of interlinked sameness. On first instance, we might reason that cinematic clones can be seen as a contemporary intensification of the doppelgänger, as the clone historically owes its conceptual lineage to the uncanny double. But as the clone moves from the double's distinct binary logic to a radical rationale of the multiple, these serial copies rather operate as a fracturing figure for the double, in a sense 'fractalizing' its dual identity structures into a multifariousness of difference that is 'intra-connected' by the notion of similarity.

Moreover, unlike the double, the clone as a cinematic trope – especially in the genres of science fiction and horror – is not merely a metaphorical framework often imposed on particular narrative structures involving resemblances between two characters. Cinematic clones, by contrast, involve literal copies of a distinct human subject in physical appearance and, quite often, in mind and memory as well. The spectatorial experience of such encounters between identical human subjects, a spectacle made possible by a range of devices of cinematic trickery, from double exposure to digital manipulation, marks the clone as a distinct kind of cinematic figure.

If we search the history of cinema, taking into consideration this clonal logic of seriality and multiplicity, we find that the first clonal figure was present long before the first proper cinematic clones appeared. Film as a medium has found its origins in vaudeville acts, magic tricks, optical toys, and illusions and can be rooted in what Tom Gunning calls 'the cinema of attractions' (2006). Since seeing multiple indistinguishable subjects interact with each other on screen in motion produces an eerie effect that cannot be easily reproduced by any other medium than the moving image, we might trace a kind of 'pre-clone' before the clone's first appearance in the fifties.

A cinematic figure that visually functions according to a logic of multiplicity and seriality, as opposed to merely operating along the lines of doubling, can be found in George Méliès' *The One Man Band* (1900). In this trickery film, the magician 'copies' himself seven times to form a multiplicity as a 'one man band' through the clever usage of stage magic, editing and superimposition. What is remarkable about this pre-clone depiction is the fact that the multiple Méliès' are figured as kind of 'alternative dimensions' of one another. Each Méliès plays a different instrument, as they perform a sort of chair-dance where they seem to magically morph out of each other as they continually stand up, get duplicated and take their place onto the chairs next to them.

Midway through the act, after they danced around the chairs, they merge back into one another by taking a seat on the next ones' lap, until only one Méliès remains at the end. This notion of clones as alternative dimensions of one another is an important aspect in designating what is conceptually at stake in the notion of clonal subjectivity. This conceptualization of clones as differing dimensions of the self forms the basis of my project's argumentation and will be elaborated upon in the chapters to follow. But before we can embark on this film-philosophical endeavor, an exploration of the concept of cloning and its intimate conceptual relation to the medium of cinema is necessary to form a theoretical foundation from which we can set out to explore the intricate relation of self to self that is variously staged within my case studies.

The Clone in The Genetic Imaginary and in Feminist Posthumanism

As this introduction has argued, the phenomenon of human cloning is a distinctly cinematic and philosophical topos that exists within the so-called genetic imaginary. This term was coined by feminist film scholar Jackie Stacey in *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (2010), in which she investigates not only the concept of cloning, but also the larger topic of genetic engineering and its relation to the medium of film. While there are some articles circulating in the field of film studies

that deal with human cloning in certain films, only this book to date takes fully into account the intricate conceptual interconnections of cinema and the genetic manipulation practice of cloning.

A certain passage from Stacey's book evocatively shows that unraveling the human genome has a treacherous flip side.

> Since our cells are now thoroughly codifiable as genetic information – which can be tagged, extracted, transferred, reprogrammed, and recombined – and our reproductive capacities can now be amplified, assisted, manipulated, substituted, externalized, or blended with laboratory techniques, previous notions of the sacredness of life, the distinctiveness of the human, and the singularity of embodied subjectivity can no longer form the foundations of modern subjecthood as they once did. (179)

The promise of enhancing human life by potentially eradicating diseases through genetic modifications also gives rise to the destabilization of the very notion of what it means to be human. For human subjectivity relies for a large part on the stability of embodied subjectivity, which is governed by the singularity of the self. The sacredness of life and the distinctiveness of the human are thus utterly endangered by the increasing malleability of our cells.

Perhaps thinking in this vein seems like a giant leap when we are coming from practical, scientific questions of genetics that are asked today and dive into elusive, philosophical questions of subjectivity that might or might not affect us in the future. Nonetheless, it is important to ask these existential questions beforehand, for "the time to address the ethical implications of this [genetic] technology is before we actually apply it" (Kirby 211). Especially since "the possibilities of techno-scientific interference in biogenetic processes" are advancing in such a way that they inaugurate "a sense of what we might call a lost bio-aura" (Stacey 179). The notion of bio-aura in relation to cloning will be addressed more fully in chapter three.

For now, it is important to stress that, although actual human cloning has not been implemented by science, our embodied subjectivity's traditional integrity is presently already highly compromised by the "geneticization of the body" (180). Stacey evokes this concept in

tandem with “the decade of the clone, marked by the completion of the Human Genome Project and the cloning of Dolly” to lay bare “a profound disturbance to our previous modes of corporeal perception” (180-1). In line with this disturbance, a genomic discourse of sorts is intimately informing and affecting our cultural imagination as well as our sense of self in a palpable fashion.

The genetic imaginary has entered into the fabrics of our lives – into our fictions, into our discourses, into our minds and even into our embodiments. Within it several tangible tensions “surrounding the reconfiguration of the boundaries of the human body, the transferability of its informational components, and the imitative potentialities of geneticized mode of embodiment” are played out (Stacey 8). As such, the genetic imaginary can be seen as a ‘fantasy landscape’, a kind of figmental ‘mise-en-scène’ that frames these imaginative yet substantial anxieties (8). Moreover, Stacey argues that cinema and genetic engineering are intrinsically intertwined. This affiliation should not only be discerned as a sort of homology, rather both technologies also function on a kindred ontological level.

These technologies of reproduction share not only a fundamental similarity based on common descent, but they share innate characteristics which define the very essence of their productive mechanisms as well, as they both “inaugurate disturbances to our sense of place in the world, and our connectedness to people and things around us” (Stacey 7). The genetic imaginary “spatializes the inner and outer limits of such disturbances” (7). Cinema and genetic engineering both probe our sense of self by simultaneously disturbing and delineating our foundations of subjectivity. In sum, the genetic imaginary, of which cloning is a prominent part, problematizes naturalized conventional conceptions of human subjecthood, and in this sense this imaginary operates within a specific theoretical field that is called ‘posthumanism’.

Philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013) is seen as one of the most seminal works in this field. She usefully divides her book into four chapters that each represent a crucial aspect of how her 'embodied and embedded' conception of the posthuman goes beyond particular normative boundaries: post-humanism as a life beyond the self, post-anthropocentrism as life beyond the species, the inhuman as life beyond death and posthuman humanities as life beyond theory. In its introduction Braidotti states: "While conservative, religious social forces today often labour to re-inscribe the human within a paradigm of natural law, the concept of the human has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns" (1). The biotechnology of genomics in which cloning is inextricably interwoven, is certainly part and parcel of this double pressure.

What is at stake for Braidotti is the conception of subjectivity itself, in as much as the posthuman also signals a certain condition of being we have currently entered. She argues that after "the postmodern, the post-colonial, the post-industrial, the post-communist and even the much contested post-feminist conditions, we seem to have entered the post-human predicament" (1). The way Braidotti formulates her interest in the posthuman, shows why this predicament calls for new conceptions of subjectivity:

> [M]y interest in the posthuman is directly proportional to the sense of frustration I feel about the human, all too human, resources and limitations that frame our collective and personal levels of intensity and creativity. This is why the issue of subjectivity is so central to this book: we need to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing. […] I take the posthuman predicament as an opportunity to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge and self-representation. The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming. (12)

Braidotti thus advances that we need to learn to think differently about ourselves in profound ways, reshaping "subjectivity as both materialist and relational" (52). Still, her investment in the

posthuman stems from an 'all too human concern' about the sorts of knowledges and intellectual values we are presently producing as a highly technologized, mediated, and complex society.

Commenting upon the global economy and its techno-scientific structure, Braidotti notes that especially the "bio-genetic structure of contemporary capitalism" is central to "the discussion on the posthuman" (59). This capitalistic structure "involves the Human Genome project, stem cell research and bio-technological intervention upon animals, seeds, cells and plants" (59), and one can decidedly add the biotechnology of cloning as well. Braidotti explains that advanced capitalism, seen as "a spinning machine that actively produces differences for the sake of commodification" (58), both "invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives" (59). Salient to note in this respect is that Braidotti hails Dolly, the first cloned mammal, as *the* icon of the posthuman predicament we are currently in.

She states that in many ways, "Dolly the sheep is the ideal figuration for the complex bio-mediated temporalities and forms of intimacy that represent the new post-anthropocentric human–animal interaction" (74). She explains that this artificially constructed animal, seen as the first of a new gender and species, goes "beyond the gender dichotomies of the patriarchal kinship system" as she provides the following description: "Cloned, not conceived sexually, heterogeneous mix of organism and machine, Dolly has become delinked from reproduction and hence divorced from descent. Dolly is no daughter of any member of her/its old species – simultaneously orphan and mother of her/itself" (74). This scrutiny of Dolly shows the profound implications the technology of cloning has for heterosexual, humanist conceptions of reproduction, gender, and kinship.

Moreover, Dolly fractures the linearity of time for Braidotti and "exists in a continuous present. This techno-electronic timeless time is saturated with asynchronicity, [as] it is structurally unhinged" (74). This first cloned mammal is both "archaic and hyper-modern, Dolly is a compound

of multiple anachronisms, situated across different chronological axes" (74). Dolly's shattering of linear time "blurs the categories of thought we have inherited from the past – she/it stretches the longitude and latitude of thought itself, adding depth, intensity and contradiction" (74). As this clone embodies complexity, "this entity which is no longer an animal but not yet fully a machine, is the icon of the posthuman condition" (74). Braidotti advances this delineation of the cloned sheep under the specter of Donna Haraway's Cyborg.

Braidotti's scrutiny of Dolly as a nature-cultural compound fits well with her own definition of cyborgs "as creatures of mixity or vectors of posthuman relationality" (73). In a majority of posthuman theory, Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" is often signaled as one of posthumanism's most emblematic and originating works.[5] Especially the manifesto's call for implosion of all binary categories, however problematic the way in which this formulation could be deemed, is considered paramount for posthuman thinking.

But what makes the clone distinctive compared to other posthuman figures that have received much attention, with the cyborg as frontrunner? Unlike other cinematic emblems of posthuman otherness the clone is a posthuman other marked by its *similarity* with the human self. The clone *is* a human being. Yet, it is also something other than a natural, normal human being. Cinematic "clones and genetically engineered individuals often share many of the cyborg's distinguishing features, such as super-strength, heightened physical senses and/or amplified intelligence" (Thomas 64). Might the cyborg be seen as a precursor to the clone in this respect?

[5] "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1991, first published in 1985) is a critique of what Haraway perceives as 'binary feminism'. This second-wave feminism adheres to the same heteronormative matrix present in patriarchal society, that it tries to overcome; binary feminism merely reverses the hegemonic categories of feminine and masculine and still feeds the same power structure that is to be abolished. Haraway instead calls upon a radical implosion of all binaries by evoking the mythical figure of the cyborg: an ironic, political, literal, and metaphorical weapon. By incorporating all the possible dichotomies, Haraway's cyborg implodes the normative binaries that structure the heteronormative matrix.

As the cyborg is often taken as one of the most emblematic posthuman figures, supposedly embodying an almost archetypal form of biotechnological modification of embodiment as well as retaining a mythical air of third-wave feminism's progressiveness, this figure's discursive specter looms over a significant number of representations of posthuman figures, which in themselves are quite often hybridized entities already, including the figure of the clone. However, clones as cultural figures are perhaps currently taking over the position the cyborg previously held.

Rhys Owain Thomas in "Terminated: The Life and Death of the Cyborg in Film and Television" (2015) argues that recently "the cyborg's function has been appropriated by less archaic liminal constructs" (64). He starts his summary of these "other SF archetypes" by listing clones, next to sentient AIs and virtual avatars (64). These latter two figures are "a more recent trend", but "during the late 1990s there was an increased general awareness of cloning and genetic engineering" (64). Clones appear "to have hijacked the collective public imagination previously centered upon cyborgs" (64). Considering the trajectory that I delineated in this introduction's first sections, we can state that this hijacking occurred after the birth of Dolly specifically.

Continuing his argument, Thomas states that technological advances "are destined to cause substantial shifts in how humans relate to each other, the environment and themselves" (64). Hence, the "othering of technology has increasingly become a ludicrous concept, and as technological accessories, appendages and applications have become inseparable from the bodies to which they have become integral […], the cyborg becomes redundant as a marker of social, political and cultural anxieties" (64). I agree that the figure of the clone, amongst others, has filled this position, and therefore deserves extensive examination. As cinematic clones primarily touch upon anxieties about the singularity of embodied human subjectivity, I find it fruitful to analyze the ways in which cinema has envisioned several encounters with the self in the form of a clone.

Trajectory of the Dissertation

The cinematic clones I investigate cut across various film genres and modes of rendering their multiplied protagonists. They are, nevertheless, all produced in the post-Dolly era. All films deploy a hybrid form of computer-generated imagery and cinematic trickery in the material visualization of their clones. While some of these films could be classified as 'independent films', industrially they are indebted to Hollywood and can historically be categorized as contemporary films from the past three decades. What bounds this selection of films together most of all is the vigorous and arresting way in which all these films animate their clonal encounters.

The films I examine thus prominently stage the encounter between their cloned selves, and this characteristic has been the reason why I have selected my specific case studies. The moment of the clonal confrontation puts an immense pressure on the normative conception of our human sense of self, as the other that the self faces in this instance is also another self. Questions of embodiment, consciousness and memory are hence prominently raised by how my films render their clonal encounters. But not every cinematic clone pressures the temporal and spatial axes of human subjecthood in the exact same manner. Analyzing the various ways in which my selected cinematic clones envision the relations between their multiple selves as they encounter one another, will help us unpack the questions of subjectivity that I have raised in this introduction.

My main argument hinges on the idea that clonal subjecthood encompasses something I term a *paradigmatic relation of the self* as opposed to the more conventional *syntagmatic relation of the self*. The way we usually understand ourselves is through an accretion of memories and experiences. We have one body that lives through life's experiences, and we acquire memories thereof over time; something that I would call a life's sentence of sorts, or the syntax of existence,

which progresses on a horizontal axis. This intuitive conception of subjectivity can be seen as a syntagmatic relation of the self oriented through a linear temporality.

Cloned selves, on the other hand, allow a multiplied selfhood, flowing across a range of embodiments. Each multiplied self relates to its cloned companions and 'dethroned' original as alternative dimensions of each other. This paradigmatic relation opens up a potentially infinite depth structure, operating on a vertical axis that is associative rather than causal. The notion of parallel seriality replaces or supplements linear succession. Conceptually, cloning's paradigmatic relations overthrow the self's intuitive syntagmatic relation. The clonal relation of self to self smears conventional subjectivity out to a point where we no longer can constitute this self as unified and unique. This conceptual framework of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of the self will be expounded more fully in my first chapter.

Each subsequent chapter analyzes one film by placing it into conversation with multiple theoretical interlocutors. While discerning the films as equal sparring partners in these philosophical conversations, I integrate my conclusions into my conceptualization of clones as paradigmatic dimensions of each other. All four films belong to different (sub)genres, each deploys a different cinematic language to comment upon the thought experiment of encountering one's own self in the form of a clone. Each film is treated as a separate thought experiment in and of itself, opening up discourses on how we can understand our human selves in our highly technologized world, problematizing conventional conceptions of how the relation between mind and body operates.

The connective tissue of my chapters is shaped by how my case studies envision their clonal encounters with respect to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of the self. My first two films shed light on the paradigmatic dimensions, while my third film comments upon the syntagmatic. I turn to the syntagmatic relation only after I have fleshed out the most important

implications of the paradigmatic relations of cloned selves, as a syntagmatic conception of the self is so kindred to our own daily, intuitive conception of selfhood. This return to the syntagmatic enables me to clearly demarcate the differences this more conventional type of self has in comparison to the prolific paradigmatic relations of clonal subjecthood. My last case study moves us beyond the clone, by providing a return to the double on posthuman grounds.

My first chapter analyzes *Moon.* This film serves as a benchmark for what is at stake in conceptualizing cinematic clones, as it features its clonal encounter as a prolonged and ongoing occurrence. It is the debut of Duncan Jones, who has since acquired the status of arthouse director. This film investigates the patterns of conduct of its cloned protagonists, while it raises ethical questions pertaining to clones' moral status, as it envisages its clones as disposable laborers who are unknowingly enslaved by corporate greed. I start with *Moon* because it is a sustained clonal encounter. The film focuses on how the cloned protagonists negotiate their relationship, placing an unnerving emphasis on the mundane interaction between the two male clones.

By drawing on Allison Landsberg's notion of 'prosthetic memory' (1995) and David Hume's treatise "On Personal Identity (1740), I argue that *Moon*'s clones share a so-called 'continuous consciousness'. In this paradigmatic relation of self to self, the multiple clones can be discerned as different spatio-temporal dimensions of one another, each one implying and productively supplementing the other, connoting the idea of 'the multiple are one'. The last section of this chapter analyzes the clonal relation of self to self through the notion of 'the unattained but attainable self' as reworked by Stanley Cavell in *Cities of Words* (2004), which fosters what I call a 'remarriage of the self'. Debbora Battaglia's concept of 'the replication problematic' (2001), in which filmic clones are seen as 'supplements', forms a bridge between these two parts.

Chapter two shifts us from self to other in the horror of seeing oneself cloned, as I turn from a continuous consciousness to a 'continuous corporeality'. *Alien: Resurrection* features a contrasting encounter that prompts a destructive yet transformative affiliation between the different incarnations of its female human-alien clone-hybrid. Being the *Alien Quadrilogy*'s fourth installment, it also brings the notion of sequels into my discussion of cinematic clones. The *Alien* universe's two most distinctive markers are re-envisioned through the trope of cloning, as the franchise's heroine Ripley and its mesmerizing alien are both resurrected as 'transgenic' clones. Since this film's clonal figure is not just marked by duplication but also stigmatized by an intricate, monstrous form of feminized hybridization, the self that the self faces here, is also uncannily other.

I place the questions of impure corporeality, devouring similitude, gendered embodiment, biological reproduction, and female hybridity this film raises into conversation with Stacey's idea of cloning as 'the relations of excessive sameness' (2010), Stephen Mulhall's reading of the *Alien Quadrilogy* (2016), Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject (1982), Barbara Creed's *Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) and Braidotti's metamorphosing monstrous (2002). Remarkably enough, cloning produces in this case study an abundance of fluid, interconnecting layers of difference. By suturing together cloning and hybridity, this film's mode of clonal reproduction involves a complex form of difference *and* sameness. During its clonal encounter, which I read as a reversal of the Lacanian mirror stage, an absorption of the cloned embodiments occurs, connoting the paradigmatic clonal relation of 'the one is multiple' instead of *Moon*'s clonal relation of 'the multiple are one'.

After exploring the paradigmatic relations in my first two chapters, action sci-fi Schwarzenegger-vehicle *The 6th Day* illuminates how the syntagmatic relation of the self can be altered by cloning. While *Alien: Resurrection* incited a transformative dismantlement of the other self, and *Moon* proposed a productive remarriage of the other self, this film cultivates a problematic

denial of the other self on multiple levels. Envisioning its cloned protagonists not as multiple but only as a duo is the first level. The second involves the film's restoration of a more conventional conception of subjectivity by portraying the practice of cloning as a simple continuation of the syntax of life by figuring cloning as a 'substitution model'. The third level consists of tricking the audience into forming allegiance with the clone retroactively in the film's finale, which makes us realize we have been identifying and empathizing with the clone instead of the original all along.

While I engage with Michael Hauskeller's concept of 'postmortality' (2015) and Vivian Sobchack's SF reworking of Michel Foucault's thoughts on the conceptual operations of similitude versus resemblance (2000), Stacey's reworking of Walter Benjamin's notion of the artwork's 'aura' into the concept of 'bio-aura' (2010) forms this third chapter's most prominent interlocutor. Stacey transposes his argument on the technological reproducibility of art onto the technology of cloning. By 'copying' human bodies they also lose their unique existence, their authentic claim to traditional, specifically humanist, forms of embodied subjectivity. Genetic engineering and cloning, as imitations of human reproductive life, threaten the body's bio-aura by way of their manipulation of the cycles of life and death. In *The 6th Day* the sacredness of life is challenged by the perverted promise of eternal life that cloning engenders.

We turn in this dissertation's final chapter to *Annihilation* to see how the conceptual workings of cinematic clones bear on the posthuman.[6] This apocalyptic 'weird fiction' envisages a new mode of being (not only) human, in which an otherworldly force alters all of nature by 'refracting' all of life's matter. In the film's finale a surreal dance macabre between two entities – between its female protagonist and a sleek black-oily figure which materializes out of her – is featured. We can discern

[6] My article "Chromophilic Annihilation: Posthuman Prisms & New Materialist Refractions of Reality" (2021), published by *Pulse: The Journal of Science and Culture*, formed the basis for this dissertation's fourth chapter. b096b2_8d64ef38d81b47a687528d21489ba85c.pdf (pulse-journal.org)

these figures as something I call ‘refractive clones’. These entities are shown to replicate at a sub-cellular level, and this process is cinematically adorned with an overabundance of color, as the film’s alien doubling of the self is rendered by conjuring up a peculiar kind of ‘prismatic’ color.

Annihilation’s refractive clonal encounter provides us with a doubled prism for tracing the ways in which the clone can be considered as being posthuman and how the double’s logic has changed due to a clonal paradigm. Braidotti’s conception of ‘difference as the principle of not-One’ (2013), Haraway’s concept of ‘kin and kinship’ (2015), Karen Barad’s new materialist and ‘intra-connected’ notions of ‘diffraction’ and ‘the agential cut’ (2008), and David Batchelor’s *Chromophobia* (2000) are this fourth chapter’s most important theoretical interlocutors. The way this case study’s posthuman, refractive clonal figures are visualized through its striking color-scapes, challenges us to reorient our humanist thinking, as the film synthesizes an allegorical critique of our anthropocentric biases. Lastly, this dissertation will be concluded by a short coda.

Chapter 1: Continuous Consciousness in *Moon*

It seems fitting that clonal potentialities are intelligibly captured by the cinematic form. The clone gains its vitality from its visual physicality in motion specifically and not from its bare conceptual texture. Seeing two or more indistinguishable subjects interact on screen produces an eerie effect that cannot easily be reproduced by another medium than the moving image. One cloning film in particular takes this uncanny-valley-like experience to extremes, as it stages the encounter of its clones as a prolonged and ongoing confrontation: *Moon* (Jones, 2009).

How this film envisions its clonal encounter functions as this project's primary prism, for this case study crystallizes the heart of my argument pertaining to clonal subjectivity. This chapter's first parts draw on the notion of 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg, 1995) to show that *Moon*'s clones share something I call a 'continuous consciousness'. Or to be more precise, *Moon* envisions the clonal sense of self as a 'discontinuous continuity of consciousness'. The final part analyzes the clonal relation of self to self through the notion of 'the unattained but attainable self' as reworked by Stanley Cavell in *Cities of Words* (2004). The concept of 'the replication problematic' (Battaglia, 2001), in which filmic clones are seen as 'supplements', forms a bridge between these two parts.

Through *Moon* I will flesh out a working definition of cinematic clones. Hence this film serves as a benchmark for how clones can be rendered on screen and what is at stake in conceptualizing clones across the axes of embodiment and memory. In *Moon*'s case, questions of subjectivity and consciousness become pivotal. Yet first we need to explain how *Moon* acquaints its viewers with its clones. As the film's protagonists are plural, the introduction to the two main clones is doubled too, befitting a clonal logic. Therefore, my introduction also starts twice, once with the film's actual opening. And once more through a 'pro-retrospective' vision of *Moon*'s protagonist, which imagines the encounter between its clones before they actually meet in the plot.

En*vision*ing an Encounter with the Self

Duncan Jones' debut film *Moon* can be considered as a thought experiment that explores questions of subjectivity, identity and humanity through the trope of human cloning. The fact that *Moon* is an arthouse movie renders this text as more philosophically oriented, making this pensive exploration of clones an optimum opening for this dissertation. The film raises ethical questions pertaining to the moral and social status of clones, as it envisages its clones as cheap, disposable laborers who are unknowingly enslaved by corporate greed. *Moon* also implicitly raises existential questions like: who am I, if I am not myself? Who am I, if I am already out there? Who am I, if I am immanently and inescapably faced with myself?

Remarkably enough, *Moon* starts off by explicitly raising a question in its very first shot: "Where are we now?" These words appear at the bottom left corner of a black screen, while a flowing piano score catches the viewer's attention. As the words quickly disappear, a voice-over starts speaking: "There was a time when energy was a dirty word, when turning on your lights was a hard choice". Archival footage of environmental disasters are shown, while the voice-over narrates the deplorable state the earth was in due to energy shortages.

After 10 seconds the voice-over says: "But that was the past. Where are we now?". Once this same question is verbally repeated, the piano score crescendos. It becomes clear that we are watching an advertisement for a company called *Lunar Industries Ltd* which supplies seventy percent of earth's energy needs by harvesting moonrocks. This process of mining 'helium 3' as an energy source is presented as a clean and wholesome endeavor, which seems to occur naturally without any intense manual labor. As abstracted images from outer-space, showing the mining on the moon and the helium-3 transportation to earth, are intercut with footage of smiling children from a variety of countries, the restorative and benevolent nature of this endeavor is highlighted.

The voice-over ends the commercial: “The power of the moon, the power of our future.” Lunar Industries’ logo appears on a white screen, as *Moon*’s daunting signature score (composed by Clint Mansell) commences, warning us of the collateral damage this company produces. The score continues as a forbidding mechanical whirring sound becomes audible. The frame fades to black, dissolving into a close-up of running feet on a treadmill. A cut to a medium-close reveals the person on the treadmill: an exhausted, scruffy looking man in his mid-thirties wearing a wedding ring and a bright yellow shirt (fig.1.1).

Figure 1.1: First moment the spectator encounters protagonist Sam Bell (TC:00:01:33).

On the shirt red capital letters spell: “WAKE ME”. Below this intriguing imperative the words “when it’s quitting time” are written in a smaller, black font. As we cut to a medium-long shot of the running man, a boxy looking white machine passes in the foreground. A not-so happy smiley is displayed on a small computer screen that is mounted at the front of this remarkably antiquated apparatus. On the soundtrack another kind of machinic rattling is added to the sound of the treadmill and running feet, emphasizing the awkward heaviness of the boxy machine.

Across the various streamlined lines of the claustrophobic white yet fouled interior, the film’s credits are diagonally displayed, and seem to retain a reflection on certain parts of the wall (mirrored credit text in blue portion of wall in fig.1.1), as to integrate these non-diegetic elements

into the filmic world's mise-en-scène. In its opening sequence *Moon* already starts to blur fact and fiction, assumption and actuality, reflection and materiality, in a subtle visual doubling, while displaying a foreshadowing tongue-in-cheek pun on the protagonist's costume.

The scene ends as the camera tracks backwards through a narrow window, revealing part of the exterior of a moon-base. Through a dissolve the moon's surface comes into view. While panning down, more of its surface is revealed until earth appears in the background. The film's title is projected in the moon's semi-circle. Through two more dissolves, spliced in the middle with a shot of a satellite, the full moon-base is shown in which the scruffy man and the boxy machine reside. With the ominous accompaniment of computer sounds reminiscent of the original *Alien* (Scott, 1979), white letters spell: "Mining Base Sarang, Crew: 1, Contract: 3 years".

In two meager minutes *Moon* provides a well-rounded backstory to the diegetic world we have entered, while aptly acquainting us with the 'only' characters that stay with us for the film's entire duration. The discrepancy between the supposed wholesome helium-3 mining and the oppressive reality of the labor on the moon are starkly sensed in these moments. Simultaneously the film poses a self-reflexive quandary to its viewer: "Where are we now?". The answer will turn out to challenge conventional notions of subjectivity that are based on uniqueness and singularity.

As my reading of *Moon* will show, human cloning as a topos functions at the junction of philosophy and cinema. Cinematic envisionings of clones question notions of embodiment, consciousness and memory, while tapping into cinema's imaginative aspects that are linked to the workings of dreams. Therefore, it is salient to note that one of the most intriguing encounters of *Moon*'s clones occurs early on, in a scene which takes us into the protagonist's dreamscape. In doing so, this short but sinister scene plays out the existential questions raised above.

The precarious nature of the relation of self to self is evocatively condensed through an enigmatic vision of the film's protagonist – a man who is a clone but who is initially unaware of this fact. Sam Bell's (Sam Rockwell) solitary task is to manage the helium-3 harvesting. His only companion is benign robot GERTY (Kevin Spacey), an intelligent entity with a computational subjectivity who is programmed to aid Sam in each and every way he can. But Sam's solitary stretch is shockingly interrupted when he encounters his own self in the form of a clone. This clone is not the only one. Sam turns out to be one of many, many other clones that preceded him.

These clones were all produced to manage the station after the previous one expires in three years, without ever knowing they were clones. A period of corporeal deterioration precedes their inescapable expiration. These terrible truths are gradually revealed to the spectator, as the film's narration restricts us to the knowledge the protagonist(s) have. Two weeks before the current Sam thinks he will be able to return home to 'his' wife Tess and daughter Eve on earth, he crashes while inspecting a harvester. A new Sam is awakened – although the spectators, like both Sams themselves, initially do not know that it is a clone who has been awoken.

Just before Sam physically encounters his own cloned self, a metaphorical premonition of this impending future event manifests itself in a dream that commences as a memory. Although it only lasts thirty seconds, this brief sequence has an ominous, disorientating effect. This 'vision scene' begins with an establishing shot where the camera slowly tilts down to the moon base on which Sam lives. While an eerie score accompanies a dissolve into Sam's bedroom, the camera glides into the room with a smooth and spectral-like movement – giving the impression that we ourselves, as viewers, are creeping up to the sleeping Sam.

A peculiar deliberate swiftness that attends this agile camera movement even suggests that some kind of haunting entity is taking possession of Sam in this instance. Another dissolve, cued

on the close-up of Sam's dormant face, takes us into his dreamscape. At first this dream appears to be a recollection of an intimate memory, where Sam and his wife sleep in a caring embrace. Then, with an equally spectral-like movement, the camera sweeps underneath the covers. The frame momentarily fades to black, and plunges us into a claustrophobic, tunnel-like maze, formed out of the covers. Convulsively the camera slithers down Sam's legs from right to left. When the soundtrack climaxes, we discern a hand, frantically clutching at Sam's feet.

As the camera tracks the grasping hand, we zoom in to a close-up of the face of another – very distressed – Sam (fig.1.2). After this 'second' Sam is revealed, who will turn out to be one of his many 'precursors', the shot abruptly dissolves into another establishing shot of the moon-base and the sequence ends like a thief in the night. Shortly after this vision, Sam finds his barely alive predecessor. What unfolds next is a moving, distressing, cynical and uncanny relationship between the two Sams, who at the end of the film wake up yet another Sam. The purpose of bringing this third clone to life is using him as a proxy in their escape plan for the second clone.

Figure 1.2: Sam Bell clutching at Sam Bell's feet (TC:00:23:31).

This vision might go unnoticed by the casual viewer who sees this demure yet suspenseful film for the first time. Nevertheless, this succinct interlude early in the film's narrative flow plays

an important role in understanding the configuration of the figure of the human clone in *Moon.* It reveals a certain spatio-temporal distortion in the construction of the clonal sense of self. Moreover, *Moon* as a filmic text overall emblematizes the way cinema in general envisions human clones, as *Moon*'s spatio-temporal distortion refracts the most important philosophical concepts my project will engage with in its investigation of cinematic clones.

This cloning relation of self to self has a significantly different structure from conventional forms of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. Firstly, this relationship can be discerned as synchronic as well as diachronic. By 'copying' a person through cloning, these multiplied embodiments start several new life paths within different spaces and/or times – a multiplicity of forks in the road of life occurs, which also intersect in intricate ways. Secondly, and perhaps even more pertinent, the clonal relation is informed by a paradigmatic instead of a syntagmatic logic. We return to these important notions shortly in this chapter's next section.

Still, the spatio-temporal confusion the vision brings fort, can already be sensed at this point. As it envisions the clonal encounter with the self before it actually occurs, it leaves us wondering: How do these two Sams relate to one another, on a conceptual and material level? Are they manifestations of different temporal and/or spatial dimensions of one and the same entity? Are they duplicates of the same or are they similar yet distinct persons? How does *Moon* structure this relation on screen? To what extent is this relation cinematic in particular?

While the overall status of the vision scene might at first be interpreted as a dream which is based on a memory, it can be argued that through the infusion of the literal latent presence of the other clone in this dream, the scene in effect takes on the special function of an actual *vision*. This vision, in which the two protagonists intimately share a continuous consciousness, reveals that conventional conceptions of memory and embodiment undergo a transformation when one

encounters their own self in the form of a clone. This chapter will dissect how this clonal encounter is envisioned in *Moon.* Before we start our close analysis of this film, we need to expound the kind of logic that governs the notion of a clone in general, so that we subsequently can comprehend the specific workings of *Moon*'s cinematic clones more fully.

Clonal Embodiment, Consciousness & Memory

The encounter with a clone problematizes at once the confrontation with the other as well as one's conception of, and relation to, the stable self. Our understanding of the stable self is embedded in a dominant philosophical tradition, one that is distinctly Western and European. This paradigm emphasizes the way selves are shaped from their antagonism with others; how one individual differs from another determines the form of its existence to a large extent. Without the 'other' we would not have the 'self'. Identity within this framework is thus delineated by a relationship of self and other, by discontinuities between persons, as entities in opposition. The architecture structuring this conventional understanding of the stable self is hence in its essence discriminatory, as it operates along the segregating lines of exclusion, rather than inclusion.

Clones, however, entail a deviating inter-subjective relation; an encounter of self and self rather than self and other. Other frameworks for subjectivity do emphasize the importance of a relation of self to self in the formation of internal subjecthood.[7] Yet, clones still upset these identity structures too, for they materialize a relation of self to self in multiple *external* embodiments. Therefore, as the hypothetical encounter with one's own clone can be said to stage a 'facing of yourself as other' – or visa versa, facing another which turns out to be yourself – the dual notions of self and other seem to conflate. But the kind of conception of selfhood that is imbued in our

[7] Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) notably argues that *Dasein* is conditioned by three relationships: being in the world, being with another, and being with oneself. Sigmund Freud conversely conceptualizes different levels of the self through his notion of the unconscious.

perception of clones, is nonetheless shaped by these conventional notions of a stable self, which require a strict split between a singular self and a distinct other.

The relation between clones as multiple similar selves poses a conceptual conundrum: a paradox proliferates with respect to the basic demarcating terms of identity, as a separation between the dichotomy of self and other no longer is tenable. How can we rationalize this clonal relation of self to self? When a sense of self multiplies in the form of a clone, when a binary becomes one and plural at once, how are we to conceptualize personal identity to begin with?

For this larger-than-life question, we turn to philosopher David Hume. In "Of Personal Identity", a section of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (2009, first published 1740), he problematizes any conception of the self as a stable entity. First Hume advances the proposition: "If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner" (Hume 394). Here Hume provides a general definition of personal identity, which most would intuitively hold as true.

Hume, however, directly dismisses this kind of conception of the sense of self by forcefully stating: "But there is no impression constant and invariable" (394). Hume continues explaining: "Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea" (394). In Hume's conception of personal identity, he stresses that the very notion of a constant and invariable self and the idea that "we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence" is intrinsically a *fictional* construction (393). I gather that, according to Hume, we should therefore view our subjectivity as a 'fiction of the self'.

This fiction of the self is based on our ever-changing perceptions of our identity, which are based on the perceptions of our memories of our impressions of ourselves. Hume delineates this dynamic as a "collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (396). Hume's statement "I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception" shows that subjectivity in this vein should be discerned as already being an imagined construct we carve out of our own perceptions (395). The Humean sense of self is thus far from being a stable entity, as it is formed out of nothing but perceptions, impressions and our recollections thereof.

Moreover, it is important to stress that Hume advances the claim: "self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference" (394). Within this conception of subjectivity our personal identity has always been a collection of *multiple* fictional assemblages, hence we can state that this kind of self already consists of plural past others that continue to morph in an ever-changing construction we call the self. The perceptions of our memories of our impressions of ourselves as well as the memories of the lived experiences we undergo then make us who we are. But all these variables change and fluctuate rapidly and continuously. To grasp the full extent of these Humean conclusions regarding personal identity, we need to complicate another aspect of this intricate constellation: the concept of memory – a notion which essentially structures our sense of self.

Memory in itself is a fickle phenomenon. The allegory of our memories as static, dusty old books shelved away in our brains' library has exhausted itself (Lehrer 83). Our memories are malleable, volatile, erratic, fallible and involuntary. "A memory is only as real as the last time you remember it – the more you remember something, the less accurate the memory becomes" (Lehrer 85). Memories "are imperfect copies of what actually happened, a Xerox of a Xerox of a

mimeograph of the original photograph" (Lehrer 89). Even the *memories* of our several impressionable impressions of ourselves – which succeed each other with an incredible velocity and are in a perpetual flux – are in themselves also already highly pliable and precarious. But what if the memories of our several impressions of ourselves could be severed from the embodiment they reside in, to be implanted into another? Hence memory is not only deceitful, imagined, traumatic, and collective. It can even be prosthetic as well.

In this instance we turn to Alison Landsberg's notion of 'prosthetic memory' (1995).[8] This concept experiments with the idea that the memories and therefore the identity of an individual could be extracted and subsequently implanted into the next as a kind of prosthesis. By prosthetic memories Landsberg means "memories which do not come from a person's lived experience in any strict sense. These are implanted memories, and the unsettled boundaries between real and simulated ones are frequently accompanied by another disruption: of the human body, its flesh, its subjective autonomy" (175). Here Landsberg flags the dislocating power memory holds over embodied subjectivity, and this disruption will turn out to be Humean in its sort.

She starts by delineating the way in which memory is constitutive of identity. First, we should note that the lived experiences we have and the memories we conceive of them shape our subjectivity. Subsequently Landsberg argues that although memories might be divorced from the actual lived experience, they still continue to motivate actions and construct identity (175). The idea that memories can be severed and extracted from one individual to be implanted into the next as a prosthesis, shows that our conscious awareness of ourselves, which is based on our memories of the experiences that make us who we are, is a very fragile and mutable construction.

[8] Landsberg coined this term in her article "Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* & *Blade Runner*" (1995). This formed the basis for her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004). All references and citations made in this chapter stem from the original article.

As Landsberg explains: “We rely on our memories to validate our experiences. The experience of memory actually becomes the index of experience: if we have the memory, we must have had the experience it represents” (176). But if memory is “the precondition for identity or individuality – if what we claim as our memories defines who we are – then the idea of a prosthetic memory problematizes any conception of memory that posits it as essential, stable or organically grounded” (176). Moreover, in addition the concept of prosthetic memory “makes impossible the wish that a person owns her/his memories as inalienable property” (176). The evocation of prosthetic memory thus uproots the supposed nontransferable essence of our memories. It renders any conception of memory as inherently unstable.

Landsberg’s notion of prosthetic memory not only lays bare the malleability of memory itself, foregrounding its impressionable and transient nature. It also underlines the Humean idea that our personal identity is inherently a fictional assemblage. Our hegemonic cultural and material constructions of the self are therefore just as ‘real’, or just as ‘fictitious’ as the constructions of subjectivity we find in cinema’s imaginary, such as the figure of the human clone. For our sense of self, our own personal identity, has always already been a fictitious construct.

The questions cinematic clones raise about human embodiment, consciousness, memory, biological reproduction, and boundaries of the self, problematize intuitive conceptions concerning the relation between mind and body specifically. The various mind-body relations clones could have, are envisioned by cinema in many different ways. Technically, as stated in my introduction, a clone is a biological organism that is multiplied by means of genetic replication, on the basis of the DNA of an original. Extrapolating from science, cinema has envisioned clones as the bodily copies of individual humans; an artificially created ‘twin’ or series of twins. Some filmic clones are fabricated in such a way that they have shorter or longer life spans. Some have enhanced DNA in

comparison to their originals. Sometimes clones are envisioned as mere 'organ-body bags' or 'empty shells', but quite a few fictions feature clones with implanted memories of the original person that was cloned. These implants are a form of what Landsberg calls prosthetic memory.

What fascinates me for my clonal exploration, are those clones that in some respect possess and simultaneously are possessed by the malleable memories of their original's lived experiences: clones that are endowed with an actual prosthetic memory. By letting cinematic clones enter Landsberg's thought experiment, the radical effects of prosthetic memories on our perception of subjectivity are brought to unprecedented extremes. The concept of a prosthesis readily connotes a logic of extension, supplementation, and enlargement, but its infusion in the figure of the clone stretches this rationale to the point where it snaps into an inexhaustible form of seriality.

What happens if the malleable memories of an original are implanted into a cloned embodiment? This premise potentially makes these memories the imperfect copies of a Xerox of a Xerox of a mimeograph of the original photograph of a memory implanted within a subjectivity which on its own could already be discerned as a Xerox of a Xerox of a mimeograph of the original photograph of a cloned sense of self. Still, even within this dazzling scenario, memories remain one of the most fundamental building blocks for identity – however unstable they might be.

For clones with prosthetic memories, we can state that the mind is 'cloned' too, as the 'personality' of the original human is transferred into the clone. Although memories might be divorced from actual lived experiences, these memories do continue to shape and construct identity. Hence, not only does the body of the cloned subject enters into a plural relationality in these sorts of cloning scenarios, but likewise the mind is multiplied too. It is this type of clone that we encounter in *Moon*, as the multiple Sam Bell clones all possess and share the memories of an

original Sam. But how can we rationalize the relation these different Sams have with each other? In what ways does the mind's multiplication complicate our intuitive conceptions of selfhood?

The way we usually understand ourselves in real life is through a seemingly consecutive accretion of memories and experiences. We consider ourselves as having one body that lives through life's experiences and as acquiring memories of these experiences over time; a life's sentence of sorts, or a syntax of life, that progresses linearly on a horizontal axis till death forms the final period. Cloned selves, however, might allow for a spatially and temporally multiplied selfhood that operates on a different dimension. To better grasp the conceptual workings of clones' multiple embodiments and minds, I utilize the linguistic notions of *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic* relations.

An intuitive conception of the self rests on a chain of memories of lived experiences, which can be understood as a *syntagmatic relation of the self*, oriented through a linear temporality, as a before and an after. But cinema envisages that if a singular person is reproduced through cloning, that particular self flows across a range of embodiments, existing in multiple points in space and time. Each multiplied self relates to its cloned companions and 'dethroned' original as *alternative dimensions* of each other. This *paradigmatic relation of the self* opens up a depth structure that is potentially infinite and operates on a vertical axis that is associative rather than logical or causal.

The notion of parallel seriality (repeating alternatives or substitutions of the same) replaces, or better yet supplements, linear succession (new generations elaborating upon former ones). The figure of the clone thus flips a normative 'relationality' upside down. The term relationality in this respect is the logic that governs (inter-)subjectivity. Conceptually, cloning's paradigmatic relations could overthrow the intuitive syntagmatic relationality of the self. This potentially endless paradigmatic relation smears conventional subjectivity out to a point where we no longer can

constitute this self as unified and unique. The clonal relation also holds a perverted promise for eternal life, as individuals can be copied ad infinitum, while becoming more dispensable.

Through the figure of the clone a normative sense of self implodes precisely as this subjectivity expands exponentially. This sort of oscillation can be found when the interconnected notions of time and space are drawn into a black hole. The relationality of a cloned sense of self amounts to being a nimble nexus that at once expands and compresses the notions of space and time, and the categories of self and other – as within the continuum of cloning these oppositions are no longer tenable. This dynamic engenders something I call a 'continuous consciousness'.

Moon's clones intimately share this kind of interlinked consciousness. The endowment of the original Sam's memories within the clones functions as a conductor of consciousness, giving way to a formation of a continuity of consciousness and thus of subjectivity. This continuity not only links the Sams across space, but also over time. This clonal subjecthood has a significantly different structure from conventional forms of (inter)subjectivity. It not only opens up paradigmatic relations of the self but encompasses both a synchronic and a diachronic relation of self to self.

Figure 1.3: The Sams's maquette that visualizes their continuous subjectivity (TC:00:45:33).

This clonal continuous consciousness, which is enabled through their mutual prosthetic memories, is emphasized in *Moon* in a variety of ways. In the dialogue as both Sams intuitively

switch between ‘you’ and ‘I’ when referring to both the other and themselves on different occasions. But it is also rendered visually in the mise-en-scène by the extensive scale model of the original’s hometown, on which all the previous clones build (fig.1.3). These instances are subtly dispersed throughout the film and show that subjectivity has become continuous through multiple corporealities. Identity is thus not fixed in the singular but flows across a paradigmatic relation.

By evoking a continuous consciousness, a modification of the aphorism ‘cogito sum’ can be made for clonal subjecthood: we have thought, experienced and felt the same by means of prosthetic memories, therefore WE are. A fractalization of the self is set in motion, which prompts the question: Might it be that through the figure of the clone a normative sense of self explodes precisely because this subjectivity expands excessively, no longer being constrained to a singular body in the same space or time, and potentially no longer bound to a singular mind as well?

By picking apart the ways in which *Moon* renders the spatio-temporal relations between the Sams as they encounter one another, we can unpack this question of clonal subjectivity. But first, we need to stress how the notion of prosthetic memory correlates to the filmic medium itself. Landsberg directly relates her term to the workings of cinema, as film too installs imaginary memories of fictional experiences in its spectators. Film can be seen as a kind of prosthetic memory; an arena where fictitious yet affective experiences are disseminated across people’s minds, a virtual commonplace where actual memories are formed. The cinematic experience affects our perceptions of our impressions of ourselves, and hence shapes our sense of self.

The moving image is a medium through which we can transport ourselves into the lives of others, sense empathy with entities that are other than ourselves, and live through experiences that are other than our own. The prescience of cinematic clones lies in how these figures reconfigure a relation of sameness with alterity, a bodily kinship that extends the self into the other, by

acknowledging continuities between persons, as entities in concord, while the filmic medium opens up avenues of empathizing with this clonal otherness.

The coupling of human cloning with prosthetic memory is a fruitful one, as it destabilizes an intuitive sense of self as a stable entity, while shedding a new light on how we can conceptualize cinema's operations related to prosthetic memory's emphatic dynamics. How the relation of self to self functions on a cinematic level will be discussed in the next section, as we take a closer look at both the material organization of clones on screen and the clonal relation's conceptual structure.

Rendering the Clonal Encounter on Screen

Moon places prosthetic memories firmly within the foundations of the cloned sense of self. These memories are key to how the cloned protagonists affiliate with each other in a novel kind of subjective relationality. The two clones we follow for the duration of the film live next to each other in a confined space and time. By prominently staging the encounter of its clones as a prolonged and ongoing occurrence that takes up most of the film's screen-time, *Moon* forms a salient exception to a certain 'rule' I have discerned in cinematic representations of human clones.

A majority of cloning films shape their plots in such a way that the clones only encounter each other in person for some brief moments, or do not physically encounter each other at all. Especially two-shots of clones are a rarity. A technical reason for the uncommon occurrence of a two-shot of clones in the filmic medium can be attributed to the difficulty of splicing together multiple strips of film of the same actor into one single frame. Creating the illusion that two or more indistinguishable subjects interact in real time on screen, as if sharing the same diegetic space, is not an easy thing to do. This holds true for both analogue renderings of clones and its digital counterparts produced by computer-generated imagery (CGI).

Before the advent of CGI and digital editing, this sort of image production was extremely labor intensive. Matte painting for instance, which can be seen as a precursory technology to CGI renderings of clones, is an analogue form of camera trickery that was used to merge images of multiple clones into a single two-(or more)-shot. This technique requires a lot of cut and paste skills from the editor; if executed in a sloppy manner, the end-result looks quite amateurish and unrealistic. Early cloning films that were produced before the digital era generally have little to no two-shots of clones. Crosscutting or parallel editing was often utilized to keep the clones separated, probably because this made it easier to produce a somewhat convincing interaction between a multiplied character that is played by the same actor.

Even with the aid of CGI (usually deployed in post-production) the rendering of one actor 'acting with himself' on screen in a two-shot is still very challenging. As the uncanny-valley-like experience of seeing clones interact with each other is generated most fully by a photorealistic, or by a perceptually realistic rendering, and not by a completely animated image, the actor in question has to be shot separately, acting out all the scene's different components in several takes. In these takes the director has to be cautious about properly taking into account the various figure placements of the multiple clones as they move through the frame.

Most digital techniques for animating multiple clones on screen deploy a hybrid form of digital and analogue materials and consist of a complex form of layering that is called 'digital compositing' (Manovich 152). The purely analogue clonal image can also be described as a composite image of sorts, but post-CGI renderings of clones in particular rely heavily on the practice of digital compositing. This is a specific kind of image production with its own visual regime as theorized by Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* (2001).

Manovich characterizes digital compositing as something that is achieved by meshing together different image layers, sometimes even more than a thousand at a time, into one to create a two-dimensional image (152). These image layers "may all have different origins – film shot on location ('live plates'), computer-generated sets or virtual actors, digital matte paintings, archival footage, and so on" (152). Furthermore, historically, a digitally composed image "can be seen as a continuation of montage within a shot" (152). In the composite image multiple layers – or 'dimensions' if you will – seamlessly exist next to each other on the surface of the screen to create an intricate illusion that seems real and tangible.

We can see these different layers as a hidden depth structure that resides behind or below the flattened end-product: a latent constellation of what I describe as the paradigmatic dimensions of the composite image. It is important to emphasize this aspect of digital compositing in relation to the conceptual workings of cinematic clones, seen as different paradigmatic dimensions of each other. The philosophical framework I have expounded for the functioning of the clonal sense of self is thusly mirrored in the actual material manifestations of clones on screen.

The hybrid techniques used to render clones in two-shots by way of composite imagery deploy a method that also taps into paradigmatic depth structures. Yet, this paradigmatic mirroring on a conceptual and material level should not be seen as an isomorphic connection. Rather it is a metaphorical analogue that enhances our understanding of cloning and cinema as kindred technologies of reproduction. Returning to *Moon*, the immediacy of the prolonged encounter of its clones sheds a light on the figure of the clone's cinematicity, as the materiality of this film's rendering of the clonal confrontation complicates cinema's relation to the reproduction of reality.

Cloning as a narrative theme is deeply entangled with the medium of film. But cinematic clones thrive most fully in the age of digital film specifically. The way clones are rendered by

hybrid CGI technologies gains relevance when one takes into consideration the long history of cinema that questions notions of duplication, replication, reproduction, and simulation. If one takes a Bazinian stance to the ontology of the photo/cinematographic image, film can be said to copy or clone the phenomenological world around us by artificially reproducing it. The artificiality of this kind of reproduction is increasingly heightened by the ever more complex forms of digitized cinema. Simultaneously the level of perceptual realism is augmented in post-CGI filmic illusions.

The digital image loses some of the original indexical power the purely cinematographic retains but might gain a different sort of relation to the reproduction of reality. André Bazin famously yet controversially argues in *What is Cinema?* (2005, first published in 1969) that the photo/cinematographic image, in contrast with previous modes of representation such as painting, entails an objective reproduction of reality. In Bazin's view the camera is a kind of mechanical eye which captures its subject without any subjective interference from a human actor, making photo/cinematography a non-human form of reproduction. Yet, digital cinematographic reproduction in my opinion can be seen as taking this trajectory even further, albeit not in a fashion that warrants an augmentation of objectivity by way of circumventing the human element.

Digital cinema, not relying solely on photographic reproduction that still finds its roots in the human perceptual apparatus of the eye, can be discerned as having a *posthuman* affiliation with the reality it reproduces. For the digital derives its relation with and simulation of reality by way of reading and rendering code, instead of mechanically taking physical imprints of light casting off of objects. In this sense parallels might be drawn between how digital code in animating cinematic clones and genetic code in constructing cloned embodiments operate in producing their illusory constructs on a technical basis. It is important to note that reading and rendering code in no way

should be seen as an objective endeavor, as digital programming perhaps even entails a more partisan process than deciding which imprints of light to make where, when, and in what manner.

The concept of 'indexicality' as theorized by Mary Ann Doane (2007) and the notions of illusion and spectacle as treated by Tom Gunning in "Faking Photographs, or What's the Point of an Index" (2008) are relevant here. Considering surrealist photography, Gunning questions the ontological importance of indexicality in scrutinizing perceptually realistic but conceptually illusory images. Digital renderings of cinematic clones too are lifelike yet imaginary representations. With these sorts of images, the power of the illusion is drawn from the fact that its appearance *looks* as if it has an indexical relation to reality, that an actual imprint of a reality that once was, has been made, while its fabrication in essence is a synthetic hybrid based on code.

The particular uncanniness of the experience of seeing perceptually realistic clones interact on screen in motion thus stems for a large part from this illusory indexicality that the cinematographic image of the human clone retains. This clonal uncanniness is in addition intensified by the amalgamation of multiple indexical image layers into one continuous whole, which can be seen as the digital composite's paradigmatic dimensions. Yet, next to the technical predicaments of rendering clones together on screen and the conceptual ramifications of these material visualizations, it seems that quite some cloning films eschew bringing their multiples in close physical proximity for another specific reason, which is as ephemeral as it is existential.

Clonal encounters namely force an anxious confrontation with an other who, by virtue of being a clone, presents an excessive threat to a comfortable notion of individuality. Still, many films featuring clones do stage an encounter between their multiples, but this brief confrontation is often spectacularized and presented as the film's most climactic moment. The clonal confrontation in

cinema seems to be something that needs to remain exclusive and is preferably staged as a non-recurring moment to keep the uncanniness of this encounter to an entertaining minimum.

The editing deployed in many cloning films therefore generally emphasizes the clones' distance in time and/or space, instead of bringing them together, let alone in one and the same shot. Most cloning films do not spend more than a few seconds or minutes on the encounter between their cloned characters and are structured so that these clones are not in close physical proximity in the diegesis. *Moon* radically upsets this apparent convention. In this section's second half we will scrutinize the ways in which our case study does so.

Seen from a technical and material vantage point, the way *Moon* animates its clones on screen for such a lengthy period of time is already exceptional due to its ingenious digital and analogue merging of multiple shots in a majority of the scenes.[9] But it is also quite extraordinary on a conceptual level. Because *Moon*'s clones exist together in close proximity, the problematic of syntagmatic subjectivities entering into a paradigmatic relation is pushed to its extremes.

As Sam Bell actually lives and converses with Sam Bell throughout two-thirds of the film, these sustained moments of clonal confrontation put tremendous pressure on the normative conception of our traditional sense of self. This strain on the intuitive perception of selfhood happens in two ways: First, by spatially stretching subjectivity across the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Second, by temporally protracting the sense of self to entail a diachronic and synchronic relation simultaneously. This latter kind of protraction can be found in the newly awakened Sam's vision, since older Sam is prospectively present in this premonition.

[9] For an extensive exposition of the techniques that were used to render *Moon*'s clones, see the special features on the DVD released by *Sony Pictures Classics* (Liberty Films UK, 2009). This includes two commentaries with director Duncan Jones, a 'making of' and an item on creating the visual effects.

The prolonged encounter of *Moon*'s clones prompts the question of how this clonal sense of self is structured. What are the conceptual workings of the spatio-temporal construction of the multiple Sams? This construction comprises a complex framework that is already astutely alluded to within the question the film poses as it commences: where (a place) are (a being in time) we (multiple subjectivities) now (a spatio-temporal unit)? Before we scrutinize the ways in which *Moon* renders the paradigmatic relation between its clones after they encounter each other, we need to explicate the manner and order in which the Sams's initial encounter occurs and how we as spectators are presented with these events.

The unfolding of the first 'act' of the plot is, as it happens, not as self-evident as one might think. The spatio-temporal confusion that finds its acme in the vision scene is lurking throughout the entire first act, and even gets intensified after the clones encounter each other. One has to be aware of the clonal 'twist' before one can fully comprehend the scope of this spatio-temporal distortion. In this sense, *Moon* can be grouped under the genre of what Thomas Elsaesser calls the 'mind-game film' (2009).[10] The description of this genre comprises two levels, which on their part can also be combined within one and the same filmic text.

Firstly, "there are films in which a character is being played games with, without knowing it or without knowing who it is that is playing these (often very cruel and even deadly) games with him" (14). Secondly, the audience "is played games with, because certain crucial information is withheld or ambiguously presented" (14). While Elsaesser does not mention *Moon* in particular, this film does operate on both these levels. In the diegesis Lunar Industries plays inhumane and

[10] The article "The Mind-Game Film" (2009) formed the basis for Elsaesser's last (posthumous) publication, a book titled *The Mind-Game Film: Distributed Agency, Time Travel, and Productive Pathology* (2021). All references and citations made in this chapter stem from the original article.

murderous games with all the Sams and the film itself ambiguously presents, by playing into certain viewers' expectations, the first act's occurrences.

On first viewing, we think that the Sam who wakes up in the infirmary is the same Sam who, in the scene prior, crashed in the rover. The way *Moon* presents these events suggests that the crash is the cause of the effect that Sam awakes thereafter: the film transitions into a shot of Sam waking in the infirmary immediately after showing the crash. The reason most viewers hold such a conviction is because we are habituated to drawing such conclusions by the language of film itself.

Many films, especially the ones produced in Hollywood, deploy continuity editing. This editing system is designed so that space and time are neatly connected through a linear spatio-temporal logic, which can be seen as syntagmatic. We are conditioned by continuity editing to automatically assign a cause-and-effect rationale to the images as they are presented in a certain order. Cohesion between diegetic spaces and plot-events in chronological story-order are created in the spectator's mind by this linear and causal logic. Yet, it is precisely these kinds of successive, syntagmatic arrangements that *Moon* upsets by assuming an associative, paradigmatic continuity.

This paradigmatic continuity is not only present in *Moon*'s conceptual organization of its clones, but also in the material organization of its cinematic language. The fact that *Moon* generally deploys dissolves as a standard transition in its editing, is an example of this. The dissolve is a form of merging different shots together that readily connotes entering a certain dreamlike state or flags a transition into a flash-back.[11] As dissolves typically gesture towards a passage into a different time, space and/or reality in comparison to the previous shot, this kind of transition indicates a break with traditional linear, syntagmatic continuity. Furthermore, dissolves simultaneously assert an associative correlation that is not necessarily chronological or causal.

[11] A flashback is a narrative devise that can be described as a diegetic memory recounted especially for the eyes of the spectator and which unsettles the chronological plot-order.

In a majority of Hollywood films dissolves are not used frequently but are reserved for special scenes. *Moon* on the other hand systematically implements dissolves, endowing this film with a hypnotic and transient air. A dissolve is also utilized for transitioning from the shot of the crash to the shot of Sam waking in the infirmary. The first-time viewer, however, is not yet accustomed to this kind of paradigmatic filmic language. Therefore, we believe, in relying on a presumption of linear and causal continuity in this transition, that it is the same Sam that awakes in the infirmary, while in actuality it is a new clone who is awakened.

The film does provide subtle clues which hint at this fact. 'New' Sam, who says he doesn't remember a thing after GERTY asks him if he knows what happened, is tested by the computer on his cognitive and motor skills. The first-time viewer thinks this is standard procedure after being in an accident that could have caused brain damage.[12] Furthermore, when new Sam tries to stand up, he immediately falls to the ground, as if he has no existing muscle power. Sam is also very sensitive to the lights in the moon-base. Again, the first-time viewer rationalizes that because of the blow of the crash, Sam suffers from a concussion and is extremely weakened. But in fact, this Sam has not set one step in his life before this instance, nor has he previously seen the light of day, as he literally 'is born' when he is awakened by GERTY.

If one listens closely to the audio while Sam takes his first wobbly steps ever, one can hear GERTY reporting to someone from Lunar Industries in a live stream by saying: "The *new* Sam is in good working order, but we only have two working harvesters now." The person GERTY speaks with, replies "How do you lose a fucking rover, harvester and employee all in the same day?",

[12] In the latter parts of the film GERTY explicates to the Sams that this is a Lunar Industries procedure to test all newly awakened clones on their mental and physical capacities, to see if they do not have any detrimental defects from the genetic cloning process.

implying that Sam is just another piece of equipment in the view of Lunar Industries. As Sam stumbles towards GERTY, he quickly disengages the video-call.

The computer says he was recording a message to update Central on Sam's progress, as the live feed has allegedly been down. In actuality, there are four towers, placed at the harvesting-area's peripheries, blocking the long-range comms' signal, impeding Sam from having direct contact with earth. Shortly after, new Sam is up and running properly and suspects something is off. He wants to go outside to fix the harvester. GERTY utters some vague excuses, to prevent Sam from finding the other Sam, and for a moment the computer succeeds. New Sam then goes to sleep in his own quarters for the first time, and it is here that the vision scene occurs.

The first-time viewer would relegate this dream as a mere nightmare, prompted by the crash and the emotional turmoil Sam is experiencing as he is isolated from real human contact for so long. Previously, we had seen 'old' Sam having a dream where he makes love to his wife. In first instance, the viewer might think that a similar scene is repeated, but this time as a less erotic and more intimate one. The agile swiftness of the haunting camera, however, sets this scene apart from the previous dream-scene where a more unobtrusive cinematographic style is deployed, consisting of calmer camera movements, placid dissolves, and regular cuts.

The moment the camera sweeps underneath the covers in the vision scene, and the 'second' Sam is revealed, a kind of vertigo takes hold of the viewer. Still, as the scene ends abruptly and is short in duration, the spectator does not consciously register this as a crucial event. Even if the spectator suspects that some kind of doubling has taken place, they are stunned by this occurrence. The narration itself hastily brushes over the vision as it readily proceeds with an incoming message from Central, ordering Sam to stay put till a rescue unit comes. But Sam disobeys this order and

tricks GERTY into letting him outside. As the spectator's brain is now engaged with processing these new plot developments, no time is allowed to ponder the vision.

When Sam tends to the harvester, he finds that a spacesuit and a rover are missing. As Sam approaches the harvester, he sees that the missing rover has crashed into the machinery's side. A light flashes from within the rover. Sam enters the vehicle through a hatch. As he descends, a man in a spacesuit lies below his feet. The man awkwardly moves a bit but does not seem responsive. Sam brushes away a thick layer of moon-rock dust on the helmet's visor, revealing the face of another Sam. The moment Sam finds this 'other' Sam, we as viewers start to realize that our assumptions were wrong. The Sam we meet after the crash, is a different Sam than before.[13]

Figure 1.4: New Sam finds old Sam below his feet (TC:00:28:14).

It is this second Sam that had the vision. The Sam that is clutching at dormant Sam's feet in the vision, is the initial Sam we met at the beginning. One can even argue that this older Sam takes possession of new Sam in the vision, calling to him as it were to come and rescue him. Even the strange, seemingly inelegant figure placement of the two men when new Sam finds old Sam, attests to this kind of reading. By placing old Sam directly below new Sam's feet as he finds him (fig.1.4),

[13] We could have noticed that Sam waking in the infirmary is not the 'same' Sam. Old Sam had burnt his right hand prior to the crash, but the Sam that awakes after the crash does not have any sign of a burn.

the visual composition of the two clones in the prospective vision is mimicked within this specific scene, where the clones physically encounter each other for the first time.

This spatial arrangement is significant with respect to the spatio-temporal construction of the multiple Sams, who are paradigmatic dimensions of one another. Now that we have explicated how the spectator meets the clones, the following section examines their interaction after the initial encounter and analyzes how the Sams relate to one another. Although *Moon* stages a fantastical cloning narrative, the film itself can be perceived as an investigation into the patterns of conduct of its clones. *Moon* does not explicitly draw attention to the clonal element, rather it sutures the clones' continuous subjectivity into the characters' fabric in a naturalistic and intelligible way.

Discontinuous Continuity & Paradigmatic Relationality

The clonal encounter is really the substance of *Moon*. Most of the film focuses on the Sams's relationship, placing an immense emphasis on the unnervingly mundane interaction between the two clones. Their physical and temporal proximity allows the film to examine their daily habits. *Moon*'s sci-fi scenario about clones interacting with each other quickly becomes an exercise in picturing, in cinematic form, a distinctly plural subjectivity; how they think, how they speak, and how they understand themselves. A key figure in comprehending Sam's subjectivity as multiple and being formed out of a relation instead of being based on singularity, is GERTY.

We should remark that GERTY's presence immediately stirs up troublesome associations for the ardent sci-fi spectator. GERTY 3000 namely evokes HAL 9000, the evil computer in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968). Like *2001*, *Moon* touches upon existential questions of subjectivity and humanity. Unlike *2001*, the role of the intelligent computer in *Moon* is not that of antagonist. Instead GERTY grows into, especially in the second and third act, a true friend and helpmate for the Sams. Whereas HAL reveals itself to be a malicious, homicidal entity who sets

out to destroy humanity, *Moon*'s intelligent entity with a computational subjectivity becomes ever more friendly and sympathetic, playing a crucial part in one of the Sams's escape to earth.

Still, we remain vigilant towards GERTY. We expect him to develop similar dark tendencies as HAL. A reason for this suspicion is the fact that GERTY has the same ominous red camera eye, which has become a terrifying icon representing a potent but unstable omnipresent, omniscient artificial intelligence. But unlike HAL, GERTY's computational subjectivity is not a disembodied, all-seeing menacing presence. Rather, by representing GERTY's embodiment as a remarkably antiquated and clunky apparatus, the computer in *Moon* is rendered as quite harmless. The dorky smiley that is mounted at the front of the boxy machine even provides GERTY with a face that is capable of showing emotion, hence the computer is somewhat anthropomorphized.

Furthermore, it is salient to note that the only 'real' humans in *Moon* are merely images on a screen. Sam's wife is strictly shown in pictures and prerecorded videos, apart from appearing in Sam's dreams. Sam's daughter is only shown in childhood pictures. Her grown-up version is merely a voice. Sam's employers are mostly shown in video-messages as well, except for some snippets of live conversation GERTY secretly has with them. By presenting the humans as flat images in a frame, *Moon*'s humans are dehumanized; they are stripped of the spectator's sympathy as we are not able to fully identify with them. The only 'persons' that are worked out to well-rounded characters are the Sams and GERTY, clones and a computer.

We are thus prompted to align ourselves with these two unconventional senses of self, and they gain our allegiance over the course of the story. By depriving the more conventional form of human subjectivity from having prominence in the diegesis, *Moon* urges its viewers to open up to a novel kind of subjecthood. *Moon*'s story is wholly focalized through the clonal perspective and the computer functions as a gateway figure for comprehending the relations of these cloned beings.

When new Sam finds old Sam, he demands GERTY to tell him who this man is. GERTY answers: "Sam Bell, we need him to get to the infirmary immediately." As GERTY usually addresses Sam by stating his full name, the computer is both answering that this man is Sam, while hailing the other Sam too. This uncanny encounter repeats when old Sam wakes up. He demands to know who the man in the rec-room is. GERTY answers: "Sam Bell. You are Sam Bell." For GERTY there is no difference in their subjectivities, although two embodiments are present. On the basis of these dialogues, one can say that Sam's subjectivity has become not only multiple but also continuous across plural embodiments. The clones' paradigmatic relationality is hence mediated through *Moon*'s computational subjectivity.

Perhaps a human would not address the clones in such a way. But as GERTY is an artificial intelligence who does not form his sense of self according to conventional conceptions, he is able to rationalize the clones' existence as a fluid identification of 'I are You'. Within this identification the I that is You is literally plural. Sam's sense of self flows across multiple embodiments as water runs through multiple rivers and as life gushes through multiple forms; 'panta rhei' – subjectivity indeed flows when I are You.[14] What is it about GERTY as a computational subjectivity that makes him able to rationalize the clones' subjecthood as a fluid and plural identification? Does this involve the fact that computers, no matter how 'smart' or artificially intelligent they are, work on the basis of digital code consisting of zeros and ones?

This is an odd opposition: a being that is structured based on binary code, easily thinks of these clones as a multiplicity that goes beyond binaries. Because GERTY worked with numerous Sams before, he discerns all the Sams as belonging to the same continuous subjectivity. Perhaps because parallels can be drawn between how digital code in animating cinematic clones and

[14] The phrasing 'panta rhei' stems from the ancient Greeks and is an important concept in the philosophy of Heraclitus. It literally means 'everything flows' but is usually translated as 'all things are in flux'.

genetic code in constructing cloned embodiments operate, GERTY sees no difference in the multiple Sam Bells. But GERTY is not the only one who discerns the Sams in this particular way.

The Sams too, gradually accept their configuration as clones and adjust their conception of selfhood accordingly. In the diegetic experience of both Sams, the impossibility to be (re)united with their loved ones is the bigger trauma rather than entering into a distinctly plural subjectivity. Although old Sam is rapidly decaying and aware of his oncoming demise, he does not cease to take further steps in life; he continues his daily activities and helps new Sam get to earth.

New Sam devised a plan for one of the Sams to escape in a helium-3 transportation pod. With GERTY's aid a third clone is awakened so that the rescue unit will not notice that one of the clones is missing upon arrival. At first, new Sam offers the pod to old Sam. But old Sam realizes his physical decline is irreversible. He insists that new Sam is the one to meet their daughter. Yet, for their plan to work, a Sam, any Sam, needs to be found in the crashed rover. Old Sam volunteers. *Moon*'s last sequence crosscuts the third clone's awakening with the rescue team's arrival. In this instance, old Sam sees, exhaling his last breath, how new Sam launches to earth.

New Sam also programmed a harvester to ram into a tower that blocks direct communication with earth. As the tower topples over, we cut to a computer inside the base: "Live feed available." The film's last shot shows the pod plummeting towards earth, while playing fragments of news reports: "Lunar Industries stocks have slipped a further 32% after accusations of …", "Clone 6, the clone of Sam Bell, has been giving evidence at …", "He's one of two things. He's a wacko or an illegal immigrant. Either way, we need to lock him up!"

Even if summaries of some plot-elements come across as eventful and spectacular, *Moon*'s tone is prosaic and hypnagogic. With a slow editing pace, chiefly consisting of dreamlike dissolves, most scenes merely comprise the two men participating in humdrum activities: playing ping-pong

(fig.1.5), tending to the plants, arguing with each other, building the maquette, and reminiscing events their original experienced. The Sams indeed seem accepting of their configuration as clones. They do not rebel against their paradigmatic relationship and do not perceive it as devouring; they appear to be rather in sync with one another. Yet, each Sam is not every single thing the other Sam is, albeit they are exact bodily copies of each other.

Figure 1.5: Old Sam teaching new Sam to play ping-pong (TC:00:39:01).

Little markers of these discontinuities in their continuous consciousness gain prominence as *Moon* so explicitly focuses on the clones' ordinary conduct. Examples of these markers of difference within sameness are the facts that new Sam cannot play ping-pong or is not skilled at crafting the scale model together, while old Sam is. Differing attitudes towards the bizarre situation they are in hint at the clones' disjunctions. Through contrasting body-language, frequently juxtaposed in two-shots, and through different intonations of their conversations, the discontinuities in their continuity of subjectivity are emphasized. These subtle filmic techniques disclose that we should not view the Sams as simple duplicates of an original.

The Sams are rather different spatio-temporal *dimensions* of one another, each one implying and supplementing the other. Contemplating the discontinuities in Sam's continuous consciousness, we return to Landsberg's conceptualization of memory's productiveness: Contrary

to popular opinion, memories are the domain of the present instead of the past (176). Every time you remember something, the memory of the lived experience itself is altered by your act of remembering. It thus makes you a slightly different person than before, each time you remember.

This is a possible explanation for Sam's plural subjectivity of sameness that produces minor yet multiple variations. The different memories we have are highly productive, formative moments. The act of recalling is reliving a perception of past experiences in the present. Memories "are less about validating or authenticating the past than they are about organizing the present and constructing strategies with which one might imagine a livable future" (176). Memory is "not a strategy for closing or finishing the past", it is a generative force that "propels us not backward but forwards" (176). Returning to the Sams's construction of memory, I posit that the discontinuity in their continuous consciousness stems from the fact that their memories are a mixture of prosthetic and 'genuine' ones.

The nature of this memory-mixture should not be interpreted as too self-evident. The discontinuities in their kindred identity are not merely propelled by the different lived experiences they had after being awakened as identical clones. They can also be attributed to their differing recollections of their past experiences in the present. Each time a new experience changes one or both Sams, their recollection of their prosthetic memories also alters, producing increasingly more variations in their different embodiments of the same continuous subjectivity. To elaborate in a Humean vein: not only their way of remembering their prosthetic and genuine memories changes, which readily fosters their discontinuous continuity of consciousness. The clones' perception of their (fictional) selves, based on the impression of their malleable memories, gets modified too.

By multiplying their embodied subjectivities, these doubled entities as similar subjects not only start several new life paths, forming an intricate multiplicity of forks in the road that is called

life. This memory-mixture also engenders a multitude of different Sams at different moments, which together comprise the larger fluid and plural identification of I are You. The Sams materially manifest multiple embodiments that are paradigmatic dimensions of each other. Here the way in which the clones are spatially positioned in the mise-en-scène becomes pertinent.

In most two-shots of the clones (fig.1.2,1.3,1.5,1.6,1.8) old Sam is positioned screen-left. New Sam is usually screen-right. In conventions of western languages, the left of a visual composition connotes the past, the right represents the present going towards the future. As we are conditioned to read a sentence from left to right, whatever is stated on the left precedes what is on the right. A similar spatio-temporal logic can be ascribed to the Sam's characters. However, this particular placement of the clones does connote a relationality that is based on the logic of a sentence, namely a linear syntagmatic relation, which I previously coupled with an intuitive conception of selfhood based on uniqueness and singularity.

Figure 1.6: The 'Hall of Clones' (TC:01:06:19).

Still, the Sams are structured by a paradigmatic relationality too, for they are conceptualized within a possible infinite structure of alternatives based on parallel seriality and multiplicity. This seriality is evocatively captured in a shot of the rows of stocked Sams (fig.1.6), set-up to be

awakened one day, as the Sams discover these clones. The men's temporality, visualized through the syntactic left/right spatiality, is not only stressed by their figure placement but also by the dialogue. The latter clone asks the former: "Who goes first?" The decaying clone answers decisively: "I go first" and descends into this hall of clones.

Although the clones are conceptually structured by a paradigmatic relation, the filmic text arranges its protagonists across a seemingly linear axis. Hence, *Moon*'s visual language does not render its clones in a state of unbridled flux. Rather it intricately reconfigures the more conventional, intuitive conceptions of syntagmatic subjecthood, problematizing subjectivity by introducing paradigmatic dimensions of embodiment. Yet, *Moon* complicates its clones' spatial relations further by not only utilizing the left-right composition for old and new Sam respectively.

The film also arranges its clones according to a spatial logic that extends into all three dimensions of space; not just from left to right, but from front to back and from above to below too. When the dominant left-right composition is not adhered to, generally a similar linear structuring is still deployed. In some of these moments a staging in depth is used; the newer clone is closer to the camera and the older clone is positioned in the middle- or background.

Figure 1.7: New Sam playing ping-pong as old Sam sits in the background (TC:00:39:39).

This happens for example when old Sam works on his maquette and explains that he does not even remember building all of it. Old Sam sits in the background. In the foreground, new Sam plays ping-pong with himself by bouncing the ball off of the wall (fig.1.7). In the scene directly prior, old Sam taught new Sam to play. Throughout that scene, the left-right composition was adhered to (fig.1.5). The contrast with this different figure placement of fore- and background gains prominence as this scene directly follows the more prevalent left-right composition.

Up and down are further important spatial trajectories for arranging the clones' temporality. New Sam is literally placed above old Sam in various instances. This happens when the Sams descend into the 'Hall of Clones', but also when new Sam finds old Sam. It even holds true for old Sam hearing an older Sam's voice. Early in the film, we hear a recording of a previous Sam having a conversation with himself: "I want chocolate. I think you're sweet enough, I don't need chocolate." This is heard when old Sam descends into the rover, in which he will later crash, through the same hatch new Sam enters when he finds old Sam below his feet.

The audio's source seems to originate from within the rover itself, as if an actual trace of this previous clone still resides underneath somehow. The content of this audio is quite peculiar, since this older Sam too intuitively switches between 'you' and 'I', making it hard to establish who the 'you' and the 'I' are. Might this fragment of a conversation be between two past Sams? One thing is certain, the voice is that of Sam Bell. But which one? There is no further evidence in the plot that a previous encounter of even older clones is the case. Nevertheless, the fact that this tiny line hints at the possibility of such a conclusion, is salient to say the least.

Moon mostly arranges its clones by placing old Sam on the left, below or in the background. New Sam is predominantly on the right, above or in the foreground. Sometimes two of the three dimensions are combined (figures 1.6&1.7). Like *Moon*'s signature transition of the dissolve, these

spatial trajectories for arranging the clones' temporality are another example of the fact that *Moon*'s paradigmatic continuity is not only present in the conceptual organization of its clones, but also in the material organization of its filmic language.

However, there is one scene where all three spatio-temporal structures align: the vision. Old Sam is in the background and below new Sam's feet, as the camera slithers down new Sam's legs from right to left. The vision literally synthesizes the three spatial dimensions. Each of these spatial, linear axes connote the clones' temporal relationality, as they are diachronically and synchronically collapsed into one image. These various spatio-temporal layers seamlessly exist next to each other on the screen's surface to create a lifelike multi-dimensional clonal illusion.

The vision's overlap of the three dimensions reveals the conceptual constellation that lies at the heart of the Sam Bells' kinship: a paradigmatic relationality in which the clones are alternative dimensions of each other, where each clone at once implies and supplements the other clone. This might be the cause of the vertigo that takes hold of the viewer during this specific shot, as the clones' paradigmatic dimensions visually disclose themselves for an instant and the hidden depth structures residing beneath the flattened end-product of this composite shot are made apparent.

So far, we have considered the Sams's spatio-temporal relationality through the concepts of paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures as well as through the notion of discontinuity within continuity. However, yet another aspect of the clonal affiliation should be emphasized, in discerning the Sams as different spatio-temporal dimensions of one another: the idea of clones as *supplements* to each other. *Moon* exhibits an anthropological thought experiment of how day-to-day interaction between clones might unfold and how a friendship is forged between two selves.

The nature of this sort of friendship is something we should further investigate. This chapter's final section examines how the paradigmatic, alternative dimensions of *Moon*'s clonal

selfhood foster a constructive mode of being through its discontinuous continuity of consciousness. As we will see in this dissertation's second chapter when we analyze *Alien: Resurrection* (Jeunet, 1997), the clonal relation of self to self can also engender a rather destructive and devouring paradigmatic relationality. Hence it is important to consider in which distinct ways the Sams's relationship is a productive one.

Supplementing the Self through a Remarriage of the Self

For a conception of clonal supplementation, we turn to Debbora Battaglia's "Multiplicities: An Anthropologist's Thoughts on Replicants and Clones in Popular Film" (2001). Battaglia states that "quests for the secret of life, for life's authoritative code […], occupy ever-multiplying and disparate sites of the cultural imagination" (493-4). She flags that "big ethical questions, particularly in the wake of the seismic scientific and media event of Dolly the udder-cloned sheep, concern who *controls* the secret of life; who authors or authorizes creation, the intentions of these authors and the nature of their accountability" (Battaglia 494–original emphasis). As a critical anthropologist, she muses over these questions with a vigilant eye for biological essentialism.

Recognizing human personhood and "technologies of the self" as social constructions from the get-go, Battaglia acknowledges "cinema's place of honor in bioethical rhetoric and popular debate about genetically engineered entities" as "major cultural documents of the social life" (495). She investigates "narrative themes in film in which replication 'passes' for reproduction, and in which human copies similarly 'pass' for multiples of persons" (496). Although this article was written before *Moon* was made, it is fruitful to look at how she conceptualizes filmic clones as supplements, as *Moon*'s clones too exhibit a supplementing logic.

Terming her question the replication problematic, Battaglia asks: "what happens when a human being doubles by design and the self presents itself as *supplement* to the self" (496). At base

is “a notion of supplement as something that supplies, or makes apparent, insufficiencies” (496). Hence, she sees the mechanisms of supplementation as elemental to social exchange. She claims that “the supplement of new knowledge […] shows the limitations and strengths of prior knowledge with which it interacts” (496). Supplementation is a process of “new knowledge acting upon prior, never total or sufficient, knowledge, and in consequence placing the stability of the latter at risk” (496). Supplementation here then connotes a volatile yet productive dynamic.

For Battaglia “feature film replicants and clones are corporealizations of the supplement’s capacity to destabilize the social paradigms and self-knowledge of their creators” (496). Cinematic clones thus upset conventional power structures. Yet not just the creators’ or originals’ insufficiencies that the supplement lays bare are of interest to this project. The supplementing relation of self to cloned self also incites a destabilization of the social paradigms of subjectivity in itself. Such a reconfiguring of traditional subjecthood is this dissertation’s aim.

As Battaglia contrasts cinematic replicants and clones, she states that, “unlike the replicant, which requires no connection to an original and is often seen questing for a connection, even a negative connection, to its makers” the clone as supplement “embodies the closest relation to the original” (506). Replicants can be described as biological entities that are artificially manufactured. They are ‘made’ and not born. But these entities are not ‘copied’ from an original as the clone is.

Battaglia argues that the “*clone’s existence requires an other* – which is why the clone goes against the grain of totalizing romantic narratives” (506). But this other is simultaneously the self. In contemplating the conceptual ramifications of cinematic clones, its most distinctive marker is the *relationship of self to self*. Battaglia also comes to a similar conclusion when she writes that because “the heroes here are multiple, not the autonomous egos of Freudian theory, […] our subject-

position identifies with a relation" (511). But how do we interpret this supplementing relation? As a devouring expansion? As a constructive augmentation?

Salient to note is that Battaglia too flags the importance of continuity when she states: "the distinction between replicants and clones is, respectively, the distinction between relations predicated on social displacements and ruptures", and those "predicated on continuity and connection" (507). This clonal continuity of connectedness of the self with the self fosters an exceptional subject-position. Yet, instead of conceptualizing an anxious confrontation with an other who, by virtue of being a clone, poses a threat to a comfortable notion of individuality, we could discern the clone's paradigmatic relations, by gestating clones as productive supplements to each other, as a vigorous form of continuous subjectivity.

I will examine how *Moon*'s clones can be seen as supplementing their own senses of self through a kind of 'remarriage of the self'. This concept I distill from Cavell's notion of 'the remarriage comedy'. In *Cities of Words. Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (2004) Cavell designates two distinct film genres: 'the melodrama of the unknown woman' and 'the comedy of remarriage'. In my opinion *Moon* provides an alternative to the remarriage of the so-called 'principal pair'. In these comedies a couple work themselves through a crisis. They function as each other's helpmate to make each other intelligible to the world as well as to one another.

Unlike classical comedies, where "the drama is to get a young pair past the obstacle of an older figure", remarriage comedies concern getting an older pair "who are already together past some inner obstacle between them and hence together *again*, *back* together" (Cavell 10). The issues the principal pair "confront each other with are formulated less well by questions concerning what they ought to do" than by "the question of how they shall live their lives, what kind of persons they aspire to be" (11). A willingness to become a better person thus arises in these principal pairs.

For Cavell marriage is an allegory "of what philosophers since Aristotle have thought about under the title of friendship, what it is that gives value to personal relations" (15). We can extrapolate some of these insights for clonal subjecthood. *Moon*'s pair, that must come to terms with each other and make each other intelligible, are each other's clones. Intriguingly enough, Cavell advances in his chapter on Aristotle that the "friend becomes, as it were, my next self" (367). This enigmatic sentence bespeaks a temporal becoming, an ethical oscillation between two subjects where the self extends into the other.

Cavell advances that Aristotle "speaks of friendship in its highest form as the desire to live together", by which Aristotle means "not necessarily living under the same roof but something like spending time together" (362). For the principal pairs it is less important what they do together "than the fact that it is together that they do it" (362). The idea of spending time leads to "different conceptions of time that define the respective genres, the melodramas sketching a past frozen and compulsively active in the present, the comedies proposing an openness to the future, responsive to invention" (Cavell 109). This is salient with respect to the prolonged screen-time *Moon* spends on its clones' humdrum activities and considering the spatio-temporal confusion the clonal paradigmatic relationality brings forth.

Although *Moon*'s tone is not comedic per se, its narrative structure resembles that of a comedy. I argue that *Moon* indeed exhibits a remarriage of the self – a narrative that stretches and supplements the notion of 'the unattained but attainable self'. This conception of selfhood is one that Cavell advances in *Cities of Words*, by reworking a concept from Ralph Waldo Emerson. Cavell starts his book with the notion of "a split in the human self, of human nature as divided or double" (1). The prominent place of this split in the book prompts the thought experiment of encountering

one's own clone, as within this divided or double human nature we readily see a philosophical similarity with the discourse on human cloning.

Cavell calls upon this notion to delineate a fundamental schism within the self and in the world, which immanently prompts us as human beings to re-consider and re-evaluate each and every step we take in life's journey. Herein there is "no question of reaching a final state of the soul but only and endlessly taking the next step to what Emerson calls an unattained but attainable self – a self that is always and never ours – a step that turns us not from bad to good, or wrong to right, but from confusion and constriction toward self-knowledge and sociability" (Cavell 13). This constant re-assessment of self and world is to be perpetually re-iterated.

In "The Good of Film" (2005) Cavell describes the unattained but attainable self as "being true to oneself" or "the caring of the self, […] with a dissatisfaction, sometimes despair, with the self as it stands" and as "a progress of self-cultivation and with the presence of a friend" whose "words have the power to help you guide the progress" (336). This notion of being true to oneself is tied to the Romantic idea of 'becoming who you are'. But how does this progress with the presence of a friend unfold? How do you become the one you are?

Cavell conceptualizes the human self as being "confined by itself" and at the same time "aspiring towards itself, always becoming, […] always particularly in a further state" (*Cities of Words* 26). This aspiring finds its shape with the aid of the other, the figure of the friend or the helpmate: "the other to whom I can use the words I discover in which to express myself is the Friend" (Cavell 27). Because the human self is unattained yet attainable, we strive, with each step we take, to become who we are. But although we might attain ourselves a bit more with every step, we already have another unattained self who we aspire to become. In this continuous process we need the figure of a friend to decide how and which steps to take.

For Cavell this friend appears in various forms, ranging from a transcendental universal voice (31) to the concrete figure of the helpmate as spouse in the remarriage comedies, to "the sage in each of us, that without which one cannot become the one one is" (344). The friend stands beside us, resides within us and hovers above us, hence it is "a figure that may occur as the goal of the journey but also as its instigation and accompaniment" (Cavell 27). The journey's progress is not assured by "a moral compass, but rather pointed to by what Emerson figures as a gleam of light over an inner landscape" (Cavell 329). This gleam of light, which is comparable to the notion of the sage in each of us, is a rather mystical concept.

Yet, Cavell asserts that this gleam is concretely "guided, and tested, by whether the next step of the self is one that takes its cue from the torment, the sickness, the strangeness, the exile, the disappointment, the boredom, the restlessness", that he claims are the terms in which the modern subject is portrayed (329). The journey then "puts tremendous weight on one's judgment, critically including one's judgment of who's judgment is to be listened to most attentively" (329). How does this intricate Cavellian construction of the self relate to Sam Bell's character? Whose judgment is to be listened to most attentively, when the presence of friendship in the film I analyze comprises a clone, a doubled version of yourself, representing your *attained* self of sorts?

Can we perceive the multiple Sams as a literal materialization of the split in the human self? This materialization in effect endows the latter clone the role of an attained self of the former clone, whereas the former clone functions as the gleam of light over the latter one's inner landscape. *Moon* thus presents us with a scenario where an alternative dimension of the attained self, a self which should have remained unattained to become attainable, is literally materialized. The unattained and attainable self are both synchronically present in *Moon,* instead of the usual

diachronic structuring of these selves. This chapter's last pages elaborate on what happens if the one you become stands right in front of you, physically attainable within your reach.

If we consider the inherent quality of the science fiction genre which allows philosophical ideas to roam freely through the fictional simulations it creates "to reflect on existential questions rarely encountered elsewhere" (Eberl 27), we can establish a link with the way Cavell discerns certain film genres. He argues that the "remarriage comedy bears a relation to horror movies in view of their both featuring the idea of the transformation of self and the world" (Cavell, "The Good of Film" 346). Strictly speaking *Moon* is neither a horror movie nor a comedy for that matter. However, a similar kind of strategy can be found in this film and so Cavell's argument could be extended to include science fiction films.

Either way, this kind of existential inquiry pertaining to the transformation of self is invoked in *Moon* by the figure of the clone. The existential questions *Moon* raises can be recast as follows: Who should I aspire to be when I am immanently and inescapably faced with myself? Who will become the one I am / you are? As posited, the habitual use of language plays a pivotal role in delineating the paradigmatic sense of self present in the clones. GERTY functions as a mediator for the clones' continuous subjectivity, while he rationalizes their relationality as a fluid and plural identification, which now can be rephrased as 'I are the one You become'.

The Sams too discern each other in this particular way. Their continuous consciousness is captured by their touching dialogue as they together recall the moment they first met their wife (fig.1.8). This scene occurs during the last moment the two Sams interact with each other. New Sam drives old Sam to the crashed rover. Both men know that old Sam will soon die. But the prospect of new Sam escaping to earth to meet their daughter seems to propel both Sams to take

further steps in their continuous life. Old Sam is an alternative dimension of new Sam functioning as new Sam's sage, while new Sam is old Sam's attained version who will meet their daughter.

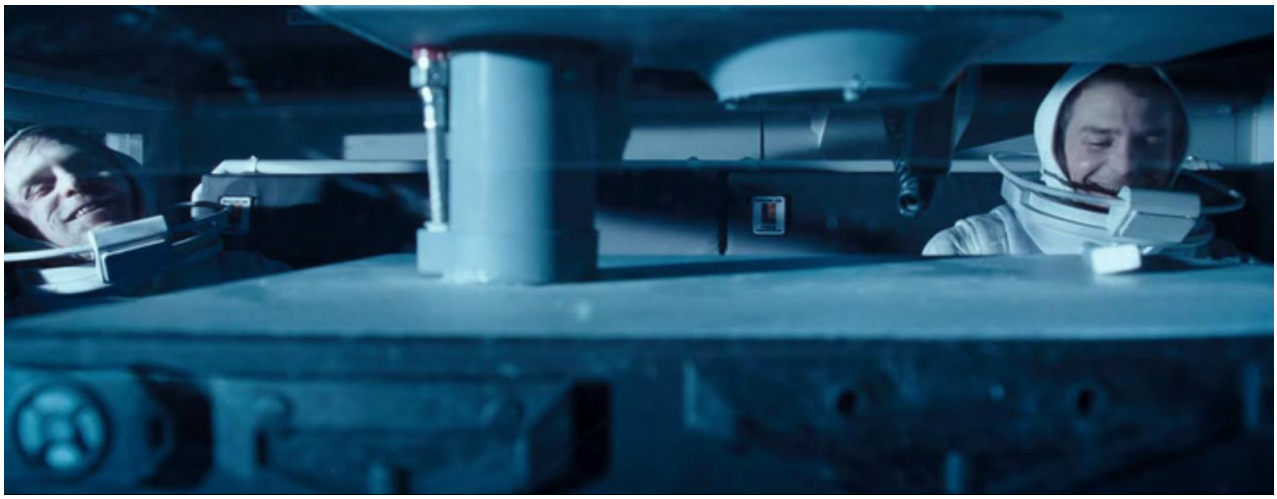

Figure 1.8: The Sams share their prosthetic memory of meeting their wife (TC:01:23:40).

Old Sam is not just an other to new Sam, but he is new Sam's actual other self. Hence old Sam will, through new Sam, also meet their daughter. The fact that both Sams in this instance intuitively switch between 'you' and 'I' when referring to themselves as well as the other in sharing these intimate prosthetic memories, shows that their clonal sense of self indeed is a continuous relation of self to self – a clonal relationality that can be rationalized as 'the multiple are one'. As mentioned previously, the clones' continuous subjectivity is also rendered visually within the mise-en-scène by the maquette on which all the previous clones build (fig.1.3&1.7). Old Sam says he cannot remember building all of it, but still, he perceives it as his own, and continues to build on it fervently.

The Sams accept, through their habitual interaction, their configuration as clones seen as the materialized split in the human self. They engage with each other as different incarnations or versions of their unattained but attainable selves – where the latter clone is the attained self of the former, who is present in the same space and time. To recapitulate this dazzling constellation of clonal selfhood: New Sam stands before old Sam as the synchronically materialized attained

version of the self, whereas old Sam stands before new Sam as the friend which guides him to become the one he is. The clones as different paradigmatic dimensions of one another make each other intelligible to each other by performing a convoluted remarriage of the self.

The former and latter clone are thus different reincarnations of the very same split in the self, yet this split multiplies as well. The previous clone is the helpmate for the subsequent clone, who is the attained self of the former one, but who remains unattained but attainable for himself. A labyrinthine fractalization of the unattained but attainable self is set in motion; an attained self is added, which for its part also comprises a *further* unattained but attainable self. This conceptually goes on ad infinitum because clones can potentially be copied indefinitely. A passage from Cavell's chapter on Plato, in which he addresses the Myth of Er, of reincarnation, is compelling when considering these unattained but attainable *and* attained clonal selves.

Cavell writes that "rewards and punishments" are not assessed "in a future life but 'in this one life.'" (*Cities of Words* 337). Cavell continues that "seen as a series of unpredictable incarnations", it is "no longer clear that what we live is 'one life' rather than a sequence of lives, as discontinuous as they are continuous, […] remembering enough to consider that we are already living a future life, reincarnating one past but open to one present" (337). He states that "we are the successors of ourselves (in our 'journey from here to there and back again'), and not necessarily succeeding in a given order or direction […], seizing crises of revelation, good or bad, […] as chances of transformation" (337). This Cavellian reinterpretation of the Myth of Er is a precursor to the fractalization of the unattained but attainable and attained self – set on by the figure of the clone seen as the materialized split in the human self.

Returning to Battaglia's notion of clonal supplementation, I posit that the unattained but attainable and attained self's fractalization is "something that supplies, or makes apparent,

insufficiencies" too (496). But here the supplementation process of new knowledge acting upon prior, never total or sufficient knowledge also adds multiple dimensions. For this prior knowledge (seen as the former unattainable self) at once functions as the materialized 'sage in each of us without which one cannot become the one one is', hence literally supplying the supplement.

Whereas Battaglia places a negative focus on the supplement seen as the replication problematic, my Cavellian reworking of supplementation through different reincarnations of the same self places a positive focus on the clone's paradigmatic qualities. By perceiving the Sams as supplements and helpmates to each other's unattained but attainable and attained selves, the paradigmatic relations on which multiple subjectivities are based do not entail a devouring sense of self but give way to a vigorous conception of continuous subjectivity, in which the multiple are one as these clones share a continuous consciousness. In this chapter's final paragraphs, we return once more to the scene where Sam, if we discern the film's chronology according to the information the plot disperses, encounters himself for the first time: the vision.

As a complex mode of cinematic narration, the vision is distinct from more common forms of chronological plot-disruptions like flashbacks, flash-forwards and dreams, while these modes also inform the vision for an important part. If we trace the vision's broader function, it refers to the 'abstract'. Laura Copier states in *Preposterous Revelations* (2012) that, within a religious context, the state of a vision should be discerned as "a thought, a religious belief, which is […] rendered visually" (206). Visions thus reveal a kind of concretized, perceptible representation of an abstract truth. Moreover, cinematic visions problematize chronological, syntagmatic time.

Copier argues that the uncertainty of "the temporal reality experienced during a vision provokes questions with regard to the status of the beginning and the end" (206) The notion of a "vision disrupts notions of linear time and, consequently, the unfolding of narrative. Time can be

imagined as a loop, moving from past to present to future but […] not necessarily in that order" (206). The ways in which cinematic visions problematize conventional notions of temporal linearity echoes well with the arguments I made with respect to how the clonal sense of self is delineated in the spatio-temporal construction of the multiple Sams.

Moon's vision can be discerned as a quite literal envisioning of the clone seen as a materialized instance of the unattained but attainable self. For the older incarnation of Sam, who is positioned on the left side of the frame, reaches out to the newer incarnation on the right – in effect almost physically attaining, but never actually obtaining his attainable self (fig.1.2). The fact that this metaphorical envisioning is presented to us in a dream-like state which is located within a malleable memory readily testifies to the complex spatio-temporal construction that is Sam Bell's paradigmatic subjectivity. Moreover, *Moon* as a whole inherently problematizes what occurrences could count as memories, dreams, actual experiences and hallucinations.

This vision in a memory in a dream alludes to the notion of the fractalization in the unattained but attainable and attained self, which occurs when the inherent split in the human self is cloned. Sam's vision of his future encounter with his former but continuous incarnation beautifully underlines *Moon*'s remarriage of the self. Yet, this chapter's conclusions are based on a single film that deals with the trope of human cloning. There are more cinematic envisionings that render an encounter with one's own self. The fact that *Moon*'s clones engender a productive continuous subjectivity might be an exception. *Alien: Resurrection* for instance, the film that we will analyze in the following chapter, delineates a devouring clonal sense of self. This film entices a dismantlement instead of a remarriage with the other self, making it perhaps more akin to the Cavellian melodrama of the unknown woman.

Chapter 2: Continuous Corporeality in *Alien: Resurrection*

In *Alien: Resurrection* (1997) we find an intriguing and, in some respects, diametrically different envisioning of the thought experiment of encountering one's own self in the form of a clone than *Moon* (Jones, 2009) offered us. Our second case study, the fourth and final installment of the *Alien Quadrilogy* directed by self-taught French filmmaker Jean-Pierre Jeunet, presents us with a pastiche-like iteration of the *Alien* universe as constructed in the previous trilogy.[15] This iconic universe's two most distinctive markers are radically re-envisioned through the trope of cloning, as female hero Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and the franchise's monstrous, mesmerizing alien undergo a genetic transformation that affects both their corporealities in profound ways.

The *Alien* trilogy's protagonist is resurrected from the dead by scientists from 'the Company'. Extracting her DNA from the planet she died on 200 years ago, this malignant company rebuilds Ripley as a clone, with the objective to bring forth the alien queen that resided inside her body when she valiantly committed suicide in *Alien*^{3}'s finale. This self-sacrifice was to permanently eradicate the all-consuming titular alien species she battled against in the previous three films. By cloning Ripley, the company is able to harvest the fetal queen from her chest and intends to breed a vast alien army for military purposes. However, by cloning a human body that was impregnated with an alien life form, the DNA of the two different entities merged into one. The DNA-strands' intertwining holds true for the composition of Ripley's corporeality as well as for that of the alien queen, making both entities into so-called 'transgenic' clones.[16]

[15] The trilogy consists of *Alien* (Scott, 1979), *Aliens* (Cameron, 1986), and *Alien3* (Fincher, 1992). Arthouse director Jeunet gained critical acclaim for his post-apocalyptic black comedy *Delicatessen* (1991), his surrealistic science fantasy *The City of Lost Children* (1995), and his most well-known film *Amélie* (2001).

[16] *The National Human Genome Research Institute* defines 'transgenic' as referring "to an organism or cell whose genome has been altered by the introduction of […] foreign DNA sequences from another species by artificial means." (Hyperlink: Transgenic (genome.gov))

By turning to *Alien: Resurrection*, this chapter reorients our focus from consciousness to embodiment, while it also entails a turn from the cloned masculine to the cloned yet hybridized feminine. Moreover, as we shift from self to other in the horror of seeing oneself cloned, we simultaneously take a turn to the monstrous, as we leave behind the strictly human clones of sci-fi arthouse film *Moon* and enter a franchise that is known for not only hybridizing the genres of science fiction, horror, and action, but combining blockbuster qualities with critical acclaim as well.

Most importantly, this film features a contrasting clonal encounter in envisioning a destructive yet transformative affiliation between the different incarnations of its female human-alien hybrid-clone. This case study hence complicates the notion of cloning by introducing hybridity. As we will see in this chapter's latter sections, in which I will analyze this film's clonal encounter scene, a volatile absorption of the cloned embodiments occurs that connotes the notion of 'the one is multiple', instead of our first case study's clonal relation of 'the multiple are one'. But before we scrutinize this film's rendering of the relationship of self to self, we will analyze the way *Alien: Resurrection*'s cloned protagonist is resurrected. Therefore, in the next section we take a closer look at the first actual shot of the cloning film under scrutiny in this chapter and delineate what is at stake in a reading of this different kind of clone.

Genetic & Generic Hybridized Duplication

A heavy mechanical door opens with the accompaniment of exaggerated pneumatic sighs and creeks, revealing an equally bolstered door guarded by two military men holding high-tech assault rifles. These symmetrically positioned guards, synchronously chewing gum, oddly and ironically point their heavy-duty weaponry at each other's heads instead of outward. White letters appear on screen to spell: "USM Auriga. Medical Research Vessel. United Systems Military." As the camera slowly tracks towards the second door, it opens and an addition to the first non-diegetic statement

follows: “Standing Crew: 42 Enlisted. 7 Science Officers.” As these letters disappear, the original enigmatic score from *Alien* is initiated and the gliding, prying camera enters the darkened maximum-security room.

A massive pillar-like tank, top- and bottom-lit and enclosed by an impervious metal structure, stands erect in the dead middle of the frame. Two scientists in white lab coats, flanking the sides of this elaborate tracking-shot, are inspecting various medical materials, on a computer and through a microscope respectively, while paying no attention to the protruding pillar. Gusts of white steam hiss as they are continuously thrust out of the ceiling, on the left and right sides of the tank. As the camera continues its unrelenting steady tracking motion towards the room’s center piece, the metal encasing is lifted with an even more menacing hissing sound. The pristine, naked body of a bald young girl, arms and legs crossed, roughly ten years of age and suspended in stasis within a glass tube, is revealed. The camera’s tracking motion is halted when the shot reaches a close-up of the girl’s dormant face.

A child-like female voice-over utters a phrase that for the ardent *Aliens* viewer sounds eerily familiar: “My mommy always said there were no monsters, no real ones.” Then the female voice switches to a mature, deep timbre and adds: “But there are.” As this foreboding addendum is spoken, the camera tracks back and the close-up of the girl’s face morphs into the face of a grown woman. The original *Alien*’s score is still audible at this point, but the diegetic environmental sounds of electronic whirring, hissing steam, and people mumbling (the audience faintly hears someone saying: “We see no *additional* defects”) start to take over the soundtrack. Five scientists are gathered around the tube containing the by now full-grown female figure. Inspecting the marvel of her naked corporeal construction meticulously and in awe, a man on the frame’s left side states: “She’s perfect” (fig.2.1). Another male voice utters an affirmative “Uh-huh.”

Figure 2.1: The spectacular unveiling of the Ripley-clone (TC:00:03:14).

During this long take, lasting almost a full minute, we have observed the spectacular unveiling of the recently 'reconstructed' Lieutenant Ellen Ripley. In analyzing this case study, it is important to note that this film is not to be considered as merely another sequel to the original *Alien*. *Alien: Resurrection* itself is a self-conscious, reflexive 'Xerox of a Xerox of a mimeograph' of the original cinematographic text of one of the most influential sci-fi films the genre has brought forth. This clonal case study is, just like its sphinxlike transgenic protagonist and antagonist, a hybridized *clone* of all its precursors; a coy and cloying copy that (re)produces an abundance of fluid, interconnecting layers of excessive difference.

Whereas *Moon* investigated existential, cerebral questions of cloned identity from a dispassionate and mundane vantage point, *Alien: Resurrection* violently raises questions about impure corporeality, devouring similitude, gendered embodiment, biological reproduction, and female hybridity in relation to cloning. This film prompts us to wonder what happens when a cinematic configuration of the clone is a hybrid. What occurs if something is added to the copy, making it a new, unique original? Might these multiple bodily copies be seen as grotesque alternatives of each other, like distorted mirror images in a fun house? How do these differentiated

cloned bodies relate to one another? Might these composite clonal embodiments share an interrelated corporeal kinship that goes beyond human recognition?

Our analysis of this horror film, and in particular the close reading of its clonal encounter, will refine my delineation of the clonal *paradigmatic* relation of the self, as it helps to further flesh out my previous argument about clonal continuity by adding an abraded and abrasive bodily dimension. *Alien: Resurrection* shifts our focus from consciousness to embodiment, as the film urges us to (re)consider the specific workings of the paradigmatic depth structures of clonal subjecthood as advanced in the previous chapter, most of all in relation to the structures of clonal memory. This film does not present us with a form of prosthetic clonal memory functioning as a conductor of consciousness, but with a bodily clonal memory that is rooted in the transgenic kinship with the monstrous alien species. This chapter hence turns us from a 'continuous consciousness', as was the case in *Moon*, to what I call a 'continuous corporeality'.

But first, I will explicate in this section what kinds of philosophical implications the *Alien Quadrilogy* in its entirety raises. By turning to Mulhall's film-philosophical reading of this franchise (2016), I situate *Alien: Resurrection* in a discourse on subverted gender roles, while problematizing notions of human, maternal reproduction. Additionally, Kristeva's notion of the abject (1982), Creed's *Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) and Braidotti's conceptualization of the metamorphosing monstrous (2002) – feminist texts that famously analyze notions of impure female corporeality – are crucial for delineating what is at stake in a gendered reading of the *Quadrilogy.*

The *Alien* series has a prominent place in cinema's history. Mulhall writes in his book's third edition *On Film* (2016) that its four members "managed to combine popular success and critical interest in a way matched by very few films produced in the last two decades of the twentieth century" (3). The original *Alien* is lauded for its ingenious genre bending and blending of science

fiction and horror, a generic mixture that was hitherto unprecedented, while conjuring up one of cinema's most terrifying alien monstrosities: an elusively non-binary or trans-gendered creature that is fittingly called the 'Xenomorph' (in Ancient Greek 'xeno' means 'other' or 'foreigner' and 'morph' means 'form' or 'shape'). Moreover, *Alien* was one of the first films to feature a strong female protagonist in a customarily male dominated genre.

The character of Lieutenant Ellen Ripley has become a female, feminist, and queer icon. Yet, the kind of thematics the *Alien* series dabbles with, problematizing female biological reproduction in intricate and unsettling ways, generally poses a conundrum for feminist film scholars in particular. Mulhall claims that these films are obsessed "with a variety of inter-related anxieties about human identity – about the troubling question of individual integrity and its relation to the body, sexual difference and nature" (3). *Alien: Resurrection* even challenges this question of individual integrity to a higher degree than its *Alien* predecessors by reconfiguring its female hero as a transgenic clone.

Furthermore, the *Alien* series' preoccupation with "the bodily basis of human identity raises a number of inter-related questions about the conditions of cinema as such", since this medium "is dependent upon the photographic reproduction (or, better, transcription) of human beings, the projection of moving images of embodied human individuals presented to a camera" (Mulhall 4). The sort of embodiment that *Alien: Resurrection* reproduces is not only cloned, but highly hybridized as well. This coupling of cloning and hybridity brings forth several compellingly contradictory conceptual frameworks for embodied, gendered subjecthood as well as for biological and cinematic reproduction.

This leads us to consider the 'body horror genre', as the *Alien Quadrilogy* must be firmly placed within this tradition. This subgenre of horror is, according to horror-film scholar Carol

Clover (1987), characterized by its explicit exploitation of the body's horrific and sensational qualities (189). Body horror is also marked by its distinctly 'excessive' nature (Williams 4). The body's excessive, horrific, and sensational qualities are certainly present in the various but kindred ways the *Alien series* renders its source of horror. But in *Alien: Resurrection* the hybridizing of human and alien DNA in its female protagonist results in an even more excessive and sensational rendering of its clonal corporeality.

This distinctive excessiveness is relevant considering Stacey's analysis of our case study in her book *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (2010). In her chapter "She Is Not Herself: The Deviant Relations of *Alien: Resurrection*" Stacey offers a reading of "the configuration of cloning as the embodiment of what [she calls] the relations of excessive sameness" (37). She argues that "all cloning films could be read through this problem of too much sameness, insofar as they are concerned with technologies of copying (those within the science fiction or body horror genres probing the monstrous potentialities of such imitative experiments)" (37). Ripley's cloning, however, is exceptional according to Stacey as it "is given cinematic life through a relay of anxieties connecting multiple and interrelated forms of biological, technological and sexual sameness", making this kind of sameness excessive (37). Nevertheless, remarkably enough, cloning, seen as the embodiment of the relations of excessive sameness, produces in our film an abundance of fluid, interconnecting layers of difference.

In my opinion, our case study's mode of cloning is more importantly predicated upon this intricate form of difference than it is upon the notion of sameness. Though, this clonal difference is still distinctly excessive in its nature, as it reproduces a paradigmatic relationality between the different hybrid-clones as a continuous corporeality that is monstrously multiple. Plus, the merging

of alien and human DNA in the Ripley-clone's hybrid body intertwines our female protagonist with the monstrous maternal antagonist even in a higher degree than this film's predecessors.

Ripley and the alien always had a special relation beyond that of 'good final girl' and 'bad monster'. The first film conjoined the two mostly along the lines of visual echoes. The second film created a thematic analogy between Ripley and the alien queen, rendering them both as nurturing warrior mothers, in which Ripley represented an empowering, socialized and chosen maternity while the alien queen embodied a ruthless and unstoppable natural, maternal reproduction devouring all that came in her way. The third film manifested Ripley's maternal nightmare by impregnating her with the daughter she never wanted, namely the alien queen, resulting in an act of martyrdom for humanity's sake.

But this time around the alien queen is not merely in Ripley's own body as a second entity waiting to burst out into the world to spread her reproductive mayhem. In this fourth installment the monstrous maternity of the alien species is ingrained into Ripley's very own cells and immanently spread throughout every fiber of her cloned, composite being. *Alien: Resurrection* thus constructs a female clone-body in which hybridity, a notion that generally engenders the cultivation of difference, is combined with cloning, which typically engender sameness as it "suggests replication, qualitative indistinguishability" (Mulhall 72). This film's representation of cloning hence features a curious amalgamation of two distinct and ostensibly incompatible modes of reproduction by suturing together cloning and hybridity.

Important to note is the fact that the category of the monstrous should always already be discerned as a distinctly hybridized notion. In *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002) Braidotti comments upon how the monstrous as a composite category upsets normative dichotomies, especially between the concepts of self and other. According to her the

monstrous is "a borderline figure [that] blurs the boundaries between hierarchically established distinctions (between human and non-human, Western and non-Western, etc.) and also between horizontal or adjacent differences" (204). Salient is the fact that "the monstrous triggers the recognition of a sense of multiplicity contained within the same entity" (204-5). In our current case study not only a sense of multiplicity contained within the same entity is foregrounded, but most of all *our recognition* of this multiplicity as spectators will gain prominence.

Braidotti explains that the "monster is an entity whose multiple parts are neither totally merged with nor totally separate from the human observer. Thus, by blurring the boundaries of differentiation, the monstrous signifies the difficulty of keeping manageable margins of differentiation of the boundaries between self and other" (205). Considered thusly, the conjoining of Ripley and the alien queen intensifies the composite nature of this figure of the female hybrid-clone even more. But the disintegration of self and other within the category of the hybridized monstrous needs to be expounded considering yet another set of qualifying markers, namely the interconnected notions of the 'abject' and the 'monstrous-feminine'.

The body horror genre in general is often delineated as an abject genre, as theorized by feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) Kristeva argues that the dread caused by a specific type of fear, called abjection, stems from an unsettling disintegration of meaning. This dissolution of the structures of meaning is propelled by a breakdown of the boundaries separating the subject and the object, or put differently, by a collapse of the distinction between the normative categories of self and other, just like the composite category of the monstrous also effects. According to Kristeva one of the most abject existential conditions is embodied by the notion of maternal pregnancy. The mother as a separate entity carries another within the bounds of her own body, and this has the effect that the differentiation between self and

other is completely disintegrated. Seen in this light, we can argue that the state of being pregnant also encompasses a state of being where the one is multiple.

Taking Kristeva's theory of abjection as the basis for her feminist psycho-analytic investigation into the representation of 'woman-as-monster' in horror films and being mindful of Kristeva's abject delineation of maternal pregnancy, Creed argues in *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) that "when woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive functions" (7). Presenting 'the seven faces of the Monstrous-Feminine', she traces the different types of woman-as-monster that the imaginary of our patriarchal society has brought forth. The first and most protruding figuration of this monstrous-feminine is the 'archaic mother'.

Creed implements an analysis of the original *Alien* to flesh out the contours of her fearsome face: "The archaic mother is the parthenogenetic mother, the mother as primordial abyss, the point of origin and end" (17). According to her "the monstrous creature of *Alien* is constructed as the agent of the archaic mother but […] the mother's phallus-fetish covers over, not her lack – as Freud argued – but rather, her castrating *vagina dentata*" (22–original emphasis). Moreover, the archaic mother's "all-consuming, incorporating powers are concretized in the figure of her alien offspring; the creature whose deadly mission is represented as the same as that of the archaic mother – to tear apart and reincorporate all life" (22). Creed locates the dread of this all-consuming feminine drive emanating from the alien life form in the original *Alien* in a daunting form of continuity that is inextricably linked to a total loss of subjectivity.

Creed explains that since the figure of "the archaic mother is closely associated with death in its negative aspects – death seen as a desire for *continuity* and the loss of boundaries – her presence is marked negatively within the project of the horror film. Both the mother and death

signify a monstrous obliteration of the self and both are linked to the demonic, as *Alien* so terrifyingly demonstrates" (30–emphasis added). As we have seen in our previous chapter, the figure of the clone also fosters a continuity between self and other self which engenders a conflation of the dichotomy of self and other.

Yet, *Moon*'s clonal continuous consciousness of 'I are you' did not engender a monstrous obliteration of the self, but a productive supplementation of the self. *Alien: Resurrection*'s hybrid continuous corporeality, on the other hand, might spawn an abject, demonic breakdown of the self. The hypothetical encounter with one's own clone can be said to stage a 'facing of yourself as other', or visa versa, facing another which turns out to be yourself. However, since our current case study's clonal figure is not only marked by duplication, but it is also or even more so stigmatized by an intricate and most of all monstrous form of feminized hybridization, the self that the self faces in this film is also uncannily other.

Our case study cannot be understood simply as a sequel to the earlier *Alien* films. The very form of this film is already a transgenic clone in and of itself. *Alien: Resurrection*'s "universe is at once utterly discontinuous with and intimately dependent upon" its predecessors (Mulhall 72). Hence, the film's title does not refer to "a resurrection of the alien species, or of that species' most intimate enemy" in the form of Lt. Ripley (72). Rather the title "characterizes its hybrid of cloning and hybridity as an alien species of resurrection – as something uncannily other to any familiar religious idea of death's overcoming" (72). Ripley's uncanny resurrection as transgenic clone is coded as extremely deviant, volatile, and abject from the get-go, even before the unveiling of her clone is presented to the viewer.

Our case study's mode of clonal reproduction is not just any sexual, maternal reproduction, nor 'ordinary' replication, as it involves a complex form of difference *and* sameness. But how does

Alien: Resurrection's hybrid-clonal reproduction relate to maternal reproduction and clonal duplication? The next section dives into how the film reproduces its composite mode of reproduction, while analyzing the ways in which the Ripley-clone is introduced to us versus the way the film introduces itself. We commence by scrutinizing the mesmerizing opening credits, which inescapably visualizes the film's interbred reproductive brew.

The Reproductive Horror of Resurrecting Ripley as Transgenic Clone

How the clone is introduced to the spectator in the film's first scene already shows that *Alien: Resurrection* brands its clonal figuration in terms of gendered embodiment specifically, as opposed to *Moon* in which sexual difference seemed to be neatly cast away to its sterile background. Yet, the apparent immaculate integrity of Ripley's cloned body as presented in the opening shot, is jarringly juxtaposed with the ferocious viscosity of the film's title sequence, which is shown directly prior to this first actual scene.

During these opening credits, the spectator is plunged into a grotesque, labyrinthine mesh of organic tissues consisting of mucus, flesh, teeth, cartilage, hair, bone, and skin that constantly morphs into new and incongruent arrangements as a flowing and ballooning river of bio-lava. The dominant color of this parthenogenetic stream of malleable meat is a sickening hue of jaundice-like golden-yellow, reminiscent of amniotic fluid. "The waves of the flowing cells are accompanied by an eerie musical score that rises and falls to the same rhythmic pattern" as the motions of these monstrous distortions (Stacey 39). The camera slowly and hypnotically performs a lateral tracking motion while parts of unrecognizable organs and fleshy formations, such as a contorted human eye and ear, slither and slide past the camera's lens (fig.2.2). This seemingly continuous intro shot, consisting of distorted extreme close-ups, appears to be shot with a fish-eye lens and is spliced together by a series of almost imperceptible dissolves.

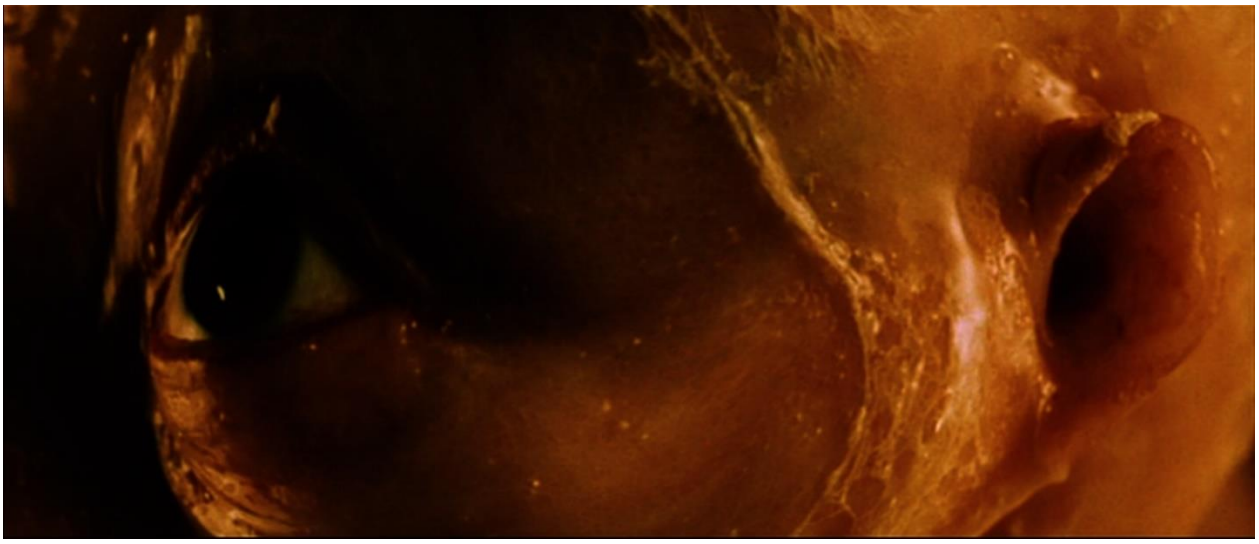

Figure 2.2: Ballooning river of bio-lava in *Alien: Resurrection*'s intro (TC:00:01:28).

This warping mirroring effect heightens the organic tissue's amorphous nature, while simultaneously imbuing this monstrous material with a certain slippery cinematicity – not only enhancing the tactility of the adipose and slimy flow, but also embellishing its photogenic visuality. Furthermore, before we are allowed to see the satisfying fully formed and coherent end-product of the resurrected female hero of the *Alien* series, presented as an ideal (mirror)image by the film's opening shot, we must witness the abject material fashion in which the human-alien hybrid-clone is cooked, as the credits and film-title are shown. The intro serves as a direct, prospective exposition of the deviant way in which the corporeal construction of the cloned protagonist of this fourth *Alien* reproduction is (re)produced, endowing its clone with all the monstrous, sensuous otherness of the terrifyingly transmutating alien.

This hybridized clonal reproduction causes replication not to be as clonal anymore, but more like sexual, maternal reproduction (i.e., merging of half of the chromosomes from one parent and half from the other) without the actual sexual component. As a result of this hybridized clonal multiplication the transgenic Ripley-clone is resurrected as a chimera that comprises a human surface with slithery alien depths. Yet, the alien queen herself has also undergone a radical

alteration during her resurrection. The transgenic queen-clone consists of an alien exterior with a humanoid womb, as towards the film's end the queen's reproductive system turns out to be fundamentally transformed by the cloning process.

This unforeseen modification of the alien reproduction cycle results in the fact that during the finale the queen genuinely gives 'live' birth to her offspring directly for the first time, without the mediation of using other live embodiments as hosts in a deadly parasitic manner. The 'natural' reproductive process of this monstrous trans-gendered species, as constructed in the previous trilogy, involves the queen "incessantly manufacturing eggs in an awesome excess of reproduction" (Doane, "Technophilia" 115). Out of these ova, that look like disembodied vulvas with quadrupled labia, the notorious 'face-hugger' emerges.

This abject arachnoid looking creature, which also resembles a disembodied hand with a tail, on its turn impregnates a random host body. The face-hugger as an autonomous spermic agent attaches itself to the host's face in an instance of oral rape, "penetrating his throat and gastrointestinal system to deposit its seed" (Doane 115). The original *Alien*'s narrative in particular "operates by confusing the tropes of femininity and masculinity in its delineation of the process of reproduction", as its "alien gestates within the stomach of the *male* crew member who later 'gives birth' to it in a grotesque scene in which the alien literally gnaws its way through his stomach to emerge as [a kind of] *phallus dentatus*" (Doane 115–original emphasis). This latter creature is called the 'chest-buster' and rapidly develops into the horrid adult Xenomorph that the *Alien* franchise is famously known for.

But in *Alien: Resurrection* the alien reproduction cycle from the trilogy is uprooted. The coupling of cloning and hybridity spawns an aberrant oneness that goes beyond mere similitude and engenders an (re)incorporating multitude; a clonal paradigmatic relationality that I call *the one is*

multiple. Moreover, a multiplication of the process of reproduction itself is shown during the film's first four scenes, as it quadruples various instances of clonal conception, germination, birth, and coming to life in four stages. Initially, as we saw in the opening credits, the material fabrication of the clone's carnal construction is exhibited. The intro functions as a visualizing instance of the internal clonal conception, which is governed by a so-called *teratoid* cellular division.

This monstrous mitosis mimics a specific sort of cancer known as *teratomata* (the Ancient Greek 'terat' means 'monster'): tumors that develop from unfertilized sperm or egg cells. These consist of various types of tissue, like muscle, bone, hair, and teeth. The teratoma's most distinguishing feature is that "it has the capacity to produce the cells of all the organs in the body" and hence has "the fascinating yet grotesque characteristic of fetal resemblance" (Stacey 276:n7). Therefore, these tumors are sometimes called "monstrous births", as they "may imitate pregnancy" (276:n7). The teratoma hence also manifests a curious amalgamation of cloning and hybridity, just like our film's mode of reproduction. The cellular growth of teratomata is a cancerous, asexual reproduction that replicates fragmented, deformed 'organoids' in the body. This term is deployed in science to designate different organ-types that are grown in a lab by means of genetic manipulation and with the aid of the technology of cloning.

Yet, in teratomata, a kind of 'natural' albeit diseased form of cloning takes place. Teratoid reproduction hence is not a monstrous duplication or reproduction of the self, but a monstrous reproduction of the other within the self. By invoking a teratoid cellular division in its intro, this film yolks together cloning and hybridization in a distinct monstrous discourse, as the field of teratology not only encompasses the study of teratomata, but also "the scientific study of monsters and marvels" (Stacey 41). Moreover, the teratoma's bizarre "disordered mixtures of tissue violate general cultural categories: they mix together life and death, health and illness, the normal and the

pathological, the human and the monstrous" (41). The film thus envisions the clonal conception as a parthenogenetic practice in which deformations, diseases and distortions lie at the heart of its productive mechanism.

The second stage of *Alien: Resurrection*'s reproductive multiplication occurs during the first actual scene, in which the exterior of the full female clonal form is spectacularly unveiled. Directly after this reveal, the clonal construct is rapidly matured in an *in vitro* test-tube. This visualization of accelerated aging discloses an instance of clonal germination. However, this clonal germination is infused with an abundance of hybridity. By subtly morphing not only the close-up of Ripley's child-like face into the image of her adult version, but also by simultaneously switching Weaver's own voice from imitating a childish intonation to a mature enunciation at the moment she proclaims that there *are* real monsters, the film yet again endows the Ripley-clone with a latent monstrosity, while concurrently coding the transgenic clone within a child-like dimension.

This transgenic clone is not only a teratoid amalgamation of human and alien DNA that grafts hybridity upon duplication, but she is also a composite of juvenescence and maturity. In the *Alien* universe, the spectator's identification is always focalized through Ripley's perspective upon it, hence our point of view in *Alien: Resurrection* from the first scene onward "is that of a newborn posthuman being – one to whom everything is new, and to whom the human perspective is no more natural than that of the aliens" (Mulhall 76). Moreover, by having Ripley's voice-over reiterate the exact line that was spoken by her surrogate daughter Newt in *Aliens*, our case study's opening-statement conjoins these two characters in its in vitro test-tube, which marks this film's moment of clonal germination.[17]

[17] The 6-film *Alien Collection* DVD (Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2017), including *Alien: Resurrection*, contains an 'audio commentary' in which Jeunet and some of his crew explain that "the body of the little girl was based on photographs that Sigourney send us of herself as a child" (TC:00:02:55).

Additionally, this moment also functions at once as the germination of the alien queen present in the clonal construct. The Ripley-clone is not just *a* posthuman newborn, but the clone is identified with her progenitor's chosen daughter in particular, while simultaneously she is forced to become the biological mother of the mothering monster her progenitor tried to eradicate at all costs. Reluctantly resurrected as mother *and* daughter at once, the Ripley-clone is a point of radical convergence in which different species, different ages, different kinship perspectives and different modes of reproduction intersect. This is the first fashion in which this film's clonal figure embodies the paradigmatic relationality of the one is multiple seen as fluid, interconnecting layers of excessive difference.

In the third reproductive multiplication, the clone within the clone, namely the infant queen housing in Ripley's chest, is birthed by means of cold surgical precision, without any of the intense labor involved in 'natural', live births. The enthralling, almost poetic flow of the continuous tracking motions of the intro and the first scene are interrupted by the film's first hard cuts. The Ripley-clone is cut open as she lies unconscious in a sterile operating tank. Her chest is incised with a laser-like scalpel from the stomach upwards, emulating the procedure of executing a cesarean section. As the infant queen is pried out of her chest's cavity with a repulsive audio-track of gurgling and sloshing sounds, alternating claustrophobic close-up shots of Ripley, the alien queen, and the surgical team are shown.

Just before the queen is excised, a quaint, canted top shot of the cramped operating room (fig.2.3) is spliced in between the extreme close-ups. The moment the sleek alien's head is popped out of Ripley's body, which is accompanied by a distinct audio-effect heightening the fleshy gore of this excavation, the team first holds their breath and is then heard sighing deeply, while their faces display various grimaces of exhilaration, fascination, and disgust. A close-up of Ripley's

peaceful unconscious face follows, after which the cutting of the umbilical cord is mimicked as the main surgeon carefully cuts away a strand of flesh that clings from the alien fetus' belly to Ripley's chest with a metal scalpel.

Figure 2.3: Top shot in which the alien queen is 'birthed' from Ripley's chest (TC:00:03:55).

When the cloned infant queen draws her first breath, partially sucking in the slimy membrane that covers the alien's distinctive phallus-shaped head, a ferocious shriek is thrust from the queen's small but terrifying mouth. This forceful cry for life clearly unsettles the surgical team. Even the malignant head scientist overseeing the procedure, Dr. Wren (J.E. Freeman), hisses "Jesus!", as he widens his eyes. The baby queen is then placed in an incubator and the extraction procedure seems to have ended successfully.

As another close-up of Ripley's dormant face is shown, the scientist who performed the surgery, Gediman (Brad Dourif), asks Wren full of anticipation "What about her? Can we keep her alive?", while the incubator containing the queen is carried away. Wren turns his head and asks: "How's the host?" A female lab-technician replies with a smug smile, after checking Ripley's vital signs: "Doing well." Wren grins and orders Gediman to "Sew her back up." Gediman then nods at

another surgeon to make it so and as another top shot of the operating room is shown, he says: "Excellent work, everybody".

Figure 2.4: Top shot of the Ripley-clone awakening after the extraction surgery (TC:00:05:09).

After this, we cut to another top shot that initiates *Alien: Resurrection*'s final reproductive multiplication. This scene encompasses a rebirth of sorts as the Ripley-clone awakens in a panoptical cell after the queen's extraction (fig.2.4). Spliced together not by hard cuts, but by smooth fades-to-black, this scene visualizes the Ripley-clone's actual animation. The distinct shot-transition of fading to black and then fading back to the next shot mimics the motion one's eyes make when waking up. These smooth fades, which are cued upon the same eerie musical score that accompanied the parthenogenetic stream of malleable meat of the film's title sequence, endow these images with a similar poetic yet sinister flow.

Lying naked in a semi-see-through shroud, the clone performs several dramatic motions further expressing her process of vivication, as she – for the very first time in her life – gasps for air. The shroud itself functions as a sort of amniotic sac out of which Ripley needs to emerge to be (re)born. She sensuously pushes up against the thin membrane of her artificial placenta from a variety of procumbent positions, with shot-sizes ranging from medium shots to close-ups. Salient

to note here is that, towards the scene's end, the Ripley-clone penetrates the arachnoid shroud from within (fig.2.5).

Figure 2.5: The Ripley-clone erupts out of her shroud as an instance of (re)birth (TC:00:05:44).

Her opalesce, sharply pointed dark-green nails shred the sheet and thrust outward in a manner akin to how the franchise's 'classic' chest-buster would usually thrust its head through a host-body's chest, as an instance of monstrous alien birth. But in this moment Ripley's own hands perform this lethally erupting alien-birthing motion that symbolizes the clone's coming to life. Although the clone's outer appearance may look human, a distinct alien vitality animates this hybrid body. Directly after this shot, we are shown a medium-wide shot of the Ripley-clone sitting on the floor, caressing the massive scar on her chest out of which the alien queen was removed, with her left hand.

She thrusts this hand, clamped in a fist, through her other hand and through the opening in the shroud, again emulating the chest-buster's bursting trajectory. As she starts to stroke her left arm, we cut to a POV in extreme close-up of her arm's skin, revealing that the number '8' has been tattooed on it, while she traces the shape of this number intently (fig.2.6). The Ripley-clone then looks up in her panoptical cell with a mixture of inquisitiveness and melancholy, as a last fade-to-

black is executed to end this scene, and with that shot the film's fourth and final multiplication of the process of reproduction ends as well.

Figure 2.6: The Ripley-clone intently traces the number 8 tattooed on her arm (TC:00:06:01).

At this early stage in the film, the spectator does not know the significance of this number yet, but already senses that this sign has a profound meaning. The number 8 is a symbol that if it is turned on its side also represents the lemniscate, the sign for infinity. The way this number is presented in this instance is highly ambiguous, since the Ripley-clone's POV of the tattoo is canted, framing this sign exactly in between a horizontal and vertical positioning. Hence, this mark can just as easily be interpreted as ∞, as it can be read as the number 8. The film thus prompts us to ponder this sign's meaning, while a specific set of expectations is conjured up, connoting an endless seriality or an incessant form of reproducibility.

Midway through the film the tattoo's diegetic signification is unveiled. This number namely indicates that our cloned protagonist is in fact the end-product of the eighth and only 'successful' attempt at cloning Ripley and the alien queen gestating in her chest. This means that there were seven failed attempts that yielded unviable clonal constructs. Our protagonist will inevitably encounter these former clonal embodiments, or better yet, her 'preincarnations' in a spectacular 4-

minute scene that is as violently visceral as it is achingly affective. As this dissertation analyzes actual cinematic encounters with the self in the form of a clone – by which I mean a diegetic confrontation between cloned selves – and not just cinematic clones in general, this one scene will take center stage in this current chapter.

As I argued in my previous chapter, in contemplating cinematic clones' conceptual ramifications, its most distinctive marker is the *relationship of self to self.* The fact that during the Ripley-clone's (re)birth, in our case study's final reproductive multiplication, her clonal mark inscribing her with her predecessors is prominently present, shows that clonal subjecthood in our current case study is also necessarily predicated upon a relation – a distinctly paradigmatic relation as I argue in this chapter's final section. We should note, however, that *Alien: Resurrection*'s paradigmatic relation of the self is of a different kind than the one in *Moon*, as it entails a continuous corporeality instead of a continuous consciousness.

Moreover, it is not just that this figure of the clone itself is essentially identified through this clonal relationality. Conjointly, because the heroes of cloning films often "are multiple, not the autonomous egos of Freudian theory", our own spectatorial "subject-position identifies with a relation" as well (Battaglia 511). The Ripley-clone's confrontation with her preincarnations, which I will refer to as 'the encounter scene', unveils how her reflexive relation of self to other self is structured and how her composite-clone-body relates to its different yet kindred clonal incarnations of hybridity, while simultaneously it lays bare a suturing kind of editing that weaves the viewer into this clonal relationality.

But before we dissect this encounter scene, we need to transition out of the film's reproductive multiplications and explicate how *Alien: Resurrection*'s filmic construction shows its hybridized nature. Our next section hence focuses on how the Ripley-clone's hybridity as well as

that of the alien is rendered in the diegesis and how the film's hybridity itself is manifested in its self-reflexive plot, to better understand the way in which our case study sets up its clonal encounter.

Manifesting Hybridity on Multiple Levels

Alien: Resurrection's clonal encounter, in contrast with the one in *Moon*, is not rendered as a prolonged and ongoing occurrence. Rather, it is staged in *one* explosive scene only, as an event that irrevocably brings our protagonist face to face with herself, as she discovers why she has the number 8 etched into her skin. She finds a room containing the seven abortive clones that made her successful corporeal construction possible. By framing her through the glass in the door that unlocks her predecessors – the numbers 1-7 are inscribed on her face and mirrored in her eyes – it is implied that all these previous clones are inextricably part of her breathing being (fig.2.11).

Through encountering her preincarnations, the Ripley-clone traumatically gains a new sense of self. Prior to the encounter scene, she is not informed about the hybrid corporeal riddle she is. However, she senses that she is of a different composition than before being resurrected as a clone. Next to the fact that her blood consists of acid, which is distinctive for the Xenomorph's physiognomy, Ripley's flesh is capable of accelerated healing and her sense of smell is uncannily heightened. Furthermore, Weaver's sleek and slimy dark costume connotes an alien physique, enlarging her shoulders while resonating H.R. Giger's alien construct – the late Swiss surrealist painter who designed the alien for the film's franchise.

The clone's predator-like gestures and glistening skin further highlight this 'alienness', just as the dramatic motions that expressed the hybrid-clone's animation during her (re)birth, endowed her with an extraterrestrial vitality. She also "possesses an intuitive awareness of the thoughts and deeds of the aliens surrounding her", sprouting from the clonal bodily kinship she shares with her alien others (Mulhall 71). As the film progresses, she "begins to recover some access to Ripley's

memories and character; but that results from an aspect of her nature that reinforces her distinctness from her genetic original – the fact that she is not even a member of the same species as Ripley herself" (71). Being neither fully human nor wholly alien, the Ripley-clone is a true hybrid, a unique construct.

One "manifestation of that hybridity – her participation in the alien species' hive mind and racial memory – is what allows her to recall Ripley's life and death" (71). The intricate nature of this corporeal clonal memory is analyzed in this chapter's last section. For now, it is important to remark that this mercurial alien-clone-body is molded into a still somewhat 'human' form, unmistakably recognizable as the trilogy's heroic, self-sacrificial lieutenant Ellen Ripley. The viewer decidedly remembers Ripley's life and death because of this semblance. Additionally, only her eighth iteration has a human appearance, the seven failed clones overtly show their hybridity on their bodies' exteriority. Our protagonist's seemingly immaculate human appearance is just a surface, it comprises a thin layer that veils the clone's capricious composite inner body. Ripley is not herself anymore, and as the encounter scene will show, her hybrid body is not just her own.

After the reproductive clonal genesis scenes, Ripley-8 (the Company's scientists have given her this name) is tested on her mental and physical capacities. Meanwhile, the extracted queen has matured and starts laying her eggs, containing the face-huggers who are awaiting host bodies to impregnate. Concurrently, an outmoded spaceship called the Betty, with its motley crew of space-pirates transporting a secret cargo load, arrives at the Auriga. The miscellaneous crew consists of shifty captain Elgyn (Michael Wincott), his girlfriend and pilot Hillard (Kim Flowers), wheelchair wielding mechanic Vriess (Dominique Pinon), dreadlock wearing weapon's specialist Christie (Gary Dourdan), blunt neanderthal-like strongman Johner (Ron Perlman) and newly enlisted member Call (Winona Rider).

The *United Systems Military* (this is the flag under which the malignant Company from the *Alien* trilogy now flies) contracted these space-pirates to deliver live human host bodies as a next step to breed their Xenomorph army. This transformation of the Company into a united yet highly dysfunctional military is a self-reflexive nod to the inept military men and women that were hired in *Aliens* to swiftly execute a 'bug-hunt' that they could not measure up to. But this time around the military's portrayal is even more parodical than the already ironic representation in the second film, as our openings-shot's symmetrically positioned guards, who are synchronously chewing gum and oddly point their heavy-duty weaponry at each other's heads instead of outward, shows.

Except for some information on a need-to-know basis the Betty's captain has, none of its crew is aware of the macabre and illegal intended use of the cargo they are transporting, nor of Ripley's presence. But inquisitive outsider Call suspects some kind of foul play, while seemingly knowing more about the experiments that are being executed on the Auriga and about Ripley's hybrid nature. After the film's first half hour, the newly bred Xenomorphs break loose. But the way they break free is rather cutthroat and bespeaks an even more insidious drive than the trilogy's portrayal of this already menacing species.

In these previous films, the alien race is only shown to kill humans or animals, and they merely utilize their own deadly embodiments to execute the kills, never handling human tools. Plus, their acts of killing are only geared towards species survival and reproduction. They do not act out of spite or revenge or experience any joy in inflicting pain; no human form of emotion is connected to their various slaughters. But in *Alien: Resurrection* the Xenomorphs' killing methods deviate significantly from this pattern, perhaps because their hybrid-alien embodiments are infused with a distinctly human connivery.

The adult versions are caged in a circular panoptical construction, which consists of multiple highly bolstered prison cells mounted on a rotation wheel. This can be operated in such a fashion that a selected cage, containing several alien specimens, rotates in front of a centralized 'viewing' box. From this stationary box the scientists monitor the adult Xenomorphs, while also attempting to domesticate them by administering physical punishments in the form of gusts of freezing steam. In a scene where Gediman performs this sort of 'training', we see that the aliens quickly pick up on this type of conditioning.

However, the scientists have underestimated the inventive ruthlessness of the alien life-form. As they naively put together three Xenomorphs in one single cage, two specimens attack their third cellmate and rely on the species' signature acidic blood to eat through the metal encasing of their buttressed cell, allowing the attackers to escape and free the other aliens. One of the cunning escapees kidnaps Gediman and murders a guard by exposing him to the same gust of freezing steam that Gediman used to tame it.

The slime-dripping monster creeps up to the big, red ignition button, and by forcefully pushing on it with its outward thrusting inner mouth, releases the (for humans) lethal stream of ice. Directly after this shot, we are shown a shot of the Ripley-clone in her own panoptical cell, intently looking up, as if she intuitively senses that 'her little brothers and sisters' (this is what Johner calls the aliens in a later scene) are breaking free in this moment. Soon after, the Xenomorphs are also pounding on Ripley's cell. The hybrid-clone utilizes her own acidic blood to subsequently escape too.

Just before the encounter starts, the Ripley-clone joins the Betty's motley crew. After the crew's first confrontation with a Xenomorph, that gruesomely killed Captain Elgyn, Ripley emerges from underneath the captain's corpse, killing the alien that murdered him, as "it was in

her way". The crew panics and tries to escape the alien coming after them, but Elgyn's body suddenly moves, and the predator's attention is relegated to his corpse. As it opens its mouth and hisses, a shotgun's barrel is inserted into the monster's jaws and blows out the back of its head from within. Next, that same barrel sets aside Elgyn's remains. Out of the floor's hole the Ripley-clone thrusts herself up with great ease.

The astounded crew decides that she comes with, as they leave no-one behind – although Call argued against the hybrid-clone joining, explaining that she is "not even human". Before they move on, the Ripley-clone reaches into the dead alien's mouth, and pulls out its outward thrusting inner mouth, facetiously handing it to Call as a 'souvenir'. Shortly after, the clone senses that the ship is moving. Call inexplicably corroborates this fact (the crew and the audience do not yet know that Call is a 'second gen android' with special posthuman abilities of her own). Wren, who is held captive by the crew, confesses that the Auriga since the aliens' attack has auto-piloted to home-base and will arrive there in three hours.

Shockingly, the destination of home-base is earth, a place where the Ripley-clone is a stranger herself, but which she does remember because of her hybridized bodily kinship with the Xenomorphs. The prospect of the alien infested Auriga's arrival at earth is something that our heroine again wants to prevent at all costs and therefore decides to team up with the Betty's crew to devise an alien expulsion plan. So, while our protagonist shares a genetic lineage with the aliens, the specter of her progenitor's drive to eradicate that species inhabits the Ripley-clone too and even trumps her monstrous genealogy. In response to the unsettling news of the ship's course to earth Johner says: "I'd rather stay here with the things, man." Call urges that they must destroy the Auriga, but Christie first wants to reach the Betty so they can try to escape.

Except for the film's opening act, in which the quadrupled clonal genesis is shown in a way that condenses time, the events presented to us seem to unfold in real-time. Moreover, the film often employs parallel editing to convey that many of the events occur simultaneously in different parts of the Auriga and the Betty. *Alien: Resurrection*'s plot hence develops wholly chronologically. No flashbacks or flash-forwards are implemented, only the overlapping editing of the frequent crosscutting modifies the film's narrative flow. This type of suturing editing gives the film an ostensibly fast pace and has the result that the plot's events seem interwoven into one continuous whole, consisting of causes and effects, each event driving the narrative unrelentingly forward. But midway through the film the narrative hauntingly halts to reveal the spectacle of its clonal encounter.

Figure 2.7: The Ripley-clone all of a sudden halts intently (TC:00:49:43).

The way a seemingly generic dialogue between the Ripley-clone and Johner is shot already reveals many facets that become relevant during the encounter scene. This dialogue occurs directly prior to the encounter and follows the troubling discovery of the ship's altered destination to earth. The crew yet again moves on, making their way through the hostile metal hallways, as suddenly our protagonist literally comes to a halt. In a long-shot of a crossroad, back- and side-lit and

enveloped with smoke, we see how the Ripley-clone's silhouette stops and raises her hand intently (fig.2.7). The crew, armed with rifles containing flashlights, follows. As they frantically scan all directions of the crossroad, the unarmed Ripley-clone takes an abrupt left turn, while resolutely walking straight towards the camera's lens.

The hectic nature of the flashlights emitting from the crew's heavy-duty weaponry, shining their narrow beams of light all across the nebulous corridor, contrasts sharply with the clone's calm and collected demeanor. Our heroine does not need high-tech arms nor additional lighting to navigate this alien infested space. Moreover, she senses intuitively where she exactly needs to go next; it is as if she is instinctively drawn towards the room that houses her preincarnations. The camera starts to track backwards and frames her in a medium-close, which is shot from a slight low-angle that makes her stature look towering.

Johner catches up with her and says: "Hey Ripley." The hybrid-clone stays one step in front of him in this moving two-shot as they walk and talk. Her eyes, illuminated with a small extra halo-light projected in her irises, constantly track the upper parts of the hallway. Only when Johner calls the name of the clone's progenitor to hail her, does she briefly avert her piercing gaze. The moment she looks at Johner, she disapprovingly frowns. She clearly does not want to be distracted from her focused perspective. Johner still starts the conversation by saying: "I heard you, like, ran into these things before."

As they walk through the foggy hallway, the Ripley-clone is well-lit in comparison to the darkened Johner. Her elongated, alabaster neck and cleavage glister against the murky surroundings and seem even more translucent in contrast with her dark costume. The clone replies: "That's right." Johner is impressed and utters: "Wow, man. So, like, what did you do?" Our protagonist chuckles ominously and responds with a smirk: "I died". She then resolutely steps out

of the frame. The camera performs a quick pan to show a reaction-shot of Johner, who is left stupefied. In more ways than one, parts of Ripley will die again when she runs into her own monstrous clonal preincarnations in the scene under scrutiny.

After this laconic tête-à-tête, we cut to a quaint tracking top shot filmed through the alloy framework above the corridor. We discern flickering fragments of the crew walking through the hallway beneath, in which the Ripley-clone is not included. We clearly hear the crew's heavy footsteps echo against the metal flooring and the almost irritating sound of Vriess' wheelchair whirring by. Throughout the film this peculiar type of shot is utilized, which deploys a range of curious perspectives. Top shots through rosters like this one, but also top shots like the ones described in the third and fourth reproductive multiplication (fig.2.3&2.4), are prevalent shot compositions in *Alien: Resurrection*.

These high-angles, ostensibly originating from the far upper corners of the diegetic spaces the characters reside in, or low-angles so close to the ground that we as spectators feel as if we are crawling on the Auriga's cold, metal floors ourselves, endow the film with a distinctive surveillance quality. But who is doing the surveying? The USM scientists? The spectator itself? Or even the aliens? One could argue that these warped perspectives are motivated by the ubiquitous presence of the aliens that lurk throughout the spaceship. In the *Alien* franchise, one of the reasons why the Xenomorphs are so terrifying is the fact that these creatures, with their shiny, glistening black bodies molded in forms resembling an amalgamation between organic and technological shapes that blend seamlessly with the hostile environments they lurk in, suggest an omnipresent threat that can arise at every waking moment.

The aliens' physiognomy eerily mimics the dark yet glistering metal pipes, tubes, grilles, and mechanized surfaces that are the series' trademark mise-en-scène. One cannot tell what parts

of the treacherous environment are composed of harmless inert materials or consist of pestilent living matter. The Xenomorphs' biological corporeality sutures itself into the diegesis' industrial backdrop in such a way that mere looking does not unveil its morphing guise, and this uncanny hybridity of subject and object in return even exercises a reciprocal gaze upon its vigilant but unseeing prey. Yet, this was at least the case for the *Alien* members of the trilogy. One could easily transpose this type of argument onto *Alien: Resurrection* and advance that this alien race's equivocal, pervasive imperceptible presence hence also motivates our case study's surveillance type of camera angles and shot compositions.

However, I am inclined to reason that these spying shots are intrinsically linked to the Ripley-clone's character specifically. Firstly, the hybrid-clone's heightened alien senses and intuitive awareness of the Xenomorphs surrounding her, diegetically warrant this kind of spying perspective. Secondly, as we saw in the dialogue sequence and as we will see in our next section, the film strenuously insists upon the Ripley-clone's all-seeing capacities, by emphasizing her eye-movements and the direction of her glances, while conspicuously illuminating her irises. As mentioned, it is her human-alien clonal hybridity that is the focal point through which our spectatorial perspective is mediated, though more importantly, it is her gaze that motivates the editing of the film's most momentous shots.

From the encounter's start, commencing with a 'fetishized' shot, the act of intently looking is not just reserved for the film's spectator beholding the Ripley-clone's composite body. The gaze of the cloned protagonist herself in fact takes center stage, as her glares are the cues from which the encounter scene's intimate editing originates. Important to note is the fact that a fetishized mode of presenting the body is common procedure for rendering the female form in film, although it is certainly not unproblematic. Psychoanalytic feminist theory, such as Laura Mulvey's concepts

of the active ‘male gaze’ and passive female ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’, has shown that cinematic renderings of femininity are affected by, and lay bare, the patriarchal structures that are at play in our culturally constructed perceptions of gender.

Amongst these discursive mechanisms is the fetishized shot *Alien: Resurrection* implements to introduce the Ripley-clone during the encounter scene. However, our case study’s fetishized long take, which at once fragments and sutures the cloned female body, problematizes this gender trouble a bit further. Mulvey argues in “Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema” (1975) that the female body in cinema is often spectacularized and that during these voyeuristic scenes, which are presented as events in which the female form is overtly on display for the spectator itself, the film’s narrative comes to a halt. The same holds true for the encounter, but in what ways does *Alien: Resurrection*’s spectacularization of the clonal composite body differ from a classic spectacularization of the ‘regular’ female body?

Even though the hybrid-clone’s body is on display for the spectator during the clonal encounter, it is primarily *her active gaze* instead of a passive to-be-looked-at-ness that we are sanctioned to see. Furthermore, while the entire scene is predicated upon the act of looking, the Ripley-clone’s glances even go beyond mere seeing as her gaze is inbued with a certain sensatory fullness. “Ripley’s clone is not just seeing the world for the first time; she is seeing it as no one has ever seen it before (inhabiting it as much through smell as through vision, as much collectively as individually, as a mortal who has already died)” (Mulhall 76). Therefore, in the next sections we analyze how this sort of expansion of our heroine’s sense of vision functions, while scrutinizing how the spectator itself is sutured into the Ripley-clone’s figurative and literal point of view, as we dissect the encounter scene’s structure shot by shot.

The Encounter: Suturing Gaze to Gaze, Skin to Skin, Gasp to Gasp, Face to Face

Alien: Resurrection modifies the supposed sameness of cloning into a locus of intersecting difference, as a sort of similitude across species hybridization. This composite clonal relationality encompasses an embodiment of 'the one is multiple', and the way it operates is revealed by the encounter. This scene has a prominent place, exactly in the dead middle, as it starts around minute 50 of the film's 100-minute runtime. This scene's placement in the greater narrative is arresting, as the story literally comes to a standstill to showcase the film's most important transformation with respect to the clonal sense of self.

Figure 2.8: The Ripley-clone makes a full stop in front of the clonal cabinet (TC:00:50:28).

Directly after the quaint top shot, we cut to an extremely low shot. This is the moment the encounter scene factually commences. We hear an amplified thud when the Ripley-clone's massive boots walk in from screen-left (fig.2.8). She stops as the rest of the crew pass her. The camera slowly tracks the back of her body from the feet up, semi-circling her impressive figure as she stops in front of the clonal cabinet filled with ghastly curiosities. By 'gazing' at the Ripley-clone through this fetishized shot, the viewer is explicitly cued that an extensive examination into her constructed hybrid corporeality will take place.

The clone's body is fragmented in this shot, for we are not permitted to see an establishing shot in which we can view her in her entirety; she is broken down into her separate body parts so that we can discern her design thoroughly. Her body is at once spectacularized because of the theatricality in which her fragmented physique is displayed. As we are placed up-close to the clone's tough, imposing exterior, the same eerie musical score that sounded during the intro and Ripley's (re)birth, lets its mesmerizing notes rise and fall once more. The reiteration of the non-diegetic score imparts this long take of the clone's physique with a similar monstrous, entrancing flow as the tracking shot of the intro's malleable meat.

Curiously enough, in this fetishized view of our cloned heroine the reiterated score together with the camera's fluid motion conveys a sense of composite continuity. While she is presented in a fragmented manner that breaks up her body, her embodied presence is immediately glued together by this shot's duration, and its echoing soundtrack, but most of all by the gliding mobility of the frame that captures the Ripley-clone's action of entering the clonal cabinet. Even if we see only one part of her physique at the time, this continuous shot works towards composing a physical cohesion that sutures our heroine into the room housing her preincarnations, and thus discloses a clonal continuous corporeality.

Moreover, only the Ripley-clone is in sharp focus. The others walking by are blurred into the background as they are out of focus. Even the wheelchair's irritating buzz is heard as a minor murmur in the intensified musical score's low regions. When the camera reaches the back of the clone's head, she turns to the left and stares intensely to a point off-screen (fig.2.9). Her face is brightly lit, accentuating her glistening skin, and reflecting the lights in her eyes. All that matters now is the clone and her gaze. In the same shot that commenced with the tracking of her legs, she starts to walk towards the point on which her gaze is securely fixated on, while Vriess yells in vain:

“Not that way!” As viewers we are not yet permitted to see the thing that our protagonist is looking at; we are only allowed to look at her looking.

Figure 2.9: The Ripley-clone’s gaze directs the shots during the encounter scene (TC:00:50:42).

Figure 2.10: The Ripley-clone’s POV of the door that unlocks her preincarnations (TC:00:50:48).

The fetishized long take ends when the Ripley-clone strides towards the point off-screen that she is beholding, taking several slow steps, all of which are clearly heard despite the swelling soundtrack. On the seventh step, we cut to the Ripley-clone’s POV, granting us a subjective view of what has entranced our protagonist (fig.2.10). We see a massively bolstered door with the numbers 1-7 written on its small glass window. This shot is slightly tilted and moving, and we

continue to hear boots clank against the floor, functioning as an auditory match-on-action for the clone's movement towards the door. Christie then yells: "Ripley!" But the clone does not respond at all and does not avert her gaze one moment.

The shape of the small window is notable, as it elicits a distinctly voyeuristic mode of looking. It is not big enough to reveal the contents residing behind this door, but it is just large enough to suggest having a sneak peek. The sort of gaze that we as spectators along with our protagonist will behold on the room's content is therefore already informed by an exhibitionistic secrecy, while also implying a certain level of sensuousness and taboo. It is as if we, as a kind of peeping Toms, will take a look through a mailbox's slit to peer into a primal scene that should have remained hidden. The film itself carefully constructs this sense of secrecy, although at the same time the film also beckons the Ripley-clone and the spectator alike to unearth this forbidden primal scene. Our spectatorial gaze is completely aligned with our protagonist and this alignment broaches a clonal corporeal taboo.

The Ripley-clone is not sure what is behind this door, and neither are we, but all of us strongly suspect something grotesquely horrific. The fetishized long take slowed down the story and sets up a momentous reveal. The way certain plot information has been carefully dispersed also foreshadows the clonal encounter. During Ripley's (re)birth, we have been keenly made aware that she has the ambiguous mark of the number 8 and/or the infinity sign on her arm. Additionally, the room itself is ostentatiously labeled with the numbers 1-7. More logical, inconspicuous choices for naming the room include words such as 'lab' or 'storage'. But *Alien: Resurrection* instead wants to draw the viewer's attention to the fact that Ripley's number 8 complements or even completes this numerical sequence.

Furthermore, our protagonist is instinctively drawn to this series of 1-7. It is as if she subconsciously stumbled across the room housing her preincarnations. In contrast, *Moon*'s 'Hall of Clones' is a securely hidden, subterranean space. The Sam Bell clones persistently searched for this space and only after multiple exploratory attempts were they able to unearth this room. But the effortlessness with which this film's clonal cabinet is discovered, conveys the idea that all its clones are immanently interconnected, and that our heroine's number 8 inextricably belongs among the numbers 1-7 locked behind this door.

Figure 2.11: The 7 preincarnations are inscribed onto Ripley's corporeality (TC:00:50:53).

The door's window itself resembles the small aperture prison cells frequently have. These slits are usually integrated into a door in such a way that the one on the outside is permitted a surveillant glimpse of the inside, while the one locked on the inside is denied a returning look. Yet, subsequently, after the Ripley-clone's POV of the door, we cut to a reverse-shot of our heroine's disquieted face from inside the room behind the window, inscribing and mirroring the numbers 1-7 in reverse on her eyes (fig.2.11). It is as if the room's content is returning our protagonist's gaze, as if we are presented with a POV from within the room itself staring back at the Ripley-clone.

Furthermore, the dash between the numbers is superimposed precisely over the clone's irises, hence when she lowers her pupils, this minute eye-movement gains great emphasis. As she looks

down, we cut to a close-up of her left arm which she slightly lifts, so that she (and we) can clearly discern the number 8 tattooed on it. Christie says: “Ripley, come on.” But the clone still does not react to his repeated hails. The camera tracks upward from the 8 to Ripley’s face, who starts to look up at the door’s numbers once more. We simultaneously hear Christie urging: “Ripley, we got no time for sightseeing here.”

Although the crew begs her to go on, to continue their quest to escape, and consequently to drive the film’s otherwise unrelentingly continuing chain of plot events forward, the film in this moment allows for an extreme and quite literal case of sightseeing. Here, in the dead middle of the film, the narrative comes to a spectacular halt as our protagonist enters the clonal cabinet. As our heroine will take in her own corporeal ‘prehistory’, it is not just the monstrous bodies of the Ripley-clone’s predecessors that are on display. Our protagonist’s gaze itself is the spectacular sight we are shown during this ‘sightseeing’.

As she looks up, another shot of the Ripley-clone’s face through the door’s glass with the numbers 1-7 imprinted on her eyes is shown for a second time. A subtle match-on-action is executed in this precise moment by eye-movement alone. As she glances upward, the ‘direct’ shot of the Ripley-clone is spliced together with the second shot through the door’s glass, in which she continues to look up at the numbers. Normally, matches-on-action are implemented to suture together important diegetic spaces that a character traverses. The editing technique of the match-on-action, or cutting-on-action, thus establishes a continuity in time and space, while also erasing the harshness of the cut itself.

This kind of continuity editing generally contributes to a certain seamlessness of the filmic form, while aiding the viewer’s mental construction of the story’s space and time. In action movies, for example, if the hero is thrown through a window from inside a house to the yard outside, we

might see a shot of him being flung towards the window, and then cut to the yard, where we see his body breaking through the glass from the outside. Consequently, we intuitively understand that these two diegetic spaces are adjacent and are being traversed in the same moment, while the action's fluidity is carried over from the first shot to the next. Yet, the 'action' that is matched across this cut in this action-horror film is by no means as kinetic as conventional matches-on-action, as it merely consists of a minute eye-movement.

The film once more places an unusual emphasis on our protagonist's act of looking, even elevating it to the *action* of looking, while at once suturing us as spectators within the core of the intersecting plane of these active, convergent looks. This cut not only establishes a continuity between diegetic spaces, but it cinematically builds a continuity between our heroine and whatever is behind this enigmatic door through a corporeal connection. The 'cutting-on-looking' or 'match-on-glance', as we might call this eye-movement-match-on-action, further sutures the Ripley-clone, being her progenitor's eighth iteration, into the seven previous clones that are behind this door. The match-on-glance visually adds her 8 to the glass's 1-7, since it cuts from the tilt of this mark on her arm to the superimposed numbers on her face.

Additionally, this sequence of shots starting with the Ripley-clone's POV of the door, stitches her embodiment into the room before she entered it, akin to how the superimposition of the numbers 1-7 on her eyes etched her preincarnations onto her face. As we have a direct shot of Ripley spliced in between the room's two returning gazes, she is through editing enveloped by shots of the door that holds her corporeal prehistory. Moreover, the fact that these return gazes also inscribe the numbers 1-7 in her eyes amplifies the idea that a kind of incorporation is about to take place. The suturing editing together with the cutting-on-looking emphasizes a continuity between

the hybrid-clones based on a bodily inscription that is executed cinematically, even before our heroine or the viewer has seen any of the other clones.

Furthermore, by recurrently hailing our protagonist as 'Ripley' at the scene's start, the film insists on the spectator regarding the clone as the trilogy's heroine during this encounter, as opposed to the way the scientists called her at the film's beginning, namely Ripley-8. The film hence sets up a specific mode of spectatorial identification that stitches the identity of the trilogy's heroine securely in its clonal leading lady, no matter how monstrously hybridized her composite corporeality is. Diegetically, our heroine is the eighth iteration of the original Ripley, and thus she is 'not her'.[18] But the film's firm positioning of this hybridized construct as *our* heroine from the series will make us as spectators carry our previous identification with the clone's heroic progenitor into this composite body, just before the grotesque nature of the impending clonal primal scene is disclosed. This is a strategy to familiarize and humanize the clone, which we will behold as 'our Ripley' despite the alienating, inhuman confrontation that follows.

After Christie uttered the warning that there is 'no time for sightseeing here', we immediately cut to our Ripley as she pushes the door open, which is accompanied with a mechanical hissing sound, and the clonal sightseeing intractably commences. In this shot, the back of Ripley's head covers the numbers 1-7. It is as if she has absorbed these numbers into her being, as if our heroine will ingest her seven preincarnations by stepping into this clonal cabinet. As she enters someone yells: "Ripley, don't!" A reverse-shot from farther inside the room then shows a back-lit and

[18] In a previous, intimate scene between Call and the Ripley-clone in her panoptical cell, in which Call intended to kill her to murder the queen housing in her chest, the android tells the clone: "Ellen Ripley died 200 years ago. You're not her" (TC:00:30:05). For a compelling reading of this scene and the homoerotic, posthuman relation between Call and the Ripley-clone, see Stacey's second half of her chapter "She Is Not Herself: The Deviant Relations of Alien: Resurrection" in *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (57-65), which is a reworking of an article published in *Screen* in 2003. All references and citations made in this chapter stem from Stacey's book from 2010.

darkened – but caught in sharp focus – Ripley standing in the door's opening, while Call, Christie and Wren are hazy in the background.

The backlighting of this medium-long shot makes Ripley's figure yet again look like a silhouette, while the contours of her distinctly human form are illuminated. The film emphasizes Ripley's human shape once more before we are shown the room's grotesquely hybridized clonal contents. In the same shot, she takes multiple steps forward until she is framed up-close, as she walks into the light. The intense flickers of halo-lights are reflected in her eyes, which are moving sharply yet slowly from left to right. We then cut to an establishing shot in which a center-framed Ripley is seen from the back as she moves through the room's space, revealing what her eyes had beheld directly prior (fig.2.12).

Figure 2.12: Center-framed Ripley enters the clonal cabinet filled with cryotubes (TC:00:51:32).

The spectator is shown the first shot revealing the room's contents: cylinders containing dead monstrous predecessors in every stage of development ranging from fetuses to adults. Grotesque eyes and mouths sprout out of incongruous body parts that are covered with alien skin. These clones are set up in monumental cryotubes, comparable to the massive pillar-like tank our cloned protagonist was suspended in during the film's first scene, creating an echo through the mise-en-

scène. The camera's position in this shot is stationed in the same vantage point that Ripley previously occupied. This first spectatorial view of the preincarnations is thus filmed from the exact spot our heroine stood in when she entered the room.

Hence, this shot also functions as a reverse-shot of sorts, suturing us in the intersecting plane of our protagonist's gazes. Yet, we are only allowed to first see Ripley's eye-movements as guiding instances, before any reverse-shot is shown, revealing to the viewer the things she has just seen. The emphasis in this scene unequivocally lies on *our protagonist seeing* the clonal spectacle. The fact that the spectator subsequently sees what Ripley has seen is simply secondary. Our Ripley takes the lead, and we as her audience follow her meticulously.

Furthermore, amid these suturing shot-reverse-shots we are never permitted to take in the room's contents by means of an over-the-shoulder-shot, which would put the viewer in a more comfortably distanced relation to our cloned protagonist. In *Suture and Narrative: Deep Intersubjectivity in Film and Fiction* (2017) George Butte gives a phenomenological account of the narrative process of suture. Over-the-shoulder-shots or the "oblique angles in the shot / reverse shot chain", as Butte calls them, allow the "authorial audience to be closer to a character's interiority, but also distanced, inside a character's perspective but also outside it, just over her shoulder" (52). Yet, during this encounter our case study's authorial audience is never granted to inhabit such an aloof yet subjective position.

We are only allowed to behold medium or medium-long shots in which Ripley is centrally framed either dead smack in the middle or just off center, so that we can completely take in all the gruesomeness that envelops her as she traverses the clonal cabinet. Or we are presented with uncannily direct POV's of Ripley beholding her own prehistory, putting us not just beside but inexorably *in* her shoes. Or we are presented with intense close-ups of her face and eyes. Our own

spectatorial proximity to our protagonist is therefore rendered by the film's particular shot-compositions as close as can be. We are never just over Ripley's shoulder; we are always intimately up-close to her skin or even inhabiting it.

The first cryotube shown up-close is a POV from Ripley's perspective after she looked at it. This clone's face resembles a freakish fetus and floats in a pose akin to Ripley's suspension in the first scene, with deformed legs crossed and even merged together (cryotube frame-right of fig.2.12). As we cut to another close-up of Ripley, her eyes direct us to the room's other side while she starts walking in that direction. We then get a brief establishing shot of the room with Ripley framed center left as she looks at a second cryotube, after which another close-up POV of our heroine inspecting this second specimen is revealed.

Figure 2.13: Monstrous Mirror: Ripley empathetically touches her preincarnation (TC:00:51:49).

The second clone has an abundance of dark, wavy hair. In a later underwater scene, Ripley's hair waives in an identical fashion. While this clone's face is deformed by an alien beak next to its human-looking mouth, its facial features clearly mimic our heroine's human façade. As we cut to a two-shot of Ripley and this adult clone, she empathetically touches its glass tube (fig.2.13). In the same shot she again redirects her (and our) gaze to the room's opposite side. Another POV

revealing a third clone is shown, tracking it from the disfigured legs upward, and floating in a similar position, arms and legs crossed.

This fifth clonal iteration (the number 5 is visible on the tank's glass, but it is the third clone we see up-close) presents the most overt signs of alien hybridity on its bodily surface. It is completely covered with alien skin, while it still has Ripley's alabaster skin tone instead of the dark, glistening membrane that typically covers the alien's corporeality. It has a heinous eye sticking out of its back, while its head resembles the Xenomorph's distinctive phallus-like form, uncannily devoid of any kind of eyes. The camera movement that is implemented in this POV shot is also salient. It echoes the fetishized tracking motion used to present Ripley at the encounter scene's start, tracking her body from the feet upwards, flagging that an examination into her constructed hybrid corporeality was about to commence.

By reiterating this camera movement for the up-close reveal of this most monstrous hybrid-clone, through a POV of our protagonist herself as a return shot revealing the sight of her perplexed gaze to the spectator, it is implied that underneath our Ripley's humanoid surface the exact same hideously hybridized inner biology is hidden. We cut to a single close-up of Ripley who moves closer to number five's tube. The moment the glass containing this abomination comes into view, the eerie musical score begins to swell back up as she starts to look up. This looking up parallels the moment Ripley looked up from the number 8 tattooed on her arm to the numbers 1-7 on the door, and again functions as a match-on-glance, but only retrospectively as it matches the upward tracking motion of the previous shot. When Ripley tilts her head back to look number 5 in the face, the score climaxes and cuts to her POV, showing a close-up of the composite atrocity. We then cut back to the close-up of our heroine looking back down and farther into the room. We are next shown a similar establishing shot of the room with our Ripley in the middle as fig.2.12 (fig.2.14).

But she has now traversed the entire space filled with the cryotubes, having taken in its horrendous hybridity. Ripley's figure is now not large and looming as previously was the case, but her body is dwarfed in size in comparison to these tanks. It is as if she is now integrated as just another bodily iteration set up in the room's clonal cabinet of ghastly curiosities.

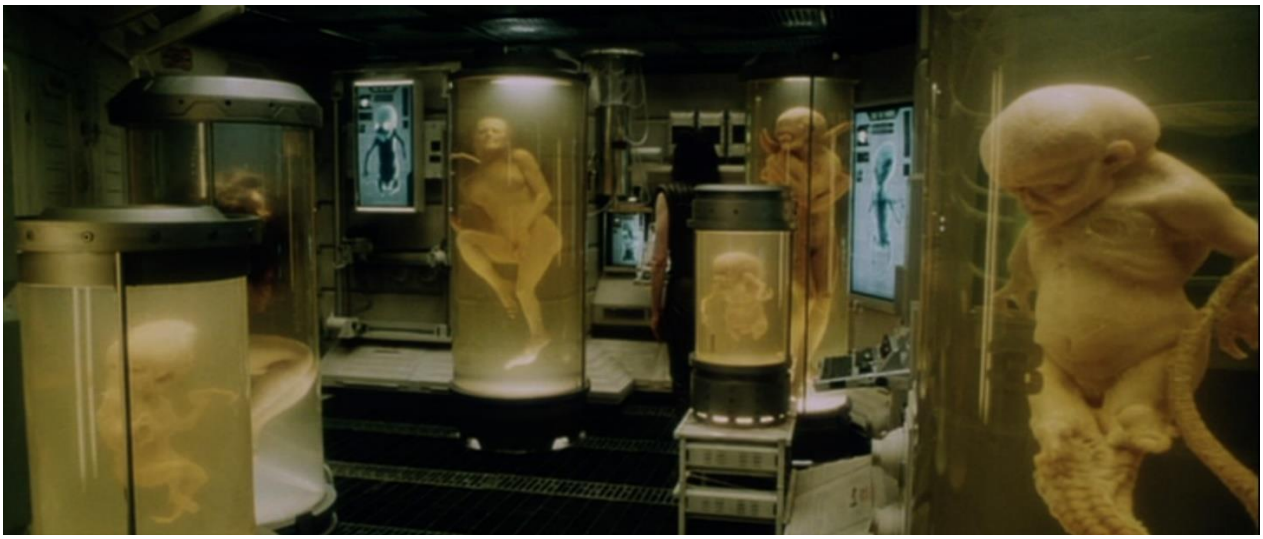

Figure 2.14: Ripley is integrated into the clonal cabinet (TC:00:52:11).

Figure 2.15: Ripley is cinematically merged with one of her predecessors (TC:00:52:18).

Subsequently, we cut to Call as she steps into the room as well. Her baffled eye-movements mimic that of our Ripley's when she entered. Next is a shot of Ripley through the glass of yet another cryotube, distorting her face and endowing her with the sickening golden-yellow hue from

the credit sequence (fig.2.15). After this we cut to a POV of Ripley looking at the clone's face, featuring a similar distortion as our heroine's face just had through that very same tank. Again, by framing Ripley through glass – now a cryotube containing the fourth degraded counterpart we see up-close, albeit it is the sixth clonal iteration – her physique is linked to these abominable clones.

It is made clear that Ripley's preincarnations are immanently part of her existential inner biology. The glass functions as a mirror, unveiling her chimeralike body for what it is: a continuous composite corporeality configured as distorted yet excessive sameness. The alternating shots of our heroine's face, intercut with fragments of her monstrous predecessors, exhibit her eyes' gripping movements, and we are forced to track her piercing peers throughout the entire scene. Its distinct shot-reverse-shot structure not only sutures her preincarnations into our protagonist's corporeality, but it also weaves the viewer into this clonal relationality of the one is multiple. It is as if we ourselves are walking through this clonal cabinet and are recognizing shards of our human selves within these grotesquely misshapen bodies.

We then cut to a medium-close of Ripley, looking down and then screen-right, as she starts to pant out of emotional overload. Suddenly, we hear another gasp from even farther down the room. Ripley looks up in disgust and sighs out of shock as she sees where the respiring is coming from, but we do not see this source yet. In the same shot she walks in the gasp's direction, walking past the camera as we again hear her boots clank against the metal floor, moving us into an over-the-shoulder. The music dies down as the gasping intensifies, while the rhythmical sounds of a respirator and a pulse tracker become audible. For what is to come, what lies alive in the heart of darkness in the back of this clonal cabinet, the viewer now does need a somewhat distanced perspective rendered through an oblique angle.

But we do not just cut to an over-the-shoulder shot. We are placed there by tracking Ripley's continuous movement towards the gasping sound. Our heroine takes the lead, and the spectator subserviently follows. In the back we discern a mangled figure lying on an operating table, as we more clearly hear medical equipment's beeping and this breathing being's tormented moans. We then cut to a medium-close of Ripley, hesitantly walking towards the table as she tears up looking at this last live preincarnation. Again, we are denied a primary view; we are only allowed to first look at Ripley's gaze, to read the horror on her face and to see the hurt reflected in her eyes caused by the thing she is beholding.

Since our identification is completely aligned with our cloned protagonist and this identification is humanized by means of hailing her as the trilogy's heroic Ripley, this emotive display of our protagonist's face importantly codes our own affective response as viewers as well. Even though we have not fully seen this final clone, we already feel intense pity for and condolence with the moaning, suffering entity. We then cut to a slow tracking POV revealing the full figure lying on the table. This seventh clone (the fifth we see up-close) is hooked up to all sorts of tubes and is half naked. Only a light-green sheet covers her lower parts, while her upper body – with an unhealed scar in between her bare breasts – is clearly visible. The reiterating sounds of the medical equipment, the figure's repeated moans and Ripley's footsteps provide an entrancing diegetic rhythm to the sinister score's slow strings.

We then cut to a medium-close of Ripley, as she comes face to face with herself. While she approaches, she flinches as the mangled clone makes a choking sound off-screen. This reverse-shot, expressing a melancholic revulsion on Ripley's face, is spliced in between an even closer POV of the unlucky number 7's face. This second POV from Ripley's vantage point appears to be stationary, yet a slight hand-held motion conveys the idea that we are now beholding this live

clonal abomination through our protagonist's eyes. Her direct predecessor then fights to thrust out the words: "Kill me" (fig.2.16).

Figure 2.16: Kill me i.e., kill us (TC:00:53:07).

An establishing shot from the operating table's other side, framing Ripley above the mangled clone's body, shows how she compassionately grabs a piece of the sheet to cover the tubes projecting out of number 7's abdomen (fig.2.17). Another POV of our Ripley beholding number 7, frames the suffering clone in extreme close-up as she directly looks into the camera and again stammers: "Kill me" (fig.2.18). Although this direct address is motivated by the fact that we are seeing our heroine's ocular POV in this moment and that we have consistently been seeing through her eyes from the encounter scene's start, this excruciating plea for termination so up-close in the camera almost breaks the so-called 'fourth wall'.

This usually occurs when the narration itself reflexively acknowledges the audience's existence outside of the story world. This is not necessarily the case here since this direct address reinforces the wall, confirming that we as spectators are seeing through Ripley's eyes. But this direct address does feel as if we ourselves are being asked to put this clone out of her misery. Since we are so aligned with the Ripley-clone throughout this gripping scene, we have been made to

sense her clonal position. This near violation of the implied and invisible barrier between story and audience does not arise because the story reaches out to its spectator, but because the spectator itself is affectively drawn into the world of the film.

Figure 2.17: No.8 comes face to face with no.7 (TC:00:53:14).

Figure 2.18: Plea for termination is directly addressed at the audience (TC:00:53:21).

Next, we cut to Ripley as she sharply inhales to fight off her tears and backs up, after which a back- tracking POV follows, showing number 7 in agony. As we cut back to a two-shot of the two live clones (comparable to fig.2.17), we hear footsteps approaching as Call walks in. Ripley and Call are both positioned above number 7's maimed body, not showing her face. Call hands

Ripley a flamethrower, and the abdomen of number 7 begins to whimper. We then cut to a medium-close of Ripley pressing her lips together with teary eyes as she points the weapon at her aching, monstrously deformed mirror-image.

Again, a POV from our Ripley of an extreme close-up of number 7's face appears, now expressing relief and nodding her head directly in the camera as to convey that this is what she wants, while she thrusts out a last, consenting gasp. We cut to another establishing shot, only showing number 7's mangled legs in the frame's right front, as Ripley starts to pant heavily again while she ignites the flamethrower on the frame's middle-left side while Call stands in the middle, with cryotubes numbers five and six showing in the background (fig.2.19). As Ripley blazes the fire out of the weapon, it seems as if the screen goes to white as the frame momentarily becomes completely lit up, a so-called white-out.

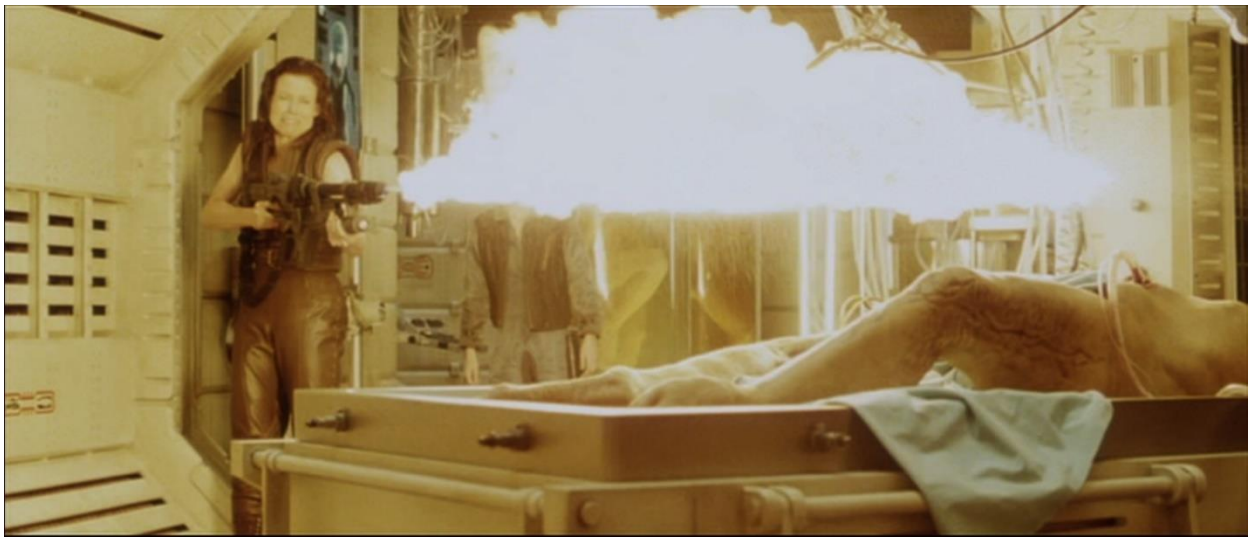

Figure 2.19: The inferno of devouring paradigmatic subjectivity (TC:00:53:49).

Amid this all-consuming fire, we briefly cut to a close shot in which we see unlucky number 7's body burning while we hear a forceful scream. Then we cut to an over-the-shoulder of Ripley as she douses the entire operating table by strenuously and continuously moving the heavy flamethrower from left to right. The usage of a flamethrower to expel Xenomorphs is a generic

trope for the series, as such a weapon is visually much more arresting than using regular guns. Diegetically, its use is warranted as the aliens have acid for blood. If only injured, not incinerated, the monster's bodily fluids would relentlessly eat through whatever lies in its way. The fact that a flamethrower is also utilized for this clonal mercy killing not only adds to the spectacularity of this moment but infuses this inferno with a sense of executing an alien cleansing purge as well.

Next, we are shown a hectically handheld medium-close shot in which the camera follows Ripley as she tracks back through the entire clonal cabinet, not clearly showing the teratological environment but instead focusing on our heroine's intensely palpitating body. When Ripley reaches the door through which she first entered, we cut to a close-up in which she continues to track back. She presses her lips again and while inhaling sharply she ignites her weapon once more. In an awesome conflagration of emotion and fire our heroine incinerates the rest of the cryotubes. These monumental clonal containers all explode in a climaxing montage, expanding this surging event by showing an abundance of shots in which the tubes violently burst apart, while the soundtrack blares the reverberating, engulfing sounds of glass breaking, liquid gushing, and fire surging.

Over the course of a mere thirty-nine seconds a baffling number of thirty-six shots are fired at the spectator, filmed from a multiplicity of vantage points all throughout the room, ranging from extreme low to the ground shots, to the curious high angles discussed previously, and from close-ups to long shots and everything in between. This overlapping editing's pulsating frames not only show shots of the tubes shattering apart but they are intercut with shots of Ripley as she thrusts the fire out of her weapon. In this inferno we can hardly see because of an exuberant excess of light rather than because of an annihilating absence of light. Yet, what we can clearly see amid this hectic, volatile montage is our heroine's distraught demeanor as she continues to sharply inhale while forcefully blasting the flamethrower.

Furthermore, this glistering blaze's discharge at once feels as if we can finally breathe again after enduring the vexing, suffocating sighs and gasps of the encounter between Ripley and number 7. At the explosive montage's end, Ripley stands in the room's doorway once more. But now her silhouette is not back-lit, instead her face is framed up close and illuminated by the fire in front of her, endowing her with the intro's distinct amniotic tint. The backlighting in the shot when she first entered the room emphasized her human form, but this sickening yellow glow on her face makes her presence look diseased and violated. As we hear some last shards break, Ripley tries to get her breathing under control. She looks at the sea of flames raging in the incinerated clonal cabinet in front of her, moving her eyes from left to right, reminiscent of her eye-movements when she first entered the room and took in her own bodily prehistory.

However, her eyes continue to move farther right. Our protagonist's gaze redirects our attention once more, as she turns backwards to the hallway. Menacingly, with her flamethrower raised, Ripley strides toward Dr. Wren, the scientist who resurrected her by cloning her. Wren clearly fears for his life as he backs up. Call anxiously commands: "Don't do it, Ripley." Surprisingly enough, our heroine forcibly flings her weapon on the ground in front of Wren and turns to Call to say, "Don't do what?" while marching off. Subsequently Call punches Wren in the face. Then we get a last shot of the room's door from the inside. Johner leans against its frame and fulminates: "What's the big deal, man? Fuckin' waste of ammo." Christie walks up to him, pats him on the shoulder and says: "Let's go." Johner shakes his head disapprovingly and then utters: "Must be a chick thing."

To end our film's spectacular clonal encounter, we cut to a hallway crossing, comparable to figure 7. In this long shot our heroine yet again halts in a pose similar to when she and the film's narrative literally came to a standstill before the clonal sightseeing began. Coming full circle, the

crew members with their flashlights all pass her in this echoing frame as the story picks up its unrelentingly continuing chain of plot events. Except for Call, who briefly consoles Ripley by touching her left arm just above her tattoo of the number 8 (fig.2.20). Finally, we cut to an extreme long shot of the corridor in which we see Ripley's dwarfed figure also continuing her quest as she follows the crew that has pushed ahead.

Figure 2.20: Call consoles Ripley as the clonal encounter comes to an end (TC:00:55:43).

The One is Multiple: A Paradigmatic Absorption of the Clonal Corps Morcelé

After meticulously dissecting the encounter scene, we consider in this chapter's final section how the explosive facing of the self in *Alien: Resurrection* advances a particular kind of clonal relationality. This relation of self to other self is distinct from the sort of clonal relationality delineated in my previous chapter, because, remarkably enough, in our current case study cloning engenders hybridity. It seems that within these composite clones "even genetic replication cannot suppress nature's capacity for self-transformation and self-overcoming, its evolutionary impulse" (Mulhall 72). Yet, this film's clonal self-transformation and self-overcoming takes the form of a devouring expansion of the self, in which the corporealities of the other selves are simultaneously

and irrevocably condensed into one embodiment. The 'one' clone that remains after this facing of the self is unremittingly and monstrously 'multiple'.

The way *Alien: Resurrection* renders its figure of the hybrid-clone shows that cloning may not only foster a continuation of consciousness, but it can also engender a *continuous corporeality*. This bodily continuity, which is predicated upon an excessive form of difference *and* sameness, does not generate a productive but rather a destructive relationality between its different incarnations of the self. *Moon* proposed a remarriage of the self, seen as a constructive supplementation between the other selves. But *Alien: Resurrection* incites a transmutating dismantlement of the other selves.

The notion of a transgenic clone complicates our previous understanding of clonality, and in particular our comprehension of the workings of the *paradigmatic* relation of the self. Conceptually, cloning's potentially endless paradigmatic relation between different cloned selves smears conventional *syntagmatic* subjectivity out to a point where we no longer can constitute this self as unified and unique. The normative sense of self implodes precisely because clonal subjecthood expands excessively, at once thickening and compressing the notions of space and time, and the categories of self and other, as the clonal sense of self flows across a range of embodiments, existing in multiple points in space and time.

This also holds true for the clonal subjectivity in our current case study, but whereas *Moon*'s paradigmatic 'continuous consciousness' formed a destabilizing factor for conventional subjecthood on a mental level, *Alien: Resurrection*'s paradigmatic 'continuous corporeality' brings forth a disruption of embodied subjectivity on a viscerally physical level. Traditional conceptions of subjectivity not only rely on a unity and singularity of the mind, but also of the body. In *Moon* the clonal subjecthood that flowed across a plural identification of 'I are You' still remained neatly

packed away in separate corporeal entities in the form of the several Sams, who are different temporal dimensions of each other – incarnations of the same in different stages of 'becoming the one you are'. Because the Sams are supplements to each other's unattained but attainable and attained selves, they are able to retain a certain corporeal integrity.

Yet, the same cannot be argued for the Ripley-clone. Her sphinxlike nature and physical bond to her monstrously other selves engenders a messy continuous corporeality, in which the disorganized human-alien hybridity of her preincarnations spills over into her unified bodily integrity, unfastening her seemingly human façade. One might even equate the clonal encounter's final conflagration with an abject, Kristevaesque dissolution of meaning, as in this transformative event the other selves are violently absorbed into our protagonist's embodiment. The separate Sams shared a clonal relationality of the multiple are one, in which they were bonded together by their continuous consciousness, but *Alien: Resurrection*'s transgenic clone ferociously embodies the one is multiple through her hybridized continuous corporeality.

Commenting upon our protagonist's intimate interaction with her preincarnations during the encounter, Stacey states that the "transparent storage columns" that are "spaced throughout the room", require "Ripley to move amongst her predecessors as she slowly takes in the shocking visual evidence of her own prehistory" (43). Furthermore, "Ripley's physical proximity to, and her touching of, the glass containers indicate her genetic kinship with and growing empathy for her teratological ancestry" (43). Just as in *Moon*, the way the film sets up the Ripley-clone's physical closeness to her other selves is paramount for delineating the kind of relationality these cloned beings have. Though, this clonal relation goes beyond mere empathy or kinship, as this bodily bond entails a volatile paradigmatic absorption as well.

Moreover, it is not solely the set-up of the scene's set, nor the visual echoes present on the six abortive clones' bodies that weave the preincarnations into the Ripley-clone's corporeality. Most importantly, the scene's intimate use of its shot-reverse-shot technique allows for an arresting instance of incorporation, in which the spectator is also incorporated. Stacey keenly remarks that the scene's "shots alternate between medium shots and close-ups of the grotesque bodies of the clones, and long shots placing Ripley (and later Call) among them" (43). Yet, she does not mention that all medium shots and close-ups of the clones' bodies are POV's of Ripley herself as she takes in the evidence of her own prehistory, nor does Stacey flag the remarkable lack of oblique angles.

I argue that the Ripley-clone's gaze upon her preincarnations enacts something we can call 'suturing looks'. Without using aloof yet subjective over-the-shoulder shots, the scene's editing strictly deploys an oscillation between direct ocular POV's and medium-long establishing shots placing our Ripley at or near the center of the frame, clearly showing her eye-line matches. Hence, our own spectatorial proximity to our protagonist is as close as can be. As stated before, we are never just over Ripley's shoulder; we are always intimately up-close to her skin or even inhabiting it. And if we are not inhabiting a subjective, ocular POV, the alternating establishing shots envelop our centralized heroine with the monstrous embodiments of her predecessors, which she is actively taking in through sight, sound, touch, and breath. These constant shot-reverse-shots are hence not implemented to take in a conversation, as usually is the case with this type of editing, but they convey the paradigmatic kind of absorption that is about to take place.

As Ripley unlocks the clonal cabinet, the way our heroine's composite clonal body is verily organized, gets unveiled by her reflexive relation to the six abortive clones suspended in the monumental cryotubes, but most of all by the respiratory interaction with her direct predecessor, the live number 7, who pleads to kill her. These multiple bodily copies are all grotesque alternative

reflections of each other, functioning like distorted mirror images in a teratological fun house. Towards the scene's end, an actual scattering mirroring occurs when Ripley finds number 7.

This unlucky clone is still alive, despite her agonizing state. Number 7 is most like our Ripley. She is not suspended in a cryotube, and as this clone is given a human face – our heroine's human face – to her brutally mangled alien body, their inhuman paradigmatic linkage becomes painstakingly clear. Additionally, number 7 also has a clearly visible scar on her chest, suggesting that an attempt was made to extract the alien queen from her body. Yet, we can reason that this monstrous birth was unsuccessful, as the scientists did create our Ripley as well.

Although the eight clones are not exact mirror images of each other – all in different states, shapes, and sizes – each of their bodies directly implies and reflects the other, accordingly with all its horrific continuous corporeality. Furthermore, the echoing, respirating noises we hear throughout the encounter with number 7, starting with our heroine's pants before the audience has even seen this last breathing clone, function as a form of clonal communication as the clones reflect each other's sighs and gasps. This clonal conversation, consisting of a mirroring of sound, is clearly a bodily kind of non-verbal yet intentional interaction.

Diegetically, number 7 mostly tries to relieve her bodily aches, which do not necessarily stem from her extraction surgery. Her excruciating pains are more so caused by the haphazard fashion in which her horribly hybridized corporeality is resurrected, manifesting her tormenting composition on the surface of her body. We can only reason that the same painful teratological structure spreads throughout her entire being. Our Ripley seems to realize this too, as she recognizes and feels the excruciating pain her preincarnation is in and sighingly concedes to her wheezing pleas to kill her. Cinematically, these reverberating interactions of numbers 7 and 8 serve as a clonal reflector.

Our heroine's encountering of the clones hence operates as a reversed 'mirror stage' of sorts. The classical Lacanian mirror stage, seen as a psychoanalytic description of the process of subject formation, moves the infant from a sensation of the fragmented body – the corps morcelé – to a recognition of an idealized, complete, and controllable image in the mirror as itself, albeit this is a false recognition. The glass present in the clonal cabinet, namely the cryotubes themselves as well as the door's window displaying the numbers 1-7, functions as a kind of mirror too. However, this clonal mirror does not entail a false recognition of the self as a whole and ideal ego that causes a complex form of self-alienation as the subject recognizes the self as other – which it is not.

Contrastingly, what this clonal mirror does, is tear apart the guise of the Ripley-clone's 'successful', human-looking corporeal construction. It shatters the sensation of being a unified embodiment, while revealing our heroine's monstrously disconnected and unorganized bodily state for what it is, through the excessive similitude with her failed clonal counterparts. Each deformed clone mirrors fragmented elements from her physique: "Recognizable traces of Ripley's hair, jawline, teeth, forehead, cheekbones, and nose are blended in the contours of the exaggerated facial features of" the overtly hybridized numbers 1-7 (Stacey 43). By moving through the clonal cabinet, Ripley recognizes these reflecting shards, and the scene's distinct shot-reverse-shot editing further sutures these fragments into her corporeality.

The recognizable similarities with the hybrid clones disclose that all parts are part of the one, and this one is multiple. When at the encounter's end Ripley comes face to face with herself, the mirroring becomes so unbearable that our heroine shatters this sp(l)itting image. This looking into the clonal mirror, this alienating facing of the self, in effect causes a true recognition of the composite-clonal self as monstrously other – which it immanently *is*. Looking at number 7, Ripley recognizes the alien within herself and tries to purge this hybrid monster's reflective surface. The

clonal mirror unveils the other within the self – this is the hybrid horror of the deformed clonal mirror. By incinerating all her monstrous mirror-images, our heroine attempts to annihilate the clonal corps morcelé that has been revealed in the mirror of the teratological fun house.

Yet, the clonal cabinet's mirror stage reverses the entire classical mirror stage, not only its effects are reversed, but also the order of its operations. Feminist scholar Moira Gatens explains in *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (1996) that during the Lacanian mirror stage "the child is able to recognize the image of the other's wholeness, the other's bodily integrity, and to anticipate this integrity as its own 'to be' before its motor competence 'justifies' such integrity, that is, before its kinaesthetic experience is integrated" (33). Gatens argues that "this account places considerable emphasis on the scopic. The child *sees* its wholeness before it *feels* its wholeness, and this seeing is actually constituent of its future identity as a distinct and whole being" (33–original emphasis). Our case study also places an unnerving emphasis on our heroine's the act(ion) of seeing.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the mirror stage's child, the Ripley-clone already seems to *feel* her scattered 'fragmented-ness' before she *sees* it. The film's quaint, spying perspectives as well as the effortlessness with which our heroine finds her preincarnations, for instance, are reflections of our heroine's omnipresent clonal perspective, which is predicated as much upon the sense of sight as it is on the senses of sound, smell, and touch. The Ripley-clone's kinaesthetic continuous corps morcelé is ubiquitously present, not only in the diegesis but also in the film's construction. This bodily and fragmented kind of expansion of our heroine's perception becomes relevant considering Gatens' claim that the purely scopic regime is a distinctly masculine form of apprehending the world around us.

Gatens advances that the "scopophilic tendency of psychoanalytic theory has been criticized by feminists who argue that there is something particularly masculine about this privileging of sight over all the other senses, such as the tactile, which, it has been suggested, is more closely aligned with the feminine" (33). Our female hybrid-clone's repeated tactile interactions with the multiple parts of her continuous corps morcelé – the tracing of her clonal tattoo, the stroking of her extraction scar, the pushing open of the clonal cabinet, the empathetical touching of the cryotubes, the grabbing of number 7's sheet – discloses an anticipation of the reveal of her disconnected, unorganized bodily state before the guise of her human-looking corporeal construction is disintegrated by the deformed clonal mirror. This feeling of her fragmented-ness is constituent of her clonal identity as a continuous yet fragmented being.

Narratively, however, within this particular configuration of the cinematic figure of the clone, there seems to be only room for one actualized cloned embodiment that encompasses a multiplicity of corporeality. So, when the two live composite clone-bodies, the successful clone-construct and the degenerate clone-body, are faced with each other, number 7 begs number 8 to kill her – in effect asking our heroine to kill the paradigmatic linkage that structures her clonal sense of self. The line "Kill me" has become an aphorism of sorts for being impregnated with a Xenomorph in the *Alien Quadrilogy*. The previous three films all featured a horrifying instance of a human pleading to be killed after a face-hugger laid its seed in their stomach. But in this film Ripley is not merely impregnated with an alien.

In all the previous iterations of the *Alien* series, the bodies of Ripley and the alien were in an autonomously separated relationship. But now their corporeality is intrinsically intertwined in a paradigmatic structure. This new paradigmatic relationship entails multiple subjectivities that are molded into a singular corporeality, which at once connotes and memorializes a multitude of

constructed bodies. By expelling her previous embodiments that reveal her relations of excessive difference within sameness, the hybrid Ripley-clone seems to defy her clonal corps morcelé: she radically dismantles this devouring paradigmatic structure that incarnates her from within her genes, for it threatens a by now fallacious syntagmatic structure that veils her humanoid surface.

Number 8, overwhelmed with emotion, incinerates all the preincarnations with a flamethrower in a fashion that is reminiscent of the inferno at the end of *Alien*^{3}. This was the memorable scene where Ripley sacrificed herself to expel the queen that resided in her body as a separate entity, a consciously courageous act which made her into a full-fledged female martyr. But this time around the alien is not merely inside her body, it is inherently part of her body as well as of her corporeal remembrance, as are the clones that overtly unveil her bodily construct. Her hybridized continuous corporeality devours her from within her very own cells, for the clonal absorption radically hacks the last pieces of her human existence away. The only way for Ripley to regain some of her former humanity is to perform a perverted act of self-sacrifice.

To keep this surface intact, she eradicates her clonal subjectivity and thus herself: "As Ripley backs out of the area, her panting connects her to Number 7, whom she had destroyed in an act that establishes her humanity through the affective connection of transgenic kinship" (Stacey 44). Yet, this inferno in *Alien: Resurrection* is not a valiant, sacrificial suicide to preserve humankind. Rather this volatile conflagration is instigated to preserve her own humanity in vain, making it an utterly self-effacing and self-destructive act. It is an act that devours her reshaped subjectivity because it is delineated as a petrifying paradigmatic relation. It is a suicidal act instead of a true act of martyrdom.

The moment the Ripley-clone comes face to face with herself in the form of unlucky number 7, in which the two clones return each other's gazes, the spectator is sutured dead smack

in the middle of this exchange of emotionally laden looks. But the entire flamethrower inferno at the scene's finale then extinguishes these suturing looks. This a sea of flames disintegrates the materiality of the preincarnations, yet their existential substance is subsequently inhaled and thus absorbed into our cloned protagonist's being. Breathing in the clones' incinerated corporeality, our Ripley incorporates her preincarnations' beings into hers.

The clonal cabinet hence functions as a mirroring, paradigmatic bodily prehistory, which in its moment of uncovering sutures together all the clonal iterations of Ripley. Even though the numbers 1-7 are destroyed, our heroine remains number 8, she is still structured as the one is multiple. As she has gone through the room, she has taken in each and every single one of her predecessors. By blasting apart these distorted shards of herself and inhaling their remains, our Ripley becomes one with all of them. As a plot event the fire concretizes that our protagonist has incorporated these other selves; she takes in the memory of them into herself and this changes who she is. Carrying them within constitutes this film's paradigmatic relation of the self, as a clonal paradigmatic absorption that consolidates the fact that the Ripley-clone is monstrously multiple.

The incorporation or absorption is a response to the horror of the deformed clonal mirror, it is a violent annihilation that also is a denial of the other self. The clonal conflagration might look like an act of mercy sprouting out of a volition to do the right and humane thing. But as we know from all films in the *Quadrilogy*, all Ripleys always annihilate aliens, that is their generic make-up. Although our heroine's genetic make-up is now infused with alien DNA, her generic urge to thwart the Xenomorph's all-consuming, incorporating powers as an agent of the archaic mother, also inhabits the Ripley-clone. Yet, ironically, committing this 'humane' act of mercy, in fact has the very same inclination as the monstrous-alien-feminine, namely 'to tear apart and reincorporate all life', admitting all clonal life in this instance.

This corporeal continuity is conducted by the notion of memory as well, albeit in a different fashion than in *Moon*. Our previous case study's clonal relationality was figured as a 'discontinuous continuity' of subjectivity, where the clones intimately shared an interlinked consciousness that was enabled through their mutual prosthetic memories. The Ripley-clone, however, is not endowed with such an interlinking prosthesis, disallowing her a direct recollection of the original Ripley's human memories. Still, our cloned protagonist does retain a recollection of her former self. But this is not a prosthetic memory in terms of Landsberg's concept (1995), rather it is a genetic memory figured as a painstakingly organic, corporeal remembrance that is ignited by this film's clonal encounter.

However, this genetic cognizance is completely alien, as it sprouts from an ancestral species memory that the Ripley-clone inherited from and shares with her monstrous alien others. This bodily recognition encompasses something I call an 'anamnesis' through the former embodiments – a re(con)figuration as well as a dismantlement of the cloned self. This anamnesis, seen as a process of radical unforgetting, engenders a 'continuous discontinuity' of the hybridized clonal embodiments. The Ripley-clone's ancestral memory of her shared genetic inheritance with the previous clones thusly does not pertain to a shared prosthetic memory per se, which can engender a continuity of consciousness. Rather this sort of transgenic clonal memory is a 'corporeal remembrance', a true anamnesis in the full sense of the word.

Anamnesis in this case connotes both its philosophical, Platonic meaning of the recollection of the Ideas that the soul had known in a previous existence as well as its biological meaning in immunology: the memory of cells when encountering a previous encountered antigen. When a corporeal remembrance seen as anamnesis is delineated as such, this kind of memory essentially operates as an 'unforgetting': a literal undoing of a process of forgetting. Ripley's

bodily memory gets rekindled and jolts an explosive absorption through its conflagration of all the preincarnations at the encounter scene's end.

The previous existence of the hybrid corporealities forcefully collides into her own embodied sense of self during this clonal conflagration. The Ripley-clone is not able to escape her new bodily identity: even if the actual preincarnations are now destroyed, her continuous corporeality continues to exist through the anamnesis of her physicality. The undoing of a process of forgetting cannot be undone. What is unforgotten remains remembered, namely that the one is multiple. We hence might state that this transgenic, hybridized figure of the cinematic clone is a gruesomely destructive and dejected one instead of a productive and vigorous one.

If we now take a step back, we can ponder the type of corporeal construction that is the cloned female hybrid. In *Alien: Resurrection*, cloning is not only a radical means to enter into an infinite, paradigmatic structure as the lemniscate – the number 8 on its side – connotes. It also entails absorbing multiplicity and radical difference into one and the same body. Stacey comes to a similar conclusion: "If the figure of the clone is generally constructed as the embodiment of a relation, as Battaglia argues, then Ripley as transgenic clone embodies not only the relation of original to copy and, simultaneously, the relation of human body to alien monster" (38). The hybrid-clone's linkage with the alien's otherness irrevocably codes the clonal corporeality as a transgenic extension of the monstrous-feminine.

Sam Bell's clonal subjectivity could be seen as a sense of self that is smeared out across different incarnations: the paradigmatic relationality as a fluid identification of 'I are the one You become'. Yet, in *Alien: Resurrection*, a sort of reversal of these subjectivity-reshaping mechanisms are set in motion. The different incarnations of the cloned self are sutured in stages during the clonal sightseeing into the embodiment of our protagonist. First, they are inscribed, then mirrored,

reflected, and echoed, to subsequently be absorbed and finally recollected and remembered through anamnesis upon and into one and the same hybridized yet continuous corporeality.

The first inscription is quite literally present in the form of our protagonist's tattoo of the ambiguous number 8, already shown during her (re)birth as a clone. Then a metaphorical inscription occurs with the number 1-7 on the door's glass which is cinematically inscribed into her eyes. While walking through the cabinet the glass cryotubes containing numbers 1-6 reflect the shards of Ripley and thereby mirror her teratological inner biology. By coming face to face with the last live clone that is most like herself, and by echoing the gasps and sighs, the monstrous mirroring is made complete and subsequently shattered by an implosive conflagration. Then by backing up through the very same space, just before the cryotubes are blasted apart, our heroine once more visually absorbs her preincarnations, and in the moment of combustion she further absorbs as she inhales the clones' incinerated materiality.

Here cloning is not only seen as excessive similitude, the hybrid-clone is also delineated as an explosive locus of excessive difference. Ripley's teratological preincarnations seen as the clonal horror of the deformed mirror forces a recognition of her corporality as simultaneously being continuous *and* fragmented. Whereas *Moon*'s continuous consciousness engendered an implosion of traditional subjectivity by stretching out the conscious awareness of the self, the continuous corporeality of *Alien: Resurrection* collapses this singular and unified embodied subjectivity by scattering it across various deviant embodiments that are at once sutured together as well. This paradigmatic absorption of the clonal corps morcelé makes this rendering of the female hybrid-clone into a clonal figure that mournfully memorializes the notion that one is inextricably multiple.

Up to now, we have considered two very distinct and contrasting cinematic clones through their paradigmatic relations of the self, as represented by the Sam Bell clones' continuous

consciousness and the hybrid Ripley-clones' continuous corporeality. These two figures can be seen as occupying the extreme ends of the cloning continuum on its paradigmatic axis, as the concepts of a continuous consciousness and a continuous corporeality are two different dynamics of the same paradigmatic relationality: a nimble nexus that simultaneously expands and compresses the notions of space and time, and the categories of self and other. But this dissertation' philosophical thought experiment on close encounters of cinematic clones should encompass more than sketching out a mere dichotomy.

Therefore, this binary is balanced out with the analysis of a third, yet again quite different clonal figure. *Moon* and *Alien: Resurrection* both embrace the paradigmatic structure of clonal identity into the cinematic languages they each deploy, although they differ greatly in their respective productive and destructive conceptualizations of the clonal sense of self. Yet, the film we turn to in our next chapter, *The 6th Day*, tries to restore a more conventional, syntagmatic conception of subjectivity by portraying the practice of cloning as an ostensibly simple continuation of what I call life's sentence or the syntax of existence.

Chapter 3: *The 6th Day*'s Multiple Denials of the Other Self

Containing the Clonal Mitosis

"God created man in His own image, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. GENESIS*1.27,31*". These words are the first thing we see as our current case-study *The 6th Day* (Spottiswoode, 2000) commences. With this abbreviated biblical quote, at once serving as an explication for its title, the film immediately evokes a religiose, moralizing comparison between the act of cloning humans and God's creation of 'Man'. Next, the film's title sequence recapitulates human cloning's legislative and technical advancements. When this intro ends, the film situates itself "In the near future, sooner than you think".

This phrase's ominous and direct temporal positioning evokes a feeling of imminence in the spectator. The intro's statements and visualizations straightforwardly allude to human cloning's supposedly real prospect, not only in the diegetic world that is about to unfold, but also in our own contemporary daily reality.[19] How the intro's graphics are rendered also coaxes the spectator into an anxious state of moral uneasiness. The Genesis quote's words, eliciting a reading between the lines (humans should not be playing God), are abruptly erased by a graphic transition that consists of multiple computer cursors, executing the command of backspacing the letters on screen.

Instantaneously, after the quote is deleted, a heap of deviant and radical cells breaks through the last pulsating cursor on screen and spreads like wildfire as it takes over the entire frame, resembling a virus multiplying through a fractalizing pattern. The divine genesis of Man is digitally erased, and in its place appears a clonal cellular structure. Next, a vertical wipe swoops over the screen from left to right, commencing an overview of the current state of cloning-affairs through

[19] The film's story "was originally set 20 to 30 years in the future", but as during its pre-production "more and more cloning-related stories made headlines in the media", director Spottiswoode decided that *The 6th Day* should only be set about five years in the future (DVD extra).

fragments of science reports and news coverage, which are intercut with more imagery of the deviant cells. A sheep named Dolly was cloned, the Human Genome Project has been completed, anti-cloning protests have taken place, the human cloning experiment failed, and the court ordered the clone to be destroyed, after which the sixth day law was passed: human cloning is banned.

While this last statement is explicitly communicated by the words on screen, the parallel editing, concurrently showing visuals of deviant cells running amok, implies that humans nonetheless are readily being cloned. The image that is evoked after this cloning history lesson, as the title itself is shown, poignantly emits a specific yet paradoxical discourse on human cloning. The fragile sacredness of human life dependent on mortality for its existence, here envisioned by an embryonic fetus, is utterly endangered by the frantic mitosis of the aberrant cloned cells lurking beneath its womb (fig.3.1). The sixth day law, which should safeguard that the (re)creation of human life is reserved for 'His' hands only, has been violated by artificially copying 'His' design.

Figure 3.1: The credits for *The 6th Day*'s film title (TC:00:01:43).

Yet, the cloned embryonic fetus (seemingly threatened by the mitosis) can at once be seen as restraining the volatile, multitudinous cellular division. The title-image's frame is spliced exactly down the middle on a horizontal axis. The superjacent fetus, shown in the split-screen's top half, is considerably heftier in size in comparison to the subordinate conglomerate of kinetic

cloned cells that are relegated to the lower part of the frame. The spatial arrangement of the individuated fetus projecting itself from a top-down position onto the motley of multiplying cells is telling with respect to the discursive message that is relayed by this striking image. It could have been the reverse, that the threatened fetus lies helpless below the rampant march of the multiplicity of clonal cells. But this does not seem to be the case in *The 6th Day*.

The cloned cells' grass-root nature, potentially fostering a disruptive paradigmatic structure, needs to be contained by a conservative singular structure, protruding from a superior status. The title-image thus presents us with two types of cloning: the correct, individuated, singular, life-extending version on top in the form of the cloned fetus and the incorrect, multifarious, deviant, subject-annihilating variant below. Two examples of the figure of the clone's intricate multiplicity were given in my first two chapters, through *Moon*'s continuous consciousness and *Alien: Resurrection*'s continuous corporeality. Both films embraced the novel paradigmatic depth structures of clonal identity, integrating it into the cinematic languages they each deployed. But the cloned protagonist we encounter in this chapter assumes merely a duality, as *The 6th Day* envisions its clones only as a duo: the clone and his original.

This sci-fi action film shies away from letting its clones engage with each other in a profound manner. The clone and his original only meet each other in the finale, when well over two-thirds of the film's screen-time has passed, as they team up to save the world, their family and themselves. As soon as this task is completed, they part ways, and the film ends. Whereas *Alien: Resurrection* incited a transformative dismantlement of the other self and *Moon* proposed a productive remarriage of the other self, now our current case-study cultivates a problematic denial of the other self. In the following section we will explicate the three levels in which this denial of the film's 'clonality' occurs.

Three Kinds of Denials of the Other Self: Conceptually, Diegetically, and Narratively Concealing *The 6th Day*'s Clonality

Figuring its cloned protagonist not as multiple but only as a 'double' constitutes the first level in which *The 6th Day* cultivates a problematic denial of the other self. Simultaneously, our case-study recasts a salient light on the notion of the *syntagmatic* in relation to the concepts of cloned embodiment, consciousness, and memory. This film namely tries to restore a more conventional form of subjectivity by portraying the practice of cloning as a 'simple' continuation of life's sentence or the syntax of existence. This reductive effort ties into the second level in which this cloning film represses its clonality.

The previous two chapters have shown that the potentially endless *paradigmatic* clonal relationship smears subjectivity out to the point where we no longer can constitute this self as unified and unique. This protraction of the self occurs on a vertical axis that is associative rather than logical or causal, as it taps into the notion of parallel seriality seen as repeating and supplementing alternatives of the same. Yet, *The 6th Day*'s clonal sense of self comprises a certain syntagmatic integrity that in a problematic way adheres to a traditional notion of subjecthood.

In our current case-study we encounter a kind of 'textbook' delineation of the clone. *The 6th Day*'s relation of self to self is predicated upon a linear succession, seen as new generations elaborating upon former ones, by generating a clonal logic of singular substitution. The status quo of the configuration of cloning is depicted as a successive and diachronic pattern, as the name *Replacement Technologies* connotes, the company which executes the process of genetic engineering and cloning. Ideally in this film's diegetic world, one clone replaces the other when the former incarnation perishes.

The prospect of cloning in general engenders a promise for eternal life as the cloned individual can hypothetically be multiplied ad infinitum. *The 6th Day* takes up this aspect of cloning

in a viciously visceral fashion. Its cloned embodiments become painstakingly and extensively more expendable over the course of the story, while the subject's cloned consciousness is horizontally protracted across these disposable cloned bodies. Cloning is presented as a method for escaping death, understood as the final ending to the syntagmatic course of life: when you die, you get cloned, you continue to live on as the syntax to your existence is prolonged. Or, as the film's evil antagonist Drucker dramatically states: "We will finally be able to *conquer* death".

Through cloning death is defeated, or better yet, deferred – a radical refashioning of what it means to be human. Yet, the horizontal structure on which traditional human subjectivity is based, is merely extended by the practice of human cloning seen as a logic of singular substitution. Because the body is cloned and the latest 'syncord' is uploaded into the cloned embodiment, death does not form the final period anymore; it only entails a momentary comma. Hence the consecutive clone continues the linear accretion of memories and experiences of the anterior embodiment.

The 6th Day presents us with an interesting ideological negation of cloning's paradigmatic potential. By diegetically prohibiting its clones to multiply – as only *one* cloned embodiment is supposed to be alive at once and so-called 'synchronous clones' should not exist – this film renders a clonal sense of self that remains radically and utterly Cartesian. First of all, this Cartesian rendering speaks from *The 6th Day* centering on mind over body, in which the latter is rendered as a disposable vessel. Secondly, it speaks from the fact that in these clones the syntagmatic logic of selfhood is still adhered to by presenting them as singular, embodied subjectivities unified through the act of conscious awareness of the self.

Simultaneously, this film's representation of cloning advances problematic forms of body/mind relations through its conceptualization of syncording. This is the film's 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg, 1995) variant, and it raises interesting questions pertaining to the syncord's

validity for forming as well as maintaining the same identity through the different, subsequent clones. While the human life span is continuously elongated by protracting life's sentence through cloning, this film concurrently portrays clonal memory as a discontinuous and transitory piece of easily delete-able data.

The ideological negation of cloning's paradigmatic potential constitutes the second level in which *The 6th Day* cultivates a problematic denial of the other self. Instead of opening up the paradigmatic dimensions of clonal subjecthood and letting subjectivity flow freely across multiple embodiments who share an interlinked consciousness in which the self can supplement the self, our case-study advances a stark clonal logic of singular substitution. The self should remain the same singular self, even though its embodiment has been cloned. This is the diegetic constraint that *The 6th Day* forces upon this film's clonal encounter. However, the event that disrupts the status quo of this generic action movie and sets its three-act structure in motion is the fact that protagonist Adam Gibson (Arnold Schwarzenegger) accidentally gets cloned while his original is still alive. This is the event that brings *The 6th Day* into this dissertation's purview.

Adam's encounter with himself remains generically propelled by the film's Hollywood plotline and refrains itself from inherently problematizing the intricate cloning relation of self to self. Or at least, this seems to be the case on a first inspection of *The 6th Day*'s clonal encounter. Nevertheless, the clonal close encounter commonly does force an anxious confrontation with an other who, by virtue of being a clone, presents an excessive threat to a comfortable notion of individuality. Adam does encounter his own self on multiple occasions; therefore, I wonder what we might learn from Adam's generic yet spectacularized clonal confrontation? How can we read the fact that the uncanniness of Adam's clonal encounter seems to be kept to an entertaining

minimum? Might the film's cinematic discourse be at odds with, or even undercut, the ideological terms of its own diegesis?

Although *The 6th Day* amounts to a genre flick, which in this case serves as an action-oriented Schwarzenegger-vehicle, the plot itself and its particular 'genetic imaginary' are rather intricate. The diegesis is riddled with subjectivities that do not comprise the traditional Cartesian sense of self. Next to clones, so-called Sim-Pals (life-like dolls that are programmed to be children's playmates), holograms of attorneys, girlfriends and psychotherapists populate the narrative. *The 6th Day* invokes multiple forms of duplication, simulation, replication, and reproduction of human subjectivity at once. Yet, all these other artificial beings are simulated by digital and/or synthetic means. Only the clone is reproduced by biotechnological means, through genetic duplication.

Conceptually, by conjuring up a myriad of simulated selves while denying the clone to be multiple, *The 6th Day* obfuscates its clonality. Perhaps the film's multiple replication problematics are fueled by its refusal of a clonal logic of supplementing multiplicity in favor of the simple substitute, however muddled its envisioning might be. Additionally, this idiosyncratic representation of artificial life is further complicated by the film's recounting of its story. The presentation of the dense story information to its viewers is highly convoluted, since the majority of the narration is restricted to the film's hero, who is unknowingly cloned and whose memory gets tampered with in the process.

Adam Gibson, a loving husband and father who owns an adventure-charter business, is supposed to fly an important client, Michael Drucker (Tony Goldwyn), and his crew in a helicopter to their snowboarding getaway. But the sudden death of the family pet, a dog named Oliver, upsets the planned sequence of events. Adam's wife Natalie summons him to go to the *RePet* company

immediately to get their favorite canine replaced before their daughter Clara ever knows Oliver died. At first Adam tries to protest the cloning of their dog. He tells his wife: “Oliver can live on in our memories. It’s the natural process of life. You’re born, you live, and you die. She has to learn about that someday”. But there is no arguing with Mrs. Gibson and Adam is forced to take a look at the cloning store.

Adam’s partner Hank hence takes his place as pilot for the illustrious billionaire businessman Drucker, a man who owns popular sports teams as well as two genetic engineering companies. The RePet company, specializing in the legalized cloning of domestic animals, serves as a benign front for Replacement Technologies. This latter company openly deals in cloned organ transplants, which is a life extending medical practice that is allowed according to the sixth day law. This titular law prohibits and even criminalizes the cloning of human beings. Regardless, Replacement Technologies secretly endeavors in the practice of cloning entire humans.

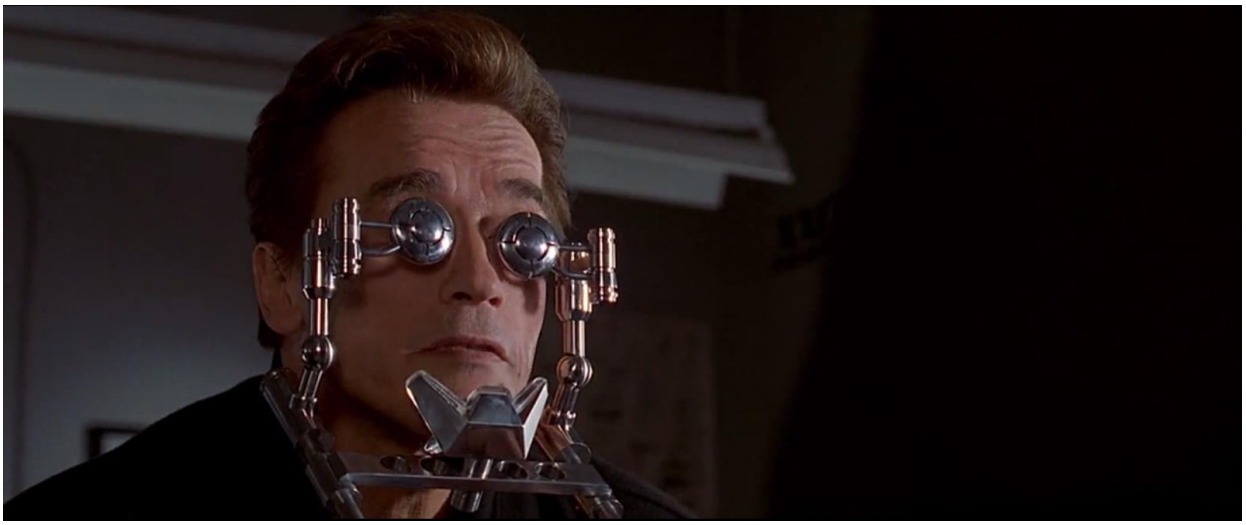

Figure 3.2: Adam’s memory gets extracted through the process of ‘syncording’ (TC:00:15:22).

Drucker’s office, however, is not informed of the last-minute replacement between Hank and our protagonist. As Adam already took the mandatory ‘drug test’ before being hired as Drucker’s pilot, the two colleagues decided that it would be too much of a hassle to repeat this test for Hank. Hence both men agree that Hank should take Adam’s place in the chopper. The drug test

consisted of donating a sample of blood and included an alleged eye test (fig.3.2). In actuality these tests amount to the ingredients necessary for cloning a human being: a piece of DNA and a syncord.

A syncord is described in the film as an 'exact picture of your mind'. The eyes function as the gateway to the brain and accordingly to all of its stored memories. Extracted syncordings can be downloaded into so-called 'blanks', the raw biological materials needed for growing a clone. Hence the genetic subject's identity is cloned too, by giving it the original's or previous clone's memory. The syncord itself, which is stored on a disk-like looking object, is a transient and temporal snapshot of the previous embodiment's memory; it only records the memories that are stored at the exact time of the syncording. The memories of the lived experiences that follow are not included. The syncord needs to be updated regularly if one wants its subsequent clone to remain part of the same syntax of existence.

After Adam and Hank agreed to switch places, a succinct and chaotic sequence follows, which comprises an ambiguous flashback or memory, played in fast-forward. The fragmentary images show Hank, impersonating Adam, arriving with Drucker at the snowboard piste. Suddenly a deranged man, who will turn out to be an anti-cloning activist, draws a gun. The audience is left to guess what happens when a point-of-view shot of the weapon firing gets dissolved into a visual of aberrant cells scattering across a black screen, evoking the clonal cells of the film's title sequence. Then we see Adam waking up in a cab at the RePet store, highly disoriented. Later, the audience and Adam himself realize that our hero in this very instance has been cloned.

What unfolds next is a dazzling action spectacle where Adam tries to return to his family and get rid of Drucker. This evil mastermind not only cloned Adam, but also himself several times along with various others as he utilizes the technology of cloning to gain wealth, while exercising power and control. Taking the 'drug tests' is standard procedure for anyone who works with

Drucker. In case he would die, he is able to clone himself and all who died with him, so that his illegal cloning business remains hidden.[20] Yet, he also clones football players, politicians, and other high-placed people, with congenital defects build into the cloned DNA. These people will die of the flaws in their genetic code in a few years. By giving them shorter lifespans, they keep coming back to Drucker to continue their life's sentence. If they betray Drucker, they are dead.

Adam is hence unintentionally part of a large-scale conspiracy to cover up Drucker's extensive implementation of the banned practice of human cloning. Our protagonist is initially unaware of all these twists and turns that pervade *The 6th Day*, which complicates matters even further when it comes to piecing together this narrative puzzle, especially since the film's narration is mostly restricted to the main character. The most pivotal piece of plot information gets revealed to the spectator and to our protagonist himself in the film's final stage. It is the moment we are told that the hero we have been following and identifying with for the film's duration, turns out to be the *clone* instead of the original.

This is a true plot twist that casts the entire film up to that point into a different light, as the spectator's allegiance is retroactively relegated to the clone. When Drucker tells Adam he is not the original, but the clone, he in fact is professing to the audience that this film's hero is not the human original but his cloned duplicate. While diegetically the existence of synchronous clones (who might enter into a paradigmatic relation with each other) is seen as aberrant, *The 6th Day*'s narrative structure seems to praise the clone by featuring it as its true hero.

Furthermore, all the heavy lifting is performed by the clone, who is more perceptive and action-ready than the original, and thus more heroic. The original only has an assisting role, as

[20] This is what happens after Drucker, his crew and Hank get killed on the piste: they all are resurrected by cloning them. But as Hank impersonated Adam in this instance, they clone the wrong person, resulting in two synchronous Adams. This wrong must be set right, by killing the cloned Adam, but also by – after the fact – still cloning Hank to revivify him so no-one would know of Drucker's assassination.

mere helpmate, in saving their family and vanquishing Drucker. Cloned Adam turns out to be the real main character, and original Adam's performance is rendered as a minor, supporting character. Yet, how it is revealed to the audience that the clone is the hero instead of the original, by means of tricking us into forming allegiance with the clone retroactively, shows that the filmic text itself tries to hide the clonality of this cloning film. This last obfuscation of the film's clonality, by mediating it through narrative sleight of hand, constitutes the third level in which *The 6th Day* cultivates a problematic denial of the other self.

Our case-study propagates its clonal denial on at least three different levels. Narratively by outing the hero as clone after three-quarters of the film has passed and hence duping the audience post factum into an identification with the clone. Diegetically by prohibiting synchronous clones to exist within the world of the film in order to prolong the syntax of existence and denying the clone its synchronous paradigmatic potential. And conceptually by representing the cloned protagonists only as an uncomplicated duo consisting of one clone and one original among a host of simulated subjectivities. Furthermore, both the insistence on and the ambiguity of who is the clone and who is the original throughout the film emphasizes the asymmetry of this clonal duo.

But despite the fact that this film's denial of the other self is rather intricate and multilayered, *The 6th Day*'s cinematic language should be read according to the conventional rules that govern this type of text: a generic Hollywood action movie. In this sense, the filmic techniques that are deployed to entice a certain kind of signifying effect in its spectators are not always as subtle. For example, the way in which our protagonist, who is about to be cloned, is introduced to us signals the theme of the film very explicitly. One could even say the film lays it on too thick.

The scene begins with an over-the-shoulder shot of Adam, who extensively examines his own reflection in the mirror, while saying: "Do I look any different to you?" (fig.3.3). Seen from a

diegetic level in the narrative, this introduction makes sense. Adam asks his wife this question on the morning of his birthday as he looks for additional wrinkles which tell his age. But if we discern this instance at the level of the filmic text itself, this scene rather bluntly introduces the theme of cloning by way of framing its protagonist in the duplicating mirror and contrasting this with the question of difference. Although the spectator's first encounter with our hero is not quite nuanced, I do wonder if Adam's encounter with himself yields relevant insights.

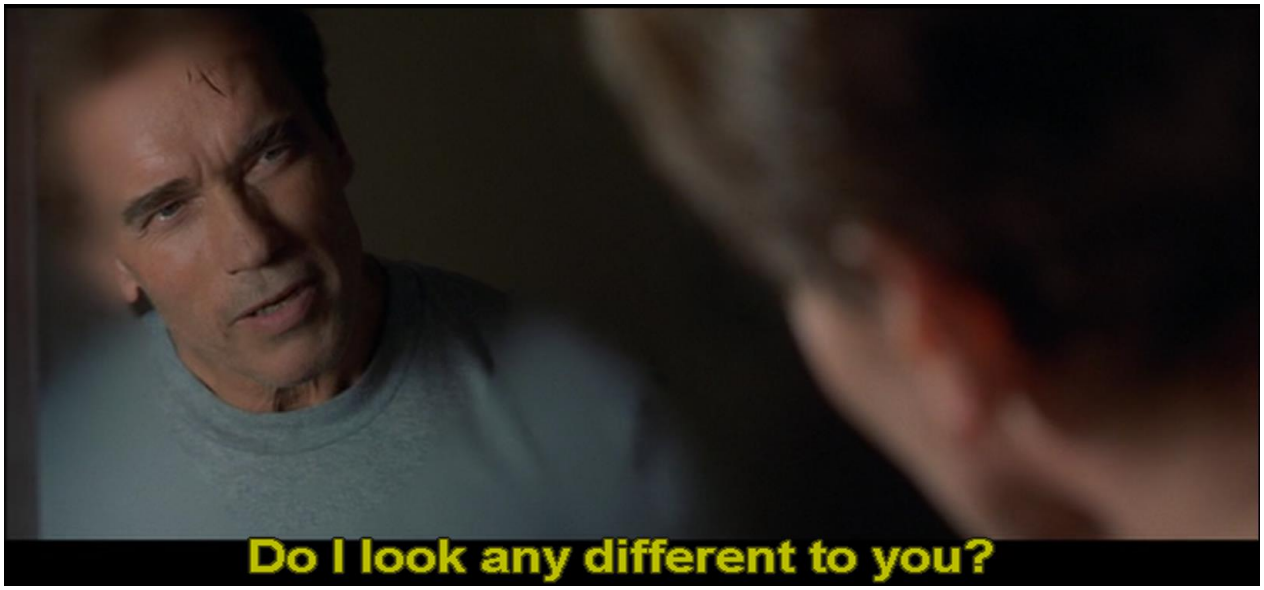

Figure 3.3: First moment the spectator encounters protagonist Adam Gibson (TC:00:04:22).

Does this film still complicate notions of clonal embodiment, memory, and subjectivity in pertinent, but perhaps tangled and therefore confusing ways? If *The 6th Day*, especially on the level of its diegesis, but also in the construction of the film as a whole, conspicuously conceals or obfuscates this cloning film's clonality on three distinct levels, then what are the ideological, political, ontological and aesthetic repercussions of this remarkable obscuration of the clone's multiplicity? Yet, as our case-study cloaks its clonality so ostentatiously, we need another strategy to unearth this film's structures of the clonal relation of self to self. As we will see in the following section, this alternative strategy also saliently consists of three kinds of levels.

Adam's Clonal Close Encounters of the Third Kind

It is fruitful to examine *The 6th Day*'s clonal encounter in relation to a similar phenomenon in the science fiction genre, and more specifically in the 'alien invader' sub-genre.[21] This sort of narrative trope has been pervasively present since the beginning of the genre, and also deals with a spectacularized encounter: so-called 'first contact' scenes. Most (sub)genres have a specific set of traits or tropes that mark the respective genres in significant ways. Examples of these almost archetypal scenes are the 'showdown' in the western or the 'resurrection' of the serial killer in slasher-horrors. In the sci-fi genre the first encounter with the alien other is such a hallmark narrative device.

Typically, genre films are discerned as barometers of our times, but sci-fi movies can especially be read as metaphoric mirrors of ourselves, sometimes through a crystallization, other times through a distortion of a certain condition. The sci-fi genre has long been recognized as a narrative form that is particularly apt for allowing philosophical ideas to roam freely through the fictional simulations it creates. "Even films meant as pure entertainment can position audiences to reflect on existential questions rarely encountered elsewhere" (Eberl 27). Sci-fi films customarily pose 'what if scenarios' that find their roots in the fears and anxieties present in a particular society and extrapolate them through the fantastical simulations they produce. The generic text of *The 6th Day* decidedly features a distorted, confusing simulation of clonal subjecthood, which touches upon existential questions pertaining to the (im)mortality of (post)human embodiments in particular.

[21] The alien invader sub-genre counts as one of the first instances of clones in cinema. Before the 1970s almost no audiovisual representations of cloning exist. As mentioned in my introduction, an early, famous example of cinematic figures that can be read as clones is *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956). This film's 'pod people' (identical looking impostors) are designated by the plot as plant-like aliens who invade the earth. In this sense, this film has more kinship with alien-invader narratives than with narratives involving cloning, especially if one takes genetic engineering as a characterizing feature. Yet, it is worth mentioning this film as it forms an essential reference for visualizations of clones, while it interconnects the alien encounter with the clonal encounter.

The cinematic trope of encountering one's own self in the form of a clone in general shares a kinship with the way in which the sci-fi genre has figured its multiple encounters with alien others. The clonal encounter of self and self can be discerned as a distant (or perhaps as an eerily close) relative of the alien encounter. But instead of encountering the extreme otherness of the alien, the clonal encounter is reconfigured as facing the extreme sameness, similarity or similitude of the self. Despite the apparent reversal in the categories marking both these extraordinary encounters, from other to self, the structures underlying the alien encounter can bring illuminating insights with respect to clonal close encounters.

In fact, since the encounter with one's own clone can be said to stage a 'facing of yourself as other' (or visa versa, facing another which turns out to be yourself), the dual notions of self and other seem to conflate to a point beyond recognition. So, in effect, the encounter with the alien other is not so different from an encounter with the cloned self. Moreover, in her article "Postfuturism" (2000) science fiction film scholar Vivian Sobchack points towards an important shift, especially from the 1950s and 1960s onward, in the sci-fi genre's representation of 'otherness' in relation to the human self.

Sobchack argues that "in a culture where nearly everyone is regularly alienated from a direct sense of self (lived experience commonly mediated by an electronic technology that dominates both the domestic sphere and the "private" or "personal" realm of the Unconscious), when everyone is less conscious of existence than of its image, the once threatening SF "alien" and Other become our familiars – our close relations, if not ourselves" (136). She then makes a distinction in contemporary SF film with regards to two different strategies of 'assimilating' the alien other into the human self, utilized by what she calls 'postmodern marginal SF films' and 'conservative mainstream SF films' respectively.

The latter maintains "'difference" and 'otherness' in the name of homogeneity" and embraces "the alien as an other who is like us" (Sobchack 137). The former more radically maintains "'difference" and 'otherness' in the name of heterogeneity" and erases "alienation by articulating it as a universal condition in which we are aliens and aliens are us" (137). The way this distinction functions and what its symbolic and cultural implications entail, will be addressed in this chapter's final section. First, we highlight another reason why the comparison to the encounter with the alien other yields interesting insights in relation to our current case-study's clonal confrontation. How the Adams encounter each other occurs in three distinct stages.

In each stage cloned Adam gets closer and closer to his actual encounter with his original self. These three stages evoke a famous example of a first contact movie: Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). Especially the film-title's origins are of interest. The name 'close encounter' stems from a classification system invented by astronomer and UFO researcher J. Allen Hynek. In an attempt to bring scientific rigor to the field of ufology, Hynek published *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry* (1972), in which he devised a classification system for UFO sightings and possible alien encounters. In order to reduce misidentification, Hynek claimed that a supposed close encounter (defined as an event where a person witnesses an unidentified flying object) needs to occur in rather close physical proximity.

A 'close encounter of the *first* kind' entails a 'visual sighting' within at least 500 ft. or 150 meters (Hynek 115). A 'close encounter of the *second* kind' involves an occurrence in which a 'physical effect' is alleged (144). The 'closest' encounter possible on the Hynek scale is a 'close encounter of the *third* kind'. This encounter does not only entail a sighting or a trace of an unidentified flying object but counts as an actual instance of first contact with the alien other. For close encounters of the third kind involve UFO encounters in which an 'animated entity' is present

(177). In the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* the various stages of Hynek's scale are emulated to tell the tale of a man becoming obsessed with encountering the aliens that have ventured to earth and making first contact with them.

If we scrutinize the three phases in which cloned Adam meets the original Adam, we notice that these phases are quite similar to the three different encounters described by Hynek's scale. Adam's encounter of the first kind constitutes only a sighting of his other self, as he beholds this disturbing scene from his house's exterior. It is the moment Adam finds out that he is cloned, and it occurs when he comes back home after visiting the RePet store. As it is his birthday and Hank earlier accidentally gave away that his wife is throwing him a surprise party that evening, Adam is expecting a surprise. Yet, the surprise that befalls him is something he could not have fathomed: he encounters his own self, blowing out the candles before he himself has arrived at his own party.

The scene begins as Adam steps out of a cab. Although his wife ordered him to have their dog cloned, Adam decided to get Clara the Sim-Pal she so desperately wanted. As he walks through the dark front yard, he rehearses what he will say to Clara to explain that Oliver died. The wind hauntingly rustles through the trees, while we see Adam's warm breath condense in the cold air as their house appears in the background, heightening the feeling that something uncanny is about to take place. All of a sudden, we hear a dog barking. The camera cuts to a shot of the cloned dog rushing to the yard's fence. A suspenseful soundtrack starts as we cut back and forth between the front door and close-ups of Adam, first looking shocked and then shaking his head, uttering the word "Natalie" in dismay.

As viewers we feel a sense of relief that we found the apparent source of the eerie air enveloping this scene: Oliver's unexpected resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless, the suspenseful soundtrack unflaggingly continues as Adam climbs the front porch's stairs. Suddenly

we hear people in the house singing “happy birthday, dear Adam”. The soundtrack surges to a climax as we see a baffled Adam approaching the living room window’s exterior. When the guests stop singing, they start the birthday-cake countdown off-screen. At the count of three, the camera abruptly cuts to a point-of-view-shot from Adam’s perspective, seeing *another* Adam blowing out the candles. The camera then cuts back to an elaborate tracking-shot hurdling quickly towards a perplexed Adam standing outside looking in.

The camera subsequently cuts to another perceptual and subjective POV, showing ‘outside’ Adam looking at ‘inside’ Adam, while the image speed decreases to slow-motion, and the party sounds get increasingly warped. Then we see a brief shot of another Sim-Pal sitting at the table, implying that the other Adam already gave this present to Clara. Appalled, we hear Adam whispering “Oh my God”. The camera gets sucked into Adam’s eye, displaying jumbled images in fast motion of his daughter and wife laughing and celebrating the other Adam’s birthday, while a creepy carnivalesque score augments this disconcerting scene. The camera then pans from inside Adam, shot from the outside, to the frame’s right side, first revealing outside Adam’s reflection in the window before settling upon his actual face.

This take is an unofficial first two-shot of the Adams, as it consists of one (seemingly) continuous motion where both Adams are present, while it echoes Adam’s introductory scene which juxtaposed the question of difference with a duplicating mirror (fig.3.4). After the pan another mishmash of fragmentary images of Clara, Natalie and other Adam is instigated, alternating between fast- and slow-motion, relaying the almost psychotic sensation that overwhelms our Adam in this instance. But Adam does not get any breathing room to process what happened, as two of Drucker’s goons, Talia and Vincent, immediately appear after this first clonal encounter.

Figure 3.4: First shot in which both Adams are shown together (TC:00:23:53).

Talia tells Adam: “There has been a sixth day violation. A human was cloned. That human was you”. Vincent adds: “We can help you. But you’ll have to come with us.” Adam does not trust these two one bit and tries to enter his house. Then Talia tasers Adam. As he falls down the porch’s stairs, a third iteration of contorted imagery of his family is intercut with Adam tumbling down the stairs in slow-motion, while the carnivalesque score recommences. As the goons drag an unconscious Adam to the street, a final reverse-shot of his other self inside the house is displayed.

The scene up to this point counts as a close encounter of the first kind on Hynek’s scale. Adam is close enough to establish with unquestionable certainty that he has witnessed his other self, yet his other self has not seen him, nor have the two men interacted with each other yet. Our hero, however, was not unconscious. He fights off his attackers and manages to escape, by stealing his own car from the garage. What follows is the film’s first of many more high-speed chases, in which Adam evades Drucker’s goons as well as the police with an overabundance of violent and elaborate action, as we have become accustomed to seeing in Schwarzenegger movies.

Adam’s second encounter with himself takes place shortly after this first elaborate chase, after Adam was able to get to his recently revivified business partner Hank. In the scene directly

prior to the second encounter Adam explains the deadly clonal predicament he is in and asks his by now cloned best friend for help. The scene of the second encounter starts when we cut to an establishing shot of Adam's house. Adam and Hank hide in the bushes to keep out of sight for the other Adam, who is working in his garage with his carpeting supplies. Then 'our' Adam pulls out a gun which he intends to use on other Adam in an attempt to 'take back' his life.

Hank is startled and asks: "Are you going to kill him?" "Why not? He's not real. Plus, there's no law against it", Adam says in response. Hank tries to dispute the killing of what they now still believe is the clone: "But look at him. He looks just like you. Technically, this could be committing suicide." Adam adds: "But he is not me, he is not even human." As Hank inspects other Adam, he suddenly starts to question who the 'real' Adam is: "Wait a minute. How do I know he's not you and you're not him? Look at him, he's even a shitty carpenter." Adam next shows Hank the shaving cut he made that morning. Both men believe this physical mark is enough proof to reason that the Adam currently standing before Hank is the original, and that the clone is the one they are presently observing from a distance, as Adam is sure that he was not cloned yet that same morning.

It is remarkable that Hank utilizes a double negative here to address Adam's ambiguous status as either clone or original. In a way both Adams, the clone and his original, are not Adam Gibson anymore. Or at least not the Adam that existed before he was cloned. That Adam ceased to exist the moment his identity was spliced down the middle into the dual Adam Gibsons that are standing before each other in this scene.[22] Then, other Adam approaches the shrubbery the colleagues are hiding in. This is taken by our Adam as the cue to move in. But as Adam points the

[22] The name Adam does not only refer to the biblical Adam, who was the first man created by God, but paradoxically in the context of this cloning film, the name Adam also shares an etymological root with the word 'atom', meaning 'indivisible' in Ancient Greek.

gun at other Adam from behind, who is crouched over to pick up carpeting supplies, he realizes that he cannot kill himself.

Figure 3.5: First actual two-shot of the Adams during the second close encounter (TC:00:48:32).

These shots amount to the first official two-shots of the Adams (fig.3.5), as both men are clearly visible in one and the same frame and are occupying the same diegetic space, as opposed to the Adams' first unofficial two-shot. It is striking that this first visual rendering of the doubled protagonist is permeated with violence. Adam's primal reaction to his duplicate is to kill him, to even out the anomaly that uproots his universe. Yet, for some reason his urge is thwarted. It cannot be that family man Adam is unable to take another breathing being's life, as he relentlessly killed some of Drucker's goons in the previous chase. It must be that Adam intuitively feels a certain profound connection to his dead ringer.

Other Adam returns none the wiser to the garage, without having seen our Adam pointing the gun at him. Next Natalie comes walking in, treating her husband to illegal cigars and romantic alone-time. When they enter the garage, Clara appears in front of our Adam. She asks him to tuck her back into bed, as she's had a bad dream. Adam takes his daughter into the house, while Hank waits outside and witnesses Natalie and other Adam having an intimate moment. As our Adam

kisses his daughter goodnight, she asks him if Oliver died. “Is he a RePet?” Clara inquires, since other Adam had locked him outside earlier. Our Adam apologizes for this: “Oh, I am so sorry, but I haven’t been myself lately.”

Suddenly an unknown car arrives at the house, but other Adam is too engaged with his wife to notice this. Our Adam does notice. He opens the door and threateningly waives around a golf-club, as he finds two of Drucker’s goons, Marshall and Talia, imposing as *Millennium Security* officers. Oliver then rushes to the door as well and starts barking loudly at the ‘officers’. Adam contains the dog and says: “I’m so sorry but he is a RePet. He used to be a really good watchdog. Now he lets my car get stolen and barks at security guards. I *hate* clones.” By saying this and making some other excuses, Adam has convinced the goons sufficiently that the ‘clone’ is not at the house, and they leave.

Meanwhile, the continued barking has alerted other Adam. He heads to the house to see what all the noise is about. As the goons walk down the porch’s stairs, other Adam enters through the back door. Adam and Hank are again forced to hide to remain unseen by the other Adam. Now they hide behind the living room couch, that sits in front of the same window through which Adam previously witnessed his other self for the first time. Oliver stands on top of the couch and together with other Adam they look outside to see what is going on. Oliver barks, but as there appears to be no threat, other Adam pulls the dog off the couch and says: “Gee, you’re glitchy today.”

This entire scene is riddled with a certain form of wordplay present in the dialogues, referring to our hero’s ambiguous duplicated nature. “I haven’t been myself lately” and “I *hate* clones” are the most ostentatious illustrations of this kind of pun. This double entendre’s prime example, however, is the phrase “You had me cloned”, which Adam utters in a later scene when he encounters Dr. Weir (Robert Duval), the medical expert who developed Drucker’s cloning

procedure. Semantically this phrase works both ways. It can refer to the fact that original Adam at this instance is stating a clone has been made from his own cells. This utterance could, on the other hand, also reveal the fact that it is the clone who is speaking. The latter conclusion is the correct one, although at that point Adam and the audience still believe that it is he who is the original.

"Gee, you're glitchy today" is another example of these double entendre cloning-puns that pervade the film throughout. As other Adam does not know he has been cloned, he looks down on the cloned abomination that he thinks his dog is.[23] But the cloned canine is not glitchy at all. In fact, Oliver is spot on about the peril that lurked outside. The dog in this close encounter of the second kind deflects other Adam's attention, assuring that our Adam and Hank remain hidden. But the dog's barking not only conceals our Adam's presence from other Adam, it at once constitutes the physical effect that is alleged to be present in Hynek's close encounter of the second kind.

If the dog had not barked so loud, other Adam would have found our Adam. But the fact that the dog barked at all signaled other Adam to come into close physical proximity with our Adam. As soon as other Adam leaves, Oliver runs to greet our Adam, who pets the dog and says: "Good Oliver. That was a bad idea". Hank then utters: "We can't just leave them here with it… that, that *thing*?", as the camera briefly cuts to the other Adam eagerly rushing out to the garage to continue his entre nous with his wife. Our Adam explains to Hank: "Those were the guys that were trying to kill me. It's dangerous for Natalie and Clara if I hang around." The friends then leave and the second clonal encounter ends.

[23] In a prior scene, when cloned Adam 'first' (as his original has already been there before him) visits the RePet store, he expresses his anxieties about the 'freaks of nature' that he calls clones. He tells the salesman: "Suppose the clones do not have a soul or that they are dangerous?" (TC:00:20:04) . After Adam discovers he is cloned, he continues to struggle with clones' potential lack of a soul. In the Adams' final scene together, they muse over the fact that cloned Adam does have a soul as he fought 'just as hard' to save his family.

Adam's encounter of the third kind, which is the first actual contact between the clone and his original, is remarkably short in duration, lasting not even a full minute. Some minutes before, Clara and Natalie had been kidnapped by Drucker's goons. As other Adam finds out his family is missing and tries to call the police, our Adam is readily on his way to Clara's school from which they were taken. Our Adam rushes in and says: "Forget about talking to the police, I tried that already." As the image speed decreases, other Adam utters: "Who the hell are you?" Our Adam responds: "I know this sounds insane, but I am Adam Gibson." Astounded, other Adam can only say: "What?!" Our Adam interjects: "We don't have enough time right now for you to be shocked, because they've got Natalie and Clara and I need *your* help to get *my* family back."

Figure 3.6: Clonal first contact: Adam's close encounter of the third kind (TC:01:18:27).

Appalled, other Adam forcefully utters: "They're *my* family!" This enrages our Adam so intensely that he, during this brief first encounter of the third kind that constitutes Adam's initial clonal interaction, punches his other self so hard that he is knocked out (fig.3.6). This third encounter between the clone and his original is cloaked in superficial violence as well. The Adams' quarrel revolves around who has legitimate 'ownership' over their family, instead of engaging with the question of how a relation of self to self might occur.

Some encounters follow, where both Adams team up, jointly building bombs and booby-traps, and executing their plan to overthrow Drucker. Yet, how these additional encounters enfold is not very striking. Adam's clonal encounters are mostly action-packed and plot-driven, only geared towards the end goal of saving his family. Plus, the fact that the film stages its clonal encounter as a triptych, a miniature three-act-structure for the encounter of self and self to take place in, enhances my claim that *The 6th Day* purposefully obfuscates its clonality. Adam's close encounter of the third kind is a narrative strategy that curbs the clonal confrontation's uncanniness to an entertaining minimum, like outing the hero as clone after three-quarters of the film. Both these narrative devices subdue our protagonist's clonality, while defusing the clone's radical potential, as they ease the audience into forming allegiance with the clone.

Through *The 6th Day* as a whole runs a curious ambivalence. The film flaunts a tendency to align the viewer's identification with the cloned hero, while also cultivating a problematic denial of the other self on multiple levels. Why does this film evade its clonality so ostentatiously? Even if it touches on some existential questions of clonal identity, it only breezes lightly over these intricate issues during Adam's clonal encounters. As *The 6th Day* deploys a film-language adhering to Hollywood's conventions, it does not willingly challenge its remarkable replication problematics. It utilizes the surface of these philosophical questions as genre-traits, while its actual clonal conundrum only emerges in the fissures of its filmic construction, as a clonal specter lurking between the lines.

The 6th Day's most interesting clonal questions originate from several other cloned characters besides our cloned protagonist, like the antagonist Drucker, his goons and cloning-expert Dr. Griffin Weir and Weir's wife Katherine. Although the diegetic world is trying to evade cloning's prolific paradigmatic potential, in the fibers of its filmic construction this clonal specter

seeps through, in certain assisting character plotlines that do not include Adam, but also in its editing techniques. This specter reveals that this film's real existential challenge is found in its figuration of (im)mortality through cloning's technical manipulation of the cycles of life and death, as mortal life is utterly challenged by the perverted promise of eternal life that cloning engenders in our case-study.

Dying, Cloning and Syncording: The (Im)Mor(t)ality of Conquering Death

This section investigates the film's horrid interconnection between dying, cloning and syncording, while opening up the cracks through which *The 6th Day*'s clonal specter emerges. Its rendering of clonal memory in particular is of interest, as its envisioning of disposable clones joint with the continuation of the syntax of life is strongly dependent upon its form of prosthetic memory. The first fissures we scrutinize are *The 6th Day*'s actual material fissures or cuts. The editing namely visualizes the process of multiplication through an unusual usage of a certain digital graphic transition.

Figure 3.7: Multiplying digital transitional editing (TC:00:31:26).

After the first chase, for example, which occurs in between Adam's first and second encounter, various establishing shots of the city are shown. The frames of these images erratically

multiply across the screen over the duration of several shots, lasting around seven seconds (fig.3.7). This transitional editing is repeated several times, becoming a stylistic trademark of sorts. It is also deployed at the title sequence's end and when we transition from a shot of Adam climbing out a river to an establishing shot of the police station, and after Adam shoots Marshall.

Our first case-study also notably used a distinctive shot transition. This was *Moon*'s dream-like dissolve, which endowed that arthouse film with a hypnotic and transient air. How *Moon* sutured its sequences together by way of utilizing the dissolve as a standard transition, inherently problematized what occurrences count as memories, dreams, actual experiences, and hallucinations. If we compare *The 6th Day*'s transition to *Moon*'s signature dissolve, we can state that, while stylistically these editing techniques differ greatly, they do have a similar signifying effect when it comes to delineating both film's relations to the concept of clonal memory.

The 6th Day's multiplying editing is a kind of staccato or fragmentary version of *Moon*'s smooth and hypnagogic dissolve. It also muddles the images' ontological status to some degree, except that our current case-study's multiplying transition works by way of jarring overlaps between the previous and next shots, instead of gently fading or merging shots as the dissolve does. This discontinuous multiplying transition expresses how *The 6th Day* portrays its discordant conception of clonal memory and experience. These erratically multiplying frames visualize the sort of discontinuous mechanism that lies at the heart of the digital syncord. This discordance stands in stark opposition to the fluid fashion in which *Moon* rendered its prosthetic memory, which engendered its continuous consciousness.

In his article "I, Clone: How Cloning Is (Mis)Portrayed in Contemporary Cinema" (2010) Jason T. Eberl writes: "*The 6th Day* presumes that a self-conscious human mind can be downloaded to a storage device, and then uploaded into the brain of a cloned body such that the exact same

person wakes up in a physically identical body" (28). In this sense a kind of continuation of subjectivity is engendered through the syncord. Yet, this continuation does not foster a continuous consciousness or a continuous corporeality, for there should only be one embodiment present at a time that is 'possessed' by this sort of prosthetic memory. Or, at least, that should ideally be the case within this film's diegesis.

In *The 6th Day* a particular person's memories are not exchanged between different individuals, nor should they be implanted in two or more embodiments of the same subjectivity at once, resulting in synchronous clones. These implanted memories are not to foster a prolific paradigmatic continuity of the self, rather the syncord should only enable the continuation of life's sentence on a syntagmatic axis, adhering to a logic of singular substitution. Even if the syncord's name tries to conjure up an aura of continuity and togetherness (the ancient Greek prefix 'syn-' means 'with, together, at the same time'), in actuality its productive mechanisms operate by way of discordance and discontinuity. The syncord's digital nature opens up the possibility of editing the stored memories. But there is also room to tamper with this form of prosthetic memory in the moment or gap between the syncord's extraction and implementation.

As was stated in this dissertation's first chapter, the concept of prosthetic memory "makes impossible the wish that a person owns her/his memories as inalienable property" (Landsberg 176). This is directly exemplified by *The 6th Day*'s conceptualization of memory as an easily extractable, remixable, implantable and therefore highly malleable syncord. In *The 6th Day*'s genetic imaginary not only a person's genes, but their memories too can be "tagged, extracted, transferred, reprogrammed, and recombined", just as Stacey argues that "our cells are now thoroughly codifiable as genetic information" (179). In addition, considering the film's form, both the plot

information's fragmentary, asynchronous dispersion as well as the erratically multiplying transitional editing symbolically double the mechanism of the film's form of prosthetic memory.

Our protagonist's job too refers to the problematic of prosthetic memories, while it at once alludes to the multiplication that is about to take place. Adam owns *The Double X Charter*, also spelled as *XX Charter*. Nomen est Omen; the doubling of these X's in the name matches the doubling of the clones. Adam's work entails that he flies a chopper (a clear intertextual reference to Schwarzenegger's famous action-oeuvre) from a distance in another chopper by operating it through a prosthesis.[24] At times he races with himself, while he has no control over the chopper he physically resides in. This displacement of lived experience and the ostensibly incongruent perception of this experience manifests that we indeed are possessed by the memories of lived experiences instead of possessing them ourselves.

The notion that through the practice of syncording our memories have become just as codifiable as our cells have become in the genetic imaginary, is metaphorically mirrored by *The 6th Day*'s overall narrative structure and by its style of editing. So not only our genetic information, which engenders the distinct embodiments our subjectivity resides in, has become mercurial and malleable. But memory too, seen as our building blocks for identity, has become inherently open to *external* manipulation in *The 6th Day*. Because of what was stated in chapter one, we are aware of the fact that every act of remembrance changes you. However, that particular change was prompted from within. In *The 6th Day* the changeability of our memories comes from without and is even homicidal.

[24] The Adams utilize this 'skill' to overthrow Drucker. By tricking Drucker and his goons, the Adams are able to steal Drucker's syncord as leverage. The Adams send in a chopper, which is empty and remote controlled, as a decoy. In actuality they reside in a second chopper and thusly infiltrate the cloning facility. This sort of trick is later 'doubled' when the Adams raid the cloning lab to free Natalie and Clara, first sending in cloned Adam to clear the way for the original to "stroll inhere to rescue his wife and kid" (TC:01:35:28).

The way memory gets tampered with is not only achieved through the sterile remixing of the syncord itself, but also by the act of killing. As death is no longer the final ending to the syntagmatic course of clonal life, a perished clone is effortlessly replaced in under two hours. The cloned embodiments become dreadfully expendable, although not inexpensive, as gestating a new clone from a blank costs three million dollars. Accordingly, killing and subsequently cloning someone to redirect their memory becomes a tool for Drucker to exercise control, not only over his enemies, but also over his closest allies. One scene in particular showcases this homicidal manipulation of memory.

This is perhaps one of *The 6th Day*'s most insidious scenes and it occurs when Drucker kills Dr. Weir to 'undo' the conversation they just had. In some scenes prior, Dr. Weir's beloved wife Katherine conveyed that she does not want to be cloned anymore, just before she died from one of Drucker's congenital defects that apparently was 'accidentally' build into her cloned DNA, resulting in a childhood disease. "Part of the reason Dr. Weir's cloned wife accepts her impending death is that she feels her time 'has already passed' insofar as her progenitor had died five years ago and she doesn't believe that the conscious experiences that were syncorded and downloaded into her mind are authentically hers" (Eberl 32). In the scene at hand, the doctor tells Drucker, while being consumed with grief, that he will never "bring back anyone ever again".

Weir loved his wife so much that he rather chooses to live on without her, than to disrespect her dying wish by bringing her back. But Drucker does not respect anyone's corporeal or mental integrity. Before he shoots Weir, Drucker explains that he plans to bring back both Weir and his wife by cloning them. This conversation is shot according to the editing logic one would expect in a Hollywood film, namely utilizing shot-reverse-shot. Yet stylistically something curious is

happening in these shots, repeating itself a few scenes later when Drucker reveals that our hero is the clone instead of the original.

Most of the angles are shot from below and consist of canted frames. The shots themselves are often in continuous motion, sometimes deploying semi-circles to slowly gyrate around the characters if they are stationary, other times subtly tracking the characters' movements as they traverse the diegetic space. These canted frames, low angles and unobtrusive yet elaborate camera movements in these shot-reverse-shots add a sinister suspense and uneasiness to these dialogues. This type of shot-reverse-shot is only deployed during scenes in which Drucker reveals his Machiavellian plans.

Drucker intends to alter Weir's and Katherine's syncords so that they do not remember these conversations; it will appear as if nothing happened. But Drucker presents this as "the greatest gift you can ever imagine": "I am going to save your life, I am going to save Katherine's life, I am going to save our friendship, and I am going to save your marriage". He then pulls out a gun and as he steadily walks towards the terrified doctor, he shoots Weir in the head. As Drucker walks away, he says "You're welcome" to the smoldering corpse. But Weir and his wife never reappear.

In Drucker's autocratic, megalomanic hands, the promise of immortality engendered by cloning paradoxically produces an extreme version of mortality for the cloned flesh. While the cloned mind might potentially live on forever, the cloned body perishes more often than an average person buys new shoes. Ironically, the crudeness of this body/mind split is directly alluded to several times in the form of vulgar jokes, made at the expense of the expendable nature of the cloned embodiments. These quips are similar to but decidedly more sinister than the double entendre cloning puns. Drucker's goons, during their violent manhunt for the cloned Adam, comically express great agitation over losing certain consumer products when they perish. They

are more upset about this than about their previous embodiments dying in a gruesome way. The loss of a new pair of boots or an expensive hair coloring treatment is mourned over more extensively than the very loss of their own flesh.

Talia, for example, dyes her hair in all sorts of extravagant colors, like bright red, neon green and blue. The first time we see her being resurrected, she wakes up screaming after her syncording has been downloaded into her new body, frantically grabbing her throat where she was shot. Yet, this visceral, physical reaction to the infusion of Talia's prosthetic memory into her new embodiment does not bother her as much as discovering that her hair is blonde, as one of the first things she says is: "Do you have any idea how much my hair treatments cost?". Irritated, she takes out a piercing from her progenitor's corpse, and without any remorse or flinching sticks it into her new, unpierced ear. In a later scene Marshall even goes as far as discarding his entire body after his foot was shot off. As he opens fire onto Adam's getaway car, he yells: "You're going to pay! Those were brand-new boots!" In the next scene he appears, Marshall does not have an amputated foot, implying he was cloned, as to generate his complete leg. Since in Drucker's universe no synchronous clones should exist, we can reason that Marshall's progenitor was killed off.

In *The 6th Day* the body is a mere garment, a true discardable object. Simultaneously, the syncord becomes utterly indispensable. This digital object, a piece of software, seems to be the thing that entails everything the subject is. The body is only a fleshy vessel for the syncord containing a person's subjectivity. A rather crude depiction of the body/mind split is manifested by *The 6th Day*'s envisioning of human cloning, pointing toward a radical Cartesianism. Death is not stipulated by the embodiment's expiration, but only by an obliteration of subjectivity, which is encased by the disk-like object comprising the subject's syncord. But is this radical Cartesianism propagated throughout the entirety of *The 6th Day*?

Here we turn to how Eberl comments upon the visceral mortality of our case-study's cloned embodiments. He states that the "transfer of conscious experience is starkly depicted in *The 6th Day*: A clone possesses even the memory of its progenitor's death. The memory sometimes manifests itself in psychosomatic symptoms: the clone of someone who was run over by two cars feels tightness in his chest, almost as if, were he to open his shirt, he would expect to see tire tracks" (Eberl 31). Since the clones do remember and immanently feel the previous clone's death on their current body, it seems that body and mind are not as strictly separated in this film as one would expect in first instance.

In this transference of the death experience onto the subsequent clone, we discern a fissure that opens up a form of paradigmatic clonality, however short lived these moments are. One of the cloned goons, Wiley, vehemently feels the deaths of his previous embodiments on the flesh of its subsequent bodies. He not only feels the tire tracks on his chest after he was run over by Adam, indicating that it is "hard to breathe" in his new body. He also experiences sharp pains after his neck was broken the second time Adam killed him. These morbid phantom pains can be seen as momentarily paradigmatic traces of his progenitors. Nonetheless, this painful, fleeting trace is nothing like the productive paradigmatic dynamic that the clones shared in *Moon*.

Rather than a supplementing remarriage of the self, *The 6th Day*'s morbid phantom pains are a sadistic after-thought of the former self. However, these phantom pains might be akin to Ripley's explosive paradigmatic incorporealization of her previous embodiments. These pains too entail a bodily inscription that reveals a reflexive relation between the clones. But this remembrance of the progenitor's death experience does not engender the kind of corporeal remembrance that Ripley experienced in her transformative *anamnesis* (an undoing of a process of forgetting engendering her continuous corporeality). Still, *The 6th Day*'s lingering corporeal traces do counter the diegetic

premise's radical Cartesianism, manifested by Drucker's cloning ideology of singular substitution, and unveil the film's discordant, discontinuous rendering of the clonal body-mind relation.

When Wiley complains about his clonal phantom pains, the other goons scorn him on various occasions, telling him to dismiss it like the rest of them does. Talia, for instance, agitatedly reprimands Wiley by snapping: "It was your old neck that was broken, this is your new neck, get it?!" Wiley responds: "Give me a break, I've been killed twice within two hours." Marshall interjects: "Oh knock it off, we've all been killed before." As a last attempt to impart the severity of his previous embodiments dying, Wiley says: "You know what really bothers me? That I've never even seen a white light. Never have seen any angels. Nothing!" The goons get no chance to respond to this troubling confession, as Talia finds out that Adam used a severed thumb from her previous embodiment to access the restricted cloning facility: "Son of a bitch has got my thumb".

This prompts yet another elaborate action sequence in which Adam outsmarts the goons in his quest for taking back his life. Again, the paradigmatic potential of clonal subjecthood is breezed over by superficial violence. But this scene does show that our case-study raises "interesting questions regarding the role *mortality* plays in human nature" (Eberl 29–original emphasis). However, we should nuance the way in which *The 6th Day*'s promise of immortality functions on a conceptual level. Strictly speaking, the prolongation of life's sentence by cloning the subject's body after its previous embodiment perishes, does not foster actual immortality. Being immortal by way of clonal singular substitution would potentially entail an infinite supply of new bodies to eternally continue the syntagmatic chain of cloned existence, but this scenario does not appears to be an actual, viable option.

Instead, the prospect for eternal life that cloning engenders in *The 6th Day* should be seen as a 'postmortality' (Hauskeller). This is a kind of becoming "immortal in the sense that we will

no longer *have* to die in the natural course of events" (205–original emphasis). Cloning in *The 6th Day* namely entails a convoluted form of "life and health extension", rather than the creation of "a thing that simply *cannot* be destroyed, a thing whose existence *cannot* end" (205–original emphasis). The life extending qualities of our case-study's rendering of human cloning in its prohibition of synchronous clones existing to promote an autocratic clonal logic of singular substitution, actually makes its practice of cloning more *therapeutic* as it were, than *reproductive*.

Medical science distinguishes between these two types of cloning, deeming some forms of therapeutic cloning as valuable manners for enhancing the abilities of our current healthcare practices. Eberl describes the distinction between the two types as follows. With therapeutic cloning "embryos are cloned in order to derive stem cells that may be transplanted back into the progenitor" (Eberl 27:n2). With reproductive cloning "a clone is allowed to gestate and be born. While many ethicists object to both forms of cloning, others contend that there is a moral difference between the two and that therapeutic cloning may be justifiable for the health benefits it could potentially provide" (27:n2). Yet, most delineations of therapeutic cloning in fictional representations do retain a certain insidious nature.

Here we briefly evoke two films that can be regarded as the most well-known examples of cloning films to feature the notion of clones as so-called 'organ-body bags'. In both *Parts: The Clonus Horror* (Fiveson, 1979) and its remake called *The Island* (Bay, 2005) the clones are used as such mere shells to provide healthy new organs to their originals, while the clones themselves are unaware of their harvesting purposes that will lead to their certain death.[25] However, there is an important difference between these films with regards to their respective depictions of the clones as either horrific or heroic. Kate O'Riordan designates in "Human Cloning in Film: Horror,

[25] Haran et al. flag *The Clonus Horror* as one of the "earlier films which were important for their representations of cloning" next to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956) and *The Boys from Brazil* (Schaffner, 1978) (7).

Ambivalence, Hope" (2008) a qualitative shift in the representations of cloning before and after the cloning of Dolly that involves the distinction between reproductive and therapeutic cloning.

Human cloning "has been constituted in film as reproductive cloning (cloning babies/whole humans) through the conventions of horror and science fiction since the 1950s. These visual treatments have stressed the body of the clone, through the corporeality of the cloned body and the image of the clone as twin" (O'Riordan 146). So-called 'pre-Dolly' representations are shaped by a body-horror discourse, where the clones themselves are the site of abjection. But "contemporary filmic treatments of human reproductive cloning, such as *The Island* and *AEon Flux* [Kusama, 2005], whilst still drawing on and reflecting fears about reproduction, focus on therapeutic uses [and have] become ambivalent, pointing towards hope" (146). Post-Dolly with therapeutic possibilities in mind, quite a few films represent the technology of cloning in a less negative, or at least more undecided way.

If we compare *Parts: The Clonus Horror* and *The Island*, we can argue that the former pre-Dolly representation is more infested in depicting the cloned body's horrific nature and does not feature the clones as the film's protagonists. *The Island* produced post-Dolly, on the other hand, places the clones at its narrative's center and humanizes the clones accordingly, by making them the heroes of its story. *The Island*'s abjection does not stem from the clones' physicality as organ body-bags, but from the fact that the scientists deploy the clones as such. A trajectory of humanization of cinematic clones, from abject monsters to the heroic victims of science gone awry, seems to be emerging in my opinion.

In *The 6th Day* our cloned protagonist Adam is hailed as the unequivocal hero of the story. While there are scenes in which the cloned embodiments are the site of abjection, the film limits these to the cloned bodies of the antagonist and his goons. Our cloned protagonist is never

portrayed in such a body-horror discourse. Adam is the heroic victim of Drucker's maleficent cloning practices, and this particular wrenched method is rendered as therapeutic due to the life extending qualities generated by the film's clonal logic of singular substitution. We might even argue that how the diegesis purports its intended use of cloning does not differ a great deal from these clonal organ-body bags. It only takes this kind of organ harvesting a radical step further, thereby transforming the notion of therapeutic cloning.

Generally, therapeutic cloning involves maintaining the old, original being, by rendering the body subordinate to that being, as a part rather than a whole. Reproduction, however, is about creating a new being, cloning babies or whole humans. But in *The 6th Day* not only certain organs are cloned or taken from the clonal embodiment, the entire body itself is substituted or 'transplanted' by a new body, as was the case with Marshall's 'foot transplant'. Yet, this reproduction is executed for the sake of maintaining the old, original being. Although this envisioning of cloning advances quite a problematic relation between the cloned body and mind, the film at once tries to reinstate a kind of bodily integrity for the clonal subject. This restoration, however, occurs in an even more problematic manner, as we will see in the following section. In it we deepen our investigation into the second level in which *The 6th Day* cultivates a problematic denial of the other self, which is driven by a curious ideological negation of cloning's paradigmatic potential, seen as an illusory longing for a lost 'bio-aura'.

The 6th Day's Longing for a Lost Bio-Aura

The 6th Day's strict diegetic prohibition of synchronous clones, together with cloning's postmortal yet singular prolongation of life's sentence, is an attempt to restore the body's so-called bio-aura. This term was coined by Stacey (2010), by reworking Walter Benjamin's famous 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (2002). Benjamin argued that during

the industrial revolution, due to the incredible technological reproducibility of novel media like photography and cinema, the artwork lost a certain spiritual essence by mass-producing it: its 'aura'.

Even the most perfect copy or reproduction lacks one crucial element: "the here and the now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place" (Benjamin 103). This uniqueness underlies the concept of the artwork's authenticity, and on the latter the idea of a tradition is founded "which has passed the object down as the same, identical thing to the present day" (103). However, the "sphere of authenticity eludes technological […] reproduction" (103). By mass-producing art, the value of tradition is abolished and hence the original loses its ephemeral aura.

Stacey transposes this argument onto the technology of genetic engineering and cloning, which she jointly calls 'the geneticization of the body'. She evokes this concept together with "the decade of the clone, marked by the completion of the Human Genome Project and the cloning of Dolly" in order to lay bare "a profound disturbance to our previous modes of corporeal perception" (180-1). Because of the body's geneticization "previous notions of the sacredness of life, the distinctiveness of the human, and the singularity of embodied subjectivity can no longer form the foundations of modern subjecthood as they once did" (179-180). The prospect of enhancing human life through genetic engineering and cloning thus engenders a destabilization of the very notion of what it means to be human.

At the start of Stacey's chapter "Cut-and-Paste Bodies: The Shock of Genetic Simulation" she asks: "Is geneticization to the body what digitization is to the image?" (179). For Stacey both geneticization and digitization "are metonymic relations with the capacity for endless reproducibility through replication" (179). This incessant reproducibility is what fosters *The 6th Day*'s promise for immortality, through Drucker's implementation of cloning as a singular prolongation of life's sentence, yet it does not foster a prolific paradigmatic multiplicity.

Stacey then asks: "how might we think about the possibilities of techno-scientific interference in bio-genetic processes as inaugurating a sense of what we might call a lost bio-aura?" (179). Her argument entails the idea that by copying and multiplying bodies, they too lose their here and now, their unique existence in a particular place, their authentic claim to traditional (specifically humanist) forms of embodied subjectivity, similar to how Benjamin argued that the artwork lost its aura.

By extending "Benjamin's concept of the loss of aura to the domain of the geneticized body, we might think of the demise of bio-aura through the fading sense of the body's singularity, nonrepeatability, uniqueness, integrity, and authenticity" (182). The following passage from Stacey captures the heart of *The 6th Day*'s most intriguing existential question:

> If the word "aura" can be understood as an affective and present relational connection between bodies and artifacts, bio-aura might be thought of as a sense of the transmission of humanness based on genealogical, integrated, and unmediated vitality. As successful imitations of human reproductive life, genetic engineering and cloning threaten the previous sense of humanness located within a particular intergenerational capacity for generation, simultaneously able to initiate new life and to avoid or postpone death. (183)

Genetic engineering and cloning hence threaten the body's bio-aura, by way of their "technical manipulation of the cycles of life and death – scrambling generations and toying with immortality" (183). The sacredness of life and the human's distinctiveness, which are guarded by these normative cycles of life and death, are challenged by how *The 6th Day* toys with immortality through Drucker's autocratic wish to postpone, or even conquer, death by a clonal logic of singular substitution.

This is made explicit when Adam talks about 'the natural process of life', which should comprise a person being born, living, and dying. Instead, *The 6th Day*'s process of cloned life spans a serial assemblage of living, dying, living again, dying again and living again, possibly ad infinitum. The cycle of life, which is productive by means of its circular nature, has been altered

into a static, extended life's sentence. Moreover, the geneticized body "threatens to taint human reproduction with a loss of authenticity, transforming our perception of the life-giving processes of the human body into a set of scientific techniques in which the promise of life is haunted by a deathly presence" (Stacey 183). This cadaverous specter is certainly present in Drucker's immor(t)al conception of cloning, and in the body-horror discourse in which the antagonist and his goons are rendered.

Yet, it seems that in conquering death by merely replacing or *substituting* the previous embodiment with a new one on a horizontal, syntagmatic axis instead of *supplementing* multiple embodied subjectivities simultaneously through a paradigmatic dimensionality, this figure of the clone – while highly manipulating the cycles of life and death by way of virtual postmortality – does not overthrow the singularity of embodied subjectivity so it can no longer form the foundations of modern subjecthood as they once did. In a conservative way, these clones remain strikingly singular: neither their corporeality nor their consciousness becomes truly multiple or continuous. *The 6th Day*'s rebooted clones are not able to engender progressive ways of conceiving a prolific cloned sense of self.

The reason why this film's practice of cloning is dangerous and aberrant does not stem from a multiplication of the *paradigmatic* identity-structures. Its treacherousness can rather be located in the erratic elongation of the more conventional *syntagmatic* identity-structures, by trying to restore the body's bio-aura along the lines of a radical Cartesianism that nurtures Drucker's power fantasy. The film's cloned individuals are rendered as mere pawns or 'parts' in service to Drucker's autocratic 'whole'. Hence, *The 6th Day* forces a conservative, outdated sense of self onto the logic of clonal subjectivity, although in vain – for it denies the metamorphic consequences of

human cloning for the constitution of identity. But in this denial an interesting ideological negation of the existential questions that have been raised by our previous case-studies can be traced.

In envisioning the clone as a means to secure the continuation of the same syntax of life, *The 6th Day* tries to restore the bio-aura of normative and singular embodied subjectivity, which threatens to be abolished by the prolific paradigmatic relationality which a cloned subjectivity can foster. In *The 6th Day*'s Trump-like universe, Drucker conceals the clone's clonality to consolidate his autocratic and phallic power, since the phallus always functions better when veiled. Yet, as we have seen in our first two case-studies, the cinematic figure of the clone does have the ontological power to reconfigure the traditional Cartesian sense of self, by envisioning a clonal subjecthood that is not predicated on an individualistic and naturalized Man of reason, but on an affective and interconnected multiplicity.

This is a power which amounts to the abolishment of bio-aura, seen "as a sense of the transmission of humanness based on genealogical, integrated, and unmediated vitality" (Stacey 183). Just as the modernist medium of cinema abolished the artwork's aura through the mediation of its alleged essential non-repeatable nature, the posthuman figure of the cinematic clone can abolish the unmediated vitality of Man by conceptually multiplying the supposed sacred distinctiveness of the human – on the condition it reshapes subjectivity along the prolific lines of its paradigmatic axis. By envisioning a biotechnologically mediated transmission of humanness across different yet similar clonal embodiments that are interlinked through a continuous subjectivity, this filmic multiplication of identity could counteract the limiting culture of individualism that produces a starkly rational and narcissistic subject.

Nevertheless, *The 6th Day* negates these substantial consequences of clonal identity by working a distinctly Cartesian delineation of singular subjectivity into its diegetic desire to conquer

death through cloning. Moreover, the desire to restore a lost aura, be it the aura of an artwork or the bio-aura of the body, is quite problematic and even dangerous. Because in this logic certain categories are 'valorized' and deemed as natural, organic, or authentic and thus more paramount than others, a 'demonization' of the other categories is set in motion. This act of valorization has a certain exercise of power imbricated in its hierarchical mechanisms, where the demonized other of the naturalized category is relegated as deviant due to its artificially unnatural qualities.

According to Stacey, the desire to restore a lost aura stems from "the projection of a nostalgic longing for nature onto a lost golden age which is now to be mourned", while "the sense of original presence (of unspoiled, unmediated contact with nature) is itself an illusion" (185). Whatever is lost through the demise of bio-aura "is imagined to have been previously connected to nature through its procreative capacity, authentic integrity, generational sequence and genealogical lineage" (187). When this mythical past is disrupted, "pure biological reproduction comes to symbolize the traditional embodiment of modern spatiotemporal relations. Technoscientific interference in genetic processes represents the end of our embodied sense of integration, distinctiveness, and individuality" (187). Ironically, *The 6th Day*'s contorted configuration of the clone is based on an illusionary longing for exactly this kind of embodied sense of integration and individuality, while it at once operates in the domain that fosters the disruption of the aura it squeamishly hankers to preserve: the genetic imaginary.

A sarcastic argument, which occurs after Drucker confronts the clone with the fact that he is *not* the original, is revealing. Drucker states: "I just took over where God left off." Adam rebuts: "If you really believe that, then you should clone yourself... while you are still alive." Drucker subsequently asks Adam: "Why is that? So I can understand your unique perspective?" Adam replies in line with the kind of machismo parlance we expect from a generic Schwarzenegger-

character: “No. So you can go fuck yourself!” Adam’s abrasive answer strikes an essential nerve with respect to the relation between normative reproduction and human cloning.

The notion of fucking yourself actually aptly alludes to the way in which the life-generating practice of cloning makes human biological reproduction redundant by uncoupling sexuality and reproduction. By multiplying life without the interference of new cells, cloning essentially equates to producing your own offspring through/from/with your own self: the incest taboo on steroids. However, by letting Adam utter this brash phrase in response to such a key question of clonal identity – even if the notion of fucking yourself reveals a crucial aspect of the unsettling nature of the practice of cloning – the film itself seems to disguise the existential repercussions of clonal identity, again through deploying superficial violence, but this time as a profanity.

In displaying an exaggerated version of tough guy masculinity by abhorrently swearing a phrase that has become a generic trait for this type of action movie, the average popcorn consuming viewer would either discern the line ‘you can go fuck yourself’ as a perfunctory pun making use of this clonal reproductive double entendre, or they would not notice the latent connotation at all. Hence a twisted and conservative nostalgia for the bio-aura of a heterosexual reproduction that is already lost emanates from Adam’s rebuttal. To sum it up, the quote “So you can go fuck yourself!” underlines the film’s illusionary longing for biological reproductive sex as the normative life-generating practice.

This idea astutely resonates with Stacey’s following statement: “The sense of a lost bio-aura enacts a form of heteronormative nostalgia in the phantasmagoria of new modes of reproductive and sexual replication” (188). *The 6th Day* expresses a deeply conservative attitude towards sexuality, in some ways comparable to the Catholic church’s stance that sex is exclusively for reproduction, as was also prospectively echoed by the film’s superficially religious allusions

present in its title sequence. This sort of sexual conservatism has important repercussions for our contemporary moment, in which the radical right's resurgence, with its anti-abortion and anti-woman politics through its essentialist re-framing of identity, poses a genuine threat to our gendered conceptions of subjectivity.

The 6th Day's denial of the clone's clonality in this instance can be read as an anxious, even religiose reassertion of heteronormative patriarchy's nostalgia for 'natural', God-given heterosexual reproduction. Moreover, the film never hints towards the polyamorous possibility that it also opens up, if one were to indulge in a reading against the grain. For Natalie does have *two* hunk husbands in the world of the film. But the narrative shies away from acknowledging this opportunity, as it denies her a meaningful interaction with both her husbands. She is only shown interacting with the original, the clone merely gets to say a brief goodbye to her at the film's end.

Still, both Adams do seem to share the same identity through their mutual love for their family. Eberl comments upon this aspect of the Adams' clonal identity as follows:

> Though we cannot say that Adam is identical to either of the resulting persons, each has everything that is required for us to say that Adam "survives" in each of them. Does it matter that we are apparently left with *two* Adam Gibsons now? The two of them seem to accept this consequence; for while the cloned Adam leaves for South America to keep his identity as a clone secret – death is the legal prescription for any human clone in this society – the "original" Adam allows him first to visit his family – who are none the wiser – one last time, telling him, "This is your family too. You were willing to die to save them." Adam further reassures his clone that his willingness to sacrifice himself out of love for his family is a clear sign that the clone is just as human, and apparently just as much "Adam Gibson," as he is. (35)

The clonal joint love of the family appears to be a common trait in cinematic clones, as *Moon* showed us previously. This mutual familial love is even a decisive factor in reasoning that the clone and the original share the same sense of self – just as the endowment of the original's memories in the figure of the clone can function as a conductor of consciousness, resulting in an interlinked clonal identity – and this sacrificial love is a marker that the clone has a soul.

But why does *The 6th Day* shy away from letting Natalie engage with her cloned husband until the film's second to last scene? Natalie is never made aware that Adam has been cloned to begin with. There are various instances in which the original is openly amorous with his wife, during Adam's introduction and the second clonal encounter for instance. Yet, we never see the clone getting erotically intimate with his wife. Might the latently queer and polyamorous prospect that cloning the head of the nuclear family engenders, be the real reason for the film's convoluted heteronormative conservatism?

Figure 3.8: Desexualized familial love during the clone's final goodbye (TC:01:55:41).

In the last moment with his family, the clone's bond with his daughter is emphasized. Natalie only gets a quick peck as Adam enters the house. Clara, contrarily, is hugged extensively by Adam. The clone's attention is relegated entirely towards his daughter. The clone's affection for his wife is rendered as a mere byproduct of his love for his family as a self-contained unit. This contributes to a certain desexualization of the clone, which is illustrated by father and daughter's prolonged embrace. In this shot Adam affectionately looks at his wife as he is enveloped by Clara's small body (fig.3.8).

Natalie warmly squeezes the clone's hand, but she herself is positioned almost completely off-screen. Only a small portion of her physique is visible in the frame: her outstretched arm that reaches out to the assemblage of husband and daughter. The affection shown here is a clean and wholesome domestic love devoid of any sexuality. This desexualized interaction between the clone and his wife stands in stark opposition to how we have seen original Adam engage with Natalie. During Adam's introduction, it was made explicit that he and his wife were about to initiate sexual activities, where it not that Clara interrupted before this Freudian primal scene commenced.

Moreover, the goodbye scene mirrors the deflection of sexualizing the clone, as was the case during Adam's second encounter, by redirecting the clone's attention towards his daughter. In that scene, cloned Adam, who was lurking in the bushes to observe his other self and his wife, was interrupted by his daughter, asking him to tuck her back into bed after a bad dream. As a loving father, Adam of course does not decline. The moment cloned Adam went upstairs with his daughter, the original and his wife started making out, with only Hank left to witness this sexualized engagement. Both these scenes relay the idea that the clone's affection for his offspring has infinitely more priority over the potential lustful love cloned Adam could harbor for his wife. In effect, the clone is neutered, stripped of his sexual masculinity, leaving him only with a self-sacrificial paternal manhood.

Directly after his touching goodbye, the clonal anomaly is taken out of the equation. Cloned Adam is relegated to vanish to Patagonia, Argentina, where he starts a franchise of Adam's adventure-charter business. This shows that the neutered clone is only a derivative of the original. While loving his family so much so that he would sacrifice himself for them, does make the clone as much human *and* as much Adam Gibson as the original is, the clone remains a secondary copy. He does not have the right to claim a life with his family as his original has. Although the clone

performed most of the heavy lifting to save his family, the original gets to free Natalie and Clara. The original is allowed to continue to live the life Adam Gibson had before he was cloned.

Why would the original have such a privileged primacy over the clone? Neither Adams, not the clone nor the original, are Adam Gibson anymore. The Adam that existed before he was cloned ceased to exist the minute his identity was spliced down the middle into the dual Adams. In this sense we can reason that both Adams have an equal right to the life of that former Adam, as the splitting of the Adams produced two new entities as it were. Yet, in *The 6th Day* persists an unequivocal inequality between the clone and his original, in spite of the film's continuous play with Adam's ambiguous clonal status. It does matter that we are left with two Adam Gibsons now, not because one is not human or not Adam, but because the dual Adams are placed in a hierarchical ordering, in which the original has the upper hand over the copy.

While both Adams are also intrinsically linked through the mutual loving memory of their family, this bond is not akin to the continuous consciousness of the multiple Sams. *Moon*'s clones intimately shared a substantial spatio-temporal unit that allowed this film to examine their mundane habits, but Adam only encounters himself under extraordinary yet short-lived circumstances that abide by Hollywood's conventions. The Ripley-clone also succinctly encountered her former multiple selves. Nevertheless, this confrontation encompassed an awfully affective and explosive encounter which shook her to her existential core: she carried her pre-incarnations in her corporeality on a cellular level, while she physically abolished her predecessors' clone-bodies in an absorptive conflagration.

So unlike Ripley's transformative facing of the self, Adam's encounter with himself unfolds in a relatively moderate manner. And unlike the Sams's prolonged, ongoing confrontation, Adam's fleeting collaborative encounter is quite superficial. Adam never surpasses a duality. The

Sams were genuinely multiple and even serial, a notion that was evocatively captured in a shot of the rows of stocked Sams. At *Moon*'s end it was revealed that the clone that made it back to earth was 'Clone 6', implying there were at least seven Sam clones alive in this film's story. And three of the Sams were synchronously present in *Moon*'s plot. The Ripley-clone was the infinite number 8.

But Adam is only two. If the Adams were truly multiple, *The 6th Day*'s privileging hierarchy would be more difficult to maintain. Each new copy would hack away at the original's claim to unique authenticity. As Benjamin tells us, the "sphere of authenticity eludes technological […] reproduction" (103). But a distinguishing feature of technological reproduction is the fact that the aura of the original, be it the original artwork or the original human, is only lost if its reproducibility is potentially multitudinous. Since the Adams are so ostentatiously figured as a duality, the clone is only an anomaly instead of a serial occurrence. Therefore, original Adam's aura, not only his bio-aura but also his subjectivity's aura, is preserved.

Figure 3.9: Dual Adam Gibsons facing each other on *The 6th Day* DVD's main menu.

Although the clone turns out to be the heroic protagonist, he remains the original's subordinate, while narratively the original has the supporting role, but only retroactively. By cloning its protagonist *The 6th Day* merely doubles its narrative action instead of multiplying its cinematic structures of subjectivity. Even though our cloned action-hero saves his family, the world and himself with the aid of his original self, Adam Gibson remains just that: a doubled generic action-hero who is unable to transcend a conservative sense of self. Adam is not *Moon*'s 'the multiple are one', nor is he *Alien: Resurrection*'s 'the one is multiple'. Accordingly, Adam's clonal configuration is utterly marked by duality instead of multiplicity. Even the image on the film's DVD menu confirms this, showing two en-profile shots of the Adams facing each other (fig.3.9).

Uncontainable Clonal Mitosis

This last section scrutinizes the conceptual and ideological repercussions of *The 6th Day*'s unequivocal inequality between the clone and his original, its insistence on the authenticity of the original, and its refusal of the clone's multiplicity. This film's encounter with the self is neither as intricate nor as intimate as my two other case-studies' encounters, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Adam neither enters into a continuous consciousness, nor into a continuous corporeality. If we rephrase some of these conclusions in a Cavellian vocabulary, we can state that both Adams do not seize the opportunity to aspire to become 'the one I are'. Immediately after their 'job' of saving their family is done, the clone casts his helpmate aside and the original negates his potential *attained* self.

Whereas new Sam stood before old Sam as the synchronically materialized attained version of his other self, and old Sam stood before new Sam as the friend who guided him to become the one he is, original Adam is only a temporary helpmate for cloned Adam. The clone does not take on the role of attained self for his former, original self. *Moon*'s clones as different supplementing,

paradigmatic dimensions of one another made each other intelligible to each other by performing an intricate remarriage of the self. But Adam only momentarily allows himself to supplement the fractalization of his unattainable but attainable self. He regrettably ignores the materialized split in himself as the gleam of light over his inner landscape. No further attained self is added, and consequently no subsequent unattained but attainable selves are manifested. Just the original and the other self as copy exist.

By banishing the clone to Argentina, the original regains his autonomous ego as the singular head of his nuclear family.[26] Yet, as was noted in this dissertation's first chapter, in contemplating the conceptual ramifications of cinematic clones, its most distinctive marker is the *relationship of self to self*. Battaglia reached a similar conclusion, when she posited that because "the heroes here are multiple, not the autonomous egos of Freudian theory, […] our subject-position identifies with a relation" (511). How should we then interpret the meager clonal relation of self to self in *The 6th Day*? Not as a constructive supplementation of the self, as was the case in *Moon*. And neither as a devouring expansion of the self, like the Ripley-clone in *Alien: Resurrection.*

In *The 6th Day* the relation of self to self is figured as a problematic denial of the other self on multiple levels. This denial reinstates the original self as sovereign individual. The film not only negates cloning's metamorphic consequences in its desire to restore a bio-aura that is irretrievably lost, also the cloned protagonists' encounter is based on an utterly ideological refusal of the possible paradigmatic upheaval the figure of the clone engenders. To explain why this rejection of the clone's paradigmatic potential is so problematic, we return to Sobchack.

In her article "Postfuturism" (2000), Sobchack turns to Michel Foucault's *This Is Not a Pipe* (1983) to designate the sort of power play present in both mainstream and marginal SF, as

[26] The film's choice of banishing the clone to Argentina is salient to say the least, as South America in general became a troublesome refuge for thousands of former Nazis after the second World War ended.

"he makes an important distinction between relations of resemblance and relations of similitude" (137). Sobchack couples 'mainstream/conservative SF's embrace of the alien' to the conventional relations of resemblance, and 'marginal/postmodern SF's erasure of alienation' to the volatile relations of similitude. Furthermore, Sobchack paraphrases that relations of "resemblance may assert sameness, but they 'demonstrate and speak across difference,' and are hierarchical, requiring the 'subordination' of one term to the other that provides the original model" (138). This kind of subordination that resemblance requires, is what befalls the cloned Adam. His relation to the original Adam demonstrates a distinct hierarchical difference between the clone and the 'authentic' Adam, who serves as his original model.

Foucault himself states that resemblance's model is "an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it. Resemblance presupposes a primary reference that prescribes and classes" (44). Contrarily, the "similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences" (44). Perhaps this reversible similitude that speaks across sameness, while still asserting difference, can be seen as commensurate to the Sams's plural subjectivity of sameness – or better yet, of similitude – that produces minor but increasingly more variations in their supplementing relation of self to self. In this sense, there is a link between how the Foucaultian relations of similitude operate and how I delineated cloning's paradigmatic relationality, functioning as an indefinite seriality of multiple alternatives that challenges the conventional subject's intuitive syntagmatic identity-structures. But by contrast, the Adams's clonal relationality seems to be predicated on a relation of resemblance.

In this instance it is fruitful to examine the figure of the clone in relation to another cinematic figure that is quite similar to, but also distinctly different from, the clone: the replicant. The iconic replicants from *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) demonstrate, according to Sobchack, a relation of resemblance as they "are predicated upon and subordinated to a human model, and their 'faithlessness' as copies is ironically and conservatively an idealization of that model" (138). Replicants are biological entities that are artificially manufactured, they are 'made' and not born. Yet, these entities are not 'copied' from an original like the clone. If we contrast the clone with the replicant, we can state that the latter merely 'copies' the idea of the human species – not duplicating an actual, specific human as the former does. Hence the replicant does not go beyond a hierarchical human(ist) model.

With the replicant an original humanity that prescribes and classes prevails, as the authoritative makers of these replicated copies. But with the clone, the notion of an authentic original can be abolished by way of interrelating the cloned individual in a paradigmatic structure of similitude that is without hierarchy. Nevertheless, *The 6th Day*'s original is not paradigmatically 'dethroned' and the humanist hierarchy persists. As our case-study envisions a figure of the clone that is denied its clonality, the film's ideology renders its cloned protagonist merely as a 'replicated' copy, whose faithlessness assures that it is subordinated to a human model.27

This subordination of the clone manifests itself, for instance, in the fact that the clone 'needs' the original's reassurance at the film's end that he indeed is human and has a soul. And contrarily, original Adam has the power to 'allow' cloned Adam to visit his family one last time. Yet, *The 6th Day*'s ideological strategy of subordination does not just take hold of cloned Adam.

27 *The 6th Day* makes, in an ironic fashion, a reference to *Blade Runner* by having a 'holo-shrink' loosely paraphrase the first few lines of the by now famous 'Voight-Kampff test', as he says to Adam: "You're avoiding talking about your parents. Imagine: two turtles are walking through the desert" (TC:00:37:50). In *Blade Runner* this dubious test is utilized to *determine whether or not an individual is a replicant or a human.*

It also asserts a wider autocratic model of dominance. As Sobchack tells us, conservative SF's articulation of resemblance "preserves the subordination of 'other worlds, other cultures, other species' to the world, culture, and 'speciality' of white American culture" (138). What she calls a 'new American humanism' expands into and colonizes "outer space, making it safe for democracy [and] multinational capitalism" (138). *The 6th Day*'s conservative envisioning of cloning also colonizes, but not outer space.

Instead, our own terrestrial space 'in the near future, sooner than you think' is colonized by a new American humanism, making *The 6th Day*'s generic genetic imaginary seemingly safe for religiose, individualist and heteronormative capitalism. But as was stated before, through our case-study's filmic text as a whole does run a curious clonal ambivalence. While the film cultivates a problematic, paradoxical denial of the other self on multiple levels, it also aligns the viewer's identification with the cloned hero, but it only does so retroactively. The original Adam is, after the twist, relegated as a one-dimensional, supporting character. We as viewers do not really get to know original Adam, but we were led to believe that we were following the original up to the point that Drucker professed that our protagonist is the clone.

Therefore, the effectiveness of the plot's clonal twist can be said to rely completely on the hierarchy that persists between the clone and its original. However, the antithetical manner in which *The 6th Day* envisions its clonality does not only affect its narrative, also the relation between its diegetic terms and its specific filmic form exude a convoluted clonal tension. Although a new but treacherously conservative American humanism conceptually pervades our case-study, the film's material level in actuality divulges our case-study's clonal specter. As this chapter's final turn, we return to *The 6th Day*'s title sequence to elucidate this spectral unveiling.

The film's intro establishes a distinct interrelation between computational and biological engineering, by evoking certain genetic images in tandem with digital audiovisuals. Again, the film's fissures or cuts are striking. The parallel editing between the intro's 'cloning state of affairs' and the visuals of deviant cells running amok, is accomplished by a series of vertical wipes. These transitions, which move from left to right, come in the form of a light blue radiant line (fig.10). The intro's news flashes are erratically intercut with imagery of the clonal cells, which seem to break through from hidden layers residing beneath the screen. The light blue line itself pulsates lightly, mimicking the motion of a computer cursor and implying that some sort of digital manipulation is taking place. As this line swoops over the entire screen, a mechanical whirring sound is made audible, further enhancing the idea that some form of data processing is involved in this particular motion.

A remarkable feature of the deviant clonal cells, in addition, is that they are interconnected by electric strands that have the same radiant blue hue as the pulsating vertical wipe (compare with fig.3.1). The clonal cells, while multiplying in a fashion that is all but linear, are thus directly linked to the vertical light blue pulsating cursor-line that serves as this title sequence's cinematic fissure. This transitional wipe discloses an interesting interplay of how *The 6th Day* envisions the role of digitization as being involved in the genetic cloning process. The intro utilizes a certain type of genetic imagery, in between the crosscutting of the deviant clonal cells and the cloning news flashes, by projecting various medical and microscopical footage on its background.

As the news of Dolly is being relayed for instance, a shot of embryonic hooves appears. When the wipe makes way for electronic letters typing their message about the human genome project's completion, an extreme close-up of an eye's iris contracting and dilating comes into sight (fig.3.10). Then, a hypodermic needle injecting a cell's nucleus is conjured up. By the

cloning state of affairs' end, when it is declared that the human cloning experiment fails, we see flashes of a fetus' cranium, from which a hoard of deviant cells explodes. Next, a pixelated X-ray of two identical heads merged at the back facing outward, is shown. Lastly, a series of humanoid figures hanging in artificial uteri pops up by erratically multiplying these images (fig.3.11), similar to the multiplying transitions described earlier in this chapter.

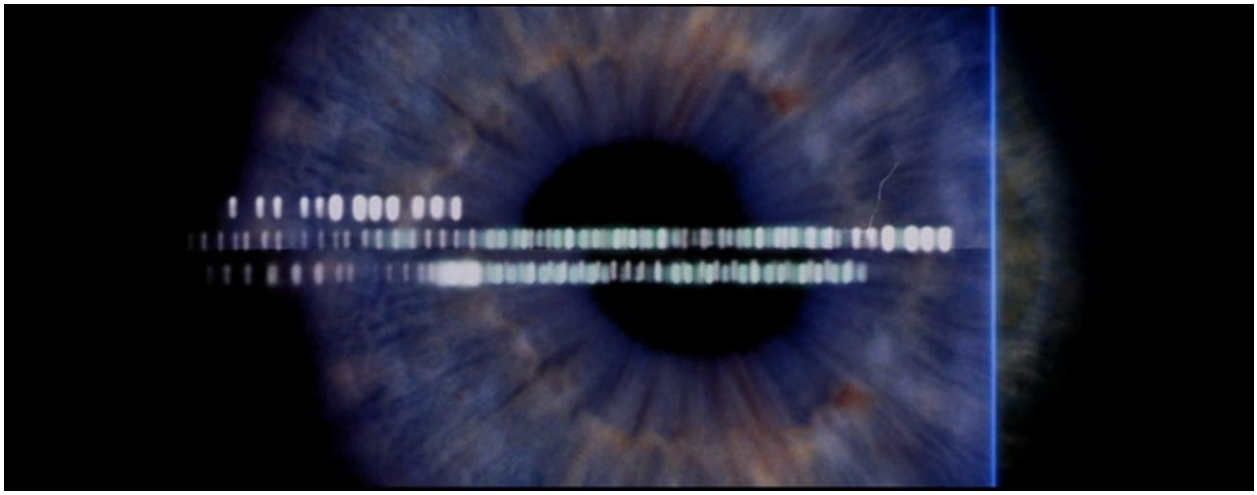

Figure 3.10: Vertical line (mimicking a cursor) wipes across a dilating iris (TC:00:01:14).

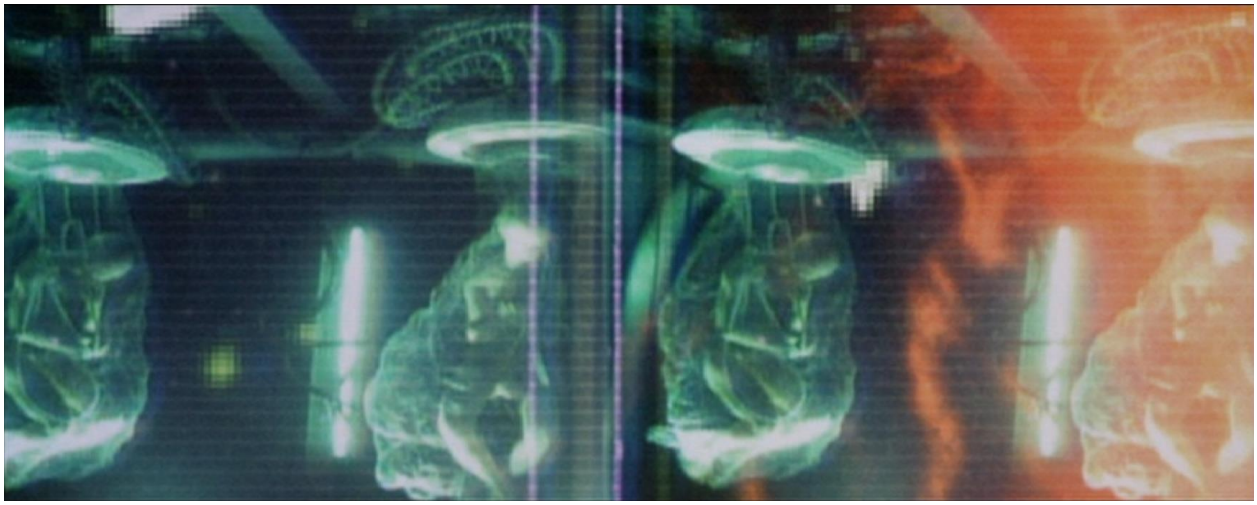

Figure 3.11: Pixelated multiplying images of blanks hanging in artificial uteri (TC:00:01:37).

The vertical pulsating wipe, accompanied by sounds of mechanical whirring, is deployed each time a new cloning headline appears, suturing the practices of digital *and* genetic manipulation together. Just like the imagery of the deviant clonal cells, the medical imagery

surfaces from a space residing below the screen, as if in this instance a digital database is being accessed by erratically browsing through its directory. This space below, that harbors the latent yet emerging digitized clonal force, is also echoed by the title-image's spatial arrangement, in which the individuated fetus projected itself from a top-down position onto the motley of multiplying cells lurking below. While I argued in this chapter's introduction that the radical cloned cells' grass-root nature necessarily needed to be restrained by a conventional singular structure protruding from a superior status (which still is the case in this striking split-screen), simultaneously *The 6th Day*'s filmic form shows that its clonality cannot be contained by the film's narrative constraints.

For although the film conceptually and diegetically renders cloning as a conservative prolonging of the syntax of religiose, individualist, heteronormative and capitalist life, on the material level of the film itself, within the cinematic logic of its editing, the clonal specter forcefully seeps through. As *The 6th Day* is a generic Hollywood film, one would expect the conventional style of continuity editing, that with its seamlessness naturalizes the artifice of its (digital) cinematic construction. One would expect that such a film advances the vividness of its narrative through generic shot-reverse-shots, utilizing clean cuts, and erasing its reproduction, which would parallel the ideological erasure of the clone's clonality.

But instead, *The 6th Day* does not polish its actual material fissures or cuts at all. The editing explicitly exposes its digital and genetic mechanisms of multiplication, calling attention to its artificial reproduction and replication. The multiplying transitions as trademark, the conspicuous way the intro establishes an interrelation between computational and biological engineering, and the jarring fashion in which most shot-reverse-shots of the evil antagonist are rendered, all counter the diegetic and conceptual erasure of this film's clonality as a cinematic clonal unconsciousness.

The film even goes as far as ‘cloning’ its entire narrative in the very last sequence, namely by rewinding all the plot’s occurrences in extreme high-speed. As original Adam’s chopper whisks by cloned Adam’s chopper mounted on a large freighter debarking for Argentina and disappears off-screen, the frame momentarily fades to black. But suddenly, the same extreme long shot reappears and the chopper flies in the opposite direction. Directly after this shot a dazzling mishmash of the film’s most iconic images are erratically reproduced, lasting thirteen seconds. So even though ideologically this film does not tap into the fractalizing and diffracting paradigmatic qualities of the clonal relationality, the materiality of the film does embody a clonal rationale of multiplication.

Chapter 4: Posthuman Doubles – *Annihilation*'s Refractive Clones

An Annihilating, New Materialist, Alien Doubling of the Self

Having examined how the previous films render their clones in terms of continuity and discontinuity of clonal embodiment, consciousness, and memory, we turn in this concluding chapter to *Annihilation* (Garland, 2018) to see how the conceptual workings of cinematic clones bear on the notion of the 'posthuman'. This categorically 'weird' film might not seem to operate as a specific case study on a different kind of cinematic clone at first glance, since *Annihilation* contains no typical, 'human-made' clones.[28] Yet, this film, directed by Alex Garland who gained critical acclaim for *Ex Machina* (2014) and more recently for *Men* (2022), offers a remarkable confrontation with a troublesome, alien 'double' that does in fact constitute a 'clonal encounter with the self'. In doing so, the film opens up avenues for exploring how posthuman and new materialist thought relates to the figure of the clone, which in its turn is historically indebted to the double.

Annihilation vibrantly and ferociously visualizes a novel form for humanity, a new kind of being human, as it presents us with a radically different state of life itself. Its plot revolves around a phenomenon called the 'Shimmer' (fig.4.1): an expanding alien environment that came into existence after a meteor crashed on earth. Protagonist Lena (Natalie Portman) and a team of female scientists venture into this iridescent Shimmer to explore the anomaly. This colorful otherworldly area functions as an actual 'prism' that *refracts* not only light but all matter present within it. Yet, the overwhelming hallucinatory color-scapes of our current case study envision a more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, posthuman or even a 'neo-human' state of existence that not

[28] Something termed the 'aesthetics of the weird' has arisen in film and literature in tandem with a strand of theorizing 'the weird' as a specific kind of affect in contemporary critical thought. Both trajectories focus on estranging and altering conventional modes of perception and experience. As a subgenre of speculative fiction, 'weird fiction' combines both physical and existential terror while deploying elements of fantasy as well as science fiction tropes. One of this genre's exemplars, Jeff VanderMeer's bestselling trilogy *Area X: Southern Reach Trilogy – Annihilation; Authority; Acceptance* (2015), is the source text for Garland's film.

only relentlessly refracts but also intimately 'intra-connects' each aspect of life, calling into question what it means to be human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, dead or alive.

Figure 4.1: Lena and her team enter *Annihilation*'s iridescent Shimmer (TC:00:28:29).

The Shimmer itself is an estranging reproductive force that constitutes an asexual, mutating form of recreation and provides unfamiliar forms of kinship. Furthermore, and more pertinent to this project's exploration of cinematic clones, the film's mind-boggling finale features a surreal dance macabre between two entities – between Lena and a sleek black-oily alien figure that materializes out of her. These beings are to be seen as posthuman doubles specifically, as opposed to the classical doppelgänger that can be linked to a 'modern' or humanistic mode of thought. Moreover, the confrontation between these posthuman doubles even constitutes a refractive clonal encounter with the self, a confrontation in which the human self becomes utterly other.

Annihilation's posthuman doubles engender an intricate 'fractalization' of the self that is in continuous flux.[29] Hence, these figures can be discerned as something I call 'refractive clones'.

[29] The documentary *Clouds are not Spheres* (Lesmoir-Gordon, 1995) explains that the term 'fractal' was coined in 1975 by mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot in his investigative quest into disparate phenomena like the shape of clouds, mountain ranges, and coastlines, the structure of blood vessels, nerve cells, and lightning, the formation of crystals, snowflakes, and proteins, but also certain economic trends such as cotton prices. The fragmented, broken, fractional, irregular patterns of these phenomena all have in common that they exhibit so-called 'self-similarity' over different scales. The 'Mandelbrot set' for instance, contains replicas of the original set within its

These entities are shown to replicate at a sub-cellular level, and this process is cinematically adorned with an overabundance of color, as the film's alien doubling of the self is rendered on screen by conjuring up a peculiar kind of 'prismatic' color. The way this case study's posthuman, refractive clonal figures are visualized through its striking color-scapes, forwarding a salient stance about mutation and life, challenges us to reorient our humanist thinking, as the film synthesizes an allegorical critique of our anthropocentric biases.[30] The film's prismatic color refracts anthropocentrism by going against what we might call 'humanist' color. Scrutinizing the ways in which *Annihilation* produces evocative instances of otherworldly color and terrifying transformation, this chapter highlights how it prompts a shift away from anthropocentric thought.

This clonal case study thus envisages a new kind of not-only-human nature that is intensely saturated by color and shares kinship with the theoretical strands of posthumanism and new materialism. As a theoretical field posthumanism is a quite diffracted and partitioned terrain. Different sub-fields exist and incongruities about the definition of the posthuman proliferate, while differing political stakes are hailed in invoking this figure. The relative novelty of this current might form a reason for the fractured profile the face of the posthuman retains. Nevertheless, most critical texts in this field can be said to transgress and rework frameworks of normative boundaries or structuring binaries, such as inside/outside, self/other, stability/flux, feminine/masculine.

In general, posthuman theory questions the perception of human nature as universal and hegemonic. Posthumanism often calls for a re(con)figuration of culturally ingrained dichotomies that stem from Enlightenment 'humanism', "understood as an outlook that stands and falls with a

subsets, as one zooms into one of its borders. These replicas are almost identical, occurring with slight differences from the original set within the set, while infinitely new patterns emerge, as the Mandelbrot set's frontier is infinitely complex.

[30] The term 'anthropocentrism' stems from the Greek 'Anthropos' meaning 'human' and refers to the belief that humans are at the center of the universe. Correspondingly, the 'Anthropocene' is seen as Earth's most recent geological time-period, characterized by the overwhelming (negative) impact human-influenced processes have had on the planet.

particular ontological condition, a particular way of being in the world that has long defined what it means to be human" (Hauskeller et al. 2). This outlook, heavily influenced by the Cartesian split of body and mind, is said to emanate a discourse of exceptionalism of the rational human subject, and still influences much of critical theory today.

According to Braidotti this outlook implies "the dialectics of self and other, and the binary logic of identity and otherness as respectively the motor for and the cultural logic of universal Humanism" (2013:15). Central to this binary logic is "the notion of 'difference' as pejoration. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart" (15). When difference spells inferiority "it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'" (15). Humanism's restriction "of what counts as the human is one of the keys to understand how we got to a post-human turn at all" (16).

To gain a preliminary grasp of what the diverse posthuman field entails, we turn to a philosopher who recently published an extensive work about posthumanism and its multiple incarnations. In *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2019) Francesca Ferrando states that this current originated "within and after Postmodernism, generated out of the radical deconstruction of the 'human'" (24). Late 1960s it began as a philosophical and political project and by the 1990s turned into an epistemological one. Ferrando references literary theorist Ihab Hassan as one of the first to use the term 'posthuman' in works he published in the late 1970s and 1980s.

In "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?" (1977) Hassan asserts that "the human form – including human desire and all its external representations – may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must

helplessly call posthumanism" (843). Developing the term more fully a decade later in *The Postmodern Turn* (1987), Hassan points towards a particular pattern that he sees developing in the Western world consisting of "a vast, revisionary will" that is "unsettling/resettling codes, canons, procedures, beliefs – intimating a post-humanism" (XVI). While it remains difficult to exactly pinpoint how and when the term was coined, most scholars in the field trace posthumanism's genealogy to Hassan's work and root it in postmodernism specifically.[31]

In line with Hassan, Ferrando advances that "the posthuman destabilizes the limits and symbolic borders posed by the notion of the human" (5). Dichotomies like human/animal, human/machine and human/nonhuman are "re-investigated through a perception which does not work on oppositional schemata" (5). Similarly, the posthuman deconstructs "the clear division between life/death, organic/synthetic, and natural/artificial" (5). Explaining what the prefix 'post' entails, Ferrando states that it "is a 'post' to the notion of the 'human', located within the historical occurrence of 'humanism' (which was founded on hierarchical schemata), and in an uncritical acceptance of 'anthropocentrism', founded upon another hierarchical construct based on speciesist assumptions" (24). This latter concept is especially relevant for our discussion of *Annihilation*'s posthuman nature, as the film envisions a radical alteration of what species demarcations entail.

The film's stance can in particular be aligned with a new materialist view of nature, a strange (re)turn to an otherworldly material nature where the boundaries between the technological and the organic continuously merge. New materialism as a term was coined in the 1990s and entails a specific theoretical current that can be seen as emerging out of one of the strands of posthuman thought that acknowledges the agency and liveness of matter itself. In stressing that matter – not only figuratively but also literally – matters, it presents a "turn away from the persistent dualisms

[31] Hauskeller et al. in the introduction to their comprehensive *Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television* (2015) also cite Hassan as the one who "first prophesied" the "evolving posthumanist narrative" (1-2).

in modern and humanist traditions" (Grech 1). Both new materialism and posthumanism challenge anthropocentrism by questioning "the stability of an individuated, liberal subject", and advocate "a critical materialist attention to the global, distributed influences of late capitalism and climate change" (1). In *Annihilation* hybridity and impurity prevail as formerly discrete demarcations of human life are uprooted and scattered across a novel posthuman mosaic of sorts.

Our case study envisions a mode of being that is not predicated upon fixed qualifiers but rather emerges in continuous flux as an embroidery of fluidity, exchangeability, connectivity, and unpredictability. Barad's specific strain of new materialism becomes especially relevant when analyzing this case study's posthuman condition. Their 'diffractive methodology' re(con)figures the notion of agency and posits a sense of self which is internal to the 'entangled quantum world' within their 'agential realist account'.[32] They propose a radical shift in concepts that usually anchor our understanding of existence, like matter, change, causality, time, space, bodies, subject, object, and individuality. We return to this dazzling, diffractive framework of thought at this chapter's end, after the particular workings of *Annihilation*'s posthuman condition are expounded more fully.

The Shimmer's Posthuman Prism: Refracting Human/Nature

> "It wasn't destroying. It was changing everything. It was making something new."
> (*Annihilation* TC:01:45:05)

Even though the title of this chapter's case study might suggest otherwise, this film is not about absolute destruction or the nullification of existence. Rather, it immanently deals with a refractory re-creation of reality, in which color plays a pivotal part. The line quoted above, uttered by female protagonist Lena in one of the very last scenes from this weird science fiction film, explicitly verbalizes this claim. In that scene, Lena is questioned by a military official, after returning from

[32] Barad develops this agential realist account and diffractive methodology most fully in their extensive work titled *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007).

the so-called Shimmer, an alien iridescent environment that came into existence after a meteor crashed onto a lighthouse somewhere on the southern coastline of Florida in the USA.

This Shimmer started to expand rapidly, even exponentially, and threatens to take over the entire globe with its rhizomatic reach. The infected, mushrooming area which it has spread to, has been designated by the military as 'Area X' ever since. The military has taken great precautions to prevent the general public from knowing about the Shimmer's existence, or at least, it has tried to hamper the public's comprehension of this alien force. Nevertheless, as the military's head psychologist Dr. Ventress (Jennifer Jason Leigh) explains to Lena, the military can only guess as to what the Shimmer's nature entails. "A religious event? An extraterrestrial event? A higher dimension? We have many theories, few facts."

Multiple top-secret expeditions were issued into this extraterrestrial Terran terrain that increasingly grows like a cancerous tumor on earth, before Lena entered Area X. Except for her now dying husband Kane (Oscar Isaac), who is held at the same military facility she is interrogated in, no living thing returned alive. The facility is stationed outside the area's outer fringe and Kane, a special forces soldier, will perish soon from internal organ failure due to his exposure to the forces inside the electromagnetic Shimmer.

Lena, a biology professor at Johns Hopkins University who studies the life cycles of cancer cells, and a former soldier herself, decided to enter into the Shimmer after her husband unexpectedly returned home, after being missing in action for a year and presumed dead. Upon his return from his covert mission, he fell incredibly ill and together with Lena, was taken with brute force by army men with large guns while being treated in an ambulance for his severe condition. The two were rushed to the secret military facility, where Lena – after her return from the Shimmer – recounts her story not only to the military official who is questioning her, but also to us spectators.

The film opens with an initial interrogation scene in which Lena is questioned by a large, British speaking Asian man dressed in a white quarantine suit (fig.4.2). An ever so slight yet highly menacing track-zoom is executed as the camera focusses on Lena, who is framed in between two visually imprisoning lines on the wall behind her. This scene's shots alternate between shot-reverse-shots of our protagonist and her interrogator. Adjacent to the sterile interrogation room, behind a large glass door, a dozen anonymous onlookers dressed in blue quarantine suits ominously observe the interrogation (left of fig.4.2 & reflection of fig.4.9). Being flanked by two other people in white quarantine suits, Lena's interrogator's first question is: "What did you eat?"

Figure 4.2: Lena is questioned after her return from the Shimmer (TC:00:01:02).

The interrogator states that Lena only had rations for two weeks, but that she was inside for nearly four months. Lena herself explains that she thought she was inside for days, maybe weeks. This apparently sporadic form of amnesia indicates that one's perception of time is greatly altered within the Shimmer, affecting the conventional workings of human memory. Yet, this altered perception of time not only interferes with the diegetic characters in the movie, also the film's form is displaced by it, as *Annihilation*'s story is fragmentarily presented to us in the form of several subjective flashbacks, with its narration wholly restricted to our protagonist.

The story is arranged around the intervals of Lena and Kane's 'doubled returns' from the Shimmer. We have the time before Kane left for his covert mission, the time in between Kane's return and Lena's departure into the Shimmer. Then we have Lena and her team's time within Area X, which takes up most of the film's screen time. Lastly, we have the 'present' time from which the story is told, after Lena's return from the Shimmer, consisting of the interrogation scenes with which the film starts and ends. There are four interrogation scenes in total, and the film's plot cuts back and forth between the different temporal intervals structured around the doubled returns, with the interrogation scenes functioning as narrative anchors.

As the reader probably senses at this moment, the film's refracted narrative, due to its non-linear temporal ordering, resists any easy or succinct summary of its plot.[33] We might even compare *Annihilation*'s plot structure with the so-called 'diffractive interference pattern' of waves, as the various temporal layers of the flashbacks are intermittently dispersed throughout the film's screen-time. All the different, interrupted diegetic times flow in and out of each other, causing ripples in the way we as viewers thread these plot occurrences together. We might at first believe that the interrogation scenes anchor our understanding of the narrative, but the fashion in which usually two or three different diegetic times are spliced in between or just before or after these interrogation instances even intensifies the displacements of these temporal waves.

This Baradian kind of interference pattern creates diffractive echoes throughout the film by means of visual iterations, narrative iterations, musical iterations, and formal iterations. One of these diffractive threads is the recurring imagery of cellular mitosis. After the first interrogation

[33] Paramount held back on a global release due to the test screenings' conflicting outcomes as the preview audiences apparently found the film too weird, too difficult to understand and too intellectual (Tufnell, 2018). Fearing low revenues, the production company did not release the film theatrically worldwide, but only in America, Canada, and China, while the rest of the world got a Netflix release. It the years after its release, the film has become a cult hit, being taken off Netflix multiple times, but each time the public's demand for the film also secured its return to the streaming platform. This upheaval regarding its reception and popularity attests to *Annihilation*'s refractory nature in its entirety, not merely on the level of its diegesis, or its filmic form, but also as a commercial object.

scene, a sequence shows a meteor plummeting towards Earth, and hitting the lighthouse, after which a swirling mass of dark polychromatic organic material materializes below the lighthouse. Lastly, we see the lighthouse, where at its base, from the impact site, an iridescent shimmer starts to emit. Next, the film's title is shown. Directly after this, curiously enough, the film's first diegetic shot is of microscopic, black-and-white footage, showing how a cell divides (fig.4.3).

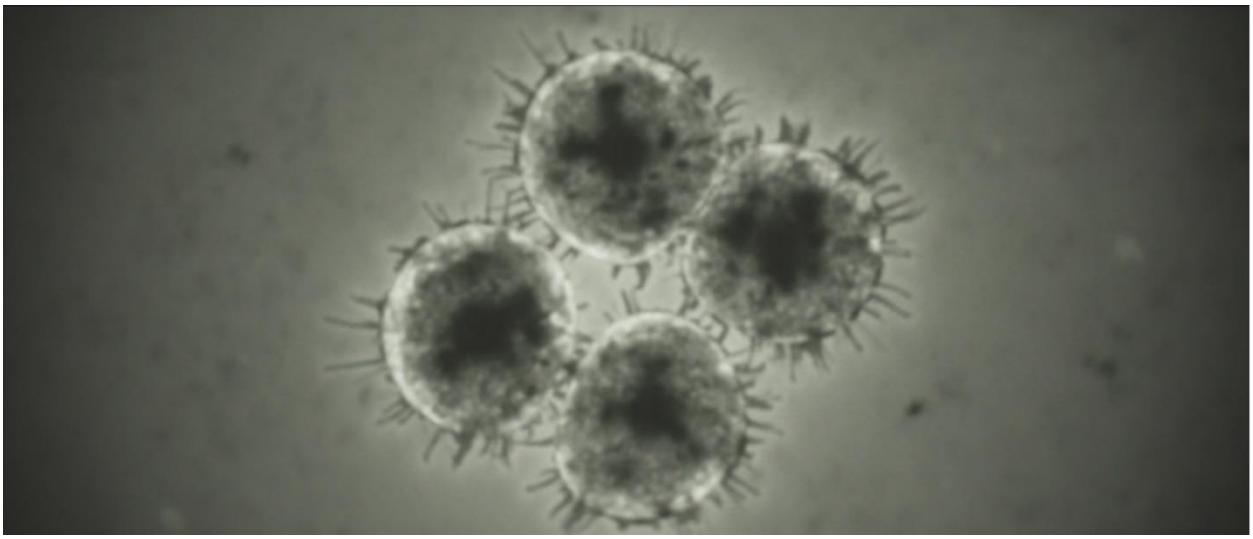

Figure 4.3: Microscopic black-and-white footage of a cancer cell's mitosis (TC:00:03:03).

Lena's voice-over then states: "This is a cell. Like all cells, it is born from an existing cell. And by extension, all cells were ultimately born from one cell." As the cells multiplied to two pairs, we cut to Lena's classroom. While we hear mechanical whirring, the light emitting from a projector, which showed the mitosis to the class, shines into the panning camera, creating a host of iridescent rays (fig.4.4). This shot will later be echoed by both the lens flare present in the first shot of Lena and Kane's house (fig.4.5) and the lens flare present in the shot of the house in the Shimmer (fig.4.10). Remarkably enough, this latter house within Area X appears to be the same house as Lena and Kane's house, but then a rundown and overgrown version which appears as a mysterious double of their actual house outside the Shimmer. Hence, we could reason that even memories seem to find a refractive material manifestation in the Shimmer as well.

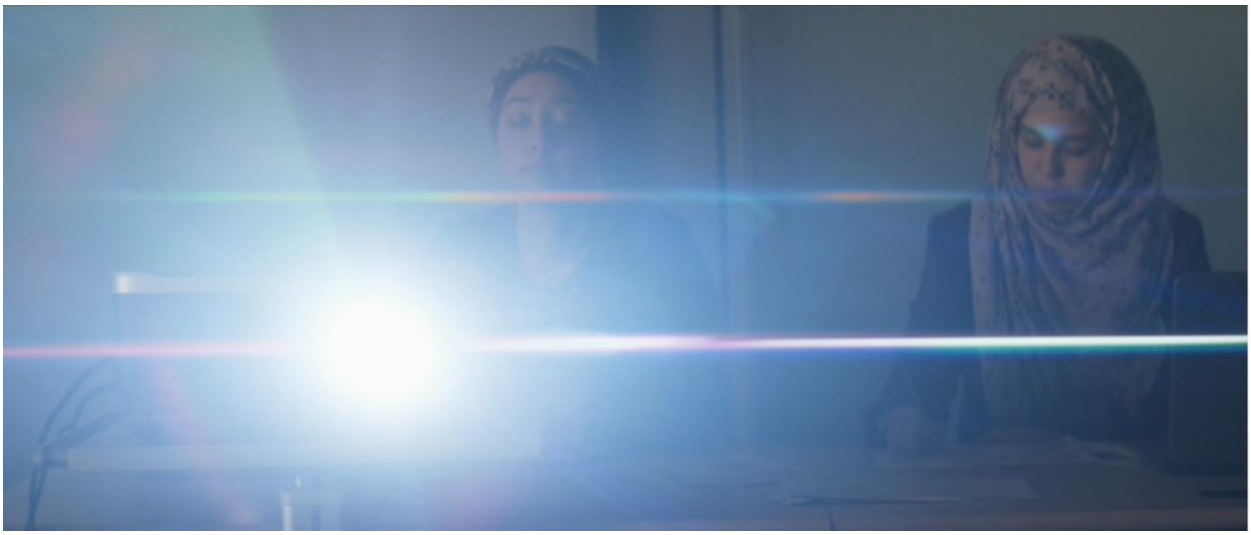

Figure 4.4: Lens flare of a projector in Lena's classroom (TC:00:03:10).

Figure 4.5: Lens flare during an establishing shot of Lena and Kane's house (TC:00:05:17).

As we cut to an establishing shot of the classroom, Lena sits in front of a large window, framing her in between two window lattices, in a manner similar to how she was framed in between the interrogation room's two visually imprisoning lines. But here Lena's backdrop is not a plain white wall. Contrastingly, her figure is enveloped by the lush and colorful natural environment behind the reflecting glass, which mimics the iridescent Shimmer, while she says: "About four billion years ago, one became two, two became four. Then eight, 16, 32. The rhythm of the dividing pair, which becomes the structure of every microbe, blade of grass, sea creature, land creature and

human. The structure of everything that lives and everything that dies." Lena then states: "The cell we're looking at is from a tumor. Female patient, early 30s, taken from the cervix."[34]

Soon after, Kane returns home, and Lena embarks on her mission into the Shimmer. Yet, the kind of diegetic experiences that Lena recounts from her time within this alien zone are even more refractory than the narrative structure that presents us with these weird and extraordinary occurrences, which we will shortly address. Additionally, as viewers we can question the truthfulness of our protagonist's account, as Lena can retroactively be deemed as a deeply unreliable narrator, as the film's very last shot takes into question whether Lena herself still is 'human', or if she might have transformed into an alien, refractive doubled version of herself.

Figure 4.6: The tendrils of a human-floral-fungal mosaic assemblage (TC:00:48:03).

What we do incrementally find out over the course of the film, by piecing together parts of the plot as we surf from waves of flashbacks to currents of other flashbacks, is that the entire

[34] This description references the first 'immortal cell line' called *HeLa*, named after patient Henrietta Lacks. In 1951 the 31-year-old Lacks was treated at Johns Hopkins for cervical cancer, but her tumor's cells were used without her knowledge in numerous studies. HeLa cells were the first to be used in-vitro, the first human cells to be cloned, the first to create human-animal hybrids. This enabled the mapping of chromosomes that led to the Human Genome Project. They were also paramount in many advances made in cancer and virology research. Salient to note is that Lena is seen reading Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (2010) in multiple flashbacks. Furthermore, just like the Shimmer's transmutating tendrils, HeLa cells are difficult to control due to their unbridled and unrelenting cellular division and mutation, while easily contaminating other cell cultures.

environment within the Shimmer apparently has gone berserk. Different species of plants have intermixed their usually distinctive structures into one new conglomerate whole. However, it seems that not only plant life has taken on this kind of unruly hybridizing quality; also fungal, animal and even human lifeforms are affected by the Shimmer's transmutating tendrils, which produce stunning new chromatic composites of life (fig.4.6). Faun-like doubled deer with bark-like antlers endowed with fluorescent flowers on their skull-like heads, and prehistoric bear-like monsters with exposed craniums who adopt their victims' last cry in their death-roar, populate Area X (fig.4.7).

Figure 4.7: Transmutated 'deer' and 'bear' (TC:01:01:09 & TC:01:17:04).

In the second interrogation scene, Lena explains: "The mutations were subtle at first, more extreme as we grew closer to the lighthouse. Corruptions of form. Duplicates of form." Lena is filmed from a vantagepoint behind the glass where the people in blue quarantine suits are observing the interrogation, causing an irregular reflection, or better yet a refraction, that looks like the Shimmer's iridescent cascading border wall (fig.4.8). The interrogator askes: "Duplicates?" Lena then looks at her left arm, on which a curious tattoo of a snake in a lemniscate form that bites its own tail is visible.[35] As she slightly lifts her arm, she utters: "Echoes". He then asks: "Is it possible

[35] This lemniscate tattoo echoes the Ripley-clone's 8-tattoo. But here the symbol for infinity is a snake eating his own tail, a variation of the 'Ouroboros'. In Egyptian mythology it represents the formless disorder surrounding the orderly world and is involved in its periodic renewal. In Gnosticism a serpent biting its own tail symbolizes eternity and the soul of the world, a symbol of the unity of all things, the cycle of birth and death, connoting the idea that 'all is one'. This tattoo is not visible in the film's first part, it only forms after Lena has been inside the Shimmer for a while. When Lena examines her blood under a microscope in the house with the humanoid plants in front, a bruise she got from a transmutated crocodile gradually morphs into the lemniscate tattoo. Yet, Lena is not the only one with this tattoo. Medic Anya (Gina Rodriguez) also has this tattoo later on, while at first, she does not. Even one of Kane's team members, who they gutted and who grew out to be the human-floral-fungal mosaic, is shown to have this doubled infinity mark. Also, Lena's double has the tattoo. The fact that multiple people who

these were hallucinations?" Lena replies: "I wondered that myself. But they were shared among all of us. It was dreamlike." "Nightmarish?" "Not always. Sometimes it was beautiful."

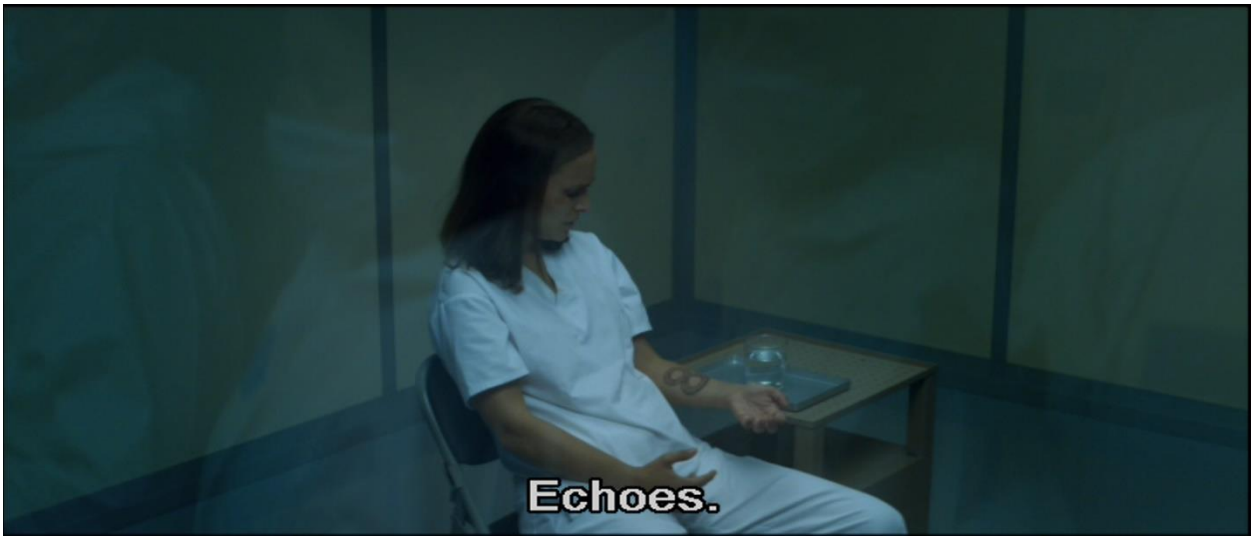

Figure 4.8: Shimmer-like reflection on glass as Lena looks at lemniscate tattoo (TC:00:37:44).


Figure 4.9: Humanoid shaped 'plant' in front of doubled house with lens flare (TC:01:06:22).

How the Shimmer operates is expounded just over halfway through the film. The alien forces within Area X literally *refract* all waves and particles in the environment. The team's physicist Josie Radek (Tessa Thompson), while encountering humanoid shaped 'plants' (fig.4.9),

resided in the Shimmer have this mark, conveys that they are all intra-connected through their ever-changing mutations.

explains that at first, she thought their radio-waves were blocked by the Shimmer, but then realized they weren't blocked, they are in fact refracted. Not only does light get deformed into the fantastical rainbow hues that seep into Mother Nature, but also all previously discrete units of DNA of various species are scattered and remixed according to a diffracted or even fractal pattern into new syntheses that seems intimately intra-connected.

As Josie ominously spells out: "The Shimmer *is* a prism, but it refracts everything. Not just light waves and radio-waves. Animal DNA. Plant DNA. All DNA." Ventress starkly adds: "She's talking about *our* DNA. She's talking about us." All living species are radically refashioned, immanently altering the traditional ontological categories of what life on Earth entails. All matter becomes susceptible to radical change at its very core, as former demarcations of species types disappear, including the hierarchies that usually structure them. Transmutated deer, bears, and crocodiles, human-floral-fungal assemblages, and humanoid shaped plants, but also moving fingerprints, bowels slithering like serpents, and flesh moving like liquid only seem to be the beginning of this planetary metamorphosis.

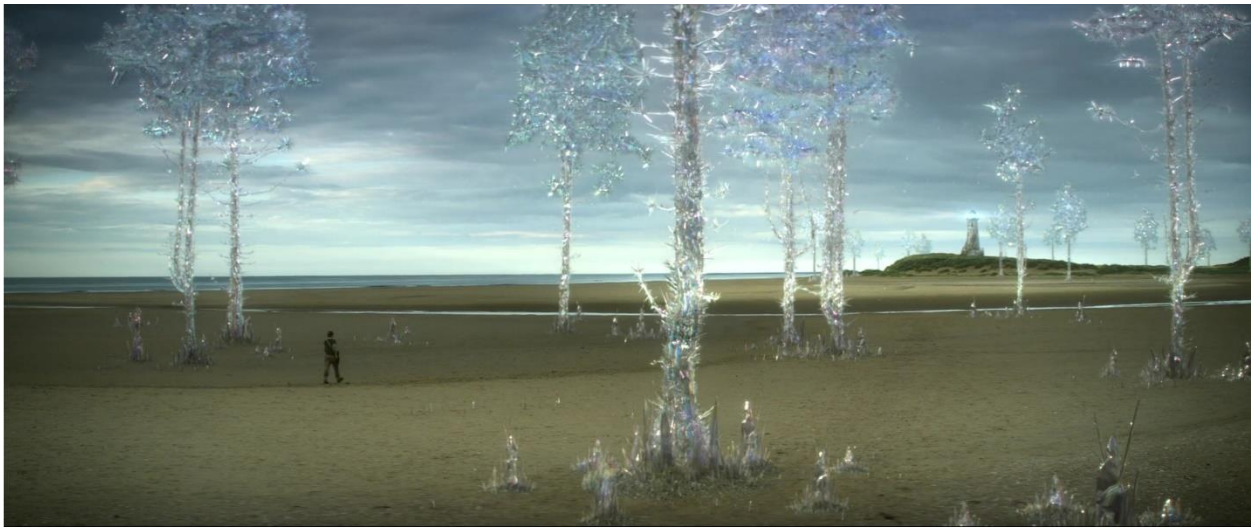

Figure 4.10: Crystalline 'trees' surround the lighthouse (TC:01:24:18).

It is not just that these 'plants' have a humanoid form, they *are* in fact some of the missing crew members of previous expeditions into Area X. Their bodies have transformed into plants themselves, as will Radek's after her prolonged exposure to the Shimmer. Moreover, the farther we venture into the Shimmer, as Lena literally *grows* closer to the lighthouse, the more intense the refracted mutations get. Its transmutative apex is formed by the crystalline 'trees' that surround the lighthouse (fig.4.10), and the mysterious space residing underneath the lighthouse, where the meteor physically impacted the Earth and where the iridescent Shimmer's source emanates from.

However, it is not merely that our case study's diegetic matter exhibits a refractory, transmutational hybridity, nor that its plot is scattered like an interference pattern. The film's construction as a whole also constitutes a mesmerizing mosaic, refracting and reassembling multiple bits and pieces from different cultural texts, specifically within the science fiction genre. Famous sci-fi films like *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, 1979), *Alien* (Scott, 1979), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968), but also *Alien: Resurrection* (Jeunet, 1997) are some of the works Garland references to create his own unique tale of apocalyptic planetary transformation, remixing them into a new kind of signifying mesh that mirrors but also alters these previous texts significantly.

If we briefly compare Tarkovsky's sci-fi epos with *Annihilation*, we see some remarkable resemblances. Both films feature a group of people who venture into a cryptic extraterrestrial terrain that appeared on Earth after a meteor impact: Area X and *Stalker*'s 'The Zone'. In both alien yet Terran territories, the almost supernatural alienation and estrangement of nature and the human self, plays a crucial role. Within each of these otherworldly 'earth-scapes' an even more mystifying core resides: *Stalker*'s 'The Room' and *Annihilation*'s lighthouse. Both films end with

an ambiguous finale which leaves the spectator bewildered, contemplating a metamorphosis of all materiality and of all the substance of our existence.

Also, the fact that both films contain a relatively small cast of which the main characters on their journey into the 'heart of darkness' are habitually referred to by their respective occupations, forms a formal link between these two films. Even the way *Annihilation*'s camera captures its mutational splendor in some instances echoes Tarkovsky's signature camera movements consisting of slow tracking shots filmed directly from above, usually of little streams of water seeping through different natural vistas.[36] Yet, our case study's depiction of its estranged nature within the Shimmer is submerged in an excess of outlandish form of posthuman color, even more so than *Stalker*.

Another notable doubled refractive, visual reference is found in *Annihilation*'s depiction of the space underneath the lighthouse. When Lena enters this cavern, we see that its structure appears to consist of a sleek, black oily material that is lined like the intestines of a living organism, but the form of the structure quaintly resembles the irregular, yet symmetrical shapes that crystals and snowflakes can assume (fig.4.11). It is as if the entire subterranean space below the lighthouse *is* a dark, crystalline prism itself that is not inanimate but very much alive.

This almost fractal space within the lighthouse's inner cavern is saliently similar to the womb-like catacombs with vaginal-shaped shafts that the viewer might recognize as a reference to H.R. Giger's Oscar-winning artwork for the original *Alien*. It seems fitting that this cavern, which is the origin of the Shimmer's refractive life force, is visually gendered as a distinctly feminine alien space, coded with the monstruous-feminine's terrible powers of reproduction.

[36] In "Technological & Posthuman Zones" (2018), R. L. Rutsky calls for "a reconceptualization of both human identity and technology in non-humanist and non-instrumental terms" and argues that the notion of 'posthuman performativity' involves not only a transformation of human identity, but a "broader re-conception of the entire environment – natural, cultural, technological" in which human beings are complexly implicated. No longer conceived as subject to human use and control, these posthuman zones are "often cast as ambiguous, inhuman, alien, or simply weird." These zones are biotechnological: they alter humans, animals, and the environment in invisible and unpredictable ways.

Moreover, *Annihilation*'s entire final act that takes place in the lighthouse can be seen as a visual homage to *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s ground-breaking hallucinatory finale.

Figure 4.11: Womb-like cavern with vaginal-shaped shafts reminiscent of *Alien* (TC:01:31:06).

The film's refractory nature thus also shines through in its extraordinary visuals and cinematography, for which the film has been overtly praised. The way these novel refractions of life are figured within the film's form is nothing less than absolutely mesmerizing. All kinds of shimmers, shines, neon-glows, and crystalline flickers are featured in the film to animate the Shimmer's life-altering alien force. Yet, *Annihilation*'s aesthetics go well beyond the mere surface level of formal design, and it is within its specific chromatic visualization of the refractory re-creation of life that the film's true transgressive potential lies.

Without Emptiness in Exuberant Color: The Chromophilic Fall into Color

The way our case study envisages its all-encompassing transmutation of all that is present in our world, presents a fascinating instance to analyze how *Annihilation*'s science fiction represents the nature of a new kind of not-only-human nature through its refractive *and* chromatic 'annihilation'. Yet, as one can now comprehend more fully, this film is not about the absolute annihilation of existence, it is about creating something radically new. Therefore, I want to direct our attention to

the curious paradox that lurks beneath the film's title. If we carefully trace the etymological roots of the word 'annihilation', we find that it is composed of two parts which antithetically annul each other while fortifying the word's meaning too.

Its primary definition indeed means to reduce to utter ruin or nonexistence. To annihilate is to reduce something into nothing, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun as the "action or process of reducing a person or thing to nothing or of wiping a someone or something out of existence; total or effective destruction." However, although the main component of the word consists of the Latin word 'nihil', which denotes 'nothing', the prefix 'an-' designates that the word behind it is not, or is without, or is lacking the thing that is being stated behind it. So, in fact, 'an-nihil-ation', literally means 'not nothing'.

One could state that the word annihilation seen in this manner rather encompasses a 'lack of nonexistence'. It connotes something that is inherently *without emptiness*. Therefore, we could claim that in its origins, the process of annihilation entails more 'a becoming of something' rather than it is 'a reduction to nothing', even signaling a peculiar form of lavish excess. For as we know, sometimes, or perhaps even more often than we think within our neatly linear ordered and normative lives, it is within the mechanisms of destruction that the potential for unbridled creation itself resides, the making of something radically new. Nevertheless, the common connotation of the word 'annihilation' does signify the state of being annihilated, a total extinction of utterly everything.

This linguistic and philosophical paradox of the absolute reduction, or alternatively the (re-)creation, of (non)existence that underpins the film's title, also lies at the heart of the film's core concept. *Annihilation* savagely systematizes a crystalline, cancerous structure of being that exudes a towering form of growth and mutation of everything that is present or that has a presence in our earthly existence. Within the Shimmer, the undiscriminating force projecting from out of the

lighthouse encapsulates all of life with its megalomanic refractive and chromatic metamorphosis, and this extreme presence of the lack of nonexistence annihilates the world and our human selves as we know it. But before we can further scrutinize the ramifications of these dazzling denouements, we need to analyze this perplexing film's use of prismatic color more in depth.

If one boils down *Annihilation*'s basic premise to its bare narrative essence, it might not seem very revolutionary: an alien force from outer space intrudes upon life on Earth and changes everything. The archetypal space-invader narrative does not constitute anything new amongst envisionings of the end of the world after a cataclysmic disruption. However, the chromatic fashion in which our case study assembles its specific apocalypse is incontestably unique. The current section hence dives into the posthuman nature of *Annihilation*'s prismatic color-scapes, as the film's refractive recreation of life is deeply embedded within this extreme chromaticity it materializes.

From the first moment the spectator enters the Shimmer with Lena and her female colleagues, who all have been scarred by life in their own distinct yet kindred ways, we know immediately that we are not in 'normal', human territory anymore.[37] A huge multicolored wall of what seems like feather-light translucent oil counterintuitively cascades up towards the sky (fig.4.1). Yet, within this plethora of color in *Annihilation*'s diegetic world, two distinct types of iridescent color-scapes exist. In the first part of the film an ethereal milky-white opalescent chromatic register manifests itself, which is prevalent in most outdoor 'nature' sequences within the Shimmer. The second is a menacing oily-black polychromatic register, which is featured in the concluding scenes underneath the lighthouse (fig.4.11), where Lena encounters the shiny, sleek alien figure that materializes out of her and that morphs into her refractive clone.

[37] Psychologist Dr. Ventress turns out to have incurable cancer. Anthropologist Cass Shepard (Tuva Novotny) confides in Lena that she lost her daughter to leukemia, that paramedic Anya is a former addict, and that physicist Josie has auto mutilation scars (these scars are the point where her floral mutation begins).

Both posthuman color-schemes contrast sharply with the human hues of the 'normal' world outside the Shimmer. Film scholar John Belton argues in "Painting by Numbers" (2008) that black-and-white imagery versus color instances in films such as *Sin City* (Miller, 2005) and *Pleasantville* (Ross, 1998) operate within distinctly different diegetic registers. These color instances function as "hallucinatory fragments of colour that exist in a diegetic limbo – neither quite inside the story space nor outside of it" (62). Furthermore, Belton claims that "colour manipulation poses a potential threat to our traditional understanding of chromatic and achromatic colour systems and their creation of a credible narrative space" (61). One could transpose this argument onto *Annihilation*'s outlandish colors and argue that, in comparison to the 'normal', human hues outside Area X, both posthuman iridescent color-scapes operate in a similar way.

The milky-white opalescent chromatic register as well as the oily-black polychromatic register, seen as two complementary iterations of one and the same polychromous posthuman vernacular, together form an alternative, alien diegetic idiom that differentiates itself from a normative, naturalistic, photo-realistic, and often desaturated color-scheme that we can designate as a 'humanist' chromatic mode. Both types of iridescent color-scapes are decidedly otherworldly, but the 'white' version functions like a gateway that leads us from the humanist world further and further into the posthuman heart of darkness, as to ease the spectator into the increasingly incredible transmutations, while maintaining the creation of a credible narrative space.

Annihilation hence splices its alien prismatic colors gradually into the more familiar humanist diegetic register, increasing the estranging intensity of its polychromatic gradient drastically as we approach the lighthouse. The deeper we enter the Shimmer, the more its mutating chromatic excess manifests itself. Even the lighthouse itself is divided into the two chromatic registers. The transmutating tendril formations on the lighthouse's façade that slither out of the

meteor's impact site are predominantly white (fig.4.12). When Lena enters the lighthouse, we see that inside there is a second hole, also with white branch-like formations, radiating outward. But the cavern inside and Lena's refractive clone itself consist of the oily-black polychromatic register. [38] Again, the white opalescent version functions like a gateway towards the hyper-hallucinatory limbo of the dark polychromatic womb-like cavern and the entity it produces.

Figure 4.12: Lighthouse's façade with white tendrils radiating outward (TC:01:25:02).

Nevertheless, it seems that from the film's start, little chromatic slithers of the Shimmer already seep through into the human plane and refract our vision. If we carefully look at the film's imagery of the 'normal' world outside the alien infested zone, we notice that the film foreshadows its shimmering chromaticity in certain shots, like the quaint and echoing lens flares throughout the film (fig.4.4,4.5,4.9,4.12), the lush natural backdrop behind Lena in her classroom, and the blue reflections in the second interrogation scene (fig.4.8). Although the actual Shimmer has an expanding but clearly demarcated border wall consisting of the feather-light translucent oil that counterintuitively cascades up towards the sky, its prismatic color thus also readily affects and infects the world outside of Area X, making its reach all-encompassing.

[38] This oily female alien echoes another sci-fi film which gained a cult status: *Under the Skin* (Glazer, 2013).

Annihilation's chromatic otherness can be placed into a productive conversation with artist and writer David Batchelor's discussion of the notion of 'chromophobia'. In his book *Chromophobia* (2000), he states that societal anxieties about the 'contamination or corruption through colour' have been prevalent since ancient times, specifically in Western culture. He urges his readers to see that color is trapped within a set of rigid, constraining dichotomies. As he defines chromophobia, he analyses two distinct ways in which color in Western culture traditionally has been demonized by means of othering it and trivializing its essence:

> Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. [The] purging of colour is usually accomplished in one of two ways. In the first, colour is made out to be the property of some 'foreign' body [...]. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; in the other, it is perceived merely as a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Colour is dangerous, or it is trivial, or it is both. [Colour] is other to the higher values of Western culture. Or perhaps culture is other to the higher values of colour. (22-23)

One decisive binary informing this discourse is East/West. This tandem can be extended to a surplus of oppositions that have been traditionally linked to this binary: progressive/primitive, masculinity/femininity, rationality/emotion, normal/exotic, culture/nature, good/bad, self/other, human/alien. Within these oppositions one category always has the upper hand; the binaries are bound together by normative, hierarchical power relations. I propose to protract these sets of binaries with humanist/posthumanist, while considering it within Ferrando's particular stance of posthumanism to dismantle this dualism as well as other dualisms.[39]

Ferrando states that in order "to postulate a post- to the human, the differences which are constitutive to the human, and which have been historically erased by the self-claimed objectivity

[39] Ferrando defines her 'Philosophical Posthumanism' as "an onto-epistemological approach, as well as an ethical one, […] which discharges any confrontational dualisms and hierarchical legacies" (22).

of hegemonic accounts, have to be acknowledged" (5). Her Philosophical Posthumanism not only conceptualizes itself as *post-human*, but also as a *post-dualism*, and as a *post-anthropocentrism*, as it allows for a "relocation which is aware of speciesism and of the devastating effects of anthropocentric habits" (186). It is indebted "to the reflections developed out of the 'margins' of such a centralized human subject, because of their emphasis on the human as a process, more than a given, inherently characterized by differences and shifting identities" (5). Humanism, on the other hand, has been sustained by reiterative hierarchical formulations of symbolic others, structured as dictating dualisms that keep which ever 'other' the normative category of the human has 'othered', trapped in the realm of the devious and the dangerously trivial.

To return to Batchelor, he analyses the 'fall' into color as a fall into the unconscious, into otherness, and consequently this is seen as a loss of the 'self'. In a passage which discusses the utterly contradictory discourses surrounding the notion of color, he states:

> Colour is both a fall into nature, which may in turn be a fall from grace or a fall into grace, and against nature, which may result in a corruption of nature or freedom from its corrupting forces. Colour is a lapse into decadence and a recovery of innocence, a false addition to a surface and the truth beneath that surface. Colour is disorder and liberty; it is a drug, but a drug that can intoxicate, poison or cure. Colour is all of these things, and more besides, but very rarely is colour just neutral. In this sense, chromophobia and chromophilia are both utterly opposed and rather alike. (71)

In Batchelor's delineation of chromophobia's hegemonic discourse, color-in-general is condemned as an ominous other and even as alien. Chromophobia falls in line with an 'enlightened' humanist discourse that values shape over color, integrity over chaos, form over indeterminacy.

However, the way in which the chromophobic discourse typifies color is highly schizophrenic. As the quote above shows, it endows color with both positive and negative traits, it figures color as a mesh of supposedly irreconcilable dualisms. The chromatic discourse manifests itself as a head of Janus with a chromophobic and a chromophilic face. Yet, this two-sidedness

does not constitute a clear-cut dichotomy: “Chromophobia might not really have its opposite in chromophilia; chromophobia might be seen as simply chromophilia’s weak form. [C]hromophobia recognizes the otherness of colour but seeks to play it down, while chromophilia recognizes the otherness of colour and plays it up” (Batchelor 71). Chromophilia thus lies at the far end of a discursive color spectrum and abolishes hierarchical dualisms, while reveling in color’s refractory qualities which are – as we shall shortly see – linked to the notion of the ‘digital’.

The chromophilic discourse opens up a posthuman possibility for a new materialist view of nature. Especially the relationship of color to the rationale of human language is of interest to our discussion of chromatic otherness in *Annihilation*. To this end, a passage where Batchelor quotes art critic Charles Blanc’s (1813-1882) chromophobic discourse is highlighted:

> This is a strange image – colour as the language of nature – but it is crucial, as Blanc goes on to make clear: “Intelligent beings have a language represented by articulate sounds; organised beings, like all animals and vegetables, express themselves by cries or forms, contour or carriage. Inorganic nature has only the language of colour. It is by colour alone that a certain stone tells us it is a sapphire or an emerald... Colour, then, is the peculiar characteristic of the lower forms of nature”. (25)

This chromophobic outlook on crystals, gems and precious stones becomes crucial, as *Annihilation* prominently features such seemingly inanimate objects.

The womb-like cavern, where most of the film’s perplexing finale takes place, comprises shiny surfaces which seem to be completely composed of precious stones. Furthermore, the above-mentioned crystalline trees are a distinctive feature of the film while the entire Shimmer itself could be designated as a gem-like, prismatic, shimmering, natural environment where all beings, all things present, do not adhere to a set organization for they morph continuously.

According to Batchelor, gems often stand in for color-in-general, as they convey the notion that color is active, alive, projecting, and that light appears to shine from within (74). In the same section Batchelor mentions how writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley explained the place of

precious stones in the so-called 'literature of paradise': "it was not in itself the rarity of these stones […]; it was, again, their colour. For this colour – intense, heightened, pure, unqualified – offered a glimpse of the 'Other World', a world beyond Nature and the Law, a world undimmed by language, concepts, meanings and uses" (75). *Annihilation*'s gem-like Shimmer also seems to consist of such an almost celestial space, a natural world beyond the nature of man, illuminated by the splendor of indeterminate formlessness and chromatic hybridity.

Batchelor goes on to comment on Blanc's and Huxley's very distinct yet kindred views on the 'language of gems':

> For both men, gems and shiny things are significant because they represent that which exists beyond the reach of language. In fact, Blanc does describe gems as a kind of language, but it is a paradoxical, metaphorical and mute one, the language of the formless, a language entirely alien to human consciousness. For Huxley, precious stones are precious because they "may remind our unconscious of what it enjoys at the mind's antipodes". For both, in different ways, these shiny objects are unspeakable. (76-77)

Both Blanc and Huxley figure a kind of polarization between language and color. However, Blanc tries to anxiously keep these poles apart in stark opposition, whereas Huxley's chromophilic stance sees the dive into color as a heavenly liberation from the restrictive structure of language.

For Huxley "our main problem is that we have fallen out of colour and into line, writing and language" (79). Batchelor states that to attend to color is "to attend to the limits of language. It is to try to imagine, often through the medium of language, what a world without language might be like" (79). *Annihilation* imagines a posthuman world which falls 'back' into color and out of the humanist integrity of shape, form, and line. The 'language' of its posthuman nature is one of formlessness, as it entails unceasing transformations, trying to imagine through the visual language of cinema, what a world without species boundaries and without humanist hierarchies would look

like. The film attends to the limits of human language and its normative structures by adorning itself with an abundance of *digitally* generated colors that convey its 'unspeakable' nature.

Here we turn to chromophilia and the shift from analogical to digital color. Batchelor states that the analogical color circle dominated the understanding/use of color in art, establishing relationships *between* colors, but also implying "an almost feudal hierarchy among colours – primaries, secondaries and tertiaries, the pure and the less pure" (105). With the digitalization of color, which Batchelor links to the color-chart specifically, the previous seamless spectrum of the analogical color circle, which comprised an undivided whole, a merging of one color into another, became something that consisted of individuated, fragmented and plural 'colors'.

These pluralized colors are captured in discrete units where "there is no mergence or modulation; there are only boundaries, steps and edges. Analogical colour is colour; digital colour is colours" (105). Batchelor directly links the digitalization of color in art during the industrial postwar era "to the experience of modernity. These colours are more the colours of things than atmospheres. More urban colours than the colours of nature. Artificial colours, city colours, industrial colours" (105). I suggest another shift in color is in effect when it comes to the past decade's 'hyper-digitization' of color, and *Annihilation* adheres to this second shift in a posthuman and new materialist manner.

The Shimmer assembles its color-scapes in such a way that the modernist sharp edges of urban, industrial color once again get blurred, but this time into a refracted or even a diffracted indeterminate color spectrum. The digital color chart's individuated plural colors are now intricately entangled with one another in a postmodern and posthuman convalescence. The waves of color that engulf us in *Annihilation* are hyper-digital glimmers of otherness which are as refractory as they are fractalized. This is not the feudal hierarchy of the analogical color circle

where the different colors blur into one another according to "a geometry of triangulation and a grammar of complementarity" (105). As with the modernist digitalized colors, there are no more hierarchies within this postmodern version of hyper-digital color, but the colors also do not relate to each other as discrete units. Rather the hyper-digital colors intermix in dazzling, irreverent ways.

This vibrant hybridity which thrives on shimmers, shines, reflections, refractions and diffractions, revels in a strange (re)turn to an otherworldly nature where the boundaries between the technological and the organic are (re)mixed on a sub-cellular level. It is a fall into color where hybridity and impurity prevail as the formerly discrete digital color units and the formerly distinct units of human life are intertwined within a novel posthuman and postmodern mosaic. This constitutes a powerful loss of the self which uproots humanistic dualisms through its chromatic mutations, and which annihilates the rational human world with its hierarchical structures and anthropocentric selves. Yet this an–nihil–ating force does not reduce reality to sheer nothingness, it in fact entails a radical state of being immanently without emptiness in exuberant color.

The Rhythm of the Dividing Pair: *Annihilation*'s Refractive Clonal Encounter

At this point I want to emphasize why I am so thoroughly combing through the specific ways in which our final case study visualizes its speculative apocalypse. *Annihilation*'s chromophilic and lavish lack of nonexistence that (re)assembles life as it refracts it, constitutes a profound 'reworlding' of sorts, as feminist cyborg-scholar Donna Haraway might call it. In her article "Making Kin" (2015) Haraway argues that it deeply "matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts" (160). She pleads for a re(con)figuration of the concept of kin and kinship between all earthlings as 'kinds-as-assemblages' (162) instead of framing life in the restrictive categories of species, to overcome the menaces of our current epoch of the Anthropocene.

Haraway, in her new manifesto of sorts, urges that if "there is to be multispecies ecojustice, which can also embrace diverse human people, it is high time that feminists exercise leadership in imagination, theory, and action to unravel the ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species" (161). This unraveling can be set on by "the webs of speculative fabulations, speculative feminism, science fiction, and scientific fact" (160). The way she calls forth her 'Chthulucene', an epoch of sorts she envisions following the Anthropocene, is profoundly embedded in fiction as a form.[40] "Mathematically, visually, and narratively, it matters which figures figure figures, which systems systematize systems. [W]e need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections" (160). We can add that it also deeply matters what cinematic visions visualize visions.

Annihilation forms one of these infringing figures which holds the potential to unravel the ties of genealogy, kin, and species, as it systematizes a kind of ecological system that goes beyond the normative category of the human, by going beyond species boundaries as it goes beyond hierarchical color-schemes too. Therefore, it is fruitful or even vital to scrutinize the specific way *Annihilation* tells its story, for it indeed matters which figures figure figures. Our case study envisions and systematizes a kind of ecological system which goes beyond the human by going beyond normative species boundaries. It prompts us to conceptualize a transspecies recreation or a kind of '(re)fractalization' of life which portends to an-nihil-ate the distinctive and hegemonic category of the 'human' as we know it, through evoking its prismatic posthuman color.

Hence *Annihilation* advances a kindred claim to the post-anthropocentric one Haraway advocates: "No species, not even our own arrogant one pretending to be good individuals in so-

[40] Haraway's Chthulucene refers to a process of reworlding. She insists "that we need a name for the dynamic ongoing sym-chthonic forces and powers of which people are a part, within which ongoingness is at stake" (160). Haraway first developed this argument in an article published in *Environmental Humanities* (2015), which formed the basis for her book *Staying with the Trouble* (2016). All citations made in this chapter stem from the original article.

called modern Western scripts, acts alone; assemblages of organic species and of abiotic actors make history, the evolutionary kind and the other kinds too" (159). The film's reassembling force seems to resurge to us from out of our own mind's antipodes, while refracting life in a crystalline manner. *Annihilation* forces us to radically rethink our thinking about our human selves, by ways of its iridescent splendor as the film harnesses a chromophilic liberation from humanist hierarchies.

But what kind of figure of refigured humanity does this film figure through its mathematical, visual, and narrative refractions? What are we to make of Lena's refractive clonal encounter with the self? What are we to make of the fact that our protagonist's refractive encounter is foreshadowed by a diegetic viewing of her husband Kane's clonal encounter captured on camera that we as spectators along with Lena will witness just before her own doubling commences?[41] How does this doubled alien, sub-cellular replication of the self of our current case study's principal pair relate to our other case studies' clonal encounters with the self? To answer these questions, we first must take a closer look how *Annihilation* renders its encounter with the self.

The clonal confrontation of the film's refractive doubles takes place during its mind-boggling final act, which takes up almost a quarter of the two-hour run-time and is set in the mysterious lighthouse. Lena has followed Ventress, by now the only other crew member who is still alive, into the depths of the womb-like cavern. As she sits in the middle of this subterranean space, we hear Ventress prophesize: "It's the last phase. Vanished in the havoc. Unfathomable mind…" As she utters these last words, she inhales deeply and throws her head back.

[41] When Lena enters the lighthouse, she finds a tripod with a camera that is pointed at an unrecognizably charred corpse. This video-camera's footage shows Kane entering the cavern and encountering something that can only be described as a floating, morphing, polychromatic, light emitting blob resembling a black hole that sucks in small particles out of the environment. After these hectically handheld close-ups, we see stationary images of Kane recording a last confession before he commits suicide with a phosphorus grenade: "I thought I was a man. I had a life. People called me Kane. And now I'm not so sure. If I wasn't Kane, what was I? Was I you? Were you me?" Next, another Kane steps into the frame from behind the camera and watches how his original burns after detonating the grenade.

We see that her own skin has taken on the texture and color of the sleek, black oily material surrounding her, and her eyes have disappeared. She then says: “And now beacon. Now sea.” Lena approaches her from behind with her weapon raised and says: “Dr. Ventress?” As she turns around, suddenly her face is ‘normal’ again. Ventress references the last time Lena and her spoke, that she needed to know what was inside the lighthouse. Then she nods her head and says that “that moment’s passed.” While grabbing her chest she achingly states: “It’s inside me now.” Lena is shocked and asks: “What’s… inside you?”

Figure 4.13: Ventress disintegrates inside the womb-like cavern (TC:01:33:06).

Ventress answers: “It’s not like us. It’s unlike us. I don’t know what it wants, or if it wants. But it will grow until it encompasses everything. Our bodies and our minds will be fragmented into their smallest parts until not one part remains. Annihilation.” The film’s score swells up and Ventress’ body starts to convulse. As she screams, forceful rays of colorful, fiery light and energy shoot out of her mouth, materializing into glistening droplets or globules and swirling streams, filling the cavern’s entire space. Ventress’ body glows intensely and disintegrates as all her body’s matter is dispersed out of her (fig.4.13).

A flash of light fills the cavern while the frame momentarily goes to a complete white-out. As the all-encompassing light fades, we discern individual shimmering globules floating around, while Lena's face comes into view. As they dance through the air, the globules start to divide like cells, and then converge to form a vortex of energy in the middle of the cavern, on the spot where Ventress disintegrated. This vortex is the same as the floating, morphing, polychromatic blob resembling a black hole that we saw just before the film's title was presented and which we got a glimpse of on Kane's video (note 42). Yet, now we can discern more clearly that, although it is in continuous motion, the object's shape resembles a crystalline formation, with a light emitting 'iris' in the middle of its symmetrical yet unceasingly swirling billow. Lena stands eye to eye with this completely alien entity, as bright, liquid-like energy radiates from the opening of the vortex.

Figure 4.14: The Shimmer's abyss staring back at Lena (TC:01:34:31).

The camera gyrates around the pulsating mass and appears to get sucked into its blooming aperture. We then cut to a close-up of Lena staring into this abyss, releasing an ecstatic gasp as her pupils are lit up by the vortex's emanations. Subsequently the viewer is plunged back into the psychedelic orifice, first with a direct shot of the vortex's opening, and next with a shot from inside the alien black hole, looking back at a perplexed Lena, while light from outside the vaginal shaft

behind illuminates her contours (fig.4.14). Another reverse-shot showing a POV of Lena beholding the kaleidoscopic vortex that continues to take on more entrancing shapes and colors is intercut with an extreme close-up of Lena's eyes, in which we see the vortex reflected. Next, a droplet of blood on the bridge of her nose gets sucked into the vortex.

As Lena's blood is drawn into the vortex's center, the droplet becomes luminescent and starts to divide itself in an identical fashion as we have seen the black-and-white footage of the cervical cancer cells multiply in the first scene after the film's title image. As they reached a doubled pair, we cut back to a shot of Lena from inside the vortex comparable to figure 4.15. Before her eyes, the cells created by the division process come together to form an iridescent featureless, black oily humanoid-shaped creature. As Lena staggers backward, we cut to a panning shot that shows the full figure of this entity facing Lena, while the vortex disappears – first transforming into a shimmer-like film – into thin air (fig.4.15). Lena shouts "No, no, no no!" as she opens fire onto this refractive clone that materialized out of her.

Figure 4.15: Lena's refractive clone materializes in front of her (TC:01:35:34).

Swirls of energy emerge from the creature's back as the bullets hit it. Her clone steps forward to approach her, but Lena runs toward the vaginal shaped shaft. As we cut to a shot in

which Lena emerges from the hole into the ground floor of the lighthouse, her refractive clone already stands next to the tripod in the center of the circular space, while the last swirls of energy that the bullets made, are drawn into its body. At this point the elaborate dance macabre commences, in which Lena's refractive clone mirrors her every move, yet it seems to always lag a little behind (fig.4.16). Lena grabs the tripod and tries to hit the creature, but she herself is knocked out and the screen goes to another white-out. Her clone then crouches down onto the floor to assume a mirrored position next to Lena and the echoing dance of the doubles continues.

Figure 4.16: Lena comes face to face with her refractive clone (TC:01:36:49).

Lena runs to the door, but her clone catches her and pins her to the door as she pushes back against it. In an extreme close-up, but fading in and out of focus, we see how it presses its body so tightly against Lena, that she loses consciousness. As she falls to the ground, her refractive clone falls with her in an abundance of multicolored rays of light reflecting in the camera's lens, a shimmering fall into color itself (fig.4.17&4.18). We then cut to the sun setting (which is a diffractive phenomenon that allows us to see the colors in the sky) behind the crystalline trees.

In what follows next, the mirroring dance macabre continues as the refractive pair now really face each other. As Lena steps away from it, the refractive clone steps toward her. Lena then

grabs another phosphorus grenade from Kane's backpack, and as she places it into the clone's hands, touching its hands with her hands, its skin starts to change and its entire figure morphs into an exact duplicate of Lena, with all her features, including the ouroboros-lemniscate tattoo. Lena then pulls the pin, dives away, and a bright white light fills the screen once more. Lena runs to the door as the creature starts to sparkle from the grenade. In the doorway outside, as the door swings shut, she looks at her clone in the human looking face one more time.

Figure 4.17: Reiteration of lens flare during the clonal danse macabre (TC:01:38:24).

Figure 4.18: Lena and her refractive clone synchronously 'fall into color' (TC:01:38:31).

Inside we see the clone back in its iridescent form with its hands on fire. It turns to Kane's corpse, while the fire continues to spread over its body. It touches Kane's charred head, which also catches fire. Next it touches one of the lighthouse's tendrils, which starts to burn as well. The fire is both blue and red. Outside, Lena watches the fire spreading over the outer walls. Inside, the creature fully engulfed with multi-colored flames crawls back into the hole toward the cavern, where it spreads the flames all over the black, iridescent floor and walls. A shot from inside the vaginal shaft, which is burning, shows how the creature crawls back onto the spot where the vortex materialized (fig.4.19), echoing the shot that returned Lena's gaze when she looked into the alien abyss (fig.4.14).

Figure 4.19: Lena's refractive clone incinerates in the womb-like cavern (TC:01:42:34).

A few shots follow that alternate between Lena standing outside watching the lighthouse burn, and the entity inside burning within the cavern. When we again cut to an outside shot of Lena, we also see all the crystalline trees bursting into flames. Inside the creature's body completely disintegrates as the entire cavern is on fire, and yet another white-out is utilized to show the intensity of this refractive clonal conflagration. Outside, the crystalline trees crumble

down as they shatter apart while they fall to the ground. In the surrounding forest, the shimmer dissipates. Then the last interrogation scene starts.

We return to the military base where Lena is questioned by a military official about her experiences inside the Shimmer. He asks her: “So it was alien? Can you describe its form?” A resolute “No” constitutes her reply. The official continues by asking her: “Was it carbon-based?” With a blank stare and an evenly unflinching demeanor, she says: “I don’t know.” Slightly baffled, her interrogator mutters while shaking his head: “What did it want?” Lena squints her eyes and while the camera almost imperceptibly zooms in on her head and torso, which again are carefully framed in between the two vertical lines on the wall behind her – visually imprisoning her even more than the sterile interrogation room in which she is being held and observed, already does (comparable with fig.4.22) – she states: “I don’t think it wanted anything.”

While the camera holds a firm grip on Lena’s face, the official says off-screen: “But it attacked you.” Shrugging a little, Lena replies: “It mirrored me. I attacked it. I’m not sure it even knew I was there.” Cutting back to the military official’s frowning face, tucked away behind his plastic, reflecting quarantine mask, he stresses: “It came here for a reason. It was mutating our environment. It was destroying everything.” The camera during this last line cuts back to a close-up of Lena, who disapprovingly shakes her head while looking down. “It wasn’t destroying. It was changing everything.” In a telling manner she then looks up to the official and forcefully asserts: “It was making something new.”

A close-up of the masked face asking, “Making what?” follows. Lena again replies by saying: “I don’t know.” However, this time around she seems less resolute. While we hold on Lena’s close-up, the official interjects by stating: “A team reached the lighthouse a few hours ago. Everything is ash. If what you encountered was once alive, it seems it’s now dead.” Lena is

somewhat distraught after this claim. The camera then cuts to a carefully composed close-up of a glass of water sitting on a tray next to the chair Lena is seated in (fig.4.20).

Figure 4.20: Lena's hand reflects in a glass of water (TC:01:45:44).

Figure 4.21: Refracting of Lena's and Kane's hand in a water glass echoed (TC: 00:09:25).

Although this specific shot is quite brief and does not seem particularly meaningful on first glance, it visually echoes a shot from an important early scene in as subtle fashion, namely the scene where Lena's husband Kane unexpectedly returned home (fig.4.21). While the legs of other military officials watching the interview from behind safety glass – all dressed in blue quarantine

suits – are shown in the background, the spectator is presented with this odd close-up of the water glass while Lena's figure itself is obscured by the relatively low vantage point of the camera.

Only her legs, the lower part of her torso and her hands are shown in this shot. In this way, the seemingly insignificant glass of water gains an overwhelming prominence. It is the only element in the entire shot that is in full focus and its central positioning within the frame highlights its importance, as does the symmetrical placement of the glass on a tray on a table. We see how Lena's hand, on which she wears her golden wedding ring, reaches for the glass. In this instance her hand's image is reflected, or rather refracted and mirrored, within the water in the glass.

Figure 4.22: Lena puts the glass back with her lemniscate tattoo clearly in sight (TC:01:45:51).

In a meticulous manner, she takes a sip from the glass and precisely places it back in its original position. Then the camera cuts to a forward shot of Lena while she drinks and puts the glass down (fig.4.22). Directly after this, the camera cuts back to the close up of the glass on the tray, but this time the glass is framed even closer and the 'mutated' reflection of Lena's hand with wedding ring claims even more attention from the viewer (fig.4.23). "Now, will you tell me what happened to my husband?" Lena asks the official, and the scene ends.

Figure 4.23: Reiteration/doubling of reflection/refraction of Lena's hand in glass (TC: 01:45:58).

Refracting our Human Reflection with an Agential Cut

It might seem strange to focus so intensely on a mere reflection in a water glass, especially after all the hallucinatory imagery we have also discussed in this chapter. Yet, in my opinion this specific shot encapsulates quite effectively the core concept of *Annihilation*. As was stated before, in this film our 'normal', normative human existence is nullified by an ethereal, alien force that functions as 'a prism of light *and* life' that remixes, doubles, copies, rewrites and reassembles all life on earth by and through its unyielding *refractions* of our reality. So, this reflection, which as a matter of fact comprises a refraction of the image it reflects, is paramount. If one traces the exact meaning of the word 'refraction', one finds multiple definitions.

In physics refraction means "the phenomenon whereby a ray of light (or other electromagnetic radiation) is diverted or deflected from its previous course in passing from one medium into another, or in traversing a medium of varying density" (OED). Alternatively, in astronomy, refraction points to "the effect of the atmosphere in making terrestrial objects appear higher than they are, or otherwise distorted; a deflection or distortion of this kind" (OED). Refraction's figurative meaning is defined as "the mediation, alteration, or distortion of something,

usually something pure or absolute, arising from the medium of expression, personal perspective, social context, etc.; an instance of this" (OED). All these definitions could be relevant to *Annihilation*, as the film intrinsically deals with the mutation of entities in diverging manners through an encounter with 'an other', in which not only the nature of these entities but the normative perception these entities have on themselves are altered in the process as well.

The etymological root of the word 'refraction' stems from the Latin 'refractio(-onis)', which translates into something like a breaking up, a rupture or a separation of things. 'Re-fractio' is a noun derived from the past-participle stem of 'refringere' ('re' means 'back/anew/again' and 'frangere' means 'to break up'). Hence the word refraction has a common lineage with the word 'fringe': an outer edge, a margin, a periphery, a border. We can discern the meaning of the word refraction as operating by means of resetting certain boundaries, redistributing former demarcations and in the process of separating new assemblages are carved out.

It is this sort of refraction that, in my opinion, forms the recreating life force in *Annihilation*, in a comparable antithetical manner as we have seen the word annihilation operating within our case study as well. By being attentive to what the previous margins reflect in a fashion which aligns itself with a post-human, post-dualist and post-anthropocentric stance, it is this kind of refraction that forms *Annihilation*'s re-creating life force; the Shimmer *cuts* things as much 'apart' as it cuts things immanently 'together'. We could see the film's refraction of light and life as a radical configuration of Haraway's new 'kin'. *Annihilation* too unravels the ties of genealogy and kin, and kin and species.

Furthermore, within a similar yet very distinct strand of theoretical thought, we could see *Annihilation*'s refraction of life as operating in a kindred manner to Barad's notion of the 'agential cut' (2008). This is a cut that does not slice entities into an opposition, like the separation of dead

and alive, subject and object, human and nonhuman. In contrast to the Cartesian split between body and mind, this deeply material cut rather "enacts a *local* resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy" (Barad 133–original emphasis). This kind of cut 'jointly cuts together', just as filmic frames are spliced together within the cinematic apparatus and specifically in the technique of editing.[42]

This agential cut cuts together, just as species are cleft together on a cellular level by the Shimmer, while the previously discrete modernist color units of the color chart are spliced together in the film's refractive color-scapes. *Annihilation* hybridizes its hyper-digital colors into a posthuman chromophilia that harnesses the irreverent and indeterminate potential of the loss of the rational anthropocentric self. As stated earlier, *Annihilation*'s re(con)figuring of the categories of life falls in line with a particular new materialist way of thought, most famously theorized in Barad's diffractive quantum thinking.

Both in Barad's perception of the universe as a quantum entangled world and in *Annihilation*'s Shimmer there are no inherent boundaries anymore, not for the human body, not for the sense of self or for 'nature' in general. Barad's new materialist 'essence' of nature seems to be that there is no stable or fixed nature of essence, there is no absolute core within existence, there is no 'outside of nature'. All is *of* the world, *of* the universe. Everything, all matter including 'us', is 'intra-connected' (Barad 133).

Existence itself comprises only 'phenomena' which are entangled in ever-changing assemblages. The diffracted states in which these phenomena exist are iteratively performed with each 'agential cut' which momentarily enacts a delineation of boundaries with continuously different 'roles' and no set hierarchies or dualisms. Because all former categories of life are not

[42] The 'technique' of editing splices, cuts, assembles, or merges images together, as the term 'montage' connotes (used for the practice of editing in certain strands of film theory, esp. Sergei Eisenstein and the Soviet Montage).

fixed anymore, notions like agency, causality, individuality, and subjectivity are to be appreciated as continuously in flux and in 'intra-action'.

Annihilation's agential refraction assembles, it cuts through the segregating categories of hierarchical species life as it cuts together refractory color-schemes, establishing unruly intra-actions between new, indeterminate forms of mosaic life. This film's refraction is something that literally 're-fringes', it reorders the borders of light while transforming formerly conventional boundaries of life. We as a refracted human figure can potentially become entangled with all the categories and forms of life by means of its cataclysmic and cancerous chromatic refraction.

In this sense, our last case study's encounter with the self at once disturbs and confirms many of the previous chapter's conclusions about clonal subjecthood. At first sight, *Annihilation*'s clonal encounter might not be discerned as featuring entities that typically can be defined as clones. I stated in my first chapter that technically a clone is a biological organism that is multiplied by means of genetic replication, on the basis of the DNA of an original; an artificially created 'twin' or series of twins. Furthermore, the basic scientific definition, stemming from the *Chambers Dictionary* that I provided in my introduction, states that a clone entails "two or more individuals with identical genetic makeup derived, by asexual reproduction, from a single common parent or ancestor". Lena's and Kane's doubled 'refractions' are not 'artificially' grown in a lab by human scientists, as most would instinctively presume when thinking of clones.

Our film's principal pair's duplicates are shown to be utterly alien in their conception. But they are germinated on the basis of the DNA of an original, their multiplication is realized by means of a sort of genetic replication or asexual reproduction, and – although they are pointedly alien – they are biological, living organisms that constitute identical copies of that original. Moreover, our entire case study is infused with a clonal logic that is distinctly different from the

more classical, humanist identity structures of the figure of the double. Yet, this alien sort of cloning does not entail a mere replication of the old, original being, rather it constitutes the making of something continuously new, while still engendering a kind of qualitative indistinguishability with the entity that is replicated.

Therefore, even though *Annihilation*'s alien clones are only present as a doubled pair and do not multiply beyond a dual duality – we only have refractive doubles of Lena and Kane – their existence does overthrow the privileging hierarchy between copy and original, unlike *The 6th Day*'s refusal of its clonal multiplicity which insists upon the authenticity of the original. Through its 'uneven' doubled doubling of its principal pair who are reunited and even 'remarried' at the film's end, our case study trivializes the question of who the original is and who the refracted copy is.

In the film's very last scene, Lena is allowed to visit Kane in his quarantine room, where he sits on his bed that is set up in an isolation tent. As she enters the room, the camera films its first shots of Lena and Kane through the tent's translucent material, creating a Shimmer-like effect. Filmed from inside Kane's tent, Lena asks him: "You aren't Kane, are you?" With a blank stare he answers: "I don't think so." Lena inhales sharply as she nods her head while looking down. Kane then asks: "Are you Lena?" As she looks up at him, the medium-close shot of Lena inside the tent is intercut with a medium-long shot from outside the tent, enveloping this two-shot of Lena and Kane with the Shimmer-like effect. Kane stands up and steps toward her, while the camera slowly tracks back, and pans left. In the same shot, he hugs her, and she returns his embracing gesture.

An eerie low-pitched static noise grows stronger as the camera continues to pan left and crosses one of the room's pillars, now filming the embracing couple through a heavily blue-tinted window, until the pair is framed in a visual box on the right side of the screen (fig.4.24). We then cut to a close-up of Kane's face as he continues to hold and rock Lena, while we see an iridescent

shimmer lighting up the irises of Kane's eyes. Directly after we cut to a close-up of Lena and see that the same shimmer lights up her irises as well. While the spectator and Lena both know that Kane is not Kane anymore, but his refractive double, we as viewers still believe that Lena is her original. Yet, Lena's silence after the question "Are you Lena?" and her iridescently glowing eyes tell us that she too is radically transformed beyond her original self.

Figure 4.24: The refractive principal pair is visually 'remarried' in the last scene (TC:01:47:55).

Annihilation's refractive clones are not *Moon*'s 'the multiple are one', nor are they *Alien: Resurrection*'s 'the one is multiple', nor does its infinitely refracting growth mirror *The 6th Day*'s process of cloned life, which spanned a serial assemblage of living, dying, living again, dying again and living again, possibly ad infinitum. What *Annihilation*'s refractive cloning of all matter re(con)figures is an an-nihil-lating notion of 'all are multiple', yet 'all' is also intimately 'intra-connected' in a Baradian quantum entangled manner. Yet, this type of thinking needs to be connected to yet another important posthuman conception.

Here we turn to Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013) and her notion of 'difference as the principle of not-One'. In this work she advances a sensibility that avoids anthropocentrism and from her background in feminist anti-humanism, she conceptualizes something she terms a 'vitalist

materialism'. Her specific conception of posthuman subjectivity is deeply embedded in philosopher Gilles Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking, especially his work in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) that he wrote with Felix Guattari. Their lines of flight permeate Braidotti's vitalist conception of subjectivity as a process of continuous becoming; a fluid, fragmented, relational logic of nomadic being.

Braidotti's posthuman theory of subjectivity does not rely on classical humanism and invokes a neo-Spinozist monism in following Deleuze, which views matter as vital and self-organizing.[43] This monism relocates "difference outside the dialectical scheme, as a complex process of differing which is framed by both internal and external forces and is based on the centrality of the relation to multiple others" (56). The classical emphasis "on the unity of all matter, which is central to Spinoza, is reinforced by an updated scientific understanding of the self-organizing or 'smart' structure of living matter" (57). She vitally reconfigures a kind of difference or differentiation across sameness or similitude that goes beyond a monism in which all is one.

As Braidotti argues that all living matter is 'intelligent', or self-organized (autopoietic), since "it is driven by informational codes, which both deploy their own bars of information, and interact in multiple ways with the social, psychic and ecological environments", she posits that "subjectivity in this complex field of forces and data flows" becomes "an expanded relational self" (60). Hence, she sees "the wider scope of animal and non-human life", which Braidotti calls *zoe*, as "the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself" in opposition to the narrow anthropocentric notion of *bios* (60). She thusly calls for a *zoe*-centered egalitarianism.

Braidotti hails this egalitarianism as "the core of the post-anthropocentric turn: it is a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic trans-species

[43] Braidotti calls this 'radical immanence', as "this approach rejects all forms of transcendentalism" (56).

commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism" (60). Braidotti claims that contemporary subjectivity actualizes "the virtual possibilities of an expanded, relational self that functions in a nature–culture continuum and is technologically mediated" (60).

A certain strand of post-feminist posthumanism, which in the iteration of Anneke Smelik's and Nina Lykke's *Bits of Life: Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience & Technology* (2008) is termed the 'Feminist Cultural Studies of Technoscience', proposes a sort of 'fractalization' of the figure of the cyborg. "By taking the fragmentation of the body-in-ruins from postmodernism", their figuration of 'bits of life' "assumes a posthuman definition of the body" as a "body that is not-one" (xi). In invoking the 'bits of life' figure as a "middle road between the metaphorical and the material" against a "background of a diversity of blurred boundaries and machinic assemblages" they present a "condensed feminist analysis of present-day technoscience and biocultures" (xii). These bits of life push the cyborg's questioning of fixed entities and bodily boundaries even further, as they intricately intermingle with Braidotti's conception of zoe.

Braidotti states that "posthuman ethics urges us to endure the principle of not-One at the in-depth structures of our subjectivity by acknowledging the ties that bind us to the multiple 'others' in a vital web of complex interrelations" (100). This ethical principle breaks up "the fantasy of unity, totality and one-ness, but also the master narratives of primordial loss, incommensurable lack and irreparable separation" (100). Braidotti emphasizes instead that "one is the effect of irrepressible flows of encounters, interactions, affectivity and desire, which one is not in charge of" (100). In an affirmative vein, her posthuman nomadic vital political theory stresses the priority of this relation.

Braidotti describes this experience of not-Oneness as humbling, and "constitutive of the non-unitary subject" (100). It anchors "the subject in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and

external others that are constitutive of that entity which, out of laziness and habit, we call the 'self'" (100). Braidotti underlines "the productive aspects of the condition of not-One, that is to say a generative notion of complexity" (100). In channeling Deleuze and Guattari, her materialist politics of posthuman differences function by way of potential becomings: becoming-animal, becoming-earth, becoming-machine and becoming-imperceptible.[44] This trajectory can also be found in *Annihilation*'s transmutations of life. When Shepard is killed by the transmutated bear, her voice gets incorporated into its death-roar, effecting a becoming animal of some sort. Radek becomes 'earth' as she transforms into a humanoid tree. And Lena's reproduction of her refractive double can be discerned as a machinic assemblage which engenders a becoming-imperceptible.

Moreover, the clonal paradigmatic relation of the self conceptually materializes both the 'body that is not-one' and Braidotti's idea of not-Oneness. As a clone you are possibly one of many *many* other clones. The notion of the double already problematized the supposed sacred uniqueness and wholeness of a person, but in the clone a rationale of duality becomes a logic of infinite seriality, exhibiting salient differences in a continuity of sameness. The splitting of the self in the clone does not engender a duality of a good and bad half, rather it produces multiple similar yet distinct alternatives of the self. The fractalization of the self in the figure of the clone can replicate potentially infinite *paradigmatic* alternatives that can be seen as differing dimensions of the self.[45]

It seems that through the figure of the clone our humanist sense of self implodes precisely because the posthuman subjectivity of cloned embodiments expands, potentially infinitely. Although Braidotti was talking about a real-life clone when she advanced that Dolly "stretches the

[44] Seen as radical empirical immanence and not transcendence, Braidotti states that death as the inhuman within "marks the becoming-imperceptible of the subject as the furthest frontier of the processes of intensive transformation or becoming" (100). A true an-nihil-lating becoming of something new.

[45] Here the Emersonian notion of 'an unattained but attainable self' which Stanley Cavell through his 'moral perfectionism' conceptualizes in *Cities of Words* (2004), becomes particularly relevant, as it entails a self that also supplements the self in an ongoing process (see my first chapter's last section).

longitude and latitude of thought itself, adding depth, intensity and contradiction" (74), we might transpose this kind of thinking upon the figure of the clone more generally within its fictional, cinematic incarnations as an expanded, relational self. The pursuit of sameness or similarity of identity through cloning turns out to generate an intricate form of interlinked difference.

Annihilation's refractive cloning even takes cloning to a new level, to a post-cellular kind of cloning, perhaps forming a post-replication of sorts that intervenes in our understanding of reproduction and opens up a new, posthuman way to think about this kind of replication. A more conventional understanding of cloning would be seen as reflection, but in *Annihilation* we see how the cloning and hybridity that is seen reproduced in *Alien: Resurrection* becomes more of a Baradian interference pattern, posing the alien reproduction at hand as diffraction rather than a (distorting) reflection. It is not just that this film is morphing the regular hybridizing, but it saliently interweaves the notion of intra-connection as well.

Annihilation's alien force indeed operates like cancer; it is a part of you, it is you, it is 'alive', but it refracts a towering form of mutating growth, it makes something other out of you, transforming you in the process by making something radically new. The annihilation of *Annihilation* does not entail a breaking up of older taxonomies, rather it encompasses a refractory resetting of fringes, an endless entanglement of former borders, genetic as well as chromatic. What was at the margin becomes all-encompassing and ubiquitous, just like the film's entrancing prismatic color-scapes.

Annihilation prompts us to rethink the ways in which life is structured, in the manners in which Braidotti and Haraway and Barad rethink the matter of life's matter. What in my opinion is most salient about *Annihilation*'s rhizomatic entangled ecological thinking is the fact that it seems to function by way of a kind of unintended design. The refracting alien force has a sort of agency

without intentionality, much like how Anna Tsing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015) conceptualizes the unintentional design of landscapes' ecosystems and the accompanying indeterminate encounters that transform life.

One could read this agency without intentionality in the line: "I don't think it wanted anything." In cinematically and chromatically re(con)figuring this kind of thinking – an unintentional, indeterminate, crystalline, cancerous, refractory, refractive and fractalizing kind of logic of light and life – *Annihilation* presents us with an infringing perspective which allegorically could liberate us from the annihilating anthropocentric state we are currently in. If one reorders the borders and hierarchies in which we are traditionally structured to think, feel and see, one might see a tumor growing from human cells potentially as a new composite of life instead of a devastating disease. One could perhaps see the ecologically disastrous state we are in as presenting regenerative disruptions, or a pandemic as a cataclysmic reset.

Perhaps this kind of thinking sounds extremely crude and mean-spirited if one realizes that these occurrences are taking countless human lives all over the globe. Nevertheless, I suggest that *Annihilation*'s allegorical criticism is not trying to advocate a destructively nihilistic vision of the human kind, but on the contrary, the film tries vigorously, in all its refracting chromatic splendor, to revive a fertile framework of thought which can imagine a flourishing future for *all* of life's matter. It does so, as the sci-fi genre generally does, by envisioning a radical, in this case an *an-nihil-lating* 'what if scenario' which finds its roots in the anxieties present in our current society and extrapolates it through the fantastical assemblages it produces.

To enter this infringing state of mind we must recognize that the disaster has already happened, that placing the rational human subject with its suffocating hierarchies and its cancerous drive towards exponential growth at the very core of the universe, at the expense of all

other kinds of marginalized ‘others’, utterly destroys life on Earth without any promise of some form of cataclysmic regeneration. We must realize that concepts like individuality, subjectivity and agency are not fixed markers which solely belong to the human condition.

These concepts do not exclusively coincide with the category of the human species as we have figured it till now within our normative humanist discourse which aligns itself with a toxic anthropocentrism that is presently annihilating our planet—albeit in a less swift but therefore also less cataclysmic manner. The fall (back) into color, the loss of the discretely unified category of the human self through chromophilia does not constitute a loss of existence. It might only constitute an annihilation of anthropocentric dictating dualisms, while it simultaneously assembles a potent posthuman potentiality of entanglement. This is the kind of ‘refringing’ *Annihilation* refracts through its chromophilic prism.

CODA

To shed some light on how my dissertation's topic has taken a hold of me, I would like to share a personal anecdote that takes us back some thirty-three years ago. I must have been about 4 years old, and both my parents were getting me ready for bed after allowing me to stay up late. As I have always loved to talk and do some of my best thinking late in the evening, I was still actively chatting away at my mom and dad about what I had experienced that day, and what I had watched on TV, as I was titillated by the virtual experiences these moving images gave me. But I was also excited to go to sleep, for I found it fascinating that in my dreams I could experience even more extraordinary events than the fictional experiences of the movies I saw on the television.

Perhaps inspired by this thought, I found myself wondering out loud: Wouldn't it be awesome if I wake up tomorrow and I was someone else for a day? How exciting would it be if I were someone on the other side of the world, maybe in Africa or in America? Or if I were a boy? Or perhaps even someone older, that I wasn't a child for a day? Think of all the things I could do… Of all the things I could feel… Of all the different friends I could have… But as I was telling my parents about this exciting prospect, I felt the exhilaration that came over me transform into a wave of anxious ambivalence. If I would indeed *be* someone else for a day, I would not be able to realize that I was *being* someone else for that day. I would really be *that* person and I would not know anymore that I was this little girl from Amsterdam wondering how it would be to be someone else.

I have always carried this childhood memory with me, and I believe that my passion for the medium of film in general and my ambition to work within the field of film studies in particular originates from this type of philosophical curiosity that already inspired me as a little girl back then. These existential questions of subjectivity – of what it means to be a 'self' and not an other – have guided my academic career throughout. They fuel my love for the genre of science fiction,

and they have deeply informed this dissertation's central question: What do cinematic fictions of human clones tell us about ourselves and our relations with others? The most succinct answer to this question is that cinematic clones provide us with an encounter with a nonhuman that is like us.

As stated in my introduction, unlike other emblems of posthuman otherness that received much attention in the field of film studies, the figure of the human clone is an artificial human, a posthuman other that is saliently marked by its uncanny similarity with the human self. The clone *is* a human being, but a human that potentially encompasses an intricate continuous *and* discontinuous multiplicity, in consciousness as well as in corporeality. While owing its lineage to the classical double and stemming from a Frankensteinian fascination with so-called automatons (science fictional replicas of human selves), the cinematic figure of the human clone is a conceptually distinct figure as it does not merely entail a good and a bad half, nor a simple artificial replication of the self. But what precisely have the imaginative identity structures of my human clones told us about the normative construction of our human subject-position?

After dissecting how my cloned protagonists have encountered their own selves, and by extrapolating the implications of clonal subjecthood for a feminist posthumanism, I show why it is important to conceive of notions of subjectivity that go beyond normative, humanist frameworks of binary thought. By rendering an expanded, relational, embodied, and embedded self on screen this clonal reconfiguration of subjectivity on posthuman grounds can foster a curiously affirmative, non-hierarchical, and perhaps even 'rhizomatic' formation of selfhood that has the potential to overcome the exclusionary and segregating formulations of a stable self that still inform current Western conceptualizations of human subjecthood for a large part.

My research shows how we can imagine human subjectivity differently, as my clonal close encounters envision new possibilities for what human subjecthood can entail. I show how my films

prompt us to go beyond the normative ways in which we have conceptualized the human, beyond a kind of Cartesian rendering of the human sense of self that is rational, individualist and informed by a primarily masculine, white, and able-bodied vantagepoint. Questioning the presupposed human(ist) core rooted within the Cartesian split between body and mind in different yet kindred ways, my clones unfasten this binary thinking of self and other, and diffractively rework what the concepts of difference and sameness encompass.

Precisely because we are entering yet again novel modes of being that hold the power to uproot tradition and previously hegemonic conventions in our highly technologized, mediated, and complex society, there might be an opportunity for us to rethink the hierarchical, oppositional, humanist frameworks of thought that structure our sense of self and imagine through the cinematic figure of the human clone novel forms of subjectivity that encompass inclusive, supplementing and differentiating alternatives of subjecthood. But why are these binary structures of human identity so detrimental? This is luminously explicated by Barad in their article "Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart" (2014).

In diffracting Trinh Minh-ha's thoughts on "identity and difference defined through a colonizing logic whereby the 'self' maintains and stabilizes itself by eliminating or dominating what it takes to be the other", Barad explains that the "self in positioning itself against the other, constituting the other as negativity, lack, foreignness, sets up an impenetrable barrier between self and other in an attempt to establish and maintain its hegemony. The self ('I') only ever sees itself, and not the other. The other, the 'non-I', is consigned to the shadow region, the space behind the mirror" (170). To counter this colonizing framework, Barad proposes, by not only diffracting Trinh's thinking, but intra-acting with multiple others, a quantum disruption of this binary thinking.

To find a way to "figure difference differently", Barad argues that it "cannot be positioned in opposition to sameness, […] for this would reiterate the same problematic logics. [A] non-binary conception of difference is 'not opposed to sameness, nor synonymous with separateness'" (170). I believe my conceptualization of the clonal paradigmatic relation of the self, in which the clones are seen as alternative dimensions of each other, indeed advances this kind of non-binary conception of difference. This type of clonal subjecthood might inaugurate a new paradigm for the self that is not only not opposed to sameness, nor synonymous with separateness, but also embodies a 'non-unitary subject', in the words of Braidotti, anchored "in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and external others that are constitutive of that entity which, out of laziness and habit, we call the 'self'" (100). The clonal relation of self to self, of multiple iterations of the self that go beyond a binary doubling of the self, is a gliding, fractalizing scale of differences across sameness.

This clonal paradigm operates in a manner akin to how Barad sees the notion of diffraction: "There is no sharp boundary separating the light from the darkness: light appears within the darkness within the light within" (170). "The self is itself a multiplicity, a superposition of beings, becomings, here and there's, now and then's. Superpositions, not oppositions" (176). The clonal relation of self to other self thus encroaches the supposed impenetrable barrier between self and other, as the clonal corps morcelé illuminates the space behind the mirror, as it casts – through a diffractive interference pattern – a light upon the shadow of the non-I by superimposing the I onto the other, engendering a fluid and plural identification of I are You. And the spectator of these cinematic clones is empathetically made to identify with this clonal relation, so that the I also sees the non-I as an other self, instead of only seeing the I as a unitary subject separate from the shadow.

Taken together, the different cinematic envisionings of the figure of the human clone chart the space of this project's larger film-philosophical thought experiment on (post)human subjectivity

and reveal the diffracted modes in which a cloned sense of self can manifest itself within the realm of cinema. As I believe it is fruitful to compare multiple clonal encounters and to put these cloning films in conversation with each other next to introducing them to theoretical interlocutors, my case studies need each other as philosophical sparring partners. The ramifications of the Ripley-clone's continuous corporeality are most intelligibly drawn out alongside Sam Bell's continuous consciousness, as *Moon'*s productive paradigmatic relation of 'the multiple are one' necessary supplements *Alien: Resurrection*'s incorporating paradigmatic relation of 'the one is multiple'.

Furthermore, *The 6th Day*'s reworking of the syntagmatic relation of the self saliently counters the previous two film's renderings of their paradigmatic relations, by advancing an interesting ideological negation of cloning's paradigmatic potential. Lastly, *Annihilation*'s refractive clones provide a vital prism for how the clone is connected to posthuman thought. As separate case studies, my clonal close encounters lose some of their philosophical potency. Just as clonal subjectivity is 'embodied and embedded' like Braidotti's conception of the posthuman, I see my clonal case studies as being diffracted and intra-connected in a Baradian fashion. This is not to say that I believe my dissertation is complete in its current form, as my film-philosophical thought experiment could benefit from even more clonal intra-actions.

The confrontation between the Ripley-clone and the black, sleek, glistening, cloned alien queen, for instance, might strike affective echoes with *Annihilation*'s female, black-oily, shimmering, refractive clonal figure. This kind of discussion on the alien, non-human clone could take my analysis of the figure of the clone beyond a mere human affiliation, while it also illuminates patterns emerging around the gendering of cinematic clones. My case studies consist of two male embodied clones and two female embodied clones, but one could reason that all these clones are still conceived from a masculine point of view. Both male clones touch more upon

cerebral questions of subjectivity, while both female clones are intensely immersed in a bodily type of hybridity. Although all my clonal encounters problematize the relations between body and mind, and unfasten a Cartesian sense of self, a kind of dichotomy between consciousness and corporeality does prevail in my clonal case studies, albeit they are continuously intra-connected.

Nevertheless, by analyzing these cinematic clones we can imagine ways in which identity could be refashioned with a transgressive or even progressive potential within the realm of fiction. Turning towards science fiction to ask philosophical, existential questions about our already fictional sense of our human selves could perhaps make us more susceptible to and accountable for including the non-normative and what we still consider as inhuman. Once the extended alternative dimensions of the self are paradigmatically opened up in the figure of the clone, the productive, affirmative, posthuman differences of potential becomings are vitally discharged within the genetic imaginary that thrives most fully in the cinematic dream machine.

For, as I argued alongside Landsberg in my first chapter, film can indeed be seen as a prosthetic memory in itself; an arena where fictitious yet affective experiences are disseminated across people's minds, a virtual commonplace where actual memories are formed. The moving image is a medium through which we can transport ourselves into the lives of others, sense empathy with entities that are other than ourselves, and live through experiences that are other than our own, in a way comparable to the thought experiment I mused over when I was four. The powerful prescience of cinematic clones lies in how these posthuman figures re(con)figure a relation of sameness with alterity, a bodily kinship that extends the self into the other, by superimposing the non-I onto the I, and by acknowledging continuities between persons, while the medium of cinema opens up rich imaginative avenues of empathizing with this clonal otherness that is so kindred to our own mode of being human.

By interrogating discourses on human subjectivity by analyzing cinematic clones in this dissertation, I forge an original approach to the science fiction genre in particular in the field of film studies through combining film-philosophy, feminist science studies, and posthuman theory – an innovative exploration that aims not only to build upon and to expand disciplinary knowledge, but also sheds light on ethical and political questions of vital concern to the humanities writ large. To conclude this coda, I want to emphasize the way I believe the cinematic medium has shaped my research. If I look at my personal and professional relationship with the cinematic medium, this life force – which film *is* – has been an integral part of my development of thought. Next to the fact that films function as an emphatic prosthetic memory, cinema can be considered as a certain *mode* of thinking. A medium through which memories are formed, is a medium that enables an advancement of consciousness and hence film is a medium through which we are productively able to think.

This kind of film-philosophical stance is something I have prominently brought into this dissertation, engaging with my case studies by way of intensive analysis and discussion. Each of my films presents us with its own distinct cinematic language; a particular ideologically laden vernacular that invites us into philosophical dialogues. I enter my films as true thought experiments and experience the cinematic site as an existential, ethical playground where we can venture into as an innate means to explore who we are. As I have a passionate drive to let the cinematic object genuinely speak for itself, I strive to create a mutually beneficial dialogue for both object and theory – just as a train of thought itself is enhanced by exposing it to challenging viewpoints. Hence, I view my theories as equal sparring-partners within a larger conversation, intrinsically prompted by the filmic text as thought experiment, without creating contrived conversations. We simply need to be attentive to the particular nature of the discourse a certain cinematic object speaks.

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The Boys from Brazil. Franklin J. Schaffner. Producers Circle, 1978.

The Island. Micheal Bay. Dreamworks SKG, 2005.

The One Man Band. George Méliès. Star Film Company, 1900.

The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler. Bob Wynn. Madison Productions Inc., 1971.

They Cloned Tyrone. Juel Taylor, MACRO Media, 2023.

Under the Skin. Jonathan Glazer. Film4 Productions & British Film Institute, 2013.

What Happened to Monday. Tommy Wirkola. Vendome Pictures, 2017.

APPENDIX

Audiovisual representations of cloning in film and television until 2020 (106):

1970's and before (12)
Flesh Feast (Grinter, 1970)
Futureworld (Heffron, 1976)
KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park (Hessler, 1978)
Monsters from Green Hell (Crane, 1957)
Sleeper (Allen, 1973)
The Boys from Brazil (Schaffner, 1978)
The Brood (Cronenberg, 1979)
The Clones (Card & Hunt, 1973)
The Clonus Horror (Fiveson, 1979)
The Darker Side of Terror (Trikonis, 1979)
The Grissom Gang (Aldricg, 1971)
The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler (Wynn, 1971)

1980's (10)
Anna to the Infinite Power (Wiemer, 1983)
Blade Runner (Scott, 1982)
Cherez Ternii K Zvyozdam (Viktorov Brothers, 1981)
Creator (Passer, 1985)
Robotech: The Untold Story (Noburo & Macek, 1986)
Starman (Carpenter, 1984)
Superman IV: The Quest for Peace (Furie, 1987)
The Clones of Bruce Lee (Velasco, 1981)
The Nude Bomb (Donner, 1980)
Warrior of the Lost World (Worth, 1983)

1990's (15 with 10 post-Dolly)
Army of Darkness (Raimi, 1992)
Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (Roach, 1999)
Brave New World (Libman & Williams, 1998)
Body Snatchers (Ferrara, 1993)
Johnny 2.0 (Fearnley, 1997)
Judge Dredd (Cannon, 1995)
Jurassic Park (Spielberg, 1993)
Multiplicity (Ramis, 1996)
Rasen (Iida, 1998)
The Avengers (Chechik, 1998)
The City of Lost Children (Caro & Jeunet, 1995)
The Fifth Element (Besson, 1997)
The Lost World: Jurassic Park (Spielberg, 1997)
Universal Soldier III (Woolnough, 1999)
You Only Live Until You Die (Kanefsky, 1997)

2000' (39)
4 (Khrzhanovskiy, 2005)
2001: A Space Travesty (Goldstein, 2000)
Alien Abduction (Forsberg, 2005)
Appleseed (Aramaki, 2004)
Austin Powers in Goldmember (Roach, 2002)
Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker (Geda, 2000)
Blueprint (Schübel, 2003)
Code 46 (Winterbottom, 2003)
Dragon Fighter (Tang, 2003)
Frankenstein (Mercurio, 2007)
Genetic Admiration (Leeming, 2005)
Godsend (Hamm, 2004)
Impostor (Fleder, 2001)
Jaane Hoga Kya (Ankush & Glenn, 2006)
Life-Size (Rosman, 2000)
Lego Star wars: Revenge of the Brick (Graham, 2005)
Lego Star Wars: The Quest for R2-D2 (Pedersen, 2009)
Leroy & Stitch (Craig & Gannaway, 2006)
Pokémon: Mewtwo Returns (Hidaka, 2000)
Red Cockroaches (Coyula, 2003)
Replicant (Lam, 2001)
Repli-Kate (Longo, 2002)
Resident Evil: Extinction (Mulcahy, 2007)
Reversal of Fortune (Park, 2003)
Shadow Fury (Yokoyama, 2001)
Stargate: Continuum (Wood, 2008)
Star Wars: Ep. II – Attack of the Clones (Lucas, 2002)
Star Wars: Ep. III – Revenge of the Sith (Lucas, 2005)
Star Wars: The Clone Wars (Lucas, 2008)
Stitch! The Movie (Craig & Gannaway, 2003)
Superman: Doomsday (Montgomery, 2007)
Teknolust (Hershman-Leeson, 2002)
The Adventures of Pluto Nash (Underwood, 2002)
The Other Me (Coto, 2000)
The Spirit (Miller, 2008)
The Stepford Wives (Oz, 2004)
Viyabari (Chidambaram, 2007)
What Planet Are You From? (Nichols, 2000)

2010's (32)
Altered Carbon (Series, 2018-2020)
A Number (MacDonald, 2008)
Blade Runner 2049 (Villenueve, 2017)
Cloud Atlas (Tykwer & Wachowski Bros., 2012)
Conscientia (Kouba, 2011)

Clone Baby (Series, 2010)
Depositarios (Ordonez, 2010)
Evangelion: 3,0 You Can (Not) Redo (Anno, 2012)
Forbidden Science (Series, 2009)
Gemini Man (Lee, 2019)
I'm Not Jesus Mommy (Juares, 2010)
Jurassic World (Bayona, 2018)
Little Witch on a Broomstick (Vorlicek, 2011)
Living with Yourself (series, 2019)
Logan (Mangold, 2017)
Mayfly (Purves, 2009)
Naruto Shippuden the Movie (Murata, 2011)
Never Let Me Go (Romanek, 2010)
Oblivion (Kosinski, 2013)
Orbiter 9 (Khaiche, 2017)
Orphan Black (Series, 2013-2017)
Oxalis (Gottlieb, 2018)
Pacific Rim (Del Toro, 2013)
Possibility of an Island (Houellebecq, 2008)
Renaissance (Campagna, 2016)
Replicas (Nachmanoff, 2018)
Splitting Adam (McAboy, 2015)
Stranded (Christian, 2013)
The Escape (Blomkamp, 2016)
The Clone Returns to the Homeland (Nakajima, 2008)
What Happened to Monday (Wirkola, 2017)
Womb (Fliegauf, 2010)

This appendix conveys a personal search of film and television titles that are related to cloning until 2020. Although I have tried to list as many titles as possible of audiovisual representations of cloning I could find, please note that this list is most likely incomplete. A recent IMDb search (Febr. 2024) even shows 249 titled associated with the keyword ‘cloning’, see following hyperlink: https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/?keywords=cloning&sort=year,desc&mode=detail&page=1&ref_=kw_ref_key