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Xenomorphs and Androids: Queer Ecologies in David Fincher's *Alien*³

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David Fincher's *Alien*³ reintroduces characters from the classic films, highlighting gender dichotomies but also emphasizing the queer. Crash landing on the all-male, prison-planet Fiorina 161, Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) awakens to the loss of her fellow survivors from *Aliens*. While connecting physically and emotionally with the prison medical officer, Jonathan Clemens (Charles Dance), Ripley recovers from her crash and discovers a xenomorph is loose on the planet. She must convince the inmates and warden (Brian Glover) of the threat of the alien and rally them to fight it. In the process, Ripley discovers that she is carrying the embryo of a xenomorph queen. Considering the film's negative reception by critics, it is unsurprising that while plenty of scholarship exists regarding the *Alien* franchise, Fincher's contribution is comparatively less written about. Much of the critique that has been done of this film uses feminist theories to understand Ripley's role on the all-male planet as woman, abject, and potential mother. Such interpretations tend toward heteronormativity as the lens through which the film is explained. In focusing on the xenomorph rather than primarily on Ripley and using a queer ecocritical lens, the film presents a breakdown of heteronormativity and human/non-human hierarchies while opening new possibilities of what it means to be human.

In this paper, I first examine the ways in which Fincher's xenomorph destabilizes the "natural" order of things as they appear on the surface in favor of queer interconnectivity that is exemplified through the breakdown of the species hierarchy which traditionally places humans at the top. Next, I detail the ways in which the androids function similarly to break down the human and non-human

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divide by appearing as what Timothy Morton describes as strange strangers, uncanny in their similarities and familiar in their differences. The depiction of the humans in Fincher's film, as they are framed through juxtaposition with the androids, is one of imperfection and flawed genetics – again upending the species hierarchy. Finally, I analyze the births and deaths in the film through a queer lens. Ripley is reborn through the crash at the beginning of the film; she is now as much a product of the alien as the alien is a product of her. The xenomorphs also provide us with multiple queer deaths, the death of heteronormative patriarchal symbols, including Clemens, and Ripley herself at the end. The very nature of the film's placement in a series evokes production and reproduction. Fincher's contribution to the *Alien* series is a love letter to the xenomorph, the superscript in the title not calling to mind a mathematical equation, but its other, less commonly used, definition – an epistolary addressee, a superscription. In contributing to the narratives of the previous *Alien* films as envisioned by two different directors, Fincher is engaging in reproduction outside of the heteronormative structures, creating a child, both the film and the xenomorph, that adds new vision and possible futures to the *Alien* universe.

However, before jumping into my analysis of the film, it is important to briefly explain the links between aliens and queerness, and queerness and ecology. Alienness and queerness are often read together as co-suggestive of Otherness. Tracing first the racist history of science fiction's depictions of aliens, in "Some Things We Know about Aliens" Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. argues that "Aliens are by definition queers. Since they appear almost exclusively from the normative point of view of the heroes of technoscientific adventure, their difference is excessive and non-functional by default" (14). While this view at least hints at the idea that the queerness of aliens might be culturally constructed, other scholars base alien queerness in biological frameworks. In his article "Mutations and Metamorphoses: Body Horror is Biological Horror," Ronald Allan Lopez Cruz, with the xenomorph as an example, argues "certain staples of body horror [are] working on the frightening aspects of sexual selection" (162). In other words, Cruz's claim rests on the assumption that the xenomorph is horrific because of its "unnatural" hybrid reproduction. Each of these claims, and others like them, are rooted in naturalized heteronormativity and gender categories. Examining *Alien*³'s xenomorph through a queer ecological lens troubles these categories of gender and natural/unnaturalness.

Theories of queer ecologies, as the name suggests, look not just at sex and gender or nature but how these function interrelatedly. Defined in the introduction to *Queer Ecologies: Sex Nature, Politics and Desire*, edited by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, questions of queer ecologies are “oriented to probing and challenging the biopolitical knots through which both historical and current relations of sexualities and environments meet and inform one another” (5). Such questions can take many forms, some of which include interrogating environmental policies, the naturalization of sex categories, and hierarchies between species, sexualities, and genders. Working toward these ends, Timothy Morton postulates in a *PMLA* guest column that, “Queer ecology requires a vocabulary envisioning this liquid life. I propose that life-forms constitute a mesh, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment” (275-6). A queer ecological reading then, is concerned with re/denaturalizing and broadening the scope of what it means to be human – without reinscribing the binaries and borders that create rifts between living species and the living and non-living environment.

Much of the analysis that I conduct in this article lives where the borders of queer ecological theories and critical animal studies touch. While I engage more closely with theories of queer ecology, my argument touches on concepts of speciesism and cross-species boundary dissolving that are also discussed by critical animal studies scholars. As is pointed out by Erika Cudworth in her chapter “Beyond Speciesism,” many critical animal scholars are concerned with redefining the boundaries between species. The debate focuses heavily on policies regarding animal rights and determining “‘which’ other animals count as ethical subjects” (25). While this approach may be useful in a pragmatic legal or sociological sense, it continues to uphold a hierarchical structure, steeped in anthropocentrism, which values some species above others. The queer ecological lens, in contrast, works to unsettle and eventually displace such a hierarchy entirely.

Amongst the many interpretations of the *Alien*³ film most focus on the gender binary, highlighting the feminine abject, without questioning the categories themselves. In Lisa Purse’s article “Square Jawed Strength,” Ellen Ripley is identified as the model for the archetypal hypermasculine female action hero that is perpetuated especially in astronaut movies. Louise Speed highlights the ways in which Ripley, the only female on a prison planet, is Othered and positioned in the film as abject. Speed draws attention to the gendered difference set up in the film,

arguing that Ripley, and thus the female body, signify monstrous reproduction. While such readings tend to lead to a critique of postmodern society, they continue to uphold gendered binaries. A queer reading of the film, instead, shows the potential futures that Fincher's film enables.

In this vein, I would like to highlight Brenda M. Boyle's article "Monstrous Bodies, Monstrous Sex: Queering *Alien Resurrection*" as a key part of the genealogy of texts that I am working from in this paper. Boyle reads the fourth film in the *Alien* franchise drawing on queer theories such as Jack Halberstam's identification of the postmodern monster, Gloria Anzaldúa's call to be tolerant of ambiguity, and cultural theorist Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's treatment of the monster as a culture-revealing subject. Boyle thus argues that the xenomorph of the fourth film is "a queer cultural product, not a deviation from culture" (161). Further, Boyle aims to "free us from reading Ripley and the *Alien* series only in terms of heteronormative sexualities and reproduction" (161). Though the theorists that I draw most heavily from differ, I aim to continue this reading backwards in the series. Whereas Boyle suggests that *Alien*³ is still bounded by the heteronormative, I suggest that Fincher's breakdown and final erasure of these boundaries and hierarchies is exactly what makes Boyle's queer reading of the fourth film possible.

The very nature of the film's placement in a series evokes production and reproduction. In his book *On Film*, Stephen Mulhall suggests that "Fincher's primary preoccupation as a director is with closure" (93), reading the confinement of the alien and enclosure of the prisoners as means to this end, and further interpreting the superscripted 3 in the title as a cube that also encloses. However, this reading presumes a heteronormative (re)production in which Fincher's film is the last of the series. Rather, I argue, Fincher's contribution to the *Alien* series is a love letter to the xenomorph, the superscript in the title not calling to mind a mathematical equation, but its other, less commonly used, definition – an epistolary addressee, a superscription. In contributing to the narratives of the previous *Alien* films as envisioned by two different directors, Fincher is engaging in reproduction outside of the heteronormative structures, creating a child – both the film and the xenomorph – that adds new vision and possible futures to the *Alien* universe.

What Kind of Animal? Eroding the Non/Human Divide

The classification of species is an imperfect historical obsession dating as far back as Plato. Beginning with Plato's definition of species as unchanging types, Aristotle

then worked to classify and rank beings into categories of species. In her article “Animal Appetites,” Leah DeVun explains that, “In keeping with Greco-Roman cosmology, Aristotle grouped humans and animals within the same continuum of existence” (464). To Aristotle, humans were animals, yet scholars of the thirteenth century would redefine this continuum as a hierarchy in which humans were at the top and separate from animals, defined “partly on their expression of sexual difference” (DeVun 464). Later, in the eighteenth century, Carl Linnaeus furthered the project of species classification creating the taxonomical system we still use to this day, albeit modified. Twentieth century evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr questioned prior definitions of species, modifying the definition to include sexual reproduction more explicitly – if two animals cannot produce reproductively viable offspring, they do not belong to the same species. Logically, as Ladelle McWhorter points out, this suggests that “In order to become and remain a ‘good species’ (Mayr’s phrase)...a gene pool must dam itself off from alien gene flows” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 92). Not only did such thinking naturalize sex and gender categories, but it was also used in eugenic logics against racial and sexual others. It is here, then, that an application of Morton’s “mesh” to Fincher’s *Alien*³ becomes a kind of reparative reading that destabilizes the “natural” order of things as they appear on the surface in favor of queer interconnectivity.

The means through which the xenomorphs reproduce is perhaps the most obvious of ways in which the *Alien* series, including Fincher’s iteration, interrogate the modern definitions of species categorization. McWhorter notes that though Mayr’s definition of species through reproductive viability is generally accepted culturally, many biologists object to this as an oversimplification of natural reproduction. The xenomorph’s reproductive cycle highlights Mayr’s oversimplification and, though alien, its reproduction is not unnatural to Earth. Canonically, the xenomorph is an asexual being; it does not need a partner to reproduce. Like bees, the xenomorphs have a queen which lays eggs (ovomorphs). These eggs open when a host nears them and the classic face-hugger seen in the first *Alien* emerges, attaching itself to the face of the host and implanting it with an embryo. This embryo incubates and emerges through the host’s chest, giving this part of the lifecycle the name chest-burster. The chest-burster may either be a queen or play the role of guarding the queen and ovomorphs so that more xenomorphs may be born. Not only does the xenomorph reproduce without the sexual intercourse that Mayr found so necessary to his definition of species, but it also incorporates other species into its reproduction. In providing the series’ first non-

human host, Fincher breaks his rendition of the xenomorph even further from Mayr's species classification as, unlike previous iterations of the xenomorph, Fincher introduces explicitly that xenomorphs are not just incubating embryos in the hosts, but they take on the traits of the host. This suggests that the xenomorph is taking on the DNA of other species and remaining reproductively viable. The possibilities presented by the xenomorph's reproduction lead us to question not just Mayr's definition of species, but also ask us to consider whether we are so different from the xenomorph, or the other species whose DNA it absorbs.

The boundaries between species are blurred often and such blurring begins early in the film. After the ship crash lands on the prison planet, an inmate's dog goes missing, reappearing with bloody gashes covering its face. Upon seeing his dog, the inmate, Thomas Murphy (Christopher Fairbank), looks puzzled, gazing past the camera asking, "What kind of animal would do this to a dog?" (Fincher). Though the audience is to understand that the dog was attacked and impregnated by the xenomorph, Murphy is unaware that the alien creature landed on Fiorina 161. His question, then, suggests that he is referring to his fellow humans as animals, not so subtly positioning the dog as morally surpassing them in its innocence. In this scene, not quite fifteen minutes into the film, Fincher already calls upon his audience to question the species hierarchy which positions humans as separate and superior.

Perhaps Fincher, in adding this line (as it was not in the original script) was reiterating the production process which blurred species boundaries. Representing the xenomorph in the film went through multiple productions. In the assembly cut footage, it is not a dog that the xenomorph breeds with, but an ox. Ryan Lambie points out in his comparison of the assembly to the theatrical cut that "When the ox refused to do as it was told, the decision was made to switch the host to a dog." Fincher opposed by the will of the ox re-filmed the birth of the xenomorph, and filmed several new scenes, including the one mentioned above. The cross-species interchange births not just the alien, but pieces of the film itself. In the switch from ox to dog, Fincher also replaces introductory material that appears in the Assembly Cut in which livestock is being led through the dark, windy landscape and is later shown as yoked to the emergency escape vehicle (EEV) which has been pulled to land from its oceanic crash site. By removing the oxen entirely from the theatrical cut of the film, Fincher shifts the relationship between man and animal. Whereas the oxen suggest ownership over animals by man, the dog suggests companionship between species.

Fincher further blurs species boundaries in his efforts toward creating the new xenomorph. The effect of the quadrupedal (also known as a runner) xenomorph, which differs from those two-legged aliens and the face-huggers from previous films, was achieved by applying makeup and costuming to a whippet. The xenomorph is a dog, and vice versa. The distinctions between the two are dissolved as soon as Fincher's new xenomorph is birthed, and the dog that was its host (mother) dies. Additionally, the humanoid xenomorph existed only one generation prior to that of the runner. The closeness in proximity between humanoid and runner highlights the nearness of humans to animals. Further, the proximity of human to animal also suggests that perhaps like Fincher's xenomorph we cannot, as McWhorter puts it, dam up our gene pools. Unfortunately for the viewer, but perhaps fortunately for the whippet, the breed's distinctive gait (an adorable trot) did not embody the xenomorph's ferocity and is replaced by a puppet. Ironically, for the very thing that categorizes the xenomorph as monstrous (queer) to be naturalized, Fincher has to turn to the unnatural, mechanical puppet. Again, boundaries are confounded, and Morton's mesh of interrelations revealed, this time between the living and non-living.

Trying to be Better: Inmates, Androids, and Acid

The boundaries between living and non-living are not just blurred behind the scenes through the special effects of the xenomorph, but also in the film's depiction of the mechanical androids. Trying to discover what caused her ship to crash, Ripley digs the android Bishop (Lance Hendrickson), who saved her in the previous film, out of the garbage heap in hopes of partially repairing him. The left side of Bishop's face is mangled in such a way that his skin peels back, and his eye no longer appears human but the milky white color of his android blood. Bishop's injuries mirror those of Ripley's from the opening scenes, her eye similarly bloodshot, though red rather than white. Through these visual similarities, Fincher suggests that the androids and humans are perhaps not so different after all. Though mechanical and non-living, the androids are made in the image of their human creator, Michael Bishop, and can be harmed similarly to humans.

Returning to Morton gives insight on these cross-boundary similarities between human and android. He proposes:

Strange strangers are uncanny, familiar and strange simultaneously. Their familiarity is strange, their strangeness familiar. They cannot be thought as

part of a series (such as species or genus) without violence. Yet their uniqueness is not such that they are independent. They are composites of other strange strangers. Every life-form is familiar, since we are related to it. We share its DNA, its cell structure, the subroutines in the software of its brain. (Morton 277)

The androids here are the uncanny strangers, whose faces we recognize to be human, but who subcutaneously have milk white “blood” flowing through their veins. They are able to think and run because of the software they contain, the software that Ripley hopes to restore to gain insight into her own situation. Yet, as Morton suggests, the human brain is nothing but software of a different kind. They are neither human, nor are they not human. Mayr’s species divide cannot be applied here; the androids were birthed from human hands and human ingenuity and possess many human traits. Throughout the *Alien* franchise, it has been impossible to tell human from android unless the android self-identifies, is damaged, or ceases to function.

Fincher builds upon this history, blurring the human/android boundary even further in the final scenes of the film. The team that comes to rescue Ripley from the prison planet is led by an uncannily familiar face – Michael Bishop (Lance Hendrickson). Upon recognizing Ripley’s distrust of him, a strange stranger, he introduces himself saying, “I’m not the Bishop android. I designed it. I am very human” (Fincher). There is nothing in his mannerisms or appearance that suggest this Bishop is anything other than human, though as we have seen before there never is. It isn’t until Bishop is hit in the head with a metal bar, and his ear detaches with blackish blood that his mechanical nature is revealed. Though he does not bleed white like the other androids, he is able to withstand the blow that would have incapacitated a human. Upon impact, though, the android repeats his mantra, “I’m not a droid” (Fincher). This Bishop not only appears human, but seems to believe that he is the original Michael Bishop. While the movie doesn’t explicitly tell us whether he is an advanced android or a cybernetically enhanced human, it is violence that reveals him as other – though not as other as may have been thought before.

The androids Fincher creates are more human than they are not. The Bishop droid that Ripley recovers to repair demonstrates his humanity in his final moments. After confirming for Ripley that the xenomorph was on the ship and the EEV with them and that the Weyland Corporation knows of its presence, he makes of a request of her. No legs and only part of a torso and his head remaining, the damaged

Bishop tells Ripley, “I hurt. Do me a favor and disconnect me. I could be reworked, but I could never be top of the line again. I’d rather be nothing” (Fincher). The android feels both pain and the human emotion of despair. Quite literally pointing out hierarchy that structures his existence, Bishop would rather escape it, becoming nothing, than exist somewhere lower than the top. Ironically, such feelings are even further blurring the human/non-human hierarchy suggesting that the hierarchy itself can be erased into nothingness instead of Bishop.

The androids dethrone the human from the top of the species hierarchy as they erode the hierarchy. It is the androids throughout the series that view the xenomorphs as superior beings. This view is reiterated in the final scenes when the Bishop, trying to stop Ripley and save the xenomorph queen yells, “Think of all we could learn from it” (Fincher). This could be read charitably as the Weyland Corporation, and this individual (maybe) android acknowledging their shortcomings and trying to better understand the nature of the xenomorph. However, it is more likely that in the company’s desire for domination, what they can learn is how to utilize the xenomorph’s superior survival and predatory skills, such as its acid blood, in a bioweapon.

Fincher further upends the species hierarchy referencing back to the android Ash in the first film. Whereas Ash calls the xenomorph the perfect species, in *Alien³* Golic (Paul McGann), an inmate who has seen the alien says, “There’s no such thing as a perfect human” (Fincher). In this move, Fincher is acknowledging connections, while highlighting differences. Calling back to the predecessor of *Alien³* rhetorically forces the audience to think not just about the imperfections of humanity, but also how humanity stacks up against other species. It is no coincidence that Golic, who is considered profoundly mad by the prison warden and fellow inmates, is the one to speak these lines. Reflective of the culture from which the film derives, it may be considered utterly mad to suggest that humans are not at the top of the species hierarchy – a belief that has been ingrained in Western productions of knowledge since the thirteenth century. Yet, everything we have seen up to this point in the film suggests that it is not Golic who is mad. He saw the xenomorph despite no one believing him, he did not murder his fellow inmates despite no one believing him, why would he not be correct on this one last point, too? Perhaps those who are truly mad, are the ones who refuse to believe him. The truly mad are the humans who cannot accept an existence in any place other than the top of the hierarchy.

While establishing that there is no perfect human, Fincher also prompts viewers to question in-species categorizations of difference. The inmates of Fiorina 161 all contain the double-y chromosome, which is described as a genetic mutation that promotes those with it to commit violent and sexual crimes. In other words, the double-y chromosome is one of those human imperfections. Notably, this imperfection is not just any genetic defect, but one pertaining to the sex genes. Each of the inmates are male, but queerly so. Yet, they are not portrayed as the monstrous queer as one might expect from their status as prisoners. Instead, Fincher depicts most inmates, save for those who attack Ripley, as significantly more sensitive than the warden who presumably doesn't have the genetic mutation. We see this first in the scene in which Newt and Corporal Hicks are cremated. The warden stiffly reads a eulogy from a book, seemingly unaffected by the deaths. Dillon (Charles S. Dutton) steps forward, reciting a truly moving eulogy that brings Ripley to tears. Later in the film, it is even revealed the Clemens, who has treated Ripley gently and kindly throughout, was also an inmate, suggesting that he too contains the genetic defect. While it is true that the inmates treat Ripley as an outsider at first because of her gender, it is the inmates who take her seriously and help her in trying to eliminate the xenomorph, and it is with them that Ripley forms the closest bonds in the film.

It is also the inmates who assist Ripley in her final act of sacrifice, while the rescue team sent from Weyland Corporation enact violence upon them. One might expect that a rescue team would be benevolent. As their name implies, they are supposedly there to save Ripley. Instead, they arrive armed to the teeth, in ominous looking biohazard suits. When they step off their ship, they show no interest in bringing the prisoners, or the prison staff to safety, brusquely asking "Where is Ripley?" (Fincher). Upon finding Ripley, it becomes apparent that the team's intent is not rescue, but capture. They are quick to fire their weapons at inmates and prison staff alike, showing that it is not just the double-y chromosome that precipitates violence. In showing these flawed, violent, genetic offenders as characters with depth and kindness in contrast to those who are presumed to have XY chromosomes, Fincher simultaneously erodes biological categories while questioning who the real monsters are.

Queer Births and Queerer Deaths

Fincher further questions the biological by reimagining possibilities in birth and death throughout the film. While it is possible to make the claim that Ripley is reborn from the cryotube in the opening scenes of *Alien*³ (and such points have been argued), the opening of the assembly cut depicts a different kind of birth – one that I find more compelling. In the opening scenes of the assembly cut, Ripley is found not in her EEV cryotube with her companions but washed ashore and discovered by a lone Clemens, the doctor who comes to represent heteromascularity throughout the film, wandering the dark, desolate landscape. As Clemens walks, he is framed by the mining machinery while the landscape surrounding is ravaged and empty, a storm brewing around him. The grey bleakness suggests the masculine enterprise of raping the earth for minerals is destructive, making the land undesirable and uninhabitable. When Clemens stumbles upon Ripley's body, she is covered in mud and blends in almost perfectly with the dark sand on the beach of the turbulent ocean. Rather than being reborn of hetero-masculine technology as she is in the theatrical cut, here Ripley is reborn of the ocean and the earth.

The birthing imagery continues when Ripley awakens in the medical ward of the prison/mining complex. Grabbing Clemens's wrist just before he penetrates her arm with a syringe, Ripley asks where she is. Clemens explains to her that her EEV separated from the mothership, and tells her "coming out the way you did can be a jolt on the system" (Fincher). Like a newborn baby entering the world with a jolt, Ripley is also completely naked. Ripley's birth, though, is not from another human but from the environment, and a birth precipitated by the actions of the xenomorph. It is the alien's blood which causes the ship to malfunction, and once aboard the EEV, it is the face-hugger that enters Ripley's cryotube, impregnating her as it presumably ejects her to emerge on the shore. Ripley is as much a product of the alien as the alien is a product of her.

Throughout the film, Clemens comes to symbolize heteromascularity. In the aforementioned opening of the assembly cut he is introduced framed by the looming metal mining equipment of the colony. As the chief medical officer of the colony, he is also positioned as the epitome of Western masculine knowledge. When Ripley doubts how Newt died and insists upon an autopsy, Clemens' authority is solidified as Ripley's findings affirm Newt's cause of death was drowning as Clemens had previously ruled. However, Fincher undermines this heteromascularity in several ways. First, it is revealed that Clemens is not just the chief medical officer on the planet, but was also prisoner – his crimes, morphine addiction and medical malpractice resulting in the death of 11 patients.

As he reveals his tragic backstory to Ripley while preparing a syringe of medicine for her, he asks, "Do you still trust me with a needle?" Ripley extends her arm in the affirmative, and as the syringe phallically penetrates her skin and the last of its contents are emptied into her veins the xenomorph appears behind the curtain and kills Clemens.

The manner of Clemens' death, and the conversation surrounding it undermine the heteromale structures that he came to represent. Fincher not only chooses to make the moment of Clemens's death the one in which his imperfections as a doctor are revealed, but to also surround his death in the heteronormative discussion of marriage. Prior to this scene, Clemens and Ripley had become utilitarian lovers, each having been deprived of sex for many years and neither opening up emotionally. As Clemens prepares to treat Ripley, Golic, an inmate and patient who had witnessed the xenomorph in the mines turns to Ripley and tells her, "You should get married, have kids" (Fincher). Clemens reiterates by asking if she is, in fact, married and when she says no, he bares his confession to her. In this instance, their relationship deepens from one of utilitarian sex to a possible romantic connection. Yet, it is at this very moment that the xenomorph opens its mouth, and punches through Clemens' brain with its tongue-like appendage, in effect symbolically killing his patriarchal medical knowledge and the heteronormative family structure.

Clemens's death is not the only queer death in the film. The final death of the film, that of Ripley herself, is the queerest of them all. Having succeeded in killing the adult xenomorph by covering it in molten lead and rapidly cooling it, Ripley is acutely aware that the queen inside of could birth a whole new generation of aliens. Thus, when a rescue team from the Weyland Corporation led by Bishop arrives, she is less than trusting of them. As Bishop tries to convince Ripley that they can surgically remove the incubating queen, killing it while saving her, he tells her "You can still have a life. Children" (Fincher). His attempts to gain access to the queen are couched not just in heterosexual reproduction, but as a representative of Weyland Corp, they are also implicitly couched in capitalist conquest. The corporation wants access to the queen so that it can create the perfect bioweapon for profit. Bruce Erickson writes, "Thinking through a politics of nature without future means rethinking nature such that it is not bent toward the utility of power" (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 324). Ripley quite literally removes her own future so that nature cannot be used as a means toward power. She flings herself into the furnace falling backwards into the fire, the queen bursting through her chest

as a new day dawns upon the planet. Ripley holds the queen to her chest like she is comforting a newborn baby, suggesting that in her final moments as they plunge into the furnace, she has accepted the role of the queer parent in this interspecies coupling. The final scene of the film replays Ripley's transmission from the end of the first *Alien*, returning us to the beginning, suggesting that we have come full circle. We cannot have a future without examining the past.

Fincher's ending forecloses any remaining possibility for (hetero)sexual reproduction, yet it has not foreclosed futurity. Ripley, dead, cannot become the mother that is suggested she become, nor can the film franchise continue reproducing her and the xenomorph by traditional means. Because Fincher has so thoroughly killed off heteronormativity in *Alien*³ the only way through which a new *Alien* film can arise is queer reproduction. His ending forces us to face "the difficulty of the strange stranger" that Morton suggests is key to a more radical ecological politic (277). The way forward is not through domination of nature, or through its utilization. Rather, it is through understanding the ways in which we are interconnected with other living and non-living things no matter how drastic our differences appear. It is through understanding how our futures are intertwined with our pasts, and that something entirely new can be born from history's ashes. What that new something is, Fincher leaves to our imaginations.

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