



## Posthuman Female Identities and Cyborg Alices in *Orphan Black*\*

### *Orphan Black*'te İnsan Ötesi Dişil Kimlikler ve Sayborg Aliceler

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#### Abstract

This article scrutinizes the reception of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) in the television series *Orphan Black* (2013-2017) through the lenses of posthuman and feminist theories. It argues that, reminiscent of Alice's coming of age anxieties, in the series the self-aware female clones, called the Leda clones, go through their own identity crisis, which can be traced in their near-death experiences followed by metaphorical rebirths and in their conversations with their *sestras* through mirrors or mirror-like objects. It focuses on these clones' process of becoming self-aware with regard to the demands of the posthuman condition and the call of Rosi Braidotti for new ways of subject formation. It analyses the clones' process of becoming through Julia Kristeva's theories of the mirror phase, the symbolic, and the semiotic. It suggests that these self-aware Leda clones might be read as Donna J. Haraway's cyborg Alices, in that they explore cyborg female identities in the twenty-first century. These clones eventually overcome their existential crisis and their anxieties over shifting identities through community bonding. Meanwhile, the allusions to the Alice books serve as a source of symbolism and structure for the series. Like the guidance and council of the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar and the Cheshire Cat, they provide guideposts for the deepening, darkening, and branching *Orphan Black* universe to prevent the viewers from getting confused or lost as they follow the Leda clones deeper into the rabbit hole and through the looking glass.

**Keywords:** Reception studies, identity, posthumanism, cyborg, feminist theory.

#### Öz

Bu makale Lewis Carroll'ın *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) ve *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) adlı novellalarının *Orphan Black* (2013-2017) adlı televizyon dizisindeki alımlanışını *posthuman* ve feminist kuram merceklerinden bakarak irdelemektedir. Alice'in büyüme kaygılarına benzer şekilde, dizide Leda adı verilen ve klon olduklarının farkında olan dişil klonların da kimlik bunalımı yaşadıklarını öne sürmektedir. Bu kimlik bunalımları, klonların gerek metaforik olarak yeniden doğumlarının takip ettiği yakın ölüm tecrübelerinde gerekse ayna ve ayna benzeri objeler aracılığıyla *sestra*'larıyla konuşmalarında görülmektedir. Bu makale *posthuman* koşuluna ve Rosi Braidotti'nin özne oluşumu için yeni yollar çağrısına dayanarak, bu klonların klon olduklarının bilincine varma süreçlerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu klonların oluşum sürecini Julia Kristeva'nın ayna evresi, sembolik ve semiyotik kuramlarıyla incelemektedir. Yirmi birinci yüzyılda sayborg dişil kimliklerini keşfettiklerinden dolayı, klon olduklarının bilincinde olan bu Leda klonlarının, Donna J. Haraway'ın sayborg Aliceleri olarak okunabileceğini önermektedir. Nihayetinde bu klonlar varoluşsal krizlerini ve değişim gösteren kimliklerinden kaynaklanan bunalımlarını topluluk olarak birleşerek atlatırlar. Bu sırada, Alice kitaplarına yapılan göndermeler televizyon dizisi için sembolizm ve biçim kaynağı görevi üstlenmektedir. Beyaz Tavşan, Tırtıl ve Cheshire Kedisi'nin rehberlik ve öğütleri gibi, Leda klonlarını tavşan deliğinin derinliklerine ve aynanın öteki tarafına doğru takip ederken, izleyicilerin

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akıllarının karışmasına veya kaybolmalarına engel olmak için giderek daha derinleşip karanlıklaşarak dallanıp budaklanan *Orphan Black* evreninde işaret direkleri sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** alımlama çalışmaları, kimlik, posthumanizm, sayborg, feminist kuram.

## Introduction

The reception of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) in the television series *Orphan Black* (2013-2017) serve as a source of symbolism and structure for the series. Reminiscent of Alice's coming of age anxieties, in *Orphan Black* the self-aware female clones, known as the Leda clones, go through their own identity crisis following their process of becoming self-aware with regard to the demands of the posthuman condition. The female human clones in the series might as well be the "cyborg Alice[s]" whose coming Donna J. Haraway heralded, in that they explore cyborg female identities in the twenty-first century (2016, p. 14). Just like the curiosity of Alice leads her down the rabbit hole and through the looking-glass, the curiosity of Sarah Manning, a con artist and a Leda clone, and the irresistible opportunity for identity theft lead her to other Leda clones, her *sestras*. Gregory E. Pence, an international expert on the ethics of human cloning, emphasizes that the Leda clones "are not identical multiples of the same ancestor, but rather 'variations under nature'" (2016, p. 128). These variations can be traced in the Leda clones Sarah meets in the very first episodes of the series. After each new encounter with another Leda clone, Sarah goes through a disassembling and reassembling process, disrupting the "dominant normative vision of the self" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 167). Rosi Braidotti believes that the posthuman condition demands that we scrutinize our identities in this process of becoming. She calls for new ways of subject formation to parallel our transformations (2013, p. 12). Julia Kristeva, too, avers that our identities are perpetually challenged and altered (2005, p. 351). So is Sarah's identity every time she meets one of her already self-aware clone sisters. Sarah's construction of the self is an example of the postmodern collective and personal self that Haraway expects feminists to code (2016, p. 33). In the opening scene of the series, Sarah comes face to face with her clone sister Beth Childs, a police detective. Reminiscent of the White Rabbit dropping his fan and gloves to be picked up by Alice, Beth leaves on the platform her jacket, purse, and shoes before jumping in front of an oncoming train. Sarah finds herself trying to fill Beth's shoes and investigating what happened to her—initially as a con artist, but then as a resourceful Clone Club member and a caring *sestra*. Like the White Rabbit initiates Alice's quest in Wonderland, Beth introduces Sarah, and thereby the viewers, to the *Orphan Black* universe. Compared to this deep, dark, and branching universe, both Wonderland and the Looking-glass world are far more familiar to the viewers. Hence the references to the Alice books, scattered throughout the series as leitmotifs, not only interweave the story arcs, but also serve as guideposts to help the viewers follow Sarah as she follows Beth. The parallels between the Alice books and the series enable the viewers to discern Sarah's encounters and experiences. Meanwhile, the self-aware Leda clones, as cyborg Alices, go through their own identity crisis, reminiscent of Alice's coming of age anxieties.

### "Someone Else Sometimes": Shifting Identities, Trading Places, and Disguises

The second clone Sarah encounters, Katja Obinger, is shot to death only a few minutes after they meet. Then, Sarah meets with Alison Hendrix and Cosima Niehaus, the two remaining original members of the Clone Club. Alison is a Stepford wife and a soccer mom with two adoptive kids. Cosima is a PhD student in Experimental Evolutionary Developmental Biology at the University of Minnesota. The Clone Club includes not only the self-aware Leda clones, but also their intimate family and loved ones. Sarah unites them against Neolution, a fringe-science genetic engineering organization running human cloning projects. At the bottom of the rabbit hole, there is an allegedly Victorian scientist, P. T. Westmorland, whose work seemingly has led to Ethan Duncan and Susan Duncan's experiments on human cloning.

Ironically, while Braidotti refers to the practice of defamiliarization as a sobering process, Sarah goes through defamiliarization and connects with the other Leda clones and her daughter when she is intoxicated and in imminent danger. For instance, she sees Beth in mirrors and/or has conversations with her when she

is heavily intoxicated with alcohol, cocaine, or drugs. After being heavily drugged at the military base, in season 3, episode 6, “Certain Agony of the Battlefield,” she dreams of her daughter Kira and Charlotte Bowles, a Leda clone the same age as Kira (Nealon and Shaver, 2015, 23 May). In season 5, episode 1, “The Few Who Dare,” when Sarah falls unconscious on the island due to loss of blood, she dreams of Kira again (Manson and Fawcett, 2017, 10 June). On that note, Beth has used cocaine and abused prescription drugs; Alison is an alcoholic and a drug abuser; and Cosima smokes weed. As a matter of fact, in season 1, episode 3, “Variation Under Nature,” when Sarah and Cosima meet at a bar, reminiscent of the Caterpillar sitting on top of a giant mushroom and smoking hookah in Wonderland, Cosima is sitting on a bar stool, drinking wine, and reading Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. Matthew Dear’s (2012) song “Earthforms” is playing at the bar. The first line of the song recalls the Caterpillar’s assurance on shifting identities: “It’s alright to be someone else sometimes” (Manson and Frazee, 2013, 13 April). The Caterpillar provides Alice with the size-changing mushroom and assures her that physical change does not change who she is. Cosima, in like manner, gives Sarah answers. Beth has been trying to find out who is killing all the clones. In the meantime, Cosima is working on a cure for the fatal genetic defect of the Leda clones.

Resembling Alice’s anxieties of growth, initiation into adulthood, and self-definition, all the self-aware Leda clones struggle with their shifting identities. Alice finds the changes in her size disorienting to the point of losing her previous identity or any concept of a permanent identity. Alice’s existentialist inner quest starts with the question “Who in the world am I?” (Akgün, 2004, p. 28). The Caterpillar too asks Alice, “Who are you?” (Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, 1974, p. 67). Alice has changed so many times since she woke up that morning that she does not know who she is anymore. Besides, in the Looking-glass world, the Red Queen warns Alice to remember who she is. On the one hand, the Gnat owns that it could be convenient to lose one’s name as nobody would be able to call you by your name to remind you of your responsibilities or chores. On the other hand, Alice imagines having to look for the creature who has got her name after entering the forest where things have no names. Likewise, in season 5, episode 3, “Beneath Her Heart,” when Alison and Cosima meet for the first time, Alison is intoxicated with magic mushrooms. Alison asks “Who are we really?” and Cosima replies by saying that that is the existential question (Levine and Wellington, 2017, 24 June, 06:18-22). The Clone Club’s riddle to identify one another also underlines their existential crisis: “Just one, I’m a few. No family, too. Who am I?” (Manson and Fawcett, 2013, 30 March, 42:36-40). The answer is “A clone.” Eventually, in the final season Alison tries to resolve her identity crisis with a Jungian she meets in California. As for the benefits of losing one’s name that the Gnat mentions, Beth, committing suicide, loses her name to Sarah, who has to take over Beth’s responsibilities along with her identity. Then, Katja, Alison, and Cosima have to try to figure out who is masquerading as Beth.

Indeed, the Leda clones conveniently disguise as one another throughout the series. Rachel Duncan, a self-aware clone working for Neolution, kidnaps Sarah’s daughter disguised as Sarah whereas in the last season Sarah does the exact opposite. Furthermore, Sarah disguises as Cosima to enter the Dyad Institute building. Sarah, Cosima, and Helena almost take turns to fill in for Alison respectively during her rehabilitation in season 2 and during her election campaign and drug-dealing career in season 3. Their disguises bring to mind the March Hare, the Mad Hatter, and the Dormouse’s constantly moving around the table sitting in one another’s place. They also mirror Alice’s disorientation due to her constantly changing in size in Wonderland when she eats cakes and mushroom, drinks potions, or uses a magic fan.

As for the clone killer mentioned above, it is Sarah’s womb-twin Helena. Helena was raised in a Ukrainian convent. She was adopted and brainwashed by the Proletheans, religious extremists, to murder the other clones. Initially, Helena is the *doppelgänger*; she is the mirror image of Sarah with her internal organs on the opposite side, mirrored from their normal positions. This reminds us of the room seen through the glass in Alice’s house, the room in the Looking-glass world, which is just the same; “only the things go the other way” (Carroll et al., p. 181). Helena often talks to herself and in season 3 with her imaginary “friend,” a scorpion named Pupok. She also cuts herself as a means of self-inflicted punishment; she carves angel wings into her back with a razor. Comparatively, in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* “[e]ven the above-ground Alice speaks in two voices” (Auerbach, 1992, p. 336). It is stated that Alice:

generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. (Carroll et al., pp. 32-33)

Unlike Alice, Helena has *sestras* who experience similar anxieties and fears. Upon her initiation into the Clone Club, Helena gradually comes to terms with her identity, stops cutting herself, and gets rid of Pupok. She even makes a habit of saving the lives of her *sestras* and their loved ones.

M.K., yet another self-aware Leda clone, acts as the White Rabbit first to Beth and then to Sarah. Thanks to her hacking skills, M.K. provides them both with crucial information and leads them further down the rabbit hole. Also reminiscent of the Cheshire Cat, she appears and disappears abruptly. Her sudden and brief appearances are most often via a computer screen, showing only her head in front of a psychedelic and kaleidoscopic background. She hides her face behind a sheep mask, which is an obvious reference to Dolly the clone sheep. Like the Cheshire Cat, she shares partial and confusing information regarding Neolution. Actually, her name is Veera Suominen, not M.K. or Mika. Her self-fashioned name is made up of the two letters in her clone genetic code 3 M.K.296. She is the sole survivor of the clones and their families in Helsinki, who were murdered upon the orders of Rachel Duncan. M.K. has a large burn scar on her right cheek from the fire she survived.

Then, there is Rachel Duncan, the ruthless businesswoman. Rachel is the first, if not the only, self-aware clone. After the supposed death of her foster parents Ethan Duncan and Susan Duncan, she was raised by Neolution. Like Helena, Rachel identifies with the self while she views the other Leda clones as the other, as mere copies. According to Cosima and Sarah's foster brother, Felix, knowing that she is a clone and thinking that she is unique might have triggered narcissism in Rachel. Rachel actually believes that she is on the other side of the scientist-subject relationship as well as the binary oppositions which encapsulate women. Haraway, however, argues that such binary oppositions in Western traditions are the very means through which women are rendered as others and dominated (2016, p. 59). Despite being a self-aware clone herself, echoing the Queen of Heart's fondness of having everyone beheaded, Rachel orders all the self-aware Leda clones to be murdered to keep Neolution's human cloning projects as a secret. Like Neolution, Rachel regards the clones as less than human and disposable bodies to use Braidotti's terms. Unlike Helena who was raised as an assassin by religious extremists, Rachel commits all her crimes of her own will despite having been raised by two loving foster parents. In season 4, episode 10, "From Dancing Mice to Psychopaths," Susan Duncan notes that Rachel betrays her mother, her clone sisters, and herself by making deals with the Dyad Institute Board, a sub-branch of Neolution, just like Evie Cho, the director of BrightBorn Industries, another sub-branch of Neolution, who wanted to dispose of the self-aware Leda clones too (Manson and Fawcett, 2016, 16 June, 29:14-20). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Rachel kidnaps Sarah's daughter Kira. She holds both Kira and Sarah captive in the basement of the Dyad Institute building. As a matter of fact, Rachel could legally claim the custody, or rather ownership, of Sarah's daughter because all the clones are the restricted intellectual property of the Dyad Institute. The patent in their genome refers to the clones as "organism and derivative genetic material" (Manson & Fawcett, 2013, 1 June, 39:50-40:30, 41:49-57).

### **Through the Looking Glass, Through the Mirror Phase**

Returning to Sarah, encountering her clone sisters one after another also takes her metaphorically through the mirror phase to "the symbolic"; the individual develops language and articulation skills only after the mirror phase (Kristeva, 2005, p. 352). Correspondingly, Sarah has conversations with Beth after Beth's suicide. In one of these conversations, in season 4, episode 7, "The Antisocialism of Sex," Beth convinces Sarah not to commit suicide and to unite the Leda clones (Troubetzkoy, Manson, and Frazee, 2016, 26 May). Furthermore, when Sarah and Cosima meet at a bar, Sarah sits in the bar stool next to Cosima and looks at their reflection in the mirror behind the bar (Manson and Frazee, 2013, 13 April). Also, in

season 2, episode 10, “By Means Which Have Never Yet Been Tried,” Rachel antagonizes Sarah through a one-way mirror connecting the two cells where Sarah and her daughter Kira are locked up separately. While Sarah’s daughter Kira is having a tea party with a stuffed toy animal in her cell, Rachel tries to manipulate her against Sarah. This scene recalls Alice’s entering the Looking-glass world and saying that it will be fun when they see her through the glass but cannot get at her. It is a one-way mirror through which Sarah can see Rachel as well as her own reflection on her side of the mirror whereas Rachel sees only her reflection (Manson and Fawcett, 2014, 21 June, 09:33). This demonstrates how Rachel refuses to recognize her clone siblings and thereby cannot go through the metaphorical mirror phase like Sarah does.

As opposed to Sarah’s interactions with her clone sisters, fighting the Leda clones instead of networking or bonding with them takes Rachel back to “the semiotic,” to “the pre-linguistic states of childhood” (Kristeva, 2005, p. 352). Due to the brain damage she receives during Sarah’s escape from the Dyad Institute building, Rachel loses her left eye and motor functions; she suffers from apraxia of speech. Eventually, her foster mother Susan Duncan kidnaps and locks Rachel up in the House at the End of the World. She operates on, examines, and monitors Rachel to nurse her back to health.

Nevertheless, the first time Rachel meets Alison, in the final season of the series, is an exception. Alison brings the head of Aldous Leekie, a late Neolutionist and a surrogate father to Rachel, to her office at the Dyad Institute building. When the elevator doors open, Alison and Rachel see each other through the glass wall of the latter’s office, which acts as a see-through mirror (Levine and Wellington, 2017, 24 June, 34:40). Instead of the whereabouts of Helena, Alison tells Rachel about the bodies buried in her garage and threatens her with the possible consequences if they are discovered. Rachel agrees to get rid of the bodies, but she adds that she would like to strangle Alison with her bare hands. Alison responds by acknowledging that she and Rachel are apparently not that different. When they part, each has a vague smile on her face due to the mutual understanding and appreciation of their similarity.

### **Community Building Through Cyborg Imagery and Cyborg Writing**

As both Helena and Rachel eventually realize, their assumption that they are the original positions them in “a dialectic apocalypse” (Haraway, 2016, p. 60) with the other Leda clones. Braidotti states that the hierarchical binary oppositions render the other as less than human and disposable (2013, p. 15). Haraway offers “Cyborg imagery” (2016, p. 67) as an antidote to these binary oppositions through which women define their bodies and tools. Respectively, to know more about their origins, bodies, and genetic disease, Beth has been tracking down the Leda clones and investigating Neolution while Cosima has been studying their genetic codes.

Actually, the Clone Club is “a self-consciously constructed space” that acts “on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship” (Haraway, 2016, p. 18). In parallel with the significance Haraway and Braidotti attribute to networking and community bonding, in season 4, episode 7, “The Antisocialism of Sex,” Beth, as mentioned above, asks Sarah in one of her visions to bring the Leda clones together. Affirmatively, in the same episode, Felix calls Sarah the glue holding them all together (Troubetzkoy et al., 2016, 26 May). Like Alice eventually assumes responsibility, saves the Gardeners by hiding them in a flower pot, and defends the Knave who is accused of stealing cream tarts, Sarah gradually assumes the responsibilities of a mother and a sister. Sarah is reminiscent of Braidotti’s critical posthuman subject because she is defined by her relation to the multitude of Leda clones. Due to this strong sense of community building, Sarah presents “an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others” as opposed to Rachel’s “self-centred individualism” (2013, p. 49, p. 50). Subsequently, Rachel’s redemption follows her bonding with Charlotte and Kira. Echoing Braidotti’s affirmative bond, Alison calls the Clone Club a sisterhood. For instance, Beth has taught Alison how to use a gun. When Sarah takes over Beth’s identity, Alison, in turn, teaches Sarah how to use a gun. At the funeral of her foster mother Siobhan Sadler (Mrs. S), Sarah mentions her late mother’s network, too, which has helped the Clone Club.

*Orphan Black* resembles what Haraway calls “cyborg writing,” in that it “is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that

marked them as other” (2016, p. 55). When Kendall Malone, the genetic original for the Leda and Castor clones, is murdered, and when Cosima’s work is deleted by a virus, Cosima has to work with Susan Duncan to find a cure for the fatal genetic defect of the clones. Susan Duncan asks Cosima to share the original’s genum so they can save all the clones. They fertilize Sarah’s egg (Leda) with Ira’s sperm (Castor). However, Susan Duncan has actually been planning to use the cure to continue the Dyad Institute’s cloning experiments. Additionally, Beth’s narrative told in flashbacks in season 4, and Rachel, Sarah, Helena, Cosima, and Alison’s flashbacks in season 5 are all examples to the tools which, according to Haraway, are often retold stories that subvert the hierarchical binary oppositions of neutralized identities (2016, p. 55). Jeremy Heuslein, a Belgian scholar of phenomenology, suggests that encountering other bodies like hers “unravels Sarah’s sense of identity” and brings her past into question, including her past before her birth (2016, pp. 76-77). As Heuslein maintains, *Orphan Black* demonstrates that an analysis of identity must not be limited to one’s own personal history. On the contrary, it must take into consideration both the genetic and the generative conditions of identity (Heuslein, 2016, pp. 79-80).

Søren Kierkegaard, in like manner, asserts that “life must be lived forwards, but understood backwards” (as cited in Heuslein, 2016, p. 79). Correspondingly, the season 4 trailer of *Orphan Black*, in which Sarah, Cosima, Alice, and Helena quote passages from the first pages of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, ends with the sentence: “The only way forward is to go back.” They all say the last four words at the same time to emphasize that this season will take the viewers to the past. Actually, the series itself starts with Sarah’s coming back to town to take her daughter Kira from Mrs. S, who has been taking care of Kira for the past ten months. In season 4, Sarah, Mrs. S, and Kira move back to town, to a new safe house in the basement of a comic book shop called Rabbit Hole Comics. Cosima has a secret lab there as well. In season 5, expecting her twins in a convent, Helena is writing her memoirs for them. In the last two episodes of season 5, both Helena and Sarah have flashback scenes during Helena’s labor. Helena remembers her painful childhood and upbringing. Meanwhile, Sarah remembers almost getting an abortion and then giving birth to Kira. During Helena’s labor Sarah mimics what Mrs. S has done during Sarah’s labor. In the series finale Helena reads her memoirs to her *sestras* and Felix. It is titled *Orphan Black*. It is “an embroidery” about her *sestras* “with many beginnings and no end” (St. Cyr, Manson and Fawcett, 2017, 12 Aug, 39:36-44).

### **Privacy and Ownership of the Identities and Bodies of the Clones**

As mentioned above, the bodies of the Leda clones are the copyrighted property of the Dyad Institute. Therefore, there is an ongoing battle between the clones and the institute over the ownership and privacy of the lives and bodies of not only the clones but also those of their children. In the meantime, the bodies and privacies of the clones and of their children, including the unborn, are penetrated in diverse ways. Haraway, appropriately, regards bodies as “maps of power and identity” (2016, p. 65). Just as Haraway and her dog, the companion species, “are subject to state regulatory identification apparatuses and biopolitical identification apparatuses and surveillance” (2016, p. 222), the Dyad Institute monitors, drugs, and examines the Leda clones on a regular basis. The monitors are planted in the lives of the unsuspecting clones most often as their partners. It is significant that the name of Project Leda originates from a rape story in classical mythology: the myth of Zeus raping Leda disguised as a swan. There is also a drawing of Leda and the Swan in the book of *Neolution*, which is allegedly written by Westmorland and dates back to the Victorian age. Accordingly, Helena has written “Swan Man” on the back of a photo of Ethan Duncan and accuses him of playing God. Ethan Duncan and Susan Duncan have been running human cloning experiments by impregnating women disguised as a couple who could not have children.

Indeed, all the scientists who are in charge of, running, or copying *Neolution*’s human cloning projects assume the role of the rapist god Zeus. This includes a divergent branch of the religious extremist group Proletheans. They kidnap Helena to extract egg cells from her. They fertilize her eggs with the sperm of Henrik Johanssen, the head of the divergent Proletheans. Then, they implant these fertilized eggs into Helena and Gracie, the daughter of Henrik Johanssen. *Neolution*, too, kidnaps Helena to take away her yet unborn

twins, to extract the mutations from them to create a cure, “the fountain of youth,” for Westmorland (St. Cyr et al., 2017, 12 Aug). To cure Cosima’s fatal genetic defect, the Dyad Institute implants stem cells from Kira’s tooth into her uterus without telling her about the source. Again supposedly to heal Cosima, they ask Kira also to donate her bone marrow. Eventually, they start injecting Kira with hormones to be able to harvest her eggs to continue to impregnate clueless women all around the world with Leda clones. Moreover, they implant a bot worm inside Sarah’s cheek to alter her DNA. Helena kills the man sent by the BrightBorn Industries before he can implant one inside Alison’s cheek as well. Dr. Virginia Coady, who runs Project Castor, Neolution’s military branch focused on male clone soldiers, abducts and experiments on Helena and Sarah to weaponize the genetic defect of the Castor clones. Coady first draws blood from Sarah to inject it into the Castor clones. She then injects Sarah with Castor blood. Being nonconsensual acts of penetration and exchanges of bodily liquids, the bot worm implantations and these blood transfusions are the strongest rape analogies in the series. Alison’s husband Donnie’s use of double entendre while he is checking his wife’s cheek for any bot worm implantations furthers this rape analogy. Upon Alison’s complaints, he claims that he will not feel anything if he does not go deep (Nealson & Girotti, 2016, 28 April).

Rachel’s attempt to remove one of Sarah’s ovaries and Sarah’s shooting Rachel with a pencil in the eye during her escape are both acts of penetration, albeit the latter is executed with poetic justice. The cybernetic eye that Rachel gets instead of the one she has lost is yet another act of penetration on many levels. Rachel wakes up with a cybernetic eye, locked up in the former office and living quarters of Westmorland on an island. She has not been informed or consulted about the operation. Her foster mother Susan Duncan tells her that she needs to be grateful for the operation and the eye. Little does Susan know that Westmorland uses the cybernetic eye for surveillance and manipulation purposes. The fish eye camera implanted inside Rachel’s cybernetic eye is known for its ultra-wide-angle lens which produces a distorted vision. It allows Westmorland to spy on everything Rachel sees with that eye, and thereby bestows upon him a god-like omniscience at the expense of Rachel’s own vision and privacy. This strengthens the analogy between the invasive scientist and the rapist god. As a manner of god-like punishment, he electrocutes Rachel via that eye when she wears an eyepatch over her cybernetic eye to blind his godlike vision.

### **Rachel’s Rebellion, Revenge, and Redemption**

Like the White Rabbit, the white swan in the visions Westmorland shows Rachel via her cybernetic eye initiates her into another part of the island where Westmorland lives and runs his human cloning experiments. Incidentally, the code name Kira uses for the island is Wonderland. Furthermore, by continuously showing Rachel images of a white swan and then the beheaded head of that swan, Westmorland urges Rachel to kill her foster mother. Rachel cannot bring herself to actually kill Susan. Nevertheless, upon seeing the final vision of the beheaded head of the swan on the kitchen counter right next to the knives, she takes one of the knives and stabs her mother with it. This is indeed a gender-bending of the myth of Cronus overthrowing and killing his father Uranus. Susan Duncan, like Uranus, says that she regrets having created Rachel after witnessing her cruel nature and deeds. Westmorland, like Gaia, nudges Rachel into murdering her foster mother, but with a kitchen knife instead of a sickle. However, Rachel, unlike Cronus, does not attempt to kill her foster mother to save her clone siblings. She does it because she sees her mother as competition.

Right after stabbing her foster mother, Rachel has an encounter and a physical fight with Sarah. The wounds Rachel inflicts on Sarah during this physical assault are similar to the ones Rachel herself has received at Sarah’s hands during her escape from the Dyad Institute building. In return for the left eye she has lost, Rachel cuts Sarah with a kitchen knife right above her left eyebrow. In return for her paralyzed right leg, Rachel stabs Sarah’s upper right leg. This is a reversal of the scene in which Sarah shoots Helena and finds out that her internal organs are mirrored. In a manner of speaking, after Helena’s initiation into the Clone Club, Rachel assumes the role of the *doppelgänger*. It could also be interpreted as a twisted form of sibling rivalry, as Rachel’s way of recognizing Sarah as her clone sister. Rachel’s name-calling amplifies the sibling fight analogy. She calls Sarah a cockroach, for Sarah, like Helena, is immune to the genetic

defect of the clones. Reminiscent of a cockroach, Sarah has black hair, wears black smudged eyeliner and eye shadow, and dresses in black. Rachel, on the contrary, has light blonde hair, and mostly prefers to dress in shades of white although she sometimes dresses in other colors such as black and navy blue too. Furthermore, Sarah is crawling on the floor on her back like an insect while Rachel is standing over her and attacking her. Rachel points out that Sarah is not immune to her. Sarah barely escapes with her life, limping and bleeding.

Rachel's rebellion against Neolution and atonement for what she has done to her clone siblings follows her foster mother's death. While visiting her mother's grave on the island, Rachel remembers, through flashback scenes, the first time that she met Westmorland. The contract she signed with him seemingly exempted her from Project Leda and any cloning experiments; it granted her ownership over her own body and identity (St. Cyr and Frazee, 2017, 22 July). During her unscheduled and enforced medical examination with Coady, Rachel remembers, once again through flashbacks, her previous examinations with Aldous Leekie. After her examination, Rachel asks for privacy from Coady. She also demands from Westmorland to be given a prior notification and to be able to choose her own physician next time. Meanwhile, she sees that she is labelled as "A-01" in Coady's new human cloning project. Neolution has always been using her clone genetic code. Just like the rest of the clones, Rachel is but a code. Her mother has been right. She is still regarded as a disposable human clone and a test subject even though she has become a Dyad Board Member. More importantly, she realizes that she has been doing the same to Kira. Last but not least, she finds the device which gives Westmorland access to everything Rachel sees via the camera in her cybernetic eye (St. Cyr and Frazee, 2017, 22 July). Upon these existential epiphanies, following one another in the very same episode, Rachel decides to do her part to save not only herself, but also her extended clone family from sharing her fate at the hands of Neolution.

First, Rachel puts an end to Westmorland's violations of privacy by cutting out her cybernetic eye with the shard of a martini glass (St. Cyr and Frazee, 2017, 22 July). As mentioned earlier, although she mostly dresses in shades of white or sometimes black, she wears a nude-colored dress on the day that she cuts out her cybernetic eye and helps Kira escape from the Dyad Institute building with her family. The color nude symbolizes Rachel's shift of identity following her epiphanies. She is no longer under the illusion that she is the self or superior to other Leda clones. She no longer believes in Neolution or in her own righteousness for that matter. Next, she hands over confidential documents to Mrs. S to expose the Dyad Institute and by extension Neolution along with all its sub-branches. She also helps the Clone Club to find out where Neolution has taken Helena and to rescue her. Finally, she provides them with the full list of the Leda clones so that they can all be cured.

## Conclusion

Joseph Campbell suggests that only birth of something new can conquer death: "Within the soul, within the body social, there must be . . . a continuous 'recurrence of birth' (*palingenesia*) to nullify the unremitting recurrences of death" (1993, p. 16). The near-death experiences of Alice and the Leda clones are followed by metaphorical rebirths too. After Alice manages to escape from the pool of tears, reminiscent of the amniotic water, she enters the garden through a tiny, narrow door, drawing a birth analogy. Her escape from the White Rabbit's house, which is reminiscent of the uterus, is another birth analogy (Akgün, 2004, pp. 40-41). In *Orphan Black* the suicide of Beth enables Sarah's metaphorical rebirth as Beth. The tunnel-shaped train platform, akin to the birth canal, also establishes this birth analogy. Moreover, Sarah has to fake her own death in order to become Beth. Accordingly, on Alice's being transported to the Looking-glass world, Lawrence Krauss maintains that, from a mathematical perspective, to enter one world is to disappear from the other (2009, p. 141). Among further examples to the continuous recurrences of birth in the series are Sarah's giving birth to Kira; Helena's giving birth to twins, which are anomalies as the clones are supposed to be infertile, "reproductively silenced females" (2016, p. 94) to put it in Haraway's words; and Susan Duncan's four hundred or so unsuccessful cloning attempts supposedly to save Rachel but primarily to continue the Leda project. Following their near-death experiences due to Coady's experiments, Helena and Sarah's escape from the military base is loaded with birth analogies as well. Charlotte and Kira show



Sarah the way out of the military base in her dreams. Both children invoke the image of the White Rabbit for they lead Sarah out of the base through tiny doors and underground tunnels, which are reminiscent of the rabbit hole. Besides, in Sarah's dream Kira is wearing a white dress and twirling a white ribbon. Respectively, Paul Dierden, Beth's former monitor who works for Neolution, and Helena help Sarah escape. To complete the metaphorical rebirth analogy, the owner of the cantina where the Sarah and Helena meet with Mrs. S after their escape tells Sarah to use her bathroom to wash off where she has been. The bathroom and the bathwater replace the womb and the amniotic fluid.

These near-death experiences and metaphorical rebirths of the Leda clones point out to their accountability and atonement for their past deeds, too. Admittedly, the Clone Club survives on Darwinian principles, sacrificing one of their own or even themselves if need be. To begin with, Alison does not want to let Sarah in the Clone Club unless she can provide them with the services Beth used to do as a police detective. Everyone in the Clone Club seems to have either the means or the skills to contribute to the survival of their community. Cosima, being a biology student, is working on a cure for the genetic defect of the clones. Alison, being a housewife, provides financial resources. Helena, being raised as an assassin, ensures their safety. M.K. offers them her surveillance skills. Krystal Goderitch is left outside and in the dark because she has already shared with the others all the information she has gathered. Even M.K. is eventually sacrificed. She is left behind to be killed by Ferdinand Chevalier, a cleaner who works for Neolution and who is responsible for the murder of the Helsinki clones and their friends and families. M.K. seems to be dispensable because she is dying of the genetic defect of the clones. Protesting that she is tired of running, M.K. herself insists on staying behind so that Sarah and Kira can escape.

Both Haraway and Braidotti discuss the use of living species in scientific experiments (Haraway, 2016, p. 271; Braidotti, 2013, pp. 7-8). Likewise, M.K.'s sheep mask invokes Dolly the sheep, another cloning experiment subject. Also, as mentioned earlier, in their first meeting with Rachel, Alison owns that she and Rachel are not that different considering what they are capable of doing to protect themselves and their loved ones (Levine and Wellington, 2017, 24 June). On that note, Mrs. S delivers Helena to Coady to protect Kira, but it should also be noted that Mrs. S does not refrain from risking her very own life to protect her "chickens" and the rest of the Clone Club, either. She is murdered by Ferdinand although she manages to kill him before she dies (Porter-Christie, Manson and Morton, 2017, 29 July). Nevertheless, the sacrifices of the Clone Club differ from the murders of Neolution. Inspired by Jacques Derrida's understanding of "structures of sacrifice," Haraway argues that it is impossible "not to inherit the structure of sacrifice." Instead she suggests not making "killable," but coming to terms with the structures of sacrifice and accepting it as our burden (2016, p. 271). The Clone Club tries to do so in the final season through the wake of M.K. and the funeral of Mrs. S, through mourning, and, at the same time, through celebrating the birth of Helena's twins.

The Leda clones, as cyborg Alices, explore female identities in a world which regards them as less than human and disposable. Echoing Alice's coming of age anxieties, they suffer from similar anxieties over shifting identities and overcome their existential crisis through community bonding. The references to the Alice books are a source of symbolism and structure for the series. Like the guidance and council of the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar and the Cheshire Cat, they provide blueprints for the deepening, darkening, and branching *Orphan Black* universe to prevent the viewers from getting confused or lost as they follow the cyborg Alices/Leda clones deeper into the rabbit hole never once worrying about how they would get out again.

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