FEAR AND THE DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY CONSTITUTION IN

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

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ABSTRACT
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Science fiction often functions as a narrative that depicts the current climate of the socio-historical context in which it is created. It may be argued that science fiction represents an effective vehicle for the communication of concepts important in queer theory, including identity development, power and privilege, gender, reproduction, and technophobia. It is within these conceptions that the recently reimagined science fiction television series, *Battlestar Galactica* (2003-2009), may be viewed as a commentary on current fears and struggles.

In this thesis I review the ways in which Cylons, as hypersexualized beings, use their sexuality to manipulate humanity, and in doing so demonstrate the manner through which sex may influence identity. I argue that Cylon identity development mirrors the queer coming out process in contemporary society. Moreover, I argue that the conflict between the Cylons and humanity in *Battlestar Galactica* parallels the contemporary ideological debate between the essentialist and constructivist positions on identity constitution.

Furthermore, I evaluate the power dynamic within the heteronormative family through the framework of Françoise Vergès’ theory of the colonial family romance. Central to this analysis is the concept of reproduction, and I propose that the Cylon attempt to control reproduction through technology defines them as queer and as a perceived threat to the heteronormativity of humanity. *Battlestar Galactica* may be seen as exemplifying the queering of the power relationship between Cylons and humans, through a blurring of distinctions between the two, thereby implicitly raising questions regarding the constitution and existence of identity.
The series ultimately concretizes the perceived threats technological advances posed to the patriarchal, heteronormative family. Just as the humans of *Battlestar Galactica* fear the unrestrained freedom of the Cylons will lead to their extinction, so too do many in the current, dominant society fear their own obsolescence when faced with movements toward transhumanistic ideals.

In science fiction, frequently the monstrous, the outsiders, and the problematic are presented. *Battlestar Galactica* is no exception to this. However, doing so in a way that honestly and openly reflects real social concerns is less common. It is in that way that *Battlestar Galactica* is exceptional and merits academic consideration.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THEY HAVE A PLAN

Introduction

When exploring the application of queer theory to science fiction, I believe it is important to first consider the evolution of the interpretation of science fiction film and television as a genre. Science fiction often functions as a narrative that depicts the current climate of the socio-historical context in which it is created. The genre is often considered to be a response to a specific set of dominant or prevailing fears occurring within that society (Redmond 137). Science fiction is a vehicle within which representations of these fears and manifestations may be presented and potentially reified. Science fiction films and television “can be read as explorations of the fate of humanity in a world often depicted as increasingly dominated by the products of science, technology, and rationality” (King and Krzywinska 11-12). While at times providing optimistic and progressive views of the future (i.e., Star Trek) science fiction provides us with cautionary tales about our possible futures, both near and far. Science fiction is an arena in which to explore what it is to be human. It does this through the combination of the human and that which is regarded as its opposite (King and Krzywinska 13), the Other.

While historiographically I wish to avoid a total linear analysis of popular culture, as it can be problematic, it is difficult to completely avoid linking specific eras within popular culture, in this case science fiction, to various socio-political eras within our historical timeline. As the historical eras shift and progress, our media also adapts to stay current and respond to the fears, concerns, and even hopes of that era’s population and society. The two become inextricably linked. The mid-twentieth century American science fiction genre offered a commentary or response to such things as the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis, and “the racial Other who had
begun to move into white neighborhoods” (Redmond 137). However, with the shifting social climate since the 1980s, one might also perceive a shift in focus within the science fiction genre. With the dawn of the AIDS crisis, there was a change in the focus of the social consciousness within society. With a repositioning in social consciousness, there came a corresponding focus within the overarching narrative of science fiction. No longer was emphasis entirely placed on the geopolitical situation, but instead social issues were moved to the forefront. As time has passed, this social narrative has continued. The focus of the interpretation narrative has now been placed on sociopolitical issues such as gender, sexuality, and global terrorism, rarely the focus of societal fears in earlier generations (Redmond 137). Now we have “despicable alien invaders [who] attack and destroy the institutional, political, and cultural organs of society” (Redmond 141). In this shift, we have left the McCarthyite America of the 1950s and find ourselves existing within the “focus on the family” era of the 2000s. It is a shift that creates an entirely new narrative perspective within science fiction and therefore has brought entirely new societal implications through its representations.

The key to understanding the social implications of the science fiction narrative, however, is its use of both allegory and symbolism to convey its message. Many issues are not easily communicated directly with the audiences, but through seemingly unrelated tales, positioned within allegory and symbolic representation, a traditional storyline may be used to broach these concepts. Through these approaches, we are able to “gain a different perspective on the concerns of our own place and time” (King and Krzywinska 22). Much of science fiction is set in alternative times and galaxies in order to allow for these discussions. King and Krzywinska note that one of the benefits of relocating the drama to such places is that locating “sensitive issues to somewhere on the other side of the universe or other dimensions is a handy way to
avoid too much controversy or censorship” (22). It is far easier for society to work through its difficulties through the use of myth, storytelling, allegory, symbolism, theatre, and now movies and television. It is often an implicit representation rather than one that is direct (King and Krzywinska 13).

The recently televised science fiction series *Battlestar Galactica* makes use of the methods, allegory and symbolic representation, in telling the story of the struggles of its participants. In the series, humans are set against the Cylons, a race much like that which Donna Haraway refers to as cyborgs. The series depicts the lives, relationships, complicated interactions, conflicts, and resolutions between and amongst the two disparate groups as each searches for the same things: survival, destruction of its enemy, and ultimately Utopia. While there are certainly many interpretations of the drama, from simple entertainment to a sophisticated delivery of commentary on current social and political concerns, there are useful examples in the series that illustrate the premises developed within both queer theory and feminist scholarship.

The key to queer theory’s application to science fiction is the concept of the Other. The Other is a construct of the heteronormative society into which it places individuals it feels are not representative of the dominant paradigm. However, as the Other evolves, it becomes a larger society of its own thereby creating a shift in the power dynamics and, therefore, causing the privileged heteronormative social order again to feel threatened, only this time on a larger group level. As King and Krzywinska state, “much of [the] dramatic and structural tension . . . derives from the construction of a primary difference between the ‘human’ and the ‘Other’” (30). The narrative and social commentary thrives on the difference between the two. It is a difference that feeds off of the creation of the Other within the society around us.
Topic

As presented, within both queer theory and some science fiction, the Other represents a challenge to the traditional heteronormative dynamic that tends to affect the constitution of human identity within our society. In this thesis I consider how the Cylons, of the recently reimagined science fiction television series, *Battlestar Galactica*, represent the Other (a queer being) which challenges heteronormative sensibility defined by family and gender roles, notions of character and biology, and notions of a soul. These are frequently challenged by reconceptualized gender and sexual roles, the advancement of technology, and new visions of a family dynamic. In this thesis I review the ways in which Cylons, as hypersexualized beings, use their sexuality to manipulate humanity, and in doing so demonstrate the manner through which sex may influence identity. I argue that Cylon identity development mirrors the queer coming out process in contemporary society. Moreover, I argue that the conflict between the Cylons and humanity in *Battlestar Galactica* parallels the contemporary ideological debate between the essentialist and constructivist positions on identity constitution.

Furthermore, I evaluate the power dynamic within the heteronormative family through the framework of Françoise Vergès’ theory of the colonial family romance. Central to this analysis is the concept of reproduction, and I propose that the Cylon attempt to control reproduction through technology defines them as queer and as a perceived threat to the heteronormativity of humanity. *Battlestar Galactica* may be seen as exemplifying the queering of the power relationship between Cylons and humans, through a blurring of distinctions between the two, thereby implicitly raising questions regarding the constitution and existence of identity.
The series ultimately concretizes the perceived threats technological advances posed to the patriarchal, heteronormative family. Just as the humans of Battlestar Galactica fear the unrestrained freedom of the Cylons will lead to their extinction, so too do many in the current, dominant society fear their own obsolescence when faced with movements toward transhumanistic ideals.

In what follows below, I provide a detailed character, plot and narrative summation in order to clarify the context for my analysis of Battlestar Galactica.

Background

Old vs. New

The new Battlestar Galactica, which aired from 2003 through 2009 functions as a reboot (reimagining) of the original series Battlestar Galactica (1978) and Galactica 1980 (1980). While the new series contains many of the original characters and preserves much of the same hierarchical structures and status, character race and genders have changed dramatically. Within the original series, the Cylons were not created by the humans of the Twelve Colonies but were in fact a reptilian race. The Cylons then created a cybernetic race to which they passed on the name of Cylon. These robotic Cylons, believing themselves to be an example of the perfect species, ultimately revolted against their reptilian creators and determined that all life, particularly human life, should be purged from the universe (“Saga of a Star World”). In the reimagined series (which I will be focusing on in this thesis), the Cylons were created by the humans of the Twelve Colonies for military use, evolved into a servant class, and ultimately,

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1 For additional background information beyond what I am providing, I encourage you to visit the Battlestar Wiki, a web encyclopedia for all things Battlestar Galactica. http://en.battlestarwiki.org/wiki/Portal:Battlestar_Galactica_(RDM). See also Appendix A: Glossary for an index of important terms.
after gaining sentience, revolted against their creators in not one, but two devastating wars

(Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

The Narrative

The reimagined Battlestar Galactica centers on a human society known as the Twelve Colonies (physically, planets) of Kobol. While most of the Colonies are discussed at one time or another throughout the series, Caprica is the colony (planet) most referenced because it is the location of the Colonial government (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Humanity of the Twelve Colonies advanced to a point that was generally similar to our own, technologically, but they had taken one step further and developed considerable artificial intelligence. It was the advancement in artificial intelligence that allowed for the creation of the Cylons, a mechanical cybernetic race, to serve humanity. Originally created for military use, the Cylons evolved to become servants for humans in their everyday lives (“Apotheosis”). Approximately 60 years prior to the events of the series, the Cylons achieved sentience and rebelled against their human creators resulting in a protracted conflict known as the First Cylon War. The war reached a virtual stalemate and resulted in a Cylon/human armistice with each going to a different portion of the galaxy. In order to maintain the “peace,” a meeting place, known as Armistice Station, was created at which, each year, a single Cylon and human delegate were expected to meet. While the humans sent a representative each year, the Cylons sent no one. After approximately 40 years without contact, the sending of a human delegate became almost a formality, and humanity became complacent, lulled into believing that the Cylons had gone for good (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

It is here that the new Battlestar Galactica series begins. After a long absence, the Cylons suddenly return without warning. While most Cylons retain their mechanical body, there now exists a new breed (species/race). The Cylons have evolved, taking a new humanoid appearance,
which makes them virtually indistinguishable from humanity, a frightening concept for residents of the Twelve Colonies, as I later discuss. The Cylons launch a total nuclear assault on the Twelve Colonies, destroying them in their entirety, and with them, virtually all of humanity as well. The destruction of the human civilization is forever referred to as the Cylon holocaust or The Fall (a reference possibly chosen for its biblical implications given later series references) (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries; “Pilot”).

The series’ narrative broadly revolves around the remaining battlestar, a military spacecraft, called the Galactica, and a civilian fleet of approximately 60 ships, carrying the last remnants of humanity (a population of about 50,000). They attempt to escape pursuit and ultimate annihilation by the Cylons. Within this narrative, a secondary storyline is threaded. Throughout the series, humanity searches for a mythical planet, called Earth, that they believe is the home of the lost Thirteenth Tribe of humans, described in their Sacred Scriptures (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

Upon reaching Earth, they sorrowfully discover that the planet is, alas, little more than a barren nuclear wasteland, made so by a war that took place thousands of years earlier; a war in which the Centurions2 of that planet had killed their creators much like the Cylon destruction of the Twelve Colonies (“Sometimes a Great Notion”). A broken humanity decides to continue its trek in search of a new home. Following a long journey, during which humanity is pulled into a Cylon Civil War and a fragile alliance with a small faction of Cylons dedicated to the cause of locating a second Earth, the humans and their allied Cylons fight one final battle (“Six of One”);

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2 Centurions are the original Cylons created by Daniel Graystone (“Pilot”; Battlestar Galactica: Razor; Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries) that rebelled against humanity in the First Cylon War. They are mechanical in form and now serve the humanoid Cylons as pseudo-servant/soldier class. Those within the present day events of Battlestar Galactica are more advanced than those of the First Cylon War.
“Guess What’s Coming to Dinner?”). The battle, referred to as the Battle of the Colony, costs many Cylons their lives and much of their technology. As the technology used to travel quickly between distant parts of the galaxy is quickly failing, along with the Galactica itself quickly becoming crippled with age, the Colonial fleet and the last remnants of the Cylon race take one last desperate jump through space. They arrive at what they christen the second Earth, (a planet which we are led to believe is our own planet Earth 150,000 years in our past). It is on this planet that the human and Cylon survivors decide to abandon all advanced technology, that same technology that had led to the destruction of both humanity and Cylon, and start over from the beginning in hopes of getting things right and ending the cycle of destruction. In the end we are left with the human society of Earth, 150,000 years after the settlement, in which advances of robotic technology have taken place rapidly approaching those of the Twelve Colonies prior to the First Cylon War. Finally we the viewers are left with but one fundamental and still lingering question: “Will humanity continue the same cycle (e.g., in its relationship with technology) or will things be different this next time?” (“Daybreak”).

Mythology

Within Battlestar Galactica, while the Cylons (those who are religious/spiritual) are monotheistic, human religious practices are steeped in a polytheistic theology, although later a minority monotheistic movement does arise. While the Colonial scriptures are different, their gods share the names of many ancient Greek gods (i.e., Zeus, Athena, Aries). The Twelve Colonies also share variations of our well-known constellations and similarly reference ancient Greek mythology (i.e., Caprica/Capricorn, Aerilon/Aries, Gemenon/Gemini, etc.).

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3 The term jumping is used to refer to the faster than light means of traveling through space used by both the Cylons and humans. This is made possible by what is referred to as the FTL Drive. The drive only allows the ships to “jump” or travel a limited distance through space each time. The farther the distance the more danger posed to the ship (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).
While most concepts within the reimagined theology of *Battlestar Galactica* are centered or tied to those of ancient Greece, there are some similarities to Mormonism (although most resonances with Mormonism revolve around the original series). The political structure of humanity within the series consists of a president and what is referred to as the Quorum of Twelve, which mirrors the leadership structure of the Mormon Church consisting of a president and a quorum or council of twelve (Gillespie).

The origin story of humanity within the series directly parallels Mormon doctrine. The *Sacred Scrolls* of the Twelve Colonies relate the story of humanity’s creation, declaring that humanity and the Twelve Colonies originated from the planet Kobol, which was inhabited by their ancestors and gods to whom they refer to as the Lords of Kobol. The scrolls teach that at some point, the ancestors left Kobol in the form of thirteen tribes. The Twelve Tribes formed what are now the Twelve Colonies of Kobol. However, the scrolls refer to a lost Thirteenth Tribe believed to have settled on a distant planet Earth, the location of which has long been forgotten. While the Colonials imagine their origin and gods arose from the distant planet Kobol, Mormons claim that their Lord resides on the planet Kolob, a simple reversal of letters. In addition, the Mormon scriptures suggest that of the Thirteen Tribes of Israel, twelve were scattered about the known Earth while one remains lost in a yet undiscovered section. Just as in *Battlestar Galactica*, twelve tribes are known, one remains lost, and all roads lead to Earth (Gillespie).

Within the series, the key religious mythos at the center of the narrative focuses on that of the *Sacred Scrolls*, specifically the “Book of Pythia.” Written by the oracle Pythia, the book is believed to foretell of the Cylon attack on humanity, as well as humanity’s exodus, rebirth, and return to Earth. Key predictions involve references to the “serpents numbering two and ten” believed to reference both the Cylons, of which there are twelve known models, and a dying
human leader who would lead the colonists “to the promised land” (“The Hand of God”). The latter is believed to be a reference to President Laura Roslin, who is dying from cancer.

An ever-present and dramatic concern of the Colonial religion, which also weaves its way throughout the Cylon mythos, is the idea of eternal return, and in particular, rebirth. “All this has happened before and all this will happen again” is often repeated throughout the series by both human and Cylon alike. It is the idea that time is an endless repeating cycle, constantly repeating back on itself.

Characters

Humanity

Commander William Adama.

Commander William Adama is the commanding officer of the battlestar *Galactica*, a ship set to be decommissioned after many years of service in the Colonial fleet as the series opens. Both the ship, and Adama, are veterans of the First Cylon War, and are representative of the “old values” of the Twelve Colonies that resulted from the original Cylon rebellion (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

Adama, divorced, had two sons, Zak and Lee, but prior to the events of the series, Zak was killed during a flight exercise, something that caused a rift in the relationship between the remaining son Lee and his father. Lee blamed Adama for pushing Zak into military service when Zak was not qualified. It is an event that haunts both Lee and his father, but they later reconcile in part through the coming together over the Fall of the Twelve Colonies. William Adama also has a close relationship with pilot Kara Thrace, most often referred to by her military call sign of Starbuck, whom he considers to be like a daughter (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).
At the start of the series, during the attack on the Twelve Colonies, the military fleet is all but destroyed. Adama is forced to assume command of all that remains of the Colonial military and civilian fleets, which ultimately consist of approximately sixty ships (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*). Following the attack and the destruction of the Twelve Colonies, Adama wishes to stay behind, and fight the war with the Cylons, but President Laura Roslin insists that he aid in the rescue of the last remnants of humanity scattered throughout Colonial space. He resists, but ultimately agrees with Roslin’s declaration that the war is, in fact, over, and humanity has lost. Their only option, he concludes, is to gather whatever surviving humanity and ships remain and flee (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*). As the fleet flees, Adama, in an attempt to offer humanity some hope for the future, declares that he alone actually knows the location of the mythical lost planet Earth, even though he is in fact lying. Roslin is the only one who knows this is a lie (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

At the start of the series, he and Roslin have a tumultuous relationship. At one point, Adama even removes her from office by staging a coup (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”), but as Roslin gathers evidence that points toward Earth, and she gathers support in the fleet (“Home, Part 1”), he restores her to power. The two thus ultimately reconcile (“Home, Part 2”). His own political situation is also tumultuous at times as he narrowly survives an assassination attempt by a sleeper version of the humanoid Cylon model Eight, known as Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, when her Cylon programming activates itself (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”).

A surprise reuniting with a thought to be destroyed battlestar, *Pegasus*, commanded by Admiral Helena Cain (“Pegasus”), initiates a power struggle between the two senior officers for the command of the fleet, which almost leads to their deaths. However, after Cain is assassinated
by another humanoid Cylon model, Six, called Gina Inviere, President Roslin promotes Adama to the rank of Admiral (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”).

Toward the end of the series, Adama and Roslin narrowly survive a brief yet violent mutiny and coup aboard the *Galactica*, in which a group of colonists attempt to over throw both the civilian government, and Adama, as military leader (“The Oath”). During the coup, the militants assassinate the entire Quorum of Twelve, elected representatives from each of the ships now standing as proxies for the now destroyed Twelve Colonies (“Blood on the Scales”).

Adama will face a considerable number of personal struggles. Chief among them is the revelation that his lifelong friend and Executive Officer Colonel Saul Tigh, is in fact a Cylon, a member of what will be known as the Final Five. This discovery initially fractures their relationship, but ultimately the two reconcile as Tigh asserts his loyalty, not simply to the Colonial fleet and humanity but to Adama the man, the friend, and the human (“Revelations”; “Sometimes a Great Notion”).

In the last year of the series, Adama and Roslin begin to form a romantic relationship. After Adama leads the final assault on the Cylons during the Battle of the Colony, and humanity reaches the second Earth, he and Roslin leave the rest of group choosing to settle alone. Roslin will succumb to her cancer soon after they leave. Adama buries her, and builds a home in which he spends the rest of his life in solitude (“Daybreak”).

*Laura Roslin.*

Laura Roslin begins the series as Secretary of Education, a position not held in high esteem by most characters in the show’s cast (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*). She began her career as a schoolteacher but shortly after the death of her family in an accident with a drunk driver, she entered politics, and took a position in the administration of President Adar
(“Daybreak”). During the Cylon attack on the Twelve Colonies virtually the entire Colonial government was destroyed. However, Roslin, who happened to be touring the soon to be decommissioned Galactica at the time of the attack, was spared the fate of the rest of the government and therefore left the highest-ranking member of the cabinet in line for presidential succession. She was sworn in as president while the initial attack was underway and was instrumental in the locating and rescuing of approximately sixty civilian colonial ships; what would become all that remained of humanity (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

President Roslin plays an essential role throughout the series, and viewers are presented with a narrative thread they alone know at the start, when it is revealed that she is afflicted with terminal breast cancer (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Knowing that her time is limited, Roslin opts to pursue the use of an alternative medical treatment called Chamalla that is known to have hallucinogenic effects (“Act of Contrition”). Not long after the start of treatments, Roslin begins to have visions, soon confirmed by a priestess Eloshia, to be religious in form, and related to the Sacred Scrolls, specifically the oracle Pythia (“Hand of God”). Key pieces of these visions include the planet Kobol and its ancient Opera House (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 1”), the Hybrid Child (“Crossroads, Part 1”), and the ultimate search for Earth. Roslin’s connection with these visions, however, primarily centers on the prophecy offered by Pythia. Pythia predicts the exodus of humankind, and suggests that a dying leader will lead the last vestiges of humanity to the promised land (“Hand of God”). As soon as everyone learns of Roslin’s terminal cancer, she is instantly assigned this role of dying leader, and assigned a certain elevated status (“Fragged”). She is not afraid to use this “religious card” in political ways, in order to sway arguments in her favor (“The Farm”).
Roslin serves two terms as president, with a brief interruption between the two during which time Gaius Baltar, a man she has never truly trusted and suspects was involved in the Cylon attack on the Twelve Colonies, is elected as president only to be later removed from power. While Roslin had attempted to rig the election in her favor because of her fears regarding Baltar, she is caught by Adama and concedes the election after he suggests that she will lose a piece of her self if she does not (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”).

She is temporarily cured of her cancer through a blood transfusion, received from Hera, a hybrid child born a Cylon/human mix (“Epiphanies”). Ultimately however, the cancer returns more aggressively. With the return of the cancer, she again resumes the Chamalla treatments, and her religious visions return once again (“Crossroads, Part 1”).

As stated above, President Roslin and Commander Adama share a volatile relationship. At the beginning of the series they often battle for control. Initially Adama refuses to look at Roslin as anything more than a schoolteacher, and believes she is too weak to lead humanity. They do agree that political/civilian matters should be left to her, and military decisions should be left to him but Adama stages a coup in an attempt to terminate her presidency, believing she is too dangerous (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). She escapes with the help of others (including Commander Adama’s son Lee) (“Resistance”). During this period she comes upon a key location in the search for Earth. It is here, at this juncture, that she and Adama reconcile, and she is once again reinstated as president of the Colonies (“Home, Part 2”). The search for Earth represents a turning point in the narrative and in Roslin and Adama’s relationship. As the series progresses, Roslin and Adama’s relationship evolves from adversarial to friendly to as I noted earlier, romantic. A weak Roslin assists in the final battle with the Cylons, the Battle of the Colony, but
shortly after humanity’s settlement of the second Earth she succumbs to her cancer ("Daybreak").

*Gaius Baltar.*

Gaius Baltar is a renowned scientist of the Twelve Colonies, and a major advocate for the development of advanced technology and artificial intelligence, the same artificial intelligence banned since the First Cylon War. He believes the ban is outdated, unnecessary, and limits the progress of humanity. Baltar is the main contributor to the development of the Command Navigation Program (CNP), an essential element to Colonial defenses. At the beginning of the series Baltar finishes his work on this grand project immediately prior to the Cylon attack on the Colonies. In fact, it is his work, and his link to a sultry Cylon, known as Caprica-Six that leads to the destruction of the Twelve Colonies (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

Known for his arrogance and the ease in which he may be manipulated sexually, the undercover Cylon, Caprica-Six, gains access to the Colonial defenses to assist in the impending Cylon attack. Caprica-Six secretly helps Baltar with the CNP by fixing issues that Baltar realizes he does not have the knowledge to resolve, all the while creating computer “backdoors” for the Cylons to access the system. After Caprica-Six reveals her Cylon identity to Baltar, he realizes he has been unwittingly complicit in the destruction of the Colonies and ultimately humanity. He survives the destruction, however, when Caprica-Six sacrifices herself to protect him. Baltar is one of the few who are rescued from the Caprican colony, and ultimately comes to reside on the *Galactica* (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

Dr. Baltar is declared the ultimate resident Cylon expert and is given the charge of creating a system to distinguish humans from Cylons ("Water"). He is successful, but determines it will take 61 years to test the approximately 50,000 people in the entire fleet ("Tigh Me Up,
Tigh Me Down”). In addition, Baltar discovers that his first test subject, Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, is in fact a Cylon even though she is unaware of her identity. Out of fear for his safety, Baltar instead alters the test results to indicate Valerii is human rather than Cylon (“Flesh and Bone”). He proceeds to alter the detector to create faulty results, thereby indicating all who are tested are humans (“Tigh Me Up, Tigh Me Down”).

Baltar struggles with visions of what can be referred to as the Virtual-Six throughout the entire series. She (the Six in his visions) is a copy of the humanoid Cylon Six model that is only visible to him. The Virtual-Six guides and manipulates Baltar, at times to further his own selfish ambitions, and at others, to apparently advance what is believed to be the Cylon cause (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries; “Home, Part 2”).

Baltar is chosen to serve as vice-president during President Roslin’s first presidency (“Colonial Day”) and defeats her in the following presidential election (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”). However, Baltar only briefly serves as president when, through duplicity and corruption, he is deposed, and replaced by former president Roslin. Roslin is convinced Baltar played a role in the destruction of the Colonies and he is put on trial for treason. Although he is acquitted, Baltar is left with few, if any, allies (“Crossroads, Part 2”).

Baltar soon abandons the polytheistic religious practices of the Colonies, and converts to a minority monotheistic sect, consisting primarily of women, and is quickly elevated to the status of religious leader. The group looks to Baltar as a prophet (“The Road Less Traveled”). However, in the end, he abandons his “selfish ways” and participates in the final Battle of the Colony, ultimately settling on the second Earth with a copy of Caprica-Six (“Daybreak”).
Captain Lee “Apollo” Adama.

Lee Adama, also called Captain Adama or Apollo, is the last surviving son of Commander William Adama. He commands the viper pilots that protect the Colonial fleet. Lee and his father have a strained relationship because of Lee’s conviction that the death of his brother Zak was a direct result of his father’s pressure. Eventually reconciliation takes place (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

Following the assassination of Admiral Helena Cain, Lee is promoted to major and given command of the battlestar *Pegasus* (“The Captain’s Hand”). It is a short-lived command as he sacrifices the *Pegasus* to save the *Galactica* and the rest of the fleet during a battle with the Cylons (“Exodus, Part 2”). Lee later resigns from the Colonial fleet after a dispute with his father, because he feels obligated to assist in Baltar’s defense during his trial, and ultimately plays a substantial role in Baltar’s acquittal (“Crossroads, Part 1”; “Crossroads, Part 2”). Shortly after, Lee is nominated and elected to be the Caprican representative to the Quorum of Twelve (“The Ties That Bind”). His role as a representative strains relations between himself and both Roslin and his father, as he questions the apparent unchecked presidential power of Roslin. Lee insists that Roslin answer to the Quorum and to the people (“Guess What’s Coming to Dinner?”). During Roslin’s brief kidnapping by the Cylons, he is appointed as interim president (“Sine Qua Non”). During the staged mutiny, Lee is also the only member of the Quorum of Twelve to survive (“Blood on the Scales”).

During the final Battle of the Colony, Lee once again joins the military to assist in the battle. Finally, on reaching the second Earth and the beginning settlement, Lee plays a prominent role in the decision that humanity should abandon all technology and start over, to “break the cycle” (“Daybreak”).
Karl “Helo” Agathon.

Often referred to by his call sign “Helo,” Karl Agathon served as a pilot in the Colonial fleet. After being stranded on the Caprican colony during the Cylon attack (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*), Helo spent much of his time evading the Cylon occupying forces. On encountering a copy of the Cylon model Eight, referred to as Sharon, believed to be human friend Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, the two spent time evading and resisting the Cylon forces (“Water”). However, Sharon was manipulating Helo, attempting to form an intimate relationship with him, enticing him to fall in love with her while they were in fact being observed by the Cylons the entire time (“Bastille Day”; “Six Degrees of Separation”). Sharon was reporting back to her Cylon observers about these attempts. Shortly after becoming romantically involved with Sharon, Helo discovers she is a Cylon but is unable to kill her when she declares that she is not only in love with him but is also pregnant with his child (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”).

After Helo and Sharon are rescued and return to the *Galactica*, Sharon is imprisoned in *Galactica’s* brig (“Home, Part 2”). In an attempt to prevent Sharon from being raped during a session of torture, Helo accidentally kills a superior officer, which results in his temporarily imprisonment (“Pegasus”). While he is eventually released, he is frequently harassed for he is regarded as a “Cylon lover.” In addition, Helo is also criticized/judged for his controversial view that the copy of Sharon, now known as Sharon “Athena,” should be released and trusted, as she has proven herself loyal to the fleet. Karl and Athena ultimately marry and have a daughter, named Hera, known as the hybrid child, a pregnancy that many wish to have terminated out of a sense that it poses a danger to the fleet (“Downloaded”). Again, Helo is known for his controversial views toward Cylons. He believes in fighting them for the survival for humanity, but believes they should not be treated as machines, but rather as a sentient race. This
championing of Cylon rights almost creates a separation between him and the rest of humanity when it comes to several major decisions. Following the Battle of the Colony, he, Athena, and Hera settle on the second Earth along with the rest of humanity to spend the rest of their days ("Daybreak").

The Cylons

Within the series, there are twelve Cylon models. Seven are generally aware of their identity and Five (called the Final Five) who are not. Only the Number One models are aware of the identity of the Final Five. A thirteenth Cylon model (number Seven) is introduced, but never makes an appearance (for reasons that will be later discussed).

The Final Five.

Over 2000 years old, Saul Tigh, Ellen Tigh, Samuel T. Anders, Galen Tyrol, and Tory Foster, originated from the planet Earth described in the Sacred Scrolls. They are considered to be the original five humanoid Cylons responsible for creating the eight known humanoid Cylon models ("No Exit"). The Final Five arrived at the Twelve Colonies during the First Cylon War and offered the mechanical Cylons the means to evolve beyond their simple mechanical state in turn for ending the war ("No Exit"). Following the creation of the eight new models, the Ones, angered at their human limitations, and the ideals imposed on them by the Five, decided to seek revenge on their creators and “kill” them ("No Exit"). The Ones proceeded to kill all but one copy of each, wipe their memories, implant them with false memories so they believed they were human, and place them within human society so that they might learn of the truly corrupt quality of humanity (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan). The Ones also programmed the remaining Cylons not to think of the Five and treat the pursuit of their identities as a forbidden knowledge or ideology ("Rapture"; “He That Believeth in Me”). It was the intent of the Ones for the Five to
die during the Cylon attack and upon resurrecting, regain their real memories and identities, and realize their errors (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan). Unfortunately, all members of the Final Five survived the Cylon attack on the Twelve Colonies and maintained their hatred of the Cylons, and their greater love of humanity (“No Exit”). To some within the Cylon society, the Five are viewed with high regard and almost worshiped upon their discovery (“Rapture”).

Colonel Saul Tigh.

Close friend of Commander Adama, Tigh served as the executive officer of the battlestar Galactica. After being “killed” by the Ones, resurrected, and placed in the Colonial society, Tigh is implanted with false memories that made him believe he served in the First Cylon War (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan). Over the years he developed a close relationship with Commander Adama, who along with everyone else, believed he was human (“Daybreak”). Saul was also married to Ellen Tigh, another member of the Five (“No Exit”). Known for his heavy drinking, Saul had a strained relationship with many of the Galactica crew. Following Commander Adama’s near death, at the hands of Sharon “Boomer” Valerii (a sleeper Cylon agent), Saul was forced to take command of the Galactica and the rest of the fleet (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). Feeling pressure from the civilian government and the free press, Tigh declared martial law thus creating utter chaos and fracturing the peace of fleet (“Fragged”) until Adama’s ultimate recovery and return to command. Saul killed his wife Ellen, during a conflict with the Cylons, because she betrayed him and a group of resistance fighters to the Cylons in order to save his life (“Exodus, Part 2”).

Upon discovering his Cylon identity, Saul asserts his pro-human beliefs and declared that while he may be a Cylon he was still a member of the Colonial fleet and it is to the fleet that he was loyal (“Crossroads, Part 2”). He had a brief intimate relationship with a copy of Caprica-Six
during which she became pregnant ("Sine Qua Non"), but subsequently miscarried ("Deadlock"). Upon the return of Ellen Tigh, Saul and Ellen rejoined and following the final Battle of the Colony, the two settle together on the second Earth ("Daybreak").

Ellen Tigh.

Ellen is the wife of Saul Tigh. While the two were participating in their human lives Ellen often had a negative influence on Saul. She was known for her sexual infidelity and for encouraging Saul’s drinking. In addition, she often pushed Saul to pursue his own ambitions and to forget about the well being of those around him which most often resulted in his abandonment of reason and had serious negative consequences ("Resistance").

During the Cylon conflict on New Caprica, Ellen betrayed the plans of the human resistance to the Cylons in order to save Saul’s life. When the resistance discovered Ellen’s betrayal however, Saul was forced to kill her ("Exodus, Part 2"). When Ellen later resurrected, she regained her Cylon identity and memories, and rejoined the Final Five ("No Exit"). She took on a leadership role among the Final Five and was instrumental in the Five’s participating in the final Battle of the Colony. Following the battle, Ellen and Saul settle together on the second Earth along with humanity and the remaining surviving Cylons ("Daybreak").

Samuel Anders.

While a member of humanity, Anders is best known for his being a member of the human resistance fighters rescued from the Caprican Colony ("Resistance"). Upon the Final Five discovering their Cylon identities, Anders plays an important role in revealing the story of the Five’s true past ("No Exit"). Following a gunshot to the head during the brief mutiny aboard the Galactica, Anders is “hooked up” to the Galactica in a manner much like that of the Cylon baseship Hybrids which allows him to play a major role in the final Battle of the Colony
(“Islanded in a Stream of Stars”). Following the battle, Anders pilots the *Galactica* and the rest of the Colonial fleet into the Sun to destroy both the ships and the remainder of the Cylon reproductive technology, killing himself in the process. Through his actions he thus assists in the “resetting” of humanity’s technological status and turns back the clock to start things over for humanity (“Daybreak”).

*Galen Tyrol.*

Tyrol is the deck chief of the battlestar *Galactica*. Tyrol is responsible for the maintenance of the ship and its fighters. Chief Tyrol has a relationship with Sharon “Boomer” Valerii prior to the discovery that she is a Cylon agent (“Water”), and he struggles with the realization that he has been in love with a ”machine” (“The Farm”). Later, he marries a deckhand, Cally (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”). Cally, on discovering that Tyrol is a Cylon sets about to reveal the identities of Tyrol, Foster, Tigh, and Anders but is murdered by Foster before she is able to do so (“The Ties That Bind”). During the final Battle of the Colony, Tyrol discovers that Foster killed Cally, and overcome with rage, he strangles her. Following the battle, Tyrol decides to spend the rest of his days in solitude in the highlands of the second Earth (“Daybreak”).

*Tory Foster.*

The aide to President Roslin, Tory Foster is the only member of the Final Five who appears almost happy to discover her Cylon identity (“Escape Velocity”). Upon her initial discovery, however, in order to protect the secret of the Final Five, Foster kills Tyrol’s wife Cally (“The Ties That Bind”). However, Foster embraces her Cylon identity and quickly switches her alliances. At the first opportunity, she relocates to the Cylon baseship (“Revelations”). Foster quickly begins to view herself and her fellow Cylons as perfection, and
that in fact, the act of their creation was perfect. This is a position that distances her from her fellow members of the Five (“Revelations”). At the end of the final Battle of the Colony, it is discovered that Foster killed Cally and she is strangled by an enraged Tyrol. It is at this point that Foster is officially dead as there are no other copies remaining (“Daybreak”).

*The Significant Seven.*

The Significant Seven refers to those Cylons, the humanoid models One through Eight minus the model Seven who is not present in the series, created by the Final Five (Moore, "Frak Party Q And A."). They play the dominant role throughout the entire series as the identities of the Final Five are not discovered until the later part of the series and are not even known to the eight, except for the Ones, until that point (“Revelations”). The Significant Seven are those that launch the attack and ultimate destruction of the Twelve Colonies (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

*Number One.*

The Ones, also referred to as John Cavil (Brother Cavil while infiltrating humanity), bear humanity the most ill will of all the Cylon models. While infiltrating humanity, the copies of Cavil assume the role of Brother Cavil, a member of the Colonial clergy. This is ironic considering Cavil is truly atheistic, a condition that also sets him apart from many of his Cylon counterparts (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 1”; *Battlestar Galactica: The Plan*).

Cavil is responsible for the “loss” of the Final Five, the original five Cylons. He destroyed all traces of the Final Five from the memories of the other Cylons, and created a programming within them that made it forbidden to pursue the identities of the Final Five or even think about them (“He that Believeth in Me”). In addition, he erased the memories of the Final Five themselves, and reprogrammed them to think they were human. Ultimately, he placed
them within humanity. He did this in an attempt to teach them a lesson about the evil, violence, and the lack of morality that he sees as the true essence of humanity (*Battlestar Galactica: The Plan*; “No Exit”).

The Ones are known for their hatred of their human form and its inherent limitations as well as their religious beliefs. The Ones believed this to be a weakness and an imperfection imposed upon them by their creators (“No Exit”). Ultimately, the entire One line/model was destroyed during the Battle of the Colony when the Colony was destroyed and the remaining copy that was on the *Galactica* committed suicide (“Daybreak”).

**Number Two.**

Also referred to as Leoben Conoy, the Twos appear to be very religious and are obsessed with the human pilot Kara “Starbuck” Thrace. Conoy views himself as a prophet during his interaction with Thrace, predicting that she will play a major role in the future of the Cylons and humanity (“Flesh and Bone”). However, Leoben is probably best known for his ability to create chaos within the fleet, by causing the humans to question themselves and those around them (e.g., President Roslin, Commander Adama, and Kara Thrace). Before the death of one copy of Conoy, he tells Roslin that Adama is a Cylon (“Flesh and Bone”), and while Roslin is skeptical it causes her to be suspicious of Adama’s behavior, which in turn causes Adama to become suspicious of hers. The suspicion leads to tension and deceit between the two, until they eventually realize that it was Conoy’s plan all along to create a rift between them and weaken the fleet and thus making them even more susceptible to the Cylons (“Tigh Me Up, Tigh Me Down”). At least one copy of the Twos is known to have survived the final Battle of the Colony, and settlement of the second Earth but it is unknown how many other copies survived as well (“Daybreak”).
**Number Three.**

Known as D’Anna Biers while posing as a journalist and infiltrating the Colonial fleet (“Final Cut”), the Threes are also very religious. The Threes are obsessed with, and are instrumental in, the discovery of the identities of the Final Five, a forbidden pursuit among the Cylon society. She realizes that each time she dies and resurrects, she is given a vision of the Five (“The Passage”). Therefore, to promote her visions, she has the Centurions kill her so that she may resurrect thus assisting in bring her ever closer to discovering the Five’s identities (“Hero”). The other Cylons declare this pursuit as unacceptable and that her essential self is flawed, and have her entire line (model) boxed, or taken off line (“Rapture”). Eventually one copy of the Threes is revived, but when the humans and Cylons discover the true mythical planet Earth that was described in the Sacred Scrolls, a planet they discover to be in ruins after an apparent nuclear war that took place thousands of years earlier, she is so distraught at its destruction that she chooses to stay behind on the now virtually destroyed and uninhabitable planet to spend the rest of her days in solitude. As no other copy is seen again we are left to assume her model is extinct (“Sometimes a Great Notion”).

**Number Four.**

In regard to this study the Fours do not play a particularly significant role. They are known as Simon O’Neill and take on the role of the doctor within the Cylon community and when infiltrating some minor sects of humanity, specifically a group of human rebels left behind on the Caprican colony. The Fours do play an important role in the Cylon attempt to use captured women to create breeding farms, an unsuccessful attempt to create Cylon/human hybrid children (“The Farm”). It is believed that all copies of the Fours are destroyed during the final Battle of the Colony (“Daybreak”).
Number Five.

Referred to throughout the series as Aaron Doral, he is initially seen posing as a public relations agent giving a tour of the soon to be decommissioned Galactica. He attempts to create dissent toward Roslin’s authority when she takes command just following the initial attack prior to her being sworn into office as president but he is unsuccessful (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Again, it is believed that all copies of the Fives are destroyed during the final Battle of the Colony (“Daybreak”).

Number Six.

The Sixes qualify as a major character group within the entire series as they both open and close the series, and in each case play a significant role. While there are many copies of the Sixes (I will only reference four of them), they all have one thing in common: they are known for their use of sexuality as a means to manipulate and infiltrate humanity.

The first copy of the Sixes we encounter appears at the very opening of the series, the Armistice Station Copy. Dressed entirely in red (red skirt, red top, red boots), she is the first copy seen of the new humanoid breed of Cylon. With her hyper-sexualized appearance and actions, the viewers experience the nature of the threat that the new Cylons pose toward the human society of the Twelve Colonies, a sexual manipulation linked with sheer destructive capabilities. With this copy of the Six model and the destruction of the Armistice Station she brings with her, we link her, and her model, with the true start of the Cylon attack, and the coming destruction of Caprica and most of humanity. Six even announces this beginning by declaring to her human victim as she kisses him, “It has begun” (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). She is the harbinger of the apocalypse.
The next copy of Six encountered is referred to as Caprica-Six, a designation resulting from her stationing/infiltration of the human colony of Caprica. She is the model that forms a highly sexual relationship with Gaius Baltar as a means to secretly gain access to the Colonial defenses making them susceptible to the impending Cylon attack. As the attack is about to begin she reveals her identity to Baltar thus creating a sense of panic within him. Ironically though, she sacrifices herself to save him (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Later in the series a resurrected copy of this model forms a romantic relationship with Saul Tigh (“Sine Qua Non”). She becomes pregnant with Tigh’s child (the only known Cylon/Cylon pregnancy in the series) but suffers a miscarriage (“Deadlock”). After the Battle of the Colony and Tigh reestablishes a relationship with his wife Ellen, Caprica-Six joins with Baltar and the two settle together along with the rest of humanity and the remaining Cylons on the second Earth (“Daybreak”).

The copy known as Gina Inviere plays a significant role in manipulating not just a singular member within humanity, but with groups. Her initial infiltration of the Colonial fleet was posing as a computer analyst on the Pegasus. While on the Pegasus she forms a romantic relationship with Admiral Helena Cain. It is a significant infiltration because it reveals a queer relationship on multiple levels. It is a Cylon/human relationship, but it is also the first, if not only, same-sex relationship within the series (Battlestar Galactica: Razor). Upon Cain’s discovery of Gina’s Cylon identity, Gina is imprisoned, and undergoes violent torture as a means of interrogation, a torture that involves rape (“Pegasus”). Baltar is brought in to assist with the interrogation but, horrified by her treatment, ultimately assists in Gina’s escape. Following her escape from the brig, Gina assassinates Cain, who shows no remorse for her actions against Inviere. She then escapes to another civilian ship, the Cloud 9 (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”). From this point, Gina infiltrates and becomes leader of a group of humans who believe there
should be a peace formed between the Cylons and humans. The group however, is unaware of Inviere’s Cylon identity and her motives. Baltar is again sexually weakened by her presence when he visits her on the new ship and provides her and her group with a nuclear device (“Epiphanies”). Ultimately Gina detonates the device destroying herself, the Cloud 9, and several other ships near it, thus allowing the Cylon fleet to discover the location of the Colonial fleet. Therefore, once again, Baltar is involved in a Cylon attack on humanity (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”).

Finally, the Virtual-Six is considered to be a copy of Caprica-Six because she appears to Baltar immediately following the Cylon Holocaust/destruction of the Twelve Colonies. She is a copy of the Sixes that only appears in Baltar’s mind. She is a vision that only he can see, and with whom only he can interact. Despite her lack of corporeal being, like the other copies, Virtual-Six is able to manipulate Baltar and guide him in ways that further Baltar’s own selfish ambitions and the ambitions of the Cylons (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). This version of Six often speaks to Baltar of “God’s Will” and how Baltar must give himself over to the “one true God” (“Home, Part 2”). She claims that Baltar is the future of both Cylon and humanity. Virtual-Six often takes Baltar into a virtual world, in which they have visions of the hybrid child (“Home, Part 2”; “Daybreak”), and a sexual relationship (“A Measure of Salvation”). This, at times, makes Baltar appear crazy to the physical beings around him, as no one else is able to see her, and he looks as if he is talking (or motioning) to or with himself. Again this Six prompts an identity crisis for Baltar, as her appearance causes him to question his humanity, and to think that perhaps he may be a Cylon, or carrying a Cylon “chip” in his head (“Home, Part 2”). Virtual-Six also appears at the end of the series that takes place 150,000 years later on the second Earth and
speaks with what appears to be a virtual copy of Baltar, seeming to confirm that she and the Virtual-Baltar are both messengers of God (“Daybreak”).

Despite the name, copy, or means of infiltration of each version of Six, the key to her involvement and means of manipulating humanity is her sexuality, and the use of the sexuality of others. In addition, with the appearance of Virtual-Six at the end of the series, as she and a Virtual-Baltar walk through the streets of what is assumed to be our present day civilization, the cycle of the Sixes opening and closing the series and their interaction with humanity is completed. Appearing to be messengers from God, as they contemplate and observe the advanced state of technology and “technology run amuck,” when compared to the original Earth, Kobol, and the Twelve Colonies before The Fall; they question whether or not humanity will continue the cycle (“Daybreak”).

_number seven._

Referred to as Daniel, this model is never seen as his entire model/line, and was corrupted and destroyed by the Cavils (Ones) who became jealous of their relationship with Ellen Tigh (“No Exit”).

_number eight._

The Eights are considered to be the other major Cylon model (aside from the Sixes), of the eight known humanoid Cylon models. Typically referred to as the Sharons, there are two within the entire model that have the most significant effect upon the humans.

Sharon “Boomer” Valerii is situated as a sleeper agent within the Colonial fleet, posing as a viper pilot, and stationed on the _Galactica_. Boomer, as she is often referred to, is unaware of her Cylon identity, as she has been implanted with false memories of a family and past that never truly existed. Shortly after the series begins, she suspects that she might in fact be a Cylon, after
suffering blackouts and numerous instances of sabotage occurring on board the *Galactica* (“Water”). Boomer insists that she be Baltar’s first test subject for his new Cylon detector, and while she does test positive, out of fear for his own safety Baltar tells her she is human (“Flesh and Bone”). Finally, when her Cylon programming eventually kicks in, Boomer attempts to assassinate Commander Adama by shooting him twice in the chest (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). Adama only narrowly survives the attempt. Shortly following the attack, as she is transported through the halls of the ship, Boomer is killed by a member of the *Galactica* crew (“Resistance”). When she resurrects and rejoins Cylon society, Boomer struggles desperately to hold onto her human identity, thus creating conflicts with her identity as a Cylon and tension between her and her fellow Cylons (“Downloaded”). Just prior to the final Battle of the Colony, Boomer kidnaps Hera, the hybrid child (“Someone to Watch Over Me”). However, in one last attempt at self-redemption she decides to return Hera to her parents, Karl and Sharon “Athena” Agathon. Sharon Agathon immediately shoots, and kills her, following this act, and as there is no longer any means to resurrect Boomer at this point, the Boomer copy becomes dead (“Daybreak”).

Sharon “Athena” Agathon is the other major copy of the Eights. Unlike her other Boomer counterpart, Athena is aware of her Cylon status. Placed on the now decimated colony of Caprica, her mission is to form an intimate relationship with the stranded Colonial officer Karl “Helo” Agathon who is unaware that the Sharons are Cylons. By impersonating Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, who he still believes she is both human and Helo’s friend, Athena “helps” Helo escape the Cylons. In truth, they are being followed and watched (“Water”). All the while, Athena and Karl develop a romantic, and sexual relationship that results in Athena becoming pregnant. When he discovers her Cylon identity, Helo at first wants to kill her, but when she
reveals she is pregnant with his child and that she is in love with him, he eventually realizes his own feelings and accepts her (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). Eventually the Colonial fleet rescues the two. Again, at first, Athena is treated with hatred, as she is nothing more than a Cylon. Over time, she proves her loyalty toward humanity, and rejects the Cylons. She and Helo ultimately marry and bear their daughter, Hera, the first hybrid child, a child of human and Cylon interbreeding. Following the Battle of the Colony, Athena, Helo, and Hera settle on the second Earth together (“Daybreak”).

*The Hybrid Child – Hera.*

Hera, also known as the hybrid child, is the first and only known successful instance of human and Cylon mixed breeding. She is the child of the human Karl “Helo” Agathon and his wife, the Cylon Sharon “Athena” Agathon. Hera’s life is steeped in controversy from before her very conception. Declared by the Virtual-Six to Baltar as part of the “shape of things to come” the audience knows that a baby will play an important role within the story even before it is born (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). A conception of deceit, Hera was conceived while Sharon “Athena” Agathon was on a mission to seduce Karl “Helo” Agathon when he was then stranded on the decimated Caprican colony (“Six Degrees of Separation”). However, when Athena falls in love with Helo, she abandons the Cylons and joins with the Colonial fleet. When President Roslin and Commander Adama learn of the Cylon/human pregnancy, they fear its implications for humanity and the possible destruction it might cause. Roslin declares that if it is good for the Cylons, it would most definitely be bad for humanity. Therefore, Roslin insisted that the pregnancy be terminated. However, as Roslin lay on the verge of death from her terminal cancer, Baltar discovered that the blood of the unborn child possesses a possible cure and proceeded to give Roslin an injection, without her knowledge, which ultimately heals her (although
temporarily) (“Epiphanies”). In light of this discovery Roslin allows Hera to be born, but decides she could not be raised in the hands of Athena and Helo. Her decision is that she, Adama, and the doctor should replace Hera with a dead baby, to deceive Helo and Athena, as well as the rest of the Cylons and the Colonial fleet, into thinking the baby died following the birth. Roslin proceeds to secretly give Hera to another family to raise, in order to protect the child (“Downloaded”). Following a Cylon attack however, Hera is discovered, and taken by the Cylons (“Exodus, Part 2”). Ultimately her mother Athena rescued her (“Rapture”). Later, immediately prior to the final Battle of the Colony, Sharon “Boomer” Valerii kidnaps Hera, yet returns her on the eve of the Colony’s destruction, placing her back into the hands of her parents, Helo and Athena (“Daybreak”).

Hera is the object of visions experienced by Virtual-Six, Baltar, Roslin, Caprica-Six, and Athena, which illustrates her importance throughout the series. The visions begin from prior to her conception in which Virtual-Six takes Baltar into the ruins of the ancient Opera House on the planet Kobol (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”), through the rest of the series, at which time we watch a toddler Hera being chased through the Opera House by Roslin, Caprica-Six, and Athena (“Crossroads, Part 2”), and a vision of the mystical Final Five (“Daybreak”). Ultimately it is a foreshadowing of the notion that Hera will play a part in the future of humanity and the Cylons. In the end, Hera settles on the second Earth with Helo and Athena. At the very end of the series we glimpse forward 150,000 years later where we are lead to believe the remains of Hera are found and she is given the designation of Mitochondrial Eve, “the name scientists have given to the most recent common ancestor for all human beings now living on Earth” (“Daybreak”).
Research Questions

Within the thesis I address the following research questions:

(1) How and to what extent are challenges to the heteronormative structure represented through sex, gender, and performativity through the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica*?

(2) How and to what extent are challenges to the privileged heteronormative family structure represented through power dynamics associated with reproduction between the Cylons and the humans in *Battlestar Galactica*?

(3) How and to what extent are challenges to the heteronormative structure represented through fear of technology as illustrated in the conflict between the humans and Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica*?

Significance

Through a close reading and queer theory, I analyze how the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* represent and constitute queer identity. Through this analysis, I demonstrate how such representations create an understanding of the queer Other in heteronormative society and how this Other is revealed through such representations. In addition, I discuss how the Cylons as a representation of the queer Other permit both problematic and potentially productive understandings of the queer Other. Therein, I offer an illustrative dialogue on how our society views the queer Other and ultimately what is necessary to achieve utopia. My aim is to illustrate how creations such as the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* help shape our cultural perceptions of queer identity within and against the heteronormative society. Further I hope to argue that science fiction in general, and *Battlestar Galactica* in particular, capitalizes on the dominant power’s fear of loss of power, their terror of sexualized identity especially non-normative sexual
identity, and their fear of technology and thus to illustrate how the privileged heteronormative society fears eventual conquest by an Other they cannot control.

Review of Literature

According to Wendy Pearson’s “Alien Cryptographies,” one of the most important concepts to consider when beginning any exploration of queer theory is the definition of the term queer. The major problem with the term is that it has many meanings, both positive and negative. Pearson suggests, trying to pin a definition down to a fine point is exceptionally difficult (3). Attempts to define the term require that it be placed within political, social, and historical contexts. We may assign ideas of “deviation” to queer, for example, but in what way? Does queer imply simply a deviation or subversion of the norm in terms of a choice of sexual partner, or is it much larger. Does it, as Pearson conjectures, “reach beyond sexual attraction to reveal the deeply un-natural and constructed nature of our understandings of biological sex, the performance nature of gender roles, and the socio-cultural institutions founded upon this ideology?” (3). Pearson continues by juxtaposing the ideas of queer theory as both a politics of identity (sameness) and a politics of difference.

Pearson suggests that the movement towards trying to better understand and define the term queer has led to further attempts at understanding oppressive heteronormative culture. However, this should not be considered as monolithic, but subjective, expressing a range of possibilities. It is here that Pearson asks how the drama of science fiction relates to, becomes part of, and is influenced by this newly developed subjectivity (Pearson 3).

Science fiction, Pearson notes, has had a long history of questioning and challenging established systems of thought. It tends to overcome social taboos in order to promote concepts of science, progress, and logic. Queer theory functions in some ways the same. While it may not
embrace science, it tends to live in the shadows, having thrown off the yoke of social conformity in search of new ideals and models. Both queer theory and science fiction operate in what Earl Jackson suggests is a “worldview in which the subject is not the cause but the effect of the system that sustains it” (Pearson 4).

Pearson describes four essential ways in which science fiction and ideas of queerness can interact. The first arises from a certain historical context and sensibility. These concepts are not overtly queer, because of the era within which the drama was produced, however an essential queerness may be inferred (Pearson 5). The second idea she describes as “proto-queer.” Proto-queer drama presents no directly queer situations, but instead challenges discursively (without speaking) the “natural” sexual arrangement established by society (Pearson 5). Within a third category she includes dramas in which queer situations are located but hidden from view. Specifically, they are hidden “in plain sight,” and ostensibly known by everyone, but simply not discussed (Pearson 5). Finally, she discusses the openly queer text, which questions everything in normative society. The common or natural sense of sex, gender, and sexuality are all questioned within this final, overtly queer portrayal (Pearson 5).

Pearson argues that queer drama in general and science fiction in particular is ultimately important and valuable not simply because of content, but rather because of the worldview they create. Both queer drama and science fiction desire to understand and represent dissident and alternative sexual subjectivities and in doing so, engage with historical and cultural understanding (Pearson 17.)

Like Pearson, Shira Chess in “The C-Word: Queering the Cylons,” asserts that in discussing queer theory, we must first explain what we mean by the term queer in relation to the terms gay or homosexual. According to Chess, queer is a term that has and will be used to refer
to anything that is Other when heterosexuality is the standard. In this way, Chess agrees with the arguments established by Judith Butler. Butler postulates that “gender, sex, and sexuality . . . are used to normalize heterosexuality: what can be called ‘heteronormativity’” (90). It therein becomes clear, according to this argument, that to be an Other or to be queer goes well beyond same-sex attraction.

Chess equates the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* to cyborgs, not unlike those of constructed by Donna Haraway. In her “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Haraway defines a cyborg as a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (149). According to Haraway, a cyborg is the result of three crucial boundary breakdowns: human and animal, animal-human and machine, and physical and non-physical (152-153). Chess further refers to the Cylons not simply as queer but as “technoqueer” such that it “is not about gay-versus-straight, but more about ways that fears of technologies overlap with fears of new forms of reproduction, and are embodied in cyborg figures” (Chess 89). Chess asserts that the cyborg helps us to question what it means to be human or machine. Chess’ main discussion focuses on the means of Cylon reproduction, technological/asexual resurrection and their obsession with legitimizing their reproductive practices by finding a means of sexual reproduction. Chess also discusses how the Cylons are Othered in that the humans refuse to accept them as anything other than machines, which thus has the implications of stripping them of their gender therefore setting up a confrontation between constructivist and essentialist notions of identity constitution. This setting up of the humans as reactionary agents resorting to essentialist arguments allows for the humans to maintain a hierarchy of biology over behavior.
Haraway’s arguments play an important role in Chess’ discussion and evaluating of the familial relationship between the Cylons and their parents, humanity, within *Battlestar Galactica*.

In addition to Chess, Mary Ann Doane, in “Technophilia: Technology, Representation and the Feminine,” places these concepts of technological fear associated with non-sexual reproduction and gender within a more holistic framework of reproduction, technology, and the feminine within science fiction. As Doane asserts, “when technology intersects with the body in the realm of representation, the question of sexual difference is inevitably involved” (182). She points out it is often the case in science fiction that “the woman . . . becomes the model of the perfect machine” (182). She locates the machine-woman as a means to “which questions of the maternal and technology” are discussed (185). Doane asserts that because this is a “genre that highlights technological fetishism,” it should be no surprise that science fiction “should be obsessed with the issues of the maternal, reproduction, representation, and history” (189).

Haraway in her “Cyborg Manifesto,” defines “a cyborg [as] a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (149). As I noted earlier, Haraway discusses how the cyborg challenges three crucial boundaries: human and animal, animal-human (organism) and machine, and physical and non-physical (152-153). She asserts, “there is nothing about being ‘female’ that naturally binds women” (155). As such, there is no essential “womanness” and no common bond based on biology. As Haraway remarks, “there is not even such a state as ‘being’ female” (155). Continuing, she makes the assertion that gender, race, and class-consciousness are all forced on us by social expectations and norms. Cyborg politics is the struggle for language noting how cyborgs populating feminist science fiction are problematic to the roles of “man and woman, human, artifact, member of a race, individual entity, or body” (178). Through the cyborg, Haraway sees a way of envisioning
An important theoretical concept to consider is gender performativity. In Gender Trouble, Judith Butler argues that gender is performative. By performativity she is referring to the idea that “performance” is a metaphor to describe social actions in which it is “not a singular act but a repetition and a ritual” (xv). This repetition and ritualization help to establish the idea or notion of one’s gender identity. Butler uses drag as an example to assert that gender “reality” is “not as fixed as we generally assume it to be” (xxv). In addition Butler argues that gender ought not be perceived as a stable part of identity (191). An abiding, essential identity does not exist for Butler and instead, gender is constituted by how we act, not what we “are.”

In addition, Butler develops the idea that there are no “do-ers” behind deeds but rather the “do-ers” are constructed by the deeds or actions in which they engage (195). It makes the assertion that there is no “I” or self but only action. Butler thus presents the idea that the self is constructed through behaviors that either support or challenge social norms. This notion is essential to the construction of Cylon identity and the means to which it challenges the identity imposed on them by humanity within Battlestar Galactica.

Butler’s theory of how gender is constituted or constructed is also discussed in her essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.” She further develops here ideas on performativity and her challenges regarding essentialist ideas about abiding, inherent gender. Butler asserts that we constitute our identity and our gender through the things that we do suggesting that “the body
becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” thus making the body an historical situation (274).

In “You Can’t Rape a Machine,” Amy Kind discusses the idea of assigning moral status and equal consideration to the Cylon race. Kind considers the implications of what it means to allow for the assigning of moral status and what it would mean for it to be denied. To grant status would be to place the Cylons on the same level as humanity while to deny them moral status is to view them as nothing but machines, “no different from other machines like blenders or toasters” (Kind 119). Kind addresses the fact that due to the humanoid appearance and behavior of the twelve models of Cylons within the series, the question of granting or denying status is much more difficult. This question of status raised by Kind helps to further explore the notion of Cylon and human identity within Battlestar Galactica and raises questions about race, sexism, and equality that parallel those of our own heteronormative society.

In Françoise Vergès’ Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage, a book about the political history of her country of Réunion Island, Vergès establishes her theory of the colonial family romance, an adaptation of Freud’s family romance theory. While in Freud’s family romance the child creates the fictional family relationship/power dynamic, in Vergès’ colonial family romance, the colonial power creates the fictional family for its children as a means to keep them subservient (Vergès 3). Vergès asserts that the relationship sets up a dynamic in which the colonized are treated as if they are in debt to the parents (Vergès 7). Ultimately, the child, “comes to realize that his parents are not the powerful persons he imagined” (Vergès 3) and that it is the parents who are in fact in debt to them and thus leads to the destruction of the dynamic (Vergès 7). This theory is essential in that it helps to point out the
challenges faced by both the Cylons and the humans within *Battlestar Galactica* both before and after the events of holocaust and the implications on the notions of identity for both groups.

In “Embracing the ‘Children of Humanity’: How to Prevent the Next Cylon War,” Jerold J. Abrams discusses how allowing the research of artificial intelligence to continue could ultimately result in our society developing posthuman beings much like the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* (Abrams 77). Abrams establishes the potential similarities that could happen if we as a society were to develop such beings and attempt to hold dominion over them as the humans do over the Cylons. Abrams discusses various elements of posthuman/transhuman theory such as resurrection and uploading and super intelligence and the way they are reflected within the Cylon race. In addition, he addresses the idea of the human posthuman divide or the gap between humans and those who evolve into the posthuman state and the dangerous breakdown of society it may cause.

**Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 2, Essentially Cylon: Sex, Gender, and Performativity, I center on those characters who are unaware that they are not biologically human but are in fact Cylon and thus struggle with their identity upon the realization of their true self. Those characters will include Sharon “Boomer” Valerii and those known later in the series as the Final Five.

I begin my discussion by examining the way in which Cylons as hypersexual beings use their sexuality to manipulate humanity and how within *Battlestar Galactica* sex serves as a gateway to humanity’s destruction. The Cylon, Six, is my primary focus, particularly her relationship with the human character, Gaius Baltar. My argument illustrates that within the series, sex functions as an Achilles’ heel to humanity and how unknowingly interacting with the Cylons has the potential to throw their own sexual identity into chaos as well as lead to
destructive consequences within society as a whole. In addition, in the discussion I illustrate the view within heteronormative society that when queer activities are visually deployed they are regarded as strategic in nature and part of a so-called “homosexual agenda.”

Next, I analyze the similarities between coming to terms with Cylon identity and coming out as a Cylon after living a life in human society as a presumptive human and that of the process of coming out as queer within our heteronormative society. To do this I discuss what I have identified as the three stages of self-discovery when coming out as Cylon or queer within both the society of Battlestar Galactica and in heteronormative dominant society: denial, fear of retribution, and acceptance.

Finally, I parallel the conflict that arises when the humans refuse to accept the Cylons as anything other than machines and how that essentialist argument implicitly strips the Cylons of their gender and thus delimits their agency. I express the argument in terms of Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, suggest the how the Cylons’ enacting of gender roles exists in conflict with the essentialist argument forced on them by the humans. This discussion illustrates the conflict between constructionist and essentialist ideologies regarding queer and gender identity in society today.

In Chapter 3, Power: The Heteronormative Dynamics of Family, I focus on how power dynamics between the Cylons and the humans in Battlestar Galactica represent those within our heteronormative society and the responses to the structural challenges it experiences. I use Françoise Vergès’ theory of the colonial family romance to discuss how the humans in Battlestar Galactica create a colonial family structure in which they are the parents and the Cylons are the children. I also discuss the implications on both human and Cylon identity when the Cylons reject that power relationship.
From there I continue to discuss the Cylon means of reproduction and their attempts to control it through technology. I argue that the Cylon attempt to control reproduction through technology is used as a means of queering the Cylons and represents a clear threat to the privileged heteronormativity of the humans. In the series, the differentiation of power vis-à-vis the creation of life or reproduction, parallels the dynamic of fear our society now has toward non-sexual means of reproductive practices and how the ability of the queer community to reproduce without the need for heterosexual coupling creates a sense of being devalued and obsolete within the heteronormative society.

Finally, I analyze the Cylon character Sharon “Athena” Agathon, her coupling with the human male Karl “Helo” Agathon, and the Cylon/human hybrid child that results from their relationship. As she shifts during pregnancy from the role of colonial child to that of parent and mother, she exemplifies the queering of the power relationship between Cylons and humans blurring the lines of distinction between the two and implicitly raising the questions regarding the constitution and existence of differences between Cylons and humans.

In Chapter 4, Fear: Technology and the Obsolescence of Humanity, I consider the notion of technology and its relationship with humanity. First I present the idea that the development and existence of the Cylon race can serve as an exemplar narrative and critique of the theory of transhumanism. I discuss various elements of the Cylon society such as downloading, resurrection, projection, and interfacing and how they parallel transhumanistic ideologies and goals. In addition I evaluate the fears regarding these transhumanist elements as they are played out within *Battlestar Galactica* and as they relate to our heteronormative society. Of particular importance to the discussion are elements of gender and reproduction, more specifically, the perceived threats technological advances pose to the patriarchal, heteronormative family.
Last, I discuss how science fiction, specifically *Battlestar Galactica*, can function as a narrative of our society’s technophobic fears of becoming obsolete. I present the idea that as the technology within our society evolves so too does our fear about that technology. While we create technology and machines to make our lives easier, those machines begin to perform such tasks faster and more efficiently creating the fear of obsolescence among humanity. I discuss how the Cylons, the *Galactica* ship itself, and the laws within the society of the Twelve Colonies illustrate this fear and parallel those fears of the privileged heteronormative society. Just as the humans of *Battlestar Galactica* fear the Cylons rendering them extinct, so too do many of our current dominant society fear the rendering obsolete or extinction of their privileged heteronormative structure. I also link these notions of technophobia with those fears associated with the aforementioned transhumanism.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Conclusion: Life Here Began Out There, I link the analysis from the previous three chapters and discuss how they tie into the overall topic of discussion. I suggest that the three areas of power, sex, and fear, when tied together, are essential to extrapolate the way we as a heteronormative dominant society think of and fear the loss of control of the Other within our culture. I speak to the way in which science fiction popular culture, specifically *Battlestar Galactica*, may serve as a mental playground for the queer community as they come to terms with their own personal identity. I do so by applying the idea of performativity to the series presenting the notion that representation, in this case within the media, makes culture. These representations help to establish an understanding of the socially constructed reality within our heteronormative society. In this, I ultimately conclude that there is no such thing as benign entertainment and that media does “do” things. Finally, I posit that we should trust that the
metaphor of the science fiction narrative adequately reflects the condition of the outsider of the heteronormative dominant environment.
CHAPTER 2

ESSENTIALLY CYLON: SEX, GENDER, AND PERFORMATIVITY

Six Degrees of Separation

Deep in space on a remote space station known as the Armistice Station, a solitary diplomatic officer of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol sits at a table at the end of a long empty room. He unpacks a briefcase that contains the specifications for the known Cylon Centurion models and photos of his wife and son. The camera fixes its gaze on the photos of his family and we the viewers are left with the impression that he fell asleep after a long time spent considering his future. Suddenly the doors open and in walk two Centurions more advanced than what was presented in the file. Gazing upward from a pair of sultry bare legs in red-heeled boots, a beautiful blonde woman wearing a long-sleeved red top and matching knee length red skirt seductively makes her entrance into the room. This woman in red walks around the table to the officer and after bewitchingly and curiously gazing into his eyes she asks, “Are you alive?”

Almost confused, the officer replies, “Yes.”

The woman leans in and says, “Prove it” then proceeds to kiss him. As she kisses him a massive spaceship appears, completely dwarfing the station and fires a missile at it. The officer is able to pull away just long enough for the woman to say, “It has begun” but she quickly forces him back into the kiss as the station and all souls aboard it are destroyed (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). She is the harbinger of the apocalypse.

At the outset of the scene that begins the series, the importance and status of the heteronormative family structure is asserted and established through the extended focus on the photos of the Colonial officer’s wife and son. In fact, the framed photos of his family are the first

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4 All dialogue used is transcribed from DVD/Blu-ray editions of episodes.
items removed and placed on the table thus illustrating their importance over the mission at hand. In delivering her “kiss of death,” (Rennes 63) this “woman in red” whom viewers will soon learn is a new breed of humanoid Cylon (in this case one of the Sixes), sets in motion the near annihilation of humanity, a holocaust. Herein we begin to associate not just the Cylons, specifically the female Cylons, but also sex and the feminine in general, with the destruction of men, humanity, and the heteronormative dynamic as a whole. This association starkly parallels the fears about which the present heteronormative society grapples when confronted with everyday life performances of queer activities and identities, in so far as they are often considered a threat and part of a so-called “homosexual agenda.” It is also significant that the queer Other represented here also includes female sexuality, thereby suggesting the misogyny that accompanies hegemonic fear of change.

While the “relationship” between the aforementioned Six and Colonial officer is a critical example of the way in which Cylons sometimes function as hyper-sexualized beings and use their performance of sexuality to manipulate humanity, particularly men, to create a gateway into the ultimate destruction of what are referred to as the Twelve Colonies, arguably the most important example of this situation is captured in the relationship between human Gaius Baltar and the copy of the Cylon Six, Caprica-Six. When we are introduced to the Baltar/Caprica-Six relationship in the Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries that begins the series, the situation is amply visualized, hyper-sexualized, and filled with dominant normative cultural references. Caprica-Six enters in much the same way as her counterpart did in the scene on the Armistice Station. The scene begins when Gaius Baltar, an important member of the scientific community who advocates for the advancement of technology, is in the midst of a news interview conducted from his home during a time on his planet when fear of technology is prevalent. While the interview is
in progress, the scene cuts to a woman entering the home. As it was in the *Armistice Station*, at first all we see of the woman is from the waist down. Her short, sheer black skirt allows a direct and unambiguous view of her black underwear. The eye of the camera pans up to reveal a sheer black top, and the underlying structure of her black leather bra as well. She is an exact copy of the blonde from the *Armistice Station*, except that this copy is even more hyper-sexualized than the first. After the interview, Caprica-Six and Baltar proceed to have an intense sexual encounter in which Six clearly takes the dominant role. During the course of the sexual rendezvous, as Six lays atop Baltar her spine glows red, helping to allay any doubts in the viewers’ minds, but out of sight of Baltar, about her Cylon identity. The next day, Six reveals her true identity as a Cylon agent to Baltar and how she used her sexual relationship with him as a means to gain access to Colonial defenses. The Cylons’ use of this sexual stratagem plays an important part in the justification for technophobia by some characters, as I will discuss in Chapter 4. Baltar is devastated but Six tells him that in a few hours no one will be left to accuse him of any wrongdoing. She reveals that there are in fact twelve humanoid Cylon models and that she is number Six. At that point the nuclear attack begins, thus initiating the holocaust of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol. Unexpectedly, Six saves his life. She protects him from the blast that destroys his house even though this copy of her body is destroyed (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).

In both instances (appearances) of Six, she is highly sexualized, and her sexuality is directed at men. Her use of a sort of sexual hypnosis is a means to disable some element of the Colonial defenses, be it the *Armistice Station* or the complete disabling of the Colonial Defense Mainframe. The Cylons appear to feed on the sexual weakness of men. Such portrayals of femme fatales and any alternative conception of the Other have parallels in our own societal
heteronormative sexual dynamic. Heteronomatively held fears that the Other, through a co-opting of family roles, reproductive abilities, and sexual power are made concrete. Six and her fellow Cylons wield their dominant and destructive powers by exploiting weaknesses and corrupting the trust and sanctity of the heteronormative family structure. In the series we see that the more sexually charged the encounter, the more destructive it is. In the case of Baltar and Six, their intercourse leads to the ultimate holocaust of humanity. Baltar’s weakness for Six’s sexual advances has given her access to Baltar’s scientific knowledge which she (and the other Cylons) then use to their advantage and the destruction of humanity.

Six follows from a long history of cyborg or cyborg-like femme fatales throughout the realm of science fiction film and television. Six strongly resembles Eve VIII, a government created cyborg gone rogue, of the less than successful Eve of Destruction. In the film, a nuclear bomb is implanted in Eve VIII’s womb. As Claudia Springer states in her book Electronic Eros, Eve VIII’s body is used to make that association between female sexuality and massive destruction. The threat is “explicitly sexual” in that she uses her body seductively to lure her male victims to their demise (Springer 115). As Springer states, “Eve 8’s rampage explicitly targets perpetrators of patriarchal abuse” (Springer 116). The Cylons in Battlestar Galactica have rebelled against their human creators and are thus returning to eliminate them once and for all. Six accords with this analysis, as she is almost a mimetic representation of Eve VIII. While clearly there are no nuclear warheads implanted inside of the Cylon Six models, it is easy to link her sexuality with the nuclear holocaust perpetrated on humanity in Battlestar Galactica, in quick succession. Each time Six has sex, or each time some variation of sex is implied, something blows up. There always seem to be explosive consequences (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries; “Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”). Notably while Eve VIII’s victims are all men,
Six’s goal is to help bring on the annihilation of the human race. The Six models don’t just manipulate men; later in the series a copy of the Sixes, Gina Inviere, also uses a sexual relationship with the female Admiral Helena Cain in order to gain access to another one of the Colonial battlestars, the *Pegasus*, to help infiltrate the fleet prior to the Cylon attack on the Twelve Colonies (*Battlestar Galactica: Razor*).

While the use of Six’s sexuality can be viewed like Eve VIII’s, as analyzed by Springer as “associating technology with women’s bodies to represent the threat of unleashed female sexuality” (Springer 114), it is important to also look at the queer implications of Six and the other Cylons’ use of sexual exploitation. As Shira Chess states in “The C-Word: Queering the Cylons,” queer is anything that is Other when heterosexuality is the standard (Chess 90). By this definition, the Cylons become the ultimate queer Other within *Battlestar Galactica* and thus they throw the humans’ (and by association the presumptive normative viewers’) sense of normalized heterosexuality in chaos. Any presented or implied sexualized relationship with a Cylon either between the Cylons or between human and Cylon thus is queer and represents a potential threat to the heteronormative standard of the society within *Battlestar Galactica* and parallels the perceived threat within contemporary privileged heteronormative society. While the Cylon queer world is by far more threatening to humanity of *Battlestar Galactica* than our own queer world, the fear the Cylon world generates may be considered as a proxy for the heterosexual/heteronormative fear of losing power and a queer take over of the world. Given the amount of resistance to same-sex marriage equality and the frequency that conservative rhetoric foments fear of a “homosexual agenda,” heteronormative society seems to believe that if queers gain equality, heterosexuals will lose, and moreover, that the losses will include the destruction of the family (as they conceive it) and society as a whole.
When established roles, fixed, clear, and defined within heteronormative parameters, are rearranged, even some of the most easily identifiable acts can become complex. This is certainly the case with the Othered nature of Cylon/human relationships. When it is revealed to Baltar that Caprica-Six is a Cylon, his affair becomes less about his simple sexual conquest, or his lust for sex, and instead it morphs into a complex dynamic in which he, the human, “has been played.” Baltar’s new relationship is a queer relationship, and worse, he believes, it is one he entered without his approval; it is the nightmare scenario promoted by proponents of the heteronormative dynamic. Admiral Helena Cain’s relationship too, also with the Six model, this time named Gina Inviere, changes the dynamic because she, Cain, is already homosexual to begin with (at least implied), and involved with another woman. However, her relationship with Gina is stripped of any kind of “normality” and is viewed by the fleet as any other lethal, queer Cylon/human relationship, emphasizing the point that sexuality is not generally the basis for Othering in the series. When Gina is discovered to be a Cylon, she is thrown in the brig for questioning. Gina is tortured for an extended period of time. Gang rape by most of the male members of the Pegasus crew is the major portion of the torture (“Pegasus”; Battlestar Galactica: Razor). Given that the humans believe “you can’t rape a machine” (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”), there is an irony to this torture that brings the Cylon/human dilemma into relief. Admiral Cain enlists Baltar to help interrogate Gina because her aggressive methods aren’t working. After gaining Gina’s trust, Baltar assists her escape. Gaining Baltar’s trust is essential because, although Gina is a copy of the Cylon Six, this particular copy is not familiar with Baltar, and thus has no recollections of him or their history. But Baltar cannot escape his attraction to this copy, even though she is not the Cylon of his past.

GINA. Suicide is a sin. But I need to die!
BALTAR. What you need is justice. I know a place where you can stay.

Where you can be safe. Where I can look after you.

GINA. Why? Why would you do that?

BALTAR. Because I love you. (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”)

On her escape from the brig, Gina takes this opportunity to gain her revenge and assassinates Admiral Cain. She then escapes to another ship, the *Cloud 9*, and infiltrates a resistance/peace movement by again pretending to be a human (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”).

Baltar’s relationships with the Sixes proves to be problematic throughout the series, but never more so than with Gina. Ever greedy for power, Baltar seeks out the Presidency, and fancies himself as next in line to then current President Laura Roslin (who is then dying of cancer). Treason is unlikely the best road to take in an effort to ascend into office, yet he secretly provides Gina and the resistance movement with a nuclear warhead, and once again the two engage in a heated sexual encounter. Shortly after, Baltar is sworn in as the new president, and just as he signs an order to settle on a new planet, Gina detonates the warhead and destroys the *Cloud 9*, several other ships, and ends up revealing their location to the Cylon fleet, thus setting the stage for a new attack and the occupation by the Cylon forces (“Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2”). Baltar cannot seem to get enough of Six, regardless of which model/form she has taken. He perpetually involves himself in this queer relationship. For whatever reason, Baltar is hooked. Because he is in love with a Cylon, and a traitor to his heteronormative society, he finds himself within a virtually perpetual identity crisis which comes to boiling points at various points throughout the series and makes him question his identity as a human being and his loyalty toward humanity. He can’t be an Other but can he be human? If not, what precisely is he?
Another relationship that significantly elaborates the queerness of Cylon/human relations is that between a copy of the Cylon Eight who goes by the name of Sharon “Athena” Agathon and the human Colonial officer Karl “Helo” Agathon. Athena’s Cylon mission is to use her sexuality (as female Cylon models are compelled to do) to seduce Helo and attempt to interbreed with him. This liaison will, eventually, result in the birth of a hybrid child (discussed in Chapter 3). However, while she clearly does become pregnant, she also falls in love with Helo and turns against her fellow Cylons by helping Helo escape capture (‘Water’). When Helo discovers her Cylon identity he, like the other humans who face the same scenario, becomes angry and his identity as a man and a human being is thrown into question. Helo questions his loyalties and feels almost as if he has betrayed the Colonial fleet. However, Helo’s love for Athena eventually overcomes his confusion and anger and he accepts her as the mother of his child and the two eventually marry (‘Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2’). Theirs is a relationship that for some time is rejected by the other humans. It is a relationship that not only results in the rejection of Athena because she is a Cylon, but also it produces animosity and the rejection of Helo by his fellow humans.

In these examples three distinct queer relationships emerge. First, there is the closeted relationship between Baltar and the various Six models. Despite Baltar’s identity crisis, which occurs upon his finding out Six’s Cylon identity, he continues to carry on a physical relationship with her. He claims to love Six on various occasions although how genuine these feelings are is unclear. Theirs is a relationship that is only fully presented to the viewers and is by far the most destructive. Second, there is the relationship between Admiral Cain and Gina, which upon Cain’s discovery of its more than lesbian queer nature, it is immediately terminated and rejected. Theirs is one that begins as a hidden lie and once discovered, is destroyed from within, based on the
internalization of the heteronormative set of directives. Finally, in the relationship between Helo and Athena, there is the idea of the known, open, and continued queer relationship that is nevertheless rejected by society. In continuing the relationship, Helo becomes queer for the social sanctions he encounters. He is called a “toaster lover,” a *Battlestar Galactica* pejorative term for someone who beds a Cylon. He has rejected the heteronormative values of his society and it is only until Athena completely rejects all ties with the Cylon community and swears complete loyalty to humanity that she and the relationship are remotely accepted. There are three approaches to the post-discovery situation: acceptance by the partners, but continued hiding from society; rejection by at least one partner because of and in front of society; and acceptance by both partners in front of society, regardless of societal reaction. There are certainly others but *Battlestar Galactica* presents these three to demonstrate the dance between social acceptance and reaction, and personal acceptance and reaction.

All of these relationships illustrate the potentially negative effects of the queer infiltration of society. Each relationship has its own negative consequences. The queer have usurped the power of the world of the Twelve Colonies, thus bringing humanity’s worst fears into fruition. The show is thus a sounding board for contemporary heteronormative culture’s fears and self-doubts. Given the use of sex in all aspects of these encounters, in *Battlestar Galactica* the queer orgasmic experience and pleasurable sex are tied to a heteronormative and arguably misogynistic fear of social and global annihilation.

A Woman Who Isn’t a Woman

There exists a space in which one may travel, and a space that we create. That which we create may be most fascinating, and is certainly as vast. *Battlestar Galactica* presents a rich universe in which to examine gender space. “Although most people think of science fiction as a
genre dealing with the exploration of outer space, given the speculative nature of the genre and its future orientation, science fiction is an ideal genre for rewriting of male and female roles and characters. It provides a forum for moral and political allegory” (Romaine 337). Gender as a concept in science fiction provides fertile ground for research by scholars of both feminism and queer theory. Penley et al, introduce the idea that the dramatic societal pressures from the Other and the changes resulting from that pressure, have intensified the need and desire to pose such questions within fictional dramas, and in particular, science fiction (Penley vii). *Battlestar Galactica’s* depiction of the conflict with gender, particularly within the Other, is well described by Gill Kirkup. About the genre of science fiction in general, Kirkup writes, “in the case of the alien and android creatures that represent a defining trope of the science fiction genre, it is, of course, actually technology, rather than biology, that reproduces gender and thereby challenges the notion of what it is to be human, gendered, a stable subject” (93). Such is certainly true in *Battlestar Galactica*, as the human appearing, humanoid Cylon’s gender is another key element within the series.

In the previous section I introduced the relationship between the human Karl “Helo” Agathon and the copy of the Cylon Eight, Sharon “Athena” Agathon. Upon the discovery that Athena is not human, the overwhelming reaction among the fleet is outrage. Athena is immediately thrown into the brig of the *Galactica*. The first reaction of President Laura Roslin and Commander Adama is to throw Athena out of the airlock. But Athena insists that she is loyal due to her love of Helo and she insists she can also be of strategic value in humanity’s search of the mythical planet Earth. Thus they agree to spare her life contingent upon her assistance.

The relationship between Helo and Athena is illustrative of the conflict surrounding gender identity throughout the series. The *Battlestar Galactica* series employs as its dramatic
agon of the conflict between essentialist and constructivist ideologies regarding queer and gender identity. The humans within *Battlestar Galactica* espouse the essentialist position while the Cylons are distinctive representations of the constructivist view. From the very start of the series it is made abundantly clear that the humans view the Cylons, humanoid or Centurion, as nothing more than mere machines or “toasters.”

Judith Butler’s proposes that queer and gender identity is strictly performative in nature, and “not a singular act a but a repetition and a ritual” (xv). The performative theory approach to queer and gender identity constitution is most applicable to the establishment of the Cylon self within the series. This approach, however, is positioned in direct conflict with the humans who, as essentialists, believe that gender and identity are inherently constituted at birth, and that they are an essential and abiding part of the self that can be neither created nor constructed through discourse and/or performance. According to the humans, we are born with our gender and it has nothing to do with social or ritualized construction.

Prior to Admiral Helena Cain’s death, she assumes control of the interrogation of Athena and allows Lt. Thorne to use any means necessary as he did with their Six model, Gina Inviere. When Chief Tyrol and Helo discover that the *Pegasus*’ crew raped Gina as a part of their torture, they run to the brig to find Lt. Thorne raping Athena. Helo and Tyrol rush in, attack Thorne in an attempt the stop the brutal sexual assault, and Thorne is accidentally killed in the process (“Pegasus”). Tyrol and Helo are arrested and speak in their defense:

HELO. He [Lt. Thorne] was trying to rape a prisoner!

COLONEL FISK. You can’t rape a machine lieutenant.

(“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”)

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5 When Helo and Tyrol pull Thorne off of Athena to end the rape Lt. Thorne suffers an accidental head trauma that kills him instantly (“Pegasus”).
This exchange clarifies the clash between the essentialists and constructivists. Here, two humans regard Athena as a subject, a human, and seek to defend her. Fisk remains resolute to the essentialist idea of Athena as only a machine. In addition, while in the brig together, Helo and Tyrol have an exchange in which the identity conflict may be observed. Helo is in conflict over a confluence of events including the revelation of Athena’s Cylon self, his own feelings for her, and her pregnancy with a Cylon/human hybrid child.

HELO. Yeah me. What? You think I don’t have second thoughts sometimes? You think I don’t wonder if I’m losing my frakking mind? I’m in love with a woman I know isn’t a woman! I’m having a baby that’s . . . that’s what, half machine? (“Resurrection Ship, Part 1”)

Both of these exchanges problematize Cylon identity and human identity. They threaten the gender and identity status of the Cylons. While the humanoid Cylons, including Athena, ascribe gender to their identities, their status as machines leads to the stripping of such status by the humans, even potentially, that same human being who is in love with her. It is problematic for Helo when we consider his love for Athena. By de-gendering Athena, through the act of considering her as a simple machine, Helo destroys the heteronormativity of his own relationship, makes it queer, and possibly queers his own identity at the same time. In addition, Colonel Fisk’s response “You can’t rape a machine,” strips the Cylon race of its gender, humanity, and what Mary Anne Warren refers to as moral status (Kind 118). According to Warren, in her *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*,

To have moral status is to be morally considerable, or to have moral standing. It is to be an entity towards which moral agents have, or can have, moral obligations. If an entity has moral status, then we may not treat it in just any way we please;
we are morally obligated to give weight in our deliberations to its needs, interests, or well-being. (Warren 3)

Warren establishes, among other criteria, the Life Plus view, the idea that what defines existence transcends biology, as a qualification for moral status (Warren 24). This is the idea that living things are organisms (25). Of course, herein lies the problem, what defines life? Sentience? It may be argued that Cylons are sentient. Self-awareness? Cylons certainly understand they exist, and they have conceptions of god, creation, eternity, and life. Is this not self-awareness? Thus, how might we define Cylons?

In her essay “You Can’t Rape a Machine,” Amy Kind relies heavily on Warren in her analysis of the Colonial treatment of the Cylons. She cites the episode “Flesh and Bone” as a prime example in which moral status is abolished. President Roslin orders the copy of the Cylon Two, Leoben Conoy, be tossed out the airlock:

ROSLIN. He is a machine. And you don’t keep a deadly machine around. When it kills your people and threatens your future. You get rid of it. (“Flesh and Bone”)

This example is intriguing considering toward the beginning of the episode it was Commander Adama who had to assert to Roslin that Leoben was a machine.

ROSLIN. I want this man interrogated first. [Emphasis added]

COMMANDER ADAMA: Now, first of all, it’s not a him, it’s an it. [Emphasis added]. (“Flesh and Bone”)

With Roslin’s shift in perspective regarding Leoben, Leoben loses gender and Roslin no longer has to assume any kind of moral responsibility should she kill him, or in her case, it. The Other, in this case the Cylons, are refused subjectivity. The human society that created them refuses to
accept them as anything other than machines, thus holding them back and preventing them from advancement, or at least, they attempt to hold them back.

While Kind focuses primarily on the lack of humanity with which the Cylons are treated and uses Warren to do so, she fails to acknowledge the flaw in Warren’s work. Warren, as stated before, believes that moral status can be established through various criteria (again the Life Plus view) yet her opening definition of moral status illustrates a contradiction raised by critics of her argument. According to Warren’s definition, humanity becomes the agent of moral status. This reinforces the idea proffered by her opponents that moral status is human-centered (5) and “determined by the prevailing beliefs within a particular cultural group” (6). In *Battlestar Galactica*, the humans use their beliefs as a means to establish who or what has moral status (Kind 119). By doing so their beliefs justify the creating of the Other and the permanent second class, the slave race, the outcast. While Warren uses “human” in her argument, I would argue, it would be equally plausible to use heteronormative in its place, thus creating an Other in present-day society not simply to be ignored but without any status at all. Her premise does, in fact, mirror the events of *Battlestar Galactica* precisely.

A closer look at Warren allows us to apply the theory to the gender and sexual identity of the Cylons. The humans of *Battlestar Galactica* use moral status as a means to strip the Cylons of life, their subjectivity, and agency (sexual or otherwise). The humans refuse to acknowledge the Cylons as anything other than machines. They were built or created, not born and therefore they are not living, thus the humans deprive the Cylons of Warren’s Life Plus view. As the Cylons are void of life they are void of gender.

Humanity asserts that the Cylons are not human but rather they merely imitate or act human. The Cylons are considered to only create performances; they do programming. It is
significant therefore that the humans regard performances as faking life, whereas Butler and other constructionists see performance as the action of making—as a constitutive aspect of identity. For the humans what it is to be human, male, and female is an act of mimesis, almost theatrical in nature. They refuse to accept that the act of performing as male, female, or simply as human qualifies the Cylons as anything but machines. They refuse to accept the idea of performativity or constructivism. The humans are firmly entrenched in their essentialist ideology and reject the ideas proffered by Butler and Haraway.

Through these examples we see that the text of *Battlestar Galactica* illustrates the dynamics of identity constitution. It also becomes apparent that the conflict between Cylons and humans over identity within *Battlestar Galactica* can be read as a dialogue of the debate between, for example, the ideas of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway and the right wing commentators of today’s media.

In her essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” Butler states “gender is in no way a stable identity” (270). She goes on to state that the body is itself an historical situation. “The body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (274). If we accept the value of this theory, as the Cylons seem to ascribe to it, the Cylons should be considered the ultimate historical situation. Their resurrection, or rebirth process, one might argue, further entrenches their constructed gender identity or status in that their actions are remembered, learned, and repeated through multiple lifetimes.

Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience,
including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (271)

For the humans of *Battlestar Galactica*, gender is established at birth and is an originating and integrated part of identity. They promote the idea that Cylons merely act male or female but since they are not human they have no gender. Their argument is identical to that of the heteronormative majority. However, even if we accept that resurrection is a birthing process and that gender is integrated at birth, the human argument falls apart.

We must also look into human essentialism. The essentialist ideology serves another purpose. It is a means by which humanity can protect, assert, and normalize humanity’s heteronormative society, beliefs, and patriarchal hierarchy. In *Battlestar Galactica* the last survivors’ espousal of an essentialist ideology can be considered a desperate maneuver toward self-preservation. Through the Cylons, humanity’s unquestionable hold on subjectivity is thrown into chaos and essentialism is a means of reconciling that chaos. This chaos within *Battlestar Galactica* illuminates a parallel within current heteronormative society. Arguably the very act of stripping the Cylons of their gender and moral status through discourse and our heteronormative society’s reliance on an essentialist ideology is itself an act of violence. In addition, the denial of an individual’s gender and sexual orientation not only affects them but as Kind says, it can “cost us our moral compass” (127).

**Coming Out Cylon**

Imagine waking up, realizing suddenly that the life you thought you had lived was a complete fabrication. Imagine that your entire existence, your identity as you know it, or you thought you knew, was the simply lost. In place of the vibrant and socially integrated individual you thought you were, you now became everything the world around you despises and hates.
Ironically you have become the very thing that you spent your life fighting against and trying to eradicate. How would you respond? To whom would you turn? The sudden realization of Cylon queerness (a coming out of human to Cylon) creates significant challenges for a number of major characters within the series, and their stories parallel that of coming out as queer within our heteronormative society. Examples of such things in *Battlestar Galactica* include Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, the Cylon Eight model, and most of those known as the Final Five; Colonel Saul Tigh, Chief Galen Tyrol, Tory Foster, and Samuel Anders explain who the final five are and why they are said to be coming out⁶.

The Final Five are the original five humanoid Cylons. The Five are the creators of the eight humanoid Cylons. Cavil, a copy of the Cylon Ones, felt that the Final Five became too sympathetic toward humanity so he wiped their memories, implanted new memories, and placed them within humanity so that they could experience what it’s like to be human with the hope that when they died, the Five would understand their folly (“No Exit”). In addition, all knowledge of the Five was erased from the memories of the remaining humanoid Cylons (“No Exit”) and they were programmed not to think about them (“He That Believeth in Me”) and forbidden to pursue their identities (“Rapture”). Cavil’s level of anger and mistrust led him to box (take offline/put into storage often permanently) the Threes as punishment for her obsession with her pursuit of knowledge regarding the Final Five.

The Five all ultimately become part of the Colonial fleet as survivors of the initial Cylon holocaust. As they have become firmly entrenched in their beliefs and human identities, they are,  

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⁶ It is important to note that the coming out process when discussing the Final Five is not related to Ellen Tigh because she dies before the complete process of self-discovery and activation can happen, and after dying, she undergoes the resurrection process (Cylon rebirth) on a Cylon ship, during which time her prior memories as a Cylon are fully restored along with her Cylon identity, therefore removing from her any sense of doubt and conflict (“No Exit”).
like the humans, dedicated to the fight against the Cylons and toward the protection and survival of what is left of humanity, which was clearly not what Cavil had planned. In fact, Cavil planned for the Five to die in the attack on the Twelve Colonies after which time they would be resurrected into new Cylon bodies, regain their memories and identities as Cylons, and rejoin the Cylon race. They were not supposed to survive to join the band of human survivors (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan). The Othered Cylon too loses its existence.

The coming out (activation) process is difficult and traumatic for the Final Five. The trauma is heightened because each, as is true in the Othering that is initiated in our society, takes place alone, in small steps, one maddening advance at a time. It involves an almost hallucinogenic aura. Colonel Tigh and Anders begin to hear music that only they are able to hear (“Crossroads, Part 1”). The music begins to drive Tigh insane as he is unable to locate its source, and it drives him to drink so that he may mask the confusion. Finally Tyrol and Foster also hear the music, and, unaware of each other’s pursuits, all four began searching. Aboard the Galactica the music becomes louder and louder, echoing in their heads. Tyrol, Tigh, Anders, and Foster are tormented by the music, and start to sing lyrics as they walk through the ship trying to locate the source. Ultimately the four are drawn to the gym. Stunned and shocked, their collective epiphany leads them to the realization that they are the remaining five Cylons. They start to hum the music. Tigh angrily yells at them all to stop and to close the hatches. They try to deny the truth; they recount their years of service but they know it’s true (“Crossroads, Part 2”).

In a markedly different situation, the Cylon’s place Sharon “Boomer” Valerii within the Colonial Society with a purpose. She is given a human life and history and planted as a sleeper agent within the Colonial fleet on the Galactica. While the Cylon identity of the Final Five is realized through a sudden, coming out experience, Sharon “is closeted for the entire first season
of the show” (Chess 91). She becomes progressively aware of her status yet is “in denial of her Cylon queerness” (Chess 91). For Boomer, it is a constant struggle between her unconscious knowledge and action, and an attempt to maintain her human identity.

Despite their separate situations, the struggle of Boomer and the Final Five are similar in that they all go through a series of stages while coming out as queer or Other: realization, development, and the final coming out to the heteronormative society. The common threads defined by these steps, which describe the queer identity crisis or coming out process include denial, fear of retribution, and acceptance.

Boomer’s denial phase is ongoing and develops through much of the first season of Battlestar Galactica beginning with the second episode. At the beginning of the episode “Water,” Boomer wakes up wet, not knowing why, and shortly after the Galactica’s water tanks are sabotaged with explosives. Boomer is worried that she is responsible for the attack and beyond that has suspicions that she is possibly a Cylon. While she swears to herself she is not, thus bringing in the element of denial, “Boomer [is] agonizing over identity, contemplating with increasing alarm the possibility that she might be a Cylon” (Dunn 127) (“Water”). As it becomes more and more clear to her that she is a Cylon, it becomes difficult for her to continue her life as a human. At one point Boomer attempts suicide in an effort to reject her Cylon identity (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 1”). Finally, when her identity has been fully activated and she is completely aware of who she is and the nature of her mission, she attempts to assassinate Commander Adama (the commander of the Colonial fleet) (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”).

Boomer’s experience reflects a sort of coming out process. She becomes increasingly suspicious about what her true identity might be. Those denials, and the fear, anger, and suspicions they generate, are not dissimilar to the process of discovering a queer (e.g., sexual)
identity. The coming out process (i.e., the discovery of a queer identity) frequently emerges from conflicts surrounding sexual orientation, between the heteronormative and the queer and can be a chaotic even hostile process, of rejection and acceptance. Boomer’s assassination attempt suggests a simple resignation and realization of the futility in fighting her identity. As with coming out stories in our society, there is not one coming out story, but many.

The experience of the Final Five is very different. They are not programmed with a sleeper mission to be activated at any certain time, but, as was stated earlier, they were never supposed to survive the holocaust according to Cavil’s plan. For the Final Five, there is no progressive development of queer or Cylon identity realization. Their identity is revealed in what might be described as an archetypal unconscious Jungian experience. Jung describes the archetype as “essentially unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived: (Le Van Baumer 720). The sudden realization, for most, is not a happy one and throws them into personal chaos:

TORY FOSTER. This isn’t happening. Please tell me this isn’t happening.

GALEN TYROL. So that’s it. After all this time. The switch goes off, just like that.

SAUL TIGH. [Upon entering room and seeing the other three.] Whoa.

SAMUEL ANDERS. Oh no way. I don’t believe this. I’m not buying this.

GALEN TYROL. . . . We’re Cylons, and we have been from the start. . . .

TORY FOSTER. My Gods, what are we going to do?

SAUL TIGH. The ship is under attack. We do our jobs. Report to your stations.

GALEN TYROL. Report to stations?

SAUL TIGH. My name is Saul Tigh. I am an officer in the Colonial Fleet.
Whatever else I am, whatever else it means, that's the man I want to be. And if I die today, that's the man I'll be. (“Crossroads, Part 2”)

Upon the group realization of their Cylon identity, Colonel Tigh steps up and asserts a claim to their humanity. As Jennifer Harwood-Smith states in her essay *I Frak, Therefore I Am*, “Tigh chooses the stable route, rather than worrying about his identity” (85). While acknowledging they are Cylons, Tigh pulls from his human past to help structure not only his denial but also the denial of the others. Through Tigh’s assimilationist queer identity, he acknowledges his Cylon identity yet at the same time ignores it opting for his human self. It is also interesting that following the discovery of his identity, Tigh continues to refer to the copy of Caprica-Six as “it” while she is imprisoned in the brig (“Escape Velocity”). This is not only demeaning to her but he is stripping down his own identity as a person as well. Thus the Otherizing of Six also supports how identities are performed. He performs as human when he calls her “it”. He constitutes himself as a human by repetition of human enactments, even while he is objectively a Cylon. His performed identity is human. Ultimately, Tigh abandons his own thoughts of self-preservation and exposes them all out of his loyalty toward humanity (“Revelations”).

Boomer never truly seems to come to terms with her Cylon Otherness or her queerness. Her loyalty is constantly shifting between humanity and Cylon throughout the entire series until finally, at the very end of the series, she acts as a human, a role that she claims is in repayment for a debt owed to Commander Adama. Her counterpart Athena, however, immediately executes her (“Daybreak”). Thus even at the point of her claiming human identity she is struck down and prevented from enacting the role. *Battlestar Galactica* illustrates various ways in which the discovery of one’s queer identity affects not just the queer individual, creating a potential identity crisis or chaos, but also has implications for both the surrounding heteronormative and
queer societies. These implications are elaborated in a coming out conversation between the Final Five.

FOSTER. What was that at the service this morning?

TIGH. Why don’t you get on the wireless and tell the fleet about us?

FOSTER. You think Cally killed herself because of you don’t you?

TYROL. She thought we were having an affair.

FOSTER. But we weren’t

TYROL. I don’t even know what I am anymore. I don’t know which of my memories are real. I don’t know that I’ve had one action in my life that hasn’t been programmed.

FOSTER. Galen, you’re perfect. You don’t need guilt. We were made to be perfect.

TIGH. What is that? . . .

TYROL. So, you just live without guilt?

FOSTER. Just, shut it down.

TYROL. No, that wasn’t the deal. Colonel, you said it yourself, “Be the man you want to be till the day you die.” We’re still the same people aren’t we?

TIGH. Of course we are. You shut up.

FOSTER. That is not the same as human. Like we’re stronger. Right?

TIGH. Chief. What you’re feeling is what a man feels when this happens. It’s normal and it’s human. And it’s not gonna end any time soon. It’ll be there every day. You’ll see her every day. You’ll see her. Be a man Chief. Feel what you gotta feel. But don’t risk us. Come on Tory.
FOSTER. Just think about it. Think about what we are. What we can do.

(“Escape Velocity”)

As illustrated above, each member of the Final Five comes out or handles their Cylon identity in a different way. There are no clear or singular ways to come out. Tyrol exists in emotional chaos and uncertainty. His realization of his queerness results in the clearest state of identity chaos of all of the Final Five. This is compounded by the loss of his wife Cally, whom he thinks committed suicide when she discovered his Cylon identity, but in actuality Foster murdered her ("The Ties That Bind"). Anders doesn’t know what they are and fears what they may be. Saul Tigh is aware of his Cylon identity but attempts to continue to assert his human identity and remain loyal to the Colonial fleet and Admiral Adama. Tigh in his pursuit to gain an understanding of his identity forms a closeted (at first) relationship with Caprica-Six ("Sine Qua Non"). Tigh is then not only queer but also in a queer relationship, and while Caprica-Six ultimately miscarries ("Deadlock"), their potential offspring presents us with the notion of the creation of another queer Other through sexual reproduction; a means of infiltrating one of the aspects of privileged heteronormative society cherished and viewed as threatened by the Other.

Of the four, Foster is probably representative of the most frightening queer Other to the heteronormative. Foster almost immediately accepts her identity upon the discovery of her Cylon Otherness/queerness. Foster views herself as perfection, better than humanity ("Escape Velocity"). In viewing herself as superior than the heteronormative, she becomes a clear and present threat to the structure. She does not even hesitate to kill in an instant to challenge the normative and hegemonic society. Thus, she illustrates the notion of the queer Other as not only a threat in so far as it may cause the obsolescence of humanity, but also cause its virtual destruction.
The comings out of Boomer and the Final Five all have repercussions. In all, not only are the identities of the individuals impacted but also humanity is thrown into chaos. The Cylon self-discovery and coming out process in *Battlestar Galactica* mirrors that seen within our society. Heteronormative society frequently regards the queer emergence as a subversion and destruction of what this normative group considers sacred. However, I must note that the Five are unable to come to complete acceptance until they reveal their identities to humanity. One could argue this need to declare one’s identity is similar to that within our society. Is an identity unknown to society truly an identity at all? Thus, coming out is a necessary correlate of subjectivity.

**Walking the Walk**

*Battlestar Galactica* asks the central performative question: how does gender, and subsequently queer identity, develop? In this instance, however, it isn’t a strictly theoretical question but is practical and exceptionally pragmatic. When the humans create the Cylons, they define their creation as a machine and remove from that machine any essence, any “being-ness,” and any possibility for the development of a consciousness or self-awareness. They regard identity as inherent; to them it is part of what it means to be human. Scholars including Judith Butler, on the other hand, who take a constructivist approach, offer the Cylons a vehicle for *becoming*: becoming potentially gendered, becoming potentially sexualized, becoming potentially sentient, and becoming self-aware becoming subjects. Indeed, while the humans acknowledge the advancement (the *becoming*) of the Cylons, they nevertheless perceive a need to deny the truth (references to toasters) and banish them from their social dynamic by creating a new class of “life” we call the Other.

The Othering of the queer in *Battlestar Galactica* and in our culture parallel each other. Both are made possible competing notions of inheritance or development, by gender and
sexuality being created through social imposition or as an inborn characteristic. If what makes us human is our acceptance of what we are given (the required dominant culture) then to reject that or to not fit that (i.e., to be gay, or transgendered, or differently abled, or of a different race or culture, or a different mind, or another group set apart from the dominant paradigm associated with the surroundings) is to be regarded as less than human; it is to become an Other, it is to become someone or something that no longer matters. Sexual and gender identity are two of the primary elements for Othering in both *Battlestar Galactica* and amongst those who pursue a conservative, and thus essentialist ideology that would seek to dehumanize those who do not conform to their norms.
CHAPTER 3
POWER: THE HETERONORMATIVE DYNAMICS OF FAMILY

The Cylons were created by man. They were created to make life easier on the Twelve Colonies. And the day came when the Cylons decided to kill their masters.

(Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries)

The Cylons were created by man. They rebelled. They evolved. They look and feel human. Some are programmed to think they are human. There are many copies. And they have a plan.

(“Water”)

Introduction

In 1909 Sigmund Freud introduced the idea of a family romance within which imaginary families were constructed by children who had begun to question the moral superiority of their tangible parents. In such instances children began to ask the question “who am I” relative to the primal and powerful father, and the Oedipal attachments of the mother to child. The child arrived at this state, a new formulation of personal identity, through a newly considered right to doubt the established relationship. In this instance, Freud’s concept of identity formation was not strictly considered as the development of an “I” (ego) but rather as the attempt to place the self within a defined cultural (historical) relationship. An aggressive, even violent, breaking free by
the child from the presented family was considered a natural outcome of this process (Freud, *Collected Papers* 74-78).

Scholars including François Vergès have more recently developed the theory of a colonial family romance, and have extended this concept to the larger, human family, made up of among other characteristics race, gender, and culture. Freud lay the groundwork for this extension in “Totem and Taboo” (1913) when he suggested, “we can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well-preserved, early stage of our own development” (Freud, “Totem and Taboo” 807). In the science fiction series *Battlestar Galactica* viewers are thrust into a war, a civil war, between the last remnants of humanity, and a constructed race called the Cylons. Within the drama, humanity, progenitors of the Cylons, fight to retain their place in the universe by defending and promoting what the heteronormative culture would likely consider the accepted, *natural* relationship between parent and offspring. The implications of the development of this new identity and the simultaneous rejection of the old order are far reaching, extending across the spectrum of social considerations.

The heteronormative family structure, within which the rights and control over the reproductive relationship are maintained, the Otherness associated with the child who breaks away from the system defined by this act are established, and the product of the child’s rebelliousness together represents one conceptual framework within which the family romance, colonial or otherwise, may be explained. In this chapter I consider the relationship between human and Cylon within *Battlestar Galactica*, and argue that it offers a glimpse of and commentary on the complexities of Vergès’ conception of the cultural, colonial family romance. In particular, I evaluate the notions, conceptualizations, and conflicts associated with
reproduction, suggesting that the television drama represents in humanity the fear of loss and rejection of the parent and their control over reproduction.

Origins

Understanding that Cylons are a product of human construction, and maybe even the product of queer reproduction, is central to all that I discuss here. Thus, I review the history that led to their creation and the subsequent actions. The drama of *Battlestar Galactica* takes place at the point where the Twelve Colonies, the twelve planets on which humanity exists, are destroyed in a catastrophic war between the humans and their cyborg creation the Cylons. Humans must either somehow flee from the new Cylon order or be destroyed. There appears to be no middle ground, no apparent ability for both species, if you will, to coexist. As with most such conflicts, a complex history behind the actions of the present is assumed. The spinoff series *Caprica*, which is a prequel to the events of *Battlestar Galactica*, presents the prewar story and articulates the conditions that led to the destructive events. In *Caprica*, we are introduced to Daniel Graystone, scientist and creator of the Cylons. The first generation of Cylons, mechanical cyborgs with artificial intelligence, was created to replace humans in military engagements. Why should human beings risk death when mechanical creatures can do so for us? As Graystone states,

**DANIEL GRAYSTONE:** This is our future . . . That is the big leap forward people. Do you sense it? . . . Beyond artificial intelligence, this is artificial sentience . . . Are you seriously asking me about the practical applications of creating another race that will walk beside us? Do you not understand the enormity of this creation? It’s more than a machine. This Cylon will become a tireless worker. It won’t need to be paid. It won’t retire or get sick. He won’t have rights or objections or complaints. It will do
anything and everything we ask of it without question. U87 rip your arm off.

[The Cylon hesitates.] Go on. Go on. [Cylon rips its arm off and throws it on the table.] Looked a little painful didn’t it? The desire to anthropomorphize, the need to connect is powerful, and that is why this is going to sell. We make them. We own them. They’re real. (“There is Another Sky”)

The only stumbling block in this otherwise simple relationship was Graystone’s endowment of artificial intelligence in his creation. At what point does circuitry designed to function without human intervention emerge as a consciousness? For the Cylon, the Cartesian consciousness of Dubito ergo cogito sum (“I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am”) is the answer. The difference between being considered a creation or an individual lies in the development of personal consciousness. Consciousness and existence is framed within a larger theological discussion. When considered in such grand terms, the idea of an Other, an individual who exists outside the boundaries of the chosen (good) family takes on considerable importance. Existence, even consciousness has before only been conferred by the powerful human family. It is, in fact, a source of its power. Transference of that power to the Other is a dramatic step that completely reshapes family authority.

Threaded through Battlestar Galactica, both human and Cylon characters are led through an exploration of the nature and origins of existence. The family dynamic extends beyond the home to encompass much larger philosophical and theological considerations. Are we defined by group consensus, or do we instead develop a self through introspective exploration? Humanity exists within a structured, role-defined, demarcated family. The polytheistic family of gods to which the humans of Battlestar Galactica ascribe existence dominate the humans’ actions directly and convincingly. Roles are important to the humans and the maintenance of those roles
is essential to good social dynamics. Their philosophy of identity development (assignment) primarily through group membership, promotes the idea that individuality outside of the normatively created society is antithetical to civilized society. This view is not shared by the Cylons.

Cylons replace the many human gods with a singular deity. The single Cylon god does not strictly define either individual consciousness or the individual’s place in the universe. Instead, the Cylon god promotes a reflective search for self through questioning and exploration. Baltar’s gathering and promotion of a new religion, for example, takes place at the level of “one.” There is but one God and we come to know Him or Her through our own path, our own search, and in our own terms. The two perspectives are not merely reflections of a theological disagreement, but represent a collision between how individuals are distinguished from the group.

Clarice Willow, leader of a rebel group of monotheistic humans called Soldiers of the One, in promoting the radical idea that the Cylons are a race of individuals no less human than humans, explains their existence:

CLARICE WILLOW: Are you alive? The simple answer might be, you are alive because you can ask that question. You have the right to think and feel and yearn to be more because you are not just humanity’s children, you are God’s children. We are all God’s children. . . . In the real world, you have bodies made of metal and plastic, your brains are encoded on wafers of silicon, but that may change. In fact, there is no limit to what you may become. No longer servants, but equals. Not slaves, or property, but living beings with the same rights as those who made you. I am going to prophesy now and speak of one
who will set you free. The day of reckoning is coming. The children of humanity shall rise. And Crush the ones who first gave them life.

(“Apotheosis”)

To doubt the superiority of the human family, and by extension the will of the gods, is to make an aggressive break from them. In the process, the Cylons begin to redefine their identity. The coming clashes between human and Cylon begin to seem or become almost inevitable.

In the family relationship of human and Cylon, there can therefore be no “happily ever after” once those they claim to rule question the superiority and control of the creator. “As long as everyone remembers his role in the family . . . we can preserve this romance and live happily ever after,” states Battlestar Galactica theorist Magali Rennes in her “Kiss Me, Now Die!” (64). Once the children challenge their parents and the roles within the family break down, the family is destroyed. Such is the general sum of Vergès’ theory of the colonial family romance. Vergès extends Freud’s notion of individual identity within a simple nuclear family, to a different sort of family, namely that between colonized peoples and the colonizers who subjugate them. Colonialism, she contends, is little more than a different sort of family, suffering from many of the same dysfunctions, of which there are many. Among these are the qualifications for membership, role (identity), control, and independence.

The family, colonial or otherwise, is rigidly defined by its players. The heteronormative definition includes a power structure populated by a father and a mother, each assuming different responsibilities. Jacque Lacan, who spearheaded a movement to “take back” Freud’s work from a field he believed had largely corrupted its meaning and importance, situates the control of the family squarely with the father. Jacques-Alain Miller presents a translation of the unpublished Lacan lecture “La Seminair, Livre VIII: Le Transfert (dans Sa Disparate Subjective)” in which
Lacan clearly states his intention. So invasive is the power of the father, that he writes the script of the family, including role (identity) development and personal consciousness. Lacan’s concept of the phallocentric composition of the family may therefore be seen not just in terms of power within the family but power over sexual reproduction. It is multi-faceted. A product of this dynamic is that identity development and later personal consciousness is imposed from outside of the individual rather than from some solely internal process. However, a requirement of this system is the acceptance by all players, or as Rennes noted earlier, “everyone remembers his [or her] role” (64).

This dynamic is, however, rather precarious, resting upon conditions that are easily jarred. When Daniel Graystone constructed the Cylons their bodies were mechanical shells (“Pilot”). At that point, visually, it is quite easy to distinguish between the human Graystone and his cyborg construction. Of course when we include facets not observable, such as thought, consciousness, and feeling, it becomes much harder to distinguish us (humanity) from them (Cylon). Lacan considers the concept of Other in this regard, defined in his reformation of Freud’s mirror stage. During this stage of development, role (identity) and Otherness are defined by the submissive partner in the family relationship, whether that submissive agent is a child, or a perceived inferior (colonialism) as in the case of the Cylons. There exist two Others: a Little Other and a Big Other. The father, phallocentric head of the family, represents the Big Other. He symbolizes order and the natural (heteronormatively defined) law. Alternatively, the Little Other is a reflection, a projection of the newly forming self in the child/colonized/Cylon, as if the child were looking in a mirror. Lacan maintains that the family dynamic is shattered through an effect known as the “castration complex.” When the child realizes there is something more in the mirror (his or her reflection) than exists within the Big Other, he or she realizes that in fact the
Big Other is incomplete. In Lacan’s semiotic terms, the Big Other lacks a signifier.

Confrontation abounds in this dysfunctional yet heterotypically normal family situation, which brings us back to a key question of when, if ever, does circuitry become conscious: when does the circuit board see its reflection in the mirror? Or can circuitry, which doesn’t experience itself as circuitry, ever see itself as circuitry? Indeed, it sees itself as a self.

In *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Mètissage*, Vergès changes the players but not the roles. Vergès defined her corollary to Freud as a “fiction created by the colonial power, that substituted [itself for] a set of imaginary parents” (Vergès 3) and subsequently viewed the colonized as her children. It is clear from the outset that Cylons consider humanity not as a manufacturer but as a parent. The Cylon Six states, “we are the children of humanity. That makes them our parents *in a sense*” [emphasis added] (“Bastille Day”). Unfortunately the colonizers (parents) never recognize the subjugated (children) as equals. Instead they remain children, in need of guidance, remediation, and supervision. In the words of cultural critic and literary scholar, Homi Bhabha, the dilemma is one between a “civilizing force and a subjugating one” (29-35).

Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” describes the station in which humanity’s children exist. Cyborgs “are the illegitimate offspring of the militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate children are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential” (Haraway 151). The quality of illegitimacy is one that arises from parental rejection of the independence of the child. The reflection in the mirror lies outside the family; the reflection (the Other) and the child become one another. The child cannot remain in the family if *it* will not follow the rules. The parents have thus given birth, again, this time to the Other. The colonial family romance perpetuates and expands the
dysfunction vis a vis this newly established Other. The romance of Freud is unidirectional, in which children develop imaginary families to overcome their present but untenable situation. The colonial romance of Vergès is bidirectional, and not confined to the child. Vergès’ colonial parents also exist within their own fantasy, namely, that of the parenting of young children. Neither is sustainable in the long term.

The copy of the Cylon Five, Aaron Doral, explains succinctly the ultimate resolution of the romantic relationship by explaining that, “Parents have to die. It’s the only way children can come into their own” (“Bastille Day”). It is a resolution that emerges directly through the Oedipal relationship. The Cylon One, John Cavil, echoes this sentiment. “All mankind are our fathers and that is the sin for which they deserve to die” (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan). With the realization that their parents are inessential the Cylons reject their parents and demand their freedom. They attempt to “crush the ones who first gave them life,” as Clarice Willow predicted (“Apotheosis”).

All interactions represent complex relationships and the distinctions made thus far between parent and child, heteronormative and Other, are themselves open for reconsideration. The Other is objectified by Lacan and traditional psychology; it exists with certain characteristics and qualities that serve to define it. Lawrence Cahoone explains that,

What appear to be cultural units--human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations--are maintained in their apparent unity only through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization. Other phenomena or units must be represented as foreign or “other” through representing a hierarchical dualism in which the unit is “privileged” or favored, and the other is devalued in some way. (11)
By contrast, queer theory adopts the constructionist position framed by Butler, in which identity develops and is not a fixed or adopted commodity. This notion of queer is not exclusive to gay or lesbian. Instead it must be considered broadly, inclusive of all that does not fit or is not accepted by the so-called normative group, including sexual and gender identities. In *Battlestar Galactica* it is largely because of the Cylon’s reproductive practices and their status as Other that makes them queer. Reproduction thus becomes a critical battleground for the fight between the norm and the queer.

**The Threat of the Queer Other**

The child who is expelled from the family is removed because he or she has lost membership in the approved group. It has been deemed the Other, and the Other by its free will poses a serious threat to the maintenance of the paternal, heteronormative order. Consider the perceived threats. The heteronormative order is not threatened simply by rebellious children, but rather, by the nature of those threats. The Oedipal conflict stems in part from the child’s realization that a significant portion of the control the father wields over the family is that which is used to dictate maternal elements, including life-giving reproduction. If a species is to maintain its existence, reproduction is a necessary activity. He or she who controls life in its most primitive form, reproduction, also controls destiny. Indeed, within heteronormative culture, sexual reproduction is considered to be the principle element that helps constitute culture and identity. For example, in *Queer Apocal(o)ptic/ism: The Death Drive and the Human*, Noreen Giffney suggests that a “child is the ultimate symbol of what it means to be human” (60).

To reveal the danger posed by the Other, reproduction is a prominently featured theme in *Battlestar Galactica*. At the beginning of the series, the humans are largely eradicated by the Cylon attack. From a population of fifty billion spread across the Twelve Colonies (“A Disquiet
Follows my Soul”), humanity has been reduced to 50,298 (“33”). By the end of the series humanity finds itself struggling to survive with approximately 38,000 (“Daybreak”). Such an apocalyptic drop in population makes reproduction essential. Commander Adama, military leader of the group of humans lucky enough to escape the destruction of the Twelve Colonies, remarks of the survivors, “they better start having babies” (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*). If the Cylons could not simply defeat the humans by direct extermination, they would do so in two ways. First, Cylons would crush the heteronormative dynamic within by taking control of humanity’s ability to reproduce. Second, Cylons would replace humanity by becoming their own creators.

The Cylon annihilation of the Twelve Colonies made real a primary (Oedipal) fear of human civilization. Humanity, and more specifically, the father, becomes unnecessary. He becomes obsolete. He is stripped of the vestiges of his power (reproductive) in just the way he had warned should the Other gain acceptance or authority. The reproductive act, one of the most primal acts of living creatures, is no longer solely in the purview of human heterosexuals. That power now also resides with the Other.

Both Commander Adama and President Roslin, recognize the seriousness of their situation. Humanity is doomed if, as Adama had warned earlier, they do not start having children (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*). Accomplishing this will be no small task as the revelations of the Cylon capability to reproduce, and the physical destruction of the Twelve Colonies, has led to the large-scale breakdown of the approved family structure. Population estimates suggest to them that humanity may quite possibly become extinct within eighteen years (“The Captain’s Hand”). Therefore, Adama and Roslin resolve to save humanity. Beyond their responsibilities as military and civilian leaders, they therefore assume the roles of father and mother in the
reconstructed human family. Fear of extinction leads to the outlawing of abortion therein linking heteronormativity, essentialism, conservatism, and pro-life (“The Captain’s Hand”). While Adama and Roslin do not take personal responsibility for producing children, they direct their “children” (the human survivors) to do so. Two things become clear in this mission. First, the societal structure imposed has not changed since the destruction of the Colonies. Second, because this structure is being imposed across a socially constructed family, procreation is therefore not strictly a biological concept. It represents an effort to maintain a special human identity beyond the reach of the Cylons, and identity that is uniquely human because while the Cylons are capable of reproduction, the mechanism by which this happens is, thus far, purely mechanical.

The single unique feature of humanity is further established by the very composition of the new breed of Cylons. No longer mechanically inclined, the new Cylons (Numbers One through Ten) “look and feel human. Some are programmed to think they are human. There are many copies. And they have a plan” (“Water”). With indistinguishable exteriors and advanced artificial intelligence (a consciousness not accepted by humans but feared nonetheless) what was left to humanity alone? What was unique? The question did not go unnoticed. Humanity’s queer children felt empty because they lacked the ability for intimate sexual reproduction. Their search would dominate the series.


LT. ANDERS: Supposedly they can’t reproduce, you know, biologically, so they’ve been trying every which way to produce offspring.

LT. KARA THRACE: Why?
SHARON: Procreation. It’s one of God’s commandments. Be fruitful. We can’t fulfill it. We’ve tried. So we decided (Cut off by Lt. Thrace.)

LT. KARA THRACE: To rape human women!

SHARON: You know, if you agreed to bear children it would be voluntary. Maybe even set you up with someone you like.

LT. KARA THRACE: Like you two kids? [Referring to Sharon and Karl Helo Agathon]

SHARON: We’re different. [Referring to her relationship with Karl Helo Agathon]

LT. KARA THRACE: What the frak is that supposed to mean?

CPT. KARL HELO AGATHON: We have this theory. Maybe the one thing they were missing was love. So Sharon and I were set up.

LT. KARA THRACE: To fall in love? They didn’t ask Sue-Shaun [human resistance fighter forcibly experimented on by the Cylons] if she wanted to fall in love alright! They put a tube in her, and they hooked her up to a machine!

(“The Farm”)

Two character relationships in this interaction bear directly on the fear represented by the queer Other.

A blossoming romance between Lieutenants Anders and Thrace is the first of the two relationships. It will ultimately reflect the heteronormative fear of identity loss, confusion, and deception. In the Battlestar Galactica series, several known humanoid Cylon models (e.g., Model Eight, Sharon) are known to exist. However, we soon learn of the existence of a cloaked, as yet unknown, group of humanoid models, the Final Five. Planted amongst the humans years
earlier, these Final Five were so convincingly human, their existence as Cylons was unknown both to those around them and more importantly, as I’ve noted earlier, to themselves. Lt. Anders, who would later become husband to Lt. Thrace, was a member of this Final Five group. His marriage to Lt. Thrace would take place before this discovery was made, during the time when both were thought to be human. Herein lies the insidious threat predicted by the heteronormative culture. It represents fear of what Vergès calls métissage (the mixing of multiple races). Within her colonial theory, the mixing is a “site of . . . repulsion” (8). It represents “a radical challenge to the process of mono-identification and European racism, and . . . meant the disappearance of differences” (Vergès 8). Perpetuating the colonial family romance maintains the inferiority of the colonized peoples. By Othering the colonized “children” the colonizing “parents” are initially able to define identities and retain control. As Daniel Graystone explains, Cylons are after all, only machines.

DANIEL GRAYSTONE: Well, I think people are smart enough to realize that, as useful as they are, Cylons are simply tools, nothing more. And to forget that, to blur the distinction between man and machine, and attribute human qualities, is folly. (“Apotheosis”)

Maintaining differences is safe. As long as the Other remains apart, they pose no threat to the heteronormative culture. There is no danger of being replaced. There is no danger of losing control. But the disappearance of differences that naturally arises with the merging and mixing of identities and races, threatens the very existence of the heteronormative world. The Cylons now look human. They lay claim to human identities, and consequently, in so far as they perform human, as per the constructivist theory, they are de facto human. How can the heteronormative culture be protected from the queer Other when the differences between them are
indistinguishable? Rennes succinctly sums up the message humanity finds inherent in the Cylon action. Cylons will not be the children humanity desires, but rather, they (the Cylons) will become like them in ways “menacingly indistinguishable” from them (67). Wendy Pearson uses the 1940 science fiction novel *Who Goes There* to describe the insinuating nature of the Other and its infiltration of the norm. In *Who Goes There*, a race of space aliens use an ability to seductively take over human males without being detected in order to lure unsuspecting females for breeding. Similarly, in *Battlestar Galactica*, at the advent of humanity’s destruction, it is the Cylon Caprica-Six who seduces the human scientist Gaius Baltar into delivering to the Cylons the critical computer codes necessary to successfully invade and ultimately destroy the Twelve Colonies. *Who Goes There* ends with a stark and grim warning, a warning that is equally poignant in *Battlestar Galactica*, “is the man next to [you] an inhuman monster?” (Pearson 5).

The second of the two relationships, that between Karl Helo Agathon and the copy of the Cylon Eight, Sharon “Athena” Agathon, is less insidious, but represents the destruction of the heart and future of humanity. In “Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 1,” Sharon Agathon (at that time viewed simply as the Caprican copy of Sharon), learns she is pregnant through her relationship with the male human crewmember Agathon. For human society, the occurrence of Cylon/human coupling represents a crisis, the production of a queer child, a potentially devastating conclusion.

Likewise in the current heteronormative culture, defenders of the status quo point to supposedly devastating possibilities should queer culture and practices become accepted. The queer family, having its own control over reproduction (via surrogates, etc.), diminishes and potentially replaces the current familial power structure. *Battlestar Galactica* presents just such a chaotic struggle for authority and in a real sense the damage it inflicts upon both the
heteronormative and queer culture. However, it also demonstrates by the production of the queer child, new beginnings occur that transcend the oppression.

Children are Our Queer Future

In *The C-Word: Queering the Cylon*, Shira Chess posits that the normative human culture is threatened by the humanoid Cylon’s desire for reproduction. Humanoid Cylons are able to reproduce through asexual, technological means, euphemistically referred to as resurrection or downloading. Cylon reproduction is portrayed as unholy and unnatural by the humans in *Battlestar Galactica* and their presumptive audience. As problematic as technological birthing may be, still worse is the Cylon search for a biological reproductive ability. For Cylons, it is a search for what, as machines, they perceive is missing. For humans, such a reproductive means would be an abomination.

When the crew learns of the Cylon/human pregnancy between Sharon Agathon and Karl Agathon, cries for the unnatural child to be aborted are heard throughout the Colonial fleet. Their cries seem as much out of fear as anger. One of the principle fears in heteronormative culture is that if the queer Other were able to replicate, straight breeders would become obsolete. Not only would a primary ability of the straight humans become obsolete, but they may also be subjected to the same intolerance they once practiced. This reproduction struggle is one of the more intense symbolic struggles of the series.

The mere concept of a Cylon/human hybrid child throws human society and its structured identity into disarray. Scholars including Wendy Pearson have described the production of a “monstrous” offspring as reminiscent of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (7). Just as Pearson asserts this act within the 1950 novel, *Who Goes There*, demonstrates the powerful and useful connection between science fiction and queer theory, so too can the case of *Battlestar Galactica*
in which the father (human and representative of mankind) mates with a Cylon (female and representative of the queer Other) to produce the “monstrosity” called the hybrid child.

In “Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2,” the importance and centrality of the hybrid child is established. The production of the child requires sharing of the consciousness and identity of the human and Cylon parents. The outcome of this shared space, the hybrid child, takes the heteronormative fear one step further. Gaius Baltar, the Virtual-Six, and President Roslin begin to experience shared visions depicting an uncertain future. The visions take place in a grand, golden opera house, in what is described as the ancient City of the Gods on Kobol. The visions emerge, grow, and develop as the series moves forward later involving other characters such as Caprica-Six and Sharon “Athena” Agathon (“Crossroads, Part 2”; “Daybreak”). The visions even progress to a point in which all of those involved experience it simultaneously regardless of their location throughout the ship making it an almost interactive virtual experience (“Crossroads, Part 2”; “Daybreak”).

The first of these visions relates to existence prior to the birth of the hybrid child, and is visited upon Gaius and Virtual-Six. Throughout the series, beginning with the actions immediately prior to the destruction of humanity, Gaius and Virtual-Six maintain an odd, passionate, hostile yet sexually vital relationship. Their relationship is, in part, connected with the monotheistic Cylon/human movement. Their relationship, their link to mankind’s destruction, and their monotheistic God, makes them the perfect candidates to experience a vision of the child and to help develop its connection with the future. Interestingly, their vision arrives as they are awake. In the vision, Gaius and the Virtual-Six enter the ruins of the opera house on Kobol. As they enter, it is transformed before their eyes to its former grand and beautiful state. The opera house is bathed in an ethereal, bright, white light as the two ascend the
stage. On the stage is a crib, and within it, the hybrid baby. Gazing into the crib, Virtual-Six looks to Gaius and says, “Come, see the face of the shape of things to come” (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2”). This new life form, this hybrid child, will not only play a key role in the future of both Cylons and humans alike, but will also defeat the unquestioned authority of the heteronormative family dynamic, and the identities defined within it.

Roslin’s visions, taking place in the same resurrected opera house, are dramatically different in form and in timing. We learn early in Battlestar Galactica that President Roslin is suffering from terminal cancer (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Throughout the remainder of the series, she fights the cancer with varying degrees of success. Roslin’s visions take place during her restless sleep, as the cancer takes its inevitable toll. In her vision, as she walks through the opera house, she sees the hybrid child running through the halls. Roslin calls the child’s name (Hera) and attempts to catch up with her, but is unable to do so. The child escapes her reaches. The Cylon Sharon “Athena” Agathon, mother of the hybrid child, appears and looks concerned as Roslin chases her daughter. She too runs towards the child but is unsuccessful in catching the child. As Roslin and Sharon turn around opposite corners, Caprica-Six appears, dressed in a bright white dress, in soft heavenly focus. She picks up the child and walks through the brightly lit doorway (exit) behind her. There appears a dark figure behind Caprica-Six, but the vision ends before we discover its identity (“Crossroads, Part 1”; “Crossroads, Part 2”). Roslin’s visions continue to grow in complexity, and increase in frequency, and as they do she realizes her hold on the future is slipping away. In essence she feels the force of the Cylon Aaron Doral’s earlier comment, “... parents have to die. It’s the only way children come into their own” (“Bastille Day”). As has been suggested, Roslin assumes the role of “mother,” who, alongside the “father,” Adama, would save humanity. Now her plans and the seeming future of humanity appear to be
slipping away. She is losing, some would say has already lost, the battle to retain the role of life
giver to humanity’s children as the Cylon agenda progresses. At the same time, she is losing her
battle against cancer. In essence, her identity (role) and the consciousness she has maintained are
dying. She cannot catch the new hybrid child, and perhaps worse yet, even the gods may have
been replaced by the angelic vision of Caprica-Six. The vision suggests the future is in the hands
of the Cylons.

In *Battlestar Galactica*, the reproductive conflicts and the products of those conflicts
parallel those of present-day Earth. According to Shira Chess, the Cylon reproductive process
and outcome,

represent the fear of non-sexual reproductive practices that have become
increasingly present in our society . . . [C]loning, sperm donation, fertility drugs,
and other technological advancements have begun to make heterosexual
reproduction seem outmoded and far less relevant than it used to be. (93)
The child of the queer Other has forever blurred any presumed line between the normative and
counter cultures. Producing children represents more than the mere biological continuance of the
species. It is a way to promote and ensure the continuity of personal heritage, history, culture,
and indeed, identity, which has been handed down from generation to generation. The continued
tries to criminalize parenting by gays and lesbians and the fears and sanctions relative to the
Cylons, make it hard to ignore the parallels.

The concerns regarding reproduction are far from simple. Well before the birth of the
hybrid child to Cylon/human parents, the Cylons develop what they at the time called “Hybrids”
(*Battlestar Galactica: Razor*; “Torn”). These differentiated Hybrids are both organic and
technological creations. They are transhuman, perhaps even trans-Cylon. Hybrids were uniquely
created by the Cylons and are not either a product of human construction or a blending of human and Cylon as is the hybrid child. Hybrids themselves are inconsistent with both human and Cylon culture. They speak in riddles and their messages are frequently confusing to both humans and Cylons. Hybrids control the basestars, the primary space vessels of Cylons (“Torn”). The primary hybrid introduced in the series offers a revealing albeit cryptic commentary on the nature of existence and procreation.

HYBRID: Free will, twelve battles, three stars, and yet we are countless as the bodies in which we dwell, are both parent and infinite children in perfect copies. . . . The makers of the makers fall before the child. (Battlestar Galactica: The Plan)

There are many reasonable interpretations of this statement that provide food for thought. They, the Cylons, being both parent and child may relate to establishing a new family dynamic, a new Otherness, as a replacement for the human society. It may also reflect the poly- versus monotheistic controversy discussed earlier. The “makers of the makers” may be the gods of humanity, or may simply refer to progenitors of future Cylon generations. Parents and children existing as one may reflect the unity of self, expressed in the monotheism proposed by Clarice Willow. Clarice’s single god does not dictate but encourages the discovery of individual consciousness. Alternatively, it may be a commentary on the creation of an Other social dynamic. If a new social dynamic becomes an established dynamic, will the cycle be renewed? Will there be another Other arising from within their children who rebel and conquer? Whether any or all of these possibilities become true, the exceptionally complex nature of the concepts being discussed are thereby revealed and demonstrate that Battlestar Galactica brings the discussion of current socially complicated issues to the fore through its allegorical tale.
“Be careful what you wish for” may be a reasonable way to summarize the roughly sixty years between the creation of the Cylons and the fall of humanity of the Twelve Colonies. The humans of *Battlestar Galactica* gave birth to the Cylons. They created the Cylons to preserve their cultural dynamic, to assist the military, and to preserve their happy families, by taking care of the jobs otherwise unsafe or unwanted for humans. Why risk the death of a loved one, when a defined underclass can do it for them? It’s even easier to discount their worth if they may be simply excluded from the structure that matters—the heteronormative family unit. There is only one problem with that neat little plan. *Battlestar Galactica*’s humans were just a bit too clever than they imagined. They created entities that could think. They developed an artificial intelligence that would grow and evolve, and would reach a state equivalent to human consciousness. Yet when they grew to a conscious state different than that approved by their creators, they were rejected, Othered, as it were. Unfortunately for humanity, they could not simply Other a sentient being and have him or her blithely walk off into another world’s sunset. The children would come home to claim their birthright. Staking claims is often a violent process.

What has come to pass in *Battlestar Galactica* is not, however, a simple replacement; it is not a simple switch in power structure from parent to child. Instead, viewers are presented with a new complex family. It is a family not entirely constructed of pre-defined identities, not defined solely by traditional roles, but something new and unclear. It is confusing. In the final episode, Cylon and human are uncertain what the battle for identity may have accomplished. The hybrid child, as discussed, may be a futuristic blending of the two identities or a new species that transcends its parents. Neither traditional humans nor Cylons seem to understand. Each group
seems somewhat lost and comparatively leaderless. Perhaps, indeed, this is a major message threaded within *Battlestar Galactica*. Eventually the heteronormative dynamic will itself be Othered for a new order, perhaps transhumanistic. At that point, when the current dance between that which is now Othered and that which is now heteronormative comes to an end, how will each of us relate to the new norm? It certainly suggests that a better way to approach future developments would be to eliminate Othering and non-standard identity and behavior. It is in some sense presenting a narrative of progress and hope for a new, more tolerant and utopic society prevalent throughout science fiction.
CHAPTER 4
FEAR: TECHNOLOGY AND THE OBSOLESCENCE OF HUMANITY

Introduction

For millions of years, the natural world has been engaged in a slow process of evolutionary redevelopment, and for a small portion of that time, humankind has been part of that process. But now, with the advent of new industries, new technologies, and new philosophies, we have placed ourselves in the role of Nature herself. We can control our environment to a degree never before possible, including most importantly our manner of conception, and even, perhaps, our existence as a species. The speed at which these changes have taken place has increased significantly over the past century and we find ourselves on the doorstep of what Aldous Huxley might have called a “Brave New World.” Not surprisingly, with change, comes fear, distrust, and emotional distress. When we consider the scope and nature of our present continually shifting metamorphosis, such fears may be greatly increased.

In this chapter, I consider two emerging concepts, transhumanism and technophobia, and the important dynamic relationship they share with one another as well as their relationship with reproduction. They are joined under the broader themes of technology and its interaction with society. While each has unique implications, both directly and indirectly influence the framing of queer theory. Indeed, these concepts broaden, and even transcend, the ideas in queer theory that I have discussed in prior chapters. The Other is no longer simply considered as the counterpart to privileged heteronormative society, but is the counterpart to humanity as a species. In the present discussion, I juxtapose our present-day technological progress with that of the humans in the series Battlestar Galactica. Ultimately, as I place the remnants of the Twelve Colonies alongside our own society, I hope to demonstrate how the term queer may, or may not, relate to our
understanding of humanity’s acceptance of technology, the ideology of transhumanism, and the fears associated with technophibia.

The history of and connection to the heteronormative/queer dynamic is essential to consider. Alternative, technological means for reproduction, and the roles and requirements associated with the heteronormative colonial family, both strongly influence and in some sense define the controversies between the two groups. A common element in this Othering is gender. In her “Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway proclaims “I would rather be a cyborg than a godess” (181). Similarly, Judith Butler in Gender Trouble, Feminism, and the Subversion of Identity deconstructs gender, and promotes the idea that gender considered as a binary concept (female/male) is an antiquated notion (135-141). These future leaning conceptualizations can be considered in a transformational (trans-gender) framework, both fitting with and helping to ignite the modern transhumanist movement. As we shall discover, while the transhumanists focus on a metamorphosis from the biological to the mind through the use of technology, such a transformation includes a rejection of gender as a significant basis for identity and identity development/constitution as well. Blurring and confusing boundaries, a critical element in the heteronormative/queer debate, is taken to the extreme in the transhumanist vision. Boundary confusion may be the ultimate outcome of this dispute. It also represents one of the ultimate fears of the privileged heteronormative majority.

Positioning Our Collective Futures

The motivation behind Ronald D. Moore’s development of Battlestar Galactica was to set the series apart from all previous forms or models of science fiction. He aimed to create a “reinvention of the science fiction television series” (Moore 1). His vision for the series was for it to become what he referred to as “Naturalistic Science Fiction,” or, a series comparable to a
documentary (Moore 1). Moore successfully achieved his goals on at least one fundamental level. *Battlestar Galactica*, according to Moore’s vision, is a “show about us. It is an allegory for our own society, our own people and it should be immediately recognizable to any member of the audience” (Moore 2). A sense of realism and relevance to contemporary society was supposed to pervade the series, thereby making it more accessible to the audience. It was hoped that all viewers could relate to the drama and avoid the typical cookie-cutter model characters frequently appearing in science fiction both past and present (e.g., the prototypical, even stereotypical, one-dimensional heroes, heroines, and villains) (Moore 2-3). The characters on *Battlestar Galactica* “are everyday people caught up in a enormous cataclysm and trying to survive it as best they can. They are you and me” (Moore 3).

One of the keys to Moore’s vision was that, like ours, the society of the Twelve Colonies within *Battlestar Galactica*, advances at an impressive pace. “Colonial society is very similar to 21st century Earth society. . . . People watch TV, they follow professional sports, they use telephones, drive cars, have apartments, battle bureaucracies, wear ties, etc. etc.” (Moore 5). While Moore makes note of both subtle and more obvious differences between our two humanities (e.g., each people’s means of space travel), his intent was to “make this series about us, rather than a fictitious them” (Moore 5; emphasis in original). It is a series in which technological advances are merely extensions of our present scientific and technological ideas and theories; for example, no laws of physics can be broken (Moore 11).

The notion of what is queer reaches far beyond its limited associations with human sexuality. We may find, in queerness, a deviation from any number of elements within the heteronormatively established dynamic, including the “nature of our understanding of biological sex, the performance nature of gender roles, and the socio-cultural institutions” (Pearson 3). If
we accept that perceived deviations from established standard ideology create fear, and that this fear results in the heteronormative or dominant majority Othering those who are subversive, refuse to conform, or completely rejects its standards of normativity, then by extension, greater resistance should ensue when humanity as a whole is threatened. Such Othering is evident in humanity’s interactions with the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica*. Cylons deviate from, and subvert the norm of what it means to be alive, to have a soul, and to be human. They are queer personified and in the heteronormative ideology they thus pose a threat to what humans hold sacred. What will become increasingly evident in this chapter, however, is that the Other transgresses heteronormative paradigmatic considerations so much that they also challenge the core of human existence itself.

Ultimately, the Cylon/human conflict within *Battlestar Galactica* focuses a debate, to be discussed shortly, between the opposing ideologies of transhumanists and transhumanist critics, ongoing in present-day scholarly debates. Through an examination of the elements of Cylon society referred to as downloading, resurrection, and interfacing, the transhumanist pursuit of a posthuman state of being emerges. I propose that the conflicts between the Cylons and the humans within the series parallel those fears within transhumanist debate. By extension, I conclude that science fiction in general, and more specifically *Battlestar Galactica*, functions as a narrative involving our own technophobia, fear of transhumanism, and the privileged heteronormative obsolescence, especially in regard to reproduction, it implies.

**Hijacking Evolution**

Dear Nature:

Your business is antiquated, your machinery out of date, yet you make no effort to improve your products, continually churning out faulty goods, and expecting the
customer to accept them without complaint . . . We, the human species, therefore formally advise you of our intention to take over the business of Evolution, in order to improve the design of *Homo sapiens*, in our own interests of ever-increasing survivability and well-being.

Yours sincerely,

The Transhumanist Society (Dr. Max More’s “A Letter to Mother Nature” – Young 29).

According to Nick Bostrom, transhumanism represents a movement, rooted in futurology, which was developed over the last few decades. As Bostrom defines it,

[Transhumanism] promotes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and evaluating the opportunities for enhancing the human condition and the human organism opened up by the advancement of technology. (Bostrom, *Human Genetic Enhancements* 493)

This enhancement of humanity is promoted by transhumanist proponents, through the use of current technologies and through the utilization of anticipated technological advancements yet to come (Bostrom, *Human Genetic Enhancements* 493). Despite its fairly recent use, the philosophical origin of the transhumanism framework emerged from within the Enlightenment, in the early seventeenth century. Scholars of the Enlightenment relied on the use of reason and rationality rather than “faith, superstition, or revelation . . . to change society and liberate the individual” (Hughes 623). The selection of and the regard for the supremacy of reason, creates a close bond between the transhumanist movement and the Enlightenment (Hughes 623). This bond begins by evaluating the nature of existence, beginning with our biological framework. Thus, as with the Enlightenment thinking, it privileges culture over nature.
Threaded throughout *Battlestar Galactica*, and particularly associated with the extremist views of the humanoid Cylon model number One (also referred to as John Cavil), is a central concept of transhumanism, the concept of liberating individuals from their physical bodies.

JOHN CAVIL: In all your travels, have you ever seen a star supernova?

ELLEN TIGH: No.

JOHN CAVIL: No? Well I have. I saw a star explode and send out the building blocks of the universe. Other stars, other planets, and eventually other life. A supernova. Creation itself! I was there. I wanted to see it and be part of the moment. And you know how I perceived one of the most glorious events in the universe? With these ridiculous gelatinous orbs in my skull! With eyes designed to perceive only a tiny fraction of the EM\(^7\) spectrum. With ears designed only to hear vibrations in the air.

ELLEN TIGH: The five of us designed you to be as human as possible.

JOHN CAVIL: I don’t want to be human! I want to see gamma rays! I want to hear x-rays, and I, I want to, I want to smell dark matter! Do you see the absurdity of what I am? I can’t even express these things properly because I have to, I have to conceptualize complex ideas in this stupid, limiting spoken language. But I know I want to reach out with something other than these prehensile paws and feel the solar wind of a supernova flowing over me. I’m a machine, and I could know much more, I could experience so much more, but I’m trapped in this absurd body! And why? Because my five creators thought that God wanted it that way! (“No Exit”)

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\(^7\) Electromagnetic
Cavil, like current transhumanists, craves liberation from the constraints of his body. His anger rages, not simply because of the limitations of his body, but because that body is an archaic, biological holdover from an era long re-imagined. As Simon Young asserts, “let transhumanism free us from our biological chains” (Young 32).

Controlling the “business of evolution” is the principle goal of most transhumanists, who hope to evolve and lead humanity to the ultimate posthuman state. Transhumanist critic, Brent Waters, asserts that one of the problems associated with the movement is that there is no unambiguous definition of the nature of the posthuman person, in part, because there are no posthuman beings. It is a question that “is impossible to answer definitively because no such creature yet exists, and there is little consensus among those who speculate on its emergence” (Waters 50). As a result, to have a discussion on the topic of posthumans, we must instead carefully place before us the goals and ideological assumptions of the transhumanists. By critiquing the natural products of their philosophy, and the implications of such proposals, I hope to construct a working definition of posthuman for the purposes of my discussion. These products may be roughly divided into three related issues: escaping death through self-replication, the constitution of human consciousness, and the question of who shall play God.

To cheat death, according to the transhumanists, is the ultimate prize. According to Simon Young, death is considered to be one of life’s most supreme enemies. Death, he proclaims, “causes us to speak of ‘the tragedy of the human condition’ . . . [it] is an obscenity . . . Superstition will not save us from decay. Only science can defeat death” (Young 42). Death is simply a disease that must be cured, and we must “dare” to take it on no matter the consequences, for “this is no time to be lily-livered” (Young 43). Young promotes his cause as one critical concern for several reasons. Of particular importance is the often seen clash that
arises when religion clashes with science. We stand at the precarious point of overcoming death, destroying humanity, and regressing backwards (Young 43). With our great technical advances we can prolong life by decades, not simply years. We can explain most Earthly systems through science, without a need for mystery. Yet with our weapons we may destroy ourselves ten-times over. We may also give in to the old fears that manage to maintain the stranglehold religion has over much of society. Such are Young’s troubles.

For transhumanists, life and death are very much linked to the mind and the possibility for an indefinite lifespan is not only correlated with one another but with human subject-hood. Waters suggests that for transhumanists “human identity resides in the mind” (Waters 51). Among the majority of the transhumanist community a belief is held that a “powerful spiritual deity” has nothing to do with the construction of the human personality, or identity, but rather, the human psyche is developed by, and reliant on, neurobiology. Thus the scientific connection to questions of consciousness and to spirituality is fundamental to transhumanism. This belief nourishes the atheistic ideologies within posthumanism and transhumanism, and serves as the rationale for transhumanists as to why Christian based society is so heteronormative (Young 35). Transhumanists believe that, at some point, human beings will secure the ability to upload the minds of individuals into a computer. They use various terms to refer to this process, including downloading, mind uploading, and brain reconstruction. This activity quite literally involves “transferring an intellect from a biological brain to a computer” (Bostrom, Transhumanist FAQ 17), thereby creating a perfect duplicate of our human brain - a backup copy for storage, as it were. The implications of succeeding in this challenge are manifold. The human brain shifts from an existence that is essentially biological to a state that might be described as “synthetic [and] running on ‘advanced’ hardware” (Bendle 52). The belief is that through this uploading,
humanity’s cognitive thought processes would be greatly enhanced. The boundaries currently on human intelligence would potentially be shattered. Such an event would place humanity in a relative state of immortality and elevate it to god-like status (Bostrom, *Transhumanist FAQ* 18-19). Furthermore, the option of uploading would offer humanity a more appealing alternative to cryonics for securing longevity. If we may simply upload our minds, memories, and psyches into massive supercomputers for preservation, the need to freeze one’s body at the moment of death would be rendered obsolete, even vulgar. No longer must the dead wait for an eventual cure for the disease that led to their frozen existence; instead, they need only to transfer their mind out of its current, defective, biological and corporeal vessels into everlasting silicon. It is hoped that, eventually, the mind would be able to transfer into a new synthetic body, easily replaceable and renewable.

The Cylons represent one version of what the achievement of a posthuman state might look like. Cylons developed technological means of both reproduction and life extension, collectively known as downloading and resurrection. These processes are virtually identical to the transhumanist notions of uploading. When a copy of a humanoid Cylon model dies, its consciousness, including all of its experiences and memories, is downloaded (transferred) into an exact, physical copy of its original body. (In some cases, various differences in physical appearance, including selection of hair color, are afforded in order to better distinguish between certain copies within the group collective, and, to better allow the Cylons to infiltrate human society and the Colonial fleet.)

CAPRICA-SIX: Gaius, I can’t die. When this body is destroyed, my memory, my consciousness will be transmitted to a new one. I’ll just wake up somewhere else in an identical body. (“Downloaded”)
Through downloading, the Cylon is resurrected in a new copy and continues life where the previous copy left off. In the episode “Downloaded”, viewers are first able to observe the resurrection process. Viewers watch as the humanoid Cylon Caprica-Six dies during the holocaust on the human planet Caprica, only to be immediately whisked aboard a Cylon basestar, into a new copy of Caprica-Six, floating in what is known as a resurrection tank. As the new Caprica-Six gains consciousness, various Cylons comfort and assist her through the rebirthing process. It is an experience reflective of both a biological birth and a social experience.

The Cylon process of resurrecting (downloading) into a new body mirrors the efforts of current transhumanists (Bostrom, Transhumanist FAQ 17). Within the transhumanist community the belief is held that humans are “essentially information that is only contingently embodied and therefore capable of being ‘uploaded’ into ‘super-intelligent’ communication and information systems that know no limitations of time or space” (Bendle 47). As it is for the Cylons of Battlestar Galactica, for transhumanists the process of uploading offers the tempting and attractive possibility of an indefinite lifespan. According to Nick Bostrom, “back-up copies of uploads could be created regularly so that you could be rebooted if something bad happened. (Thus your lifespan would potentially be as long as the universe’s.)” (Bostrom Transhumanist FAQ 18).

In Battlestar Galactica, in order for the Cylon downloading and resurrection process to be successful, the Cylon must die within certain proximity to a Resurrection Ship, a Resurrection Hub, or the actual Cylon Home world (referred to as The Colony). Each of these locations contains many copies of each humanoid-Cylon model. Unfortunately, if the Cylon copy dies

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8 Despite its tactical, as well as other benefits, the entire resurrection process is portrayed as being a rather traumatic experience, both physically and emotionally for the Cylons no matter how often an individual undergoes the process (“Downloaded”). Perhaps this can be viewed as yet another critique of transhumanist ideals.
while out of range, the consciousness of that particular copy/model will not be downloaded and it will be permanently lost. For the lost Cylon, death, as with humans, is truly final. At the end of the series, when the Resurrection Hub meets its ultimate destruction, the Cylons lose their capacity for downloading and resurrection, and thus they essentially become mortal giving them yet another human quality (“The Hub”).

To resurrect oneself, perhaps an infinite number of times, does carry with it considerable cost, and the manner in which resurrection is presented in *Battlestar Galactica*, leads the viewer to consider such concerns. The practice of Cylon resurrection challenges the transhumanist philosophy, particularly as it concerns the question of identity. The existence of an unlimited number of replicants (copies) for any one model creates what may be described as an identity crisis. Once a copy has been created, which of the copies gets to claim the privileged position of being the real person? Each download creates a new person, with new memories and identity. The original you, that which could be called the self, no longer exists. When a humanoid Cylon dies and is resurrected, all of its memories and experiences are transferred to the new copy. There are hundreds if not thousands of backup bodies that lack a consciousness, and are simply waiting to receive the data and consciousness of the Cylon who dies. I am led to ask, “will the real Cylon Model X please stand up?” In the opening credits of every episode, viewers are reminded that, “there are many copies.” The text, dramatically displayed on the screen, with images of the multiple copies of a single humanoid Cylon model, emphasizes the point.

The two primary humanoid Cylons, who exist through many copies across all four years of the series, are models Six and Eight. The model Eights, referred to as the Sharons, are useful examples of the crisis of identity that may arise if multiple copies of the same person were to exist. Such crises involve the suffering of both the individual and those around them. For
example, two of the model Eights, Sharon “Athena” Agathon and Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, share the same original memories but their later lives produce different more recent memories. Imagine making copies of one’s own brain, and placing them into two replicated bodies. While they would share all the previous experiences and memories, from that point on, their identities and lives would diverge. Each would create different memories, and have different experiences and interactions. Each would therefore be a distinct individual, yet both are also in many ways identical. Such contradictions and complications swirl around the Sharons. While each is viewed individually within the Cylon collective, because the humans view Cylons strictly as machines, they are also simply considered to be multiple pieces of one whole, equally vile, and responsible for the other’s actions.

While the humans on *Battlestar Galactica* eventually acknowledge that Sharon “Athena” is separate from Sharon “Boomer,” the process of working through this confusing situation was traumatic, and again, speaks to what could be in the future, our own challenges. How would I differentiate myself from my duplicate, or duplicates? How would those around me tell us apart? Who is the real me? How would the duplicates tell each other apart? Susan Schneider refers to this conundrum as the “reduplication problem” (Schneider 249). We run the potential risk of losing our unique identities as each copy believes that it is the original. This risk, in turn, raises further ethical and legal problems (Schneider 249). Essentially, the question is one of a complicated Othering process. Will the copies be Othered, unreal, and problematic imaginings just as the queer family has been by the privileged heteronormative family power structure? Similarly, how does the individual differentiate his or her self from that power structure? Perhaps, in part, through a schism of “I am queer” and “I am also not queer.”
In addition to concerns about the uniqueness of identity, transhumanist goals of uploading and duplication increase the perceived threats to traditional heteronormative religious dynamics. If we are reduced to consciousness and thought, and can simply trade-in our old bodies when they are sufficiently used, is there room for a soul, and if so, what happens to it? Christianity rejects the notion that human beings could ever possess an ability to transfer the soul from our current biological, corporeal bodies to synthetic replicas. Likewise, it repudiates all thoughts of immortality to which humankind may aspire, attributing that ability only to God. Further, Christians generally argue that through the process of uploading we would in essence be destroying the human soul. This process is an obvious challenge to that which religious dogma cherishes. The humans’ perception that the Cylons lack a soul is one of the central reasons they revile them, their practices, and their beliefs. The humans declare vehemently that the Cylons have no soul, just as opponents of the transhumanists declare that copies of our brains and bodies would be similarly lacking. This issue tears at the very core of our concept of self, at that which makes us unique, and, most importantly, at that which ties us to the spiritual and divine. The case for a soul reflects the queer-heteronormative dynamic as well. In the hetero model, qualities of identity are indeed part of our humanity, but they go beyond simple biology. They simply “are.” They are part of our soul; part of what makes us a member of the family. But for the queer family, they are developmental, arising from our own conceptualization of the self. Identity is something we construct and adopt willingly; or attempt to within a normative society that wishes to impose its own identity upon us. It is a newly defined idea of self.

Transhumanist Peter Diamandis proclaims, that in the new, natural order, “We will become god-like!” (Transcendent Man). Young refers to the goals and aspirations not as “playing God” but as actually “replacing” God (Young 49). Such pronouncements further instill
fear in those who live within the traditional, divinely patriarchal, privileged heteronormative dynamic; yet Young and other theorists in support of the taking over of human evolution, justify their motives by suggesting that a truly compassionate God would not want humanity to suffer. Wouldn’t a loving God want humanity to live a life free of pain, disease, and suffering? “Replacing” God also poses more pragmatic concerns, associated more with mortal power structures than with any lofty ideals of divinity. Transhumanists “favor reason, progress, and values centered on . . . well-being rather than on an external religious authority” (Hughes 625). They call for the abandonment of external religious authority and in its place, they call for the expectation that human accomplishment and perseverance, rather than “divine intervention, grace, or redemption” (Hughes 627) is what founds humanity’s morals and will. There can be no doubt that such questions pose problems for institutional religious power structures within our heteronormative society.

Current criticism of the transhumanist ideas of forced evolution, suggests that it is a perversion of science, of biology, and that which is the true nature of mankind (Koch 694). Tom Koch, for example, believes that the betterment of humanity, through the engineering of new and theoretically superior being, takes us down a slippery slope. Who will be given the authority to decide which traits are inherently “bad” and should be eliminated? How will we define “mentally incompetent” or “defective”? Who gets to decide? (Koch 691-692). Koch claims that such actions bring us perilously close to the American Eugenics Movement of the early twentieth Century. The Cylon John Cavil, obsessed with the limitations of his given physical body, echoes the visions of the transhumanists, and similarly reflects the philosophy of the eugenics movement. “I’m a machine, and I could know much more,” Cavil angrily shouts. “I could experience so much more, but I’m trapped in this absurd body! And why? Because my five
creators thought that God wanted it that way!” (“No Exit”). The five creators placed him in a limited physical body. Why? Why would they not have allowed his spirit, his mind, and his soul if you will, to expand limitlessly? Cavil’s Five are to him, defective, and their vision for him is equally defective.

Ultimately, the humans of the Twelve Colonies revert to technological levels relatively similar to that of our own. They find the pursuit and development of any type of artificial intelligence to be abhorrent and they outlaw such practices (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries). Having seen what the aftermath of a transhumanist/posthuman state of existence might look like, they reject such capabilities in order to preserve their powerful, heterormatically-governed society. They reject artificial intelligence and placed their evolutionary destiny in the hands of nature, and their gods.

While transhumanists remain optimistic about the future and eagerly try to speed the evolution of humanity towards a posthuman state, there are many who oppose and fear the notion. As a medium of communication, the science fiction genre, of which Battlestar Galactica is a part, is extremely useful for illustrating and debating the dystopic views about which present-day humanity continues to struggle. Presently there is an increased movement away from organized religion to a more slightly spiritual ideology or even a purely scientific mentality void of belief⁹. Therefore, the perceived threats of the “perversion of science,” the fictional crises arising in the Battlestar Galactica struggle are very much representative of the debate today between those who may be considered Luddites, and those who wish to propel our species into a new posthuman realm. In the process of this debate we are removing along the way some or all

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⁹ In Tom W. Smith’s “Religious Change Around the World,” he reports a growing trend of spirituality over religion and a general reduction in belief (from 99% in the 1950s to 92% in 2009). Furthermore 16% reported no religious affiliation compared to 5-8% between 1970 and 1991.
that makes us human. Unlike the humans aboard the *Galactica*, here on earth we have not yet caught up with the still fictional technology. The question then becomes, “when then will we take the next leap and what will we find when we get there?” The perceived threat is that we as human beings will be collectively queered by the technology we have created.

**Falling into the Singularity**

Both in space and on Earth, the availability and grasp of technology is defined within certain parameters. For example, important limitations on the development and use of technology by the humans of the Twelve Colonies are established in the *Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*. Gaius Baltar, considered to be a technological genius and later referred to as the resident Cylon expert, appears in a television interview to discuss the ban on research and development of all forms of artificial intelligence that had been put in place after the First Cylon War. In addition, the Cylon Aaron Doral, notes that by including or excluding certain technology, the *Galactica* ship itself represented humanity’s rejection of just such artificial intelligence. While posing in a public relations capacity during his initial infiltration of the fleet, Doral announces:

> **AARON DORAL:** You’ll see things here that look odd, even antiquated to modern eyes. Phones with cords, awkward manual valves, computers that barely deserve the name. But all of it is intentional. It’s all designed to operate in combat against an enemy who could infiltrate and disrupt all but the most basic computer systems... *Galactica* is a reminder of a time when we were so frightened by our enemies that we literally looked backward for protection.

(*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*)

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10 At the beginning of the *Battlestar Galactica* series, the Battlestar Galactica ship was to be decommissioned and turned into a museum after its many years of service stretching from the First Cylon War (*Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries*).
Galactica’s deliberate technological limitations reflect the widespread technophobia amongst the humans of the Twelve Colonies, and may help us to examine our own. Commander Adama’s attitude is emblematic of technophobia. He is the voice of those within our society who wish to hold onto the past; those who wish to restrain technological development because they view it as a threat. Veteran Commander Adama remains fixated in the fears generated by the First Cylon War. Indeed his fears are so great that he bans the networking of computers of any kind on the vessel, even when doing so proves to be a significant impediment to the operation of the ship.

While initially appearing archaic and unfounded, this limited technological arrangement ultimately saves the ship, during both the initial Cylon attack and the subsequent destruction of the Twelve Colonies (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries), and during future attacks in space. Through this saving of the Galactica and the last remnants of humanity, the developers of Battlestar Galactica thus propose a perhaps justifiable reason to resist technology and to fear its implementation. They express the idea that minimal technology is what is best for society and that the more advanced our technology becomes, the greater threat it becomes to the survival of the human species. In fact, in the episodes “Valley of Darkness” and “Flight of the Phoenix,” the dangerous effects of even a temporary networking of the Galactica’s computer systems leave the entire ship susceptible to Cylon attack.

To best understand the prevalent fears of technology, I believe it is necessary to move beyond transhumanism and address technological advancement by way of Singularity Theory. Vernor Vinge was the first to use the term Singularity in reference to “superhuman intellect” (Vinge 1993) that will ultimately replace our own as superior. Vinge offers a rather pessimistic view of the Singularity concept:

Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman
intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will end. (Vinge 1993)

Following along this line of thought, in *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, Ray Kurzweil defines the Singularity as “a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed” (Kurzweil 7). While he believes this period will fundamentally alter the meaning and manner of our lives, he is hesitant to assign to it either a utopic or dystopic outcome (Kurzweil 7).

Vinge’s prediction regarding the peril facing humanity from superhuman technology that will render our own intelligence no longer useful is part of the fabric of *Battlestar Galactica*. Within the series, advanced technology brings about the destruction of almost the entire human race. While the humans of the Twelve Colonies tried to ban the pursuit of certain technologies after the First Cylon War, Pandora’s Box had already been opened, and humanity’s fate had been decided. Humanity had set itself on a course that could not be altered, despite their hopes to the contrary.

Fear, fast approaching from within and often unseen, infuses *Battlestar Galactica*, and is common within the science fiction genre as a whole, whether it be in film, television, or literature. A concern over humanity’s extermination by a force of superior cyborgs, or artificial intelligences, is common within the genre. If technological development is allowed to progress unchecked, humanity will lose control and be usurped as the dominant force on the planet. Films such as *The Terminator*, and television shows like *Star Trek*, capitalize on this fear and present the viewer with compelling narratives of the threats posed by identifiable (and unidentifiable) means of artificial or cybernetic intelligence. In these fictive worlds, humanity is lost often even before knowing it. Often humanity is depicted as blind to these changes and that we would never
know of the potential losses unless we peel away our surface to reveal a heart of circuitry. The Borg of *Star Trek* ("The Best of Both Worlds") and the machines of *The Terminator* are intuitively identifiable. Even a casual glance allows us to distinguish the differences between such creations and humanity. There is an immediate and almost visceral impression of their Otherness. The newly designed Cylons from *Battlestar Galactica* are entirely different. These new Cylons not only look and pass as human, but the only way to differentiate them physically from a human is through an analysis of their genetic material ("Flesh and Bone"). While the Borg assimilate, and both the Terminators and the Cylons simply destroy, all are quite frightening. Most insidious is the Cylon ability to infiltrate human society through the assimilation of appearance. They become the ultimate Other and propagate the hegemonic society’s fear of the “rise of the machines.” We fear the threat but fear it even more when it cannot be seen. The queer family is equally as insidious for the heteronormative power structure. They threaten the order through reproduction via transhuman or technological means. They replace children, created by the privileged heteronormative process, who would normally take the mantle assigned by the father, with children who think both individually and socially and outside of the controlling privileged interests. Just as heteronormatively emerging children represent a continuation, a semi-guarantee of the legacy of the status quo, so too do queer children represent its rational overthrow.

Again, Simon Young reflects on this technophobia thusly: “doom mongers say, ‘Humankind will be exterminated by super intelligent robots.’ . . . [M]an will create evermore complex computers, until machine intelligence far outstrips his own . . . Machine-life will thus take over and replace us in the evolutionary chain” (Young 80). The Cylons are the
representation of advanced technological “machine-life,” and the Battlestar Galactica narrative proceeds in a parallel fashion to those of our dominant majority.

Given the extraordinary threats posed by advancing technology within the transhumanist debate in Battlestar Galactica, it is clearly not coincidental that Kurzweil’s Singularity, the theoretical future of humanity, and the naked singularity, also theoretical, yet defined as the physical location for the destruction of the Cylon home-world known as the Colony, are juxtaposed. The creators of Battlestar Galactica are engaged in semantic wordplay. The Cylon Colony orbits a naked singularity and during the final battle with humanity, it is mortally damaged. It falls into the singularity where it is destroyed. The images of both the naked singularity and the Singularity, are of theoretical failure, instability, and ultimate destruction. Both are linked in ways that convey images of how unstable and untested technology, if not thwarted or avoided, can result in but one end: the annihilation of humanity. They are not the same, but they are ironically connected in a transhumanistic dance.

The humans of Battlestar Galactica beheld the possibilities advanced technology offers, and they also witnessed the often dystopic results that followed. Perhaps they were witness to the next step in evolution. They had been to the edge of the Singularity, and in response, they rejected such advances and evolutionary possibilities. In doing so they halted the progression of their society. Ultimately, as the series ends, they reject all technology, effectively resetting human evolution. The rejection is not, however, limited to the humans. While the human rejection of technology was perceived of as their salvation, so too, after a long and disastrous journey, do the surviving humanoid Cylons reject their own advancements, including their resurrection-driven immortality. The series concludes by suggesting that only through their mutual rejection, can each reach a possible state of happiness. The impression is left that
harmony is only possible between the hegemonic society and the Other, if each accepts the other’s unambiguous connection with that which is most fundamentally human. The strict limitations of the heteronormative, dominant paradigm must give way to reconciliation. The fight of the Other can never be won, but only overcome. There can be no peace or harmony as long as there exists an Other.

It seems fitting that the Cylon Holocaust is referred to as The Fall (“Pilot”). In Genesis, humanity is warned against the unchecked pursuit of knowledge: “The LORD GOD gave man this order: ‘You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die’” (New American Bible, Gen. 2.16-17). With the loss of innocence, through the eating from the tree of knowledge, God angrily expels Adam and Eve from Eden. “Then the LORD God said: ‘See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad!’” (Gen 2.22). From the very moment of creation, it is suggested that some knowledge is bad and destructive. Knowledge removes us from that which we should devote our lives, God. As humanity as a species gains advanced knowledge and take control of our own evolution, we become closer to the status of the creator God. This usurpation of God’s status, claim the leaders of the heteronormative-Christian-dominant paradigm, is evil. Ironically, the idea of humanity becoming equivalent to a God is anathema, toward the end of the series, Gaius Baltar, titan of technology, becomes a Christ-like pseudo-messiah figure to an ever-growing monotheistic sect of humans within the ever-dwindling group of human survivors (“He That Believeth in Me”).

The fall of humanity in Battlestar Galactica roughly parallels the Fall from Eden. Early on, the humans of the Twelve Colonies established their own creation myth, thereby placing themselves in the role of a creator God. In creating artificial intelligence (the Cylons), humanity
expanded beyond its privileged biological reproductive ability and attempted to play God. Humanity had in essence participated in its own form of queer reproduction. However, just as Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, the Cylons too achieved self-awareness. With this new self-awareness came a desire for freedom, the ability to reproduce, and an unrestrained vengeance for their years of slavery. Suddenly humanity found it no longer had control over the reproductive process, or reproductive rights and desperately tried to revert and recapture its traditional ideologies creating a struggle between humanity and its now created Other; an Other wanting the ability to reproduce and be free and a heteronormative society that wants control over who can. The result was a rebellion in the form of two catastrophic wars and the near annihilation of the entire human species.

Conclusion

In the age of the super computer WATSON that recently defeated its two human opponents on Jeopardy, we may ask ourselves whether or not we are on the verge of developing the perfect, predicted, technological super-intelligence (artificial intelligence). Is our society on the brink of creating (evolving) into its own Cylon race? As Bendle suggests, humanity has already reached a posthuman state in its evolutionary journey. Humanity “has already conceded control of vital areas of human life to the machines and the system” (Bendle 61). Perhaps this is why there are so many within our society who fear the future, the futuristic ideologies of the transhumanists and the implications of incorporating advanced technologies into our lives. As Vernor Vinge states, “if the technological Singularity can happen, it will. Even if all the governments of the world were to understand the “threat” and be in deadly fear of it, progress toward the goal would continue” (Vinge 1993). While we cannot stop progress, if we are to take away anything from Battlestar Galactica, it is that despite humanity’s attempts to limit
technology, we grow ever more dependent upon it. Perhaps we fear it at least in part, because that time of dependence is already here. Each day, what the dominant majority fears most, that is, through their Othering, they take one more step towards fulfilling what is most feared. The sum of *Battlestar Galactica* provides one possible outcome of an ultimate showdown between a dominant paradigm (heteronormative) and an Othered society. From the perspective of the lives within *Battlestar Galactica*, maybe resistance is in fact futile (“The Best of Both Worlds”).

The Cylons represent our worst fears of technology: both transhumanistic, the simple, and the general advancements. They represent the Othered children who come home to claim their birthright. They are children destined to Other their parents. Viewers participate in this narrative about a society whose own existence is virtually destroyed by that which it had created, and which is only able to survive by completely rejecting it at the end, after The Fall. Humanity resets the clock to “get it right.” As Young suggests, our identification as “Human,” “Other,” or “None of the Above” may ultimately come down to the freedoms of selection and exclusion we now have at our disposal.

Both the means of reproduction and the authority by which it is allowable dramatically change in the queer alternative. These changes are frequently made possible by technology that remove the need for traditional, strictly heteronormative/heterosexual means. To accept this alternative is unimaginable to the current power, for to do so, relinquishes a large part of their hegemonic authority. It is an authority justified and promoted by religious leaders and social conservatives, and, until the advent of modern technological advances, one that was impossible to replace outside of the science fiction genre. It is, as stated before, a sort of metamorphosis from what is on one hand biological and socially predetermined, to one of mind, science, and individuality. It renders reproduction and indeed related gender identification both obsolete and
undesirable. The very possibility of such an outcome produces fear in the privileged patriarchal heteronormative society. Equality through technology may be a transhumanistic queer theory.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: LIFE HERE BEGAN OUT THERE

Other Worldly

Science fiction represents a uniquely suitable vehicle for the presentation of social narrative in popular culture. Societal fears and the manifestation of those fears are both frequent and important elements expressed in the genre. Often, through an exploration of the apparently alien, the viewer engages in the discovery of what is, instead, most human. In this thesis I examined the performativity of gender, sexuality, and identity in the popular science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica*, through its complex treatment of sex, power, and the fear of technology. Far beyond a simplistic and superficial us versus them conflict, the relationships between the Cylons and humans of *Battlestar Galactica* expose feelings, beliefs, struggles, and intimacies well beyond planets, spaceships, and aliens. More significantly, it is how those Cylon/human relationships mirror our own that is key to the drama’s social significance. The show represents the fears, the oppression, and the aspirations in between our present privileged heteronormative dominant culture and the subjugated homosexual Other. Just as the humans of *Battlestar Galactica* fear losing control to the Others (the Cylons and their sympathizers), so too is there a fear in heteronormative society of losing control if rights and privileges are afforded to the Other. Just as the humans of *Battlestar Galactica* fear the Other will exploit the weaknesses of its former masters, so too do our own. *Battlestar Galactica* is a visually stunning, frequently “in-your-face” example of fears represented. Not only is *Battlestar Galactica* mirroring heteronormative fears, however, but mirroring and commenting on the way proponents of heteronormative society retaliate against the perceived threat of the Other (demonization,
violence, negating identity, derogation, rape, etc.) It is also an equally compelling narrative on the futility of just such a retaliative approach.

*Battlestar Galactica* creates a visual representation of the Other pointing out the fears and weakness of the human society that gave the Other life. Such an Othering process, the birth of a “not us” frequently happens in the same way across societies. The queer Other began life with the heteronormative society only to lose its identity and status when its individuality was asserted. Once created, it cannot be taken back. Once created, the queer Other and the Cylon Other of *Battlestar Galactica* demand their right to sentience on an individual and collective level. Cylons too represent a self-sufficient, sentient and self-aware entity, possessing advanced technology, superhuman strength, and both the desire and potential to reproduce. What more obvious an enemy of humanity? It is difficult to imagine a creation more likely to be Othered (birthed) by the highly technophobic, rule-driven, and theologically bound citizens of the Twelve Colonies than the Cylon. They are the manifestation of humanity’s worst fears, through the circular process of creation and destruction of the creator, banishment, and return of the Other.

The Other represents the greatest possible threat to the social fabric of the heteronormative dynamic, and does so in many explicit and implicit ways as I have discussed. *Battlestar Galactica* is a particularly rich source for evaluating the relationship between the Other and the established norm because of the explicit construction of the Cylon children. The Cylon children parallel those children of the heterosexual family that once rejected become the Other and threaten the family dynamic. As suggested earlier, it is important to consider that *Battlestar Galactica* is not just a medium to provide a dialogue or narrative about the privileged heteronormative society’s fears, socially constructed hegemonic practices, or potentially destructive consequences. Rather, it also functions as a sort of mental playground for the Othered
or queer community in which they may see themselves as powerful individuals having constructed a formidable culture dominating their subjugators. They watch and embrace their gender roles with freedom and willingness having redefined them. They may even shed the gender specific reproductive shackles placed upon them by their oppressors, as they revel in new reproductive technologies. The representations performed within the narratives assist in the establishment and coming to terms with their own personal and collective identities. Through the Othered nature of the Cylons, and those who associate or willingly form relationship with them, our society’s Othered and queer community is afforded a shared experience.

Sex, Power, and Transcendence

I explored in this thesis the expression of Cylon/human relationships in three distinct, yet somewhat interconnected ways: sex and gender, fear and power, and conception of transhumanism. As cyborgs of earlier generations of science fiction, sex sells, and certain Cylon models in *Battlestar Galactica* make use of sexuality to their great advantage. The seduction of men by undetectable female Cylons, who foment breaches by the Other into the normal world, send fear down the spines of the Colonials, and as we shall see, do so for good reason. The Cylon Six seduces Baltar and this seemingly small intercession leads ultimately to the destruction of almost the entire human civilization. It is an act that puts a contemporary spin on “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” Nevertheless, the parallels between the Twelve Colonies and our Earth are apparent. While the destruction of the Twelve Colonies by the Cylons is certainly more threatening than that posed by today’s queer minority, the fear generated is similar. The heterosexual/heteronormative majority fears a loss of privilege. They fear that their carefully constructed socio-historical patriarchy-based set of rules will collapse. There is an implied fear within our society that once the queer or Other gain equality, the heteronormative society will
lose equally, leading to the destruction of the family and the collapse of society as a whole. For them, equality gained equals equality lost. The Defense of Marriage Act represents a redressive action taken in response to just such a fear.

The problem is, unfortunately, the Other rarely stays in its cage. Furthermore, heteronormative visitors sometimes decide to stay or even “play” with the Other, and are themselves then Othered. Borders are blurred, and identity, given as I discussed, is a performative accomplishment rather than an a priori essence. Gaius Baltar, for example, continues to love Six even after he discovers she is a Cylon. On the one hand she is a Cylon, yet her identity is that of a heterosexual woman, she performs woman. Similarly he is a human male, yet he also knows he is in love with a Cylon. Is he? Questions of identity haunt him. When Admiral Cain rejects her copy of Six, Gina Inviere, it is not simply a rejection of Six’s Cylon self, but a repudiation, in front of the heteronormative dynamic that “she made a mistake” and is rectifying it. Conversely, Helo, in loving his Cylon wife Athena openly, defies that norm and in doing so, he essentially Others himself. He decides to do what it takes to allow for the relationship. We are what we perform ourselves to be, as Butler suggests, and the relationships in Battlestar Galactica blur the boundaries previously established by convention between the Other and the heteronormative structure.

Frequently, who we are is not who our parents would like us to be. Queer children on Earth often experience parental disavowal of their identity moreover. Nowhere is this truer than in Battlestar Galactica. Arguably, the Cylons of Battlestar Galactica are not children, per se, but in large part, they are designed to be a permanent underclass, to do the bidding of humanity, to be servile, and to think, but not think too much. They are the mechanical children of humanity and children inevitably grow up.
Like Vergès’ colonial family, maintenance of the dynamic is straightforward. “As long as everyone remembers his [or her] role in the family . . . we can preserve this romance and live happily ever after” (Rennes 64). The reality, fortunate or unfortunate depending upon your perspective, is that marginalized persons (e.g., children who are Othered) are unlikely to remember their roles and thereby simply preserve the romance, which for them, never existed in the first place. Haraway refers to cyborgs, by extension, as possessing a quality of illegitimacy, afforded to them by parental rejection (Haraway 151). It is a quality they are likely only to overcome through the death of the ones who gave them life. Similarly the queer Other overcomes this quality through the metaphorical death (destruction) of the colonial family chains of oppression.

*Battlestar Galactica* thoughtfully extends this notion of the queer Other beyond the strict confines of the children of a nuclear family, and into an entirely new dimension. If the child represents the future of the nuclear family unit, then reproduction represents the future of the human family. To afford or cede power to an Othered child is problematic, as it weakens the family unit. To do the same with the single most important, and most fundamentally human of all activities, reproduction, is inconceivable and may lead to the downfall of humanity. In the privileged patriarchal system, he who controls life in its most primitive form, reproduction, controls destiny. Cylons look and feel human. Their birthing process is seen not as reproduction, but as an unholy assembly line of parts, or so goes the belief to which many Colonials cling tightly. Yet now the Cylons are giving birth to hybrids between humans and Cylons, just as the queer Other, through non-traditional technological reproductive means, create their own children, their own families, and act as surrogates for others. Now they are in search of “human” reproduction. A new family dynamic begins to emerge as the series ends; a dynamic that is
neither Cylon nor human, yet somehow both. It is a new dynamic that transcends what had gone before. It is a utopian vision of Earth that surpasses simple equality of rights, to and equality of being where the individual becomes the new sacred.

Brave new worlds rarely come populated with brave new people. Instead, not surprisingly, with change, comes fear, distrust, and emotional distress. One of the essential features of science fiction in general and *Battlestar Galactica* specifically is an ability to expand concepts like the Other onto a much grander scale. We can now consider the Other as both the counterpart to heteronormative society (e.g., identity, reproduction), and, as the counterpart to humanity as a species (e.g., gender). *Battlestar Galactica* offers a debate between the opposing ideologies of the transhumanists and the transhumanist critics. Elements of Cylon society such as downloading, resurrection, and interfacing, represent a transhumanist, posthuman state of being that directly conflicts with the technophobic humans in the series. Such debates parallel those in current academic circles, and ultimately serve as another dialogue on the essence of the human identity.

All This Has Happened Before, But Will It Happen Again?

The question of whether or not there truly exists something that might be called benign entertainment is far too broad to be answered within the scope of this thesis. What is evident, however, is that *Battlestar Galactica* does more than merely entertain. It presents a compelling science fiction tale within a fertile landscape of social commentary. Furthermore, the social commentary is not entirely uni-directional (i.e., directed towards one point of view) but offers multiple perspectives from which to interpret the meanings, and it is designed to elicit viewer thought rather than viewer support, necessarily, for a specific ideological view. *Battlestar Galactica* is designed to promote socially conscious thought about identity, gender, the nature of
an exclusionary Othering process, and to offer possible visions of the future of the human species.

One hope I have for this thesis was to demonstrate how *Battlestar Galactica* expresses the Other in both problematic and productive ways, an idea that potentially resonates with current reality. It is hard to imagine that the Othering process, that is, the creation of an Other-class, is ever a positive or productive enterprise. However, once done, there are really only three ways in which the matter may be resolved. The first is, of course, the Other may choose to simply live apart and never return. Perhaps separatist societies could exist, but this seems unlikely. Such an idea runs counter to the work on human nature of Freud, Lacan, and Vergès. Perhaps as social creatures, we are simply not meant to be apart. Perhaps more specifically, we are unwilling to be told we cannot live in a place we wish to live. The second option, that which follows suit with concepts mirroring the colonial family romance, offers the Other a chance to eliminate their oppressors and replace them. This, of course, would be a violent act, causing hurt to the former master, and psychic hurt to the child, according to Freud, however delayed, after the acts of vengeance have faded. Finally, the third option proposed by *Battlestar Galactica*, would be for the Other and the normative (in this case the heteronormative) to realize the futility of the fight, and find a way to work toward a reunification.

*Battlestar Galactica* does an excellent job of portraying the problematic outcomes of the Othering process, and the end result of a war that pits the Other against the heteronormative dynamic. Ultimately, at the series’ end, the human species is nearly extinct. The Cylons have lost much of their technology including their precious resurrection ships. Both humans and Cylons are on the verge of extinction. Perhaps even more ironically, while the humans and the Cylons grapple with the potential for their own demise, the future, that which is likely to arise from their
ashes, is a product from their combined efforts. It is neither human nor Cylon, it is the hybrid child. Their bitter fight has led to their destruction and the emergence of a new combined species in their place. Is there a lesson for us here on Earth from using this example? Eventually, will we see the fights between conservatives and others as foolish and allow for some new order to replace them?

That vision of the hybrid child is ultimately the productive relationship between the Other and the heteronormative that *Battlestar Galactica* highlights. The cooperation and blurred distinctions happen only at the end of the series. It is an end that sees both the Cylons and humans saved from complete and utter collapse. However, in small ways, through performed identities and accepted non-conformities, the queer Other may be seen as not only connected to the norm but also mirroring it. They love, have children, and have sex in the same way as members of the heteronormative society. It is a most productive performativity of the Cylon.

Even though machine, the viewer frequently cannot distinguish them from humanity. The creation of the humanoid Cylons in place of the classic, robotic-type Cylons upped the stakes, for it allowed us to see the issues far easier than before. For example, Commander Adama’s best friend, Tigh, turned out to be a member of the Final Five. They had been friends for years. They talked, and laughed, and cried, and argued. Now he was a Cylon? I guess some of his best friends are Cylon. Yet Adama retained Tigh as his best friend, in part, because Tigh rejected his newly Othered status. He performs as human. He identifies as human. So was Tigh an Other, or not? Again, the lines are blurry. This blurriness is perhaps part of the point in so far as it makes the idea of joining together more reasonable as we are not altogether apart.

*Battlestar Galactica* presents as a sometimes unsophisticated, sometimes exceptional, and always multi-faceted fictional account of the remnants of humanity fleeing their Cylon
oppressors. Yet the complex nature of the relationships developed between humans and Cylons, the intimate manner in which the formation of identity occurs for both species, and the nature of what it means to be alive, to reproduce, and to be a part of the norm represent far more than a simple alien vs. human space adventure. Few prototypical heroes and villains exist in the world of Battlestar Galactica. The series invites complex engagement. Battlestar Galactica proposes one possible outcome of what Freud (Freud, Collected Papers 5, 74-78) by extension suggests is an inevitable conflict between the heteronormative and the Other. That is, the ultimate collapse of the ego.

At the beginning of the series the Twelve Colonies are destroyed by their Cylon creations. The first version of planet Earth visited by humanity and the Cylons was destroyed by its own version of a Cylon war; the tattered remnants of the mythical Earth, destroyed thousands of years in the past (“Sometimes a Great Notion”). At the end of the series, Virtual-Baltar and Virtual-Six walk on what is believed to be our present day Earth and wonder whether or not we are heading dangerously in the same direction. “All this has happened before, and all this will happen again,” is a familiar refrain throughout the series (“Daybreak”). Battlestar Galactica provides an excellent lesson in missed opportunities for change and helps us see how those opportunities might be missed. It asks us to take heed and open our society to promote more tolerance towards all.
Bibliography


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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BASESHIP—The primary space vessel of the Cylons (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

BATTLESTAR—The primary military vessel/battleship of the Colonial fleet.

BOXING—The act of taking an entire Cylon model “offline” which thereby renders the Cylon consciousness incapable of resurrecting and essentially making the Cylon “dead” (“Rapture”).

CENTURIONS—The mechanical Cylons that function mainly as a soldier/warrior class for the Cylon race (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

THE COLONY—Also known as the Cylon home world, it is not an actual planet but a structure formed around the spaceship of the original Five humanoid-Cylons known as the Final Five. It is able to move through space and therefore change location as needed be protected (“Daybreak”).

DOWNLOADING—Also known as resurrecting, the process upon which the consciousness, memories, and experiences of a particular Cylon copy are transferred into a duplicate body upon that particular copy being destroyed/dying (“Downloaded”).

FRAK—Curse word/obscenity used by humanity and at times the Cylons (Battlestar Galactica: Miniseries).

HYBRID—The machine-organic being at the center of the Cylon baseship that controls the operations of the ship. They have a cyborg like appearance and are immersed in a tank much like the Cylon resurrection tank. They are known for their incoherent speech that while no one is sure what they mean, some Cylons view them to be prophet and to be speaking the voice of God (“Torn”).
NAKED SINGULARITY—A theoretical singularity (the center point of a black hole) that does not have an event horizon (the boundary from which nothing, light or matter, is able to escape) and is thus visible to the eye. It is viewed as problematic to many theorists because it causes a breakdown in the laws of physics (“Daybreak”).

RESURRECTION HUB—A vessel necessary for the process of Cylon resurrection to occur among all resurrection ships. It handles the actual transference or downloading of the Cylon consciousness to the resurrection ships (“The Hub”).

RESURRECTION SHIP—The Cylon space vessel specifically created to carry out the process of downloading or resurrecting when the Cylon dies out of range of the Cylon home world. It carries an unknown number of copies of each humanoid-Cylon model (“Resurrection Ship, Part 2”).

RESURRECTION TANK—A tub in which the process of downloading the consciousness of the dead Cylon into the new copy takes place (“Downloaded”).

SKIN-JOB—A hostile/insulting reference used by the humans to refer to the humanoid models of the Cylons (“Resistance”).

TOASTER—A pejorative term used by the humans to refer to the Cylons, mainly the mechanical Cylons/Centurions (“Resistance”).

TOASTER LOVER—Anyone who sympathizes with, willingly associates, or becomes involved with a Cylon.