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**Subjugation, Occupation, and Transformation: Exploring
Postcoloniality in *Battlestar Galactica***

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**Subjugation, Occupation, and Transformation: Exploring
Postcoloniality in *Battlestar Galactica***

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Scott Wendland, for whom I would never have begun, and Christopher Abdo, without whom I would most certainly never have finished.

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Abstract

Subjugation, Occupation, and Transformation: Exploring Postcoloniality in *Battlestar Galactica*

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Battlestar Galactica (2003) is a textually rich cultural product with much to say about the ever-changing global dynamics and social relations of Earthly inhabitants. Through the familiar science fiction tropes of catastrophe, space travel, and cyborgs, this study aims to reveal the discursive frameworks that inform identity politics and knowledge production as they relate to self/Other. Postcolonial theory guides the structure of this study through the influential insights of Homi Bhabha, James Clifford, and Robert J.C. Young. The first chapter investigates the ways in which colonial discourse exercises power and sanctions difference through the stereotype. Chapter two explores the justifications for and ramifications of physical colonization of subjugated peoples, while chapter three reads several characters in *BSG* as occupying a third space whereby binary notions of subjectivity are problematized in favor of hybridity. Overall, this study argues that through the allegorical interplay between a recognizable self and alien other, viewers can come to better understand the discursive conditions of their

existence and, perhaps, locate sites of resistance inside the ideological prison within which we all reside.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last 75 years, science fiction has been an increasingly important part of Western popular culture. Perhaps most noticeable have been the television shows and films beginning in the mid 1960s and early 1970s that have led to massive followings and fandoms such as for Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* and George Lucas's *Star Wars*. The popularity of science fiction productions, no doubt, has many reasons of which include the genre's ability to offer imaginative, fantastical alternatives to the humdrum of everyday life. The stories themselves and the discursive elements that inform the plots and characters no doubt vary according to the time period in which they were published. John Rieder, in his excellent book *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, discusses SF as first gaining prominence in countries involved in imperialist projects—namely France, England followed by the United States, Germany, and Russia¹ (3). It should be no surprise then that early SF was rife with motifs relating to colonial projects and Western imperialism (3). More recently, SF has also been used, both intentionally and unintentionally, to explore various aspects of contemporary culture through these alternative realities. In fact, SF literature has a long history of presenting audiences with constructions of utopian and dystopian realms as ways to reflect and critique societal ills. Many academics recognize SF as a rich discursive playground and believe that by analyzing these texts, we may better understand our active and passive roles in culture. Kathy E. Ferguson, who has done extensive work in the areas of feminist theory and

¹ Rieder cites Csicsery-Ronan, Istvan. "Science Fiction and Empire." *Science Fiction Studies* 30 (2003):

gender construction, believes SF capable of expanding, or complicating, our concept of familiar by offering stories and characters who challenge preconceived notions readers bring to the text (*This Species* 181). She states “politically robust SF can recruit us into an imaginary universe in which we are invited to refuse normalizing violence by extending legitimacy to bodies and identities” on the cultural fringes of society (181). In other words, SF has the potential to invite onlookers to identify with those discursively marked by difference. Elaborating this point further, Neta C. Crawford states that SF attempts to “imagine the consequences of present social and technological trends” so that “through the imagining of possible worlds, we may come to understand our own world better, to recognize its historical construction, to imagine new configurations, possibilities that are not constrained by pre-existing ideas” (198). In an earlier essay on SF and utopian writing, Fredric Jameson argues that the genre of SF as a whole is less about creating specific or inherent futures, which he argues we are incapable of doing (153), but rather serves to “defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own present” (151). These and other theorists suggest we as readers can look to SF narratives as symbolic tools used to question, complicate, deconstruct, and sometimes even recreate our present understandings of culture and society within the hegemonic prisons we all reside. These potentially dangerous ideas might not necessarily break us out of these prisons, but sometimes being given a spoon is the first step.

In order to have a firm grasp of current popular SF trends and tropes it is useful to look at the historical development of SF to see the various ways the genre has evolved. Science fiction as a genre is generally traced back to the second half of the 19th century

with the arrival of authors Jules Verne and H.G. Wells (Jameson 149). According to Jan Johnson-Smith, Hugo Gernsback first coined the term in April 1926 in a magazine article discussing fiction written by Verne, Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe (15). She admits that attempting to define the SF genre is slippery because content such as environment, setting, characters, time period, etc., can vary to great degrees (16). Her first step in this process begins with questions of origin. Johnson-Smith goes to great lengths to cite writers that disagree with regards to the birth of SF: on one hand, many believe it to be a relatively new, ‘contemporary’ amalgamation, while on the other hand some academics trace SF elements back to ancient myths and legends (16). Johnson-Smith does this to make the point that if we are able to divorce ourselves from the “technological preoccupations and prejudices of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries” (16) that lead one to believe that SF must always be concerned with technology, we thus allow ourselves the opportunity to look to a wider range of narratives with similar elements for cultural investigation (17). But, as Johnson-Smith appropriately asks, what specifically are these elements that generally define our conception of SF? To answer this question, she first points out one problem that accounts for the slippery nature of the genre is genre theory itself which is better suited “for co-ordination and location rather than as a means of pure delineation, inclusion and exclusion” while reminding readers that “what compromises any genre demands continual reassessment and reconsideration in the context of its era, ideology and culture” (18). This is important to keep in mind because much of the analysis discussed here can also be extended to other mediums and narratives

that might not be considered SF in the strictest sense.² Next, Johnson-Smith identifies some of the most prevalent defining elements found in SF narratives at large: they create alternative worlds and/or realities (19), have a measure of plausibility (20), cultivate the feeling of “estrangement” (21) and “defamiliarization” (23), entertain moral and ethical concerns (27-28), and feature a “novum,”³ or, in other words, a device or idea that allows for exploration in the narrative such as time or space travel (25-26).

Some of the most popular novums found in contemporary SF are the figures of the alien, monster, and cyborg. As we’ll see shortly, these figures have almost always served as vehicles for exploring identity construction, representation, technological fears or dreams, and other notions associated with post-human existence. In her book *Aliens and Others*, Jenny Wolmark offers several examples of how the alien figure can be used to perform a variety of functions in feminist SF writing as sites where regressive ideas about race and gender identity are often solidified (27), as well as heterogeneous spaces allowing for the exploration of non-conventional gender or racial identities (2). Furthermore, Wolmark describes the figure of the alien as an “expression of a culture’s simultaneous fear of and desire for the other” (3). As we will see later in this analysis, this is a science fiction trope that has obvious parallels with postcolonial theory as discussed by theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. The role of race representation and the process of racial othering in SF stories involving monsters and robots is a central focus of Edward James’s essay “Yellow, Black, Metal and Tentacled.”

² (e.g. the fantasy horror television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* created by Joss Whedon)

³ Johnson-Smith cites Darko Suvin as having coined this term. See *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics of History of a Literary Genre* (London: Yale University Press, 1979).

Similar to Wolmark, James recounts the ways in which aliens, monsters, robots, and cyborgs often serve as racial or gendered stand-ins reflecting time-period specific fears and beliefs.⁴ To elaborate this point a little further, in several of the SF novels he analyzes, foreign races perceived to be a threat to America were often re-imagined as aliens from other planets with skin colors corresponding to the ethnic group feared. In these situations, their status as alien Others, and by extension fears of racial miscegenation, are used to justify their extermination (32).

In contemporary SF, the cyborg has been a pervasive character in books, television shows, and movies making appearances in mainstream blockbusters as well as cult classics. Its popularity has led to a smorgasbord of academic interest and debate in feminist and cultural studies. Sue Short eloquently states: “The cyborg has become infused with a range of concerns surrounding identity, ideology, and the possibilities of both social and physical transformation, becoming subject to claim and counterclaim in the process” (6). Donna Haraway’s seminal piece “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” develops a notion of the cyborg as a theoretical concept designed to subvert dualistic, essentialist categories such as woman, nature, technology, and feminism. The cyborg is capable of carrying out such a lofty goal because it is, first and foremost, “a hybrid of machine and organism” (28) that has no origin story (36), sits outside of religious doctrine and “salvation history”⁵ (29), revels in the blurring of boundaries, and does not seek to produce “unitary identity” (36). Ultimately, Haraway believes the cyborg offers the

⁴ (e.g. the fear of East Asians and the so-called yellow peril of the late nineteenth, early-mid twentieth century)

⁵ Evolution, Judeo-Christian salvation, etc.

promise of a “possible world” (Penley 13). Other academics have dealt more specifically with the visual image of the cyborg searching for a better understanding of subjectivity and hybrid existences by mapping various ways in which race and gender identity, liminality, and boundary markers are often inscribed onto the bodies of cyborgs and other robotic figures. In addition, Short reminds us that the cyborg has also been a cultural battlefield where fears of and ambivalence toward technology are played out. Jennifer Gonzalez also speaks to the complexity of cyborg beings stating they represent contemporary struggles with “new, complex, and contradictory lived experience” (61). She goes on to say that cyborg figures are “test sites” for alternative ways of living in our current society (68). Following in the footsteps of Haraway, Elaine Graham sees cyborgs as a “metaphor of the various ways in which the contemporary west is currently experiencing the hybridization of human nature” (“Cyborgs or Goddesses?” 419), as well as the blending and blurring of boundaries between natural and artificial (421), humanity and divinity (423), and race and gender (424). According to Graham, cyborgs have the potential to “transcend the process of dualism upon which Western modernity, patriarchy and colonialism has been founded” and thereby dispute the naturalness of race and gender constructions (425).

It is my contention that by looking at the cyborg through the lens of postcolonial theory as discussed by academics such as Homi Bhabha, Robert J.C. Young, and James Clifford, we can better understand the lasting effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on subjectivity, identity politics, and cultural negotiations in an increasingly fragmented, dispersed, and multiply located global reality. Furthermore, I intend to use the

postcolonial science fiction work of Jessica Langer and John Rieder to discuss the parallels of science fiction with postcolonial tropes and theories in order to explore the various ways discourse is similarly inscribed on SF Others and postcolonial Others. Together, these academics and their ideas will frame this study as I apply their theoretical and methodological frameworks to Syfy's⁶ *Battlestar Galactica (BSG)* in order to show how one might read this television series as a discursive postcolonial text in which we can potentially learn more about the (after and ongoing) effects of Western imperialism and colonial experiences with regards to hybrid subjectivities and cultural heterogeneity both through the allegorical representation of the cyborgian Cylons, as well as the multiply displaced, exiled humans. More specifically, I'll be analyzing the show as a site of resistance to binary constructions, borders/boundaries, and notions of purity by illustrating the number of ways the show supports such analysis through theoretical concepts such as the "contact zone" by Mary Louise Pratt, and further expounded upon by James Clifford, as well as notions of the diasporic identity, third space,⁷ mimicry, as well as colonial fantasy, desire, and appropriation.⁸ Of course, I will also be looking at the ways *BSG* is an ambivalent text subject to the same discursive constraints I argue it is occasionally successful in obfuscating. Lastly, I will analyze this show as offering us the potential for discursive boundary crossing through the concept of the third space and its relation to hybridity as theorized by Bhabha.

⁶ Formerly known as the Sci-Fi Channel, parent company NBC Universal changed the cable channel and website name July 7, 2009 for marketing and branding purposes (Elliot).

⁷ Similarly discussed as a "between-space" by Homi Bhabha in his introduction to Frantz Fanon's (1986) *Black Skin, White Masks* (See Langer 16).

⁸ All of these 'colonialisms' will be discussed through the various theorists who have contributed scholarship on the ideas including Bhabha, Clifford, Said, and Young.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Battlestar Galactica, a re-imagined production of the original series by the same name, frequently explores contemporary issues in a post 9/11 world relating to racial and cultural difference, domination, and representation through the on-going saga of a futuristic battle between humans and a robot race originally created by the humans called the Cylons. Some of the more interesting plot related concepts explored in the show include the inverted power dynamics between humans and the Cylons as the once slave robot race is now in a position of power over the humans seeking both vengeance and ways to become superior human-like humanoids. In addition to an inversion of power, identity politics and representation strategies are complex, varied, and always questioned, particularly among the Cylons. Furthermore, notions of displacement, boundary crossing, cultural assimilation, and colonization of land and body are tropes investigated by the writers of *BSG*, as will become clearer later in this thesis.

Originally aired in 1978, the first *Battlestar Galactica* TV series experienced a fair amount of success among audiences, but was cancelled after only one season due to its high production cost of \$1 million per episode (Muir 27). Many attempts to revive the franchise were made over the next two decades including a short-lived television sequel titled *Battlestar Galactica 1980*, a couple of cinema release projects involving repackaged series episodes, as well as series resurrection talks well into the late 1980s and 1990s. In 2003, Universal Television teamed with Sky One and *Star Trek* veteran

Ronald D. Moore to create a re-imagined⁹ *Battlestar Galactica* in the form of a three hour long miniseries whereby following the success of the miniseries a weekly series was put into production spanning four seasons. This project represents Moore's attempt to reinvent television SF into something he calls "Naturalist Science Fiction" in which "the presentation of a fantastical situation in naturalistic terms" grounds the foundation of the show (Potter and Marshall 5). Examples of this naturalism include modern day bullet ammunition, familiar computer technology,¹⁰ hard-line phones, and a frequent exploration of post 9/11 issues relating to war, terrorism, and torture. This not only works to make the genre more palatable for those outside the SF die-hard community, but also more directly engages contemporary social struggles. As part of this process, the re-imagined series made many changes over its predecessor including revamped gender constructions in several of the mainstay female characters, a greater inclusion of philosophical discussions (Muir 50), and a significant change in the background story of the Cylon race. In the original series, the Cylons were depicted as alien robots that had been fighting the humans for centuries in attempts to eradicate their existence (Muir 3). In the newest *BSG*, the Cylons are recast as a robot race that were created by the humans to serve their personal needs, but eventually rebelled against their masters resulting in a long, violent civil war. At some point during the war, an armistice was reached which dictated the departure of the Cylons, leaving the 12 colonies (i.e. 12 separate planets) to find their own home elsewhere. The miniseries picks up 40 years after this Cylon

⁹ This term almost always accompanies an introduction of this show, as it has become the accepted way of distinguishing it from the original series.

¹⁰ (e.g. dot matrix printers)

evacuation and audiences learn in season one the Cylons have not only returned to completely eliminate the human race, in which they were nearly successful, but also look human. No longer a completely robotic race, both in terms of look and construction, the Cylons now have 12 models that look human. The 12 models, of which “there are many copies,” are virtually impossible to identify as Cylons as their physical and cellular structure is, for all intents and purposes, completely organic. Their base ships and fighter planes, called raiders, are also a meld of machine and organic parts that are capable of self-regeneration, biological intelligence, and memory storage.¹¹ Their hybrid nature is often emphasized in battles by dramatic displays of splattering blood and mechanic sparks when a raider is injured or destroyed. Finally, part of the evolving storyline of the series is the Cylons trying to figure out, largely through trial and error, their destiny and role in the universe.

AN OVERVIEW

As has been previously stated, cyborgs have a history of being used to expand, explore, and critique various elements of culture. It is my contention that the Cylons follow suit by providing a number of interesting and textually rich areas for critical analysis when it comes to questions of cultural and racial representation, identity, subjectivity, miscegenation, assimilation, and difference. Together, these interests will form a more complete understanding of this show as a cultural product of a Western society entrenched in binary thinking, racial hierarchies, fears of the Other/stranger, and

¹¹ That is to say, they are capable of learning from their experiences (‘Scar’ 2.15).

boundary regulation against *perceived* difference. Furthermore, as a show that has broken numerous records in viewership for the Syfy channel, won a multitude of awards and Emmy nominations, and, I would argue, breathed new life into the television SF genre, its cultural importance is clear. This has been made even more apparent with creator Moore's vision for his show; He boldly states in a 2003 "Letter of introduction" published on the Sci Fi¹² Channel website:

Our goal is nothing less than the reinvention of the science-fiction television series. ... We believe you can explore adult themes with adult characters and still tell a ripping good yarn. We believe that to portray human beings as flawed creations does not weaken them, it strengthens them. We believe that bringing realism to science fiction is neither contradictory nor a fool's errand. We believe that science fiction provides an opportunity to explore our own society, to provoke debate and to challenge our perceptions of ourselves and our fellow Man. We believe science fiction can still be relevant. We believe all these things and more.¹³

One of the most culturally significant ways this show has engaged contemporary politics is with its willingness to allegorically represent, question, and invoke America's post 9/11 anxieties relating to terror and war, most especially with regards to the American

¹² This was, of course, before the Syfy channel rebranded itself as such.

¹³ (Moore, February 24, 3002).

occupation of Iraq.¹⁴ For example, Rikk Mulligan draws a parallel between the government and military chain of command in the show with America's own questionable leadership decisions during the George W. Bush era (52-63), while Erika Johnson-Lewis unpacks the similarities in rhetoric and actions against those perceived as terrorists in America and *BSG* during times of war. Other scholarship has been interested in the question of identity and what it means to be human, as well as notions of personhood and individuality, including Amy Kind and Robert Moore¹⁵ who both dissect to what extent the choices and actions of Sharon "Athena" Agathon¹⁶ make her more human.¹⁷

Of course, no canon of academic literature performing media studies on a SF medium would be complete without essays covering the topics of race and gender representation within the show, and *BSG* is no exception. Although the Cylons do not fit the motif of an otherworldly alien race popularly used in science fiction mediums (including the original *Battlestar Galactica* in the 1970s), there are still many parallels to the ways in which the humans in the show actively other the Cylons,¹⁸ as well as receive criticism by some characters for that speciesism. For example, in "Hybridity's End" Gumpert explores the ways in which the human characters on the show tend to set up racial hierarchies by creating dichotomies between themselves and the Cylons that often

¹⁴ See also: (Dinello, 2008), (Erickson, 2007), (Gumpert, 2008), (Johnson-Lewis, 2008), (Ott, 2008), (Pinedo, 2008)

¹⁵ Not to be confused with show creator Ronald D. Moore.

¹⁶ A number Eight model that comes to live among the humans willingly in seasons 2-4.

¹⁷ This is by no means an exhaustive list, but represents some of the more oft cited scholarship: (Arp & Mahaffey, 2008), (Kind, "You Can't Rape a Machine"), (Heinricy, 2008), (Koistinen, 2011).

¹⁸ (Nishime, "Aliens: Narrating U.S. Global Identity"), (Pegues, "Miss Cylon")

mimic discursively inscribed racial difference: “Humans are free; Cylons are determined” (144), “Humans are moral beings; Cylons are amoral beings” (145); “Humans are original; Cylons are copies” (145), “Humans are organic; Cylons are inorganic” (146). Through these categories, Gumpert analyzes how the show’s racial hierarchical structure reduces Cylons to nothing more than Bhabha’s “mimic men”—“always almost but not quite human” (148). Alternatively, by focusing specifically on the human characters in the series, Christopher Deis is concerned with how *BSG* deals with issues of race without openly addressing race. On the surface, overt racism appears to be a non-issue¹⁹ on the show with a diverse cast present on the Battlestar. However, Deis scratches below the surface to reveal several instances of racialized human bodies that must be assimilated and/or have their differences stripped in order to peacefully co-exist.

Similarly, academics writing on topics relating to gender have been interested in issues ranging from representation²⁰ to rape,²¹ sexuality,²² and reproduction²³ among both the Cylon and human characters. The colonial military officer known as Starbuck has been a favorite in academic circles for her role as a confident, talented female fighter pilot who seems to defy binary categories of identification.²⁴ In addition, Korean Canadian actress Grace Park’s portrayal of Sharon Valeri has received a considerable amount of attention, especially for the character of Athena who is a Cylon refugee married

¹⁹ A few academics have loosely called this “utopian,” but I am still hesitant to apply such a lofty ideal to a show still deeply entrenched in Western ideology.

²⁰ (Jones, 2010)

²¹ (Heinricy, 2008), (Leaver, 2008), (Pinedo, 2008)

²² (Jowett, 2010)

²³ (Hellstrand, 2011), (Jowett, 2010), (Leaver, 2008)

²⁴ (Conly, 2008)

to a white, human male and mother of the first human-Cylon hybrid child onboard the Galactica ship.²⁵

CHAPTER SURVEYS

By and large, academics have certainly shown how themes and tropes within *BSG* can be used to relate to socially relevant events. In addition, it is clear that Cylon characters within this show can be discursively analyzed in order to gain more insight into the ways social constructions of difference and Other get inscribed onto bodies. While these essays have yielded many interesting discussions, not enough has been said about the complexity of *BSG* with regards to postcolonial²⁶ subtexts in the show, especially in relation to both the Cylon *and* human characters. I intend to contribute to this area of scholarship by analyzing the specific ways postcolonial tropes related to movement, displacement, trauma, power inversion, and identity negotiation within the show can be used to form a more complete understanding of the complicated, layered ways in which real world Western imperialism and postcolonialism have affected both colonizer and colonized.

In order to do this, I will conduct a three-phase analysis of *BSG*. In chapter one, I will be looking at the many ways in which Cylons are coded as alien/strange Others with discourse that has similarly been used to mark boundaries and difference in real world colonial projects. Bhabha's conception of the "colonial stereotype" and its relationship to

²⁵ (Nishime, "Aliens: Narrating U.S. Global Identity"), (Pegues, "Miss Cylon")

²⁶ This is not to say this is virgin territory for academic scholarship. What does exist will be analyzed and interrogated in the following chapters including: (Dinello, 2008), (Liedl, 2010), (Nishime 2005, 2011), (Pegues, 2008), (Rennes, 2008)

“ambivalence,” described as giving the “colonial stereotype its currency” will inform much of the analysis of this chapter (*Location 95*) and help us understand the anxieties that colonial discourse is founded upon. In addition to looking at the ways Cylon bodies are marked by difference in futile efforts to police both physical and bodily boundaries, I want to also spend some time analyzing the how the discourse of difference is also cognitively mapped. In order to perform this textual analysis, I will mostly be looking at specific, select scenes from the miniseries, as well as seasons one and two where these tropes are arguably at their height.

For chapter two, I will switch my analysis to the beginning of season three with an analysis of the occupation of New Caprica in the four episodes “Occupation” (3.01), “Precipice” (3.02), “Exodus: Part 1 & 2” (3.03, 3.04). With this content analysis, I’d like to explore the inversion of power and reversal of roles that take place when the humans are exiled from their home planets and consequently chased through space, harkening to an allegorical example of Paul Gilroy’s “ships in motion,” before forming a colony on the planet dubbed New Caprica only to have the Cylons find them a year later and initiate a full scale colonial occupation. The largest focus of this chapter will be on how the Cylon occupation and human insurgency mimics certain European models of colonialism and the tensions that are borne out of such imperialistic projects. Analysis of this Cylon occupation as being similar to type(s) of First World colonial projects as theorized by Robert J.C. Young and Aimé Césaire will greatly inform this chapter.

Chapter three will focus largely on specific episodes in the concluding season²⁷ as the humans and Cylons find that they must ultimately come to terms with their hybrid existence in order to survive. The primary mode of analysis will be discussing the effects of their exilic movement and subsequent identity formation using diaspora theory outlined by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur,²⁸ as well as Clifford's theorization of "routes" (*Routes* 3-4) and "contact zone"²⁹ (204). An underlying goal through this analysis will be looking at the various ways binary constructions and boundaries must be crossed, or violently broken, in order to allow for the potential of new knowledge production³⁰ that breaks the recurring cycles of violence and oppression in the show. In this sense, both the diasporic movements of the Cylons and humans, followed by multiple inversions of power throughout the series, come to represent varied, complex experiences for both races forever changing their subjectivity, consciousness, and relation to one another. Finally, I will conclude this thesis by looking at the transformative potential of the third space and hybrid understandings.

²⁷ Season four

²⁸ (Braziel and Mannur, 2007)

²⁹ Clifford specifically engages with Mary Louise Pratt's original articulation of the term.

³⁰ Echoing the Foucauldian sense of the term.

CHAPTER 1 Creating the Other In Colonial Discourse

In an effort to get started on the right foot, I would like to spend some time talking about precisely what I mean when I use the term postcolonialism as a theoretical framework and why it relates with the SF genre. Lastly, I'd like to go over how SF and postcolonial theory can potentially inform, engage, and synthesize one another thus providing readers and cultural critics with a richer understanding of the multifarious modes of cultural domination, subjugation, and hybridization that are inherently a part of ongoing discursive struggles and other sites of contestation.

One of the primary concerns with the term postcolonial has to do with the prefix "post," which has led many critics to question what exactly is meant by this usage. Aijaz Ahmad reminds us of the original conception of the phrase as being concerned with "periodising our history in the triadic terms of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial" (280) rather than as intellectual or theoretical methods. This is not to say the periodization of history in this manner is not without its faults, some of which we'll explore in a few moments. However, this apparently changed during the 1980s when the terms 'postcolonial,' 'postcolonialism,' and the "newly coined 'postcoloniality'" began to be used as a way of categorizing certain kinds of literary and historical writing (Ahmad 281) and found their way into First World academia (Dirlik 294-95). Ella Shohat provides insightful analysis of the term in her essay "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'." In it, she asks, "When exactly, then, does the 'post-colonial' begin?" in order to point out the "problematic temporality" of the term (325). This highlights two major critiques; One

being the connection to other 'post' words "all of which underline a passage into a new period and a closure of a certain historical event or age, officially stamped with dates" (323). There is the assumption built into this 'post' structure that the negotiations of identity and power struggles that form out of colonial situations simply ended with the withdrawal of colonizing forces. She continues: "The term 'post-colonial' carries with it the implication that colonialism is now a matter of the past, undermining colonialism's economic, political, and cultural deformative-traces in the present. The 'post-colonial' inadvertently glosses over the fact that global hegemony, even in the post-cold war era, persists in forms other than overt colonial rule" (326). The second related critique is that of "dubious spatiality" (325) in which the postcolonial is accused of universalizing and collapsing all forms of "national-racial formations" (324) as being equal in their experiences of the postcolonial. In other words, the postcolonial experiences of "settler colonies — such as the United States and Australia" (Dirlik 300) are inevitably going to be very different from those of "Nigeria, Jamaica, and India" (Shohat 324). In this way, we can think of the postcolonial as a loose descriptor for ongoing struggles of identity, power, representation, culture, and nationalism between former colonizers and former colonized; however, the various critiques of the term remind us that any framework dealing with the postcolonial can only ever speak to "partial aspects of systemic modes of domination, of overlapping collective identities, and of contemporary global relations" (Shohat 332).

By extension, postcolonialism as a theoretical framework seeks to explore the various ways in which colonizers and colonized have inevitably been changed through

colonial regimes and ongoing postcolonial interactions. In this regard, one can think of “postcolonialism and decolonization³¹ as processes rather than fixed states” (Langer 6) that are thereby freed of “strict temporal or historical” limitations (7). Furthermore, Robert J.C. Young conceptualizes postcolonialism, or postcolonial critique, as an important, urgent project (69). I quote him at length:

First, investigating the extent to which not only European history but also European culture and knowledge was part of, and instrumental in, the practice of colonization and its continuing aftermath. Second, identifying fully the means and causes of continuing international deprivation and exploitation, and analysing their epistemological and psychological effects. Third, transforming those epistemologies into new forms of cultural and political production that operate outside the protocols of metropolitan traditions and enable successful resistance to, and transformation of, the degradation and material injustice to which disempowered peoples and societies remain subjected. (69)

Young’s description of postcolonialism is both potent and far-reaching in his effort to formulate a theoretical nexus with which to fully analyze the social experiences, conditions, and political ramifications of colonization. This conceptualization will inform my own frame of analysis as I seek to partake in this urgent project through a textual,

³¹ Another term not without its own set of critiques, but loosely defined by Langer as “the process of disengaging from a colonizer” (8).

postcolonial analysis of *BSG*. The realm of SF has its own history in imperial projects and therefore provides an interesting parallel to postcolonialism.

As has already been alluded to in the introduction, the genre of SF owes many of its early thematic elements to the influences of imperial projects, as well as European “scientific discourses about culture and mankind” (Rieder 2) that were inevitably part of the discursive machine driving colonial conquest. In fact, this is so abundantly clear with the existing academic literature on the topic that it leads Rieder to quip: “It is not a matter of asking whether but of determining precisely how and to what extent the stories engage colonialism” (3). Although emergent SF tended to “revivify colonial ideologies” (4), one begins to see in early 19th century SF³² satirical reversals of hierarchical power in which humans are, in some form or fashion, effectively othered by Alien forces who are described as intellectually, technologically, and culturally³³ superior. A more recognizable example of this analysis is his discussion of H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* (1898) in which Rieder believes Wells to be asking his readers to put themselves in the place of (their) colonized subjects by comparing the “Martian invasion of Earth with the Europeans’ genocidal invasion of the Tasmanians” (5).

This placement, or discursive positioning, is a fundamental tenet of SF being able to bridge the gap between reality and fantasy by creating worlds that either promote the ideological discourse of the dominant culture or, by imagining alternative possible futures, allow for the potential of “questioning and recoding the discursive framework of

³² Rieder refers to this body of texts as “proto-science-fiction” (5).

³³ E.g. marriage customs, religion, philosophical values (Rieder 4-5)

scientific truth, moral certitude, and cultural hegemony” (Rieder 10). Furthermore, as has already been discussed by other SF-related scholarly work,³⁴ the historical realities of colonialism have many parallels to SF, most notably encounters with alien Others, strange lands,³⁵ and fears of miscegenation.³⁶ This is made even clearer with an exceedingly useful conception of SF as:

A literature of the imagination, yet often grounded in the logic of science; an ethical enterprise packaged as entertainment; and a forward looking project that is frequently rooted in anxieties about the present (as well as the past): science fiction is a genre that feeds off of conflicting impulses — of exploration and xenophobia, conquest and exchange, and technophilia and technophobia, to name a few. (Hoagland and Sarwal 9)

These parallels coupled with the fantastical conventions of the genre thus allow for SF’s “engagement with colonial history, ideology, and discourse” expressly because the genre itself “exposes something that colonialism imposes” (Rieder 15). Because of SF’s connection to and frequent engagement with historical enactments of colonization and dominance, postcolonialism as a theoretical framework becomes an excellent lens with which to identify, deconstruct, or act out instances of colonial relationships allegorically represented in a fantasy world that can therefore be connected to events or situations in the real world. This is precisely why this thesis seeks to harness both the potential of SF with a postcolonial framework in order to perform a textual analysis of *BSG* with the

³⁴ Namely Rieder (2008), Langer (2011), and Hoagland and Sarwal (2010)

³⁵ Langer (2011)

³⁶ Pegues (2008)

intent of giving some measure of voice and understanding to power relations and resistance in colonial discourse.

This might, at first glance, seem an unusual marriage of genre and theoretical framework in order to explore knowledge production and discourse, but Hoagland and Sarwal remind us that “postcolonialism is a theoretical lens through which any literature may be read — from the epics, the Bible and Shakespeare through to spy thrillers, westerns and pulp romance” (5). I would extend this analytical purview to include all cultural production mediums including film, music, and the various forms of creative art. As has already been highlighted above, this is not to say all academics agree on the definitions for either SF or postcolonialism, highlighting yet another similarity between the two.³⁷ The difficulties of defining a genre such as SF are well documented in cultural studies. Hoagland and Sarwal conceptualize this difficulty as a struggle of borders, with some looking to mark specific boundaries in order to keep the genre connected to, for example, Western-centric sciences and technology while others advocate expanding into new territories in an effort to make room for "new voices, new meanings" (5). I believe this latter depiction of the SF genre is a useful one to consider specifically because it has the potential of disrupting or, at the very least, questioning the power relations of Western knowledge in relation with the rest of the world by allowing for “indigenous and other colonized systems of knowledge are not only valid but are, at times, more scientifically sound than is Western scientific thought (Langer 9). An example of this disruption can be

³⁷ Hoagland and Sarwal (2010), Langer (2011), Rieder (2008)

seen with Dominic Alessio's and Langer's analysis³⁸ of the Bollywood film *Koi Mil Gaya* (hereafter *Koi*) as a postcolonial science fiction text that "undermines the West-centrism of blockbuster Hollywood SF film for its use of Hollywood and other Western SF conventions for the purposes of Hindu nationalism" (218). We learn that a major reason the film can be read this way is because *Koi* challenges Hollywood ideals and SF conventions by proudly presenting several mythical and religious elements central to the Hindu religion as sources of power over Western Christianity and science. Specifically, one example in which the film illustrates Hindu religion as a dominant narrative force is when Hindu religious words are used to communicate with a space alien called "Jadoo" instead of the methods preferred by Western scientists in the film (223). This narrative structure is especially subversive when one takes into consideration Western rhetoric about so-called "religious extremism" (222) and the way in which this is often a method for exerting cultural superiority over difference. In any case, being that SF often serves to describe a living, evolving plane of existence, so too must our notion of a genre that frequently seeks to critique, reimagine, and, perhaps, refine our world for a more inclusive shared existence.

MONSTERS, ALIENS, AND CYLONS, OH MY

In *BSG*, one of the novums that informs this thesis is the presence of the race already referred to as the Cylons. The Cylons were originally robots created by the

³⁸ "Nationalism and Postcolonialism in Indian Science Fiction: Bollywood's *Koi Mil Gaya*" (2003)

technology firm known as Greystone Industries on the planet Caprica.³⁹ Although we are not privy to this information in the newer *BSG*, we learn in its spin-off prequel *Caprica* that the Cylons were originally created to serve as robotic soldiers,⁴⁰ and later filling the capacity of service help before gaining sentience. Their subsequent rebellion marks a twelve-year period of civil strife known as the First Cylon War. An armistice is reached between the humans and the Cylons effectively ending the war, but forcing the Cylons to find homestead elsewhere. Forty years go by before they are seen again, which marks the beginning of the Second Cylon War that results in the nuclear destruction of the 12 colonies and 50 billion people.⁴¹ This is the point at which the re-imagined series begins.

Like other SF and fantasy stories involving beings described as non-human, aliens, monsters, cyborgs, and robots are often critically analyzed for their ability to disrupt and destabilize what Elaine Graham terms “ontological hygiene,” which is to call attention to the process of maintaining “definitive notions of human nature” (*Representations* 35). In the anthology *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen states that the figure of the monster “quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy” (4), always “signifies something other than itself” (4), and is the “harbinger of category crisis” (6) where “fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space” (17). These fantastical constructs thereby become cultural markers of ideological

³⁹ “Pilot” (1.01)

⁴⁰ “Know Thy Enemy” (1.06)

⁴¹ Miniseries (2003)

belief systems in which it is possible to theorize what it means to be human precisely by what is not human.

Academics studying the *Star Trek* (hereafter *ST*) franchise have been influential in their analyses of aliens as racial stand-ins. In his book *Star Trek and History*, Daniel Bernardi discusses the ways in which the series is both “implicitly and explicitly about the meaning of race” (3). Although many of the separate *ST* iterations have often presented a racially diverse cast, the franchise has also left itself open to critique because of the ways in which alien figures are represented and treated within the show echoing Wolmark’s reminder that the alien “has often been used to produce, rather than question” (27) hegemonic racial politics and practices. Chief in this discussion are the ways in which non-humans are visually constructed; for example, aliens presenting a threat of some kind to the Enterprise are usually dark skinned while ethereal beings that are “godlike” tend to be white (Bernardi 12). In an episode entitled “Transfigurations,”⁴² Bernardi discusses how an ethereal humanoid with divine powers is shown in “blinding white light” and believed to represent a most highly evolved being (125). Another recurring, omnipotent character on the show is Q. Q, endowed with nearly limitless power, is always shown taking a white, typically male, humanoid form (125). Furthermore, as a futuristic vision of a utopian world in which contemporary problems such as economy, homelessness, and hunger have been solved, race also appears to be a non-issue in the human population. Instead, the show tends to prefer “to project it

⁴² *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (3.25)

[racism] as a problem within an alien culture or between two worlds” (28), not completely unlike the dynamic between the humans and Cylons in *BSG*.

Robin Roberts,⁴³ Rhonda Wilcox,⁴⁴ and Leah Vande Berg⁴⁵ also perform similar analyses of *ST* with slightly different, but related, focuses. For Roberts, character casting is a fundamental way in which race can be explored. She cites the Klingon Star Fleet officer Worf as a primary example of the ways in which racial casting influences how the audiences may relate to the particular character being portrayed. As an African-American actor, Michael Dorn playing Lt. Worf “makes us read Klingons racially, not only because they are an alien species, but also because the casting positions the character as an American racial ‘minority’” (127). A similar kind of analysis has been performed in *BSG* with respect to actress Grace Park’s Korean descent informing her portrayal of the number Eights. For example, Juliana Hu Pegues has looked at the character of Sharon as a rearticulation of the *Madame Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon* narratives (193), and as such embodies images of the Orient, incites fears of miscegenation, and must be assimilated through the roles of wife, mother, white confidant, and military officer to be accepted into humanity. Likewise, Ingvil Hellstrand proposes that the reproductive politics in *BSG* are necessarily informed by the ethnicity of actresses Grace Park and Katee Sackhoff⁴⁶ (10), while LeiLani Nishime has done excellent work analyzing Park’s Sharon “Athena”

⁴³ *Sexual Generations* (1999)

⁴⁴ “Dating Data,” *Enterprise Zones* (1996)

⁴⁵ “Liminality: Worf,” *Enterprise Zones* (1996)

⁴⁶ A Caucasian American actress who plays the character “Starbuck.”

Agathon⁴⁷ as a reimagination of Asian migration and transnational adoption tropes (“Aliens” 450).

Before *BSG*, scholarship concerned with notions of liminality and assimilation has been performed with, again, the ST characters of Worf and Data.⁴⁸ Leah Vande Berg critically discusses Worf as liminal character who is positioned between race, culture, and nation. This liminality is most apparent in episodes where Worf must negotiate his loyalty to Starfleet, his human foster parents, and his Klingon descent and cultural values. Similarly, Rhonda Wilcox argues that Data can be specifically read as a stand-in for non-white ethnicity. Acknowledging that Data is white to an extreme, even ludicrous, degree, Wilcox reads his skin color as actually symbolic of non-white races because he is so white that he stands out in comparison to his Enterprise peers (74), a constant reminder of his difference and lack. Like Worf, Data is regularly in search of ways he can reduce feelings of outsidership and thereby find acceptance with his human peers through various assimilation methods including familiarity and engagement with white Western cultural artifacts such as Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, classical music, and art.

The all-too-familiar tropes linking the characters of Athena, Worf, and Data are most certainly those of racial otherness, assimilation and, by extension, miscegenation. These characters struggle with assimilating into human culture on their respective ships and their differences, rather than similarities, are more often than not reiterated in various episodes and series plots. In either case, the figure of the Other is as powerful as it is

⁴⁷ One of two regular model Eight characters played by Park. This model is known as Athena, while her antithesis is known as Sharon Valeri or “Boomer.”

⁴⁸ A fully sentient android who serves as a Star Fleet officer in *The Next Generation* series.

dangerous precisely because it presents a challenge to binary concepts such as race, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and Western modernity. Through these challenges, we have the opportunity to rethink the apparent stability and naturalness of the systems of knowledge that mark difference in the first place. For the next section of this chapter, I will look at how difference and cultural superiority is produced through colonial discourse in the *BSG* universe between the relations of the colonial humans and Cylons. Specifically, the theoretical insights of postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha will guide this section as I explore the ways in which I believe *BSG* to be a reenactment of colonial discourse that thrives through Bhabha's articulations of enunciation and cultural difference (*LoC* 50),⁴⁹ as well as his conception of fixity (94),⁵⁰ stereotype (95), and their relation to ambivalence (95). I believe that through these theories, we can better understand the multiple layers of subjectification constructed by colonial regimes of truth (101) present in *BSG*.

DIFFERENCE AND REPRODUCTION OF THE OTHER

A discussion of Bhabha's theoretical concepts would not be complete without a nod to the influential work of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁵¹ In his book, Said brings attention to the uneven relationships between the East and the West, or, respectively, the Orient and Occident, as predicated upon discourse. In other words, understandings and representations of the East were intimately tied to Europe's ability to produce systems of

⁴⁹ "The Commitment to Theory" (1994)

⁵⁰ "The Other Question" (1994)

⁵¹ Originally published in 1978. The version referred to in this text is the 1994 reprint by Vintage Books.

knowledge about an alien Other. According to Said, difference is not inherent in nature or representative of “pure knowledge,” (9) but is instead created and maintained by those in a position of power in relation to the subjected. Orientalism is thereby described by Said as a “cultural and a political fact” (13), “a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; ...; a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power” such as “power political,” “power intellectual,” and “power cultural” (12). These various forms of power reproduce themselves ideologically, politically, geographically, and materially all of which “played a vital part in constructing an Orient that allowed for the deployment of specific forms of control over it” (Mongia 4).

However, a major point of concern for many theorists, including Bhabha, was the lack of agency or power afforded to colonized groups in this conception (Young, *White Mythologies* 142). Furthermore, Bhabha believes this to be too simplistic, not only because it assumes the colonizer holds all power, but also because “colonial power itself is subject to the effects of conflictual economy” (142). In other words, the omnipotence of colonial power cannot be assumed, because it is not without its own myriad of psychic cleavages, vulnerabilities, and, in the words of Bhabha, anxiety and ambivalence. In his articulation, discourse is an active agent of colonial control that “does not merely represent the other, therefore, so much as simultaneously project and disavow difference” so that “Its mastery is always asserted, but is also always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete” (143). This identification of instability and slippage within colonial

power and, thereby, discourse is what makes it such a compelling theory for analyzing a SF serial in which power relations and knowledge production between a Self and Other are constantly in a state of flux as moments of anxiety, ambivalence, and displacement are negotiated.

In the opening credits to the miniseries (2003), viewers are informed: “The Cylons were created by Man. They were created to make life easier on the twelve colonies. And the day came when they decided to kill their masters. After a long and bloody struggle, an armistice was declared. The Cylons left for another world to call their own. A remote space station was built...where Cylon and Human could meet and maintain diplomatic relations. Ever year, the colonials send an officer. The Cylons send no one. No one has seen or heard from the Cylons in over forty years.” From this backstory, we are immediately made aware that out of this First Cylon War, the children of humanity turned into the face of the enemy. What viewers don’t know quite yet is that that face is now also their face, a Lacanian mirror image reflecting back the sins, and instability, of mankind continually threatening to rupture the discursive knowledge of self.

This backstory is told through super imposed text while a camera pans around the remote space station set up for these diplomatic relations. A colonial officer is shown walking down a large empty corridor inside the space station where he sits down at a lone desk and begins to unpack his things. While doing so, the diplomat reviews a “Cylon Specifications” sheet complete with descriptions of the “bipedal robot,” diagrams of the body, and, most interestingly, their “chip processors” or brain. This diagram sheet of the

Cylon Centurion Model 0005 harks back to the European colonial practices of scientific racism that manifested itself in science and medical journals, travel writings, and ethnographies (McClintock 33). Scientific racism, obsessed as it was with measurements (49), became another element of colonial discourse that sought to legitimize control over and mark difference against Others. As McClintock states: “A host of ‘inferior’ groups could now be mapped, measured and ranked against the ‘universal standard’ of the white male child — within the organic embrace of the family metaphor and the Enlightenment regime of ‘rational’ measurements as an optics of truth” (51). Indeed, this scene also measures and ranks the bipedal body of the Centurion juxtaposed against that of the diplomat’s white family. Just prior to his review of the ‘spec sheet,’ the man pulls a picture of his family from his briefcase and rests it in front of him where we see a smiling wife and young boy, a portrait viewers are shown once more in a close up just prior to the scene transition. The diplomat is jolted awake from his nap with the entrance of two robotic, bipedal beings that look dramatically different from the picture on the spec sheet he was previously reviewing. The camera zooms in on their faces, and we hear the approach of footsteps. A tall humanoid enters wearing a deep red miniskirt suit, tall boots, and platinum blonde hair complete with a sultry walk. She approaches the man and simply asks “Are you alive?” to which he barely stammers a response of “yes.” She responds with the directive “prove it” and leans in to kiss him, which he obliges. This scene ends with the destruction of the space station and the prophetic proclamation “It has begun.” What is most apparent in this scene is the fact that despite not hearing from the Cylons in over forty years, the colonials still dustily cling to old preconceptions of

what the Cylons are, represented in the spec sheet; a convenient reminder of bodily dissimilarity. However, the more telling way in which the Cylons are defined by the colonials is by what they are *not* with the juxtaposition of the smiling family; their difference, their lack supports an easy separation of boundaries between the colonial human and the Centurion Model 0005. The arrival of this humanoid Cylon, as will become more apparent in chapter 2, marks the first disruption of this discourse. As we will see a bit further, the use of Western science is a popular theme in the miniseries (and much of season one) as a way to distinguish between self/Other. However, before we get there, I will identify some of the various ways the humans cling to the discursive strategies that inform colonial discourse in the effort to mark difference, promote notions of cultural superiority, and police boundaries.

In addition to scientific racism, the primary way in which the Cylons are marked as Other is through good ole fashioned name calling. In his essay “The Other Question” Bhabha’s main concern is identifying the tools or methods whereby colonial power exercises its control by discourse (96). The relationship between fixity and stereotype is crucial in this understanding. Fixity is described as “the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference” in colonial discourse and necessarily “connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (*LoC* 94). Bhabha employs the stereotype as the discursive tool that enforces, or upholds, fixity “through knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (95). Furthermore, ambivalence is at the heart of the colonial stereotype for it is through this contradictory production of

stereotyped knowledge⁵² that we can better understand the continuing prevalence of stereotypes in changing contexts and environments (95), as well as identify the colonizer's anxious relationship to an Other "which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (96). This stereotype turns to fetish and "gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense" (107). The stereotype, therefore, represents "the desire for an originality which is again threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture" (107); This distinction is crucial for Bhabha, because it is through this process we better understand how the stereotype comes to deny "that play of difference" (in the desire for purity) and represents "*negative difference*" (108). The humans, looking to anxiously control boundaries and identify difference between the humanoid Cylons and themselves, employ repetitious use of stereotypes which signify difference from self, even when there is no 'physical' difference. These stereotypes are crucial to the precarious nature of their discourse and are most certainly always "in access" (95) and always "an articulation of difference" (96).

"Toasters," "tins cans," "things," "skin jobs," "chrome jobs," "machines," and "it" are some examples of the ways fixity is promoted within the human population of *BSG*. One of the main characters, Gaius Baltar, is the premiere celebrity scientist of the 12 colonies who also happens to be romantically involved with a Cylon Model Six (known as Caprica Six), at first unwittingly and later voluntarily. Despite his relationship to Caprica Six, he is still more than capable of exercising this sort of racist rhetoric. After

⁵² e.g. "The black ... is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child" (118)

an argument with a fantasy projection of Caprica Six,⁵³ he unequivocally proclaims, “Cylons are, in the final analysis, little more than toasters.”⁵⁴ Later in this same episode, the Battlestar’s chief deck hand is analyzing one of the Cylon raiders⁵⁵ they have captured but isn’t having much luck figuring out how the organic ship functions stating, “I can’t get this *thing* to work.” One of the pilots known as Boomer⁵⁶ chides Tyrol: “It’s not really a *thing*, you know? Can’t treat it like a *thing* and expect it to respond. You have to treat it like... a pet.” Despite the organic elements of the ship, and perhaps despite it necessitating treatment befitting something alive, this amalgamation of organic and inorganic is still nothing more than a thing that must be harnessed properly in order to get it to ‘work.’

In the episode “Flesh and Bone” (1.08), one of the known Cylon models, Leoben Conoy, is found stowed-away on board. Commander Adama and President Roslin discuss what to do with the Cylon. In their conversation, Adama is careful to police boundaries between humans and Cylons with an emphatic use, an excess, of the pronoun “it” rather than assign gender to the obviously male humanoid body:

Adama: “I’ll send a team over to destroy *it* immediately.”

Roslin: “I want this man interrogated first.”

Adama: “First of all, it’s not a him, it’s an *it*. Second, anything *it* says cannot be trusted. Best thing to do is to destroy *it* immediately.”

⁵³ A dreamlike representation only he can see. She’s referred to as Head Six by most academics writing on the subject. How she comes to be is never really explained in the series, however, in the series finale it is inferred that she is a messenger of God.

⁵⁴ “Six Degrees of Separation” (1.07)

⁵⁵ A form of jet fighter for the Cylons.

⁵⁶ A model Eight and, at this point in the series, a sleeper agent unaware of her Cylon origin.

Roslin: "I'd like to hear what this *thing* has to say."

Later in the episode before Leoben is interrogated Adama warns Starbuck, his interrogator, when Leoben is being interrogated, Adama reminds her, "It's a very clever machine. Manipulative, cunning." Leoben's ability to sweat, bleed, feel hunger and desire is disavowed in favor of reiterating, anxiously repeating, his status as a non-human, because as a 'machine,' he "shouldn't feel pain, shouldn't bleed, shouldn't sweat." In the absence of physical difference, Starbuck anxiously looks for other areas where difference can be marked as absence and negative prompting her to continually reinforce difference through the dichotomy of machine/human. She taunts him to turn off his "pain software" during brutal torture and in another scene calls his hunger "bad programming." In response to her question of "Why bother with hunger?" Leoben answers "Part of being human" to which she unequivocally states, "You're not human." Similarly to European notions of cultural and religious superiority during their colonial projects, Starbuck attempts to dehumanize through his religious belief system: "Somebody's programmed you with a fairy tale of God and streams and life ever after but, somewhere in that hard drive that you call a brain is a beeping message: 'Error, error, does not compute. I don't have a soul, I have software. If I die, I'm gone.'" Despite Leoben's apparent human form which bleeds, sweats, hungers, and exercises a belief system, Starbuck and the other colonial humans are unable to accept him as anything other than a thing, a machine with programming, because their fixity of Cylons and perception of self necessitate "rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (Bhabha 94). The colonials regime of truth Starbuck so valiantly seeks to defend

effectively denies Leoben access to representation of himself; the culmination of this denial manifests itself when Leoben is flushed out of an airlock after he gives up the information requested of him.

In this same episode, Western science is again used to detect and outline boundaries between the two races. In a parallel scene to the ongoing one described above, Boomer, struggling with the growing suspicion that she is actually a Cylon goes to Baltar asking if he can “tell the differences between Cylons and humans.” Baltar, who has been working on a “Cylon Detector,” is supposedly an intellectual genius rivaled by no one else in the former 12 colonies and has resumed the role of Cylon expert during season one and two of *BSG*. It is interesting here that blood is the necessary element in which Cylons can be detected. It is also telling that Boomer is so worried about being something other than purely human, something other than her own concept of self, that she feels compelled to seek the authority of a scientist to help her. Of course, Baltar’s test works properly and identifies her as the first Cylon he has tested, but fear of reprisal keeps him from telling her the truth. Instead, he nervously says, “100% human and — and very, very bright green, as well.” This scene foregrounds a major reason for the humans’ fear of the Cylons that could best be described as fear of cultural hybridization or, in other words, a corruption of purity.

An even more extreme example of the way in which Cylons are actively othered comes in season two when Admiral Cain joins Adama’s fleet. We learn that Cain has been holding a Cylon agent prisoner on her ship, the *Pegasus*. She asks Baltar if he will examine the Cylon and see if he can be any more successful at getting information out of

her than they were. When we are presented with the Cylon prisoner,⁵⁷ we see a woman lying on the floor in tattered clothing, chained, bound, and barely conscious. Baltar is visibly shocked at the abuse she has endured, especially considering this is the same model with whom he has had an ongoing relationship though not the same ‘person.’ He begins examining her as his incorporeal companion, Head Six, stands by his side. She is as distressed as Baltar and states that even if Gina had fought back, it wouldn’t “justify this.” Baltar goes about performing his examination of her body as Head Six attempts to collapse boundaries between Cylons and humans by stating “Can’t you stop being a scientist for one moment and look at the abused woman lying in front of you?!” Not only was Gina physically beaten, but also sexually abused. In “Pegasus, Extended” (2.10) we learn that one of the interrogation tactics used on Gina was long term gang rape by colonial soldiers when participating members brag about their experience to members of Galactica. Their insensitivity is directly informed by their fixity of the Cylons as nothing more than machines, which is at direct odds with the reality of the physical form they are quite willing to abuse. Furthermore, the attackers divorce themselves from guilt with dehumanizing rhetoric such as “little robot girl” and, later, we hear the XO⁵⁸ Fisk declare “You can’t rape a machine.”⁵⁹

This prisoner treatment almost manifests itself again onboard the Galactica when Admiral Cain sends her interrogation officer to speak with Athena, who is still being held in the Galactica brig. We learn about this when crew from the Pegasus are gathered with

⁵⁷ A model Six named Gina Inviere.

⁵⁸ Executive officer, second in command

⁵⁹ “Resurrection Ship” (2.11-12)

crew from the Galactica in the deck portion of the ship and begin to brag and laugh about their repeated conquests of Gina and that soon (speaking of Boomer) “little robot girl is in for quite a ride.” In the following scene, we see an officer of Pegasus, Lt. Thorne, coming into Athena’s prison cage with a group of men who hold her down while he prepares to rape her simultaneously asking questions about a Cylon resurrection ship. Two Battlestar officers, Tyrol and Helo, rush in and attack Lt. Thorne accidentally killing him. Later when Dr. Cottle is examining Athena, she is obviously traumatized. Adama apologizes to her stating “what happened to you...” before being interrupted by Cottle who answers “was unforgivable.” The conclusion of this scene ends with Adama requesting Cottle to “see that she’s okay and back into her cell.” This is one of the first times Adama recognizes her as a gendered being, rather than an ‘it’ or ‘thing.’ McClintock reminds us that colonial power was intimately tied to both conquest and exploration of land, as well as conquest and exploration of the exotic gendered other (21-26). bell hooks also states “racist white men ... historically violated the bodies of black women/women of color to assert their position as colonizer/conqueror” (368). In this same piece,⁶¹ hooks looks to create a distinction between this colonial experience of physical violence as colonial power versus sexually experiencing an exotic Other in order to be fundamentally changed somehow by the experience (369). She incisively remarks, “To these young males and their buddies, fucking was a way to confront the Other, as well as a way to make themselves over, to leave behind white ‘innocence’ and enter the

⁶⁰ Which in this context connotes humanness — a notion not without its own problems.

⁶¹ “Eating the Other”

world of ‘experience’” (368). In these two textual examples, I believe the experience for these men to be both/and; both a way to assert colonial power they are accustomed to exercising, as well as a way to experience the exotic.

Much of season two, Athena has to speak against a litany of stereotypes and persuade her human peers that Cylons are not as mechanical or programmed as they believe them to be, nor are they all enemies of humanity. In fact, she rescued Helo and Starbuck from the Cylon occupied planet they were both stranded on when she could have done otherwise. Furthermore, both she and Helo truly express love for one another, something many crewmembers and leaders find hard to believe. Throughout the series, both Helo and Athena are often put in a position of defending their relationship. While she is being held in the ship’s prison, the president comes to interrogate her asking why she has come aboard the ship to which Athena replies, “Because I love him. And because I’m carrying his child.” Roslin responds “Oh, I see, that explains it. You’re not here because you mean us any harm...or because you’re a programmed enemy of humanity. You’re here because you had an affair with one of our Raptor pilots.” Roslin continues to reinforce boundaries between Cylons and humans, because Sharon has essentially crossed those boundaries by leaving her Cylon home (or, more accurately, exiling herself by disobeying orders that would have led to Helo’s death) and effectively threatening the borders of humanity. This is further embodied through Athena’s baby Hera who is the first true hybrid being between Cylons and humans. Throughout her pregnancy and subsequent birth, the child is discussed as something that will somehow be bad for the human race.

In addition to the stereotype, we can see that much attention is paid to the Cylon physical and psychic makeup in order to mark difference where there seems to be none. Despite the humanoid Cylons being nearly identical to the humans in terms of physical form and consciousness,⁶² they are not allowed to escape the fixity with which the human colonials have constructed of them. Much like the dynamic of skin as representative of visible difference that gets made into a fetish (Bhabha 48), the humans must find ways to mark “signifiers of discrimination” (49) even if they do not necessarily reflect any sort of reality. As Bhabha remind us, truth is not a prerequisite of the stereotype, nor is it useful to think of it as coming from a form of false representation, but rather “it is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations” (45). I contend that these dynamics relating to colonial discourse are crucial in understanding the virulent and violent dynamics between the humans and Cylons, dynamics which are representative of European relations with colonized Others. Furthermore, although the Cylons do not literally represent a group of people who have been colonized by the humans in the show, as we have and will continue to see, many tropes used and explored in the *BSG* series make it possible to extend such an analysis. In the next chapter, I’ll be looking at some of the more literal ways colonial regimes exercised authority over

⁶² Although, as we will see in chapter 3, there are some differences between the two races that bear pointing out lest I make the mistake of collapsing the two into a universal, homogenized category without recognition/allowances of difference.

colonized groups, as well as the resistance borne out of such control by looking at the episodes covering the occupation of New Caprica at the beginning of season three.

CHAPTER 2 Frack the ‘Post:’ A Return To Colonialism In *BSG*

As has already been discussed at length, *BSG* has many aspects written into the narrative structure of the series that, I believe, make it an ideal candidate for postcolonial analysis. One of the major storylines I plan to analyze in this chapter has to do with how the series narratively explores an inversion of power that involves colonial occupation within the continuing ‘vision of catastrophe,’ a phrase borrowed from John Rieder.⁶³ In his analysis of colonialism and SF, a vision of catastrophe is any sort of SF disaster that narratively allows for “reversing the positions of colonizer and colonized, master and slave, core and periphery” (124). Rieder pointedly states:

Environmental devastation, species extinction, enslavement, plague, and genocide following in the wake of invasion by an alien civilization with vastly superior technology — all of those are not merely nightmares morbidly fixed upon by science fiction writers and readers, but are rather the bare historical record of what happened to non-European people and lands after being ‘discovered’ by Europeans and integrated into Europe’s economic and political arrangements from the fifteenth century to the present . (124)

I choose to bring this locution up here, because although the series as a whole pivots on the idea of catastrophe as we’ve already seen in the introduction and chapter one, *BSG*’s relation to colonialism and postcolonialism is never more apparent than in the first four

⁶³ See: *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction*, pgs. 123-155

episodes of season 3.⁶⁴ These episodes reconstruct the complex dynamics, injustices, and oppressions between a colonizing force and a colonized body through a variety of familiar, historical tropes including ideological similarities to various forms of imperial projects by first world countries, the establishment of social hierarchies informed by gender, religion, and cultural values, as well as the reliance upon military force and torture in order to enforce control. Furthermore, themes of resistance, insurgency, and terrorism abound throughout these episodes as the humans desperately seek to repel the Cylon occupation.

Robert J.C. Young, Aimé Cesaire, Anne McClintock, and Homi Bhabha will contribute to the analyses of this chapter. Young will reveal some of the ways the Cylon occupation mimics historical instances of colonization, but also show how the humans, coupled with Cesaire's work in postcolonial theory, are often set up as an Other to the Cylons through a reversal of colonial discourse that allegorizes the humans as less 'humane,' less noble, and less deserving of life. These regimes of truth are often framed through notions of religious and cultural superiority. Discourses relating to gender and colonial desire are also prevailing in these episodes, as discussed by McClintock and Langer. For example, the colonized men in the show are often shown planning insurgent attacks and holding strategy meetings, while the women are almost exclusively shown caring for children, scavenging for food, and praying in the temples, thus illustrating a gender dynamic reflective of imperial domesticity and the "organic family" in colonial

⁶⁴ Aired October 2006

relations that sanctioned social hierarchies so that “nonfamilial social forms”⁶⁵ could be subordinated (McClintock 45). In terms of religion, the Cylons believe it is their mission to bring the word of *God* to the humans, who practice polytheism with a belief in the “Lords of Kobol” whose names hark back to the gods of Greek mythology. Lastly, Bhabha’s analysis of mimicry and ambivalence, especially with regards to colonial fantasy, will magnify the precarious power relations between the Cylons and humans.

With that said, I am not looking to collapse all forms of colonial experience into one palatable, universal model; this is something most postcolonial theorists fervently guard against. However, bodies of work on the subject already show us that the value in exploring these visions of catastrophe in SF, in telling the stories to begin with, both brings attention to the historical realities of imperial expansion and the hegemonic systems that allowed for such relations of power to exist in the first place. In other words, within *BSG*, I believe Western viewers are better able to relate to the experiences of the colonized through the diegetic experiences of the humans, of who are primarily white characters.

OCCUPATION ON NEW CAPRICA: ALL THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE

Due to the nuclear attacks on their 12 home planets and the subsequent cat and mouse chases through space for the first two seasons, the humans have not had a home to call their own for some time. However, at the end of season two the discovery of a habitable planet dubbed ‘New Caprica’ forces the humans to consider settling. Although

⁶⁵ e.g. “nationalism, liberal individualism” (45)

the Cylons send a message to the humans indicting they no longer wish to pursue and destroy the humans,⁶⁶ they still fear further retaliation. One of the reasons this planet is an attractive choice for settlement is due its location within an area of space that makes it difficult for radar detection; unfortunately, the narrative plot of the series can't end here and thus the Cylons are later able to locate the humans when a ship orbiting this planet implodes from a nuclear detonation.⁶⁷ Despite concerns from certain main characters, it is decided that the humans will colonize the derelict planet. The last few minutes of season two fast forward a year later where we are met with the return of the Cylons and their full military might. The understaffed battleships and the rest of the fleet jump away, leaving the rest of the inhabitants on New Caprica to fend for themselves until Admiral Adama can concoct a rescue. At some point during this year of peace between the two races, the Cylons decide they want to bring the word of *their* God to the humans in an attempt to save humanity from itself and improve human-Cylon relations. The result is a large-scale colonization project that rips freedom and independence from the people through the Cylons' superior technology, military strength, and colonizing discourse.

In season three, the taglines that accompany opening credits and cast introductions have changed and now more explicitly frame the human population's dire situation: "THE HUMAN RACE. FAR FROM HOME. FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL." This notion of fighting for survival is made immediately prevalent in the season premiere "Occupation." Flashes of images show Colonel Tigh in a small prison scratching marks

⁶⁶ "Lay Down Your Burdens, Part II" (2.20)

⁶⁷ *ibid*

into a wall with a patch over one eye, bombs and detonators being made, and scriptures being read in a temple alongside an unusual soundtrack described by Dinello as “faux Arab” (188). These images clearly suggest a connection to the U.S. occupation of Iraq;⁶⁸ however, I believe there are connections to other forms of historical colonialism and social relations that I’ll get to later in this chapter.

The beginning of this episode informs viewers that the Cylon occupation has already been in effect for 134 days. In the next sequence, viewers are presented an array of scenes showing humans and Cylons engaged in violent resistance. Laura Roslin, the former acting president of the 12 colonies, narrates the scenes. She describes their current situation as “perpetual war,” but admits that though the attacks seem futile, she believes them to be necessary for the humans to maintain “some measure of hope.” Indeed, both the cinematic choices and supporting narration seem to emphasize the necessity of insurgency, bringing to mind the necessity of violent uprising against colonizing forces famously discussed by Frantz Fanon (1963). However, the situation seems bleak considering the technological might and superiority of the Cylons that is highlighted with images of massive heavy raider ships outfitted with machine gun weaponry mowing down groups of humans. As the narration continues, the camera shifts away from scenes of battle to the current atmosphere of the city. The visual imagery illustrates the reality of the occupation as we see a dark and dreary city being patrolled by imposing robotic Cylon centurion guards. Roslin, describing their situation as horrifying, explains that “the

⁶⁸ Also pointed out by Dinello (2008), though there are many others who have made this connection. This is by no means exhaustive, but see also: Erickson (2007), Gumpert (2008), Ott (2008)

Cylon Occupation Authority continues to exert complete control over the city” and the humans “remain at their mercy.” This opening sequence is an excellent prelude to a discussion of the occupation of New Caprica as a reversal of power structures and colonial relations.

The occupation of New Caprica and the control of the human populace described by Roslin mimics various forms of European imperialism and Western colonization found within postcolonial discourse. In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Young discusses many types of imperialism that have emerged from certain countries or regions in particular time periods. He also discusses the ways in which the term, or understanding, of imperialism has had shifting meanings (26). Nevertheless, ultimately he states that imperialism “is characterized by the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a similar form of domination” (27). Although imperialism and colonization efforts are often linked to goals of economic exploitation, these episodes indicate an occupation that is more concerned with the domination and conversion of a people through religious and cultural ideals. The episodes thus borrow tropes from various forms of imperialism including Spain and Britain. Young states that 19th century British imperialism was founded on the belief in a “civilizing mission” which assumed a racial superiority between white and non-white races (32), while Spanish imperialism was mostly associated with a drive towards Christian conversion (16). Although race is not directly discussed, it is apparent that both the Cylons and the humans see themselves as ‘the Other.’ Although chapter one discusses the various ways in which the ideology of the

humans motivates them to construct fixity about the Cylons, in this situation the overt control of the Cylons physically forces the humans to bend to their will, at least to a certain degree. This scenario is a literal example of Bhabha's "fantasy of the native" (*LoC* 63) in which the formerly subjugated Cylons take the place of their former masters. Furthermore, I would argue this dynamic is most strikingly similar to Jessica Langer's discussion of Japan as an imperial power that distanced itself from the Orient. Japan, "inflected *and* (italics mind) influenced" by Western imperialism, therefore came to be an imperial power in its own right changed by its interactions with the West as both a subjugate and student of Orientalism (16). Likewise, the Cylons, having been changed by their relations with the colonial humans, come to personify "Bhabha's concept of the unstable nature of the colonial subjectivity" (16) through their own attempts to negotiate alterity and subjectivity by picking up the master's tools.

THE BURDEN OF THE CYLONS

The civilizing mission of the Cylons can also be understood through the ideological fantasy of the "white man's burden," described by Rieder as "the belief that nonwhites are childlike innocents in need of white men's protection" (30). Although the Cylons don't believe the humans to be innocent,⁶⁹ they do come to see it as their responsibility to save the human race from itself; at least for a time. This burden is an ideological fantasy, because although the Cylons are more like their forerunners than they care to admit, their ideology of progress necessitates a vision of the Other, in this case the

⁶⁹ In fact, I would say quite the opposite, as they believed the sins of humanity to be ample justification for the nuclear destruction of the colonies ("Valley of Darkness 2.02).

humans, as a “grotesque parody” in order to support their ideology of progress and superiority (30). By doing so, they depend upon “a common assumption that the relation of the colonizing societies to the colonized ones is that of the developed, modern present to its own undeveloped, primitive past” (30) that is rampant in historical relations between colonizers and colonized. As we will see, the Cylon’s burdens take many forms and have widespread consequences for both races.

According to the paradigms discussed, part of the Cylon’s colonizing mission dictates an ideology that constructs the humans as inferior and in need of colonial salvation, especially in the form of religious intervention. This ideology is most apparent during meetings with the Cylon Occupation Authority as they are discussing the insurgency among the humans. The Cylons treat the insurgency and associated behaviors as a product of racial inferiority. Furthermore, their forcible control and occupation ultimately undermines their thin attempts at some version of diplomacy. For example, one of the Number Three models, known as D’Anna Biers, almost in an act of blind naiveté, describes her and her Cylon peers as “allies and friends of the legitimate government of the Colonies.” Rather, diplomacy is better understood in this colonial context as something that “requires and seeks to mediate otherness through the use of persuasion and force, promises and threats, codes and symbols” (Neumann 37). Later in the episode “Occupation,” a Number One model called Cavil is talking with the other Cylons about the current situation: “Let’s review why we’re here, shall we? We’re supposed to bring the word of God to the people, right? To save humanity from damnation by bringing the love of God to these *poor benighted people* (my emphasis).”

In Cavils' perspective, the human population is not only spiritually lacking, but also morally ignorant. Similar to Young's analysis, Cesairé also cites the role of Christian conversion as a motivating factor in colonial rule, which inevitably results in race-centric ideology. He states, "the chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity = civilization, paganism = savagery*, from which there could not but ensue abominable colonialist and racist consequences" (75). In the episode "Precipice,"⁷⁰ Cavil reiterates the perceived savagery of the humans by suggesting the need for stronger measures to control the human population after they begin using suicide bombers in an attempt to strike Cylon authority and human collaborators. In an act of admonition, he tells those in his circle of authority, "We have a very serious, very straightforward problem. Either we increase control or we lose control. We⁷¹ think it's time for stronger measures." The Cylons' desire to directly control the human population leaves no room for discussion of the human perspective; furthermore, the 'legitimate government of the Colonies' has effectively zero power for intervention or influence. These discussions about the humans usually end up mirroring the British "racist assumption that the native was incapable of education up to the level of the European," which therefore necessitated a *perpetual* occupation much like the Cylons' civilizing mission (Young 33).

⁷⁰ (3.02)

⁷¹ The collective Cavils

EVIL MEN IN THE GARDENS OF PARADISE: RESISTANCE AND TERRORISM

The resistance described by Roslin at the beginning of “Occupation” was not uncommon to colonized areas; Young states “colonial rule of particular territories was challenged locally by those living under its dominance who were fighting for their freedom, and such local resistance was focused on the institutional and military fact of colonial rule” (28). Furthermore, Cesairé discusses the acts of rebellion as being borne out of the condition of being colonized: “colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (76). There are several examples in these first four episodes of ways the colonial humans’ experiences of oppression and suffering reverberate the discursive and violent ways colonized people and territories have historically been treated. In “Occupation,” we find that Colonel Tigh, the former second-in-command of the Battlestar Galactica, has been held in prison for months. He looks disheveled, weak, and is now missing an eye. We later learn that during one of the torture sessions he was subjected to, his left eye was pulled out from its socket and mockingly held up before him. Along with the violence beset Tigh, Roslin informs audiences in her narration that hundreds of people “have been rounded up by the Cylons, held in detention, questioned, tortured” while “others have simply vanished.”

In addition to detention and torture, the Cylons also use food rationing⁷² in an attempt to further control the humans. Other more severe and incredible fear tactics are proposed, and often carried out, including the suggestion of executing Gaius Baltar, the

⁷² “Precipice” (3.02)

acting president of the human colonial government in name only. Cavil goes one step further and advocates for the execution of several human leaders in an attempt to regain full control of the population: “We round up the leaders of the insurgency, and we execute them publicly. We round up, at random, groups off the street, and we execute them publicly. Send a message that the gloves are coming off. The insurgency stops now or else we start reducing the human population to a more manageable size.”⁷³ Ono cites a similar practice at work with episodes in *Star Trek: TNG* in which those confronting the imperialistic Federation must either “submit to the logic, rationality, and culture of the Federation, or they will die” (159). Likewise, the humans who refuse to accept colonial rule by the Cylons, as well as their religious practices and ideology, face torture, prison, or death. In “Precipice,”⁷⁴ the Cylons decide to act on the previous suggestion by Cavil as they make arrangements for all the known leaders of the insurgency, as well as leaders in previous seasons, to be rounded up, taken to a remote location, and executed. With so much emphasis on resistance and rebellion, ultimately the humans are regarded as stand-ins for modern day conceptions of terrorists. As terrorists, the humans pose an “ideological threat” (Ono 167) to Cylon hegemony and must be controlled or eliminated in order to avoid further fractures within the colonial discourse. When debating the ethics of suicide bombings, a former deck officer Chief Tyrol asks Colonel Tigh whose side they are on. Tigh, leader of the rebellion on New Caprica, provides a flippant, smug response: “We’re on the side of the demons, Chief. We’re evil men in the gardens of

⁷³ Occupation (3.01)

⁷⁴ (3.02)

paradise sent by the forces of death to spread devastation and destruction wherever we go. I'm surprised you didn't know that." Tigh understands something Tyrol has yet to comprehend; Fanon speaks directly to the healing powers of violent rebellion in one of his most famous quotes stating, "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (94). This resistance, or insurgency, brings to light the necessity of violent upheaval in the face of suffocating oppression, while also providing a space for viewers to question their own assumptions about the notion of terrorism through this inverted story structure.

DOMESTICITY IN COLONIAL RELATIONS

The dynamics of a gender within the sphere of colonial power is another way imperialistic and colonial motifs manifest themselves on New Caprica. In her book *Imperial Leather*, McClintock discusses the various ways in which colonization of territory and its inhabitants was often framed in gendered terms. By analyzing books, advertisements, and pictures from colonial periods, McClintock argues that a major theme of Western imperialism was "the transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women" (2-3). Furthermore, patriarchal power was not only apparent in how colonized women were treated, but also in the way in which Westerners conceptualized far away lands as virginal territory waiting to be 'discovered' and tamed by male colonial exploration and mapping (25-30). In *BSG*, Starbuck is arguably the most headstrong, independent human character in the series. She is consistently shown as

physically strong, daring, insubordinate of male authority, an accomplished drinker, a fierce poker player, and the best viper pilot in the fleet. To a great extent, her character challenges dominant binary conceptions of gender roles in Western society. However, in these episodes, those characteristics present a threat to the colonial male Cylon and consequently must be controlled and assimilated. In particular, a Number Two model known as Leoben directly exerts force over her personhood turning her into a victim of “imperial plunder” (5). Throughout the series, Leoben has had an overflowing fascination with Starbuck clearly bordering on obsession. With the occupation, he is finally afforded an opportunity to assert himself. Literally kidnapped and physically removed from the confines of her home and husband, Starbuck is carried off in an act of rapine as nothing more than a piece of property. Leoben’s power over her is motivated by a desire to be loved by Starbuck⁷⁵ and to ultimately colonize her emotional, sexual, and reproductive power (McClintock 3). After kidnapping her, Leoben brings Starbuck to an apartment reminiscent of the sort of luxurious living the humans appreciated before the attacks complete with furniture, paintings, kitchenware, decorations, and, naturally, prison bars over the windows and escape. There he holds her hostage for the entirety of the occupation. During her captivity, it appears her real prison sentence is domesticity. For example, Leoben forces her to a meal of steak, mashed potatoes, and carrots with him, like a good Western family. In another scene in “Occupation,” Leoben tells her he is going to bed and it would “be nice” if she joined him. He continues, “Either way, you’re spending the night with me.” Although limited in the ways she is able to resist and fight

⁷⁵ Shown in a deleted scene from “A Measure of Salvation” (3.07).

back, Starbuck does manage to kill Leoben several times, an act that seems futile considering he is able to resurrect into a new body and return. In fact, after she kills him once during the episode, a newly resurrected Leoben walks in the door and states, “Hi, honey, I’m home. You kill me, I download, I come back, we start over. Five times now” whilst taking a seat by her side as if nothing happened. This never ending cycle points to the omnipresence of masculine colonial power and its ability to establish itself as a constant force that cannot be repelled.

This isn’t the first time Starbuck has been the target of patriarchal powers attempting to quell her counter-hegemonic characteristics. In an episode entitled “The Farm,”⁷⁶ Starbuck has traveled back to her homeworld Caprica to gather information for then President Roslin regarding a prophesized 13th planet from which it is believed the 12 colonies/planets originated from. One can appreciate the references to the original 13 British colonies thereby reminding viewers that while the humans are being colonized by Cylon occupation at the beginning of season three, they too at one time were a colonizing force departing from a home planet to establish settlement elsewhere. During Starbuck’s time on (‘original’) Caprica in this episode, she is wounded after a gunfight with Cylon centurions. She wakes up in a hospital being treated by a doctor who appears to be human, but, as she quickly learns, is actually a Cylon agent interested in her body’s reproductive power. Several times, the Cylon agent expresses interest in her ovaries referring to her reproductive system as her “most valuable asset.” In addition, he calls Starbuck a “very precious commodity,” a reductive, sexist title she vehemently refuses: “I

⁷⁶ (2.05)

am not a commodity, I am a viper pilot.” She eventually escapes the facility, but it is unclear whether or not she has been robbed of her reproductive organs. This event on *Caprica* surprisingly comes into play once again in the second episode⁷⁷ of season three when Leoben decides to introduce a little blonde girl into their domestic farce in the hope of taming Starbuck. Leoben informs us that he personally fertilized an egg that was taken from Starbuck’s stolen ovaries and had the egg carried to term by a surrogate mother. In this technological act of rape, Starbuck is once again reduced to a hapless victim of male colonial power asserting itself through a form of sexual conquest. Starbuck begins to care for the girl after she is injured and it is through this ‘accident’ that McClintock’s organic family comes together, vindicating Leoben’s earlier statements: “life means something to us, so I’ve decided to show you just how precious life can be... it can restore your faith.” In the hospital, after Kacey wakes up from her injury, we see Starbuck rousing herself from prayer while simultaneously clutching Kacey and reaching back for Leoben’s grasp. In what proves to be a deeply traumatic experience, Starbuck later learns the child did not actually belong to her after a woman excitedly claims Kacey following Admiral Adama’s successful rescue mission.⁷⁸ In either case, during her captivity Starbuck’s identity is disavowed and reduced to a figure of the domestic family, invariably linked to a fixed category of organic and natural, qualifying her social subjugation to colonial male power (McClintock 44-45).

⁷⁷ “Precipice”

⁷⁸ “Exodus, part II” (3.04)

It is important to note that this analysis is not meant to be a universal description of all female experiences of colonial power. As McClintock astutely mentions, gender relations in colonial environments took on “very different forms in different parts of the world” and that there were a myriad of ways in which women felt the pressures of colonization (31). However, through SF stories such as these, we are provided small opportunities to relate with recognizable selves and experience how colonial hierarchies assert themselves into structures of dominance and subjugation.

OF MIMICRY AND CYLON

Each of these instances represents an allegorical reenactment of colonial desire and fantasy. Langer defines colonial desire as that which “encapsulates in itself the desire to view the spectacle of the oppression of those made subaltern” (29). Despite the hypocritical statements of the Cylons declaring their wishes to bring religious and cultural salvation to the humans, their burden, there is still an element of satisfaction laced in the fact of their colonial control which betrays itself in their cavalier use of violence and force. This speaks to the ambivalence of colonial fantasy, theorized by Bhabha at length:

On the one hand, it proposes a teleology – under certain conditions of colonial domination and control the native is progressively reform-able. On the other, however, it effectively plays the ‘separation’, makes it more visible. It is the visibility of this separation which, in denying the colonized the capacities of self-government, independence, western modes

of civility, lends authority to the official version and mission of colonial power. (“Other Question” 52)

As has already been discussed in chapter one, the Cylons can be read as formerly colonized, and most certainly subjugated, race. And you’ll recall that after the armistice, the Cylons find residence elsewhere and engineer themselves to look like humans, complete with complex feelings and desires. During season one and two, they are often depicted as wanting to experience human emotions such as love and motherhood. The desire to learn and feel these emotions is, as Bhabha would phrase, an act of mimicry. Furthermore, despite their original goal of using their humanoid form to infiltrate the defense systems of the 12 colonies,⁷⁹ the Cylon models then must decide what they want for themselves once the genocide of the human race is, for all intents and purposes, nearly complete. Gumpert suggests that the “genocidal attack of the Cylons against the humans is also an act of revenge against the Colonial rule” and “illustrates the way Colonial regimes are inherently reversible” (147). This reversal of power is most certainly evident with this occupation of the humans. Even more interesting is that preceding these events on New Caprica, two Cylons give the human leaders a message in season two’s finale:⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Miniseries (2003)

⁸⁰ “Lay Down Your Burdens, Part II” (2.20)

There's been a change of plans. It's been decided that the occupation of the Colonies⁸¹ was an error. Bad thinking, faulty logic. Our first major error of judgment. Well, live and learn. You see, we're not like you. We can admit our mistakes, and we're not afraid of change. Our pursuit of this fleet of yours was another error. Both errors led to the same result. We became what we beheld. We became you. People should be true to who and what they are. We're machines. We should be true to that. Be the best machines the universe has ever seen. But we got it into our heads that we were the children of humanity. So, instead of pursuing our own destiny of trying to find our own path to enlightenment, we hijacked yours. I'm to tell you that you've been given a reprieve.

In this monologue, delivered by two Cavils, a number of things about the Cylon race are reiterated and provide concluding support for arguments already outlined. First, they claim they are capable of taking actions and recognizing them as mistakes; in addition, the Cylons create difference between themselves and the human race by saying that unlike the humans, they learn from their mistakes, another instance of their perceived cultural superiority. The Cylons also recognize that they essentially became a version of Bhabha's "mimic man" (*LoC* 125) while trying to walk in the shoes of their former oppressors. In a strange kind of nativist claim, they decide they no longer want to be mimic men, and instead attempt to be the best machines they can be. Here they endeavor

⁸¹ Here Cavil is referring to an act of colonial appropriation (*LoC* 23) when the Cylons repurpose the human home worlds after the attacks. They are seen living in apartment buildings, planting trees, reading in parks, and, of course, sipping lattes at coffee shops. (Downloaded 2.18)

to erase similarities between the two races in order to fashion their own destiny; consequently, this erasure becomes a primary driving force behind their colonial ideology and subsequent occupation of New Caprica. Lastly, although Cavil suggests in this episode for the humans and Cylons to go their separate ways, we of course find out that they will return a year later with the civilizing mission of converting the humans to their religion and thereby improving human-Cylon relations. Again, I would argue these actions and desires could be interpreted as motivated by ambivalence. The Cylons desire to be human-like, and yet they can never be fully human because as the original colonized race, they are a “subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (*LoC* 86). Moreover, in their efforts find their own path, they end up reproducing the colonial fantasies, discourses, and ideological goals of their creators.

CHAPTER 3 Transcultural Movement, Hybridity, and Transformation

My analysis thus far has discussed some of the ways in which *BSG* can be textually analyzed with postcolonial theory in order to expose the social constructedness of colonial discourse, its relation to knowledge production, and the binary axis on which the unstable nature of ideology pivots. In the second chapter, I examined the Cylon occupation of New Caprica as mimicking familiar characteristics of Western imperial practices made possible through an inversion of power that placed the humans as subjugated agents attempting to rebel against a militaristic, technologically superior force. In this third chapter, I plan to investigate the evolving conceptions of self/Other, identity, and hybridity through the tropes of diasporic movements and consciousness, as well as the “making and remaking of identities” (*Routes*, Clifford 7) in the “contact zone” (Pratt 8) and the new forms of cultural negotiation and representation that are opened up in the “third space” at the end of season four (“Third Space,” Bhabha 211). In this epic space journey, both Cylons and humans have been subjugated, empowered, disempowered, and discursively produced through regimes of truth with the intention of marking difference and policing borders. However, I believe the final season of *BSG* can also be read as favorably supporting national, cultural, and individual hybrid existences. In order to do this, I’ll be largely relying on the theoretical insights of James Clifford, Paul Gilroy, once again, Homi Bhabha to better understand the struggles, necessities, and benefits of embodying new ways of living, new ways of thinking about difference, and the potential for transformation in the process.

After the events on New Caprica, both the human and Cylon civilization are forced to reevaluate their present condition and decide what the future holds for them. The remainder of season three and four largely focuses on their continued quest for a new home called Earth, a prophesized thirteenth colony which was believed to have originated from their ancestral planet Kobol similarly to the human tribes that formed the twelve planetary colonies 2,000 years prior before being destroyed by the current iteration of Cylons during the miniseries. I say current iteration of the Cylons, because we find out midway in season four that the thirteenth tribe was actually a population of humanoid and centurion⁸² Cylons who colonized the planet sans humans.⁸³ In yet another tie-in to the series recurring theme “All this has happened before, and all this will happen again,”⁸⁴ viewers discover that the Cylons who populated Earth were later destroyed by nuclear holocaust triggered by their own Centurions in another familiar act of rebellion, destroying all life on Earth save five Cylons. A second major story arc of season four is the impending discovery of the final five Cylon models.⁸⁵ Once Earth is found, it appears as an inhabitable, devastated wasteland. Viewers learn that the final five were originally from this planet and saved themselves through resurrection technology after the nuclear attacks before making their way to the twelve colonies in the hope of warning them

⁸² The remains of the Centurions on Earth are unlike the Centurions in the present time period, highlighting the fact that these Cylons are unrelated to the ones in the show.

⁸³ “Sometimes a Great Notion” (4.11)

⁸⁴ Prophetically spoken by the very first Cylon ‘baseship hybrid’ in *Razor* (2007) and frequently repeated by other baseship hybrids. The baseships hybrids serve the function of organic computers controlling all aspects of the ship, including faster-than-light navigation.

⁸⁵ If you’ll recall there are twelve Cylon models, but only seven of which are known throughout most of the series. Number Seven model, Daniel, is never shown in the series due to the Number One model boxing him in an act of jealousy before the events that take place in this series (“No Exit” 4.15).

against mistreating their Centurions.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the final five's ship does not possess jump-drive⁸⁷ capability so it takes them thousands of years to reach the colonies,⁸⁸ at which point the humans have already created their own models of Cylon Centurions and are engaged in the First Cylon War all the while knowledge of their ancestral history is long lost.⁸⁹ By offering to help the Centurions create humanoid versions, the final five are the actual reason for the armistice that was declared.⁹⁰ Several of the recurring themes in this long, complex history are those of colonial settlement, forced movements, identity negotiation, and figuring new ways of existing with cultural Others. In order to make sense of some of these processes in this chapter, I look at two Cylon characters who are effectively transnational citizens living among the human fleet as opening the door for the recognition and acceptance of hybrid states of being thus challenging conceptions of purity. In the last two sections, I will analyze the humans and Cylons as embodying diasporic conditions and consciousness, thus informing their relations with one another and the shared hybrid existence they seem to be moving towards in the final chapter giving way to the possibility for transformation.

⁸⁶ "Sometimes a Great Notion" (4.11)

⁸⁷ A novum in the series that allows for ships to instantly travel to inputted coordinates by folding space between the origin and destination (Miniseries 2003).

⁸⁸ Since they travel at faster-than-light speed, time slows down for them such that only a relatively few number of years pass.

⁸⁹ "No Exit" (4.15)

⁹⁰ *ibid*

JUMPING TOWARDS A HYBRID FUTURE

According to Hamid Naficy, “to be interstitial, therefore is to operate both within and astride the cracks and fissures of the system, benefiting from its contradictions, anomalies, and heterogeneity” (134). In *BSG*, these fissures slowly begin to erode into gaping chasms as the series makes its journey through season four. In the beginning of the series, it is largely through the character of Sharon Agathon, or Athena, that the producers are able to challenge strict binaries thus allowing for complex understandings of identity through the motifs of the hybrid cyborg figure influenced and inflected by diasporic movement. She is able to do this by occupying an interstitial space both as a Cylon exile and border crosser living among the humans, as well as through her role as the mother of Hera, the first true human-Cylon hybrid child. Similarly, through the character of Caprica Six we see further instances of cracks weakening the foundation upon which both the humans and the Cylons construct their discourse of identity and sense of belonging.

In season three Caprica Six willingly joins the human fleet in the show’s second act of permanent Cylon border crossing marked by violence and ideological difference. In the episode “Rapture,”⁹¹ Athena initiates a rescue mission to find the infant Hera who was taken from the humans⁹² after the events on New Caprica. When Athena finds Hera aboard one of the basestars, she is being cared for by Boomer and appears to be sick.

Athena: It's me. It's mommy, yes. What's wrong?

⁹¹ (3.12)

⁹² The colonial government hid Hera’s existence from Athena by placing her with a foster family, originally informing Athena and Helo she had died shortly after birth (“Downloaded” 2.18).

Boomer: We tried everything. She didn't respond.

Caprica: Look at that. Hera knows her. That's amazing. You and she are biologically identical. Hera recognizes her mother.

Boomer: Well, good, because you can have her. I'm done with her.

Athena: You don't mean that. I know you still care about Tyrol and Adama.

Boomer: No. I'm done with that part of my life. I learned that on New Caprica. Humans and Cylons were not meant to be together. We should just go our separate ways.

Athena: Her belly's as hard as a rock. Have you noticed that before?

Caprica: What do you think that means?

Athena: Blocked intestine, maybe.

Boomer: Our doctors examined her.

Athena: Well, your doctors have never examined a child.

Athena: Hera needs to be seen by a human doctor. I need to take her back to Galactica.

Caprica: You know that can't happen, what this child means to us. What she means to every living Cylon.

Boomer: I should have known. She's been planning this all alone.

Athena: Feel her.

Boomer: She's right. Belly's as hard as a gourd.

Athena: If you don't let me take her, the first of a new generation will die.

God will never forgive you.

Boomer: Maybe Cavil's right. Maybe God never wanted us to have children in the first place.

Boomer: Maybe it'd be better for you if I just snapped your little neck.

Athena: Don't! Please. Please don't kill my baby girl.

(Caprica Six walks up behind Boomer and kills her.)

Caprica: I believe the future of the Cylon rests with this child. And the others who are gonna come after her.

Boomer: So do I.

Caprica: There's a captured Raptor aboard. Let's go. We've gotta get you back to Galactica.

This scene illustrates a couple of points. First, Caprica Six, much like Athena, decides to break away from her homeland, as it were, by deciding to cross the spatial boundaries of one ship to another in order to protect this hybrid child. Not only do Athena and Caprica show their belief in the importance of protecting a living, literal, embodiment of hybridity through the care of Hera, they also mark themselves as hybrid beings through their choices and diasporic movement. This is not to infer they completely divorce themselves from their identity as Cylons as illustrated above in their belief that Hera represents the future of the Cylons; however, because of their status as “exilic transnationals,” they become “luminars suffused with hybrid excess” (Naficy 208) specifically because through these actions and others they come to exist in a space where they are neither fully

assimilated through origin or destination freely borrowing from both. For example, there are several points during the series when Athena's abilities as a Cylon provide aid to the humans such as in "Flight of the Phoenix"⁹³ where she is shown plugging a fiber optic cable into her arm in order to cleanse the Battlestar's computer system of a networked virus.

Through their abilities to negotiate movement and hybrid existences, these two characters actively participate in what Stuart Hall calls the diasporic experience/identity where he talks about this relation between movement, identity and hybridity in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." He states:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by the conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (244)

Caprica's interstitiality informed by her diasporic experience, belonging neither here nor there but somewhere in between, is further outlined upon their return to the Galactica where the motif of boundary crossing is further used to explore heterogeneity. In an episode entitled "The Son Also Rises,"⁹⁴ Caprica Six receives a visit from a lawyer who begins to ask her several questions about her previous relationship with Gaius

⁹³ (2.09)

⁹⁴ (3.18)

Baltar. She describes her continuing attraction and love for him with great detail and sincerity. Lampkin, the lawyer, challenges a Cylon notion of love as perhaps not being as powerful, deep, or painful as a human's. He goes on to describe a failed 10 year long relationship with a woman he loved very much, a love that hurt him deeply when he realized how much he missed her. He asks her, "does your love hurt as much as mine?" to which she resolutely replies "yes." Through her responses, Caprica Six effectively crosses the boundaries of what the humans believe her race possible of experiencing. President Roslin, looking through a window listening to their interview, says quietly, "I feel like part of our world just fell down." In fact, part of their discursive world is falling down as they continue to realize the Cylons are not necessarily who the humans believed them to be. Caprica's sincerity in describing her love for Baltar is disarming, because the boundaries Roslin has spent most of the series constructing are beginning to slowly erode through these experiences with transnationals, as well as the hybrid child Hera. This brings up another interesting development involving Caprica Six on the ship towards the end of season three and the first ten episodes of season four. President Roslin begins to share dreams/visions with Athena and Caprica Six⁹⁵ in "Crossroads 2". After her dream, Roslin decides to talk with Athena and Caprica Six about it in Caprica's cell.

Roslin: I'm sorry about the shackles. Were you with us a moment ago in the lobby of the opera house? I'll take that as a yes, by the look on your face.

⁹⁵ They are presented as sharing the same dream sequence, with each individual running through an opera house looking for Hera presumably to protect her, though we are not sure from what.

Athena: I was there too. And so was Hera.

Caprica: That shouldn't be possible.

Athena: Add it to the list.

Roslin: Were you trying to reach Hera?

Caprica: I don't know. I just knew that I had to protect her with my life.

By engaging the concepts of movement and interstitiality, we can better see some of the ways in which diasporic subjectivities in the show lend themselves to discussions of boundaries and hybridity outside of the usual realm of the Cylons as hybrid ipso facto their humanoid forms as I believe their hybridity to be much more complex. Through the liminal space Athena and Caprica Six occupy, difference and purity can be interrogated in order to form a more complex understanding of identity and relations between two races brought together through discordant experiences. Furthermore, the continued exploration of Cylon identity shows the ways in which stereotypes and strict identity categories are increasingly useless tools with which to conceptualize human and Cylon identity. These realizations are the growing pains several characters on the show experience in the face of such renegotiations. As such, the next two sections will look specifically at some of the ways both the humans and rebel Cylons are transformed through their relationships with one another not just through their conceptions or discursive predilections, but also the physical and visual embodiments of change made possible through hybrid fusions.

SPACESHIPS IN MOTION AND ALTERNATE PUBLIC SPHERES

Diaspora as a concept has a history of use that is far more simplistic than current theoretical conceptions of the term. Historically used to describe movements of people across the globe, especially non-voluntary movements such as slave trade exports, Mannur and Braziel posit that contemporary theorizations of diaspora have become a “major site of contestation” (2). They go on to discuss the necessity of moving away from the use of diaspora as a “catch-all phrase” to describe all movements of people, instead advocating for a more complex understanding of the term that takes into consideration historical, social, national, and transnational contexts and histories (3). However, Clifford points out that theorists should also caution against ideal defining elements of diaspora for fear of setting up a scale of inclusion/exclusion where some groups are more or less diasporic (“Diasporas” 306). The reason for this, he states, is that all diasporic conditions and experiences can vary according to time period specific conditions, “obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections” (306) thus conceptualizing diaspora along a spectrum rather than a specific point of origin or condition. Instead of specific defining elements, Clifford advocates theorizing this concept by focusing on “diaspora’s borders, on what it defines itself against” (307). Similarly, borders, boundaries, and crossings are all persistent themes explored in the movement and blending of human and Cylon characters. Though these two groups no longer have a landmass center with which to relate to, their respective ships and fleets act as a periphery to an imaginary center that only exists in their memory. Diaspora then becomes a tool of critical analysis for questioning binary modes of thinking, as well as theorizing and conceptualizing

boundaries, liminality, and hybridity. More specifically, diaspora theory helps to understand the ways in which “diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity” (Mannur and Braziel 5). It is this very hybridity that opens “diasporic subjectivity to a liminal, dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated” (5). Conceptualized in this way, diaspora is more than just literal dislocations of people; it also speaks to the “mental, emotional and spiritual” displacements (Langer 57).

In her analysis of themes of movement in postcolonial SF, Langer lends useful insight to the connection between colonialism and diaspora. She states, “The human migration resulting from colonialism has flowed in all directions. People have fled from civil wars (pre- and post-independence), become internally or externally displaced due to violence or unjust laws, been ousted from their homelands for various reasons, and have sought out the wealthier imperial seat to escape the poverty and violence caused in the first place by colonial plundering of resources and rending of indigenous societies” (56). What is interesting about this explanation for our current purposes is that the *BSG* universe has included features of each element she lists. Both the Cylons and humans have experienced multiple levels of movement and displacement. The original migration of humans from Kobol colonized twelve distant planets and established connections to one another that, we are informed in “The Woman King,”⁹⁶ were marked by discordant relations often expressed through classism, racism, and warring; relations that bring to mind the global dynamics in our own 20th and 21st centuries. Following the creation of the Cylons and end of the First Cylon War, the robotic race is then exiled from their

⁹⁶ (3.14)

homelands. Of course, forty years later they return and commit an act of genocide numbering in the billions while permanently displacing the remaining 50,000 humans. Fast-forward to the settlement of New Caprica and the two races are once again forced into movement after a violent struggle for autonomy and control comes to an end. Then, in season four a civil war breaks out among the Cylons that leads to further transcultural crossings and fissured boundaries as the Number Ones, Number Fours, and Number Fives square off against the Number Twos, Number Sixes, and a faction of Centurions who have been granted their free will.⁹⁷

In most of these migrations, the novum of interstellar travel allows for the movement and gathering of exiled groups of beings. Consequently, spaceships in *BSG* function similarly to Gilroy's "ships in motion" with the *Galactica* acting as "a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system" (4) with space as the black Atlantic. Gilroy employs this 'chronotope' as a way to describe the persistent process of black identity formation through travel and exchange facilitated by ships (17) across the Atlantic, rather than simply conceptualizing black identity through the "constraints of ethnicity" (19) or affiliation to an American or British nation-state (30-31). Drawing a parallel from this insight, I believe that the *Galactica* and other ships in the fleet, combined with the realities of their diasporic movements through space, similarly function as "cultural and political units" (17) in which Cylons and humans experience ongoing identity changes that move away from the strict, pure, or polemical. Furthermore, I would argue that because of this ongoing process of cultural exchange and identity formation enabled

⁹⁷ "Six of One" (4.04)

through migration onboard a spaceship, humans and Cylons alike come to a place in season four in which once “authentic, natural, and stable” (30) identities no longer make sense in their worldview. Instead, their self-conceptualizations and understandings of one another become “rooted in and routed through” (3) experiences of the past and present, forever changed with the realization that they exist between a home that they can’t go back to and an imaginary future which always seems just out of reach. Similarly, I believe the Battlestar can also be thought of as a “contact zone” (8). Mary Louise Pratt speaks of the cultural transformations that result from forced, migratory experiences in the spaces between here and there. She defines it as a:

space of imperial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, ..., the point at which their trajectories now intersect. ... A ‘contact’ perspective emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees,’ not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices. (8)

The Battlestar Galactica is well-suited as a contact zone through this theorization as residents find themselves inevitably changing with, through, and despite “radical inequality,” “intractable conflict,” and “asymmetrical relations of power” (8) precisely because they must. Narratively, their survival hinges on this transformation, but more so,

their ability to recognize, understand, and internalize “pluralistic positions” (Gilroy 32) also becomes necessary in order to co-exist.

These conceptions are well demonstrated in season four with the ongoing involvement of Cylon and human relations. As mentioned above, several Cylon models begin to have a difference of opinion with regards to the current agenda of annihilating the humans, challenging the near dictatorship of the Number Ones. From the very beginning, the Number Ones have orchestrated vengeance against and pursuit of the humans,⁹⁸ while that drive has slowly waned for several of the other models. In fact, the episode “Downloaded”⁹⁹ is one of the first times we see certain models doubting their resolve and choices, ultimately changed through their emotional attachments with specific human characters on the show. In this episode, a major plot point is that for most of the Cylons at the time, emotions and difference are regarded as something to be feared and looked down upon in favor of complete Model unity. However, as they begin to learn, things inevitably change. This disagreement with the Number Ones in season four comes to a climax in the second episode¹⁰⁰ when the Cavils propose and begin lobotomizing their raiders, because they refuse to attack the human fleet.¹⁰¹ This proves too much and the Sixes retaliate by murdering their brethren. Once the Number Ones, Fours, and Fives resurrect aboard other ships, they turn their weapons against each other destroying several baseships. The surviving Sixes, Eights, and Centurions end up

⁹⁸ *The Plan* (2009)

⁹⁹ (2.18)

¹⁰⁰ “Six of One”

¹⁰¹ At the time, it is believed they refuse to attack because they do not want to harm the final five who are living among the humans, a fact all the other Cylon models save for the Number Ones are not privy to.

proposing a truce¹⁰² with the human fleet and offering their help in the fight against the Number One-led Cylons¹⁰³ in return for citizenship and an alliance.¹⁰⁴ Their new status among the human fleet is often visually punctuated with space shots of the fleet floating together with the damaged, part organic Cylon basestar adjoined. This proves to be quite a jarring image for civilians and viewers alike considering that for the three seasons the fleet has been made up of recognizable human ships. The new Cylon basestar, an image previously recognized as Other and enemy, visually signals new cultural and political relations. Natalie, a Number Six in charge of the rebellion, eloquently speaks to the cultural and political changes they have been undergoing in a speech to the governing body of the human fleet:

In our civil war, we've seen death. We've watched our people die. Gone forever. As terrible as it was, beyond the reach of the Resurrection Ships, something began to change. We could feel a sense of time, as if each moment held its own significance. We began to realize that for our existence to hold any value, it must end. To live meaningful lives, we must die and not return. The one human flaw that you spend your lifetimes distressing over, mortality, is the one thing... Well, it's the one thing that makes you whole. ... Our future, our destiny begins here.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² "The Road Less Traveled" (4.04)

¹⁰³ "The Hub" (4.11)

¹⁰⁴ "A Disquiet Follows My Soul" (4.12)

¹⁰⁵ "Guess What's Coming To Dinner?" (4.07)

These new allegiances are further signaled by the discovery that the final five are key characters within the human population: Colonel Tigh, Chief Tyrol, Samuel Anders,¹⁰⁶ Tory Foster,¹⁰⁷ and Ellen Tigh.¹⁰⁸ Unbeknownst to them, their identity as Cylons is revealed in “Crossroads I”¹⁰⁹ and initiates a series of interpersonal struggles both within themselves and their relations with the humans they care about. Up until late season three, difference and racial boundaries were rigorously guarded, with the exception of Sharon Agathon to a *certain* degree. In fact, two of the most outspoken Cylon bigots, Colonel Tigh and Tyrol, turn out to be Cylons and must find a way to negotiate their identity and role aboard the Battlestar. Likewise, Admiral Adama and several other human characters on the show have to reevaluate their own notions of personhood in light of the revelation that several characters they love and care for are actually Cylons. Adama takes this particularly hard¹¹⁰ considering Tigh has been his closest friend for several decades. Adama is able to eventually accept Tigh for the person he is rather than continue to cling to dated discursive notions of human and Cylon that increasingly hold little meaning. As Tigh declares: "My name is Saul Tigh. I'm 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."¹¹¹ Without this journey and their experiences with other

¹⁰⁶ Husband of Starbuck.

¹⁰⁷ The president's aide.

¹⁰⁸ The wife of Colonel Tigh

¹⁰⁹ (3.19)

¹¹⁰ “Sometimes a Great Notion” (4.11)

¹¹¹ “Crossroads II” (4.20)

Cylon characters on the show such as Sharon Agathon, these characters would never have been able to cross the boundaries of their own ideological constraints.

‘TRANSFORMATION IS THE GOAL:’ HYBRIDITY IN THE THIRD SPACE

In his effort to “intervene” in the process of ideological construction (*LoC* 32), Bhabha proposes the “intervention of the third space” (54) as a way of circumventing the problems associated with the politics of multiculturalism and “cultural difference” (50-51). The primary issues Bhabha has with these ideological conceptualizations of difference have to do with the “ambivalence of cultural authority” (51). According to this, the ‘simple’ act of recognizing difference may seem innocent enough; however, in the act of locating cultural difference against a universal other (i.e. ‘different’ from a center, different from an accepted ‘standard’) cultural authority is produced over that which it marks as different (51). Or, in other words, “although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always also a corresponding containment of it ... because the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests” (“Third Space” 208). Instead, Bhabha argues for doing away with practices which use histories to constitute “originary” notions of culture with which all others can be compared to in favor of “identification” with hybridity, a “ ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” which also “sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives” (ibid 211). I believe this argument advocating for a new way of thinking about the changes that take place through

cultural and political struggles and negotiations is a useful way to end both this chapter and my analysis of the *BSG* series.

In the three-part series finale “Daybreak,” a daring rescue is planned to retrieve Hera from the Cavil-led Cylons who instigated her kidnap in an earlier episode.¹¹² A rescue mission, we are told, was previously not an option as they were not able to find out where she was taken. With the Battlestar on its last leg, plans for evacuation were in the works with colonial command transferring to the refuge Cylon baseship. However, at some point during these proceedings we see Adama begin to have a change of heart after he sees a picture of Hera on the wall commemorating those lost. Soon after, he speaks to Anders who now functions similarly to a baseship Hybrid after being shot in the neck during an earlier mutiny against Galactica command for their support of Cylons in the fleet.¹¹³ Resting in a pool of organic fluid, again similarly to the Cylon baseship hybrids, he is hooked into Galactica’s power grid so that Adama can find out if he knows where Hera might have been taken. Apparently, Adama receives the information he’s looking for and soon thereafter begins planning the Galactica’s last mission starting with a volunteer request for crew. It is here we see the profound effects of this journey that began on very simple polemics of self vs. Other. However, like Adama much of the crew has been transformed through their relations with one another, shared experiences of movement, occupying liminal spaces where notions of purity and origin no longer seem to serve much purpose. President Roslin articulately expresses this struggle and

¹¹² “Someone to Watch Over Me” (4.17)

¹¹³ “Blood on the Scales” (4.16)

transformation in a previous episode when she begins to not only question, but also be changed through her questioning of older political sites of knowledge: “What if suddenly all your beliefs are called into question? Up is down, black is white, scripture is fiction, home is thin air instead of solid ground.”¹¹⁴

On the hanger deck, Adama makes two separate, brief speeches. In one he states, “I’m sure you’re all aware that a child was abducted from this ship recently. I thought that a rescue mission was impractical. Well, I was wrong” before announcing he will be planning a mission to find her.¹¹⁵ It is worth noting that Adama does not refer to Hera as the human-Cylon hybrid or use any other markers of identity as she’s generally been referred to throughout much of the series. Instead, she is simply a child. The episode then allows time to hear the feedback of various crewmembers, including Cylons, who discuss the rescue. Ellen Tigh, one of the final five, is shown responding to Tory’s belief that the mission is insane by saying, “What I know is that Hera has some meaning that *transcends* the here and now and is meant to fulfill a role, just as we were, so we’re going.” After the camera has finished panning around the ship, we are back in the hanger deck of the ship and a few hundred people have joined the floor. Adama addresses the crowd informing them this is likely to be a one way mission and that “no one should feel obligated to join this mission in any way. This is a decision I have made for myself. If it turns out that there are not enough personnel to crew Galactica, I will lead a raptor assault with anyone who is willing to join me.” Showing leadership and conviction, Adama has always been

¹¹⁴ Guess What’s Coming to Dinner?” (4.07)

¹¹⁵ “Daybreak, Part I” (4.19)

representative of the bitter struggles and changes that take place through transformation just as he was with the trust and appointment of Athena to lieutenant, as well as with his continuing reliance upon and friendship with Colonel Tigh after he discovers Tigh to be a member of the final five.

Those who volunteer are many and represent all manner of character including humans and Cylons, the final five, President Roslin,¹¹⁶ and others who have previously fought Cylons, mutinied against a command structure that did not police boundaries between the two species, and supported racial discourse marking difference. All of these characters not only have found some way to live amongst themselves, but are also willing to potentially sacrifice their lives in order to rescue a child, the first human-Cylon hybrid, a person many of them have grown to love. I would argue this union and rescue mission can be read as existing within Bhabha's third space reminding us that "hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" ("Third Space" 216). All of these characters embody a sense of hybridity because many of them now recognize that within sites of struggle, contestation, and negotiation "new sites are always being opened up, and if you keep referring those new sites to old principles, then you are not actually able to participate in them fully and productively and creatively" (216).

Although I do draw a parallel between these theorizations and certain aspects pertaining to visions of hybridity in *BSG*, I do not mean to infer there is perfect alignment

¹¹⁶ Who, along with most of the characters in the show, has committed her own acts of atrocity against the Cylons and originally feared the existence of Hera so much she instigates the plan to fabricate her death upon birth (Downloaded 2.18).

with these ideals or goals. Rather, I think these parallels are better understood as the beginnings, the baby steps, of an ideal yet to be fully realized within our own global culture shaped by Western hegemony. In this way, perhaps once again the genre of SF, when looked at through the lens of postcolonialism and diasporic consciousness, can help viewers imagine possibilities for existence and acknowledgement that go beyond their own personal boundaries for what they believe to be true, natural, and inevitable.

CONCLUSION 'We're Rebels. We Can't Go Back'

The genre of SF provides us with a fantastical playground where we project our own perceptions of reality, replete with imaginative visions of hopes, dreams, and desires. Ultimately though, these perceptions also betray us, simultaneously exposing our fears and anxieties about people, places, and cultures we do not understand, conveniently marked as *different* or Other. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to show the various ways in which *BSG* can be read as exposing some of the processes by which this discursive othering takes place. Furthermore, I have also analyzed *BSG* as offering critiques of these ideological frameworks thus allowing for the possibility of sites of resistance to erupt in the interstitial, liminal spaces between the binary constructions of fact and fiction, self and Other, good and evil. What I also hope to have shown with the contents of this thesis is that *BSG* is a show subject to the same kind of ambivalence that runs deep in any diasporic or postcolonial analysis, "a permanently fraught hope" in which we "discover, over and over, that the good news and bad news presuppose each other" (*Routes* 10). In other words, change is never easy and any bit of progress is always marked with painful struggle and violent resistance.

Although strict practices of colonialism by first world countries have ended as they relate to official imperial projects, the effects, influences, power struggles, and subjectification of Others through colonial practices in the form of neocolonialism, occupation, and social hierarchies are ongoing. The seemingly continuous occupation of Iraq and the discursive structuring of brown skin as "radicals" and "terrorists" by the

United States is a most potent example of this. Chapter one sought to analyze the ways in which colonial discourse continues to manifest itself in the politics of race and domination through the policing of boundaries. Through the figure of the Cylon and colonial human, I was able to identify how racial difference is inscribed onto bodies thereby effectively produced as Other. Postcolonial theory helped me trace the structures of power hierarchy in the show between the Cylons and humans, as well as expose the discursive strategies of fixity and the stereotype upon which colonial discourse draws much of its power. Chapter two sought to switch gears by engaging the inversion of power between the Cylons and humans through the occupation and colonization of humans on New Caprica. By analyzing this simple hierarchical reversal, I sought to bring attention to the similarities between First World colonial projects and the Cylons' through the colonizing goals, justifying rhetoric, and the exercise of power and dominance through race and gender relations. In addition, I was particularly interested in exploring the concept of terrorism and resistance in the show as it relates to a subjugated group offering a counter to the ideological construction of terrorism as inherently evil. In the final chapter, I wanted to draw attention to the changing relations between the humans and Cylons by analyzing some of the ways these associations had evolved from strictly binary terms to a more inclusive, less polarized view of identity and existence. This transformation was not simple but rather represented slow, arduous, and violent progress made possible through the realities of two groups brought together by colonial encounters, as well as diasporic movement and consciousness. The changing relations between the two, though far from equal, were nonetheless recognition of the fact that

interaction between “once distant cultures” brought together inevitably “transforms each one” (Ahmed 11). Lastly, I sought to argue for both a reading and endorsement of several *BSG* characters, human and Cylon alike, as hybrid beings operating from within a third space.

I discuss hybridity in the third chapter not as a process whereby you can simply mix two pure notions of identity and create something else all together. In fact, it is this very idea of hybridity, usually put forth in the politics of multiculturalism or cultural diversity that many postcolonial academics seek to move beyond. The third space as conceived by Bhabha shows that the very act of conceiving of hybridity in this way exposes the falsehood of this mixing since what is created, the product of this water and oil melding, is always ambivalent; it is ambivalent because that so-called hybrid mixture must be conceived against a universal standard, an originary pure other, by which all other amalgamations can be measured against and thereby subjugated in the name of cultural superiority (“Third Space”). In her discussion of diasporic consciousness and cultural practice, Annabelle Sreberny echoes the necessity of such a change. She states, “Such a construction supports the conceptual move from identity viewed as ‘either/or’ to a sense of identifications as ‘and/and’ and seems preferable to the claim of identity as ‘hybridity’, a new mixing which seems to simply highlight some putative pristine original states” (181). This becomes not only a useful way of thinking about the umbrella term ‘identity,’ but also a direct guide for other areas that fall under this umbrella, where identity is actively policed through discourses relating to race, culture, gender, and sexuality.

One of the finest examples of the application of this principle is when Helo defends Athena from reductionist identity politics:

Helo: My wife, Athena, is a person.

Tyrol: She's a blowup doll, Carl. They all are. Athena, Sharon, Boomer. Call them what you will, but they're all the same.

Helo: They're all the same, because *we made them the same*.

This interaction highlights two important points. One, Athena, and by extension all other Cylons (yes, even the 'bad' ones), are more than simple copies of each other. Two, Helo brings attention to the discursive production of truth that coded the Cylons as all the same. This recognition of Athena as a person, and not simply a Cylon, machine, or human lookalike, not only echoes the hybridity to which Bhabha refers, but also Omi and Winant's very similar call to action on a new conception of race: "For it may be possible to glimpse yet another view of race, in which the concept operates neither as a signifier of comprehensive identity, nor as one of fundamental difference, both of which are patently absurd, but rather as a marker of the infinity of variations we humans hold as a common heritage and hope for the future" (206). Ever changing global relations, as well as the reality of expanding transnational identities and borders necessitates a reshaping of how we conceive of one another.

While *BSG* is not without its many faults and hypocrisies stemming from its ideological connections to the Western world, there are still glimmers of this possibility of living within a third space acted out in the show and made possible through the allegorical storytelling of SF. Just as SF has both the potential to extend and critique the

same discursive framework it is both produced from and influenced by, so too can *BSG* be read as a product and counter to Western hegemony through its ultimate and seeming endorsement for hybridity within a third space. For me, one of the most eloquent illustrations of this endorsement is spoken by Natalie, the leader of the Cylon resistance in season four. When asked why she would participate in the destruction of the resurrection hub that allows all Cylons a form of immortality, inevitably changing their way of life forever, she replies, “We’re rebels. We can’t go back.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, painful as change may be, we should all aim to be rebels, because we can’t go back, either. After all, there’s nothing to go back to but an imaginary past.

¹¹⁷ “Guess What’s Coming to Dinner?” (4.07)

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