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# The Evolution of the Robotic Other in Science Fiction Film and Literature: from the Age of the Human to the Era of the Post-Human

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROBOTIC OTHER IN SCIENCE FICTION FILM  
AND LITERATURE: FROM THE AGE OF THE HUMAN TO THE ERA OF THE  
POST-HUMAN

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May, 2006

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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THIS THESIS HAS BEEN APPROVED  
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AND THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES BY

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Dedicated to my family for their continual support

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROBOTIC OTHER IN SCIENCE FICTION FILM  
AND LITERATURE: FROM THE AGE OF THE HUMAN TO THE ERA OF THE  
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GREGORY M. HUMPHREY

**ABSTRACT**

Science fiction film and literature establishes one of the most effective mediums for providing incisive critical analysis of complex sociopolitical issues. An observation of the robotic Other in Karel Capek's early 20<sup>th</sup> century play R.U.R.: (Rossum's Universal Robots), Philip K. Dick's acclaimed novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, and Ronald D. Moore's re-envisioning of the pop-culture, science fiction television series Battlestar Galactica, provides an illustrative study of how the creators of these varied science fiction works utilize the robotic Other to destabilize the more traditional boundaries of the Other and create a narrative that demands critical examination of the post-human concept. The collection of works analyzed in this paper use the robotic Other to study how humanity confronts the divisive issues that arise in post-human civilizations, and addresses how these issues will by necessity require a symbiotic coexistence between humanity and its technological creation in order to not merely survive but flourish in this new post-human universe.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Examining the robotic Other in science fiction film and literature provides one of the most effective means for analyzing increasingly complex social, political, and economic issues, many of which clearly resonate with the problems confronting contemporary society. Karel Capek's R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots), Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, and Ronald D. Moore's re-envisioning of Battlestar Galactica represent an illustrative collection of some of the most intellectually compelling works in the science fiction genre. The emphasis these works place on the robotic Other's position within societal constructs and its potential implications for humanity's sociopolitical and cultural evolution assist in addressing many difficult issues that are currently being debated, particularly as these discussions relate to how society interacts with the Other and extrapolating on the

role artificial intelligence and technology will play in shaping humanity's future.

Notable science fiction author and literary critic Ursula K. LeGuin acknowledges, in her collection of essays Language of the Night, that science fiction functions most instructively as a "mirror" for examining the human condition, perhaps a "true metaphor to our strange times" (108-109, 115-116). In Hans Moravec's book entitled Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence, Moravec addresses one of the most challenging questions that humanity will face with the impending advent of artificially intelligent, sentient life-forms: "The embodiment of this convergence of cultural developments will be the intelligent robot, a machine that can think and act as a human . . . Such machines could carry on our cultural evolution . . ." (2). When the assertions of LeGuin and Moravec are examined in conjunction with Edward Said's work on the concept of Otherness and Jill Galvan's study of post-humanism, the robotic Other clearly becomes one of the primary literary devices utilized by science fiction authors seeking a means for providing an effective tool with which society can analyze and criticize itself. If the lessons science fiction offers do indeed prove valuable from LeGuin's perspective and if artificial intelligence

will someday have the social and cultural impact Moravec suggests, then observing the evolution of the robotic Other in science fiction film and literature can provide significant insight into how societies form diverse sociopolitical and cultural relationships and how the principals interact within these constructs.

Central to developing a more comprehensive understanding of the robotic Other's function in the science fiction genre is the concept of post-humanism. Jill Galvan's work on the post-human collective is essential to the premise of the robotic Other's evolution. However, it is first necessary to clarify the various definitions of post-humanism because this paper utilizes both Galvan's understanding of post-humanism and another interpretation of this concept in which post-human is also coded or read to mean post-racial.

It is Galvan's understanding of the interconnecting relationship humanity has with technology that forms the basis for her definition of the post-human collective. A community of the post-human is one in which humanity and technology form a symbiotic relationship, this symbiosis establishes an environment that enables for the progression and shaping of each other's existence (Entering,413). It is important to realize that Galvan's interpretation of post-

humanism is primarily about humanity finding balance and coexistence with technology in whatever form technology takes, and with that technology quite possibly culminating in what Han's Moravec asserts is the dawn of the sentient machine.

To understand the importance of the robotic Other's contribution to science fiction does not require a belief in the imminence of a literal period of post-humanism, but rather an acceptance of the necessity for establishing a more balanced and mutually beneficial coexistence between humanity and technology. Galvan's insight provides one way in which an understanding of post-humanism may be formulated. Another means of defining post-humanism is to allow that post-humanism may also be read as coded language for the post-racial, a period in which humanity has moved beyond the need to define itself based on inherently divisive classifications.

What is especially useful about the idea of post-humanism in the science fiction genre is that these two definitions of post-humanism are not mutually exclusive, but serve instead to complement each other and aid in establishing a more comprehensive viewpoint. It is one of the reasons why the robotic Other works so well in

developing a broader and more thorough perspective for re-examining Said's traditional understanding of the Other.

Said's traditional understanding of the Other is one in which one group constructs perceived classifications of normalization that are then applied to another group that cannot help but fall outside of these imaginary preconceptions. Consequently, the dominant group never fully concerns itself with, cares about, nor often is even aware of the suffering the Other endures because of the imagined constructs that the dominant group has imposed upon it. It is this disconnect from the Other's suffering that makes the Other's subjugation both possible and oddly acceptable.

What is unique about examining the robotic Other rather than the more traditional Other is that it is quite literally an "imagined" Other. There is of course criticism to be found with studying an Other that is entirely imagined, one which literally is not human and obviously does not even exist. That it might be somehow irrelevant or invalid because it is not real. After all, we do not live in a world populated with sentient robots, androids, or Cylons.

However, the same could be said of studying fables, fantasy, or mythology. Indeed, Ursula K. LeGuin states in

her essay "Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction" that, "science fiction is the mythology of the modern world" (Night, 73). Therefore, to adopt this view of robotic Others' irrelevancy would be to negate the possibilities of what we can learn from its metaphorical and allegorical nature. The robotic Other, therefore, necessitates the need to re-examine Said's more traditional understanding of the Other because the Other may now be viewed from a different perspective, one in which the Other is more like us than not. As a result of the robotic Other, it becomes easier to empathize with the Other. The robotic Other enhances our awareness of the Other's suffering and subjugation, as the robotic Other essentially becomes a mirror for ourselves. It represents our alter ego.

The robotic Other thus teaches the importance of moving towards a more acculturated and progressive future, one of inclusion not exclusion. When the Other is more like us than not, it helps to more easily grasp the importance of embracing the similarities and striving towards coexistence rather than using the differences of Otherness as a basis for persecution and division. In effect, this post-human/post-racial concept of the Other forces us to evolve and formulate a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be human.

Developing an understanding of the emphasis science fiction places on the importance of erasing the boundaries that distinguish Otherness and progressively moving forward to embrace this next step in the process of acculturation, signifies a necessary step in formulating a more fully comprehensive view of the robotic Other's role in science fiction. Furthermore, an understanding of how science fiction employs the robotic Other as a means for addressing various sociopolitical controversies and relating the relevancy of these issues to contemporary audience denotes an essential element in the study of the robotic Other's role in the science fiction genre.

The Robots of Karel Capek's R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots) personify Edward Said's traditional depiction of the Other, in his work Orientalism, as a being that is perceived as lacking in necessary human attributes (206-207). While Capek's Robots appear human at first glance, both in terms of characteristics and composition, there are notable distinctions; it is these differences that allow for the Robots' subjugation. Capek's rendering of the robotic Other enables him to directly confront the issue of the Others' oppression and its inherently corrosive effects on a society, as Capek manipulates the robotic Other to expose the debilitating nature of the Robots' servile

environment while subtextually using the robotic Other to symbolize the oppressed worker in a society struggling to attain Marxist ideals. Capek's Robots are created as laborers for the good of humanity. Ironically, the Robots are designed to usher in a utopian society, creating a new era in human enlightenment because the Robots will theoretically eliminate the need for human labor and enable more time for the perfection of humanity. As the Robots' consciousness evolves, however, the subsequent treatment the Robots receive from their human masters gives rise to their rebellion, eventually resulting in a more dystopian future, one that encompasses humanity's ultimate destruction.

In accordance with Said's theory of the Other, analyzing the Other from a perspective of differential cultural, physical, and characteristic distinctiveness provides a more traditional approach to recognizing Otherness, as Capek's play illustrates; however, this means of defining the Other is not always applicable in science fiction, which Philip K. Dick suggests in his novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?. Moving away from Capek's conceptualization of the Robots, Dick expertly constructs a new form of the robotic Other that completely redefines the more traditional concept of Otherness Said asserts in



Orientalism, subtly subverting the idea of an Otherness based on physical or characteristic exclusivity and effectively utilizing the science fiction genre and the robotic Other specifically to destabilize Said's concept of Otherness. This unique approach allows Dick to further examine the subjugation of the robotic Other in the form of the android, a type of biotechnological Other that so closely resembles humans that it is virtually indistinguishable. Consequently, this leads humanity to begin questioning what it truly means to be human, an issue that Ronald D. Moore will further explore in the Battlestar Galactica universe.

Continuing to expand upon the work of Capek and Dick, Ronald D. Moore develops the robotic Other as an element for constructing sociopolitical commentary, which aids in enhancing the viewers' understanding of the inherent difficulty of maintaining strict moral and ethical precepts in a war-time environment. Moore's approach enables him to challenge viewers of his television series, Battlestar Galactica, to seriously consider the implications of basing societal constructs on such an unstable premise as Otherness, an Otherness that Moore presents with the evolution of a new type of robotic Other, the Cylon. Moore's development of the Cylon Other allows him to create

incisive, critical commentary that addresses some of the most fiercely debated present-day issues regarding how societies treat the Other, particularly when confronted with the most horrific and base aspects of human nature that are all too frequently exhibited in a time of war.

Similarly, all three of these science fiction works re-examine Said's understanding of Otherness from their own unique perspectives on reproductive rights. Capek's Robots struggle to attain personhood and self-reproduction, Dick's androids are forced to confront the horrific realities of limited lifespan and reproductive subjugation, and Moore's Cylons address the evolution of their own species and humanity with the birth of the Cylon/human Hybrid.

By studying these various illustrative forms of the robotic Other in science fiction film and literature, it is possible to trace its evolution, and see how the robotic Other functions within this literary genre. Science fiction thus provides one of the most effective and insightful means for analyzing complicated sociopolitical and cultural issues, and aids in developing critical commentary that utilizes the robotic Other as a method of communicating the relevancy of these difficult concepts to a contemporary audience.

## CHAPTER II

### EVOLVING TOWARD CONSCIOUSNESS: THE RISE OF THE ROBOTIC OTHER IN KAREL CAPEK'S R.U.R. (ROSSUM'S UNIVERSAL ROBOTS)

In Karel Capek's play, R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots) (*R.U.R.*), Capek presents a literary work that was unique for its time, as he envisions an entirely new class of Other, the Robot, in order to re-examine the traditional slave/master dichotomy and communicate a social, political, and economic commentary that remains as relevant today as it was for Capek's contemporaries. Throughout *R.U.R.* Capek's play exhibits the influences of Marxist philosophy, specifically what Karl Marx referred to as the "great class struggle." Indeed, the central tenet of Marxist literary theory is that, "Marxism considers literature and culture to be inseparable from the politics of class" (Rivkin and Ryan 231); *R.U.R.* is quite clearly influenced by this concept, as Capek's work with Otherness challenges his audience to confront the problems of class structure and critically examine the difficult questions inherent to

societies that elect to dehumanize the Other, whether that dehumanization takes the form of social segregation, political oppression, or reproductive subjugation. Furthermore, by examining the robotic Others' evolution from an artificially intelligent construct to a fully realized sentient being, Capek uses the robotic Other to develop one of the central questions in science fiction film and literature: what it means to be human; a recurring question that has influenced and informed some of the most notable works in science fiction, and a question that will become central to the writings of Philip K. Dick and Ronald D. Moore.

The conflict between the Robots and humanity in *R.U.R.* develops as the Robots become increasingly humanized through the gradual and intentional formation of their consciousness. As in the case of many Others who have suffered oppression, the Robots' recognition of their status within the perceived utopian society that their servitude has helped to build and maintain results in their eventual rebellion, as the Robots seek to overthrow their masters and assert dominance over their own perceived Other, humanity.

In the prologue to *R.U.R.*, Domin explains to Helena how the young Rossum's new vision of the Robots' role in

society differed from his father's ideals for his original creation. The elder Rossum sought to create people, effectively a new race. The Robots are functioning allegorically here as a means of illustrating how technology will eventually supplant the need for religion, science triumphing over superstition. Nana, Helena's nurse, affirms how she believes this goes against the divine and natural order when she states that, "such blasphemy is against the will of the Creator. . ." (27). However, the young Rossum's vision of a robotic future differs, as he seeks to perfect the elder Rossum's Robots and utilize them for both profit and principle by creating a new labor class, workers specifically designed to enhance production and eliminate the need for human toil and suffering.

The newest generation of Rossum's Robots is intended for a specific purpose, to usher in a new utopian era for humanity. It will be an historic period. One which Domin, the central director for the R.U.R. corporation, insists will bring about a new age of enlightenment:

Never again will anyone have to pay for his bread with hatred and his life . . . No one will have to mine coal or slave over someone else's machines. No longer will man have to destroy his soul doing work that he hates (21).

Domin's intentions clearly incorporate elements of Marxist philosophy. Capek's critique of the capitalist economic system echoes in the words of Domin because for Marxism the economy is ". . . a political structure in which one group (workers) is coerced by another group (owners) into producing wealth through labor" (Rivkin and Ryan 235-236). While Capek is clearly adverse to a capitalist system that values lives in terms of their ability to produce monetary returns, he cautions against the utopian ideals of Marxism, as evidenced by Alquist, R.U.R.'s Chief of Construction, who clearly does not share Domin's position.

In fact, Alquist emphatically states his opposition to such grandiose beliefs: "What you're saying sounds too much like paradise. Domin, there was something good in the act of serving, something great in humility . . . there was some kind of virtue in work and fatigue" (21). Alquist understands the potential danger the Robots pose for humanity, voicing his concern that the Robots will assume humanity's work and thereby remove what he believes is a necessary part of the human experience, to toil and create. Domin's desire to see the Robots take over humanity's labors will be further challenged by the robots themselves, as the robotic Others' consciousness begins to take shape.

Although the physical threat of the Robots is not immediately present in the play, once the head of the Psychological Research Division at the R.U.R. corporation, Dr. Gall, begins to alter the Robots' level of consciousness, at Helena's request, the Robots begin to display not only an instinct to survive but a willingness to sacrifice themselves in order to overthrow their oppressors and to promote the continual existence of the Robot collective. Kamila Kinyon's article, The Phenomenology of Robots: Confrontations with Death in Karel Capek's R.U.R., addresses the evolution of the Robots' sentience and its subsequent consequences for humanity. Kinyon maintains that the evolution of the Robots' consciousness is evidenced by analyzing the thought processes and actions of four Robots, particularly as this relates to the Robots' reactions to death (379-381). Kinyon's analysis of the Robots "confrontations with death" and Said's work on the nature of the Other, establishes a basis for providing an explication of Capek's usage of the robotic Other as a means of informing the play's sociopolitical commentary, and advances a more thorough comprehension of *R.U.R.*'s thematic concepts and the role the Robots play in exploring the dehumanization and subjugation of the Other.

Radius is the first Robot to undergo this new transformation of consciousness, and it is Radius who writes the Robot manifesto, which calls upon the Robots to unite and rise up against humanity. Dr. Gall's intentional formation of Radius' consciousness results in the Robot's uniqueness. Consequently, Radius' studies and observations on the nature of humanity lead him to conclude that Robots are superior beings with humanity merely living off the Robots like parasites. Radius' belief in the Robots' superiority provides the Robot with the impetus for inciting their revolt: "I do not want a master. I know everything . . . I want to be the master of others" (37). In one of the play's many ironies there is a reversal of the slave/master role, as Radius begins to view humans as the Other, and subsequently calls for the unification of all Robots and the destruction of humanity. Radius' act of mimicry reinforces what the Robot believes are necessary human attributes in the Robots' quest to subjugate humanity, which results in a shift of the robotic Others' perception much like what the Cylons experience in Battlestar Galactica when they seek to assert their dominion over humanity; furthermore, Radius' mimicry constitutes a subversive and menacing threat to an established system of power and oppression. It is a threat



that Domin seeks to eliminate by further tightening humanity's hold over the Robots.

Realizing after the uprising that if Robots are to continue being manufactured, then a method for controlling them must be implemented; Domin seeks to undermine the Robots' desire for unification by exploiting the very concept of Otherness itself. Domin intends to prevent future revolts by emphasizing the Robots' distinctiveness, as he relates his idea to Helena:

It means that each factory will be making Robots of a different color, a different nationality, a different tongue; they'll all be different - as different from one another as fingerprints; they'll no longer be able to conspire with one another; and we - we people will to foster their prejudices and cultivate their mutual lack of understanding, you see? (46).

Drawing on humanity's own history of prejudice, Domin will continue to subjugate the next generation of Robots by nurturing divisions among them, divisions that are based entirely on Said's traditional concepts for defining Otherness - physical, geographical, and cultural distinctiveness, or as Marx would note: "Culture is capitalism's way of getting people to construe domination

as freedom" (Rivkin and Ryan 232). In exploiting the idea of cultural differentiation, Domin sincerely believes that, ". . .any given Robot, to the day of its death, right to the grave, will forever hate a Robot bearing the trademark of another factory" (46). By fabricating a physical and cultural uniqueness for the Robots and effectively institutionalizing hatred among them, Domin is trying desperately to undermine Radius' act of mimicry and intensify the power humanity holds over the robotic Other in the hope of preventing Radius from obtaining his goal of uniting the "Robots of the World."

The subtext that Capek communicates with the Robots' revolt is evident in numerous ways, with Capek himself continuing to maintain a neutral position throughout the play. As S.R. Delany maintains in Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction, "Science fiction is not about the future; it uses the future as narrative convention to present significant distortions of the present" (291), and *R.U.R.*'s continual resonance is derived in part from the expertise with which Capek creates a futuristic, fictional narrative to establish an effective framework for his contemporary social criticism. Initially, the Robot uprising that Capek depicts serves as a critique of a capitalist system that warns against the

dehumanization and exploitation of the Other for profit; however, the Robots' revolt also provides a cautionary perspective against a socialist system in which the workers themselves may in fact become robotized by the very machine of governance they have become dependent upon in order to sustain their civilization. Capek also indicates a concern that humanity is becoming dehumanized by the technology it has put in place to further production, profit, and idealism. Additionally, the struggle for supremacy between Robots and humanity provides Capek with an excellent platform for critiquing nationalism. Although Capek does not explicitly endorse a process of global acculturation, he employs the robotic Other as means for exposing the inherent flaws of nationalism, and how fear of the Other is all too often exploited by those in positions of power to the detriment of the nation's citizenry. The robotic Other, therefore, provides Capek with a means for exploring these complicated issues, and indeed the nature of these problems embody a profound resonance that has continued to influence subsequent generations of science fiction film and literary works.

While Capek utilizes the Robots' uprising along with these instances of Otherness to force the reader to confront problematic societal aspects and critically

examine them, he also presents another equally challenging prospect. With humanity now seeking to reassert its dominance over the Robots and the Robots striving collectively for the destruction of the human race, humanity has yet to resolve its most significant problem, sterility. Humans are dying on their own, despite the Robots' revolt, having lost their capability for biological reproduction.

With production completely assumed by the Robots, humanity no longer produces anything, not even children. In the process of attaining its utopian paradise and having no further need for labor of any sort, humanity has literally lost its passion for life, which Capek symbolizes through humanity's sterility. The sterile flower Alquist cultivates for Helena, the Cyclamen *Helenae*, not only serves as a symbol of her objectification, it renders Helena as something merely beautiful and unthinking - little more than a robotic double, but most notably the sterile flower foreshadows the impending demise of humanity.

Procreation figures prominently in *R.U.R.*, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and Battlestar Galactica because reproductive subjugation is initially one of the primary means through which the robotic Others - the Robots,

androids, and Cylons - are all controlled, and biological self-reproduction remains essential to the robotic Other's quest to attain personhood. In point of fact, *R.U.R.*'s Robots only have a twenty-year lifespan, and lacking the capability to reproduce biologically they are entirely dependent on humanity, specifically Rossums's formula, for their continual collective existence. The Robots' inability to self-reproduce biologically denotes the primary signifier in the Robots' Otherness and it inhibits their progress toward a post-human world. Only through the continual evolution of their consciousness and acquiring the ability to reproduce will the Robots achieve personhood, and the next Robot to exhibit an evolved state of consciousness, Damon, offers to sacrifice himself in the hopes of obtaining a solution to the Robots' infertility problem.

As the Robots' consciousness begins to evolve, a shift occurs that results in Damon's self-awareness and also in his belief that through suffering and hardship the Robots have acquired a soul. Kinyon confirms this concluding that, ". . . following the robot massacre, the robots experience a sense of remorse for the actions of their past. This remorse results in a transformation of the robots into a collective spirit/soul" (387). Damon seeks to sacrifice

himself for the collective good, but in the process of allowing Alquist to experiment on him, Damon becomes aware of not only his individuality but of the importance of life and by extension the error the Robots made in conducting an act of genocide against the human race. The robotic Others' ability to recognize and acknowledge the importance of life notes a significant shift in their evolution to personhood, and an awareness of the robotic Others' individuality is essential to the experiences of Capek's Robots, Dick's androids, and Moore's Cylons because it marks the break from a mode of collective consciousness to the realization of an independent mind and by extension the beginnings of a distinctive personality, which is imperative to the robotic Others' desire to not merely survive but to attain the level of personhood necessary to eventually coexist with humanity in a post-human world.

Although Capek never resolves the problem of sterility in humans, in the play's final act he does present two Robots, Primus and Helena, whose willingness to sacrifice themselves for their own love indicates that the Robots are taking the final step in their evolution to realizing sentience and self-reproduction, and Capek offers a glimpse of the new era of civilization to come, which Darko Suvin

reaffirms in his critical work, The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, stating that,

. . . the robots again grow more like a new human order than like inhuman aliens, more like workers than machines; reacquiring pain, feelings, and love, they usher in a new cycle of creation or civilization (272).

Primus and Helena share not only a capacity for love, hope, and a willingness for self-sacrifice, but also an appreciation for life, and it is the appreciation for life and the ability to attain self-reproduction that marks the final step in the Robots' evolutionary journey to personhood.

In conclusion, Capek's robotic Other not only effectively illustrates the numerous and varying social economic, and political conflicts that arise in societies when one class seeks to dehumanize and subjugate another, but the robotic Other also enables Capek to explore the larger and more difficult question of what it means to be human. Chapters III and IV of this paper examines the robotic Other's ability to function as incisive social criticism, addressing new sociopolitical challenges in the post-human worlds of Philip K. Dick and Ronald D. Moore.

### CHAPTER III

#### "MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN" - THE SUBJUGATION OF THE ROBOTIC OTHER IN PHILIP K. DICK'S Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

The dystopian world Philip K. Dick envisions in his science-fiction novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (*Electric Sheep*) enables Dick to re-examine the more traditional concepts of Said's Other, as it relates to the various distinctions concerning life, and how the Other exists under the corrosive structure of colonialism. Dick utilizes his unique and varied constructs of the Other, specifically the androids and the "specials," as literary devices that assist in exposing the problematic nature of living in a colonial society, one that justifies class distinction and even encourages oppression and slavery among certain segments of the Others; furthermore, Dick addresses the complexity of establishing a symbiotic coexistence in such a debilitating environment, as he confronts the difficulties humanity must face as it



transitions from the age of the human to the era of the post-human.

Dick's novel affirms the various difficulties associated with the acknowledgement of the Other, especially as these complexities are manifested in the form of humanity's alter ego, the android. Jill Galvan considers the sociopolitical ramifications of the technologies Dick conceives in her article "Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?," and Galvan concludes that the actions of the renegade androids precipitate the necessity for redefining the preconceived classifications concerning what constitutes life, ultimately ushering in the post-human collective - a new era that recognizes the necessary symbiotic relationship between technology and humanity (413). Applying Galvan's theory of the post-human collective to the Other necessitates the need for differentiating among the various distinctions of beings present in Dick's text.

The Other encompasses many different forms in Dick's novel. In Kim Stanley Robinson's doctoral dissertation entitled The Novels of Philip K. Dick, the acclaimed science-fiction author observes that Dick portrays four distinct types of beings in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?: "Humane-Humans (Isidore, and as the novel

progresses Rick Deckard), Cruel-Humans (Phil Resch and Isidore's boss), Humane-Androids (Luba Luft), and Cruel-Androids (the androids who torment Isidore)" (92); however, Robinson does not really interpret these classifications any further. By expanding on Galvan's work with the post-human collective and Robinson's method of differentiation, it possible to illustrate how Dick develops the Other, particularly the robotic Other, as a means for effective social commentary, which is designed, in part, to reveal humanity's limitations and imperfections; furthermore, this will demonstrate how Dick expertly crafts the dual nature of the androids as a means of expressing the robotic Others' need for liberation, and how both the androids and the specials the author depicts symbolize the manifestation of the Others' desire for recognition and inclusion in this new post-human era.

The post-human world Dick imagines witnesses the decline of governmental power and the rise of corporatism. The United Nations (U.N.) still ostensibly exists, but it has lost much of its power, functioning somewhat as an organization for controlling the remaining population but predominantly operating as an extension of multiplanetary corporations, like the Rosen Association. Indeed, the largest consumer of the Rosen Association's principal

product, the android, is the U.N., offering androids as an inducement for immigrating to the off-world colonies: "That had been the incentive of emigration: the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick. . . "(16). The androids are forced to serve as laborers for citizens willing to immigrate to the Martian colonies. They represent humanity's newest class of slaves, and the androids constitute one of the primary motivating factors that perpetuates immigration to the off-world colonies: "The organic android had become the mobile donkey engine of the colonization program" (16). The androids' status as slaves is further emphasized in the commercial J.R. Isidore, a special or a perceived subspecies of humanity, watches on television.

The language the advertiser stresses during his sales pitch clearly delineates the android as the Other, a quasi-organic entity that possesses no rights and remains solely the property of its owner. The commercial describes the android as a "body servant" and a "tireless field hand," positions slaves have often been made to work. The announcer even goes so far as to say the android, ". . . duplicates the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states" (17). The android's servitude has become an integral part of the colonization program, and most humans

believe that without them colonization would be jeopardized as would Earth's entire economic system, a sentiment the bounty hunter Rick Deckard expresses during his examination of the Nexus 6, Rachel: ". . . the manufacture of androids, in fact, has become so linked to the colonization effort that if one dropped into ruin, so would the other in time" (45). The android's classification as the robotic Other effectively ostracizes them and provides a basis for legitimizing their enslavement and exploitation, and by extension excludes the androids from receiving more appropriate recognition in society.

This is evidenced in the menial jobs the androids are forced to work in the colonies, even though they are capable of performing jobs that would be far more beneficial to society, such as the type of job the android Roy Baty worked after escaping servitude. Seemingly, he was employed as a pharmacist before eventually fleeing to Earth, as Deckard later discovers:

A pharmacist on Mars. . . Or at least the android had made use of that cover. In actuality it had probably been a manual laborer, a field hand, with aspirations for something better. Do androids dream? . . . Evidently; that's why they

occasionally kill their employers and flee here.

A better life, without servitude (184).

This passage describes not only the androids' subjugation, but it also communicates the experience of slaves throughout history. Slaves whose dreams of a better life were denied and potential and contributions as productive members of society were never fully realized.

David Dresser's article "Race, Space and Class: The Politics of the SF Film from Metropolis to Blade Runner" acknowledges the android's slave status: "The replicant's association with people of color . . . implicate[s] the dehumanization process necessary at the political level to call forth the possibility of genocide" (115). In effect, the androids are robotic Others who are forced to live outside the boundaries of "civilization," differentiated and isolated from the rest of humanity; they are biotechnological beings that face extermination if they return to Earth. Nevertheless, the androids only hope of attaining freedom from slavery remains to escape the Martian colonies and seek some form of refuge on Earth, but as Dresser previously notes, this also proves a disparaging situation for the androids because they will now be targeted for "retirement" by bounty hunters.

Bounty hunters like Deckard contract to kill any androids that return to Earth, regardless of their potential value to society. The image of Robinson's humane-android is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the figure of the android turned opera singer, Luba Luft. Luba exemplifies all that the android is capable of achieving, as she transforms herself from slave to singer, extolling the finer characteristics of the androids and their potential to coexist harmoniously with humanity as valuable and contributory members of a necessary post-human environment. Even a seasoned bounty hunter like Deckard cannot help but think that, "[s]he was really a superb singer," and he questions how, ". . . [can] a talent like that be a liability to our society" (137)? Despite Luba's ability to integrate into society, Phil Resch kills her; Resch is the epitome of the cruel-human Robinson outlines.

Alone with two bounty hunters and isolated from the other androids, Luba dies screaming. Her final moments are a stark reminder of the figure she had been observing in Munch's painting just moments before. The solitary personage in *Scream* symbolizes despair and isolation, emphasizing the androids' experience as they are excluded from society. The androids are segregated as much for the

nature of their origination as for their inability to experience empathy.

It is, in fact, partly this difference in their origins that marks them as the robotic Other. According to Eric S. Rabkin's article "Irrational Expectations; or, How Economics and the Post-Industrial World Failed Philip K. Dick," Rabkin details the potential threat the escaped android must face:

. . . these machine people have been forbidden the usual habitations of humanity; instead, they are to labor on humanity's behalf. Sometimes, however, they escape and reach humanity's home. They are to be killed. The human Rick Deckard hunts them for a bounty, a difficult job as the androids are virtually the same as human beings, except for their origins (179-180).

The androids are biotechnological constructs, which results in the disconnection they are forced to endure. Incapable of generating an empathic response, despite the complexity of their organic engineering and the sophistication of their programming, the androids are perceived by humanity as not being so much inhuman in their actions as they are simply not human at all.

The question of what it means to be human is a recurring thematic concept in science fiction, especially in Dick's writing. In an interview for *Second Variety* magazine, Dick stated that it is, "My grand theme - who is human and who only appears (masquerades) as human" (Fitting 132)? Therefore, if "to be emotional is to be genuinely human," as Dresser suggests, then what does that say about Resch or Deckard's wife Iran, one of whom is a borderline sociopath with difficulties generating his own empathic responses and the other of whom depends heavily on the Penfield Mood Organ to stimulate her emotions (116)?

Resch exhibits the same lack of empathic response the android is incapable of feeling, or what Deckard refers to in psychiatric terminology as, "absence of appropriate affect" (5). This flattening of affect is the primary signifier that marks the android as not human, yet Resch resides within society, working in a profession that oddly appears acceptable and necessarily relies on the specific absence of this ostensibly human characteristic.

Similarly, Iran frequently uses the mood organ to dial for a stimulant or suppressant, altering her state of mind electronically. This is interesting in that "Penfield artificial brain stimulation" bears a strong resemblance to a computer program constructed to generate a specific



response, a program that it would be reasonable to conclude would be a central component of the androids' biotechnological composition, obscuring the distinction between humans and androids even further.

These less-than-human humans are, however, not part of the Other class of humanity. They receive full inclusion in society, unlike the android Luba who appears more human but experiences only exclusion. Furthermore, the androids are not the only Other considered to be lacking in the necessary requisites for inclusion into humanity; there are also the specials.

The specials represent a class of the Other that are also designated by the government as different, and consequently they reside outside of the accepted societal structure. In this respect, they are similar to androids because they too are relegated to performing tasks that the more biologically acceptable humans remain largely unwilling to do, and their special classification eliminates their option to participate in colonization. Like the androids, human specials are forced to endure reproductive subjugation, as imposed sterilization procedures are enacted to prevent their biological reproduction:

Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself classified as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race. Once pegged as a special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased in effect to be part of mankind (16).

The sterilization specials endure denotes them as a distinct type of human Other and forces them into a lower class level similar to the androids, effectively removing them from society. Moreover, both the androids and the specials are forced to endure reproductive subjugation in the forms of limited lifespan and forced sterilization, respectively.

Despite Isidore's status as a special or perhaps because he is *special*, Isidore belongs to the category of humans that Robinson classifies as the humane-human. As a particular distinction of the Other, Isidore faces persecution from Robinson's more deviant category of humans, the cruel-humans - those who seek to isolate and degrade Isidore solely because he has been consigned to the special caste. It is important to note that not only do certain humans view Isidore as the Other, but he is also perceived as the Other by the androids, specifically

because they lack the ability to empathize with an Other like themselves.

In fact, it is the androids that ultimately cause Isidore, the most empathic and humane figure in the novel, intense suffering. The spider the android Pris mutilates emphasizes Isidore's pain and isolation, but the spider is more than merely another source of Isidore's suffering; it is a symbol for the androids themselves. The spider is a predatory creature, as Dick notes early in the novel, a creature that lacks empathy because it would impair its ability to survive. Spiders also turn on their creators; newborn arachnids consume the female spider after birth. Dick's androids are also primarily perceived as predatory beings that lack empathy, and they too are capable of turning on their creators, humanity. Moreover, the most telling aspect of the spider's symbolization of the android is how both the android and the spider may be seen from two opposing perspectives: a benefit to society or a detriment. It is precisely the android's dual nature that proves problematic in reconciling their fate, but it is also their dual nature that makes them so closely resemble their human creators.

In Marilyn Gwaltney's article "Androids as a Device for Reflection on Personhood," Gwaltney maintains that, "If

the creature is virtually identical in kind to its creator, should not the creature have virtually all the same rights and privileges as the creator" (32)? Clearly, it is only when the androids are no longer viewed as the Other that they will be accepted into society; however, for Dick the answer is never quite so simple. Dick's conception of the android represents, in part, the personification of a technological threat to humanity, and unlike Capek's Robots and Moore's Cylons, Dick's androids never experience reproductive independence or a state of personhood that is necessary to call forth a level of acculturation and subsequently their inclusion into society. With few exceptions the androids are largely viewed as a threat throughout the novel, perhaps Dick's persistent warning of technological dangers. That Dick chooses to never resolve the androids' struggles with reproductive subjugation and a limited lifespan suggests that the android is emblematic of Dick's desire to re-examine the stability of the Other in a post-human world and question the perceived benefits of technological advancement and its effects on humanity.

In conclusion, Dick's complex portrayal of the androids illustrates the problematic nature of technology and the instability that exists with Said's premise of the Other in the science fiction genre; his depiction of both

the androids and the special, Isidore, exposes the dehumanization the Other experiences, resulting from erroneous class distinction that stems from questions of origination, emotional response, and biological acceptability. The fact that Dick's robotic Other does not conform to the Occidentals' normal standards of discourse marks a distinct break from Capek's robotic Other and an evolutionary advancement for the robotic Other that Moore will continue to expand upon with the Cylons. Humanity's ability to empathize with the robotic Others' plight in *Electric Sheep* also constitutes a notable exception to Said's premise of the Other in which the Occidental remains largely ignorant of or mostly unaffected by the Others' subjugation. Therefore, Dick's work with the robotic Other calls forth a necessary imperative to re-examine the stability of Said's Other in science fiction and the role technology plays in society, if humanity is to not only to exist but also prosper in the future Dick imagines.

## CHAPTER IV

### "ARE YOU ALIVE?" - THE ROBOTIC OTHER IN THE POST-HUMAN UNIVERSE OF RONALD D. MOORE'S BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

In Ronald D. Moore's re-envisioning of the science fiction television series Battlestar Galactica, Moore utilizes the robotic Other as a representative device for addressing concerns of acculturation, civil liberties, reproductive rights, and social control in a rapidly evolving environment where humans are confronting the very real possibility of extinction through their own robotic constructs, the Cylons (Cybernetic Living Organism). The re-emergence of the Cylons as a newly evolved, biotechnological entity constitutes a necessary imperative on the part of humanity to examine what it means to be human, and forces humanity to question how it will survive as it transitions from the age of the human to the era of the post-human.

Moreover, Battlestar Galactica examines the robotic Other from several distinct sociopolitical perspectives:

the robotic Other enables Moore to comment on the ramifications of excluding the Other from meaningful, participatory positions within a given societal structure and the potential consequence of relegating the Other to a more servile role, a subservient status that is based entirely on the premise of Otherness; the robotic Other also assists Moore in creating provocative sociopolitical commentary, which relates directly to some of the most divisive contemporary issues, especially as these issues focus on the fear of miscegenation, reproductive rights, and the debate concerning occupation and resistance, and the torture of the Other in a time of war; and finally the robotic Other addresses the consequences of technology and how the technology humanity creates will evolve with the realization of artificial intelligence.

A central element to the speculative evolutionary concept of the robotic Other in science fiction concerns the question of what it means to be alive. The idea of what constitutes life figures so prominently in Battlestar Galactica that the first scene in the "Miniseries" (M.01, M.02) depicts a meeting between a Colonial officer and one of the newly-evolved-biotechnological model Cylons, Number Six. It is the first interaction between a human and a Cylon since an armistice was declared after the Cylon War

forty years ago, and it also marks the first time a human sees a Cylon that represents a perfect simulacra of a human being. More important than what the Colonial officer sees when he looks at the Cylon are the words that Number Six speaks to him:

Six: Are you alive?

Colonial Officer: Yes.

Six: Prove it (M.01).

Number Six's question regarding the nature of life resonates throughout the series, as Battlestar Galactica forces the viewer to confront the robotic Other, not only as it applies to the evolution of the Cylons, but also how humanity chooses to address its overwhelming fear of Other and reconcile the future that awaits both races in this post-human universe.

Like Capek's Robots and Dick's androids, the Cylons are created in effect as a subservient race. In keeping with Said's assertion that physical distinctiveness renders the Other susceptible to oppression, it is precisely the Cylons' complete absence of any resemblance to humanity in the earlier sentient, machine models that renders them capable of being thoroughly dehumanized by their human creators, ultimately providing the impetus for the Cylons' genocidal rebellion.



Whereas Dick's androids sought primarily to escape servitude, the Cylon rebellion progresses much like the Robots revolt in *R.U.R.* to the virtual destruction of the human race, as the Cylons launch a massive nuclear attack that devastates the planets of the Twelve Colonies. This level of apocalyptic destruction is a familiar motif in dystopian film and literature, as it enables the creation of a new framework for effectively analyzing sociopolitical commentary by reducing, reshaping, or eliminating entirely the foundation of moral and ethical precepts that govern societies.

The Cylons' initial attack against humanity is so effective that it reduces the size of the human population from approximately 20 billion people, residing over a system of twelve planets, to a little over 50 thousand survivors, scattered among a battered fleet of starships (M.01, M.02). Destruction of this magnitude consequently results in many people within the Colonial fleet appearing all too willing to suspend morality and ethics if they become inconvenient, justifying their actions as a necessity for the survival of the human race.

Moore reinforces the plausibility of this scenario by meticulously constructing the robotic Other in the series' early seasons to denote the physical and cultural

differences that exist between the Cylons and humanity. Additionally, Moore allows that humanity's differences initially appear erased in the aftermath of the genocide perpetrated against them, resulting in a degree of unification that previously did not exist among humanity.

In order to critically examine the Cylons as the robotic Other, it is necessary to provide some clarification into humanity's perception of the Cylons in the aftermath of the attacks on the Twelve Colonies. Said's premise of Otherness remains the primary component in attaining this understanding, and Michel Foucault's lectures on the distinction that exists between the barbarian and society furnishes additional insight, as well. In his lecture "Society Must Be Defended," Foucault reasons that: "[the barbarian] can be understood, characterized, and defined only in relation to civilization, and the fact that he exists outside it" (195). The Cylons not only embody a cultural distinctiveness that Said argues would result in their perceived Otherness, the Cylons exist outside the very boundaries of Foucault's human civilization. Most importantly, however, they are believed to represent an ever-present threat to human civilization's continual existence.

This perpetual state of tension, the extreme nature of the war-torn environment, and the fractured civilization humanity struggles to retain enables Moore to use the robotic Other more effectively to help delineate the distinction between morality and immorality between the ethical and the unethical that is all too frequently set aside in a time of war, as societies seek to dehumanize the Other in order to justify the inhumanity of their own actions, and assert their control over the Other.

Moore's sociopolitical commentary evidences itself in numerous ways in Battlestar Galactica, but its most poignant criticism revolves around the United States' War on Terror. Spencer Ackerman's affirms the importance of Moore's social criticism with respect to the Iraq War in his article "Battlestar: Iraqtica" stating that,

Like many science-fiction shows before it, BSG concerns itself with the porous membrane between humanity and barbarism. Unlike most of its predecessors, however, it has the benefit of an open-ended, real-life war as its backdrop, making its lessons about barbarism unavoidably resonant ("Battlestar").

Moore's intention to raise questions and examine these issues should not be construed as an attempt to propagate a

particular sociopolitical agenda. Moore himself maintains: "I don't see the show as a platform to advance my political belief system or my own views on morality. I do see the show as opportunity to raise questions in the minds of the audience and ask them to think" (Bassom 76). Is torture ever permissible? Are there circumstances in which suicide bombings may be justified? Could anyone become an "insurgent" under the right conditions? Moore's sociopolitical commentary in the episodes "Flesh and Bone" (1.08), "Occupation" (3.01), and "Precipice" (3.02) provides a critical examination of the way in which societies justify the torture, detention, and execution of those they deem to be the very personification of Otherness, exposing the debilitating effect such actions have on those societies who perpetrate them.

The episode "Flesh and Bone" finds the Cylon Leoben imprisoned and forced to endure beatings and a form of water torture, which his interrogator, Kara Thrace (Starbuck), deems acceptable precisely because Leoben is viewed as the Other, a machine that cannot feel or experience suffering in the way a human does. Starbuck asserts that Leoben does not have feelings. He has software; therefore, "there's no limit to the tactics I can use" (1.08). However, Leoben clearly experiences both

physical and emotional turmoil. The Cylon sweats, bleeds, exhibits fear and pain, and suffers from thirst and hunger when deprived of food and water. Starbuck seeks to exploit this because she refuses to recognize Leoben as being a sentient life form, but rather she elects to view the Cylon as being simply nothing more than a machine, an entity without an established personhood and existing not only outside of human society but as a direct threat to the human race itself. Excluded from the protections of civilized society, Leoben becomes the manifestation of Foucault's antagonistic barbarian threat.

An essential element of this process of dehumanization occurs in the language Starbuck and the Colonials utilize to describe the Cylons. Starbuck does not refer to Leoben by name, but instead uses terminology like "it" or "thing" to describe him (1.08). Starbuck refuses to recognize Leoben's individuality and personhood. The language used to name the Other constitutes and imperative part of this process, as it reinforces the disconnect the Other experiences and assists in re-establishing dominance over the Other. The resonance with the War on Terror is evident. The classifications of "terrorists, extremists, and fundamentalists" utilized in the War on Terror and their collective grouping into a nearly single faceless enemy

effectively renders them all the same and encourages their treatment as one common, unlawful "enemy combatant," a barbaric Other undeserving of the normal standards and protections traditionally afforded to enemies in a time of war.

Leoben's status as the Other likewise makes it permissible for the Cylon to be detained, tortured, and ultimately executed by order of the president of the Colonies, Laura Roslin, without any form of trial, as she reasons with Starbuck: "He is a machine. And you don't keep a deadly machine around when it kills your people and threatens your future. You get rid of it" (1.08).

The fate of Leoben demonstrates the extreme level of dehumanization and subjugation to which some members of the Colonial fleet regress as they attempt to reclaim their dominance over the Cylon Other. The lack of humanity exhibited by Starbuck and president Roslin leaves little to differentiate their actions from those of the Cylons themselves, which Moore will illustrate by juxtaposing these roles and accentuating the shared similarities of the Cylons and the humans in the later episodes "Occupation" and "Precipice."

The subsequent episodes "Occupation" and "Precipice" illustrate a stark and unyielding portrayal of the Other's

subjugation, as Moore depicts an unflinching reversal of roles in the relationship between the Cylons and humans from what he presented in "Flesh and Bone," with humanity now enduring terrible oppression at the hands of an enemy it literally created. The images of Abu Ghraib, suicide bombings in Baghdad, and the green tint of night vision goggles worn on military raids make the opening episodes of the third season of Battlestar Galactica impossible to disassociate from the real world events occurring in Iraq at that time, a fact Moore readily acknowledges to John Hodgman in the pop-culture critic's New York Times article "Ron Moore's Deep Space Journey": "I knew that if you did 'Battlestar Galactica' again, the audience is going to feel a resonance with what happened on 9/11. That's going to be there whether we want it or not" ("Ron"). Moore clearly embraces these allusions, and works constructively within this environment to raise important sociopolitical questions.

The purpose behind drawing on this imagery is about the desire on Moore's part to utilize real world events to illustrate the parallels between the War on Terror and the Cylon occupation of New Caprica, and use science fiction allegorically to get the audience to consider important contemporary issues and questions of the kind he relates to

Hodgman: "What does it mean to be free in a society under attack? What are the limits of that freedom? Who's right? Who's wrong? Are you rooting for the right side?" ("Ron"). Critical questions that become more difficult to answer, as Moore depicts similarities in the roles played by Cylons and humans with real world events in Iraq, while reversing the positions of the United States and its enemy.

By placing the Cylons in the dominant position of the "occupier" and the Humans in the unenviable role of the "insurgents," Moore creates circumstances in which one cannot help but sympathize with the insurgency, as viewers witness hooded detainees, imprisoned resistance leaders, raids conducted by secret police, and executions sanctioned without trials. The result of the Cylons' attempt to assert control over the remaining human population is that driven out of desperation humanity employs some truly horrific and barbaric tactics, such as suicide bombings, leaving the Cylons to speculate why humanity refuses their leadership and desire to usher in an era of peaceful coexistence.

Moore's intent to present situations in Battlestar Galactica that offer an opportunity to critically question and examine important sociopolitical issues arises in one of the most notable conversations between Gaius Baltar and Laura Roslin in "Precipice," regarding the implementation



of suicide bombing tactics with Baltar becoming the moral conscience of humanity:

Roslin: There's something that scares the Cylons after all.

Baltar: I should think using men and women as human bombs should scare us all.

Roslin: Desperate people will take desperate measures.

Baltar: All right, look me in the eye, look me in the eye and tell me you approve of sending young men and women into crowded places with explosives strapped to their chests. I'm waiting for you to look me in the eye and tell me you approve (3.02).

Roslin remains unable to do so. Even one of resistance's primary leaders, Chief Tyrol, questions Colonel Tigh's intent to utilize suicide bombing tactics, arguing that, "Some things you just don't do...not even in war"(3.01). In the face of such antagonistic division between the Cylons and humanity, it would appear that any hope for a peaceful coexistence remains futile. However, the future of both races and any hope for peaceful reconciliation may well reside in the Hybrid, the first half-human half-Cylon child

- the best hope for post-racial unity in Battlestar Galactica's post-human universe.

The Hybrid child, Hera, represents the erasure of the Other, and the potential for the end of race itself in the Battlestar Galactica's post-human universe. Post-racial unity is a frequently addressed topic in science fiction. Its resolution often portrayed from the perspective of a type of cultural utopianism in which humanity has progressed beyond the mere differences of race, or by simply removing the element of race from the story altogether. In Battlestar Galactica, Moore elects to address this issue differently.

The robotic Other in Battlestar Galactica represents a catastrophic threat to the survival of humanity, one which will require the unification of the human race to defeat it. Moore's pairing of the Cylon Sharon and the human Helo and the child they will ultimately conceive together marks an attempt to explore questions of tolerance, racial diversity, and societal inclusion in a post-human/post-racial universe. The Hybrid thus becomes a symbol for post-racial unity, but also on one level the manifestation of the anxiety and fear experienced by some members of human society, seeking to maintain the purity of the human race.

As previously explored in chapters II and III of this paper, reproductive rights remains a regularly utilized trope in the science fiction genre. Battlestar Galactica addresses women's reproductive rights throughout the series. The episode "The Farm" (2.05) depicts Starbuck in a Cylon breeding camp, a medical facility designed to house an experiment, forcibly impregnating human women with Hybrid embryos. This is a violation of a woman's rights on both a reproductive and sexual level, one that reduces women to mere reproductive systems, treating them as the alien Other and ostensibly enhancing the Cylons' Otherness. The episode "The Captain's Hand" (2.17) places president Roslin, a prior advocate of women's rights before the Cylon genocide, in a previously untenable position of mandating the illegality of abortion for the preservation of the human species. Arguably, this may be considered a violation of women's rights that mirrors the Cylons' perspective, relegating women to the primary status as simply biological reproductive systems first with little other intrinsic value, further blurring the lines between these two races.

Despite the blurring of distinctions between Cylons and humans as the series progresses, both races readily acknowledge the significance of the Cylon/human child, Hera. In the episode "Epiphanies" (2.13), Roslin succumbs

to her fears of what the hybrid may mean for the future of the human race and argues for the termination of the pregnancy stating that, "Allowing this thing to be born could have frightening consequences for security of this fleet. I believe the Cylon pregnancy must be terminated before it is too late" (2.13). It is Baltar who is again found pleading the case for the prevailing of moral conscience, insisting that the "thing" is a half-human child and reminding Roslin and Adama that they should, "keep that half in mind" (2.13). Regardless of Baltar's ulterior motive, his argument for the preservation of the Hybrid remains compelling, and Sharon is ultimately permitted to bring her pregnancy to term.

As for Hera's future, even Roslin eventually comes to assent that, "She may well be the shape of things to come. That's either a blessing or a curse" ("Exodus, Part 1" 3.03). Perhaps, however, it is neither a blessing nor curse, but simply a matter of evolution; a logical extension of a necessary sociobiological imperative in a post-human universe. Hera's hybridity marks the end of race, both for the Cylons and the humans. Gina Bellafante's New York Times article, "Show About the Universe Raises Questions on Earth," affirms Moore's message of acculturation, as she notes that,

. . . as the differences between the Cylons and the remaining humans began to dissolve, the opportunity for more acutely contemporary symbolism emerged. It became easier to regard the series as an argument for the imperatives of shared interest in a post-racial world ("Show"). Certainly, the end of human and Cylon races would be met with a degree of fear and trepidation on both sides. Yet, hybridity ushers in a new era of acculturation and biotechnological evolution for both species. Hybridity represents advances for humans and Cylons and a chance for change; it is a removal of the boundaries existing between the two races, and the erasure of the Other classification. The Hybrid symbolizes an evolutionary opportunity, an opportunity for a shared future and a chance for a peaceful coexistence and unification in this fractured post-racial universe.

In summation, Moore's re-envisioning of Battlestar Galactica provides the audience with a well-crafted allegorical science fiction narrative that is designed to explore complex and controversial contemporary issues, concerning the War on Terror, acculturation, reproductive rights, and how society's treat the Other, to name a few. Battlestar Galactica's unique framework enables Moore to

critically examine these issues against the backdrop of a real world environment embroiled in these very conflicts. The end result is not only that Battlestar Galactica has become a pop-culture sensation. It has become an important and lasting part of the science fiction genre, one whose cultural significance and relevancy will continue to warrant examination and debate long after the series' conclusion.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONCLUSION

Karel Capek's R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots), Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, and Ronald D. Moore's Battlestar Galactica represent some of the most influential and significant works in science fiction. This illustrative collection of science fiction narratives spans nearly nine decades of the science fiction genre across three different mediums: the play, the novel, and television series. In utilizing a longer time frame and varied mediums to examine these works, it has been demonstrated how the robotic Other has evolved to address complex sociopolitical issues and relate the importance of these issues to a contemporary audience.

As examined in chapters II, III, and IV of this paper, what remains the most important attribute of the robotic Other is its singular ability to enhance the metaphorical and allegorical nature of the science fiction story. The robotic Other enables authors to explore Said's concept of

Otherness in ways that are specifically unique to the science fiction genre. What happens when the traditional characteristics of Otherness dissolve and the Other is more like us than not? The distinctions traditionally associated with Otherness evolve. The end result being that what the robotic Other teaches its audience centers on the need to move past these differences and embrace the similarities, and work towards developing a more tolerant and inclusive civilization, one that welcomes Otherness rather than using it as a basis for persecution.

In LeGuin's essay entitled, "American SF and the Other," she stresses the importance of the Other to the science fiction genre and its metaphorical and allegorical impact as a literary device for establishing a more progressive and inclusive worldview:

If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself - as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done nation - you may hate it, or deify it; but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality. You have made it into a thing, in which the only possible



relationship is a power relationship. And thus you have fatally impoverished your own reality. You have, in fact, alienated yourself (Night, 99).

In both the post-human universe these science fiction narratives envision and the post-racial world that humanity continually strives to obtain, acculturation embodies the hope for humanity's future and peaceful coexistence in a turbulent and ever-changing universe.

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