

## Union College Union | Digital Works

---

Honors Theses

Student Work

---


6-2011

# Robots Are People Too: Posthumanism in Battlestar Galactica

Rebecca Seel

*Union College - Schenectady, NY*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalworks.union.edu/theses>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Television Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Seel, Rebecca, "Robots Are People Too: Posthumanism in Battlestar Galactica" (2011). *Honors Theses*. 1059.  
<https://digitalworks.union.edu/theses/1059>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Union | Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Union | Digital Works. For more information, please contact [digitalworks@union.edu](mailto:digitalworks@union.edu).

Robots Are People Too:  
Posthumanism in *Battlestar Galactica*

By

Rebecca Seel

∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
graduation in American Studies

UNION COLLEGE

June, 2011

## ABSTRACT

The science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* explores the differences between human and machine and the nature of identity. It expresses both our fascination with machines and our technophobia. In a society of explosive technological advances come technological anxieties. What will happen when we create life? As *BSG* posits, with autonomous machines come destruction and a new race of people who, not unlike us, are trying to define who they are. As the series progresses, an overarching question emerges: what is a "person"? Is personage determined by biology or by decision? Can machines have souls? This thesis approaches *BSG* through the lens of posthumanist theory and shows how the series both reflects cutting edge thinking about human identity in the 21st Century as well as offering new contributions to the posthumanist debate. Other works examined include *Frankenstein* and the film *Blade Runner*, both cautionary tales of the dangers of technology and the creation of artificial life.

For the people who knew what I was talking about when I said I was doing my thesis on  
*Battlestar Galactica.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	[ii]
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	[1]
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	[9]
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	[25]
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	[59]
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	[104]
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	[106]

## INTRODUCTION

The television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009) explores the lines between human and machine, the nature of identity, and what constitutes a person. *BSG* draws upon posthumanist theory and science fiction tropes to create a universe in which humans struggle to survive while machines ponder who they are. Rene Descartes' famous "I think, therefore I am" would be relevant to a race of self-aware lifeforms who are confused about who they are, as they find themselves driven to become more than just machines.

*Battlestar Galactica* is an engrossing science fiction drama, yet it provides commentary on posthumanist thought and on the concept of the Singularity. The series depicts the near annihilation of the human race by the robotic Cylons. Cylons, short for **Cybernetic Lifeform Nodes**, were created as robotic slaves for the human race. The Cylons themselves are not merely machines rising up against their masters but a race of peoples that has decided, based on their religion, to reclaim God's creation by ridding it of God's first people who have turned away from their loving creator. It is through the Cylons' religious motivations that *BSG* differs from science fiction representation of the apocalypse, with cold, logic-based machines. The Cylons kill humanity in order to usurp it as God's premier, faithful chosen people.

The single defining moment in history which will usher out humanity and in the posthuman age is known as the Singularity, during when machines will rise up above their human masters and either enslave or kill them. The artificial intelligence of the Singularity will bring with it a species that is fully autonomous and may exceed human intelligence and

capabilities.<sup>1</sup> The artificial life which will rebel and likely annihilate us will be of our own making but will have developed enough sentience to recognize its superiority, and to conceive of its own, independent destiny free of human will, and perhaps even humans themselves.

The Singularity and a posthuman age are thought to be inevitable by scholars, and is suggested by the show to be a technological Rapture, ending the age of man and bringing about the age of machine. What shall replace us will be smarter than us and superior to us in intelligence if not also in other ways. *BSG* differs from the prevailing thoughts of scholars on these issues, particularly because the show gives human, fallible faces to the robots that nearly annihilate humanity. They have flaws and are not the remorseless machines which will rise up to create a new, unfeeling age of data streams and immortal technology. The Cylons of *BSG* are like us, a tenet of the series that other articulations of the Singularity and posthumanism do not always possess. *BSG* posits that our creation will be much like us, while most posthumanist scholarship argues that it will be wholly machine without altruism or intellectualism that differentiate us from other creations.

The Singularity itself is not a single, isolated event that causes the downfall of humanity. “All of this has happened before, and all of it will happen again,” is a running credo throughout the series, though characters are unaware of its significance. The Singularity occurs in the *BSG* universe twice before the present-day events on the Twelve Colonies, and twice before that in preceding civilizations. The Cylons’ taste for revenge and righteousness is a perversion of what the humanoid Cylons’ creators, known as the Final Five, intended, and the cycle of violence is continued as machines rise up but realize they may not have known why they were rebelling.

While *BSG* contributes to the science fiction genre with new interpretations on the Singularity, posthumanism, and human/android relationships, its themes are reflected in other

---

<sup>1</sup> Dinello, 26

works of science fiction and gothic horror. Of other works of science fiction, *BSG* most closely resembles the film *Blade Runner*, based on Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In *Blade Runner*, the humans on a future Earth have created humanoid robots that are used as slaves for multiple purposes such as labor and pleasure. The robots known as Replicants, virtually identical to humans, are superior in strength and at least equal in intelligence to their creators, not unlike the physically-superior, intelligent Cylons. The Replicants stage a mutiny and are permanently banned from Earth under penalty of death. Though there are large differences between Cylon and Replicant, such as the Cylons' immortality versus the short lifespans of Replicants, their depictions as antagonistic, synthetic aggressors to humanity are the same. Like in *BSG*, Replicants who thought they were human discover their true nature. The main character of the film and book, Deckard, is charged with hunting down the Replicants. The themes of humanity and personage are shared by *BSG* and *Blade Runner*.<sup>2</sup> Though one of the main themes of *Blade Runner*, the preciousness of life, is not echoed in *BSG* since Cylons are effectively immortal, both works depict almost-humans grappling with their nature, which they did not choose but must come to terms with. The Replicant Rachel, unaware at first that she is a machine, evokes the Final Five and Boomer in her experiences realizing she is no longer human, and is now an illegal object that will be hunted down.

*Battlestar Galactica* shares similar themes with gothic and early science fiction novels which explore the dichotomy between a being's creation and identity. The novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley calls into question the nature of humanity and the ability for a creation to emulate intelligent life. The monster created by the ambitious Dr. Frankenstein is horrendous in appearance and violent. Despite the fact that he educates himself and learns the tenants of

---

<sup>2</sup> I intend to discuss what defines "personage" on *BSG*, such as the existence of human characteristics, individuality, spirituality, and a "soul," all of which are relevant to characters who struggle with their identities.



humanism, he is still reviled and hunted by humanity. He wants to live in peace and desires a mate, though he is denied both by humans. His monstrous anger overtakes him and he commits murder, and retires to exile away from humanity, banished from them forever with no hope of acceptance because of his appearance and the nature of his creation. Several aspects of Frankenstein are reflected in *BSG*. The Cylons are artificially manufactured, and their “resurrection” resembles the famous “It’s alive!” moments in horror movies when their bodies suddenly animate in goo baths as Frankenstein’s body animates on a slab. The nature of Cylons’ existence is a horror to humans, and they are unable to reproduce on their own, though they similarly wish to. It is through their appearance and manner of consciousness, though, that they resemble the gothic horror themes of *Frankenstein*.

The Cylons that return after a forty year truce are much different than the Centurions who perpetrated the first attacks on the Colonies. They now have a social hierarchy with multiple breeds of lifeforms, some self-aware and some not, some with synthetic biological components and others that are fully metal. The humanoid Cylons rule over the others, deciding the fate of the species.

As they do not kill all of the humans, the Cylons are transformed through their interactions with them. They realize that they may not be wholly machine and may in fact contain more human characteristics than they would like to admit. Their religion, which they believed commanded them to kill nonbelievers in God’s name, now demands that they coexist with the humans so that all of life can live in God’s love. Through love with humans comes the hybrid baby Hera, instrumental to the survival of both human and Cylon, as well as rifts and ruptures between one faction of Cylon that would live in God’s word and love, and the other

which would continue its murderous rampage to become “the best machines the universe has ever seen.”

*Battlestar Galactica* differs most from futuristic theory and scholarship in the manner in which Cylons are embodied, their origins, their motivations, and their souls. Humanoid “skin job” Cylons look just like humans, to the extent that they are able to live amongst the humans of the Twelve Colonies (and in the Fleet) without anyone noticing. The Cylons’ technology is advanced to the degree that some Cylons are programmed to think they are human, and thus lead fully functional, fulfilling human lives until they either discover their nature for themselves or are uncovered. The seven models of Cylons in the series that were artificially created are diverse, ranging in age from an elderly man to a young woman in her twenties, all of whom have completely different appearances. Their religious beliefs and attitudes towards humans also define them. Ultimately, a series of differences between models causes the Cylons to enter into a Civil War that kills half of the models.

Humans and Cylons cannot choose *what* they are, but *BSG* offers each character a choice as to *who* they want to be. While some remain machines, others look beyond their make and model to pursue an identity that defies their origin- they decide to be people. Individuals begin to emerge from the Cylon whole, taking independent actions based on love instead of logic, compassion instead of reason. Cylon Caprica Six and Sharon “Athena” Valerii make decisions for themselves, sometimes to the detriment of their Model as a whole and their species. They act based off of emotions they believe are real, and the imperatives that cause other Cylons to murder drives them to love and protect the humans they cherish. Their decisions create ripples among their species, and their ability to define themselves despite a lifetime of anonymity (as one among many of their same model) initiates a change among the Cylon, who realize that they

can be individuals among a collective. Caprica Six and Athena, however, do not want to be revolutionaries or idealists, but rather want to love with the humans they adore, making sacrifices to be with them. It is through decisions that establish their independence and their individuality, and which inspire others to do the same, that they rise from robots to people.

Athena and Caprica Six are not the only machines to ponder their existence; other Cylons ponder how their identities as robots affect who they are as people. Sharon “Boomer” Valerii, another copy of Model Eight, lived as a sleeper agent in the Colonial Fleet, completely unaware of her true Cylon origin. She believed she was human and made a human life for herself. When her nature was revealed and took over, causing her to shoot the man she viewed as a father and leading to her own murder and the return to her people, Boomer made decisions for herself as she was caught between two worlds, vacillating between trying to hold onto her irrecoverable human past and a present she hates.<sup>3</sup> She shows compassion towards the humans and is instrumental to the Cylon/human colony on New Caprica, but the hatred she receives from the people she loved spurs her to embrace her identity as a Cylon, even casting off her identity as a Model Eight and joining with cold, calculating Models that would see the universe populated with machines, even if it meant the deaths of other Cylon. Boomer tries in vain to carve out her own identity and her own life but upon failure must join others’ in order to find self-value.

The Final Five, like Boomer, discover they are Cylons after years of living human lives. They, like Boomer, must reconcile an aspect of their identity which they did not choose with the people they are. They arrived and constructed the eight humanoid models of Cylon, yet were killed by one of their own creation who decided their message of compassion, tolerance, and love did not fit a species that was poised to rule the universe with superiority in logic and

---

<sup>3</sup> Boomer was “switched on” as a sleeper agent and shot Admiral Adama, who she viewed as a father figure. She was murdered by a member of the *Galactica* crew and resurrected on Caprica, depicted in the episode “Downloaded” (2.18).

technology. The Five were put on Earth as humans, living sometimes for decades in new lives, forming bonds with other people and human institutions, such as the military. When their Cylon nature is revealed, each faces a moral dilemma. Are they human or Cylon? Can they still be people, regardless of their synthetic biology? Each of the surviving four Cylon in the Fleet at the time of the revelation makes independent decisions to define who they are; some choosing to remain the people they had lived as and the people they wanted to be; others deciding they preferred to live as machines with their Cylon offspring. It is through the Final Five and their need to decide who they are in light of a revelation that threatens who they want to be that the larger questions of personage are explored.

The Cylons mentioned above are not the only people in the series who have personal dilemmas regarding their identities. Two humans, Kara Thrace (or “Starbuck”) and Gaius Baltar, question who they are as people and as humans, as the possibility of a Cylon identity haunts them, and as their lives are touched by a divine force. It is intoned throughout the series that Starbuck has a special destiny, and her brushes with the divine cause her to question her life and her purpose as a person. Through her death, resurrection, and journey leading the humans to their end, Kara must accept the ambiguities of her existence and the fact that the questions she asks herself can’t be answered. She is not a Cylon, yet her brushes with the divine cause her to question her mortality.<sup>4</sup>

Gaius Baltar, the person most responsible for the near destruction of the human race, struggles to navigate a post-apocalyptic world of which he is the architect. His immense guilt produces an avatar of the Cylon woman he loves and was seduced by, who sells him an intricate story of his own special destiny and value to the human race as a “chosen one.” His adoption of the belief in the Cylon-esque One True God is the basis for which he makes his decisions. His

---

<sup>4</sup> It is a popular conspiracy theory that Kara is the offspring of the dead Model Seven, and thus the first hybrid.

continued survival and the effects of his actions on the entirety of the human race speak to something more than luck guiding his existence. Gaius *wants* to be a Cylon, for the humans despise him. He is desperate to be Cylon and be accepted as one of their own. His religious beliefs are a buffer between him and his guilt, a convenient barrier between his sanity and the crushing, overwhelming weight of the consequences of his actions. His growing belief in the Cylon God is cemented by the fact that when he follows the edicts laid out for him by the Six in his Head, he not only survives but succeeds.

Rifts occur in Cylon society as the machines debate amongst themselves the nature of their relationships with humans, with God, and with each other. The evolution of Cylon into individuals and the growing interdependence of machine and human rupture the Cylon civilization, precipitating a Civil War that threatens to destroy both Cylons and humans. The battle lines are drawn between those that believe in the power of God, the value of life regardless of biology, and the importance of their past and present culture and those that look to the dominance of the universe by machines. The former group must join with the humans or be destroyed, and the merged group journeys together through the stars, looking for a home they can call their own.

*BSG* reflects scholarship regarding technology while examining what it means to be a person. Individual characters embody and differ from what scholars identify as a machine future.

## CHAPTER 1

The last scene of the frequently derided final episode of *Battlestar Galactica* is a montage from a news report on robots in our society. A range of robotic technology is shown, from mechanical dogs sitting up and cocking their heads, to a full-sized robot woman capable of moving its entire body and blinking. Advances in robotics frequently fascinate the public. Recently, a video surfaced online in which a robot performed a complicated dance routine with humans as backup dancers. Though the end of humanity at the hands of robots may not be a widespread view in light of global tensions among humans and the threat of nuclear weapons, the possibility of a new age of machines is an anxiety that cannot be fully quelled. Millions of robots are present in our society, from automata that serve as entertainment to highly functioning machines capable of advanced logic and reasoning. Technology and machines are already essential to our society, and with a stream of new technology and increasingly complex robotics shown at expos, videos of which go viral online, the possibility of a future in which we are not only dependent on machines for many essential processes but at their mercy is not completely outlandish.

Post-humanism theory addresses these anxieties and possibilities, and is a scholarly approach to studying and theorizing a period of time after mankind, an age in which the tenets of humanism, of reason tempered with altruism and intellectualism, ends and an age of machinery begins. The technology we already possess today- robotics, artificial intelligence (“AI”), bionics, the Internet, virtual reality, biotechnology, and nanotechnology- are harbingers of both a new era

of human progress and of a posthuman age.<sup>5</sup> While it is speculated that our technology may eventually replace us, it is already obvious that what we have produced thus far is gradually reengineering our culture.

In science fiction, the posthuman age heralded by the apocalyptic Singularity is associated with not love and empathy, integral to humans and humanism, but genetic discrimination, social fragmentation, totalitarianism, surveillance, environmental degradation, addiction, mind control, infection, and destruction.<sup>6</sup> Instead of benefitting and aiding humanity, technology will dominate it and is frequently depicted as bringing about the end of mankind. Technology will have its own will and agenda which will be hostile to humans and will seek to create a new culture for itself. The Singularity is the moment at which this shift in power occurs.

*Battlestar Galactica* addresses posthumanist theory and depicts the Singularity but diverges from the typical representation of robots rising up over their masters, enslaving them, evolving beyond them, and eventually killing them. Though the First Cylon War could be considered the Singularity, as machines rose up against their masters, a truce was formed and instead of wiping the humans out, the Cylons disappeared for forty years to return in humanoid form, precipitating human genocide. Humanity in *BSG* is destroyed and replaced by a foreign species, robot invaders from space who have already evolved independent of humans and not because of them. Furthermore, these humanoid robots have developed their own culture and are driven not only by logic and the desire to destroy humanity but by religious dictates.

The Singularity in *BSG* occurs in two parts. First, there was the uprising of machines over their masters and creators in the First Cylon War. Though the machines might have prevailed militarily (there was no mention of the odds of the war before the Cylons left), they did not have

---

<sup>5</sup> Dinello, 4

<sup>6</sup> Dinello, 273

an independent culture and enough autonomy to replace humans as a rival culture and essentially the next step in evolution. However, the return of the humanoid Cylons could arguably be the second step in the *BSG* Singularity. The Cylons have a self-sufficient culture that survived on its own for up to forty years on basestars scattered throughout the universe. They have a complex culture and religion to rival humanity's, and a superior knowledge of technology.

One way the show is unique is the manner in which the Singularity occurred during the second attack on the Colonies. The attack of the Cylons on the Twelve Colonies did not share tropes of space invaders or the robotic apocalypse that exist elsewhere in pop culture. The attack was remote; the defenses of the colony were shut down from Cylons' basestars which hovered around the planets, like giant metal jacks. The synchronization and interconnectedness of the Defense system was the reason why the attacks were such a resounding success. There were no robot infantry sent to wipe out humanity; instead, a thermonuclear device was used to obliterate the Colonies' capital City (killing seven million humans), nuclear bombs were detonated in various spots on each planet, and computer viruses shut down power on battlestars and in other defense technology. In fact, the "toaster" model of the Cylons is only shown on the planets after humanity is already decimated. The Cylons use non-humanoid technology instead of the horrors of killer robots to slaughter the entirety of the human race. The Cylons did not have to use physical force to eradicate the humans but turned their own technology against them, as they essentially sat and watched from their basestars. The attack came from outer space without a single invader setting foot on the Colonies.

One of the benchmarks in science fiction for the depiction of robots is the work of Isaac Asimov. When considering the future of robots and their relationships to their human masters,



perhaps one of the most famous guidelines for robotics is Asimov's "Three Laws of Human Robotics," three properties that robots should possess.

The Three Laws are as follows:

1. A robot must not injure a human being, or allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given by human beings unless they conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect itself as long as such protection does not conflict with the First and Second Laws.<sup>7</sup>

Asimov's Laws are frequently a litmus test for the portrayal of artificial life in works of fiction, but is also the prevailing hope for a future in which robots and humans may live together in peace. Obviously, the Three Laws are relevant to any discussion of *Battlestar Galactica*, the robots in which violate all three Laws. The Singularity and posthumanism ignores all three of Asimov's tenets, as robots will harm humans, ignore their orders, and put their own physical self-interests in mind over humans. However, as explored below, Cylons *choose* whether or not to "obey" Asimov's laws. Some Cylons give their lives in the defense of humans, while the Cylon collective in Season One decimate the majority of humanity. Some Cylons act in their individual best interests or those of their models, regardless of humans or other Cylons. *BSG* toys with Asimov's laws as Cylons are given free will and the ability to choose the manner of their interactions with humans.

A faction of academia believes that one of the outcomes of the Singularity will be a new age of mankind, and not our ultimate demise. There is a prevailing belief that the machinery we create will be able to immortalize us. A complicated scenario, as propagated by robot theorist Hans Moravec, is imagined in which artificial life will have the capacity to slice our heads open and scan our brain cells into a computer. Our neurological information will be translated into

---

<sup>7</sup> Graham, 129

digital code and transferred to some sort of collective stream in a computer.<sup>8</sup> “Humans” would live in such a form for an indefinite amount of time, our bodies no longer valuable and discarded. We will exist forever in a new form. This scenario, known as the “Downloading” process (not unlike the process of Cylon memory transfer on the television series, which apparently is aptly named), is far-fetched at present.<sup>9</sup>

What will it take for a race of machines to “wake up” and make a conscious decision to rise up as one to slay or enslave humanity? One assumes that they must be equal if not greater than humans in capacities other than those they were designed for, possessing the potential for abstract thought and the ability to envision possibilities that do not exist. We already have technology that can predict human actions in the context of games and other simple applications, but the machines of the future will need something beyond a circuit board built into them. Complex and intricate programming is necessary that will not only elevate their logic and ability to strategize but will give them the ambition to start a new world for which they must eliminate their creators. As Elaine Graham proposes,

Perhaps when machines have not only bodies, but warm-blooded bodies, and when they inhabit cultures of their own (perhaps with metaphysical systems of their own, including myth, ritual, and religion), an intelligence will have evolved that approaches that of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

Machines intelligent enough to organize an attack on humanity will need a reason or impetus to destroy their makers. In *BSG*, Cylons’ monotheistic religion is their reason for a return after forty years’ peace to kill their creators and establish a new Cylon civilization.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Graham, 125

<sup>9</sup> As discussed later, between the time of their death and their resurrection, Cylons’ consciousness enters a “data stream,” and their memories from the time of their previous download are updated onto some sort of database.

<sup>10</sup> Graham, 128

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the use of the collective term “Cylons” will apply to all models, as there were no clear differences in Cylons ideology until the second season, which creates a rift in the models and defines their actions for the rest of the series.

While the Singularity and subsequent posthuman world requires a race of machines sentient enough to recognize their superiority and slaughter their makers, the post-human world for the most part can only be hypothesized. What will machines *do*? How will they “live”? The machines capable of destroying life in the future are posited to begin a civilization that will either end up resembling our own, or will be so outside the realm of human understanding that it will be impossible to comprehend. As seen in *BSG*, the Cylons represent the former, quite literally replacing humans in their former habitat.

In the episode “Downloaded” (2.18) taking place on the planet Caprica, the Cylons have set up residence in the world of the humans. They have cleared the streets, disposed of humans’ bodies, and fixed up a park that was destroyed, dedicating it to the Cylons who died in the attacks on the Colonies. They stroll together outside and enjoy the sunshine they were deprived of on their basestars. The Cylons have even set up a café in which they drink coffee and converse. The Cylons live in the apartments that once housed humans. Though they returned to end human life on the Twelve Colonies, apparently they just became new tenants. This is contrary to the definition of Singularity, as robots are expected to “rise up to rival and supersede human homo sapiens, as the next step in human evolution.”<sup>12</sup> Instead, they seem to be the latest humanoid species, without any cultural transcendence. Instead of the Cylons’ posthumanist world being devoid of human-like emotion and other values, the Cylons instead are startlingly like the humans they apparently sought to replace. Though they are robots, they essentially think of themselves as better humans, an improvement on the biological model which was ignorant of the Cylon god and was therefore in a religious context unfit to live. The Cylons believed that since they were godlier they had the right to clear the humans from the Promised Land in order that they, the Chosen Ones, could live in God’s love.

---

<sup>12</sup> Dinello, 26

Some may argue that the Singularity has already occurred in our own world in light of our complete dependence on technology for a myriad of mundane and essential activities. However, the traditional view (depicted in popular culture and perhaps easier to envision) is a race of sentient, intelligent machines that look like us, dominating us and replacing us. Whether they are in robot form, are cyborgs (a combination of human and machine components), or are androids (nearly indiscernible from humans with possible organic origins), the machines that replace us will be wholly different from us but will look horrifyingly like us. In fact, science fiction (as will be discussed later) dwells on the relationship between human and humanoid, as we are preoccupied with the appearance of the beings that may replace us.

In the explosion of technology over the past decades, sentient artificial life seems increasingly likely. Artificial intelligence is becoming more sophisticated, in not only the tasks it is able to accomplish but also in the nature of the intelligence it possesses. The earliest forms of AI, developed in American universities was programming for machinery for instituting “symbolic” reasoning, including analysis of language, mathematical computation, and the faculties for playing games like chess, which require logic and skill.<sup>13</sup> Criticism of early AI usually consisted of claims that because it was created by white university professors in North America it reflects their interests; that is, AI created by these individuals was made for specific functions, and that there wasn’t a broader exploration of its possibilities.

Other goals of artificial intelligence included creating repositories for large amounts of information, and equipping technology with increasingly sophisticated decision-making abilities and the capacity for adaptability and development. Today’s AI is concerned with replicating humans by building models to approximate and resemble aspects of human nature and intelligence. This form of AI is being created not for the sake of its existence or for broadening

---

<sup>13</sup> Graham, 124

the possibilities of technology, but to help humanity understand itself. To reflect humanity, these machines are designed with increased capacity for reasoning. The closer we come to mapping out our own minds and nature through mirroring it with machinery, the closer technology comes to resembling us. By trying to create technology that is increasingly “like” us, we are imbuing it with Western concepts of thought, reason, introspection, and observation.<sup>14</sup>

Though we are producing increasingly sophisticated technology reflecting our biological and mental processes, critics of AI in this form argue that it is impossible for AI to truly resemble the human mind to the extent that it becomes sentient, and that the only use for AI are functions like storing and processing large amounts of information, that are necessary and helpful but do not create technology in our form with our functions.<sup>15</sup> AI may never be able to truly replicate the human mind. A machine would not only need large capacities for reason and logic, but the ability to simulate emotions. Robots cannot and perhaps never will be able to possess intuition, instinct, imagination, or innovation. Furthermore, critics argue that technology does not and will never have a soul.<sup>16</sup>

There are several instances in *BSG* that demonstrates this form of AI. In Season Two, Sharon leads a band of humans on Kobol to the Temple of Athena, and can quote scripture verbatim, claiming that Cylons know their religion better than they do. Caprica Six insists to Tigh that she is exactly like him.<sup>17</sup> She explains to him that “our minds were designed based on your minds. We learn things about how you work that you’ve never known” (4.05). The Cylons were created to look like humans, and possess some of the same cultural knowledge that they do. Though they are a different species of sentient life, Cylons were made to be like humans, though

---

<sup>14</sup> Graham, 125

<sup>15</sup> Graham, 125

<sup>16</sup> Graham, 127

<sup>17</sup> She is unaware at this point of the series that Tigh is also a Cylon.

their superiority to them precipitates the Singularity leading to the Cylons' second attack on the Colonies to destroy humanity.

We are fine-tuning movement and the physics of robotics; how long until there are programs that can simulate human experiences, like pleasure and pain, emotions, confusion, and even trivial things like foreign accents?<sup>18</sup> In popular culture we see robots and artificial life with these capabilities, with some of the traits installed in them used for comedic effect. However, scholars argue that the complex characteristics including those listed above attributed to humans are much different than any artificial intelligence could potentially possess. It is difficult to imagine a future outside of science fiction in which our creations would not only have human-like emotions, but more abstract and “fuzzier” things such as souls and spirits.<sup>19</sup>

Uniformity, functionality, and practicality are necessary for a race of manufactured artificial intelligence. Assembly lines exist to create copies of the same design. Perhaps one day we will have the necessary technology to provide unique characteristics and traits, but in developed cultures that rely on supply and demand, people pay for a dependable service rendered to them by programming. One might wonder if in fact it would ever be possible for a sizeable population of unique artificial life to exist with enough individuality to constitute a functioning, sophisticated society such as our own.

Scholars argue that artificial life must possess not just complex processing capabilities and elegant synapses sufficient enough to simulate emotion, but must also possess a culture to become embodied and not just manufactured. The “cultural nature” of human intelligence is essential to what differentiates humans from each other. It is our cultural experiences that make us unique as a species and help form our minds. “The biological imperatives of birth, life, and

---

<sup>18</sup> Graham, 128

<sup>19</sup> Graham, 128

death carry with them, for humans, cultural imperatives.”<sup>20</sup> We are defined by our fascination and preoccupation with our own life cycle. A defining characteristic of humanity is that we live within a finite amount of time, without the ability to upgrade or fine-tune ourselves. It is the ways through which we try to come to terms with and understand these cultural imperatives which define us as people. There is a difference between Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am,” and Shakespeare’s “To be, or not to be” which artificial intelligence may never grasp. When machines have similar human imperatives through the possession of bodies (presumably fallible in health and temporary in structure), and cultures with their own metaphysical systems (which are hard to imagine being a product of installation and programming), “an intelligence will have evolved that approaches that of humanity.”<sup>21</sup>

*BSG* differs from the widely accepted definition of the Singularity, which relies on the fact that machines that surpass their human creators must do so in intelligence and capabilities.<sup>22</sup> The uprising of the Cylons in the First Cylon War could be considered an example of the Singularity in and of itself. However, it is portrayed in the show as the Centurions effectively losing their tempers over being humanity’s slaves and shooting people, without any sort of philosophical or sentient reason beyond a self-aware annoyance. Though the Centurions may compete with if not surpass humans in the sense of technology, in the case of the first Cylon War and Singularity, they do not have the intellectual or cultural capabilities to actually compete with humans beyond a shooting match. Even toaster models shown interacting with the humans in the current events of the show have only a basic understanding of commands and functions.

While the attacks of the Cylons that begin the television series could be viewed as the Singularity, they could also be viewed as a revolution and not a massacre. Revolutions typically

---

<sup>20</sup> Graham 128

<sup>21</sup> Graham 129

<sup>22</sup> Dinello, 26

involve the overthrow of the father in order that the child can take his position.<sup>23</sup> A Model Five in the first season says, “Parents have to die. It’s the only way children come into their own” (1.3). Also, while revolution indicates a change in the order of things, in some ways it is “a redemption; a restoration. A reaffirmation of what is pure and fundamental against what is decadent and false.”<sup>24</sup> The Cylons have returned to settle matters with the humans and install a civilization in which the one true God is worshipped and his children secure a rightful home instead of being stranded in the stars like nomads, like the Israelites in the Old Testament who waited to reenter the Promised Land.

The Cylons do not follow the given definitions of the Singularity and posthumanism in other ways, as well. One way is in their quest to procreate. They rape women in breeding farms on Caprica, enslaving them to machines to try and impregnate them. They have tried to reproduce amongst themselves with no avail. Though they can survive indefinitely, there is a religious imperative to “be fruitful” which they feel they have to follow despite their superior technology of cloning. They aim to please God, to the extent that they subvert their own technology to become more like humans. They want to incorporate humans into the Cylon equation only so that they can take their natural ability to reproduce to continue the superior Cylon race. What they perceive to be their only weakness is a purely religious imperative. They determine through Sharon’s successful pregnancy and the first Cylon/human hybrid that the one ingredient missing in Cylon procreation is love- perhaps the antithesis of machinery.

Another aspect of the Singularity which does not exist with the Cylons is a cultural utopia. While they are at first united in a cause to destroy humanity, their motivations and goals become increasingly different over time, which eventually leads to their Civil War and a schism

---

<sup>23</sup> Botting, 130

<sup>24</sup> Botting, 130



in their society. As explored in greater depth later, their divisions occur because of their views on religion, their attitudes towards themselves as machines, and their attitudes towards humans. A faction of Cylons decides to lobotomize the rudimentary Raider lifeforms because they are gaining self-awareness, which causes outrage in other models and leads to war. In *BSG*, a posthuman world won't be a machine utopia, but a series of ethnic cleansings, to become the "best" machines. In *BSG*, the Cylons clearly have their own plans and agendas that increasingly conflict with each other instead of a peaceful technological age.

Whether based on religion, logic, or any number of motivations, the Cylons both embody the Singularity and are fundamentally different from it. First, after the creation of humanoid models, the Cylons must conquer and exterminate mankind. Then, they must inhabit the human worlds and multiply, claiming the Promised Land in the name of God's love. After that, the Cylons must carry out another one of God's proscriptions, to be fruitful and multiply, which fails except for the case of Hera. The Cylons then decide that they can best express God's love through reconciliation with the humans. After the debacle on New Caprica, they decide to find Earth (though it is humanity's Paradise and not theirs) and take it for their own. When Civil War erupts, some of the Cylons continue in their mission of living with the humans while others seek to become the best- and only- machines in the universe. The Singularity proposes that robots will have "an ultimate destiny beyond human control and even understanding," which all Cylons believe initially and which ultimately divides them in their Civil War.<sup>25</sup> The more religious models realize that to please God they must make peace with the humans, to the extent that they must all live together in God's love.

Though *BSG* satisfies almost every aspect of the Singularity, it ultimately fails, as the remnants of humanity and the rebel Cylons destroy the machines intent on creating a post-human

---

<sup>25</sup> Dinello 26

universe, the human-Cylon survivors escape and settle together on a new Earth. The hybrid Hera is shown to be the mitochondrial Eve that all humans descend from, making all of us part Cylon. Though inferior in many ways, the humans and allied Cylons succeed in surviving while the warring, machinist Cylons do not. In theory and perhaps by definition, the Singularity occurs, but over the course of the show the definition is tested as the band of surviving humans continues to foil the attempts of the Cylons to destroy them. Ending the series in a universe in which the machines are the ones to become extinct as humans repopulate a new planet and create a new society undermines the Singularity and posthumanism that *BSG* had originally depicted.

*BSG* may speak to a prevailing human vanity that our creation would want to replicate everything about us; down to our many limitations and fallibilities.<sup>26</sup> It is the presumption of the Final Five Cylons that new artificial intelligence would want to be like the Cylons of Earth, having individual motivations, personalities and appearances. Perhaps the Final Five who created the humanoid models were flattering themselves by purposely creating a new race of life that was inherently flawed in design. The Final Five wanted to create life that would sustain itself through its diversity, and not through making “perfect” machines. Creating the perfect machine would not end the repeated Singularity, but would instead encourage it to happen again, as it is caused by machines who view themselves as superior to humans. By creating humanoid Cylons with notable and visible imperfections, the Final Five are not only creating a new form of life, but a lifeform that can coexist with humanity, without striving to subjugate humans to their will because of a perception of superiority. By imbuing artificial life with knowledge of God’s love, the Five aimed to create a machine which was capable of love and altruism. By creating a model that was fundamentally flawed, they hoped to prevent the inevitable from occurring between humanity and machines for the fourth time.

---

<sup>26</sup> Graham, 130

It is through their belief in the one true God that the humanoid Cylons differ from other machines, especially ones that would be envisioned by the Singularity and posthumanism, and is one of the characteristics that many are skeptical of machines in real life ever possessing. Faith is diametrically opposite to machines' logic and relays, and is not something that can be programmed in, though it is on *BSG*. In some ways, the Cylons are more sophisticated than other machines in that they possess a belief system. Out of the attributes characteristic of humanity, faith is perhaps that which a machine is least likely to have. The ability to simulate emotions might one day be achieved, but programming machines to believe religious teachings and beliefs that are void of logic seems unlikely. The belief in a Cylon God, the strength of faith that the Cylons display in carrying out his commandments, and their belief in sin and redemption, all point to the fact that Cylons might have souls. At the very least, the Cylon have programming that can imbue the ability to be illogical. The religious models make decisions based on love and emotions, as well as what they perceive God would want them to do, rather than logic and synapses. They flout reason and logic to follow what *they* think is right, which is different from what logic and reason would indicate.

*Battlestar Galactica's* depiction of a universe with multiple Singularities which almost succeeds in creating a new, machine age both reflects and differs from scholarship concerning posthuman theory and the possibilities for future artificial intelligence. The show not only portray the plight of the humans, but in the latter two seasons also illustrates the Cylon culture. Rather than a group of robots beeping, the androids are literally and figuratively fleshed-out characters, each with their own motivations in a structured society that gradually falls apart when the humans they try to wipe out refuse to be killed. The series reflects aspects of posthumanist theory and depicts the Singularity, which happens four times in the *BSG* universe, but there are

also aspects of *BSG* that makes the series unique from scholarly presages of the future. The fact that artificial intelligence can love, can believe in a monotheistic God, and can recognize mistakes and try to mend errors is something that the many believe cannot be achieved.

Academics believe that artificial intelligence will be able to process more information than us more rapidly than we can, or it will evolve to a level of intelligence that we will not be able to understand. Cylons have superior functions but are ultimately approachable and able to be understood by the audience, a decision on the part of the show to give a familiar, human-like face to the perpetrators of genocide and the harbingers of a new technological age.

Ultimately, it is argued that the work of technological pioneers is merely a secular quest with overtly religious themes, a desire to create life and usher in humanity's apotheosis, obtaining divinity through science. Our ultimate goal according to these advocates and scientists is not to create technology that will resemble humans, but to create technology so sentient and intelligent that recognizes its own existence and, more importantly, acknowledges humanity as its creators. It is a lofty goal, but arguably also a dangerous one. What if technology, like Brother Cavil, decides that its existence is inferior to what it could have been? What if artificial intelligence comes to the conclusion that it could inherently be improved? And, most importantly, what happens when our own creation decides that we are the inferior models and thus makes a conscious decision to eliminate us? If these questions become realities, then the Singularity is poised to occur.

Regardless of how sophisticated our technology becomes, it is arguable that it will never really be human. As *BSG* suggests, to be human an entity needs a soul. Though this can have a religious connotation, it is a widely accepted belief that there is some sort of spiritual aspect to each individual. Though much is decided by our DNA, human twins with the same DNA have

different personality traits. Even among the Cylon models, different copies of the same models did not always share the same opinion on matters, and were in complete disagreement with each other. The indefinable component to every person which makes them unique cannot be explained by science nor can arguably be replicated by it.

Posthumanist theory argues that machinic evolution will continue the task of natural selection. Humanity arguably has reached the apex of its civilization and by creating life that will eventually surpass our own in intelligence, we will succumb to the natural process of evolution as superior life forms rise above us. Though we do not know what form this intelligence will take as we have yet to create it, should we survive the destruction of our civilization by our own hand, the descendants of life-sized, blinking robots or logical computers might be the death of us all.

“Replicants are like any other machine,” says Deckard in *Blade Runner*. “Either they’re a benefit or a hazard. If they’re a benefit, it’s not my problem.” Though Deckard is jaded because of his profession killing Replicants, his attitude is the sort that precipitated the Singularity four times in the *Battlestar Galactica* universe, and cause the Singularity in our own world. It is the tolerance to machines that seems to bring about successive civilization’s downfalls in *BSG*. Humanity does not worry when machines are working; in variants of the Singularity in *BSG*, the machines take humanity by surprise. Surprise seems to be an element of the Singularity. It is the moment in which our technology surpasses us; it may be a moment we can chart in the future, but science fiction and *Battlestar Galactica* suggests that it will be like a thief in the night, a technological rapture that will signal the downfall of mankind to their creation.

## CHAPTER 2

While humanity's quest for survival and a new home is the focus point of the series, a portrait of the Cylons, the faceless robots that annihilated them, emerges at the same time. Over the course of forty years after the First Cylon War, eight humanoid, "skin job" models were developed by the Final Five.<sup>27</sup> The Cylons returned to the Colonies forty years after their uprising to launch a devastating attack, bringing about the almost total annihilation of the human race.

From a race of machine slaves comes a culture with a hierarchy, lead by the collective humanoid models that act on motivations from their species, their models, and themselves. The Cylons are both mechanical and biological, and live in a homogenous society on basestars throughout the universe in the decades between their creation and return to the Colonies. The humanoid models of the Cylons are immortal, their bodies akin to a strange science experiment, the ability to die and be reborn in a new body something out of a horror film. Despite their homogeneity and immortality, they still attempt to reproduce. The only successful Cylon offspring is the child Hera Agathon, born of a Cylon mother and human father. Hera is an enigma for both Cylons and humans, as her existence is implausible and her purpose becomes increasingly important, as characters, Cylon and human alike, believe she is touched by the divine force which pervades the latter seasons of the series.

The Cylons are influenced by a belief in a monotheistic God which unites them but eventually precipitates a Cylon Civil War. Initially, all of the Cylons act under the pretense of

---

<sup>27</sup> Though the Seventh Model, named Daniel, was poisoned by Cavil in his amniotic fluid and did not survive.

religious devotion. Over the course of the series, each Cylon is shown to have their own motivations, some of them less pious and religious than others. Through the destruction of humanity and pursuit of the survivors across the universe, the Cylons try to identify themselves and define their place in the universe. It is their interactions with humans and their own growth that inspire change within the Cylons. Some realize they may be more like humans than they thought, while others remain intent on becoming the only sentient beings in the universe.

Several Cylons in particular challenge the majority of the race in their affinity with humanity. Through personal relationships with humans, The Model Six dubbed “Caprica” and the Model Eight later known as Athena Agathon (mother of Hera and wife of a human) splinter from the rest of their kind to pursue lives with humans. They decide their own fates and own identities, sometimes in conflict with others of their kind. These Cylons cause discord among their race but also inspire others to accept humanity. It is through their love for humans that they abandon their Cylon motivations and define themselves based on who they are as people, and not as make or model.

The Cylons have a social hierarchy, based primarily on the forms of life of their species. The variations of the machines include Raiders, Heavy Raider, Centurions, the partly-biological basestars with hybrids, and the humanoid models.<sup>28</sup> Of the variations of Cylon, the humanoid models are the sole kind that is fully self-aware. Though Centurions were the first of the Cylon created by humanity of the Twelve Colonies, the humanoid models created in the forty years between the two Cylon wars rule the Cylon society.

---

<sup>28</sup> Hybrids, considered to be the first humanoid Cylon creation, look like women but sit in liquid attached to the ship by tubes and cords. Though they speak in codes, they possess some measure of self-awareness.

The Centurions, frequently called “toasters” by humans, most closely resemble the “killer robot” trope in science fiction.<sup>29</sup> The Centurions, unlike the other Cylon variants, have no biological component and are purely metal. They are taller and larger than humans and hard to kill, possessing guns they switch out for their hands. The Centurions have multiple roles, acting as soldiers, guards, “muscle,” and slaves. They are shown marching in squadrons, performing executions, planting trees, and wiping floors. They are casually given orders by their humanoid models. Older models of the Centurions were the precursors to the other Cylon before the arrival of the Final Five. After the rise of the humanoid models, the Centurions were given “telencephalic inhibitors” preventing free thought and free will so they wouldn’t become self-aware and resist orders, since the humanoid Cylons didn’t want their own robotic rebellion (3.2).<sup>30</sup>

Of the Cylons with synthetic biology, the most basic example is the Raider, the Cylon’s self-piloted, partially biological starfighter. The Raiders and larger Heavy Raiders are seen as domesticated animals.<sup>31</sup> They have no self-awareness until Season Four, when Cylons posit the emergence of the Final Five has “awoken” a higher consciousness within them.<sup>32</sup>

The Cylon basestars, though made of metal, have synthetically biological components. Their holds are not made of purely metal but have a fleshy aspect. A kind of tendon-like webbing is seen throughout the ship, and the metal walls have red, pulsing vein-like lights. Damaged basestars can repair themselves over time.

---

<sup>29</sup> Head Caprica chides Baltar for allowing humans to use this term, calling it a “racial epithet”

<sup>30</sup> Natalie Six and Sixes, Eights, and Twos removed the inhibitors from Centurions in Season Four to retaliate the lobotomy of Raiders by Ones, Fours, and Fives, creating a legion of sentient Centurions which chose to fight with the Cylon/human alliance.

<sup>31</sup> The raiders have stall-like compartments in the basestar that they fly in and out of.

<sup>32</sup> The lobotomy of the Raiders to remove their self-awareness widens the rift between models which precipitates the Cylon Civil War.



At the heart of each basestar lies a human figure in a bath that speaks in code and nonsense and controls the ship functions. This being is called quite literally a “hybrid” that has a human form but is attached to the ship with tubes and wires. The hybrid is referred to as the “central nervous system” of the ship (4.06).<sup>33</sup> The hybrids have pseudo-spiritual significance; Model Twos believe that “she” speaks in prophecy along with gibberish. Hybrids have stated prophetic phrases, such as when they call Kara the harbinger of death and prophecy that she will lead the people to their end.

Humanoid Cylons are the closest to humans in both biology and self-awareness. As seen with Boomer and the Final Five, Cylons are so much like humans that they can live among humans undetected for years, either unaware of their robotic identity or as fully aware Cylon agents. Their chemical compounds are so biologically similar that a DNA test is the only means by which to prove they are synthetic. Though they make look physically like humans, Cylons are stronger than humans, can move at greater speeds, and possess better health. Athena is less susceptible to radiation on Caprica, and Boomer shows far less fatigue than the other human pilots in “33” as they stay awake for multiple days.

Though their synthetic biology is emphasized, there is still a mechanical component of the humanoid models which allows them mastery over machines and greater intuition with technology. Athena saves the Fleet by powering down Raiders which are pursuing them. She slits her wrist and pushes a fiber optic cable up into her forearm, attached to a Cylon biological/mechanical engine. She essentially plugs herself into the computer and transmits signals to shut down the Raiders. This is one of the starkest examples through the series of the Cylons’ tie to machinery despite their flesh.

---

<sup>33</sup> Sam Anders becomes a hybrid at the end of the series, submerged in liquid and attached with wires to the Galactica, which allows him to control other basestars in the Colony when Galactica invades.

Cylons feelings, physical and otherwise, are explored throughout the series. When Starbuck interrogates the Model Two Leoben, she is under the impression that pain is nothing more than a component of the Cylon's software, and because of this, torture is justified as a means to an end. "Why bother with hunger, pain?" she asked the Cylon, who is bloody from being punched. "Part of being human," he responds. "Machines shouldn't feel pain, shouldn't bleed, shouldn't sweat," Starbuck reasons (1.10). By convincing herself that Leoben was some sort of anomaly, a machine who may look like a human but ultimately could not feel like one, she justifies treating him inhumanely, exorcising herself from guilt or responsibility when she physically assaults him.

In the fourth season, Tigh questions Caprica Six as to her ability to feel pain. "I want to know how it feels to kill billions of human beings," he asks her (4.04). "I feel it," she insists. "Do you really think I couldn't?" "Do you turn it off?" he asks. She tells them that they are the "same" and that she "wants" the pain, as it is "how I learn" (4.04). Both Starbuck and Caprica Six attribute the feelings of physical pain, as well as the choice to feel the pain, as something that separates Cylon from humans, or makes them more similar.

The series does not directly answer the question about Cylons' ability to control their physical pain; it is clear that they experience it, but their ability to turn it on and off is never verbally confirmed. Because of their temporary deaths and their ability to download, they would rather die than experience prolonged and intense pain; they will euthanize each other and kill themselves to avoid it and speed up the downloading process to brand new bodies. It is also said that each successive download becomes increasingly painful. Apparently their rebirth is at least one instance in which they are not able to shut off their pain "software."

Like Cylons, the Replicants have rudimentary emotions and feelings, and it is through testing their responses to questions that aim to gauge their compassion and emotional responses to questions, that they are detected. “They were designed to copy humans in every way except their emotions. The designers reckoned that after a few years they might develop their own emotional responses.” They are not given any emotional programming, but can formulate and develop emotions after a period of time. The origin of Cylons’ emotions is not mentioned, but the fact that each model is so similar in their emotions speaks to programming and not individual maturity, as in *Blade Runner*.

There is a horror element to the Cylons’ existence, most obviously in their immortality and their physical bodies. One of the more distinguishing characteristics of the Cylon is the manner in which they are endlessly reborn. “I can’t die,” Model Six tells Gaius Baltar before she uses her physical body to shield him from an explosion (M1.01). When Starbuck tortured Leoben, sticking his head into a bucket until the point of drowning, he tells her “I can’t drown. I can’t die” (1.8). The downloading process is considered by humans to be “horrifying” (3.01). On New Caprica, humans turn to terrorism, though their Cylon oppressors literally keep coming back in new bodies, unable to be permanently killed.

Each individual Cylon is a consciousness which can inhabit one of its Model’s bodies. Should the individual body perish, the consciousness transmits back to a resurrection ship and downloads to a new body waiting to be animated. In the episode “Downloaded,” Caprica Six and Boomer are shown undergoing the downloading process after their deaths. When their consciousness is downloaded, their new bodies suddenly animate, taking in a large breath before gaining consciousness. They shout in fear and try to escape, completely disoriented by their

birth. The act of downloading and the animation of new bodies is not unlike a monster on a slab, waiting to be shocked into life.

After her rebirth, Caprica tells a Number Three that she feels stiff and is trying to get used to her new body. “I know it’s identical, but even after this time I still feel awkward” (2.18). The Cylons’ bodies are like a new pair of shoes, to be broken in until they fit properly and are comfortable, and are able to be thrown away and replaced.

The transfer of consciousness is equated by Cylons as being part of a “stream,” spoken of in a metaphorical sense as a river, but actually in data form. When Natalie Six is shot and killed by Athena, the hybrid aboard the neighboring basestar is aware of her death, intoning “The Six is back in the stream...back in the stream that feeds the ocean that feeds the stream” (4.09).<sup>34</sup> There seems to be some sort of virtual component to it; when they download, their memories up to their death are “uploaded” and can be accessed by others of their model. Their reincarnation is merely a transfer of information from vessel to vessel.<sup>35</sup>

In *Blade Runner*, what happens when one loses life is something Roy is preoccupied by in his final moments. He describes some of the fantastical things he has seen. “All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain,” he opines as he dies. In a civilization with technology that uploads the memories of each Cylon and preserves every aspect of their lives besides their physical bodies, the concept of mortal loss is not important to them. But, as Roy shows, it is not just a physical body that is lost with death, but something more profound. Unlike a data stream which preserves the consciousness of a Cylon, to the extent that it is saved to some sort of universal hard drive, the Replicant realizes in his final moments that there is something

---

<sup>34</sup> As Cylons had lost the ability to resurrect by this point in the series, Natalie would have died a final death, unless there was some aspect of their consciousness which remained in a data form. The concept is never explored.

<sup>35</sup> D’Anna, however, has visions between the time of her death and her next download, causing her to embark on a suicidal “messianic mission,” as she is convinced she is uncovering the Final Five with each subsequent death.

beyond the physical, something barely describable and unable to be shared, that will leave Earth with the death of the body. If Cylons can be downloaded and uploaded, and every aspect of their existence saved and documented, where is their soul? If they are individually documented and accessible to each other, what constitutes the finite spark within them that makes each of them individual? Roy mourns the fact that his experiences in life will leave along with his consciousness, but with their digital immortality, perhaps the Cylons soul does not exist.

The manner of Cylon death and consciousness is a question they grapple with in light of their faith. As Leoben puts it: “What is the basic article of faith? This is not all that we are. I know that I am more than this body, this consciousness” (1.08). Should they be too far away from a resurrection ship, or when they lose their ability to resurrect with the destruction of their Hub, they are essentially “mortal,” in that their consciousness will be unable to reach and download into a new body. The Cylons know what happens in the intervening time between their temporary deaths, but what happens after a final death? Do they have souls beyond a string of data? Cylons believe in a spiritual life that exists beyond their physical selves. Though they are bound within their synthetic bodies and in data streams, some fervently believe that they are imbued from their God with a soul that exists outside and beyond their physical creation. The sincere belief in a soul given by God is a powerful motivation for Cylons who believe that their actions and faith are necessary for life everlasting, which unlike waking up in new, identical bodies, whatever lies beyond a permanent death is undecided and unprogrammed.

As the Cylons gain mortality they become preoccupied with such questions, as their mortal lives suddenly take on meaning. When they lose their ability to resurrect, many consider themselves on equal footing as humans, since they are all now mortal. As Natalie Six, the leader of the rebel Cylons, explains,

Moments became more important, held their 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 you spend your time lifetimes distressing over...mortality is the one thing... well, it's the one thing that makes you whole. (4.07)

When D'Anna is resurrected from the Hub to reveal the identities of the Final Five, she is dismayed that resurrection has been destroyed. An Eight tells D'Anna that the Cylons' new mortality is a 'good thing' because "now that there's no difference we can start trusting each other" (4.09). Because Cylons become just as susceptible to death as humans, there is a certain level of trust that develops between the two groups, as Cylons can no longer put themselves in precarious situations that can be alleviated by their own deaths and resurrection. D'Anna takes her mortality not as an opportunity to trust other Cylons or humans, but as an imperative to survive, acting in her best interests. "I'm the only Three in the universe, so I've got to protect myself," she reasons, her actions now decided by the threat of final death (4.09).

Mortality is also an important component to Replicants. One of the ways the Tyrell Corporation tried to control the Replicants in *Blade Runner* was to give them a lifespan of four years. It is referred to as a "fail safe device," preventing the machines from maturing. That way, they hypothesize the machines can't develop any complex emotions based on lived experiences, presumably to prevent another uprising among the machines. It is because of this four year lifespan that Roy and Pris sneak onto Earth to try and lengthen Pris' life, which has already reached three years. Roy turns to violence when he does not get the answers he seeks, killing Tyrell and Sebastian in a rage over the inevitable death of his partner, who is instead murdered by Deckard, while Roy is the Replicant who dies a natural and premature death.

The lifespan of the machines is the largest difference between the Replicants of *Blade Runner* and the Cylons of *BSG*. The Replicants are driven by their limited lives, while the Cylons

are eager to wipe out humanity to begin a limitless existence in God's love. When Roy begins to die, there is just as much horror as when a Cylon is reborn in a goo bath, especially as Roy sticks a nail through his hand to feel pain as his body stiffens in death. The pressure of mortality is what differentiates Cylon from Replicant. When the Cylons gain mortality in the third Season and when their life is given meaning from the finality of their deaths, the rebel models are pressed to heal their culture by making peace with the humans and discovering the Final Five to unite themselves as a single civilization. Before they gain their mortality, though, the Cylon are relatively unconcerned about their physical well-being and act to eliminate humanity so that they can usher in a Cylon eternity.

Cylons have a seemingly limitless number of cloned bodies, but only come in seven models. They are unable to reproduce on their own and must re-inhabit bodies after death. However, because of a commandment of God to "be fruitful," the Cylons have attempted to reproduce via different methods (2.05). Because they were incapable of reproduction amongst themselves, they rounded up women on New Caprica and took them to "breeding farms" where they were hooked up to machines to be artificially impregnated. The Cylons would use the bodies of humans to create robotic life. The women they used were essentially raped by the machines; they were physically imprisoned and their wombs hijacked. The women became machines themselves as they resembled the hybrids of the basestar, with tubes and wires attaching them to large machines which presumably kept them alive. The women in the farms had quite literally become "baby makers."

Later, the Cylons conclude that love was the missing aspect of the formula for reproduction, an emotional and possibly spiritual component to living organisms that the Cylons

seem to also possess. When Athena gives birth to Hera she studies her in amazement, telling Helo, “She’s our little girl. We made her” (2.18).

A way in which Cylons are different from humanity not just in terms of their creation and biology is the age and maturity of their society. Humanoid models have been in existence for less than forty years before the events of the series, and in that time their society has continued in a relatively homogenous manner, as they lived uneventfully in base stars, plotting their revenge on the humans. Their attack on the Colonies is the first real benchmark for their culture, the first event besides their creation that defined who they are.

Because of their age, the Cylons have to find out who they are for the first time as a people. As they are so young, they have no cultural history to depend upon or inform them. They have what they believe to be God’s commandments guiding them and their lives, the knowledge that they were created by humanity and have a religious imperative to destroy them, and a mysterious prophetic phrase about history repeating itself. Through their interactions with humans, they begin to question their motivations and decisions, and realize they are not as different from their human parents as they would like to think.

Because of their deaths of the Final Five their inability to educate the new Cylons on the perils of vengeance and their place in the universe, the Cylons as a people try to define for themselves who they are. In the series, they do so by killing humanity on a perceived directive from their God in order to take their place. A Brother Cavil tells the humans who capture him later in the series that the attacks were “bad thinking, faulty logic. Our first major error of judgment. Well, live and learn” (2.20).



After their agreement with the Centurions to end the war, the Final Five created eight humanoid models.<sup>36</sup> The Cylon population is reportedly in the millions, though an exact figure is never given in the course of the series. Each of the surviving seven models shares personalities with archetypes. They have their own motivations both as models and as individuals. Each Cylon also has individual experiences which inform how they behave separately or with their models.<sup>37</sup> Models Four, Five, and One are atheist and have motivations based off of their survival and dominance over the human race rather than what a false deity thinks.<sup>38</sup> “There is no God,” says a captured Model One to humanity’s leadership. “Supernatural divinities are the primitives’ answer...at least that’s what we’ve been trying to tell the others for years. We can’t really prove one way or the other, of course” (2.20). Models Two, Three, Six, and Eight rely on religion and spirituality to determine their actions, showing greater compassion towards the humans, are interested in their past, and eventually believe that a blended existence with the humans was the way God meant for them to live.<sup>39</sup>

Model Fours, the “Simon” model, represent the archetypal representation of an android. He is the most machine-like, with a personality calm to the point of apathy, and no qualms about lying. His use of logic and reason paired with his lack of emotional response are what make him the least human out of the Cylons, or rather the most machine-like.

Fives, or “Dorals,” which side with Ones and Fours during the Cylon divide, are emotionally unstable and manipulative. They can be amiable and friendly, or angry and violent,

---

<sup>36</sup> Because of Daniel’s death, only seven survive. Often called the “Significant Seven” by fans.

<sup>37</sup> Cylons such as Boomer, Athena, D’Anna, and Caprica Six who rely on their experiences can have falling outs with their line and with other Cylons (ex. Caprica is shot trying to defend Gaius when he is pressured into signing death warrants on New Caprica).

<sup>38</sup> These models unite and with the help of Boomer win the vote to lobotomize Raiders who are gaining self-awareness. This precipitates the Civil War.

<sup>39</sup> These models show a great interest in the identities of the Final Five. Their decision to actively search for them precipitates the war between the models.

one shouting at Gaius and threatening to shoot him on New Caprica if he did not sign execution papers, and another acting as a suicide bomber onboard the *Galactica*.

Ones are the masterminds behind most of the actions of the Cylons until the models begin to fissure. Though Cavil may lead the Cylons under the pretense of being “the best machines the universe has ever seen,” his hatred for humanity and his makers and his base feelings of jealousy and anger, determine his actions. He killed the Final Five out of rage and instilled in the other models the desire to wipe out the humans who oppressed them, rather than leave the galaxy of the Twelve Colonies and spread out across the universe, as is implied what the Five intended for the humanoid Cylons to do to prevent further war between human and machine. He manipulates the religious beliefs of the other models to his advantage through the majority of the series. It is when the other Cylons realize they misinterpreted their religion and change their attitude towards humanity that he begins to lose hold over them.

The Models Three, Two, Six, and Eight on the other side of the Cylon Divide are given more screen time on the show, and have more complex characters, with specific Cylons showing individuality and a range of emotions. Threes, or D’Annas, are clever, much like the Ones, and are prone to value the interests of their own model above those of the Cylon collective. Over the course of the third season, one D’Anna develops a Messianic complex. She becomes obsessed with the Final Five and seeks to discover their identities. She is willing to undergo the repeated pain of multiple deaths in order to find the truth behind the Cylons’ creators. D’Anna’s quest for the truth causes her to make decisions independent of the other Cylons, and though she ultimately discovers the identity of the Five, her line is boxed by Cavil, who has convinced the

other models of her dangerous, independent ways (conveniently covering up the truth of the Five's identities).<sup>40</sup>

Sixes are the most fervently religious of the Cylon models, with a model's attractiveness and otherworldly, platinum hair. Caprica Six in particular becomes an integral character to the series, for after she seduces Gaius Baltar for the plans to the Defense mainframe, she realizes she has fallen in love with him, and because of that illogical emotional attachment acquires human characteristics, joining with the humans and influencing them. Sixes in general are sensitive and emotional but can be manipulative and cruel. Caprica and the other Sixes are a notable exception to the preconceptions of murderous androids. Though they have the ability to be manipulative, heartless and cold, they also can fall in love, show compassion, and display emotional vulnerability.<sup>41</sup> Model Six is arguably humanity's greatest ally among the Cylon.

The Twos, or Leobens, are also one of the more religious models, but believe in mysticism and spirituality rather than literal interpretations of Scripture and God's Word that Sixes adhere to. For example, they believe that the hybrids aboard the basestars speak in prophecy and code rather than gibberish. Though Leobens can be crafty and deceptive, they like the Sixes side with humanity and believe that their ultimate spiritual destiny is to find a way for the two peoples to live together in peace to fulfill God's love. One Leoben cultivates an obsession with Starbuck; he believes that she has a special destiny and claims to be in love with her, imprisoning her in an apartment on New Caprica so that she could realize her full spiritual

---

<sup>40</sup> Boxing is the process of punitively deactivating an individual or an entire line of Cylons. Their bodies are depowered in the resurrection tubs and their consciousnesses are placed in cold storage in a "boxing facility" (never shown in series). Cylons can be "unboxed," as can be seen with D'Anna in Season Three, one of which is brought back by Ones in order to placate Twos, Sixes, and Eights, as she is the only Cylon aware of the identities of the Final Five.

<sup>41</sup> A startling example of Sixes' nature occurs in the Miniseries, when Caprica Six snaps the neck of an infant to spare it from experiencing the Cylon apocalypse that she was instrumental in.

potential. The obscurity of Leoben's more mystical beliefs are perhaps just as contrary to the concept of posthuman machines as Sixes' orthodoxy.

Eights are one of the more complicated models. They are the teenagers of the Cylon; fickle, finicky, and emotional. As can be seen in the cases Boomer and Athena, Eights are prone to switching allegiance when it benefits them most. While some Eights profess a belief in the Cylon God, they do not seem to have the same religious fervor as the other religious models. Of all of the Cylon models, Eights are the most ambiguous. They react emotionally to situations, and seem to have a tenuous grasp of reason as they respond to situations using their feelings rather than the logic of the machine-like Ones, Fours, and Fives. The Eights make the Sixes look like the paradigm of logic.

It is the belief in the Cylon God, or lack thereof, and their spirituality that motivates the Cylon models in different measures. While some believe they must follow God's edicts and thus act to protect their immortal souls, others look to their survival and dominance as a species. The existence of God and religious beliefs are what drive the Cylons. Many of their decisions are based upon what they believe their God would want them to do. Some of the models begin taking actions that are against what others believe are morally and religiously right, and thus create factions in their culture.

The Cylons' attempts to wipe out humanity during the attacks were based off religious devotion and the belief that children must kill their parents in order to replace them and to stake a claim for themselves in the universe. As the title credits of the first season of *BSG* state, "The Cylons were created by man/ They rebelled/ They evolved/ They look and feel human/ Some are programmed to think they are human/ There are many copies/ And they have a plan" (1.01). Though the Cylon's important, guiding "plan" (as throughout the series they always seem to

have one) changes over the course of the series, in the beginning it is to live in God's love as his chosen creation. The extermination of the human race is the means by which the Cylons must achieve this directive.

In the Miniseries and Season One, Cylons think of themselves as "humanity's children."<sup>42</sup> Model Six tells Baltar that "humanity's children are returning home" (M.01). The Cylons feel entitled to the Twelve Colonies because, in their eyes, it is their inheritance from their human parents who do not deserve to live because of their sinful ways, ignorant of God's love and worshipping idols. "Humanity is not a pretty race...one step above savages fighting with clubs over food" says Leoben (M.02). "Maybe the Cylons are God's retribution for our many sins. What if God decided he made a mistake and he decided to give souls to another creature, like the Cylons?" During Starbuck's interrogation of Leoben in Season One, the Cylon explains the attacks. "I know that God loved you [humans] more than any other living creatures and that you repaid his divine love with sin, with hate, with corruption, with evil. So then he decided to create the Cylons" (1.8). The Cylons harbor the belief that they were created by a higher power through humanity in order to replace them as His creation. "They would have destroyed themselves eventually," reasons a Number Five. "They deserve what they got...parents have to die. It's the only way children come into their own" (1.3) Cylons need to kill all of humanity in order to fulfill their destiny as God's chosen people.

In Season Two, there is a shift in opinion regarding the attack on the Colonies. Caprica Six, who loved a human man, and Boomer, who lived as a human, had different perspectives on the Cylons' actions than the rest of the population. As Caprica Six reasons, "Genocide, murder, vengeance, they're all sins in the eyes of God. That's what you and I know. That's what they don't want to hear...they would have to consider the slaughter of mankind was a mistake"

---

<sup>42</sup> Though they were created by the Final Five.

(2.18). While the Cylons originally believed they were carrying out God's will by cleansing the universe of His flawed creations, a new interpretation of their religion emerges, in which they live in peace with the humans, both species living in God's love. "Our people need a new beginning," says Caprica. "A new way to live in God's love. Without hate. Without all the lies."

(2.18). It is Caprica, Boomer, and later the majority of the Cylons' beliefs that peace with the humans is a better way to serve God than the extermination of them.

A Brother Cavil sneaks onto the Galactica with the message of peace for the humans.

"It's been decided that the Occupation of the Colonies was an error," he tells them, conveniently labeling it as something other than a genocide (2.20). As he tells unbelieving Roslin and Adama,

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. 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. (2.20)

There is a division of opinion regarding the Cylons towards the Final Five, who are revealed to be their makers. The division of attitudes towards discovering and reconciling with the Five occurs on the same division between models as attitudes towards religion, and towards lobotomizing the Raiders, all three of which precipitate the Cylon Civil War. While Model Threes and Natalie are intent upon uncovering the identities of the Five so all of the Cylon can be reunited, Ones are adamantly opposed to searching for them, for reasons which are tied to the Cylons' entire existence.

Model Three decides to try to uncover their identities. She discovers that between the time she is killed and downloaded into a new body, she sees a phantom world in which the Final Five reside. After repeated deaths, essentially suicides as she commands Centurions to shoot her,

she eventually sees the identities of the Five in the Temple of the Five. Cavil convinces the others that her “messianic” ambitions are dangerous to the race and she is boxed, which to his benefit conceals the fact that he knew, aided, and murdered them.

However, some of the models disagree with Cavil’s actions and are equally curious about their creators. “You are openly discussing the Final Five!” shouts Cavil to a Six named Natalie who broaches the topic. “That is forbidden!” (4.02) Cavil programmed the Cylons not to think about the Five, though they begin to as they grow curious as to the five Cylons’ identities and involvement in the seven Cylons’ creation. Some Cylons want to go so far as to reunite with the Five. Natalie believes that the Cylons’ desire to think and learn about the Five is an evolutionary pull for the Cylon. “Something is calling us,” she insists, “pushing us to discover our origins, to understand our place in the universe” (4.02). Cylons who originally thought that their place in the universe was as God’s chosen (and only) people now believe that there is some balance that must be attained through living with the human race, rather than living without them. Questioning their existence and endeavoring to find out the truth of their birth and their purpose in the universe speaks to a greater intellectual and spiritual curiosity that makes them less machine-like and more complex.

It is through the revelation that the humanoid Cylons were created by a force other than humanity, that they in essence have demi-gods who were responsible for their lives, that fissures develop in the Cylons, aided by divisive religious beliefs and attitudes towards their models and species. It is Natalie’s revolutionary plan to create unity by “[uniting] the twelve models once and for all” (4.03). It is her and other Cylons’ belief that their true destiny lies with a unification of their culture, a reconciliation with their parents that will allow greater accord and will allow the Cylons to reach their full potential as their own people and children of the one true God.

“You’re toying with our survival!” insists Cavil adamantly. “We’re mechanized copies! There’s a reason our original programmers clearly felt that it’s a mistake for us to contact the Final Five!” (4.2). He insists that violating the programming that prevents the other models from thinking about the Five threatens their survival, though no clear explanation is given for this belief. Cavil may be adamant about preserving the Cylon culture the way that it is, but perhaps he is also worried about the fact that he was responsible for the Five’s demise, and would be held accountable for his actions should they be uncovered. Cavil may have fostered and encouraged the religious beliefs of half of the models, attributing the Cylons’ existence to a divine being with humanity as His flawed creation. It was a much easier concept for him to use to influence the Cylon rather than the truth, that the skin jobs have benevolent, parent-like predecessors that made and treasured them individually. Cavil’s staunch belief in Cylons as perfect machines would be one explanation why he would prefer not to have the other models fawn over the idea that they were created by anyone other than humans they are obligated as superior life forms to destroy. It is ironic that Cavil who is an atheist and went so far as to kill his creators in order to preserve the machine way of life essentially plays God with the other Cylons, manipulating their religion and logic for his own purposes.

Though each is different, some individual Cylons break not only with their model but also with their entire race when they try to decide for themselves who they are, their identities often affected by the human relationships they have. Cylons Athena Valerii and Caprica Six interact with humans, blurring the lines between machine and human and challenging the idea of identity and the definition of person in the series. As Cylons and humans interact, the question of identity becomes more apparent as some Cylons, particularly Athena and Caprica, prefer human life.



Of the Cylons in the series, Caprica Six must live in a Cylon culture she feels alienated from after the Cylon attacks because of the love for a man (Gaius Baltar) and guilt she feels over his death. Her guilt emerges as a virtual representation of Baltar.<sup>43</sup> Though he like Gaius Baltar's "Head Six" insists he is an angel, he is a representation of the guilt and weakness of her mind, goading and manipulating her into action when she is unsure of herself.<sup>44</sup> Head Baltar tells her that she wants to be human, which she doesn't dispute. Her love for Baltar affects many of her decisions as she shows mercy to humans throughout the series and has more in common with them emotionally than with her fellow Cylon.

In the miniseries, Caprica is the representation of the Cylons: a tall, lithe, platinum-haired model, who reveals herself to Gaius as Model Six of the Eight humanoid Cylon models. Even from the first hours of *BSG*, before the Cylons' morality and motivations are explored, a complexity in them is personified through Caprica. In one scene, she examines a small baby in a marketplace on Caprica with fascination. Knowing what is to come, she reaches into the stroller and gently snaps the infant's neck, in order to spare it from the oncoming apocalypse. She seduces Gaius for information to shut down the Colonial Defenses and thus is instrumental in the destruction of humanity. However, she claims to be in love with Gaius and feels tremendous guilt after his death which affects her as she tries to rejoin Cylon society. She expresses love as well as lust, and in her final act protects the man she both loves and betrays by sacrificing her body in an explosion. She tells her Gaius that "God wanted me to help you" (M.01).

---

<sup>43</sup> Ronald D. Moore in the commentary for "Downloaded" suggests that Caprica's virtual representation of Baltar is a representation of her guilt and her psyche "talking back to her," a psychological reaction to the immensity of the guilt from the human apocalypse.

<sup>44</sup> Though they may have been meant to represent the psyches of Caprica and Baltar, they are eventually made to be representations of the divine to the two characters, who are meant to be instrumental on the Cylon/human exodus through Earth and the protection of Hera.

Caprica Six more so than the Model Eight displays human characteristics, with a complexity of emotions. Caprica wants to be a person, though she is fully aware of her identity as a Cylon and the genocide she committed against the human race. She feels guilt for the destruction of the human race. Furthermore, because of her faith in the Cylon god, Caprica believes that she has a soul, the ability to sin, and thus has the drive to seek forgiveness from God for her actions. As she becomes more self-aware due to the love she feels for Baltar, she begins to experience a greater range of emotions than her Cylon sisters, including guilt, grief, and pain, as she becomes less like a Cylon and more like a human. Caprica Six's human emotions inform all of her actions and decisions, as she tries to define herself as a person by the way she feels.

Her relationship and the death of Baltar cause her, to her surprise, to develop a deep guilt for her actions, and though she disguises it from the other Cylons it eventually determines her behavior. Her relationship with Baltar creates a greater affinity between her and humans. Her experience of love for a human being, and the human feelings of grief and emotional pain, guides her with a human-like conscience. Though she is guilty for the decimation of the human race, she seems to be particularly affected by her betrayal of a man she realizes loves. Baltar's effect on her, emotionally and psychologically, alters her from other Cylon.

Caprica is portrayed in the miniseries as calculating and ruthless, but in the episode "Downloaded," one sees entirely different aspects of her character. She clearly mourns Baltar's death from the moment she resurrects, seeing a virtual version of Baltar in her first moments aboard the resurrection ship. Through his influence on her, but also the conscience that she believes she possesses (though arguably the same thing), her decision to continue to love him

after she discovers his survival is intrinsic to her character throughout the series, especially with her behavior on New Caprica.

Caprica hesitantly tells a Three who requests she try to help reintegrate Boomer into the Cylons on Caprica that “I’m still having...problems of my own” (2.18). Though she uses her Six wiles to convince Boomer to ditch her humanity, there appears to be some truth in what she tells the newly-discovered Cylon. “I’m different...I’m more like you. I had someone I met here. A man. I loved him and I think he could have loved me eventually” (2.18). Throughout her conversation with Boomer, Caprica looks uneasily at her virtual, “Head” Baltar, who nods, shakes his head, rolls his eyes, and makes other facial expressions which influences what she says to Boomer. He tells her that she thinks she’s more human than Cylon, and instructs her in what to say to Boomer when Caprica’s religious angle fails. When Boomer vents about Gaius, who is very much alive, after discovering his betrayal, Caprica is visibly affected by the news. She behaves differently with the knowledge of his survival, no longer trying to convert Boomer to the Cylon way, but instead treating her as a compatriot, a fellow Cylon who loves a human.

Caprica realizes the depths of her love for Baltar in a confrontation between her and a Three over the fate of Anders as they are trapped together in a bombed café. They find Starbuck’s dog tags on him, which Three throws away but Caprica finds and picks up in the rubble. Baltar appears beside her. “You have it in your hand,” he whispers to her. “Hard, physical proof of one person’s love for another. If only you felt this deeply about us” (2.18). She insists that she loves him still. “Why not kill him?” he asks, as she, Three, and Boomer deliberate about what to do with him. “You’ve already killed billions of people. Do you honestly believe one more body’s going to weigh on your conscience? Which is something you don’t have. Do

you?” (2.18) Caprica kills the Three (the first Cylon-on-Cylon violence), allowing Anders to escape.

Caprica is unique amongst the characters, particularly the Cylons, because of her massive feelings of guilt over her actions leading to the human apocalypse. No other Cylon feels as much guilt or feelings of remorse for the attacks; Boomer and the Final Five were sleeper agents at the time, and Athena never verbally expresses any regret. Tigh confronts Caprica after the revelation of the Final Five, demanding to know her opinion on her role in the Cylon attacks. He asks her how it feels to kill billions of human beings, to have their blood on her hands. “I feel it. Do you really think I couldn’t?” she replies earnestly. “You think we’re different but you know we’re not. You act like you think I’m made of switches and relays. Look, veins, not wires. We’re the same” (4.04).

Head Gaius teases Caprica that she thinks she’s a human throughout the series, but she is slowly convinced that she in particular is more human than the rest of the Cylons. While some of the other models complain about their resemblance to humans, down to the synthetic DNA they possess, Caprica uses the similarities of her body with the humans’ to make connections of her soul with theirs. If she looks human, if her physical body works the same way, then why is she so different from them? Why shouldn’t she be a person, be like them, if they are down to a molecular level the same?

Caprica begins to use her feelings to dictate how she behaves and what she does. She does not refuse to feel guilt because she’s a machine, but instead embraces what she believes are the similarities between the humans and herself. Athena, the other Cylon who defects to humanity (also for the love of a human man), does not really express any sort of deep thought as to her Cylon nature, because she accepts it. Athena’s drive to be accepted amongst the humans

despite being a Cylon precludes any sort of reflection on her part about what it means to be a Cylon. Compared to Athena in particular, Caprica is rather philosophical in pondering her identity as a Cylon and a person; she actively tries to identify who she is based on her feelings and thoughts, while Athena decides who she wants to be, and acts based on her determination to be as human as possible. Caprica's dissatisfaction with being identified merely as a Cylon becomes increasingly apparent. Her need to feel more human, to be validated by her authentic emotions, distances her from the other Cylons, particularly the other six models but from Athena and Boomer.

It is when Caprica no longer lets her love for Baltar dictate her actions, and begins to make decisions on her own, that she arguably becomes more of a person. When she listens to Head Baltar and acts upon what she believes the real Baltar would want her to do, though based on her humanlike love for him, it seems to almost be like emotional programming. Though it is fully human for a woman to act on her insecurities in a romantic relationship, by making her own decisions independent of any regard for Baltar's affection or love, Caprica begins to create an identity for herself and becomes an individual instead of a copy.

It is because of her love of Baltar that she and Boomer convince the Cylons to rejoin with the humans on New Caprica. Based on their relationships with human men, they believe that Cylons and humans can live together, though their vision for a utopian society becomes an occupation. Caprica is clearly disappointed with the Baltar she is reunited with on New Caprica. Despite her return, he continues to womanize and treat her poorly. She realizes that the vision of Baltar that she had in her head and her romanticized memories of him were vastly different from the Baltar she reunited with.

After the humans escape, Baltar is allowed to leave with the Cylons on a base ship. She realizes her affection for Baltar distances her from the other Cylons and tells him, “Whatever feelings I have for you have to stop. I allowed my feelings to cloud my judgment. I protected you. I gave your species a second chance. I even turned against a sister Cylon. And for what? I’m a Cylon, Baltar. Somehow I lost sight of that” (3.05). Caprica believes her feelings for Baltar made her more human, and to eradicate affection for him makes her more of a Cylon. Though she may grow distant from Baltar, she continues to show human emotion throughout the series, even love for him, such as when she refuses to testify against him when Romo Lampkin assures her (falsely) of Gaius’ continued affections for her. Caprica claimed she no longer loves Baltar after New Caprica, which formed her human emotions, yet continued to display a greater sensitivity to feelings than the other Cylons, as evidenced when she joins Athena to steal Hera and return to the Fleet, even killing Boomer to do so.

Caprica’s evolution is made apparent when she declines Baltar’s advances at the end of Season Four. She tells him “I have no desire to join your harem,” and refuses politely his offer of food and shelter (4.16). He looks dumfounded as she tells him that he hasn’t changed; “The problem is- I have,” she says, walking away from him.

At the beginning of the series, no one anticipated that Cylons could love humans. Personal decisions define each character in *BSG*, and Cylons which base their actions on love have more complex journeys than those who stick to their programming. Though other Cylons such as Boomer and Athena, are affected by their love for humans and each other in some way, never is the effect of love more apparent and important than with Caprica Six.

Sharon “Athena” Agathon is perhaps one of the clearest examples of determining one’s own identity. She is a character who has a clear idea of who she wants to be despite who she is.

From the start of the series, Sharon (later given the call sign “Athena”) is fully aware of her identity as a Cylon, and is given the mission to seduce the castaway raptor pilot Helo in an experiment meant to produce a hybrid Cylon child. However, Sharon falls in love with Helo and defects to humanity, and eventually is absorbed into the *Galactica* crew as a member of the military and friend. She is a perfect example of an emotional, unreliable, fickle Eight, who will destroy Cylon plans because she, as a Three later puts it, “sees something shiny.” Athena accepts she is a Cylon, and never makes excuses for her actions. Sharon triumphs over her nature, or “programming,” to define for herself her identity and who she is as a person.

Before Helo discovers Sharon is a Cylon, she tries to induce sympathetic feelings towards her race, posing that, “If they were human clones, that means they’re capable of complex emotions, maybe even love. Maybe they were misguided in the way that they were indoctrinated” (1.11). Helo, however, doesn’t buy it, and later upon finding out her Cylon identity and her pregnancy, shoots her in the shoulder to try and scare her away. She follows him anyway as they both run away from Cylon pursuers, and she tries to gain sympathy and trust by convincing him of her human qualities. “I do get cold,” she says, shivering as Helo continues to fend her off as they both hide from Cylons (1.12). She continues to follow him around, telling him that “things scare me, Helo. I have feelings” (1.13). Helo, still completely unconvinced of Sharon’s sincerity, tells her “you have software” (1.13). After running into Starbuck on Caprica Helo tells her miserably, “I fell in love with a machine” (2.05). Ultimately, though, Helo accepts Sharon after she rescues him, Starbuck, and resistance fighters, and he agrees to take her with him back to *Galactica*, unaware of Boomer’s assassination attempt.

Initially, the humans on *Galactica* do not accept Sharon as anything other than a “thing.” Apollo pulls a gun on her when she boards the *Galactica* with Helo from Caprica, and almost

shoots her in the head before he is pulled off by Starbuck. Those on *Galactica* immediately know that she's a Cylon because of the recent Boomer debacle, and Sharon is almost airlocked, until she convinces Roslin she can help them on their mission to Kobol, after which she is thrown in the brig. Sharon is too valuable of an asset to merely execute, and thus an uneasy alliance is formed between the captive Cylon and the humans. The humans on *Galactica* have mixed feelings on Sharon; she's a "military asset with strategic intelligence" (2.16) according to Adama, while Tigh chimes in, "it's a frakking Cylon."

Throughout the series, Sharon gains trust and slowly solidifies her status as a member of the fleet through her actions. However, before gaining the trust she needs to be able to prove herself, Sharon must rely on trying to convince the humans through her words that she is more "like them." Roslin tells her, perhaps more for her own benefit, "You are here because you had an affair with one of our Raptor pilots" (2.06). Athena replies, for the first of many times, that "I am here because I chose to come here." Until she gains the trust of the humans, Sharon tries to assert verbally that she is not merely a machine, and that she can define herself, despite being a copy, based on choices. It is not until those choices are executed, such as when she rescues humans on multiple occasions, that she makes headway into living the life she knows she wants.

When Helo visits her she tells him, upset, "Cylons aren't people...I'm not a person to them...I'm a thing" (2.07). Sharon is fully aware of her status as a copy of a hated Cylon in the fleet. Though she did not pull the trigger on Adama, she is forced to face some of the consequences of Boomer's actions. Of all of the characters struggling with their species identity, Sharon must not only decide for herself who she is, and differentiate herself from the nefarious original Sharon Valerii, but also must get recognition of her individuality and identity from others as well.



The humans scrutinize Sharon while she is in captivity, debating her purpose and role on *Galactica*, as well as her usefulness. One aspect of Sharon that clearly upsets the leadership of the fleet is the love that she demonstrates towards Helo and her unborn robot baby. Roslin reasons that her feelings of love for her baby are software, and must be so, because she's a machine. Roslin states that "[Sharon] says that she loves the baby she's carrying" (2.06). After speaking to Sharon at length, Roslin concedes, "she thinks she's in love. Even if it's software and not even an emotion, it's real to her" (2.06). Indeed, in one scene Roslin and several others look on as Sharon walks around in her cell in the brig, rubbing her stomach and humming. Roslin decides that "Sharon will not do anything that might risk the life of her baby" (2.09), which helps broker their uneasy truce. Sharon possessing the very human emotion of love, which the humans would think they had the monopoly on and which robots do not possess, is unsettling as she is the first Cylon to display it in front of them. Sharon's humanity that she shows through her emotions is both fascinating and off-putting for the people who would like to think that Cylons look like toasters.

Sharon is a point of contention upon the arrival of Pegasus, whose resident Cylon is regularly raped and tortured. The *Galactica* crew is horrified by the treatment of the captured Six, who they learn of when socializing with the Pegasus deck crew who describe their treatment of her and refer to Sharon lewdly, calling her "robot girl." In the brig, one of the lieutenants assaults and attempts to rape Sharon (and in the extended version of the episode does so). Tyrol and Helo who rescue her inadvertently kill him, earning them both death sentences. In a conversation with Tigh after Sharon's attempted rape, Pegasus' second-in-command drunkenly reasons, "you can't rape a machine." Despite being a robot, Sharon is traumatized by the experience, covering herself with a blanket and sobbing.

Over the next season of the series, Sharon provides critical aid in a number of scenarios which elevate her from an enemy combatant in the eyes of the military. In “Flight of the Phoenix” (2.09), Sharon disables hundreds of Cylon raiders poised to attack the fleet, rendering them weaponless for the Vipers to exterminate. It is shown later in the series that Cylons do care for the welfare of the raiders (seen in the debate over Raiders’ intended lobotomy by the Six called Natalie in Season Four). Despite any feelings she may automatically feel for her Cylon relatives, Sharon willingly allows them to be exterminated.

Despite the death of her baby, Sharon agrees to help with the rescue mission of the survivors on Caprica. She could have easily defected back to the Cylons when her raptor touched down, but she risks her *Galactica* life for the mission. A Model One infiltrates the humans, even flying in on Sharon’s raptor, and is apprehended immediately on the ship. Much to Helo’s chagrin, Sharon refuses or is somehow unable to identify the Cavil brother. Had there not been another of the model already onboard *Galactica* to provide ironic religious counseling to Tyrol, the One could have infiltrated into the humans in the fleet, with unknown consequences. For not identifying the One (though the reason is never given) Sharon earns another trip to the brig.

Sharon is finally accepted among the humans after her actions on New Caprica. During the Occupation, Adama visits Sharon in the brig to talk to her. Sharon tells him she was “consumed with rage...at the things that had happened” but realized it was “guilt” (3.01). “I was angry at myself for the choices I had made- betraying my people, losing my baby,” she says. Whether she meant humans or Cylons when she said her “people” is unclear, as is why she was angry at “betraying” them. However, despite the circumstances surrounding Hera’s death, Sharon is still committed to the humans’ cause. Even if she had been emotional about betraying her fellow Cylons, she had made the choice to continue attempting to live a human life.

Sharon is willing and eager to help rescue the humans from the Cylon occupation on New Caprica, and it is ultimately through her actions that humanity is saved. To perform her part of the rescue mission (infiltrating as a random Cylon to steal the launch keys for the fleet's ships), Sharon is reinstated as an officer in the fleet. She proudly takes her oaths, pledging her "faith and loyalty to the protection of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol" (3.01). She tells Adama that the uniform means a lot to her and that "I won't betray it." Though she has never physically been an officer in the fleet (only through Boomer's memories), gaining back the status she remembered is a key part of her identity, as solidifies her place as an important and valued member of the military. Adama smiles at her, perhaps also remembering Boomer, and tells her "good hunting," the phrase soldiers say to each other before battle.

Though not shown in the series, she has also married Helo in the time between the second and third seasons, and uses the name "Sharon Agathon." Lawfully marrying a human and taking his last name legitimizes her as a person, as she is now an equal of at least one human in the fleet. Allowing her to take the oaths of an officer to add "Lieutenant" in front of her name gives her two important labels granting her more legitimacy as a person.

Furthermore, letting the newly-minted Lt. Agathon take the oaths and put on the uniform of the human military, not to mention letting her travel to the Cylon-infested colony to conceal herself as an anonymous Eight, is a huge security risk and puts humanity in danger. However, Sharon successfully completes her mission and hands the launch keys to the resistance forces, providing the means for humanity to escape New Caprica.

Because of her success, back on board she is welcomed by the other pilots as they celebrate the rescue. One of the pilots mistakenly calls her Boomer, to which she uncomfortably smiles, saying "Boomer was...she was someone else" (3.06). Helo calls for the crew to come up

with a call sign for her. A slew of humorous and racist nicknames are shouted out before Helo settles on “Athena,” a goddess of the humans’ pantheistic religion. From then on, Boomer’s name is never spoken and Athena is universally used. For the rest of the series, Athena is shown in the rec room eating, playing cards, and socializing, accepted by *Galactica*’s leadership, crew, and pilots. Not only has she proven herself to the other humans on *Galactica*, but she has also completely replaced Boomer, as Sharon Valerii no longer exists.

Her acceptance by humans affects her relationship with other Cylons. When the *Galactica* comes across a basestar stricken by an ancient virus, Athena once again risks her life by joining a party to investigate. As she approaches dying Cylons in a prayer circle, an ailing Eight hisses at her, calling her a “traitor.” Athena is shocked, yet she self-destructs the basestar without permission as they leave, providing her fellow Cylons relief from an excruciating death.

Though some of her model despises her, others possess quite a different reaction. Athena later encounters a group of Eights aboard a basestar she boards with Kara. Leoben had told her that “the other Eights talk about you all the time,” and upon seeing her they ogle her in amazement like a celebrity (4.06). One addresses her reverently, telling her, “They call you Athena now. You even wear their uniform like you’re one of them. You were the first to say no” (4.06). Athena is confused, and the Eight refers to the mystical “Plan” since “you joined the humans and had a child. You showed us that we don’t have to be slaves to our programming.” The Eights, as it turns out, would like Athena to lead a mutiny to overturn the Sixes who are leading the remaining Cylons, to which Athena scoffs “you guys make me sick.” She criticizes their nature, telling them that because of their personality “you’ll never have anything. No love, no family, no life to call your own” (3.06). Athena views her model as weak and is disgusted by her fellow Eights who she thinks are still following their programming. Though they would like

Athena to help them against the Sixes, she surmises it is not because they truly want to be like her but would rather use her celebrity to get what they want. Athena's dislike for her model is further shown when she refuses to hold the hand of one of her dying sisters. Anders instead comforts the dying Cylon.

Perhaps Athena was put off by the Eights' admiration of her, and she becomes nearly paranoid around other Cylons, especially concerning Hera. When she discovers Hera's profuse drawings of Model Six, she runs through the halls after the adventurous toddler, confronting a defenseless Natalie surrounded by Marines, who has picked Hera up in wonder of her. In trademark Eight fashion, she dramatically says, "you're never going to take my child," before shooting her (4.07). Adama, absolutely furious at the potential backlash from an apparent assassination of the Cylon leader aboard *Galactica*, asks Athena why she hates her people, "so much that you look for any excuse to kill one?" (4.08) According to Athena, the incident with Natalie was due to paranoia of the Cylons taking Hera (and was thus a classic model Eight overreaction). Though Athena was probably truthful, it shows a marked distrust and even dislike for her fellow Cylons. For her impetuosity, she earns yet another trip to the brig.

Through her loyalty to humanity and a series of definitive choices, Athena earns her place as a person among the humans. Her one desire to achieve acceptance with the humans and thereby become a person affects every decision and action from her arrival aboard *Galactica* to her and her family's happy ending with the other humans on Earth. The clarity with which she lives her life, despite a few setbacks because of her Cylon temperament, allows her to ascend from a despised enemy to an equal. It is through loyalty, integrity, and love that Sharon Agathon defies her race and becomes not only like a human, but a person among them.

The Cylons embody the tenets of posthumanism and the Singularity, but through their humanoid form, culture, religious beliefs, and self-determination, they rise above the stereotypes of androids and killer robots and become a people. From the inception of their culture, the Cylons were bent on the destruction of humanity based off of God's edicts. Their belief in their moral superiority and their need to become God's chosen people by killing their sinful parents establishes the events of the series. However, it is through the love of humans and the rise of individuals that the Cylons reevaluate their place in the universe and the meaning of their religion and their creation. Through the emergence of "celebrity" among the Cylons that influences their thinking, the whole splinters into Models and individuals, who increasingly rely on their own experiences, intuitions, and emotions as the means by which to act. The increased individuality among the Cylons eventually leads to disagreements and conflict that tears their culture apart.

A cemented social hierarchy is in place at the beginning of the series, based upon self-awareness and the breeds of Cylon, the humanoids rising above the other variations to rule them all. Their belief in their superiority lessens when their religious beliefs guide them not to decimate humanity but to try and live with them, to create a universe of peace between all of God's creation. Because of the differences between models in terms of their religious beliefs and attitudes towards humans, a rift develops between the Cylons, which ruptures when they are faced with conflict within their own culture. The Cylons become fascinated with the The Final Five, the creators of the humanoid models. While half of the models wish to find the Five, the others would rather their identities be kept secret. The search for their origin and their parents is the second divisive issue that splits the Cylons. When the Ones, Fours, and Fives decide to lobotomize the Raiders to prevent them from gaining self-awareness, a Civil War breaks out. The

Cylons splinter because of their religious beliefs, their attitudes towards humanity and themselves, and their belief in destiny uniting them with their creators.

Of the Cylons, Caprica Six and Sharon “Athena” Agathon choose to pursue their destiny and their own lives as individuals, spurred on through their love for human men. It is through the human emotion of love. Whether it is programmed in by the Final Five or is bestowed by God is unknown, but even if it is software it feels real to them. As Romo Lampkin says to Caprica Six, “Love. A precocious evolutionary move, fashioning Cylons to be capable of experiencing it. I don’t know if it was engineered as a tactical imperative, but it’s not for the faint-hearted, is it? Maybe you should have been nicer to your mechanic.” (3.18) It is when they act upon their feelings that they distance themselves from their copies and their species. They make individual choices that define themselves as individuals and not part of the collective. It is through these actions, sometimes against the Cylons, that they become people.

## CHAPTER 3

In *Battlestar Galactica*, Cylons and humans struggle with identity in the context of their roles as two warring peoples. Though in the beginning of the series there is a very clear separation between human and machine, personage become increasingly muddled as the two races interact more and characters struggle to identify themselves and assert their individuality as they question their beliefs on personage. Cylons, however, are not the only ones who struggle with defining themselves; the Final Five Cylons who thought they were human and humans Kara Thrace and Gaius Baltar also question who they are.

While Caprica Six and Athena Agathon make decisions for themselves aware that they are Cylons, humanoid models who were not aware of their robotic nature must grapple with being Cylon while justifying their old identities with their new nature that they must grow to accept. Sharon “Boomer” Valerii lived a life as a military officer she controlled. She had a family she loved, and was confident in who she was as a person. Her opinion of herself is shattered when she discovers she’s a Cylon sleeper agent. She is forced out of her old life and must survive in a new society full of a people she considered her enemy. Though Boomer tries to be a Cylon and love the humans she lived with, ultimately she realizes that she cannot hold onto her human life. When she is rebuked by the ones she loves, she makes decisions which not only part her from her old life, but also from her model as she adopts a pro-machine attitude which threatens to destroy half of the Cylon and the humans. Boomer is a troublemaker throughout the series, as her misguided attempts to define herself only lead to destruction and death, both of her kin and the people she once professed to love. Boomer has difficulty with her identity, as she had a programmed history in her head that told her she is human, but is activated as a sleeper agent



and shoots Adama. She rejoins the Cylons after she is assassinated and initially refuses to integrate into their culture. Her failed attempt on New Caprica to live peacefully with the humans leads her to forsake her attempts at a human life and joins a model One and his machine-like mentality as they wage war on half of the Cylon race.

Like Boomer, the Final Five believe they are human before a startling revelation revealing their true nature to themselves and their fellow Final Cylon. Unlike Boomer, they are able to keep their identities secret and thus have time to process their new understandings of themselves, as well as decide if and how they will change their lives knowing that they are what they hate. Each of the Four on *Galactica* at the time of their awakening chooses a different path in dealing with the knowledge of their identity. After they are discovered with varying reactions from the people around them, they must decide whether to help humanity or to leave it to fend for itself. It is through the Final Five and their ability to decide who they want to be with the knowledge of who they are that what it means to be a person is most closely examined.

Kara Thrace and Gaius Baltar, both human despite suspicions of being Cylon at different points in the series, are examples of humans that have identity crises despite the fact they are not synthetic. Both characters experience the divine more so than all of the others in the series. Kara dies and is born again, having visions and experiences that reluctantly convince her that she has something to do with the destiny of mankind. Gaius, who has a virtual representation of his Model Six lover in his head, which is purported to be an angel of God later in the series, is driven to choices and actions to fulfill God's commandments to live in his love, though in many cases he takes the Sixes' advice out of fear for his own survival. He becomes secure in his religious beliefs and becomes a spiritual leader for the humans at the end of the series, who consume what

Head Six had been telling him throughout the duration of the series. Both characters are humans whose identities are in as much doubt as the Cylons who question themselves.

Sharon “Boomer” Valerii undergoes a change of her own. Boomer is forced to “become” a Cylon, though it is more accurate to say that she has to acknowledge her identity. She wavers between the two sides with confusion and indecisiveness, as the humans don’t want her and she is forced to try and find a life for herself with the Cylons. Though Boomer makes key and conscious decisions which have lasting consequences, in some ways the life she is thrust into and the desperation she feels to find a place for herself has more of an effect on what she chooses.

Boomer was a sleeper agent aboard *Galactica*, and it is clear that she loved her human life, as she was an accepted member of the *Galactica* “family” and was in a committed relationship with another member of the crew. However, after the Cylon attack, her Cylon nature was “switched” on, and as a result she experienced black outs, during which she made attempts to sabotage the ship. Because of the blackouts, Boomer begins to suspect that she is a Cylon, and the thought terrifies her to the point of attempting suicide. She survives and volunteers a dangerous mission to detonate a nuclear device onboard a basestar, discovering her true nature when she encounters dozens of Sharons inside the basestar. On her return, instead of shaking Adama’s hand in congratulations, as if in a trance she instead shoots him twice in the abdomen, nearly killing him. She is immediately shipped to the brig, where Tyrol, who is suspected of being a Cylon himself because of their relationship, rebuffs her and is disgusted by her because of her identity as a Cylon. The revelation of her identity, as well as separation from the fleet when she is assassinated and forced to live with the Cylons, forever alters her character. The life that had been planned and orchestrated for her is gone, and now Boomer must decide who and what she wants to be, through a series of key choices that she must make.

Boomer is not very receptive to becoming a Cylon. After she downloads in the goo bath and sees one of her many copies, she screams in terror. As a sleeper agent, she doesn't have any previous Cylon memories, so the new Cylon culture that she is thrust into is completely alien to her. She lives in her old apartment and wears her old military-issue clothing, insisting on being called "Sharon." The other Cylons seriously consider boxing her, as she is a liability to them and their culture if she continues considering herself as a human. A Three describes the need to "[turn] her around" because "she's been regressing," as if Boomer is in need of rehabilitation instead of undergoing a monumental existential crisis (2.18). When Caprica Six visits her to try and influence her to give up her humanity, Boomer becomes angry, pointing around her apartment, saying "none of it's real. It's all fabricated for my mission. It's all a lie" (2.18). Caprica tries a religious angle with her, to which Boomer shouts, "Do you think I care about your God?" Boomer loses her temper, ranting,

This is love. These people love me...I love them. I didn't pretend to feel something so I could screw people over. I loved them. And I betrayed them. I shot a man I love. Frakked over another man, ruined his life. And why? Because I'm a lying machine! I'm a frakking Cylon! (2.18)

Boomer has no choice but to acknowledge that she is a Cylon, though she is unwilling to do so. Three tells her, "Boomer, you're a hero of the Cylon. Now you're just a broken machine who thinks she's human. But you're not human, Sharon, and you never will be" (2.18). Boomer counters, "At least I'm not a murderer. I have a conscience. And I know the difference between right and wrong." Boomer's claim to a conscience and the ability to decipher between right and wrong is questionable as the series continues, when she makes a series of decisions that results in the murder of millions of her own model, as well as treacherous actions which threaten the survival of humanity.

After killing the Three, Boomer and Caprica make a pact to try and change the Cylons based on their celebrity, to find “a new way to live in God’s love.” This, however, leads to the New Caprica debacle, defeating both of Boomer’s predicted objectives, to absolve her of her wrongdoing as a secret Cylon on *Galactica*, and potentially to reconnect with the humans she loves. She later tells Tyrol that she thought that New Caprica “was a way to set things right” (4.17). The failure of the greater Cylon efforts, as well as Boomer’s inability or unwillingness to try and rejoin the humans, ultimately decides many of the choices that she faces in the future.

It is when Boomer and Athena encounter each other aboard the *Galactica*, potentially for the first time, that the impossibility of Boomer’s intended life becomes obvious, and from that point she seems to relinquish her dream of being human. Athena and Helo have been married, and have had a child. As seen in Boomer’s projections to Tyrol in the fourth season, she had imagined them married with a little girl, so to see that Athena had not only replaced her on the ship, but was also in some way living the life that Boomer had planned (and perhaps secretly still wanted) had an effect on her. She decides thereafter to ally with Cavil, sparking a Civil War which kills millions of her own model and puts the fate of humanity at risk. To see that Athena had essentially replaced her onboard the ship is clearly hurtful to Boomer, who reveals to Athena the survival of Hera, before lashing out that “despite your uniform, it’s not your home anymore,” and “you’re not one of them! You’re a thing!” (3.11). Boomer doesn’t insult Athena, but rather shows her own regrets and insecurities with losing her uniform and her identity onboard the *Galactica*.

Boomer’s motivations for boarding the *Galactica* with the rest of the party in the episode are notable in illustrating her character. The intended purpose of the visit was to convince the humans jump out of the Cylons’ way so that they could acquire the mysterious Eye of Jupiter,

which the humans possessed. D'Anna and Baltar, who eventually traveled to the planet's surface to try and acquire the Eye, understandably would be interested in a parley with the humans. A Model One that joined them also makes sense, as he surreptitiously leads the Cylons in many of their decisions. But Boomer, who shot the admiral and wreaked havoc aboard *Galactica*, has no logical, diplomatic, or tactical reason to board the ship. It is presumably to visit the life that she was torn from. Athena immediately identifies her and she is detained by Marines and Tigh. Seeing Athena settled, accepted by the crew, and living a comfortable life would be galling to Boomer who, not only because of her history but also because of her Eight nature, is easily jealous and temperamental. Telling Athena about Hera's existence (which is a guarded Cylon secret) was a rash but predictably Eight action to try and retaliate against the loss of her human life. Boomer has effectively been replaced. After Athena resurrects and boards the basestar to take Hera back, Boomer is visibly affected and angered by Hera's immediately recognizing her mother, who looks exactly like Boomer.

Athena offers to take Boomer back with her, Caprica Six, and Hera, telling her that she knows that Boomer still cares for Tyrol and Adama. Boomer insists otherwise, stating that "Humans and Cylons aren't meant to be together. We should go our separate ways... Maybe Cavil's right. Maybe God never wanted us to have children in the first place." She reaches down into the crib and threatens to snap Hera's neck in a fit of rage, before Caprica sneaks up behind her and kills her. The exchange shows the influence that Cavil already has on Boomer, as well as her final conversion to becoming a true Cylon. Though she would have probably earned herself a lifetime vacation in the brig and a snap trial upon returning to the ship, she did not even debate leaving the Cylons to return to her old life.

Her refusal to leave with Caprica and Athena is indicative of her new attitude. Not only does Boomer leave her human life behind forever, she also flaunts Cylon conventions, voting with Cavil and the Fours and Fives against her own model, something that had never happened before. Boomer has no explanation for voting against her own model, other than a strange devotion to Cavil, who espouses that Cylons should be machines, rejects the notion of the Cylon God, and believes in humans' inferiority. Cavil claims that Boomer has "seen the light of reason" (4.09) and that he is teaching her to be "a better machine, to let go of human constructs" (4.15).

Though Boomer sides with the pro-machine contingent of Cylons, she is shown to still treasure her own life, though her motivations in revealing her feelings are debatable. When she boards the *Galactica* with Ellen, she is put in the brig, though quickly regains Tyrol's trust. She verbally assures him of her love for him, telling him that she's thought about him every day, and that, "the most important thing is that we both know who we are now. Let's make the most with the time we have left," before Boomer's inevitable execution by the Cylons in the Fleet for her part in the Cylon Civil War (4.17). Boomer also ensnares Tyrol through a projection she created, of the house they planned to build in Picon, complete with a wedding photo and a daughter. By preying off of his regrets about their relationship and the love he always felt for her, she dupes him into helping her escape with a drugged Hera. However, she also asks Tyrol to come with her on the Raptor, telling him that "I can't do it without you," and that she meant the things she said "with all my heart" (4.17). While she does take Hera back to Cavil to become a science experiment, what she says and shows Tyrol is also a possible indication of a real regret for her old life, particularly her love for Tyrol.

Ultimately, Boomer is depicted as atoning for all of her sins by rescuing and returning Hera to her parents, before being gunned down by Athena. In some way, Boomer tries to regain

some amount of dignity by righting a wrong that she committed, even though she knew it would directly lead to her death. Whether she finally decided to “take a side” or was used for the sake of the storyline is debatable, but in her last choice Boomer decides to aid the humans and not her Cylon allies. Boomer’s last request was to send her regards to “the old man,” so the rescue of Hera is presumably to be interpreted as an act of humanity.

Boomer was incapable of fully choosing who she is because of the circumstances of her discovery as a Cylon, as her identity is essentially thrust upon her. In some ways, Boomer is a victim of those unfortunate circumstances, but the choices that she makes when faced with her true self define who she is. Boomer’s trajectory is much like with the Final Five, who are essentially sleeper Cylons as well. However, Boomer is alone in the universe, without anyone to sympathize with her. Instead of being a valued and loved member of the *Galactica* crew, she is now just a copy, who even defies her own model in her quest to find a path for herself and a sense of belonging.

Boomer remains an enigma as a character in the series. In many ways, her life is determined by those of others. It is perhaps more accurate to say that she chose between the more attractive of horrible alternatives in trying to define and preserve some part of herself. Despite her quest on New Caprica to atone for her Cylon sins, or her attempt to become more machine, it is apparent that Boomer’s everlasting wish is to hold on to the part of her life on *Galactica*; that is, her life as a human. Though she is resistant to becoming a Cylon upon her resurrection, many of her actions can be argued as attempts to regain her human life, or to at least come to terms with it. However, when the humans that she loves spurn her and refuse to forgive her for her actions, which she did not willingly commit, Boomer tries to make a new identity for herself as a

Cylon. However, despite the choices and decisions that she makes, she is unable to find a place for herself in the universe, and she is incapable of finding her own identity.

Perhaps the most illuminating examples of vacillation between human and Cylon, or person and machine, can be found with the Final Five, humans in the Fleet who found they had new, expanded, and terrifying identities as Cylons. With the discovery of their true nature, the four in the Fleet (the fifth at the time of their discovery is MIA) struggle to maintain their lives as humans in light of their new, unavoidable identities as Cylons. Saul Tigh, Sam Anders, Galen Tyrol, and Tory Foster are forced to confront themselves; their feelings, relationships, religious beliefs, and even “Cylon powers.” But, most of all, each of the Four in the Fleet have to decide where they fit in with humans and/or society. Do they go back to their posts to battle against their own kind? Do they defect to the Cylons at the first available opportunity? Do they give up on people, human and Cylon alike? For each of the Four, life takes on a new meaning as they experience the ultimate identity crisis.

The Four discover their true nature at the same time in the same room together, and through secret meetings they discuss what and how they should act with the knowledge that they are the enemy they revile, fight, and kill. Much of their development as new Cylons happens with each other, yet they are faced with different situations and choose to react in different ways to the new dangers of their old lives.

The Final Four discover their identities by following a song, a reworking of Bob Dylan’s “All Along the Watchtower.” They follow the melody all throughout the ship (Tigh exclaiming “It’s in the frakking ship!” as he almost comically presses his face to a wall in a corridor), entering the same room somewhere deep in the hull, at the same time, from different directions. The four couldn’t be more different. Tory is the aide de camp to the President of the Colonies.



Tigh is the XO and thus second in command of *Galactica*. Tyrol is the deck chief, overseeing the care and keeping of all of the winged vehicles of the fleet, barking out orders to mobilize the ship in each battle against the Cylons. Anders is a rescued pyramid player who played an integral role to two Resistance movements and is a newly-minted Viper pilot. Yet all are Cylons.

Adding to the dramatic effect is the gigantic number of Cylons poised to destroy the entire fleet at the same time of the Four's revelation. Such a dramatic construct forces each of the four to make an instant decision about their place on *Galactica*. In the line of fire, each chooses to resume their role as before and to create a charade of patriotism and duty to cover their shameful new secret. However, as is a running theme of the series, 'something has changed.' Their immediate response to the discovery of their "true nature" does not define their attitudes towards their mechanical heritage for the rest of the series. While some choose to remain faithful to their "old" lives, several dramatically change their attitudes towards their newfound identities.

As the final season of the series plays out, visible differences between the Final Five begin to emerge. On one end of the Cylon spectrum, Saul Tigh and Sam Anders make the unequivocal decision to try and retain as much of their human lives as possible; Tigh because of his friendship with Adama and the idea of duty, and Anders because of his disgust with the Cylon race he spent three years mercilessly killing off using guerilla and terrorist tactics. Tory, on the other end of the spectrum, embraces her Cylon nature. Ellen Tigh, who returns to the *Galactica* after a stint on a Cylon basestar, is fully accepting of her role as a Cylon, as she evidently remembers much from her life as a Cylon two thousand years preceding the events of *BSG*. And in the middle is Galen Tyrol, whose identity is so conflicted that his life spirals out due to forces beyond his control, betrayed by both humans and Cylons and alone without a place in the world.

Saul Tigh initially refuses to be a Cylon. After the Four's realizations and first reactions, Tigh straightens himself up and barks out orders to the other three. "The ship is under attack. We do our jobs. Report to your stations" (3.20). Such determination will prove to be a defining characteristic for Col. Tigh, who in his own mind remains a person because he refuses to be anything else. Tigh sums up his intentions best in his own words "My name is Saul Tigh. I am an officer in the Colonial Fleet. Whatever else I am, whatever else it means, that's the man I want to be. And if I die today, that's the man I'll be" (3.20).

The Colonel never gives up his determination to remain Saul Tigh, instead of a demi-god to the Cylon race. After apologizing a second time to Adama for what he feels is betrayal, Tigh responds to Adama's claim that the Cylons (who still remain the nefarious, murky "they") programmed Tigh to be Adama's friend. Tigh is indignant at the accusation, maintaining that "I was your friend because I chose to be. I wanted to be" (4.10). With Tigh more so than any of the other Cylons, issues of choice, individuality, and free will are tantamount to his identity, both before and after the Cylon Revelation. Tigh may begrudgingly acknowledge the unavoidable truth of his nature, but he refuses to be controlled by it or let it define him, much less be influenced by anyone else.

At the end of the series, Tigh remains true to the man he wants to live and die as, stating that 'his people' "are the ones on this ship. The ones I fought with and bled with. The old man. This crew. They're my family. The only family I've known, and the only one I care to" (4.18). He refuses to join his Cylon brethren as they plan to jump away from the fleet and start their own, pure-Cylon civilization somewhere in the stars.

Even after his Cylon nature is revealed, and even though his wife votes against him to leave with the Cylons, Saul refuses to forsake the man he wants to be, the man he tries to be, and

the man that he is. Eventually he regains the trust and acceptance of Adama. In a scene preceding the suicide mission at the close of the series, Adama and Tigh face each other in the CIC over the control board, both in tense, military stances. To the seasoned viewer, though, it looks like old times as the two return to the roots of their enduring friendship: personal responsibility, duty to the greater good, and honor. While Adama watches in silent horror as Cylons prepare the ship for battle with their own technology, marring the utilitarian but beloved command center, Tigh looks over with a twinkle in his eye, saying, “still not too late to flush them all out the airlock.” Tigh uses the prefix “them” to the end, as he forges his own destiny as an android wolf among sheep. Adama, with his ever-stoic expression, deadpans back, “take too much time.” The simple exchange is both touching and rife with comedy. *BSG* shows that some bonds, including friendship, extend beyond personage or machinery, and beyond the rote categorization prevailing throughout the series of “us vs. them.”

Saul Tigh ultimately can't be bothered with his identity as a Cylon or a human, or if he's a person or a machine, or even others' preoccupation with the existence of a Cylon soul. Tigh is a *man*, one who has free will and will continue living exactly the sort of life he chooses. In a series where identity is continually questioned, his unwavering confidence in himself is one end of a very long, very ambiguous spectrum in the question and quest to know oneself.

If the Final Five represent a spectrum of human to Cylon, Anders would second Tigh in his initial attempts to remain as human as possible. As a leader of the Resistance movement, Anders killed Cylons both on post-apocalyptic Caprica and on New Caprica. While Tyrol eventually objected to the terrorist methods used by the Resistance on New Caprica, Anders and Tigh engineered suicide bombings and a mass exodus from the planet. Killing Cylons is a favorite activity of Anders, and his total hatred of Cylons complicates how he sees himself after

he learns he is what he despises. However, his evolution to a “super hybrid” at the end of the series leads to questions greater than human or machine.

In the room with Tyrol, Tory, and Tigh at the time of their realization, Anders refuses to believe that he is a Cylon. He angrily states, “No...not after all this. Not after the Resistance and the Occupation. Not after watching my friends die, one after another, for frakking this? You stay away from me. You all stay the frak away from me” (3.20). Like Tigh, he immediately returns to duty. Just because he’s a Cylon doesn’t mean he can’t kill his ‘own kind’. However, unlike Tigh who doesn’t spend time questioning his identity when he is called to duty, Anders anxiously pulls Tyrol aside before he flies, saying “this is crazy. What if a switch flips in my head and turns me against my own?” (4.01). Anders worries that his affliction will cause others harm. Anders is a natural leader and quickly connects with other people; as a Cylon, he risks all of their lives by the unknown ramifications of his identity.

In the heat of battle, he is confronted by a Cylon, which uncharacteristically scans him before shooting. Anders pupil, for lack of a better word, “pings,” as it momentarily flashes. All of the raiders immediately turn around and head to the basestars, which jump away, detecting the presence of the godly Final Five. Though this is a miracle and a relief to everyone in the fleet, Anders is horrified by his experience with the Raider, which he does not shoot because he left his gun safeties on. He is convinced that he was “programmed” to leave them on, and his confidence is shaken by the thought of betraying all of his friends because of Cylon programming that he has no control over.

Anders possesses a level of anxiety after he discovers his identity, especially with the return of Starbuck, his estranged wife. Despite her harsh treatment of him, Anders seems to be hopelessly in love with her, and must protect at all costs his identity from her, as she tells him

that if she discovered he was a Cylon she would “put a bullet between [his] eyes” (4.01). As Starbuck herself undergoes an identity crisis as she doesn’t know who or what she is, Anders tells her (though more to placate his own worries) “[it] still doesn’t change who you are, still doesn’t change the fact that I love you, no matter what” (4.01). Anders will accept Kara for whatever she is because it is his wish that she would do the same. It’s unlikely but possible that Starbuck could be a Cylon, and if that is the worst case scenario then at least they would be the same.

Sam experiences further doubt as to his status as a person when he encounters a Model Two onboard the *Demetrius*. The Leoben, who because of his model is prone to prophecy and seeing greater patterns in life, speaks cryptically of fate and destiny that frightens Anders. Two tells him that “you were destined for more. [You] were waiting for a single moment of clarity” (4.05). Sam pulls his gun on Leoben, who may somehow know his secret. Leoben, unconcerned, tells him that “battle lines have been drawn between those who embrace their nature and those who fear it” (4.05).<sup>45</sup> Sam tells him, “Good. You can blow yourselves to hell for all I care.” Sam is a soldier against Cylons, and even if he is one of them he would rather see the rest die.

Anders questions his identity when he boards one of the basestars. As the humans and Cylons converse, he inconspicuously holds his hand over one of the Cylons control trays, which they put their hands in to convey messages, check information, and generally run the ship. He decides not to tempt fate in case it responds to him. After one of his crew members is murdered by a revengeful Six, he tells her “you’re nothing. You’re a frakking machine” (4.06). However, as an Eight lies dying, Anders in a moment of compassion which confuses others and seems to surprise him, kneels beside her, murmuring “it’s ok. I’m with you” (4.06). He shows

---

<sup>45</sup> Though he presumably is speaking of the divide between the Models, though there is a special significance for Anders as well.

benevolence towards his dying “child,” comforting her like a parent. For the first time, he allows himself to feel something other than hatred and rage for a Cylon, as he sees their vulnerability. While he wouldn’t previously sympathize with a dying Cylon, perhaps the “switch” from the nebula changed something within him, whether or not he is aware of it. Anders has been one of the greatest warriors against the Cylons, yet now kneels and comforts one of his sworn enemies. It may not mean he is becoming “more” Cylon, but does speak to some sort of intrinsic change.

On Earth, Anders finds remnants of his old life. He died in the same market as Tyrol did, playing on his guitar a song he had sung at the time, which much to his horror was the dreaded Cylon song. He describes it as a song “for a woman I love,” which Tyrol also seems to remember. He drops the half-destroyed guitar he had played two thousand years earlier, running from the desolate square in horror. After discovering the remnants of his old life, in confusion he asks, “Why are we still alive? How did we get to the Colonies? Come to think we were human?” (4.11). Anders questions who he is and, in light of Earth, the meaning of his existence as a millennia-old robot.

After Anders’ shooting when he regains all of his memories of his old life, he begins to speak in portents. He tells Tigh, “It’s all starting to happen. It’s the miracle. Right here. It’s a gift from the angels” (4.15). Anders believes in the existence of angels which appeared to warn him and Tory of the attack. He picks up a newfound faith as he remembers the entirety of his life. Perhaps seeing the immensity of his existence also revealed to him the greater patterns described by other characters. Anders also speaks of the “other side” which is echoed by Kara throughout the series. Through a stray bullet in his brain, something mystical in Anders is unlocked. Instead of worrying about having “guts” or honor, family or self, Anders begins to see the larger picture in which he plays a part.

Anders, unlike the other Five, seems to be touched by the divine. After he essentially becomes King of the Hybrids, he speaks like them, espousing numbers and gibberish but also remarkably clear and occasionally prophetic statements. He and Kara, unbeknownst to each other, speak of the “other side” which they both “go” to at some point in the series. As a character, Anders speaks to the existence of a higher power, one that is neither subject to nor sole property of the Cylons or humans.

Anders may initially be on the “Cylon spectrum” near Tigh, but by the end of *BSG* he has ascended to some sort of spiritual level that transcends the question of personage as it relates to human or machine. However, his choice was similar to Tigh, in that he wanted to be a man, a friend, and a husband above all else, regardless of whether his DNA is natural or synthetic. Anders is both a spiritual being and becomes (based on his recorded brain waves) a high-powered machine.

While Tigh is determined to retain his human qualities, Tory is the one of out of the Five that fully embraces her new Cylon identity. She feels liberated from her old life and openly welcomes the power of being a machine. After the confusion of discovering her Cylon roots, Tory decides to experiment with new things in her life, seeking out experiences such as drinking and having an affair with Gaius Baltar. Before the Cylon Revelation, she was straight-laced and no-nonsense, always at the President’s side with counsel. She was the picture of professionalism, but as a Cylon now drinks ambrosia at a bar and spouts the teachings of the Cylon God. Says Tory as she hits on Tyrol at the *Galactica*’s bar, “I’m flooded with new sensations and new feelings...in some ways I don’t hate this. Feeling new. Feeling open to things. To change.” (4.03). Tory explores her new powers as a Cylon. Though genetically similar, Cylons have better endurance and strength. Tory figures out that Tyrol’s wife Cally has discovered their Cylon

identities, corners her in an airlock, and backhands her, which send her flying over a yard away and knocking her out. Tory then calmly leaves the airlock, shuts Cally in, and flushes the woman into space. Tory is exerting her power as a Cylon both physically as she hits Cally but also morally, as she grows to believe in Cylons' superiority over the human race. Tory also flushes Cally in order to take away Tyrol's toddler son, who, because Tyrol is a Cylon, is only one of two Cylon/human hybrids in the universe.

Tory also basks in her new identity when she reveals herself as one of the Final Five to the Cylons and humans. D'Anna brings her back to the ship as a "sister," while Tory openly smiles. She tells off Roslin who asks her to do something, and instead fully involves herself with the Cylons, living with them on the basestar, voting with them on issues, and changing her use of the word "we."

For whatever reason, whether it be a dissatisfaction with her life or a promise of a new one, Tory decides to turn her back on her human life and race and become a full-fledged Cylon. She sheds pesky human concepts such as "guilt" in her quest to become like the other Cylons, even going as far as to embrace their religious beliefs. Tory, unlike the others, personally benefits from the discovery, and makes the conscious choice to turn her back on the responsibilities and the relationships she was once pledged to, in order to fulfill her own desires and what she believes to be her Cylon destiny.

The Final Five who faces perhaps the biggest conundrum and identity crisis is Galen Tyrol. His Cylon life is a tragedy, as he experiences his wife's death, betrayal by multiple characters, and misfortune and sadness despite his actions or intentions. Though Tyrol initially decides to live his human life as before, powers beyond his control decide his fate. While each of the Final Five maintains their bonds with their old lives to some extent, or creates new ones with



the Cylons, Tyrol's moorings to his old life are cut off one by one, with the people he loves leaving him. As the series progresses, his emotions range from rage, anger, and guilt to a sort of wistful melancholy. He rides out the events of the show with a small, sad smile, as he finds he is somewhere between humanity and Cylons. He is left in a sort of limbo, not human but not quite Cylon either. Perhaps he wasn't as proactive as Tigh or Tory in deciding his fate, but it may have been because of his passiveness that his identity was decided for him.

Unlike with the other four Cylons, whose identities came as shocks to the audience, Tyrol throughout the series displayed signs that he was in some way different. Tyrol's brushes with Cylons start early in the series. In the miniseries, Tyrol's girlfriend Boomer is revealed as a Cylon to the audience. As she is walked to the brig after Adama's attempted assassination and is Jack Ruby'd by Cally (later Tyrol's wife), Boomer dies in his arms, telling him that she loves him. Tyrol's hatred for the Cylons is shaken when the woman he loves and had intended to marry turns out to be one.

It is through the association with Boomer that the audience could first suspect Tyrol as a Cylon. In a shot from "Resistance" (2.04), a drop of Tyrol's blood lands on the floor of the brig, later mirrored by one of Boomer's at the end. While at the time of its airing it could be seen as metaphorically symbolizing love despite their differences, in hindsight of Tyrol's Cylon identity, they literally bleed the same blood. The scenes between the two in the episode become more poignant, as Tyrol rebuffs Cylon Boomer for being what he later learns he himself is.

In "Lay Down Your Burdens: Part 1" (2.19), Tyrol has a recurring nightmare of committing suicide by jumping from a walkway to the flight deck. He receives "religious counseling" from the ironically atheist Model 1, who tells him he is experiencing anxiety

because he secretly thinks he's a Cylon sleeper agent, another event which shakes Tyrol's resolve of his humanity.

Yet another indication of Tyrol's Cylon identity comes in the Temple of Five. Tyrol thinks he feels an affinity to the Temple because his parents were both priests, but in reality his "Cylon senses" are tingling because it is later revealed by Ellen that the Five had passed through the Temple on their way to the Twelve Colonies from Earth. As he looks around with a thoughtful and awe-filled expression, he tells Cally that "I feel something in here...something true" (3.11). Because of the implanted "memories" of his "upbringing," Tyrol knows the Temple of Five presumably from stories, calling it the "holiest of holies," though as a place he visited from his earlier Cylon life, it may have jogged his memory. Throughout the series to the reveal of his identity, Tyrol consistently displays a greater sensitivity to Cylons, as opposed to the other three in the fleet, whose first indication is hearing music in the walls shortly before their revelation.

Unlike Anders and Tigh's reactions to discovering their Cylon heritage, Tyrol acknowledges his Cylon-ness immediately, saying thoughtfully "so that's it. After all this time. A switch goes off just like that" (3.20). He tells a protesting Anders that "we're Cylons. And we have been from the start." Furthermore, he asks Tigh what they should do when the ship comes under attack from Cylons (ironically) shortly after their discovery. Tigh, ever the stoic XO, orders him to report and serve.

Tyrol's character evolves drastically after he discovers he is a Cylon, but initially after the nebula he comforts Anders who, after two Resistance movements and killing Cylons (and collaborators) as a hobby, is not taking the revelation well. "Be the man you want to be 'til the day you die," counsels Tyrol, quoting Tigh verbatim. However, two episodes later he says "I

used to know who I was. Galen Tyrol. Crew chief, husband, father. I look in the mirror nowadays, I don't even know what I am" (4.03). In the Cylon meeting he also states "I don't do well with change," which is eerie foreshadowing to the complete destruction of his former life.

After Cally's supposed suicide, Tyrol gradually drops the charade of his old life. "I don't even know what I am anymore," he says. "I don't know which of my memories are real. I don't know that I've had one action in my life that isn't programmed" (4.04). He gets angry at Tory who has broken the "deal" of living life as before, and has changed her lifestyle. He asks Tigh helplessly, "you said it yourself...we're still the same people, aren't we?" When Adama attempts to comfort Tyrol after a deck accident, Tyrol loses his composure, yelling "I didn't pick this life. This is not my frakking life" (4.04), resulting in a demotion. His identity, built so firmly on his role as deck chief before any of his other relationships, is further destroyed. In the next episode, Tyrol has clearly taken his demotion poorly; he has shaved his head, dresses differently, and jumps rope in his quarters, signs in life that something is amiss. Tyrol spends his free time poring over the airlock that Cally committed suicide in. Tigh notices his strange behavior and tells him to "pull it together" in the following Cylon meeting. Tyrol responds aggressively, telling him that he *can't* continue to be "the man he wants to be" (4.05).

Upon discovering his shadow forever imprinted upon a market wall from a nuclear blast on ruined Earth, Tyrol spends his time curled up next to it with a sad smile, shaking his head ruefully as other characters pace around the radioactive sands, upset or nearly catatonic. The rare glimpses of the last moments of his life that he picks up by touching the wall, of happily strolling through a busy market, are the only true memories he possesses; besides what little Anders tells him later in the series, he has nothing concrete in his past besides a minute or two of a memory, walking through a market smiling. The true life of Galen Tyrol is just a shadow on a wall. After

Earth, Tyrol not only acknowledges but seems to accept his identity as a Cylon. When the four (and incapacitated Anders) convene to decide the future of the Cylon race, Tyrol votes with Tory to leave, going so far as to use the prefix “we” in referring to himself with the other Cylons. He says that it would be to “start over,” referring in the conversation to the Cylons, but perhaps more appropriately to himself. When he tries to convince Adama of incorporating Cylon technology to strengthen the ship, he mixes up his words, confusing “Their tech...our tech...is way ahead of ours. Yours” (4.12). Tigh, of course, makes fun of him.

When Boomer returns to *Galactica* with Ellen, she preys on Tyrol’s feelings, using his emotions against him, and bringing about catastrophe for *Galactica* and the fleet. She shows him the projection of the house that she had built for them, as well as a daughter living in a room upstairs. He tells her, “if I had only known back then what I am” (4.17), expressing his regret and sadness that their lives never aligned. Boomer dredges up Tyrol’s guilt as she faces the death penalty. By threatening him with the prospect of losing her permanently for a second time without helping her, the ultimately compassionate and loving Tyrol breaks her out, killing another Eight in the process. Tyrol selflessly trusted and tried to rescue her, putting himself and the fleet in danger, just so she would have a chance to live, even if it was without him. His failed attempt to resolve his past (by helping Boomer escape and live, albeit apart from him), ends disastrously, as she steals Hera and returns to the Cylon Colony. Though knowing that he has freed her and rescued her is enough validation for his actions, he turns himself in for her escape. In the brig, he lives in the projection that Boomer made, alone in the house they would (or should) have shared together.

Boomer’s betrayal changes Tyrol’s attitude towards himself and other Cylons. When talking to Helo he tells him that “machines are not people. They’re just machines” (4.19). Helo

protests his wife is a person, to which Tyrol aggressively replies that “she’s a blow-up doll, Karl...they’re the same because we made them the same...you can’t trust them. You can’t trust any of them” (4.19). Tyrol’s trust has been violated not only by humans and his fellow Five, but also by the Cylon who would always remain the love of his life.

Despite seemingly giving up on everyone in his life, Tyrol agrees to help the Final Five and the fleet in the assault on the Colony to regain Hera. He joins forces with the other Four, but when he learns of Tory’s murder of Cally he promptly snaps her neck. Despite his apparent apathy, he feels so strongly about Tory’s involvement in what he assumed was Cally’s suicide that he kills her. After they successfully find Kara’s Earth, Tyrol doesn’t celebrate but sits with his back to the wall, staring unfocused at the floor, resembling his behavior upon finding his shadow on Earth. Unlike fondly and wistfully remembering the original life he had on the Cylon Earth, here he broods, without hope for a new life on new Earth.

With Hera safe, Boomer dead, and the truth of Cally’s death revealed with her murderer killed, the ties of Tyrol’s life are bound up. Though some might view it as a clean slate, Tyrol gives up and requests to be dropped off alone in what appears to be Scotland. “[I’m] tired of people, humans, Cylons, whatever” he tells Ellen and Tigh (4.20). Tyrol doesn’t care what someone is, who they are, and not the least if they are a “person;” everyone in some way has done him wrong. Love is Tyrol’s downfall, and he is betrayed by both humans and Cylons. On the new Earth, Tyrol chooses to be alone rather than being a human or a Cylon. Galen Tyrol is not just a Cylon, but a tragic hero, watching his life crumble away as he attempts to live it as a person, whether machine or human. Unlike Tigh, Tory, Anders, or Ellen, he has no choice in his identity but is swept along by fate.

Ellen's story differs drastically from her Cylon companions. She had no idea what she was when she lived her human life, despite a plot hole in which Baltar tests her blood with the accurate Cylon detector and coyly tells Head Six that he won't tell anyone if she is a Cylon...then is later racked with anxiety and terror, hoping that he is the fifth. She was not around for the Cylon revelation because she was holed up on a basestar with Cavil, and thus the identity of the fifth of the Final Five was surrounded by debate and speculation.

The largest difference between Ellen and the others of the Five is that she is fully aware of her identity and remembers much of her life. After a disorienting experience downloading in the goo bath, Ellen regains her composure. As a Cylon, she is seemingly more intelligent and composed than the human Ellen Tigh, a floozy and alcoholic. She speaks calmly to a flustered Cavil, who was the mastermind behind placing the Five as "sleeper agents" in the fleet.

Because Ellen does not have to reconcile her past with a newfound identity as a Cylon, she does not experience a crisis of identity as some of the others do. Ellen Tigh is Ellen Tigh, and does not bother with the preoccupation of machine or human. In a rather heated conversation, Cavil leers at her that, "Tigh's a machine. So are you" (4.15). "I think that depends on how you define things," Ellen levels back.

In her conversation with Cavil, Ellen repeatedly uses language implying that she thinks that all of the Cylons constitute a large family. The seven Cylon models are the Five's "children," but since she retains her human memories she also respects humans. When she returns to the *Galactica* she is physically and emotionally affectionate to Tory and Tyrol, and after a bit of a situation with Caprica Six, picks up with Tigh in a relationship which doesn't seem to differ too much from theirs as humans, though perhaps with less alcohol. She is saddened by Anders' condition, but nonetheless tells the others, "this is how it was" (4.16).

While Ellen is happy to see all of her Cylon “children” (though with pregnant Caprica Six as an exception), she also recognizes the importance of humanity in the Cylons’ destiny. She initially votes to jump away with the Cylons, but does so merely to spite Tigh. Ultimately, though, she decides to stay because of Hera, who she says “has some meaning that transcends the here and now” (4.19).

At the end of the series, she and Tigh go off to live the rest of their lives with each other. Though they have been irrevocably changed, he by discovering his Cylon heritage, and she by being restored to it, they are ultimately Ellen and Saul Tigh. Their relationship shows that despite thousands of years and multiple deaths, love will prevail, despite species or mechanics. Ellen is more knowledgeable than the other Five on their beginnings and history, but she lets destiny and fate run its course without much questioning of her part in it. For her, the larger picture (as she is a religious Cylon) is more important than questions of self.

The Final Five personify the struggle to distinguish the difference between human and Cylon, and what makes it so. By living as humans and adjusting to a new life whether welcome or not, the question of identity itself despite species or makeup is thrown into sharp relief by the Five. Tigh proves that one can choose his or her own place in the world, and that even Cylons have a choice and not just programming. Tory is also an example of choice, but decides to live her life as a Cylon. Anders, though originally horrified by his own existence, makes concessions such as comforting a dying Cylon, concluding that perhaps one cannot fully control who they are. And the tragic Galen Tyrol shows that life, whether Cylon or human, can suffer from misfortune and the whims of fate. Each of the four Cylons in the fleet and Ellen Tigh, who is not faced with an identity dilemma, shows that identity is not fully determined by blood or wires but

by choices, though in *BSG* all is guided by a higher power. The existential crisis each faces leads to the series' bigger questions, but ultimately personifies the dilemma of personage.

Gaius Baltar, the unwitting architect of humanity's genocide at the hands of the Cylons, often wonders at the nature of his humanity. Baltar is egotistical, vain, and weak, and a master of self-deception. His guilt for his actions is overwhelming, but with his giant arrogance and self-preservation, he is able to maintain his sanity and adopts an astonishing level of denial. He sees an avatar of his lover and seducer Caprica Six, who purrs affirmations to him, convincing him of the existence of the Cylon God and His love for Gaius.<sup>46</sup> Six plays a large role in Gaius' identity after the attacks, as she influences his actions and the way he thinks about himself. Her guidance, whether given through advice, seduction, or intimidation, leads him to earn vast amounts of power, including the Presidency of the Twelve Colonies, and at the end of the series he becomes one of the most powerful men of the Fleet in his role as a religious leader. Before he gains power as a religious force in the Fleet, his guilt for his past actions leads him to *want* to be a Cylon. Though he does not find acceptance with either peoples, his desire to be anything other than a human drives him to desperation as he spends the series trying to find a place for himself with humans, Cylons, a woman he sees in his head, and God.

Gaius is guided through much of the series through his relationship with his virtual, "Head" Six.<sup>47</sup> Though he eventually believes what she says and follows her advice, at the beginning of the series he is skeptical of her message, though takes comfort from her as she tries to alleviate his guilt through reassurances of God's love and rewards for following God's plan

---

<sup>46</sup> Though it was assumed that the virtual Six Gaius sees was a manifestation of his guilt and a means by which to remain sane, in future seasons she is labeled as an "angel" that guides Baltar to carry out God's plan. Because Ronald D. Moore has stated prior to her shifted role that she was a manifestation of his psyche, her changed purpose appears to be a convenient way to further the concept of the divine in the story, which is given responsibility for the events of much of the fourth season.

<sup>47</sup> I will refer to the virtual Six as either "Head Six" or simply "Six," as I always refer to Gaius' real-life Six as "Caprica."



for him. She frequently tells him “God has a plan for you,” “God is watching out for you,” “Repent of your sins. Accept his true love.” When he has doubt about speaking to the people as their religious leader at the end of the series, questioning God’s presence behind his words, Six assures him, “God speaks through you to them. When you go out there you are divinely inspired. You are the instrument that he uses to speak with his people...He has a plan, Gaius. All you have to do is put yourself into His hands” (4.12). When he dismisses her, sometimes condescendingly, she angrily tells him, “That which God gives, he can also take away” or similar threats (1.01). “I’m trying to save your immortal soul,” she tells him when he dismisses her (1.07). Several times when he disregards her advice or orders, she intimidates him, occasionally physically harming him (1.03). She appears not only as a phantom in the waking world, but seduces him in a world in his head in which he seems to find comfort, his memories of his home on Caprica.<sup>48</sup>

Baltar does not originally believe in Head Six’s religious message which later guides all of his actions. As a scientist, he believes in a “rational universe, explained through rational means” (1.01). “The universe is a vast and complex system,” that is “coincidental” with “serendipitous events.” He tells her “there is no God- or Gods,” and is angered by her at one point, telling her, “your superstitious drivel, your metaphysical nonsense...[that] no rational, intelligent, free-thinking human being truly believes...leads me to the inescapable conclusion that Cylons are little more than toasters” (1.07).

Gaius himself does not always believe in his secular, scientific views of the world; whenever he is faced with a situation that would require something coincidental or serendipitous to happen, he seems to accept the existence of a God. “I am an instrument of God,” he says to Head Six confidently after he dupes the humans into believing in his expert knowledge of the

---

<sup>48</sup> Cylons are shown to have the ability to “project,” replacing their surroundings with images. Caprica Six, for example, projects herself in a forest instead of the metal halls of a Cylon basestar. It is Baltar’s ability to inhabit his old home in his head which fueled speculation as to his identity as a Cylon.

Cylons (1.10).<sup>49</sup> Though he appears to develop religious tendencies, upon escaping from the number of conundrums he is faced with, he returns to ignoring Head Six's religious advice.

Gaius, who always acts in his own best interests, will listen to Head Six and act on what she tells him, even if it could have disastrous consequences for himself. When he accepts Six's counsel and acts as she instructs him, she leads him to do and say things that he finds disconcerting, or that he refuses to do until further goading from her. Head Six's guidance leads him to pursue a career in politics, which he once deemed "more boring than blood samples" (1.11). After carrying out "God's" will, Gaius becomes entangled with the politics of the Fleet for the duration of the series. Six insists, "I know God's plan for you. I know how to help you fulfill your destiny" (2.12), and Gaius hesitantly does as she instructs, accruing power until he is the most powerful man in the Fleet, as President and later as a prophetic religious leader.

While Six leads Gaius to power, sometimes he experiences failure and loss, for which Six reminds him of God's love for him and his special destiny. When Hera's death is faked, Six tells him "If you have faith, everything will turn out as it should. You've been chosen to lead these people by the Almighty God. It will happen" (2.19). Even when Gaius fails or misfortune befalls him, Six reassures him of God's love for him. When he protests signing the death warrants on New Caprica but does so to prevent being shot, Six encourages him, afterwards reassuring him that, "Sometimes you have to do something you hate, so you can survive to fight another day" (3.02).

Gaius rarely questions the nature of the existence of Head Six, though at one point in the series he asks her, "What are you? You're either connected to the woman I knew on Caprica or

---

<sup>49</sup> He was consulted with by Adama to look at aerial photos of a Cylon facility on an asteroid and identify the specific building Viper pilots were planning to destroy. He had no idea which it was and to admit to it or be incorrect in his guess would lead the others to suspect the extent of his Cylon expertise, which could lead to his lab, his Cylon detector, and the nuclear warhead he was in possession of being taken away.

you're a damaged part of my subconscious struggling for self-expression, so which is it?" For the first time, she tells him, "I'm an angel of God sent here to help you, just as I always have been" (3.06).

Six also teases Gaius that she is an implanted chip, or that she is a product of his insanity. He is so unsure of himself and her presence that he had Doc Cottle give him a brain scan, which shows he has no implanted Cylon technology, but does nothing to quell his anxieties about the state of his sanity. It is not until she tells him directly that she is an angel sent from God, and that he accepts her as such, that he stops questioning her presence.

Gaius begins to suspect he is a Cylon after the disaster on New Caprica. While on the Cylon basestar, Caprica shows him her projection of a forest bathed in afternoon light. He realizes uneasily that the process is similar to the vision of his old life which he has created in his head. Head Six tells him "Cylon psychology is based on projection. It's how they choose to see the world around them. The only difference is that you choose to see me" (3.06). Not only does Six insinuate that Baltar's imaginings are similar to if not the same as Cylon projection, but she also intimates that his constant visions of her are something produced by his own mind. "I think I understand projection," he tells her, "but it's a bit of a coincidence, isn't it? That I could see such a vivid reality that I've created and the Cylon projection experience seems to be so similar? Am I a Cylon?" (3.06). Six has no answer for him, and begins to tease him about his desire to be a Cylon, especially when he learns there are five additional Cylon whose identities are unknown.

The prospect of being a Cylon becomes increasingly attractive to Gaius after New Caprica. "I would stop being a traitor to one set of people and be a hero to another, and have a place to belong" (3.10). When he and Three consult the hybrid in search for answers to the mysterious Eye of Jupiter, the hybrid sits up in her tub, staring raptly at Gaius, while speaking

about the Chosen One (3.11).<sup>50</sup> After Three finally sees the identities of the Final Five in the Temple, Gaius begs her to tell him if he is one of them before she dies.

Gaius' lust for being a Cylon extends to his dreams, as after passing out from an attempted suicide he wakes up in a Cylon goo bath.<sup>51</sup> Multiple Sixes fawn over him and he is elated to have been reborn a Cylon. "No one was betrayed," he says happily to them. "I was never one of them. I was one of you? I knew it! I knew it! I always knew I was different. Special" (3.13). The Sixes who watch over him begin to scratch and harm him, telling him he is human, and he wakes up, to his horror still on *Galactica*. His elation of being a Cylon, that being one of the enemy would absolve him of the crime of betraying humanity and causing the death of fifty million people, is shattered as he merely wakes up after a dream.

When he is interrogated under the influence of a medicine meant to provoke feelings of panic and anxiety, he also brings up the Final Five, admitting that he thought he might be one of them, and that he wanted to be. He wants to be a Cylon to have "all my sins forgiven. A new beginning" (3.13). He believes all of his guilt would be resolved if he was one of the enemy he unwittingly aided.

He also demonstrates through the interrogation his self-deception and refusal to accept responsibility for the attacks. He tells Adama that all of the allegations are "lies. All lies. I did not collude in the genocide of my own people" (3.13). Even under the influence of a drug which drives him half out of his mind, he has convinced himself of his innocence. His mind begins to wander on the drugs, as he wonders, "I never intended...did I conspire? No! It wasn't my fault. I am not responsible." For the duration of the series, every time he has felt guilt about his involvement in the attacks or in New Caprica, he convinces himself that he was not at fault.

---

<sup>50</sup> As Hera and Starbuck are also dubbed the Chosen One, Gaius' role is murky.

<sup>51</sup> Gaius tried to commit suicide by hanging and was rescued in time. One has to wonder how Gaius could produce an accurate representation of a resurrection bath in his dreams without having seen one.

Furthermore, he assigns blame to the influence of Caprica Six, insisting, “She chose me. Chose me over all men, chosen to be seduced, taken by the hand, guided between the light and the dark. But is she an angel or is she a demon? Is she imaginary or is she real?”<sup>52</sup>

He continues to be questioned by Adama and Roslin and begins to admit his crimes, though he continues to refuse to take responsibility for them. “Mistakes were made, terrible mistakes!” he shouts. “Were they mine? Am I solely to be blamed? I was a player, that’s all! I was struggling to find my place in God’s plan, God’s resolve. I never intended for certain things to happen. Doesn’t that matter?” (3.13) He shifts the blame from himself to Caprica to the whims of fate, but never acknowledges that he allowed himself to be taken in by a beautiful woman and manipulated into the destruction of humanity. After he survives the interrogation without admitting to any of his crimes, he tells Six, “They forced me to admit my failings and now that I have, I feel positively liberated. In my heart, I know that I’ve always done what I had to do” (3.13).

Later in the series when he is bleeding out on a basestar with Roslin, he begins to ramble and speaks of his actions on the Twelve Colonies. “I was harboring the most awful desperate guilt. A heavy, dark, unimaginable, soul-breaking guilt. Now it’s gone...I have been transformed. I have no guilt” (4.09). He continues as Roslin looks on, horrified. “...when I realized what I had done, the magnitude, in that moment I was saved. I was loved by God. Looking back, I think I was rewarded.” Gaius’ acceptance of his actions is simultaneous with his absolution for them. He indicates a divine presence, though it is just as likely to be his amazingly resilient psyche. He continues, comparing himself to the Biblical force of a quenching flood. “No one blames the flood. A flood is a source of nature. Through the flood, mankind is rejuvenated,

---

<sup>52</sup> He calls her “Caprica” here, but usually does not equate Head Six and Caprica together. He recognizes that the Six in his head is of his own making, or later that she is an angel of God.

born again. I was another flood. I blamed myself. But God made the man that made that choice. God made us all perfect. And in that thought, all my guilt flies away.” He takes Six’s message of God’s love seriously, since the God she speaks of forgives sins and loves Gaius despite his failings. Though he may acknowledge his hand in the genocide in humanity, he has convinced himself that if God has forgiven him, then he has done no wrong, something which Roslin disagrees with, as she almost lets him bleed to death.

Gaius Baltar’s character evolves to a religious leader after his trial for his crimes on New Caprica. When he is taken in and hidden from the masses by his harem, he is disgruntled by their devotion to him. Six asks him why he is disappointed and he bitterly replies, “From President of the Colonies to the King of fools. Probably best to be hated by everyone than loved by this lot. Doomed to live out the rest of my life in this loony bin” (4.01). Gaius’ love affair with himself and belief in his superiority only extends to a certain point; when faced with a people who worship him blindly he is disappointed and annoyed. That he is put off by the people he leads viewing him as a faultless prophetic individual is rather ironic since he struggles to view himself as a blameless victim of unfortunate circumstances.

He, however, realizes that they will consume anything he tells them. Their unwavering devotion to him emboldens him to test his own religious beliefs. He cements his own opinions and beliefs about God and himself when given the attention of a rapt audience. Though he may never totally shed his disdain for his “flock” who follow him blindly, he is never more in his element than when he has an audience that devours his every word without questions or doubts. When trying to impress Tory, he tells her loftily, “Well, it seems God has chosen me to sing his song” (4.01). When his followers give him more political power than he had as President, he stops questioning his humanity and accepts his role as a spiritual leader of the Fleet, as ridiculous

as that might be to him. Six's religious babble that Gaius detested so much is his selling point to the rest of humanity for his worth. Through accepting his destiny as a mouthpiece for the Six's teachings, Gaius ascends to his most powerful role, while also finally absolving himself for his crimes. His embraces the message is of love, forgiveness, and perfection, which are the tenets of Six's religious beliefs, to rid himself of his guilt and fault.

In one of his sermons, he tells his followers,

I have...been a profoundly selfish man. But that doesn't matter, you see. Something in the universe loves me. Something in the universe loves the entity that is me. I will choose to call this something 'God'...Love your faults. Embrace them. If God embraces them, then how can they be faults? You have to love yourself...The truth is we are all perfect. God only loves what is perfect and he loves you. He loves you because you are perfect. You are perfect just as you are. (4.04)

Gaius ends his speech to applause and weeping. He created a foolproof religion for the Fleet to follow in which he is the magister, a religion which tenets absolve Gaius of any wrongdoing or guilt. He has taken his feelings of self-preservation and denial, added Six's religious adages, and created a self-congratulatory religious order for which he is the sole arbiter. Gaius Baltar has quite brilliantly created his own religion.

In another sermon, Gaius tells his harem lovingly that "on my journey, I've been wronged and persecuted...I've chosen to forgive. And most importantly, I began with myself" (4.05). Through the guise of piety, humility, and devotion, Gaius has merely created another way to clear himself for the terrible things he has done, not to mention frame the adversity he has faced, much of it by his own doing, as injustices that he has somehow conquered with faith and the aid of a loving deity. The cult of Baltar is a way for Gaius to convince others, but also himself, that he is perfect and free from blame. Six had been placing the blame and responsibility for Gaius' mistakes on his lack of faith in God. Now that he has accepted a divine figure he once

scoffed at, he has also accepted the fact that his lack of faith was the cause of his misfortune, not personal responsibility. After the revelation of the Five, it no longer matters what he is, for he has so much power and the mandate of the sole religious figure that what he is trumps who he is: one of the most powerful men in the universe.

He realizes the potential of his control over the hearts and minds of the Fleet, and begins to use that power for his own gain. After the harem's headquarters is defiled by a gang, Gaius realizes with Six's help that he must make a stand against the organized religion of the Fleet, both to help his flock and clear his own path for power. "Why can't I be a man?" he asks Six. "Do I really need to take on the Gods single-handed?" (4.04). Six coos to him, "Imagine the kind of man you'll be when you do. Surely such a man must be magnificent, larger-than-life, God-like himself." Gaius Baltar is intrigued. He goes on a rampage, disrupts a religious service, and defiles their icons earning him a trip to the brig. From there, he becomes a folk hero, and the rise of Gaius Baltar begins.

Baltar eventually amasses such a large following that speakers are set up through the halls of the ship and the bay in which his harem resides is filled with people at each meeting. Baltar has the ear of every human in Fleet. Baltar uses his political power to try for a seat in the government "for his people" who "deserve a voice" (4.19). Lee Adama, who is resistant to the idea, accuses him, "Look in the eye and tell me about the time that you made a truly heroic act of conscience which helped you not even in the slightest." "You're right. I wouldn't trust me either," says Baltar. All of his acts, no matter how selfless they appear, in some way have always benefitted him.

Though he uses it to promote himself, resulting in political power, Baltar also spreads a message of God that he seems to increasingly believe, beyond using it to resolve his own guilt. "I



joined the Fleet as a scientist, skeptic, man of reason, only to have fate turn that on its head. [There is a] purpose to it. We change. We evolve. Maybe we even learn something along the way. I have committed unconscionable crimes and I have been offered one last chance at redemption because I chose to accept my fate, not fight it anymore” (4.18). He begins to sincerely believe in a benevolent force which embraces him despite his failings.

Ultimately, Gaius makes a decision that benefits others and not himself. He elects to stay aboard the *Galactica* while his sheep take to the safety of the Fleet. Gaius makes one final act of conscience in choosing to fight rather to run and lead the people from the safety among them.

It is through Gaius’ dependence on himself and his trusty Head Six that he determines his own future. He neither belongs with humanity, which he nearly destroys twice, nor with the Cylons. Gaius determines his own identity and destiny through belief in his own ability to navigate life. He listens to the religious counsel of a hallucinatory being he later labels an “angel” and through it gains political and religious power. A crucial aspect to understanding Gaius Baltar is the limits of his psyche. The guilt he feels is tempered with self-preservation and denial so enormous that he evades the feelings that would destroy the sanity of any rational person. When he buys into Six’s religious counsel to the degree that he in essence creates his own religion, he likewise creates an order to his life in which he is absolved through all guilt and blame because of a benevolent deity who loves him. Though the series advocates for the presence of the divine through its influence on Baltar’s life, his own ability to deceive himself is as powerful an aspect to his identity as anything a deity or power could bestow upon him. Gaius Baltar creates a religion in which he is high priest that tells him that he is perfect and answers all of the feelings of guilt that lay beneath the denial he had laid for himself. Though Gaius does experience moments of clarity and acts in ways that benefit others without also benefitting

himself, it is through his own determination to be something other than what he is that defines him as a person. “Cylons, humans, we’re all just trying to discover who we are,” he says, and for someone who has sinned equally regardless of biology or machinery, he is a definitive example of a person defining who they are (3.10).

Kara Thrace has one of the more ambiguous struggles with her identity and personage in *Battlestar Galactica*. She is not only unsure of her humanity, but also her mortality, as after her death and miraculous return to the Fleet she appears to be touched by the divine. Kara, or “Starbuck,” is confident in herself at the beginning of the series. She begins to have visions, and a Leoben enamored with her and her special destiny encourages her to believe that she has a special destiny. After the explosion which unquestionably kills Kara, she inexplicably returns to the Fleet months later, in a flesh body with no memory of her death and no explanation for her new life. Kara must try and define who she is, but on a more elemental scale, as since she died she does not know who or what she is. She is told she is a Chosen One, a harbinger of death sent to lead humanity to its end. Through the latter half of the series, Kara Thrace questions if she is human or Cylon, alive or dead, a person or an angel. Her self-discovery not only has effects on the way she views herself, but on two races of people she must lead to their final resting place.

Before her death, at the start of the series, Kara is masculine, confident, insubordinate, violent, and aggressive. She is a risk-taker who is promiscuous, drinks, and smokes. It is revealed through the series that she is fatherless and was raised by an abusive mother who would inflict pain upon her as a learning experience. When she meets Leoben for the first time when interrogating him, he tells her, “your life is a testament to pain...it surrounds you like a bubble” (1.08).

Starbuck's gauge of her self-worth is largely derived from what she can do rather than who she is. She takes pride in her abilities as a warrior, as she is the best pilot on the *Galactica*, and it follows the best fighter in the military after the Cylon attacks. When she is caught by Cylons on Caprica, a Simon tries to convince her of her worth as a woman with reproductive capabilities.<sup>53</sup> "I'm not a commodity," she tells him hotly. "I'm a Viper pilot" (2.05). She could have identified her self-worth in numerous ways other than citing her military prowess, but her confidence in her abilities as a fighter trump any of her other skills and assets.

Starbuck is forever altered by her relationship with the Cylon Leoben, particularly by her imprisonment by him in an apartment on New Caprica. The Two abducted her soon after the invasion of the colony by the Cylons, forcing her into a domestic fantasy. "I only want you to see the truth of your life, the reason why you suffered and you struggled for so long. That's why God sent me to you, that's why he wants us to be together" (3.01). Leoben believes that he is Starbuck's spiritual guide, but also believes a romantic relationship between the two is necessary to his role in her spiritual awakening. Starbuck rejects Leoben, killing him in graphically violent ways. Leoben insists he is holding her because he loves her and wants her to realize her special destiny, but the sexual undertones of the imprisonment traumatize her. After she is freed by Anders she is unable to reciprocate his affection and is cold to him, saying "I'm in a different place now...I got out of that cell and it's like someone painted the world in different colors" (3.05). Though it does not appear that Leoben made physical advances towards Kara (though it may have earned him some of his five deaths), the emotional trauma of being imprisoned by him affects her psychologically until her death.

---

<sup>53</sup> The Cylons would view this as her greatest worth, as I've discussed above they imprisoned women on the Colonies, attempting to impregnate them. Though they do not have a chance to imprison Starbuck, they take one of her ovaries.

After her death and subsequent mystical return to the Fleet, Starbuck accepts Leoben's help in discovering her purpose and destiny. Despite her and Leoben's violent relationship, he joins her later in the series to help her discover her destiny. Starbuck possesses spiritual beliefs in the humans' polytheistic gods and visits an oracle, who tells her, "Two knows you better than you know yourself...he sees the truth about you. About your destiny...Leoben will show you the way" (3.17).

The indications of Starbuck's "special destiny" begin as soon as Season One, when Helo and she visit her apartment, with large mandalas painted on the walls. She drew the designs as a child, seen in her mother's scrapbook, and tells Helo "I've been doodling them since I was a kid" (3.12). She had paintings of them in the apartment she shared with her fiancé. The design proves to be important, as she begins to see it in drippings in candle wax and in the vortex she flies into where she dies. The same design was present in the Temple of Five that the Fleet discovers after her mysterious return. She has a graphic dream in which she tries to splash white paint over the mandala in her Caprica apartment, only to have the design reappear through the paint (3.17).

Before Kara's death when she flies into the storm system, she has a vision of her mother's home in which she is joined by Leoben.<sup>54</sup> "You want to cross over," he tells her. "But you're afraid...of the unknown. Death. All your high-wire stunts have been an act. Time after time, you skip to the edge of the abyss, then dance away again. But you've never really conquered your fear. You've been afraid. Ever since that day" (3.17). "That day" is revealed to be the day Starbuck runs away from home and her dying mother, a memory that haunts her and drives her risky behavior. Despite a childhood of abuse, Kara feels guilt for abandoning her

---

<sup>54</sup> "You're not Leoben," she accuses the figure. "Never said I was," he responds (3.17). Later, it is furthered by Gaius Baltar and makes sense that when the divine sends angels or heavenly figures to guide characters, it is usually in the guise of someone they know and trust. If it is indeed her projection of Leoben, it is interesting he would be the figure to spiritually advise her.

mother, and as demonstrated through the vision, has been scared of death since leaving her. She joins Two in saying goodbye to her mother on her deathbed in the vision, the woman passing away after reassuring Starbuck of her love for her, finally giving her the affirmation she had always hoped for. “See?” says Two. “There’s nothing so terrible about death. When you finally face it, it’s beautiful. You’re free now. To become who you really are” (3.17). When she accuses him of not being Leoben, he tells her, “I’m here to prepare you to pass through the next door. To discover what hovers in the space between life and death.” Starbuck, who had apparently been unconscious, wakes up and continues her descent into the storm system, telling Lee that she is no longer afraid. A white light appears in Starbuck’s vision and she tells him she will “see you on the other side...it’s ok...they’re waiting for me...” before her Viper dips too low in the storm, loses too much pressure, and explodes into thousands of pieces (3.17).

Starbuck’s death, when coupled with her return to the Fleet, is one of the greatest mysteries of the series. Her existence is touted as some of the strongest evidence for the divine, yet it doesn’t totally make sense. Starbuck, who seems entirely aware of her actions prior to her ship exploding, has no recollection of her death when she rejoins the Fleet months later, thinking she had been away for six hours. She pores over the footage of her death, disbelief on her face. The Starbuck who banishes her fears and readily accepts death is completely different from the Starbuck that has no recollection of dying, though she returns months later with a brand new Viper, claiming to have seen Earth (3.20).

Many believe Kara is a Cylon when she comes back from the dead, which would not be a difficult conclusion since four of the Final Five discover their identities in the same episode, minutes before she appears in the clouds to fly with the other Vipers against the Cylons.<sup>55</sup> Kara

---

<sup>55</sup> A DNA test definitively disproves this, though there is enough evidence for a tempting theory about her being the first Cylon hybrid.

herself thinks the Cylons may have done something to her, since she refuses to believe in her own death.<sup>56</sup> Others believe she is crazy, since she claims Earth is “a feeling, an intuition”, and loses her grip on sanity when Roslin and Adama refuse to follow her advice on the route to Earth, jumping in a different direction as she howls and rolls around on the ground, screaming “we’re going the wrong way!” (4.01)

Starbuck begins to believe in some sort of mystical transformation after her return to the Fleet because she notices differences in how she feels. Things seem “far away to her” in how they feel and taste. As she tries to explain to Helo, “[It’s] like I’m watching myself, but I’m not really experiencing it, not living it. Like my body’s just this alien thing that I’m still attached to” (4.03). Starbuck possesses a physical body; after a Raptor crash her hands are seriously burned. However, she does not feel the same sensations as she did before her death. It is almost as if she is a Cylon breaking in a new body. Furthermore, she is emotionally distant from her husband and her friends, and on the *Demetrius* she scorns the company of others, painting and drawing on maps as she tries to plot a course for Earth.

Leoben returns, finding the *Demetrius* and joining Starbuck in locating the damaged basestar with the remnants of the rebel Cylons that flies through the solar system where Earth is located. Leoben doesn’t make romantic or sexual advances towards her on their latest meeting, but is amazed by her presence, as he sees “an angel blazing with the light of God” (4.05). Starbuck is troubled by his assessment of her. Though she does not necessarily believe she is an angel, she recognizes Leoben’s spiritual prescience, and his observations of her cause her to question her mortality, as well as a possible role in the destiny of mankind. Leoben tells her that “God has taken your hand and purged you of the questions, the doubt. Your journey can finally begin.” Leoben tells Kara the hybrid on the rebel’s basestar will help her understand her changes,

---

<sup>56</sup> Later it becomes a punch line, as she refers to herself as a “dead girl.”

slowly convincing her to join the Cylons to question it. With Leoben's assessment, Kara continues to question her role in the fate of humanity as well as her own, if she is an angel as he says.

Kara loses her temper with Leoben after he boards and lashes out at him, as she would before her death to counteract her anger and insecurities. "I'm the same person," she tells him as he tries to convince her of her new fate. "No," he insists, "there's a void, an emptiness that can only be filled by taking the next step on your journey" (4.05). Kara, who has been questioning herself, asks him about the mandala, her mother, and the paintings, none of which he has any idea about. "It had to mean something," she insists, trying to make sense of her prior life and death. "You have to make peace with your path," reasons Leoben, "because that part of you is gone. I told you when I first came aboard the ship you had changed. I don't see Kara Thrace. I see an angel" (4.05).

When Kara encounters the hybrid on the rebels' basestar, her mystical role in the destiny of humans and Cylons is further complicated with the hybrid's message to her. "The children of the one reborn shall find their own country. You are a spark of God's fire," she tells Kara, uncharacteristically lifting her hand out of the water, cupping Kara's face, and looking at her with amazement (4.06). "You are the harbinger of death, Kara Thrace," says the hybrid. "You will lead them all to their end."

Starbuck cannot accept her fate as a leader or guardian of mankind. "I'll rain down death and destruction and doom on everyone...that's supposed to be my so-called destiny. I pretty much figured the whole Earth thing covered that" (4.18). Starbuck interprets the "harbinger of death" phrase to mean that she will kill all of mankind, when her role is to bring them to their

final resting place on Earth, where they will be replaced by a race of people springing from Hera, who becomes the mitochondrial Eve.

Starbuck discovers the truth of her death and the state of her dead body when the Fleet discovers the remains of Earth. After following the signal from the transponder from her Viper, Starbuck and Leoben find the charred remains of her Viper, as well as her body inside of it, complete with dog tags. "If you've got an explanation, now's the time," Starbuck tells Leoben, who runs away from her (4.11). "If that's me lying there, then what am I?" she shouts after him. Starbuck tries to make peace with herself by giving her old body a Viking funeral, but keeps the dog tags and is haunted for the remainder of the series by the evidence of her death.

Kara believes she is dead and had Baltar confirm that the body on Earth was really hers. She gives him the dog tags that she took from the charred remains. She asks him if he believes in angels, since she herself is dead. Baltar doesn't believe her and she responds, "No, I mean it. I'm dead. As in six-foot-under dead. Dead as in 'crash landed burnt to a crisp dead.'" (4.18). She hands him the tags, telling him, "Pull out the old Cylon detector, do whatever you need to do, because I have no idea. The only thing I know for sure, I'm not an angel." Starbuck is willing to believe that she is a Cylon and would have Baltar perform his own tests on her to verify. Also, perhaps she would rather believe she was mortal of some kind, even Cylon, rather than divine. Kara seems to associate angels with some sort of moral superiority or virtue, neither of which she believes she possesses.

Though Starbuck was proven by a DNA test not to be a Cylon, enough evidence emerges that suggests she might be the offspring of one, which could explain her return to the Fleet as well as her mystical significance. The seventh Cylon model, Daniel, was poisoned by Cavil out of jealousy in his amniotic fluid because Cavil believed Ellen and the other Five loved Daniel



more than him. Though Daniel was killed, did that prevent one of his models from walking the Earth? Kara is in her mid-twenties, and the humanoid models were created within forty years of the events of the series, so it is possible that the Daniel model was created by that point in time, perhaps fathering a child.<sup>57</sup>

When Anders regains his memories from Cylon Earth, he remembers the seventh model. Kara, afraid that she is the seventh, nervously asks him about the identity of the Cylon, which he names the 'Daniel.' "You're sure about the word Daniel?" she asks worriedly (4.15). "Yes, he died," responds Anders. Before he can elaborate, Starbuck tells the nurses to take Anders away for his surgery. Though Starbuck is so desperate to know who and what she is, perhaps she cannot stomach being a half-breed. She apologizes to Anders after he returns from surgery brain-dead, telling him, "I thought maybe I was the Seven. I need to be something" (4.15).

Though Starbuck may not have been the Seven, there are parallels between the story of her father and that of the dead Cylon. Kara's father's name was "Dreilide Thrace," who played the piano for a living. In a conversation with Cavil, Ellen expresses sadness about the death of the Daniel since he was a sensitive artist (4.15). Kara's father left her and her mother when she was a child and "never came back. Never called. Never wrote" (4.17). One of the most compelling pieces of evidence, though, is the song Starbuck's father played for her when she was a child. It is the Cylon song, the one that awoke the Final Five, the one Hera writes in stars and dots, and the one Anders played on the guitar on Cylon Earth. When the Five hear her play it on the bar's piano, Tigh says "What the frak?" and Tory exclaims, "That's the song" (4.17).

---

<sup>57</sup> The Kara/Cylon theory is mainly fan speculation, but there are enough pieces of evidence, though tenuous, that it cannot be fully dismissed.

During the episode, Starbuck talks to a man playing piano in *Galactica*'s bar, though he is revealed to be an apparition of some kind.<sup>58</sup> After they become acquainted, she asks him, "What am I? A ghost? A demon? When I was leading the Fleet to Earth, everything seemed so clear. For the first time in my life. I know what I was doing and why I was here. Now I'm just adrift again" (4.17). The piano man does not have answers for Starbuck, but encourages her to play the piano, the Cylon song inducing flashbacks of her and her father playing the song as a child. She smiles, looking close to tears as she begins to play. The piano man holds out his finger like the barrel of a smoking gun and she blows on it, just as she did with her father when she was a child. She and the piano man look at each other and he holds her face as the flashback shows her father did. A moment later, the vision is gone and she is accosted by the Final Five, who demand to know where she learned the song, another piece of Kara Thrace's special destiny revealing itself.

She finally accepts her role as the savior of humanity and the harbinger of their fate when she leads them to their Earth. As she stands with Apollo looking across a plain, she tells him sadly, "I just know that I'm done here. I've completed my journey and it feels good" (4.20). Apollo looks away as he thinks of what his future will hold, and glances back to find that Kara Thrace has disappeared. Her sudden disappearance suggests that perhaps she truly was an angel, a transitory being that, though she possessed a human form with flesh, had a purpose to carry out before her final departure from life. After she says goodbye to Sam and leads him aboard the *Galactica*, he whispers, "I'll see you on the other side" (4.20). Perhaps Kara Thrace resides in the place between life and death that Leoben described in her vision, emerging from it briefly to guide humanity to its end and fulfill her destiny.

---

<sup>58</sup> Or he could be an angel in the guise of a figure that reminds her of her father, as "angels" have been shown to adapt the guise of figures that are comforting or convincing to humans they are sent to influence.

Kara Thrace's identity extends beyond questions of biology as she wonders if she is even alive. Like Gaius Baltar, she undergoes a spiritual conversion, though unlike the converted religious leader, her transformation is of the flesh and the soul. Her death and resurrection, and her role as a Messianic figure to humanity, are compelling evidence for the presence of the divine in the series. Kara Thrace might well be an angel, though she is not morally superior to any of the other characters nor possesses any spiritual powers. Though she is unsure of herself, she is a reluctant guide for the humans, leading them to their end in the Promised Land of an Earth that no one thought existed. Kara questions her role in the events of humanity, though she believes "If I have a fate, then it is set" (4.20). Kara's identity is never fully explained in the story, but as Leoben says, "What is the most basic article of faith? That this is not all that we are" (4.05). Kara Thrace clearly died, but her return and the salvation of the human race elevated her from a human, ghost or angel to a force of the divine.

While the Five have the luxury of deciding for themselves who they are and if they are people, Boomer is thrust into a new world that she cannot escape from. She makes decisions in vain attempting to preserve aspects of her old, human life and her Cylon identity, and the failure of her attempts discourages her to the extent that she decides to throw off all bonds, including those to her sisters, and join with those who would see a universe free of destructive emotions like love. She decides she would rather live in a world where machines and logic rule, rather live as a machine than as a human being or a person. Rachel likewise cannot avoid the fact that she is a Replicant and that her life on Earth is forfeit because of her manner of creation. The life that she thought she possessed was a series of implanted memories from the heads of human girls. She and Deckard leave his apartment at the end of the film, presumably fleeing from any Blade Runners who may pursue them. Unlike Boomer and the Five, she does not have the ability to

choose between two peoples but is a fugitive, a robot with an indeterminate lifespan whose existence is illegal.

Through the Five and Boomer, the ability to choose personage is examined. While the Five embody self-determination and individuality, Boomer distances herself from others as she attempts to define who she is at the detriment of Cylons and humans alike. Should Boomer have accepted her fate as a Cylon and lived in peace and accord with others of her kind, perhaps the conflict in the series could have been avoided, though differences so deep as religion would have caused fissures eventually. Regardless, Boomer's decision to become more machine, based off of human emotion, have disastrous consequences for robot and human. The Final Five make choices about who they are, some deciding to be human and deciding to be machine. Ultimately, they join with humans and rebel Cylon in searching for a world in which all creation lives together, whether synthetic or biological. The new Earth is not inhabited by merely the survivors of the human and Cylon races, but is a world of people. Boomer and the Final Five show that one determines their own actions and who they are through the choices and decisions they make, and whether or not they are people.

## CONCLUSION

*Battlestar Galactica* depicts a universe subjected to four Singularities, in which posthumanism never truly takes hold because of a resilient band of humans who survive in the universe, ultimately to find a new planet on which to live and multiply. *BSG* is not a show just about the apocalypse and the rise of the machine, but also about two races of people who battle each other and themselves in order to gain a better understanding of their place in the universe.

The Cylons are not merely faceless machines, but humanoid robots that are surprisingly human. Through their religious beliefs and programming by the Final Five, they are able to feel, with emotions such as love and compassion tempering their anger and cruelty. The fissure between the Cylon occurs because of the ability of the Cylons to love.

There are a number of individuals on the show that struggle to define themselves as people instead of merely machines. Athena Agathon and Caprica Six, driven by love for humans, abandon their Cylon brethren as they act based off of their love.

Boomer also loves humans as she was once one of them, but her inability to reconcile herself to them after she is discovered to be Cylon causes her to make a number of choices out of resentment that forever part her from the humans she loves. Some of her actions are so extreme that she causes harm to both Cylon and human as she recklessly tries to find a place for herself, believing that by striving to become the best machine possible, she can exorcize the pain of her life as a machine.

The Final Five each prove that despite biology or mechanics, one can ultimately decide for themselves who they want to be. Unlike the other Cylons, they are faced with a choice after

their revelation, to embrace the machine in them or to remain the people they were before the discovery of their Cylon identity. Saul Tigh stubbornly refuses to be anything other than himself; he is a man and despite the chemicals he is composed of he is determined to remain so. The other Cylons make choices about themselves, as Tory embraces her new identity, but each is in the unique position to decide who they are, or at least who they want to be.

The Replicant Rachel in *Blade Runner* faces similar difficulties to the Final Five. Instead of the humans he thought she was, she is a robot whose life is in peril on the planet she once called home. She has a full set of memories implanted in her that she thought was her own but was merely programming; everything about her is synthetic. She, like the Five, must cope with the fact that her identity is not a product of her free will, but of others who created her.

Identity crises are not limited to Cylon. The divine is a driving force in the latter part of the series, and the effect it has on human characters Kara Thrace and Gaius Baltar effect as they question their identities. Both suspect they are Cylon at some point, Baltar having a prevailing wish in light of humanity's hatred of him that he is one. They must reconcile the fact that they may not be able to have independent lives, but must give themselves over to a higher power who wishes to use them to guide humanity. It is through their submission to divine forces that they become leaders of humanity, guiding them safely to the Promised Land of Earth at the end of the series. Though Gaius understands his role in the events of the show, all Kara is aware of before she disappears is that she has served her purpose.

*BSG* shows that one can be a purpose regardless of who or what they were created to be. It is not DNA and organic molecules that constitute personage, but free will and thought, as well as compassion towards others. *Battlestar Galactica* submits that the measure of a person is not who made them or what they are made of, but is who they are, and who they decide to be.

## WORKS CITED

- Balsamo, Anne. *Technologies of the Gendered Body*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997. Print.
- Blade Runner*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1982.
- Battlestar Galactica*. Ronald D. Moore, Michael Rymer. Universal Studios. 2004-2009. DVD.
- Botting, Fred. *Sex, machines, and navels*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999. Print.
- Dinello, Daniel. *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. Print.
- Graham, Elaine L. *Representations of the post/human: Monsters, aliens and others in popular culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 1818. New York: Norton & Company, 1996. Print.