

# SO SAY WE ALL

*An Unauthorized Collection  
of Thoughts and Opinions on*  
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

EDITED BY

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with Tee Morris and Glenn Yeffeth



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# INTRODUCTION

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Richard Hatch

**T**HE SEVENTIES: BAD ECONOMY, DOUBLE-DIGIT unemployment, inflation, gas lines, and the Iran hostage crisis—a time when the world was looking for escapism. Following the great success of the *Star Wars* films came a weekly epic space opera with heart, humor, and lots of adventure, the one and only *Battlestar Galactica*: the perfect entertainment vehicle to take our stressed-out minds off our personal problems and give the entire family a big dose of hope, inspiration, and harmless entertainment. Sixty-five million people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds tuned in to see the debut on ABC in September of 1978, giving one of the most highly publicized series in history a very respectable fifth-place finish in the Nielsen ratings. Twenty-one episodes later *Battlestar Galactica* was removed from the schedule, but not necessarily because of ratings, which listed *Battlestar* in twenty-fourth place and the sixth highest-rated new series of the season, but due to high production costs and the impossible challenge of mounting a theatrical-style series for television on a weekly basis. Please remember this was before state-of-the-art CGI and twenty-four frames per second high-definition cameras, which have made it possible to film faster and integrate special effects more effectively and less expensively. ABC at the time had seven of the top ten series on the air and could afford to drop the most costly television series in the history of entertainment, especially since the ratings, in their opinion, didn't live up to the epic-sized budget.

To the dedicated fans of this series worldwide, however, the departure of *Battlestar* was tantamount to sacrilege. In spite of the fact that critics

almost universally panned the new series—claiming it was a *Star Wars* rip-off—generations of fans fell passionately in love with the show’s epic and mythological premise. They couldn’t get enough of *Battlestar*’s heroic themes, including mankind’s quest to survive a holocaust by their archenemy, the human-hating Cylons, and following their brothers and sisters of the thirteenth tribe to a faraway planet called Earth. In fact *Battlestar* became a near-religious experience for many fans due to the spiritual overtones and ancient mythology woven into the fabric of the story. Like Moses and the Israelites, the humans and their ragtag Fleet led by Commander Adama (Lorne Green) were forced to leave their homeland chased by the technologically bred Cylons and search against impossible odds for a habitable planet upon which they could rebuild their civilization. It certainly didn’t hurt to have one of the most attractive casts on television at the time, in addition to some of the most famous guest stars in the entertainment field, including Fred Astaire, Patrick Macnee, and Lloyd Bridges.

Nevertheless, *Battlestar* got little respect. Lying in the shadow of *Star Wars* and taken to court by George Lucas (a lawsuit that he and Twentieth Century lost, by the way), *Battlestar* was challenged by the networks every week with their executives throwing their very best fare at the struggling series. Added to that, the fact that the ABC executives didn’t want the show to be too provocative or alienating in the era of escapism made it impossible for the writers to delve into the rich and meaty premise of the story. All of these challenges finally brought down the fledgling series. There was an attempt to bring the series back in 1980, but with a drastically reduced budget and without many of its original stars, who chose to stay away for their own personal reasons. The space-faring series, brought down to Earth, died a quick and painful death.

Some twenty years later the Sci-Fi Channel began replaying episodes of *Battlestar*, and fans around the world started clamoring for the return of their beloved show . . . to no avail. The executives at the time didn’t believe there were enough fans to justify a revival. The prevailing winds would eventually change a few years later when NBC decided to acquire Universal Studios, USA Network, and the Sci-Fi Channel from Vivendi, and thus began a new era at the studio and a renewed interest in *Battlestar*.

Then came the 9/11 horror, which shocked the world into the harsh reality that we were not safe, and that we couldn’t afford ever again

to close our eyes or take for granted that our government or institutions were going to do the right thing. We were beginning to demand accountability: more reality and less fantasy. Reality shows and cutting-edge provocative talk formats, along with twenty-four-hour news stations, became highly popular—quickly puncturing our idealistic innocence and bringing the world's harsh realities into our living rooms. We soon began to see much darker entertainment fare hitting the marketplace. Movies and television plots became much edgier, and it was no longer considered politically correct to avoid controversial subject matter. The demise of *Star Trek* and *Farscape*, along with many other SF favorites, paved the way for producers to pitch new ideas to the networks. It soon became clear that the underlying catastrophic theme of *Battlestar* was perfect for the new era, and ripe for a major revival, and the fans knew it. As did Glen Larson and especially producer Tom DeSanto, who pitched the series to both Fox and the Sci-Fi Channel under the leadership of Bonnie Hammer. After several failed attempts to revive the series, the concept of re-imagining the classic series was proposed by the team of Ronald D. Moore and David Eick. They were brought on board by Bonnie and asked to re-imagine the series for a new era. Ron Moore, who had been a producer/writer for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Roswell*, and the series *Carnivale*, finally had the opportunity and the vehicle to explore the much darker cutting-edge themes he had passionately wanted to bring to the genre of science fiction for some time. In truth *Battlestar* was born for both eras, but the darker millennium in which we live, along with evolved filming technologies, provided the perfect timeframe, backdrop, and palette for finally exploring *Battlestar's* deeper and more provocative themes, of which the original had barely skimmed the surface. Due to an extremely talented writing and production team, rape, betrayal, moral dilemmas, the horrors of the holocaust, and terrorism could all be explored in highly original ways that mirrored society at large. Just as importantly, they got the green light from the executives at NBC Universal and the Sci-Fi Channel who actually believed in the epic story and supported taking the series in such a controversial direction. With a fine cast of talented actors led by Edward James Olmos and Mary McDonnell, the classic SF story overcame years of controversy and a major revolt by fans of the original series who sincerely felt that their beloved series was going to be ruined as had

been the case in recent years with many updated and revived SF classics. With time, through great stories, acting, and exceptional production value, the new version of *Battlestar* was finally able to win over a substantial portion of these very hostile fans and build an entirely new audience who had never even heard of the original *Battlestar Galactica*. The series and story that wouldn't go away finally found redemption, and its place in the sun, with high ratings and rave reviews coming in from major publications all over the country. It's my pleasure to have been invited to be the guest editor for this highly informative *Battlestar* book where writers from all over the country are writing essays sharing their insights and analysis of the *Battlestar* universe, back-story, and character plots. Please join me as we take a provocative journey into what *Time* magazine has called the number one best dramatic show on television, period.

*Eric Greene's profound and in-depth exploration of today's political crisis and moral ambiguity as mirrored so successfully in Battlestar begs the statement from a powerful line in the series: "You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things that you've created." Sooner or later we come to the realization that we're all capable under the right conditions of unspeakable horrors in the name of justice, greed, or maybe fear of what we don't understand. In my hard, fought-for wisdom, I agree.*

## THE MIRROR FRAKED REFLECTIONS ON *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*

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Eric Greene

*"We have this fundamental belief in the Constitution, a fundamental belief in the Bill of Rights. . . . I wanted the ragtag Fleet . . . to mirror our society in that way but then I wanted . . . the situation that the Colonials find themselves in to challenge and provoke their notions of society and freedom. . . . [T]hat sort of challenge to the fundamentals of the system is something that I think we're going through right now. . . . [T]he War on Terrorism, the assertion of executive power in all circumstances. . . . the long march toward extreme authoritarian governance. . . . those ideas are in the show because those ideas are in the culture right now."*

—RONALD D. MOORE, developer, executive producer,  
and writer, *Battlestar Galactica*

“THE BEST SHOW ON TELEVISION,” proclaim *Time* and *Newsday*. “The smartest and toughest show on TV,” raves *Rolling Stone*. “Television’s most topical, incisive commentary on current events in our very

troubled world,” declares the *Chicago Tribune*. “One of the top ten television shows of 2005,” according to the American Film Institute. A Peabody award. Respect and praise from the “mainstream.” For a *science fiction* show? How can this be? By enmeshing the viewer in a web of troubling doubles, doubts, and transformations that mirror our uncertainty amidst the War on Terrorism and the war in Iraq, Ronald D. Moore’s revised *Battlestar Galactica* has, improbably, become the signature show of our wartime era.

The immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the anthrax attacks just one week later produced a paradoxical reaction in the American psyche. Americans, who enjoy few unifying rituals, felt bound together in a shared national grief which, at least momentarily, transcended race, class, religion, and party. And yet, under the surface expressions of unity, something stirred. Having been attacked by infiltrators who had lived among us, Americans felt anxious, wondering if more enemies lurked within. Still reeling from the attacks, we launched a war to defeat terrorism and “evildoers,” followed a year and a half later by the invasion of Iraq in order, we were told, to deny a dictator his weapons of mass destruction.

But five years after 9/11, with the U.S. State Department estimating that worldwide terrorist incidents rose to 11,111 in 2005 alone and Iraq increasingly appearing to be a quagmire, the War on Terrorism and the War in Iraq have subverted our national sense of self. At home our government has been antagonistic to the Constitution, averse to truth telling, and allergic to accountability. Abroad, torture in Iraq, conditions at Guantanamo, and the revelation of secret CIA prisons have undermined our international standing and challenged our own understanding of who we are.

With our domestic character and our international conduct under a cloud of suspicion, many Americans fear that we have both been betrayed and that we have betrayed ourselves. We wonder who we are, where we are going, and what we have become. *Battlestar Galactica* taps into that unease and, rather than soothing it, explores it by pulling its audience into a world of divided loyalties, mixed emotions, and shattered assumptions that reflect the instability of American identity in this time of uncertain ends and questionable means.

There are many reasons for remakes, few of them good. One reason is the reassuring safety offered by their sense of familiarity and comfort.

We need not worry about being confronted by the new, understanding the unknown, or empathizing with the foreign. Remakes and sequels typically pre-package our emotional allegiances and let us know what to expect. That is one of the reasons sequels, fittingly if sadly, are called “franchises”—they promise us the predictability and comfort of mass-marketed fast food.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning, however, Moore’s *Battlestar* has radically departed from that formula. Moore, his co-executive producer David Eick, and their writing staff delight in subverting rather than fulfilling the audience’s expectations. Male roles from the original *Galactica* series are now female roles. The loving clan of Lorne Greene’s “Ponderosa in Space” has been supplanted by Edward James Olmos’s fractured and dysfunctional family. Actor Richard Hatch has gone from noble hero to scheming convict. Even the original *Galactica*’s defiant, majestic opening theme has been replaced by the quiet, mournful music of the new *Battlestar*. On the original *Galactica* there was peril, to be sure, but it was usually obvious who the good guys and bad guys were. On the new *Battlestar* your son might turn on you, your father might throw you in the brig, colleagues, friends, and lovers turn out to be traitors. And, oh yes, the Cylons look like us now.

Some loyalists of the original *Galactica* might see these changes as affronts, and in fact Moore was met with some skepticism and hostility when he began his project.<sup>2</sup> But Moore understood that among the few good reasons to do a remake is the chance to foreground artistic or thematic possibilities that were not highlighted originally, to update a format for a new age, to reshape material for a new audience with different interests, concerns, and experiences.

When Moore began developing the *Battlestar* mini-series, just months after 9/11, he was struck by how “evocative and painful” Glen Larson’s original concept of the Cylons launching a surprise attack to destroy the

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<sup>1</sup> Formula movies and TV, like formula restaurants, offer a limited menu, and even if the items are slightly rearranged they are pretty predictable. Wherever you are, you know more or less what’s in a Happy Meal, and regardless of who is starring as 007 you know more or less what’s in a James Bond film. It is therefore not surprising that fast-food and film franchises have come to be synergistically bound in promotional campaigns—“you’ve seen the movie, now eat the fries”—the movie sells the food, the food sells the movie, and both offer the simplicity of sameness.

<sup>2</sup> See John Hodgman, “Ron Moore’s Deep Space Journey,” in the *New York Times Magazine*, July 17, 2005.

*Do the gods suck? And does it really matter? Matthew Woodring Stover doesn't think so and neither does Battlestar Galactica. Maybe the gods want us to think for ourselves—maybe the gods have more faith in us than we have in ourselves. And maybe Matthew Woodring Stover and Battlestar are asking all of us mere mortals to address these powerful and thought-provoking questions.*

## THE GODS SUCK

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Matthew Woodring Stover

**A**MONG ITS MANY OTHER VIRTUES, *Battlestar Galactica* is warming up to be the latest evidence that the Christian Right in the United States, for all its political power, is actually too friggin' dim to pour piss out of a boot.

I mean, haven't they *noticed*?

I keep shaking my head and wondering exactly how Ronald D. Moore and his band of pranksters expected to get away with all this. . . .

Apparently the Tubthumper Elite doesn't watch the Sci-Fi Channel. Good thing, too; in our current political environment, not only would every advertiser on that show find itself targeted for bluenose boycotts, but Sci-Fi Channel execs would be hauled up in front of a Joint Congressional Subcommittee on Un-Righteous Activity and accused of giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy in the Planetary Scrimmage Against Radically Extreme Islamo-Totalitarianism or whatever the hell they're calling their permanent war this week.

For starters (and *just* for starters—it gets worse from here), has it struck anyone else that the show's writers have deliberately cast the Cylons—the *bad guys*—in a point-for-point allegory of the mythic role of the Israelites in the Old Testament?

All together now  
(Is he KIDDING?)

Who, me?

Oppressed slaves who rose up against their masters and escaped, to wander in the wilderness until they accepted their destiny as the Chosen People of the One True God...and now, under orders of the One True God, have returned to put some pagans to the sword and appropriate their lands—well, planets—of milk and honey...

This doesn't sound familiar at all.

Now, admittedly, we're talking God of the Old Testament here, who was pretty much a sonofabitch even in His own account of things (I mean, why else would the Israelites keep on trying to worship other gods? At one point, they were so desperate to find a god that'd get them out from under Him they even tried to *make their own*, for crap's sake—remember the golden calf?). In fact, when I wrote a book making this very point, by casting Yahweh as the villain of my second novel, *Jericho Moon* (unabashed plug), I actually got fan mail from a professor of divinity at Northwestern University, who freely conceded that the God of the Old Testament, and I quote, "could be a right old bastard."

Now, I can see a fair chance that the writers are heading for a Christ-child thing with the Cylon-human baby, to redeem the One True (Cylon) God from His Right Old Bastard ways—which could be cool as far as I'm concerned, y'know, Jesus is just all right with me—but I'm not here to speculate on what they might be up to in future seasons.

I'm here to express my admiration for a television program that, in addition to providing the most compelling hour of TV *on TV*, is *sub rosa* laying out what is, as far as I know, the most sophisticated critique of moral theology ever presented in a popular medium.

It's not just Falwell and Robertson and the Bushies they're sticking it to; it's Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton...and even Gerald Gardner and Starhawk and Oberon Zell-Ravenheart...

I mean, when that Joint Subcommittee hearing rolls around, *everybody* will be out to get them.

Except me. And, I hope, you.

Because what they're doing is important. Beyond important. When you get right down to the bone, I think they're trying to save civilization.

*Our* civilization.

It's a nifty business. Clever folks, these: using an action-adventure SF soap opera about people desperately trying to preserve their civilization in the face of hopeless odds as a cover—

Because I think they're desperately trying to preserve our civilization. In the face of hopeless odds.

Let me explain.

As we got to meet a couple Cylons in the first season—a whole show devoted to an interrogation, no less—we discovered that what the blonde in Baltar's head (his mental construct of Model Six . . . who may be, I daresay, less a mental construct than an angel of the One God) had been suggesting is, in fact, the plain hard truth. This is no Borgian You-Will-Be-Assimilated Trek knock-off, nor is it Saberhagen's Berserkers, machines of limitless destruction somehow self-programmed to wipe out biological life—hell, the Cylons *are* biological life. Eight models of them, anyway. (“More human *than* human. That's our motto.”—oh, wait, different story. . . .)

No. This is a *religious* war.

This in itself doesn't signify a whole bag of much. In my field—heroic fantasy—religious wars are old hat. Even given that the bad guys are operating under the orders of a clear cognate of Judeo-Christian God doesn't make it special; hell, there's a whole sub-sub-sub-genre, wallowing in the fetid swamps of Arthurian fantasy, that's basically “Nasty Christians Boot Nice Pagans Out of Their Ancestral Lands of Britain/Ireland/France/Indiana/Wherever.” But if that was the sum total of what's going on here, it wouldn't interest me much (despite my strong sympathies for the pagans—as a pantheist myself, I get along with any congenial gods, and I like the Greek gods better than most; they throw the best parties. *Oh-pah!*).

Fictional religious wars break down into four broad categories:

*Manichaeian*: The Forces of Light vs. the Forces of Darkness. This is where most of them fall (*Left Behind*, anyone?), because it's simplistic and easy to follow. This is not necessarily a bad thing; some very good television shows spring from this soil—*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* jump up and wave—as well as some pretty damned good epic fantasy, like *The Belgariad*.

*Syncretistic*: This is one you don't often see in SF and fantasy, but

*From its inception, the relationship between the self-serving Baltar and the seemingly confident but enigmatic and conflicted Cylon Six has captured both the imagination and horror of fans everywhere. Battlestar explores the possibility that compared to the moral ambiguity and corruption of the humans, the Cylons may be, in fact, more angel than devil. Just who are the good guys and who are the bad guys? Maybe the demons we seek so ardently to destroy lie within us. What do you think?*

## AN ANGEL ON HIS SHOULDER, A DEVIL ON HERS

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Chris Roberson

**W**HAT ARE WE TO MAKE of Gaius Baltar? He's a bad apple, there's no mistaking it: selfish, egocentric, and vain. He's a slave to his own worst instincts, willing to do anything that serves his interests. If the destruction of the Colonies and the death of billions of innocents bothered him at all, it scarcely showed, as his primary concern was that he not be blamed for any part in it. He'll accuse one man of being a Cylon with no evidence, condemn a possibly innocent man to death, but conceal the discovery that a trusted member of the crew actually is a Cylon, if it means increasing his own chances of survival.

But is he really all bad?

Baltar was the winner of three Magnate Awards, a media cult figure, and a personal friend of President Adar. Working as a top consultant for the Ministry of Defense on computer issues, and known for espousing controversial views on advancing computer technology, Baltar was instrumental in the creation of the Command Navigation Program (CNP),

an automated system integrated into the navigational systems of all Colonial ships.

That's where the problems started, of course. It seemed the CNP was a bit beyond Baltar's abilities. Luckily, he was sharing his bed with a woman well versed in programming, who offered to rewrite half the algorithms and help get the program up and running. All she asked in return was for Baltar to use his connections to grant her unlimited access to the Ministry of Defense mainframe, to help give her an edge in getting a defense contract in the coming year.

It's interesting that we were never told the name of the blonde lover of his. On Caprica, her name, like her feelings, mattered little, if at all, to Baltar. He betrayed her with another woman and offered as his defense tired platitudes that he couldn't muster the enthusiasm to deliver with any measure of conviction. It was clear that he had been caught by jealous lovers before, and he expected to be caught many more times to come. But that was all about to change.

The lover, of course, is an example of the Cylon model we've come to know as Number Six. It's significant that the first lines we heard her utter to Baltar were about love, souls, and God. "Your body misses me," she said to him, "but what about your heart, your soul?" Then, as their clothing was removed one frenzied piece at a time, she asked him, "Do you love me?" When Baltar, a panicked look on his face, asked, "Are you serious?" Six laughed the question off.

Six told Baltar that she helped him with the programming of the CNP not because she wanted to win any defense contract, but because God told her to do so.

Later, Six revealed to Baltar that she is a Cylon. She claimed that Baltar must have known this all along, though his reaction made plain that he hadn't. That Six could so misread their relationship, to think first that Baltar loved her, when he gave no indication of holding her in any regard at all, and second that he had been secretly aware of her machinations all along, including their shared role in the complete destruction of the Colonies, suggests an inability to empathize and anticipate another's emotions bordering on the psychopathic. But the Cylons are the children of mankind, after all, and as it seems that they haven't completely matured, perhaps their emotions and personalities are accordingly immature. Or is it, as Six suggested, that Baltar has "an amazing capacity for self-deception"?

Baltar started to phone his attorney, to plan his defense, when the first bombs began to fall. A short time after, Caprica City was hit. Just before the shockwave reached Baltar's home, Six explained to him that she could not die, and that when her current body would be destroyed, her memory and her consciousness would wake up in an identical body, somewhere else. She shielded Baltar with her own body as the nuclear blast washed over them.

When Baltar gave his half-hearted excuse for infidelity to Six, he claimed it was all his fault.

"I screwed up. I *am* screwed up. I always have been. It's a flaw in my character. . . ."

Well, that might be understating matters somewhat, no? In fact, it seems at times as if Baltar's character is nothing *but* flaws. One would be hard pressed to identify a single selfless act, a single moment of charity or generosity. When he stood in front of Boomer's Raptor, Helo having read the number of the last survivor allowed onboard, Baltar was approached by an old woman who asked him to read her number aloud, since she had lost her glasses. Baltar saw the winning lottery number on her paper, and his desire to take her number for himself was written large across his expression. He passed up the opportunity when Helo recognized him, identifying the woman as the lucky survivor in the hopes of deflecting attention from himself—"I haven't done anything," he responded, when Helo asked if he is Gaius Baltar—but fortune smiled on him when Helo surrendered his seat in the Raptor to him.

Unexpectedly, Baltar saw Six again, in a stunning red dress, standing amongst the agitated Capricans about to be left behind. Did he experience some guilt, knowing that the selfless Colonial Warrior was willing to die so that he could live? Or was that giving him too much credit? He blinked, and when he looked again, she was gone.

She appeared to him, a short while later, on the Raptor. "You know what I love about you, Gaius?" she asked. "You're a survivor."

The first exchange we heard between Baltar and the red-dress Six was onboard the newly christened Colonial One. Baltar had already decided that she was "an expression of [his] subconscious mind, playing itself out during [his] waking states."

"So I'm only in your head?" Six asked. "Have you considered the possibility that I can very well exist only in your head without being a

*When we really take a good look at ourselves, what do we see? Are we just skin and bone—our physical bodies, brains, etc., or are we something more? And could that something more be independent of the flesh and blood vehicles we inhabit? In the digital world everything can be reduced to information and transferred, downloaded, or stored via technology. In the new Battlestar, and in this thought-provoking article, the question is posed: Are we more similar to our quickly evolving technological creations than we could ever have imagined, and why are we so afraid of that which increasingly mirrors humanity more and more each day? Is the fear of technology just an irrational fear of ourselves the beast within so to speak? And can our own creation—the Cylons in this case—show us the way to a possibly unlimited and immortal future. Read on. . . .*

## THE FACE IN THE MIRROR ISSUES OF MEAT AND MACHINE IN *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*

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Natasha Giardina

**W**E LOOK AT OURSELVES IN the mirror and what we see is reassuring. We are human, organic. Our faces bear the tangible evidence of our natures, complete with hair, secretions, skin flakes, scars, and wrinkles. We are born, not made; things of flesh and blood, not cogs and wheels. We are the real thing; we are authentic.

I write this essay on a laptop in a Wi-Fi zone, connected to the Internet via radio transmitters and satellite dishes. As I type, pressing the buttons that turn my thoughts into code, windows pop up on the periphery of the screen—friends online sensing my virtual presence and wanting to chat. I stop my essay in midstream to touch base with them, keeping up to date with their latest news, shooting them long-request-

ed photos of my last overseas holiday. I muse nostalgically through the photos, relieved that their perfect digital record can bolster my all-too-fragile memories. Eventually, I finish my work for the day and shut my laptop down. As the screen goes black, the surface catches light from the setting sun, and I glimpse my own face in the mirror. That's me—on, in, and a part of the computer—I am the real thing; I am authentic. Of course I am (not reassured).

Since 2003, *Battlestar Galactica* has prompted us to think about ourselves and our relationships with technology in new ways. The series rests on a strong science fictional foundation, its literary genealogy a clear line from *Frankenstein* to *Metropolis*, to *The Terminator*, *Blade Runner*, *Synners*, and *The Matrix*. Specifically, *Battlestar Galactica* continues using the classic science fiction theme of “machine as Other,” with its portrayal of the war between human and Cylon, but the series challenges the assumptions behind the binary opposition of meat and machine, not in the relationship between the human characters and the Cylons, but in the relationship between the Cylons and the viewing audience. It keeps the opposition, but uses the Cylons to show us how much like machine we already are, thus demonstrating the fallacy of calling the machine “Other.”

Science fiction, as Adam Roberts notes, is “about the encounter with difference” (Roberts 28). Roberts suggests that although technology is ubiquitous in our everyday lives, the machine still occupies the place of the Other in science fiction because we are unfamiliar with how technology works and cannot keep pace with its constant evolution (Roberts 146–47). One of the recurring obsessions of Western societies since the industrial revolution has centered on our relationship with the mechanical—its place in our lives, our role as creators, and the fate of our inorganic offspring. In short, we are uneasy in our relationship with technology: we fear its virtuality, its transformative power, and its imperviousness to the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. Science fiction provides an excellent record of our anxieties about the machine, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to the *Matrix* trilogy of films.

Although science fiction has explored and played with these anxieties, it has usually upheld consolatory fantasies about the innate superiority of meat over machine. In many science fiction stories, machines are monsters to be battled and destroyed. Often, science fiction contains

visions of machine worlds, like the *Matrix* or *Terminator* trilogies, where humans comprise a subjugated and oppressed minority, ruthlessly exploited by the machine masters and hunted down when they try to free themselves from this techno-tyranny. Here, a human savior is needed to save our species, who, by virtue of the flesh, is innately superior to the machines. Occasionally, there are “good” machines, like the Terminator in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* or Sonny in *I, Robot* (the 2004 film), but these willingly subjugate and even sacrifice themselves for their superiors—humans. In other science fiction, like *Frankenstein*, *AI: Artificial Intelligence*, or *Bicentennial Man*, machines are treated like our children: not evil, but nonetheless handicapped by their lack of flesh, and thus objects of pity.

Some of the texts most willing to grapple with the complexities of the relationship between flesh and machine have been cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk fiction, like William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, Pat Cadigan’s *Synners*, or Peter Hamilton’s Greg Mandel series. These stories consider the ramifications of the cyborg’s existence—that “hybrid of machine and organism” (Haraway 149)—and articulate futures of cyborg societies. Yet even these texts usually return to the hierarchy of meat over machine: despite the fact that the organic and the mechanoid often work in tandem, the controllers, creators, riders, and dreamers remain human, and in the rare instances when characters leave the meat to become one with the machine, as with Visual Mark (from *Synners*) or Philip Evans (from Hamilton’s Greg Mandel series), the resultant virtual entities still require that unique spark of humanity to make them “people.”

*Battlestar Galactica* provides the latest permutation of our continuing obsession with the technological Other. Like its ancestors in the genre, the series postulates a universe in which humans are under siege from the machines they themselves created, as stated in the episode introductions:

*The Cylons were created by Man*

*They evolved*

*They rebelled*

*There are many copies*

*And they have a plan*

During the initial 2003 mini-series, the battle lines between human and Cylon are clearly articulated. The opening words of the mini-series are spoken by a Number Six model Cylon to the human envoy at the armistice outpost. She asks him, “Are you alive?” and demands that he prove it. Ultimately, the only way the envoy can prove he is alive, and thus different from the Cylon, is not by dying, but by dying without resurrection. Nothing else can demonstrate the difference between meat and machine. This mini-series names the Cylons as “humanity’s children,” but like Frankenstein’s monster, they are flawed children who desire the destruction of their flawed creators, obliterating the Twelve Colonies and forcing the remnants of humanity to flee through space. Hampered by inferior technology, overwhelmingly outnumbered, and beholden to protect a ragtag collection of civilian craft, the crew of the *Battlestar Galactica* is humanity’s last, best, and only hope for survival. That they survive at all is a testament to the human spirit, the innate superiority of flesh over machine.

The problem with this scenario is that it doesn’t work. Oh, the story works just fine, and it provides an excellent exploration of the “machine as Other” theme. But the relationship between the story and the audience is fundamentally flawed. For the “machine as Other” theme to work, the audience needs to empathize with the human characters and revile the machines. The story must persuade us how human we are: how unlike the machine we are. But in the *Battlestar Galactica* story, the intriguing truth is that we are more like the Cylons than we are like the Colonists: at the beginning of the twenty-first century, humans are finally embracing the machine and slowly, ever so slowly, leaving the meat behind.

Our most fundamental similarity to the Cylons is evident in notions of the self. The series portrays the Colonists as strongly “embodied” in that they are tied to the meat, or “meat puppets” according to Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. We can see this because there are so few of them: fewer than 50,000 souls reliant on two *Battlestars* and a handful of *Vipers* for their precarious existence, with each death a painful reminder that the human race stands at the brink of the final event horizon. In season two, the introduction for each episode recounts the exact number of humans still existing, and as Admiral Adama says in “The Captain’s Hand” (2-17), “the fact is, that number doesn’t go up very often.” The Colonists