

**Representations of Gender and Subjectivity in
21st Century American Science Fiction Television**

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates representations of gender and subjectivity within 21st century American science fiction television. It recognises a recent convergence of generic concerns, the shifting contexts of television, and the cultural context of 21st century America. Identifying a recent shift in how American science fiction television of this era has engaged with issues of gender and subjectivity, I offer an exploration of this trend via four key texts: *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (FOX, 2008-2009), *Fringe* (FOX, 2008-2013), *Battlestar Galactica* (SyFy, 2004-2009) and *Caprica* (SyFy, 2009-2010). The importance of this thesis lies in its exploration of new representational strategies in contemporary science fiction television in relation to the female body, and its consideration of the wider socio-cultural concerns of America in the 21st century. Previous attempts have been made to examine the socio-political import of certain series this thesis interrogates. I intervene in these debates by offering a much more focused interrogation of gender and subjectivity in 21st century science fiction television, via the framework of acclaimed and newly emerging series.

Utilising a methodological approach that involves detailed textual analysis informed by social and cultural theory, I situate my case study series within the socio-cultural context of 21st century America. As such, this thesis covers a broad range of current representations that speak to how constructions of gender and subjectivity within a contemporary US cultural context are currently being worked through. Foregrounding an engagement with a particularly fraught period of American history via the female body, I argue that the protagonists my case study series present offer a positive intervention in previous estimations of how the female body has been utilised in film and television. As such, this thesis considers the implications of this particular context upon how these protagonists are represented by these newly emerging series.

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Introduction

This thesis interrogates representations of gender and subjectivity within 21st century American science fiction television. Science fiction has typically concentrated on issues of subjectivity, and its generic form is historically popular for working through shifts in such issues within national and global contexts. In this thesis I identify a recent shift in how American science fiction television of this era has engaged with issues of gender and subjectivity, and investigate this trend. Explicitly locating this interrogation within a wider American socio-cultural context, I explore how 21st century science fiction television engages with America's cultural response to major events of the past decade. It is my contention that science fiction television of this period explicitly engages with these events via distinctive representations of the female body in a manner which offers a clear departure from previous representations of this figure.

I have chosen to focus on 21st century American science fiction series because this period marks an age of trauma, anxiety and uncertainty for the United States. As such, this thesis necessarily considers America's response to major events of the past decade, against which there is a new uncertainty of, and a shift in, what it means to be American. The prominent events of 9/11 are a significant factor in this; yet I also consider these events as part of a broader schema of ongoing changes within American culture which have challenged America's sense of itself. As Haynes Johnson notes, 9/11 "shattered the nation's sense of invulnerability, initiated a global war on terrorism, and spawned a wave of apprehension and fear."¹ In this shifting, uncertain context, assertions of what it means to be American are subsequently being reassessed. In this thesis I explore how this context, and the political and economic shifts bound up therein, has therefore impacted upon science fiction television's representation of, and engagement with, issues of gender and subjectivity. Recognising this shift as one that is ongoing and changing over time, I offer an exploration of this trend via an engagement with four key texts: *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (FOX, 2008-2009), *Fringe* (FOX, 2008-2013), *Battlestar Galactica* (Syfy, 2004-2009) and *Caprica* (Syfy, 2009-2010). While I focus on femininity in particular, I wish to be clear that this focus does not completely exclude the consideration of discourses of masculinity. Indeed, I offer several analyses of male characters in this project which I employ comparatively in the case study chapters that follow. Thus, while this thesis

¹ Haynes Johnson, *The Age of Anxiety* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005) p. xi

acknowledges discourses of both masculinity and femininity therein, I focus predominantly on the female characters that are foregrounded by my case study texts. Jonathan Bignell states that studying television “relies on constructing canons of programmes that represent important historical processes and turning points.” While he acknowledges a contradiction inherent in “methodologies that work by selecting examples,” Bignell nevertheless asserts that programme examples “are necessarily both representative and exceptional.” This is due to their nature as being simultaneously exchangeable with similar programmes yet also “more than typical.” Exceeding the field they stand for, “each is there to represent a larger context and history.”² As such, these television series have been selected for their generic properties, their emergence from developing trends in television, and their engagement with the wider context of 21st century America. In addition they all, I argue, uniquely foreground gender and subjectivity in their explicit engagement with the cultural events of the era via representations of the female body.

I consider several key female subject positions within these case study programmes to examine how science fiction television engages with representations of gender and subjectivity. These are: the mother, the adult female, the racialised subject, and the young, not yet fully-formed adult. The decision to focus on how a variety of subject positions negotiate this contemporary cultural context speaks to my aim to cover a broad range of current representations of subjectivity in this thesis. Furthermore, these specific choices speak to how constructions of gender and subjectivity have been, and are currently being, worked through within an American cultural context. Each of the gendered subjectivities considered have provided a particular site of contention in the past. Employing a methodological approach which utilises detailed textual analysis informed by social and cultural theory, I explore representations of what it means to be a gendered subject in America within this contemporary context of national uncertainty.

Given the centrality of the term ‘subjectivity’ to this thesis, and in order to justify my use of this term, in this introduction I specifically consider the implications which arise in utilising it throughout this body of work. I then move on to establish how my case study series offer appropriate forums through which to address the wider concerns of this thesis. I conclude this introduction with an outline of my methodological approach and a concise overview of the chapters that comprise this thesis, demonstrating the manner in which this

² Jonathan Bignell, ‘Programmes and Canons’ in *Critical Studies in Television*, 1:1 (2006) p. 31

methodology allows for a greater understanding of the representations made available through my case study series across an indicative range of subjectivities.

Alongside the concept of subjectivity, representations of gender form a central concern to the aims of this thesis. While I offer a larger exploration of how femininity in particular has previously been represented onscreen (and considered more broadly in culture) in Chapter One, at this point I wish to assert that in this thesis I specifically identify a shift in traditional representations of the female body as a figure apt to play out anxieties; a body represented as fluid and in transition, and yet simultaneously restricted. This shift has emerged in a specific convergence of genre, medium and cultural context. Exploring contemporary real-world concerns *and* representations of gender specific to genre and medium, I consider the complex interrelation of these issues as central to my thesis. I contend that in American science fiction of the 21st century, engagements with the socio-cultural events of the era are explicitly foregrounded via the female body in a manner that is both powerful and positive, challenging both the oppressive structures of patriarchy and previous representations of the female heroine. The themes of multiplicity and in-betweenness are recognised as central facets in this. The protagonists I interrogate are of course subject to a contemporary socio-cultural context that works to restrict them. However, their own mobility generates their challenge to this environment without, I specifically suggest, in any way containing it so it may be rendered 'safe.' I argue that the series I engage with in this thesis employ representational strategies that deliberately avoid such static and ultimately negative depictions.

As such, I consider this thesis to be an exploration of representations of gender in 21st century American science fiction television, in which I employ a particular focus on femininity. The protagonists at the heart of the series I interrogate in this thesis work to challenge the sense of self-completeness that is oft-coded as 'male.' Indeed, as I will suggest in the following chapter, this sense of male 'completeness' is also particularly apparent in historical conceptions of American nationhood. What is significant, therefore, about the mode by which these female characters offer this challenge is that their very difference to this unity and completeness lies in their representation as fragmented subjects. While they exist in various multiple and in-between states, these science fiction series work to explore how such states may be positively exploited without being ultimately contained. The recent growth of female heroines in lead roles points to the fact that this is a pertinent and timely issue that requires further consideration. This thesis aims to develop this point via its engagement with the gendered subjectivities presented by my

case study texts, specifically in relation to their status as not only inherently mobile, but in possession of a mobility that is crucially categorised as ongoing. I contend that it is this latter point which is illustrative of the continued need to consider these specifically female images by further contextualising them in relation to society, genre and the television medium. 21st century America, wherein the threat of invasion is now more than ever a tremendous cultural fear, proffers just such a context. This is not merely due to the major events of the era which I have previously noted, but the ongoing militarisation, instability and anxiety that have followed in their wake. All of these ongoing issues have served to erode the unified foundational myths that exist in America's historical conception of itself; myths that I will go on to explore in the following chapter.

Defining Subjectivity

Having introduced the research topic and scope of this thesis, I now outline why I have chosen to specifically utilise the term 'subjectivity' in exploring representations of gender in my case study texts. Considering the implications of this choice, and why I contend its use is particularly apt given the wider socio-cultural concerns considered in this thesis, I aim to illustrate how the term 'subjectivity' naturally correlates with the broad historical and theoretical contextual issues in which this thesis is situated. I contend that the opposition to unifying narratives embodied by the protagonists of my case study texts is specifically represented as positive and liberating; emblematic of a shift in how the female body has previously been considered in terms of fluid and transitional characteristics. Subjectivity is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as "the quality or condition of viewing things exclusively through the medium of one's own mind or individuality; the condition of being dominated by or absorbed in one's personal feelings, thoughts, concerns, etc.; hence, individuality, personality."³ Donald E. Hall argues that as a critical concept, subjectivity "invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of control;"⁴ that subjectivity is inherently linked to any potential understanding of the individual. In psychoanalytic theory, Jacques Lacan's notion of the mirror stage within the structure of subjectivity highlights a tension between agency and powerlessness.⁵ Hall

³ "subjectivity, n.". *OED Online*. November 2010. (Oxford University Press, 7 December 2010) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/192707?redirectedFrom=subjectivity>>

⁴ Donald E. Hall, *Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 4

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991 (Originally published in 1978)) p. 50

argues that the concept of the mirror stage is used both literally and metaphorically by Lacan, pointing as it does to “the continuing human desire for self-sufficiency and agency that is always dialectically bound with, and undercut by, feelings of powerlessness and fragmentation.”⁶ As Lacan states: “the mirror stage is based on the relation between...tendencies which are experienced...as disconnected, discordant, in pieces...and a unity with which it is merged and paired. It is in this unity that the subject for the first time knows himself as a unity, but as an alienated, virtual unity.”⁷ This thesis aims to take this model of subjectivity, defined both critically and theoretically, and examine it within the context of 21st century America. Looking at how it is interrogated via the narratives of four case study texts, I utilise this psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity precisely because of the emphasis that is placed therein upon notions of agency and fragmentation. I argue throughout this thesis that it is these elements with which science fiction television of this era specifically engages. This takes place via representations of gendered subjects within a specific cultural context; a context which the protagonists of these texts explicitly negotiate. Hall points out that “in all of its many aspects...Lacan’s theory of subjectivity is one of inherent vacillation and unsteadiness in the face of a continuing desire for a firm grounding and sense of security.”⁸ As I argued above, I identify this fragmentation and unsteadiness, noted here in Hall’s interpretation of Lacan, as characteristic of the protagonists I consider.

Hall’s consideration of these theories is also particularly useful with regard to my engagement with a 21st century American cultural context. For the purposes of this thesis, subjectivity is considered as something that is intrinsically linked with nationhood; specifically the construction of an American concept of nationhood. As I have noted, the protagonists I consider are frequently located as in-between; in this instance between a conception of subjectivity that is insecure and fragmented, and the proposed unity of a wider historical conception of American national subjecthood. Louis Althusser considers national institutions such as education, religion, media and familial structures to be ideological state apparatuses, which he defines as the ideological tools by which a subject comes to be constituted. Characterised as the process by which ideology “interpellates individuals as subjects,”⁹ Judith Butler argues that Althusser’s “scene of ‘interpellation’

⁶ Hall, p. 80

⁷ Lacan, p. 50

⁸ Hall, p. 81

⁹ Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2006) p. 119

should be considered 'exemplary and allegorical' and that our conscription in and through that scene is always partial and open to challenge: 'we might reread 'being' as precisely the potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation.'"¹⁰ Usefully for this thesis, in terms of how it proposes a space for the gendered protagonists I consider to challenge existing concepts of American nationhood, Butler sees interpellation as a method which allows for "the possibility of critique and other forms of agency: 'for the 'I' to launch its critique, it must first understand that the 'I' itself is dependent upon its complicitous desire for how to make possible its own existence.'"¹¹ Throughout this thesis I interrogate precisely how the protagonists of my case study texts engage with this method, as it is characterised by Butler here. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that these characters are inherently worthy of study within this cultural context because they *don't* seek to reconcile their fragmentation with the unified whole proposed by a mythic national identity; because they *don't* seek unity as a cure for insecurity.

While E. Ann Kaplan argues that Lacan's theories "are still central for work on *representations*," she seeks to position the psychoanalytic insights derived from his work within "a broad framework that includes other theoretical views."¹² This is a significant argument which I consider here because my own methodological approach, outlined in greater detail below, is informed by a variety of social and cultural theories. Kaplan states:

Lacan showed that the structuring of the subject in the mirror-phase as in the lure of an Ideal-I makes it vulnerable to subject-ion to a Transcendental Subject. Lacan identifies this Transcendental Subject as the phallus, but Althusser's broader definition of it in relation to Ideology is useful in linking the psychoanalytic and the social terrains.¹³

Kaplan's consideration of Lacan suggests a definition of subjectivity that allows for multiple approaches from a variety of theoretical positions. This point is worth noting here in relation to gender, given that it is with representations of gender *and* subjectivity that I am concerned. It further underlines the value of exploring subjectivity through the framework proposed by interpellation, considered above in regard to nationhood. Toril Moi has noted that historically woman has been constructed as man's Other, "denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions...[W]omen themselves internalise this

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) quoted in Hall, p. 88

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 6

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15

objectified vision, thus living in a constant state of 'inauthenticity' or 'bad faith,' as Sartre might have put it."¹⁴ This statement echoes Simone de Beauvoir's reflection that "one is not born a woman, one becomes one;" woman "stands before man not as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity; she takes herself simultaneously as self and as other, a contradiction that entails baffling consequences."¹⁵ In the chapter that follows I explore previous representations of the female heroine, and consider the recurring terms (such as ambiguity, transition, unease) that are frequently employed to characterise this often paradoxical figure. These distinguishing attributes, alongside the key characteristic of in-betweenness which I identify as manifest in each of the protagonists I consider, is also echoed here by Moi and de Beauvoir. For Moi it is a state of "inauthenticity;" for de Beauvoir it is a paradoxical state of being: in-between one or another. As I go on to more fully explore in Chapter One, these states are also embodied by the female action hero; a figure of tension through a gender ambiguity that lies between embodying traditional concepts of femininity and adopting a role that lies in a traditionally masculine space. Echoing the fragmentation inherent in Lacan's psychoanalytic definition of subjectivity, the in-betweenness of the female subject proposed by Moi and de Beauvoir is therefore central to my exploration of gendered subjectivities in 21st century American science fiction television. The protagonists I consider explore their position as multiple and in-between within this particular cultural context. In doing so they attempt to renegotiate their fragmentation as something that is positive and liberating by understanding how their 'I' can be constituted, where they can locate agency, and how they may take ownership of their own selves – an argument that I contend is the key intervention this thesis makes in previous scholarship. Indeed, as Hall points out:

If there is a common political thrust to much contemporary critical theory, whether concerned with conditions of postcoloniality, gender, class or sexuality, it is that subjectivity itself is textual...to de-naturalise ourselves is not to make them easily manipulable, but it is to disrupt and disturb the automatism of their relationship to the fixed scripts and values of the past (and the present, too, in the dogma of fundamentalism, narrow essentialism, and other reactionary movements)."¹⁶

Hall's point, regarding the textual nature of subjectivity and the inherent ability therein to disrupt existing, unified and static narratives is acutely appropriate to the wider concerns of

¹⁴ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1985) quoted in Hall, p. 9

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London : Vintage Classics, New Edition, 1997 (Originally published in 1949)) p. 727

¹⁶ Hall, p. 128

this thesis, given its focus on representations of multiple gendered subject positions within a specific national cultural context.

The particular conception of subjectivity that I adopt may be further contextualised by postmodern theory. For Linda Hutcheon, postmodernism is a phenomenon “that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges.”¹⁷ It is “fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical and inescapably political.”¹⁸ Underlying the inherent mobility of the protagonists I consider, Kaplan argues that “postmodernism and deconstruction have shown that the search for one’s essence or roots misunderstands how complex the formation of subjects is and forgets that subjectivity is always in the process of being formed.”¹⁹ This conception of subjectivity is able to encompass the ongoing nature of the representations I consider, which lies in the negotiation of in-betweenness these protagonists undertake within a changed and changing cultural context. As a process which I identify as fluid and in-progress rather than fixed, these gendered protagonists may be characterised as distinctly postmodern subjects by the challenge they make to national narratives of unity and wholeness, while refusing to simultaneously restrict or contain this challenge.

The fluidity, mobility and multiplicity that I identify as the predominant characteristics foregrounded by 21st century American science fiction television via new and intriguing representations of femininity, also echo trends emergent in theories of posthumanism. This is apparent in, for example, Pramod K. Nayar’s assertion that “critical posthumanism proposes a sentience and subjectivity that is constantly dynamic in its connectivity.”²⁰ Nayar points to Rosi Braidotti’s conception of the posthuman subject as a figure constituted “in and by multiplicity,”²¹ a contention that corresponds to the traits emergent in representations of gender and, in particular, the female body with which I engage in this thesis. Interestingly, and of further relevance to the wider concerns of this thesis, Stefan Herbrechter identifies a distinct linkage between theories of posthumanism and the science fiction genre. Importantly, he contextualises this linkage as acutely relevant in the 21st century, wherein everyday life and popular culture is “constantly confronted

¹⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 3

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4

¹⁹ E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 22

²⁰ Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) p. 154

²¹ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) p. 49

with posthuman visions of technology.”²² This leads Herbrechter to assert that science fiction is “the most posthumanist of all genres,” precisely because it functions to explain “our technocultural condition” through a definition of the human predicated on science and technology.²³

The relationship between the human body and technology is a primary concern of posthumanism, and this relationship is fundamentally embodied by the figure of the cyborg. In her hugely influential essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Donna Haraway considers the “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities” as inherent properties of what she terms the “cyborg myth.”²⁴ She argues:

Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.²⁵

For Haraway, the cyborg is a destabilising figure that actively operates to challenge binaries. She explicitly identifies a link between cyborg identities and “a potent subjectivity,” which she describes as “synthesised from fusions of outsider identities” and “complex political-historical layerings.”²⁶ Herbrechter echoes this fusion of identities, stating that “posthuman bodies with their multiple possibilities precisely accentuate the precariousness of traditional characteristics of body-related identities like gender, sexuality but also ethnicity or race.” He goes on to assert that the central meaning and “strategic use” of the cyborg figure, as Haraway defines it, therefore lies its constitution of an identity that is dynamic rather than fixed.²⁷ Such aspects of posthumanist thinking clearly correspond to my conception of subjectivity, as I have thus far outlined it. Indeed, as Nayer argues, critical posthumanist thought posits the human as “a dynamic hybrid;” a figure that focuses “not on borders but on conduits and pathways, not on containment but on leakages, not on stasis but on movements of bodies, information and particles.”²⁸

²² Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 108

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 116

²⁴ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 154

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 174

²⁷ Herbrechter, p. 99

²⁸ Nayer, p. 10

This sense of mobility is illustrative of Julia Kristeva's conception of subjectivity as emblematic of a '*sujet-en-proces*;' a subject-in-process. Kristeva also reinterprets Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to demonstrate that "the subject is by nature in motion."²⁹ She adopts Plato's idea of the chora, which she describes as "a mobile receptacle of mixing, of contradiction and movement, vital to nature's functioning before the teleological intervention of God, and corresponding to the mother," yet without situating the chora in any particular body.³⁰ As Johanne Prud'homme and Lyne Légaré point out:

Kristeva's conception consists of taking unity (subject, sign, language) and putting it in process/on trial ... The subject in process attacks every stasis of a "unitary" subject. It attacks every structure that says "No" (censorship) to the subject's drives and complexification, every structure that sets it up as a unity. The "unitary" subject is replaced by a subject in process (understood as movement) whose representation is a space of mobility: the semiotic chora.³¹

The emphasis on mobility that Kristeva posits via the subject-in-process is therefore inherently suited to interrogating how the protagonists of my case study texts challenge the cultural context from which they have emerged. The varied positions of the gendered subjectivities that I consider in this thesis speak to this mobility. They reject unification and seek to embrace the openings manifest not only in a conception of subjectivity as ongoing, but also in-between: between historical narratives and an uncertain contemporary cultural context; between a unified concept of nationhood and the fragmented state exemplified by the representations with which I engage.

Method and Structure

In this thesis I adopt a methodological approach that is inherently interdisciplinary in order to more fully consider the wider contextual issues which inform this project, via a focus on representations of gender and subjectivity. This approach centres primarily upon close textual analysis of my case study series in conjunction with necessary contextual work. The textual analysis I undertake combines a number of approaches, including the analysis of narrative, mise-en-scene, formal aesthetics and character. This approach to textual analysis

²⁹ Johanne Prud'homme and Lyne Légaré, 'The Subject in Process' in Louis Hébert (dir.), *Signo* [online], Rimouski (Quebec), 2006. <<http://www.signosemio.com/kristeva/subject-in-process.asp>> [Accessed May 2, 2013]

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

aims to demonstrate how my case study series clearly engage with events of the 21st century in a US national context and foreground particular subjectivities in doing so. This methodology of textual analysis is combined with an approach that draws on a number of key theoretical concepts including theories of race and ethnicity, constructions of motherhood and youth, and gender theory. As such, I utilise textual analysis to emphasise links to relevant historical and cultural contexts. I offer a more thorough engagement with these particular historical and cultural contexts, including nation, genre, medium and gender, in the following chapter. As Jason Mittell argues, such contexts are “crucial to understanding the operation of genres as cultural categories” given that, “even in its partiality, analysing programs can demonstrate how texts work as sites of generic articulation.”³² This interdisciplinary approach, alongside my consideration of a wider cultural context, is central to understanding how representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century science fiction television are both engaging with the concerns of the era, and undergoing change. The application of these theoretical concepts, in conjunction with significant textual analysis, proffers a methodology that allows for a greater understanding of this change through a combination that is mutually productive. Importantly, this methodology allows these subject positions, and their key characteristics of multiplicity and in-betweenness, to be interrogated from a variety of standpoints. Exploring multiple subject positions, via a multitude of theoretical discourses, enables a multiplicity of gendered perspectives to be given representation and a voice; further challenging the unified ‘self-completeness’ inherent in male narratives of nationhood within this specific American context. This allows for a greater understanding of the representations made available through my case study series. Given that, as Kaplan argues, subjectivity “is always in the process of being formed,”³³ the usage of the term ‘subjectivity’ is highly appropriate to this methodological approach. As I argued above, this term emphasises the necessity of adopting varied theoretical perspectives in order to adequately encompass the ongoing, fragmented nature of multiple subject positions interacting with, from a variety of standpoints, this socio-cultural context. Employing textual analysis in conjunction with the social and cultural theories noted above allows for a more thorough engagement with these texts and their protagonists. Considered collectively, I take the position that this allows for not only a greater understanding of why such representations are manifest in

³² Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 152

³³ Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, p. 22

this specific temporal, socio-cultural context, but how the implications of this might be appropriately identified and considered.

This thesis focuses upon four case study programmes and each of these series is the focus of an individual chapter. As such, I have chosen to ground the structure of this thesis with an opening chapter that necessarily addresses the contextual issues relevant to its wider concerns. The aim of this contextual foundation is to allow later chapters to explore the unique way in which 21st century American science fiction television has made prominent, and engaged with, the representation of the various subjectivities examined within this particular cultural context. While it would be a stretch to say that television schedules are currently rife with science fiction, series such as *Revolution* (NBC, 2012-) and *Falling Skies* (TNT, 2011-) have displayed longevity on broadcast and cable networks respectively. *Almost Human* (FOX, 2013-), created by Joel Wyman (executive producer of *Fringe*), has recently debuted to favourable reviews.³⁴ More recently, American television has also proffered an array of series that might fall under generic labels of ‘fantasy’ or ‘horror,’ yet do not display enough science fiction tropes or traits – tropes which I more fully outline in the following chapter - to be considered genre hybrids. Examples of such series include *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-), *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010-), *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW, 2009-), *American Horror Story* (FX, 2011-), *Supernatural* (The WB, The CW, 2005-) and *Grimm* (NBC, 2011-). Again, each of these series has been on air for at least two full seasons, displaying longevity and, in the case of *Game of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead*, enormous commercial success. All have emerged from the shifts in television production contexts which I explore in the following chapter. Many display the traits of narrative complexity and quality television which have characterised the development of the medium in the 21st century, as I shall discuss. While several of these series continue to leave an enduring impression on contemporary popular culture, their mention here also serves to underline what sets my case study texts apart from them. While it is possible to consider my case study series via a multitude of generic television contexts, I wish to assert that within this thesis, I consider these series to be distinctly science fiction in terms of the form, themes and tropes associated with the genre, as I go on to outline them in the following chapter. *Fringe*, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Caprica* hold a unique status among the aforementioned proliferation of ‘fantasy’ series due to the convergence of generic,

³⁴ Jeff Jensen, ‘*Almost Human*: Review’ in *Entertainment Weekly* (November 26, 2013) <<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20756421,00.html>> [Accessed November 28, 2013]

medium and socio-cultural concerns I have explored here. As I seek to demonstrate in the chapters which focus upon these series, each text explicitly foregrounds its engagement with this particularly fraught period of American history via distinctive representations of the female body, offering a markedly different approach to previous representations of this type. In doing so, they explicitly challenge the claim made by Wheeler Winston Dixon that post-9/11 American television embraced a return to the past by attempting to create alternative escapist universes.³⁵

As I explore in the following chapters, this is notably evident in how the notion of authorship is presented by each of my case study series as a way in which their protagonists are able to assert their subjective autonomy from varied subject positions. Leigh Gilmore considers the subject of autobiography as “the object of production for the purposes of cultural critique,” that possesses attributes “whose meaning must be *acquired*.” She elaborates: “thus, [it is] the ways in which an autobiographer variously acknowledges, resists, embraces, rejects objectification, the way s/he learns, that is, to interpret objectification as something less than simply subjectivity itself marks a place of agency. It is in this act of interpretation, of consciousness, that we can say a woman may exceed representation within a dominant ideology.”³⁶ Gilmore seeks to analyse “how women use self-representation and its constitutive possibilities for agency and subjectivity to become no longer primarily subject to exchange but subjects who exchange the position of object for the subjectivity of self-representational agency.”³⁷ This is a process I consider throughout this thesis, via the protagonists of my chosen case study texts. My argument that the way in which these characters take ownership of their selves is emblematic of the characteristics that bind each of them together; illustrative of an emergent theme in representations of female subjectivity that I aim to demonstrate is specific to the science fiction genre and television medium as each exist in the cultural context of 21st century America. This is a shift in how representations of the female body have previously been considered: as I illustrate, the representation of the *I* as a site of resistance within these series, via these female characters, is positive, liberating and enduring.

Each of the four case study texts this thesis considers is the focus of an individual chapter, in which a particular gendered subject position is interrogated. Therefore, the

³⁵ Wheeler Winston Dixon, ‘Introduction: Something Lost – Film after 9/11’ in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) p. 12

³⁶ Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. 12

³⁷ *Ibid.*

opening chapter of this thesis necessarily addresses the contextual issues relevant to its wider concerns. Focusing on aspects of nation, genre and medium, this chapter firstly offers a broad analysis of American exceptionalism and myth-making, paying particular attention to the development of American exceptionalism throughout history and how this has been seen as manifest in national and individual subjects. Secondly, it considers the overall concerns of science fiction as a genre, across literature, film and television, in terms of form and tropes. Thirdly, it outlines the specificities of, and developing trends in, the television medium. Finally, this opening chapter interrogates debates surrounding gender and representation, with a particular focus on past representations of women in film and television. The aim of this contextual foundation is to allow later chapters to explore the unique way in which 21st century American science fiction television has made prominent, and engaged with, the representation of the various subjectivities examined within this particular cultural context.

I now summarise the chapters which interrogate my case study series, after which I will revisit the key intervention this thesis makes by seeking to place this project within a larger body of work. Drawing on constructions of motherhood and autobiography as a theoretical approach, Chapter Two explores the subject position of the mother through the figure of Sarah Connor (Lena Headey), as she is represented in the television series *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer draw attention to the patriarchal roots of the ideology of motherhood, and argue that the ability of the mother to speak of her own experiences is a crucial aspect in changing the reality of the mother's subjectivity.³⁸ Such a theoretical approach is integral to considering the series' characterisation of Sarah as both a woman and a mother operating within a specific 21st century context who endeavours to cultivate her own authorial voice. Chapter Three interrogates the adult female subject via *Fringe*. Gender theory offers an integral approach to this chapter, and Judith Butler's contention surrounding the performative aspect of gender is of particular concern.³⁹ By utilising theoretical frameworks of gender and performance, this chapter illustrates how *Fringe* disrupts and complicates the assumption of a patriarchal, masculinist domain in a changing, 21st century socio-cultural environment. This takes place via the representation of protagonist Olivia Dunham (Anna Torv) as a figure who is literally multiple and in-between. Chapter Four considers

³⁸ Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer, 'Introduction' in *Representations of Motherhood*, eds. Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) p. 3

³⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 14

female subjectivity in conjunction with race within *Battlestar Galactica*. It adopts an approach that incorporates theories of race and ethnicity, and post-colonial theory. This chapter considers the significant import of the work of Frantz Fanon, particularly his conception of the historico-racial schema and racial epidermal schema.⁴⁰ These schemata are considered as a framework through which *Battlestar Galactica's* representation of racial difference may be interrogated, primarily through the figures of Boomer and Sharon (Grace Park). Lastly, Chapter Five explores the subjectivity of the young, not yet fully-formed adult in *Caprica*, interrogating the representation of central protagonist Zoe Graystone (Alessandra Torresani). Primarily drawing upon theoretical approaches to youth and digital culture, this chapter argues that *Caprica* explicitly addresses contemporary narratives of technological progress through the youthful, gendered and fragmented subject of Zoe Graystone.

Conclusion

I consider the import of this thesis as lying in its recognition of a convergence of generic concerns, the shifting contexts of television, the properties of the medium, and the cultural context of 21st century America. The value of this thesis lies in its recognition and exploration of new representational strategies in contemporary science fiction television in relation to the female body, its engagement with texts which uniquely foreground these subject positions, and its consideration of the wider socio-cultural concerns of America in the 21st century. In examining television texts that comment specifically upon the 21st century American environment, this thesis considers the wider cultural and historical constructedness of multiple, gendered subject positions as they continually negotiate their own autonomy in response to this environment. I argue that this engagement takes place specifically via distinct representations of the female body; a figure these series propagate with far greater prominence than previous programming.

Previous attempts have been made to examine the socio-political import of certain series this thesis interrogates. Most notably, a significant amount of scholarship on *Battlestar Galactica* has sought to explore how the series has engaged with American society and America's domestic political spheres.⁴¹ I aim to intervene in these debates by

⁴⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, New Edition, 2008 (Originally published in English in 1968))

⁴¹ *Battlestar Galactica* has inspired several edited collections in which contributors explore these implications, such as *So Say We All*, ed. Richard Hatch (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2006); *Cylons in America*, eds. C.W. Marshall and Tiffany Potter (London: Continuum, 2008). Similarly, much work has

offering a much more focused interrogation of gender and subjectivity in 21st century science fiction television, via the framework of acclaimed and newly emerging series. This thesis is therefore uniquely positioned to engage with a wider cultural context in its examination of multiple gendered subject positions in 21st century American science fiction by exploring how these texts explicitly address the concerns of instability, security and militarisation that characterise this era via gendered subject positions. Foregrounding an engagement with a particularly fraught period of American history via the female body, 21st century American science fiction television signals, I contend, how engagement with gender and subjectivity within this television genre is not only ongoing, but changing over time. As such, it is important to interrogate not only the properties of this specific genre and medium within this contemporary socio-cultural context, but how this context is represented through the gendered protagonists of the texts which emerge therein. This thesis understands the protagonists its case study series present as a positive intervention in previous estimations of how the female body has been utilised in film and television. As such, it is necessary to consider the implications of this particular context upon how these protagonists are represented by these newly emerging series. It is necessary to ask why, in a nation that has historically held a very specific, unified, masculine conception of its own identity, the development of these gendered protagonists and their representation as fragmented and in-between is characterised not only as fluid and mobile, but crucially ongoing and positive in the face of the concerns of this era.

been dedicated to 9/11, its impact on American culture and representation in film. Susan Faludi addresses America's anxiety in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 in *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008). Jean Baudrillard (*The Spirit of Terrorism* (New York: Verso, 2003)) and Slavoj Zizek (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (New York: Verso, 2002)) attend to the symbolic nature of 9/11 from a philosophical standpoint. *Reframing 9/11*, eds. eds. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell (London: Continuum, 2010) offers analyses of how popular culture has shaped reactions to 9/11.

Chapter 1

Contexts: Nation, Genre, Medium, Gender

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual framework from which this thesis may interrogate representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century American science fiction television. A broad range of contextual issues will naturally arise from the thesis, as I outlined it in my introduction. These issues include myth-making and nationhood, genre and medium, and gender and subjectivity. In this chapter I therefore aim to cover a range of relevant literature to establish a foundation from which the following chapters may closely explore how American science fiction television engages with the events of the 21st century, at the level of the gendered subject. Structurally I start by considering wider concepts such as myth and nation before moving on to the more specific, particular concerns of genre, medium and gender representations. In doing so, I endeavour to demonstrate that while this body of work is rather broad in scope and touches on a number of different fields, the natural intersections that emerge from the literature considered here will enable me to further establish clear limits in terms of the scope of this thesis. I begin by offering a relatively broad analysis of America's historical myth-making and conceptions of self. Following this, I consider the overall concerns of science fiction as a genre in terms of form and tropes. I then move on to consider how television's medium specificity is acutely relevant to the case study chapters that follow in this thesis, exploring key developments and trends which have impacted on how American television is understood in the 21st century. Moving on from this, I then consider the issues at stake in focusing specifically on gender in this thesis. It is important to note from the outset that this chapter by no means aims to cover every facet of US history, science fiction, or television. Indeed, this would be a wildly unrealistic ambition for a thesis of this size. Instead, I concentrate on a small number of key events and moments in association with science fiction, the television medium and issues surrounding gender representations and the American national subject. In bringing these sections together, this introduction aims to build an historical and theoretical foundation from which subsequent chapters can explore this thesis' identification of a fundamental change in how 21st century science fiction

television engages with gender and subjectivity, within the context of the significant events that have occurred in this era.

Myth and Ideology

Susan Faludi describes 9/11 as the event which “broke the deadbolt” on America’s protective myth; a myth that held America as the master of its own security, whose might “made [its] homeland impregnable.”⁴² She argues that one needs to understand the mythic underpinnings of the American response to 9/11, and that a failure to do so would be primarily a failure to understand the American self.⁴³ I wish to explore this mythic foundation here in order to more fully consider and understand how the American national subject has responded to the events of September 11, 2001 and other significant events of the 21st century; as represented within science fiction television. Considering the impact of trauma upon both the individual and a culture in its entirety, E. Ann Kaplan that “the destruction of the symbolic order within which people live and can make sense of their lives can have devastating results.”⁴⁴ Indeed, Kaplan refers to 9/11 as a “paradigmatic example” of this; a trauma that resonated on a national scale yet was also inherently an individual experience.⁴⁵ This chapter aims to establish a foundation from which this thesis as a whole is able to demonstrate why the 21st century marks a period of unprecedented trauma and uncertainty for America, and following this, how this period has been represented within American science fiction television at the level of the individual gendered subject. An interrogation of American myth-making, so historically influential to this national subject, is essential to this aim. This interrogation of America’s mythical underpinnings specifically explores America’s conception of its subjects as ‘chosen’ from birth, while also necessarily considering some of the paradoxical aspects of America’s foundational myth. The purpose of this approach is to illustrate the continual manifestation of these ideals within American political culture, and how they have played a fundamental role in the shaping of an American ideological subject.

⁴² Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post 9/11 America* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008) p. 12

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 15

⁴⁴ E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2005) p. 67

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20

In his 1986 text *America*, Jean Baudrillard refers to the United States as being “neither dream nor reality...It is a hyperreality because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved...The Americans...are themselves simulation in its most developed state.”⁴⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset argues that this utopian orientation has been fostered by the emphasis on Americanism as a political ideology. This has also cultivated a sense of moral absolutism, which he asserts has its roots in America’s religious traditions of protestant “dissent.”⁴⁷ America’s uniqueness, its newness, its divine mission – these are the mythic properties that have historically sustained what Baudrillard refers to as the nation’s “idyllic conviction” that it was born to be – and eternally destined to remain - a society at “the centre of the world, the supreme power, the model for everyone.” He argues that this conviction was founded not so much on “natural resources, technologies, and arms, as on the miraculous premises of a utopia made reality.”⁴⁸ Myths possess the ability to simultaneously embody and absorb contradictions. As I discuss below, this is a characteristic which the United States has continually displayed throughout its history, in subservience to the establishment of an American “political religion.” Ultimately American society is “built on the idea that it is the realisation of everything that the others have dreamt of...it knows this, it believes in it.”⁴⁹ This continued commitment to a mythical foundation is, therefore, at the heart of America’s ideological conception of both nation and national subject.

In her foreword to Claude Levi-Strauss’s *Myth and Meaning*, Wendy Doniger posits that “myths, like all things in constant use, break and are fixed again, become lost and are found.”⁵⁰ Levi-Strauss, Doniger states, has taught us that myths are driven by the need to “solve a *paradox that cannot be solved*.”⁵¹ A scientific approach that explores underlying patterns or structures in human thought and culture, Levi-Strauss argues that structuralism is essentially “the quest for the invariant, or for the invariant elements among superficial differences.”⁵² It is impossible to conceive of meaning without order, or translation without

⁴⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *America* (New York: Verso, 1989) p. 28-29

⁴⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996) p. 63

⁴⁸ Baudrillard, p. 77

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Wendy Doniger, ‘Foreword’ in *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture* by Claude Levi-Strauss (New York: Schocken Books, 1995) p. ix

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. x

⁵² Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995 (Originally published in 1978)) p. 8

rules.⁵³ He states that myth gives man “the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he *does* understand the universe.”⁵⁴ The relationship between myth, illusion and order is articulated in the mediation of opposing characteristics, how they “can remain merged in one and the same person.”⁵⁵ Pam Cook argues that Strauss’s structuralist approach may be appealing to scholars interested in analysing contemporary ideology, stating that the aim of such structuralist analysis may in fact be considered as a “‘demythologising,’ stripping away the camouflage and laying the contradictions bare.”⁵⁶ Strauss himself states that:

On the one hand, a myth always refers to the events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives a myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless: it explains the present and the past as well as the future. This can be made clear through a comparison between myth and what appears to have largely replaced it in modern societies, namely, politics.⁵⁷

The linkage Strauss identifies between the timelessness of myth and modern politics is important to consider in relation to this overview of America’s own historical myth-making. While the contradictions evident in exploring the ideological myths of America’s national foundation are explored below with regard to race, I now consider the relationship between myth, ideology and national subjecthood as it is made apparent throughout America’s political history.

Myth, Nation and Subject

In his 1630 sermon *A Modell of Christian Charity*, puritan John Winthrop famously conceived of America as a city upon a hill to be watched by the world.⁵⁸ Claire Kahane reflects on this conception of nationhood in an essay published in the edited collection *Trauma at Home: After 9/11*, stating that “Americans have long believed themselves the chosen people, a nation founded in, and protected by, its innocence and its godliness.”⁵⁹ The concept of America as a city on a hill, its settlers a people chosen by God, has its roots

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 12

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33

⁵⁶ Pam Cook, *The Cinema Book* (London: BFI Publishing, 2nd Revised Edition, 1999) p. 328

⁵⁷ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963) p. 209

⁵⁸ John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630)

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html> [Accessed January 20, 2012] Winthrop states: “For wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are uppon us.”

⁵⁹ Claire Kahane, ‘Uncanny Sights: The Anticipation of the Abomination’ in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11*, ed. Judith Greenberg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) p. 108

in Winthrop's sermon. Written during his passage to North America, it actively articulates this sense of divine mission, which Kahane looks back on.⁶⁰ The 'divine mission' that marked America's foundation also played an important role in America's symbolic status as a new beginning for the world, distinct from the history of the European Old World left behind by the colonists. This new beginning is echoed by Thomas Paine in his equally famous monograph *Common Sense*, where he states: "we have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world over again."⁶¹ John Gray has argued that Paine's declaration, which "affirmed" the American Revolution as something that enabled the world to be made over again, "is a classic statement of apocalyptic belief."⁶² Gray identifies a continuing trend of the apocalypse within this Puritan religion, and contends that this played a formative role in America's foundation and growth. He goes on to argue that this "prevented [America] from establishing a variant of European civilisation in the New World."⁶³ America's early beginnings demonstrate that the confluence of ideology and subjectivity in the establishment of a national creed is clear. I have sought to establish this confluence, via the references to Winthrop and Paine, from the outset because this notion of a distinct difference between America and the Old World is fundamental to any consideration of America's historical myth-making, and the subsequent formation of a US ideological subject. As Gray points out, the US was founded "on the basis of an ideology, and if it is new it is in virtue of this fact."⁶⁴

While visiting America in the 1830s, French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville also considered America's government as unique due to its democratic basis. In *Democracy in America*, he states that the immigrants who settled in America at the start of the 17th century "somehow unlocked the democratic from all those other principles it had to contend with in the old communities of Europe and they transplanted that alone to the New World."⁶⁵ De Tocqueville was the first to refer to America as an exceptional nation. *Democracy in America* is a significant text, and I make note of it here because it is an exploration of the ways in which, as Lipset puts it, the United States is "qualitatively

⁶⁰ Winthrop, < <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html> > [Accessed January 20, 2012]

⁶¹ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776) <<http://www.ushistory.org/paine/commonsense/>> [Accessed January 23, 2012]

⁶² John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007) p. 153

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154

⁶⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin Classics, 2003 (originally published in 1835)) p. 23

different from all other countries.”⁶⁶ The confluence of ideology and subject within America’s history is predicated upon this exceptional status. As Lipset points out, the United States is exceptional in that it started from a revolutionary event, being the “first new nation;” the first colony to become independent (other than Iceland).⁶⁷ He notes Richard Hofstadter’s observation that America’s fate as a nation is not to have ideologies but rather to be one.⁶⁸ Thus, America “has defined its *raison d’être* ideologically.”⁶⁹ To be an American subject is therefore not so much a matter of birth, but rather an ideological commitment; a contention that explicitly connects a founding national ideology with subjectivity.⁷⁰

Within this ideological construction of nationhood, the themes of innocence and protection are particularly prominent. America’s innocence is derived from its newness, its distance from the Old World and the sense of divinity in its ideological foundation which I have outlined above. The theme of protection is manifest in ‘innocence’ as something which is to be preserved; the need and desire to defend what are understood as America’s ‘natural freedoms’. I return to the more problematic aspects of these founding myths below. However, in considering the relationship between individual and national identity in the cultivation of an American “political religion,” it is important to establish the collective nature of these myths. R.W.B. Lewis considers the mythical formation of American nationhood in his reflections on innocence and the figure of the American Adam in literature. While he also acknowledges the divine influence at the heart of the American myth, Lewis notes that this “second chance for the human race” was not only new, but always oriented towards the future: “‘Our national birth,’ declaimed the *Democratic Review* in 1839, ‘was the beginning of a new history...which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only.’”⁷¹ These foundational myths also clearly find their voice in Thomas Jefferson and *The Declaration of Independence*.⁷² America has always believed itself as different to the rest of the world. Understanding how this difference has been expressed through the advancement of a national ideology, and the extent to which this

⁶⁶ Lipset, p. 18

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Richard Hofstadter, quoted in Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 18

⁶⁹ Lipset, p. 18

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31

⁷¹ R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984 (Originally published in 1955)) p. 4-5

⁷² Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence* (1776) < <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.htm> > [Accessed 21 January, 2012]

ideology has intersected with the individual subject, is of significant importance to this thesis. This is primarily evident given its principal aim, which is the interrogation of how this national subject is specifically represented by a particular medium, genre and temporal period; how the question of what it means to be American, in the context of the events of this period, is interrogated by this medium and genre across a range of gendered subjectivities. The evolution of American exceptionalism, rooted in this unique, free and divine conception of nationhood, begins with Winthrop and the sense of mission his sermon espoused. This 'American Dream' is subsequently carried through political culture.

America's foundational myths are also notably evident in terms of its foreign policy. In this arena, the foundational protection myth is given great prominence. Michael H. Hunt has extensively considered the role of ideology in US foreign policy, choosing to focus this through what he describes as a "broad and commonsensical" working definition of that term. I consider Hunt's definition here because of its value to this exploration of American historical myth-making, given that it emphasises the order engendered by a "political religion" that is clearly understood. For the purposes of this discussion, ideology is viewed as what Hunt terms "an interrelated set of convictions and assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality."⁷³ Hunt refers to Earl Ravenal's recognition that to a certain extent, American foreign policy has always been based upon the presumption that "America's actual and proper concerns are universal."⁷⁴ Hunt continues: "Such national myths serve a purpose, Ravenal notes incidentally but perceptively, for they 'gloss over divisions and bind a society together.'"⁷⁵ Such a remark is evocative of my earlier discussion of Levi-Strauss and the structural properties of myths above, namely their inherent capability to absorb oppositional elements. As such, any attempt to reform a foreign policy that compromises the American myth of a nation that is unique and a force within the world would likely prove "painful."⁷⁶ This recalls Kaplan's astute comment noted at the beginning of this chapter that making such a compromise, dismantling a symbolic order within which people make sense of their lives, can in fact be "devastating."⁷⁷ The cultivation of an American "political religion," at the heart of which is an 'opt-in' ideology to

⁷³ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009 (first published in 1987)) p. xi

⁷⁴ Earl C. Ravenal, *Never Again: Learning from America's Foreign Policy Failures* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978) quoted in Hunt, p. 3

⁷⁵ Hunt, p. 3

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, p. 67

which the subject must subscribe, is central to the self-perception of both the national culture and the individual. American foreign policy has played a formative role in this, deeply rooted as it is in nation-building.⁷⁸

America's formative national ideology, in terms of its mythic roots, has also repeatedly materialised within political culture. This is apparent throughout the 20th century, at key moments in which this conception of national subjectivity has been clearly challenged. The concept of Manifest Destiny, which speaks to America's self-perceived divine right to expansion across a vast geographical space, plays a profound role in America's political status as a 'Redeemer nation.' Woodrow Wilson echoed this in his 'War Message' to Congress in 1917, in which he advocated for America to fight for democracy in order to bring peace, safety and freedom to all nations.⁷⁹ For Gray, such rhetoric echoes the institutionalisation of American national greatness within foreign policy, embodying as it does that core conviction of American liberal internationalism which Hunt identifies – "the belief that national self-determination should be extended throughout the world."⁸⁰ It is also clearly attuned with America's foundational myth of a nation born to fulfil a divine mission, and frequently reconfirms the ideology of national greatness to its citizens. Other nations have of course held similar beliefs of being redeemers, or chosen. But as I have sought to demonstrate here, America's difference lies in this very continuation of mythic nationhood; the "persistent vitality of messianic belief and the extent to which it continues to shape the public culture."⁸¹

The convergence of an overarching belief in national greatness (that must be preserved) with the individual American citizen is continually reinforced in domestic political dialogue.⁸² Such rhetoric extends into the 1990s and the presidencies of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, during which time America's role within world affairs was frequently conceived as one which was assumed as 'moral.' Elements of the mythic self-

⁷⁸ Hunt, p. 16

⁷⁹ Woodrow Wilson, *War Message* (April 2, 1917) < <http://www.heritage.org/initiatives/first-principles/primary-sources/woodrow-wilsons-war-message-to-congress> > [Accessed 21 January, 2012]

⁸⁰ Gray, p. 158

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160

⁸² See speeches such as: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *The Four Freedoms* (January 6, 1941) < <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrthefourfreedom.htm> >, Harry S. Truman, *The Truman Doctrine* (March 12, 1947) < <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/harrystrumantrumandocctrine.html> >, John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address* (January 20, 1961) < <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm> > [Accessed 21 January, 2012]

appointed 'Redeemer nation' are evident here, in the vision of America as 'world police;' upholder of international order. George H.W. Bush underlined America's role as a multi-lateral actor in an address to the nation regarding the invasion of Iraq, and later in his speech termed 'Toward a New World Order.'⁸³ Interestingly, despite the emphasis upon multi-lateral action in these speeches, this Republican re-assessment of American foreign policy did not rule out the potential for unilateral action; a policy aspect that would rise to prominence in the 21st century during the presidency of George W. Bush and his Doctrine of pre-emption.⁸⁴ In doing so, this envisioning of a new world order again embodies ongoing contradictions between America's conception of itself as a realist state that promotes its own self-interests and seeks to create a favourable balance of power in service to this; and its missionary, historically messianic status as a 'Redeemer nation;' a friendship seeking actor.

Contradictions: National Identity and Race

The issue of race, which Hunt considers as central to both foreign policy and America's formative nation-building, occupies a particularly problematic position within this historical myth-making. While this mythic construction of national identity has, as discussed, displayed a demonstrable capacity to absorb contradictions and paradoxes, race requires serious consideration in this context. Hunt argues that white America sought an "empirical basis" upon which to form its racial hierarchy, in order to give "popular legitimacy to race as a fundamental and objective category separating peoples of supposedly unequal gifts."⁸⁵ African Americans, he states, served above all others as the anvil upon which this notion of hierarchy was formed.⁸⁶ Hunt argues that this racial hierarchy, with its poles of black and white, subsequently carried over into American foreign policy.⁸⁷ While important to note that America was far from unique in this conception of race,⁸⁸ it is interesting to note Hunt's conclusion to this argument. He states

⁸³ George H.W. Bush, *Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq* (January 16, 1991) <<http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ghwbushiraqinvasion.htm>> George H.W. Bush, *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit* (September 11, 1990) <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9> [Accessed 21 January, 2012]

⁸⁴ National Security Council, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September, 2002) <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/> [Accessed 21 January, 2012]

⁸⁵ Hunt, p. 48

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90

that Americans “betrayed their common humanity by using the resulting collection of racial notions as an arena for the exercise of libidinous and other fantasies normally held in close confinement.”⁸⁹ This again illustrates the capacity of America’s protection myth to absorb this racial hierarchy, which exists in direct contradiction to founding myths of innocence, freedom and equality. Hunt’s point regarding America’s betrayal of its “common humanity” clearly reinforces this notion.

The conception of racial hierarchy is also paradoxical in a domestic sense, given America’s status as a nation of immigrants; a veritable “melting pot” of ethnic identities. Specifically exploring the representation of cultural meanings of ethnicity in American cinema, Vivian Sobchack pays particular attention to this concept of American society.⁹⁰ She argues that many of the more “cultish” films of the 1980s seemed to “subsume questions of ethnicity under broader questions about the specificity, fracture, and location of human identity, memory and history in an age of media, microchips, and multinationals.”⁹¹ This in itself exemplifies such a paradox: a single notion of what it means to be American (myth) comes to be played out against a more fractured identity; what Ihab Hassan refers to as being “caught between ‘myths of totality’ and ‘ideologies of fracture.’”⁹² In a similar vein, Michael Kazin points out that scholars such as Lipset and Arthur Schlesinger have previously been “derided for identifying, even celebrating, a unitary and distinctive American ‘character’ and ‘ideology’ articulated mainly by powerful white men.”⁹³ As J. Victor Koschmann states, Lipset’s data “shows that African Americans still refuse to conform to the American Creed, as Lipset defines it,” concluding that while there certainly are “two Americas, two value systems,” they are “far from equal, symbolically or actually, in Lipset’s scheme: one is white and authentically American, the other black and, in effect, un-American.”⁹⁴ While Lipset himself notes that figures such as

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Vivian Sobchack, ‘Postmodern Modes of Ethnicity’ in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema* ed. Lester D. Friedman (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 330

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336

⁹² Ihab Hassan, *The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science and Cultural Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois University Press, 1980) quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodern History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 20

⁹³ Michael Kazin, ‘Hofstadter Lives: Political Culture and Temperament in the Work of an American Historian – The American Political Tradition by Richard Hofstadter, Review’ in *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (June, 1999) p. 334; Kazin points to a selection of “harshly critical essays” written in the *American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997), pp. 748-74 regarding Lipset’s *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*.

⁹⁴ J. Victor Koschmann, ‘The Nationalism of Cultural Uniqueness – American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword by Seymour Martin Lipset, Review’ in *The American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997) p. 766

Thomas Jefferson and George Washington believed the *Declaration of Independence* would both undermine slavery and “have a continuing effect on American politics,”⁹⁵ this neglects to acknowledge the true significance of being a dispossessed subject; notably the continuing effect this form of subjectivity would have on American politics and the mediation between the mythical conception of nationhood and the experience of this at the level of the ideological subject(s).

The issue of race, then, clearly problematizes any consideration of a monolithic form of ‘American’ subjectivity prior to the temporal period with which this thesis is concerned. However, I have nevertheless briefly considered it here because it does reinforce the manner in which American historical myth-making is an inherently paradoxical affair. America’s complicated and problematic relationship with race can also be seen to be acutely manifest in the 21st century, the period which forms the primary focus of this thesis. Nabine Naber states that “within the context of immigration to the United States, ‘race’ has been a central framework for locating immigrants along a continuum from black to white and thereby determining the degree to which they deserved or did not deserve citizenship.”⁹⁶ This point reinforces the tension present in, and the paradoxical nature of, America’s status as a ‘melting pot’ of ethnic identities, noted above. Naber’s point forms part of her broader interrogation of Arab American racial formations in the US before and after 9/11. Prior to the events of September 11th, 2001, Naber points to the fact that several Arab American writers “used the trope of ‘invisibility’ to refer to the place of Arab Americans within dominant US discourses on race and ethnicity.”⁹⁷ The domestic events that occurred in the wake of 9/11, including numerous hate crimes committed against individuals perceived to be Muslim, Arab or South Asian, and diversity initiatives initiated by non-profit organisations and educational institutions, among others, had the effect of suddenly repositioning these “invisible citizens” as the most visible of subjects.⁹⁸ This repositioning can be seen to be reflected in political rhetoric. In his State of the Union address of 2002, George W. Bush famously posited an “axis of evil” in the Middle East that poses a “grave and growing danger” in which “time is not on our side.”⁹⁹ His speech frames

⁹⁵ Lipset, p. 115-116

⁹⁶ Nabine Naber, ‘Introduction’ in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, eds. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008) p. 13

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁹⁹ George W. Bush, *The State of the Union Address* (January 29, 2002), <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>> [Accessed 14 July, 2014]

the crisis of this “growing danger” as one which extends into an indeterminate future, grows progressively worse with time, and requires action in the immediate present. As Kellner argues, such a discourse of “evil” is “totalising and absolutistic, allowing no ambiguities or contradictions,” assuming a binary logic in which ‘we’ (America) are good and ‘they’ (terrorists, state sponsors of terror) are bad.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly for the purposes of this thesis, Naber argues that the same totalising logic inherent in the rhetoric of Bush’s foreign policy also emerged in domestic discourses in the early 21st century and, indeed, formed the terms upon which Arab Americans became “‘hyper-visible’ within dominant public US discourses on multiculturalism after 9/11,” wherein both the corporate media and the government administration “distinguished between ‘good Arabs or Muslims’ and ‘bad Muslims.’” In this, the latter came to be both associated with, and responsible for, acts of terror; the former anxious to clear their consciences of such horrendous crimes.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Naber asserts that government policies implemented following the events of 9/11 such as the PATRIOT Act, FBI home and work visits, property seizures and wiretapping “put the logic of ‘good Muslim/bad Muslim’ into practice by targeting noncitizens as ‘potential terrorists’ or ‘bad Muslims,’ and distinguishing them from ‘citizens’ or ‘good Muslims.’”¹⁰² Naber’s point is demonstrative of the climate of fear, anxiety and insecurity manifest in 21st century America which I outlined in my introduction. It also reinforces Koschman’s criticisms of Lipset’s scheme, namely the continued inequality in America’s value systems wherein an ‘authentic’ American national identity is conceived in opposition to what is deemed ‘un-American,’ whilst illustrating how this fear and insecurity also emerged along racial lines in this contemporary domestic socio-cultural context.

As I go on to discuss in this chapter, the television medium has traditionally been understood as central to cultural notions of nationhood. Indeed, in the following subsection I specifically draw attention to representational issues in association with US nationhood and race, in relation to the television medium and science fiction genre. As such, it is important to briefly consider here those discourses surrounding race and Arab Americans in 21st century America which also emerged in representations in popular television. Evelyn Alsultany considers such how such representations ultimately served to uphold the legitimising, binary discourses identified by Naber, above. Although Alsultany illustrates that some representations of Arab Americans in popular television crime drama

¹⁰⁰ Douglas Kellner, ‘Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Terror,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly*; 37; No. 4 (2007) p. 628

¹⁰¹ Naber, p. 2-3

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

were sympathetic and intended to “humanise” Arab Americans by positioning them as targets of misdirected fear and hate, she argues that such representations ultimately work to “participate in re-working US sovereignty through narrating ambivalence about racism in the case of Arab and Muslim Americans.”¹⁰³ In this instance, Alsultany defines ambivalence as “regarding the same act as concurrently unjustifiable and necessary,” arguing that racism as it pertains to representations of Arab Americans in television drama produced in the early 21st century is reconfigured as “bad in general but legitimate in the case of Arab and Muslims after 9/11 [...] as necessary...because the United States is in an exceptional state of national security.”¹⁰⁴ As such, these representations are far from sympathetic or incisive in terms of the challenge they pose to the climate of fear and insecurity from which they emerge. Rather, they actively participate, Alsultany states, in serving US government narratives such as those discussed above.¹⁰⁵ As I outlined in my introduction, this thesis focuses on representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century American science fiction television, including a focus on subjectivity and race in Chapter Four. I argue that the series with which I engage offer a far more politicised engagement with the domestic socio-cultural context of contemporary America, via unique representations of femininity which serve to challenge this context without ultimately being contained by the restrictive discourses of fear and anxiety of this period.

Naber argues that the anti-Arab racisms both she and Alsultany identify are representative of “a recurring process of the construction of the Other within US liberal politics,” in which trends of racial exclusion that have long-existed in the fabric of America’s historical myth-making, as I have demonstrated throughout this section, come to be “intensified within moments of crisis in the body politic.”¹⁰⁶ As I have discussed above, and assert throughout this thesis, the events of 9/11, their aftermath and the continued War on Terror provide one such context. Given this consideration of America’s domestic relationship with race in terms of the 21st century context with which this thesis is concerned, it is pertinent to also briefly address another significant domestic crisis in which this intensification occurred: Hurricane Katrina. Michael Eric Dyson offers an analysis of the aftermath of Katrina, via the prism of race and poverty, in which tropes of visibility and

¹⁰³ Evelyn Alsultany, ‘The Prime-Time Plight of the Arab Muslim American after 9/11: Configurations of Race and Nation in TV Drama’ in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, eds. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008) p. 206

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208

¹⁰⁶ Naber, p. 31

invisibility – tropes with which I engage in more depth in Chapter Four of this thesis – again emerge. Dyson seeks to interrogate why the poor of both New Orleans, and the poor of the American nation, are made invisible by a national disinterest in their lives and why, in the direct aftermath of the Katrina catastrophe, the visible representation of the government came not in the form of rescue and aid, but armed police chasing looters.¹⁰⁷ He argues that while the aftermath of Katrina was a “multicultural stew of suffering,” the “dominant colour was black.”¹⁰⁸ As such, when a federal government which has been shaped by the “racial forces that have continually changed [American] society since its founding” - forces which I have outlined throughout this section - failed to respond to the crisis in an effective and timely manner, “they made themselves vulnerable to the charge that race was the obvious reason for their delay.”¹⁰⁹ As Dyson states, while explicit prejudice and racism may not have directly lead to the decisions which ultimately left many poor, black Americans defenceless for days following the hurricane, race certainly “coloured the response to Katrina” due to discourses which have existed within America’s national myth-making for centuries.¹¹⁰ New Orleans then, at its core in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, was “a Southern racial narrative being performed before a national and global audience.”¹¹¹ The wider events of the 21st century in the wake of 9/11 also impacted upon America’s response to Katrina, with resources diverted to the ongoing War on Terror and Iraq. Indeed, as Dyson points out,¹¹² even when publically speaking about the events in New Orleans following the wake of Katrina, George W. Bush sought to connect that domestic crisis with the War on Terror by correlating government aid for New Orleans with “our troops [who] are defending all our citizens from threats abroad.”¹¹³ Bush’s desire to focus both his – and the nation’s – attention on the continued War on Terror had the effect, Dyson argues, of weakening domestic civil liberties and also led Bush “to ignore current, and critical, issues like poverty and racial inequality” that continue to erode American society.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Colour of Disaster* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2007) p. xii, 2

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 66

¹¹³ George W. Bush, *President Commemorates 60th Anniversary of V-1 Day* (August 30, 2005) <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050830-1.html>> [Accessed July 14, 2014]

¹¹⁴ Dyson, p. 100

Tristram Riley-Smith underlines the importance of “not confusing myth and reality,” stating that the experience of rebirth America’s settlers felt when they were christened as a ‘chosen people’ was not an experience shared by those “displaced in the process.”¹¹⁵ As such, they were not offered the opportunity to ‘opt-in’ to the ideological nation-state. This “paradox of identity,” Riley-Smith argues, is one of several contradictions afflicting contemporary American society, and remains a fundamental issue “because it lies, like a watermark, inside the fibre of the national existence.”¹¹⁶ The composition of the American ideological subject is thus also inherently split, formed by the foundational myth of a national “melting pot” yet encompassing founding divisions of black and white, male and female, separate but equal. In this sense, American’s national myths, and their relation to American subjectivity, demonstrate the binary oppositions Levi-Strauss argues are revealed by all myths; that “mythical thought always works from the awareness of oppositions towards their progressive mediation.”¹¹⁷ As I explore in the chapters that follow, this fragmentation emerges as a prominent theme in 21st century science fiction television’s representation of subjectivity within a wider American socio-cultural context. My argument throughout this thesis is that this is explicitly presented as manifest within the female body across a range of subject positions such as that of race; which, as I have already highlighted, has historically problematized America’s cultivation of a national, ideological subject. It is this national subject, as it has been traditionally conceived, that these contemporary representations are uniquely positioned to challenge.

America has, nevertheless, frequently managed to portray itself as a nation that is starting anew. The ideology identified within America’s foreign policy, the manner in which American subjectivity as an ideological construction is presented to the world, is implicit in this. This perhaps most clearly exemplifies what Faludi describes as the early post-9/11 attempt to reinstate a social fiction, to repair America’s national myth.¹¹⁸ One manifestation of this can be found in what Marica Landy identifies as the immediate post-9/11 attempts to understand the historical import of September 11th, 2001, and to locate an historical analogy in December 7th, 1941, and the events at Pearl Harbour.¹¹⁹ President

¹¹⁵ Tristram Riley-Smith, *The Cracked Bell: America and the Afflictions of Liberty* (London: Constable, 2010) p. 33

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42

¹¹⁷ Levi-Strauss, *The Structural Study of Myth*, p. 440

¹¹⁸ Faludi, p. 13

¹¹⁹ Marcia Landy, “‘America Under Attack’: Pearl Harbour, 9/11, and History in the Media’ in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) p. 79

Barack Obama's inaugural address also explicitly recalls several of America's founding myths, as evidenced by the statement "The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history."¹²⁰ His speech reasserts notions of America's national greatness and youth. It pays tribute to both the Founding Fathers and American troops, whom he terms "guardians of our liberty." Implicit in each of these are the foundational myths of innocence and protection. Yet his speech also acknowledges that in the 21st century America finds itself not only the "midst of crisis," but facing challenges that are wholly new.¹²¹ In this environment, as Faludi argues, fantasy can sometimes console but it does not necessarily make one safer.¹²²

Science Fiction and "Cultural Instrumentality"

I consider contemporary science fiction television to be distinctly positioned to interrogate not only how the cultural context of 21st century America is represented and articulated through the gendered protagonists of my case study texts but, importantly, the implications of this direct engagement with the wider events of the era through these subjectivities. I now wish to illustrate the viability of the science fiction genre for the interrogation this thesis undertakes with regards to how gender and subjectivity is represented in 21st century science fiction television. Science fiction is a genre which has typically served to question and explore anxieties and insecurities present within a given socio-cultural context. It is a genre concerned with representing human identity and how we can "maintain our human being within a context...that typically seems to condition, qualify or challenge our traditional human identity."¹²³ As J.P. Telotte notes, the genre has treated typical concerns such as genetic manipulation, racial discrimination, political corruption and corporate greed, among others. He argues that the underlying themes of science fiction have "proven so very adaptable to current issues, and thus the ways in which the genre has managed to stay vital to our culture."¹²⁴ As such, a consideration of the genre is of significant importance here, given my specific focus on a contemporary US context marked by an uncertainty that has challenged America's historical sense of itself.

¹²⁰ Barack Obama, *Inaugural Address* (January 20, 2009) <
<http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamainauguraladdress.htm>>
[Accessed 22 January, 2012]

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Faludi, p. 289

¹²³ J.P. Telotte, *Replications* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995) p. 7

¹²⁴ J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 16

What follows largely takes the form of a contextual overview, which necessarily focuses on issues of definition and evaluation. Considering key developments and trends, I note specific examples within this contextual discussion that are demonstrative of the traditional concerns of the genre, and how it has been studied in association with previous events of significance within American history. In doing so, I hope to fashion a foundation from which the following chapters may recognise a shift in how science fiction television is now engaging with these issues. It is important to note that this approach to the genre takes place across the media of literature, film and television. This is necessary to interrogate the formation of the genre itself in a broader sense: to consider how it functions, and to identify its core concerns and tropes. As such, I explore this within an overall framework which clearly transitions from literature to film, and from film to television. While I offer examples of several key texts within this interrogation, these are by no means intended as a comprehensive overview. Rather, the intent of this section is to more fully consider the *distinction* between these science fiction media, and the important trends within each.

Cognitive Estrangement

The most prominent figure in the modern critical theory of science fiction is that of Darko Suvin. Given that this thesis is specifically concerned with science fiction, and given the fact that science fiction has historically proven problematic to define in terms of its generic borders, it is necessary to consider the impact of Suvin's engagement with the genre. As Patrick Parrinder points out, "the separation of SF from the body of fantasy literature and the definition of SF as a canonical literary genre have all found their most forceful and influential expression" in Suvin's work.¹²⁵ In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* Suvin both identifies science fiction as a coherent genre, and following that, how it is separate from a genre such as fantasy.¹²⁶ He does so by arguing for an understanding of science fiction "as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*."¹²⁷ He goes on to consider the differentiations to be found within the concept of "cognitiveness" or "cognition," stating that the term as he utilises it "implies not only a reflecting *of* but also *on* reality. It implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static

¹²⁵ Patrick Parrinder, 'Introduction' in *Learning From Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000) p. 3

¹²⁶ Edward James, 'Before the *Novum*: The Pre-history of Science Fiction Criticism' in *Learning From Other Worlds*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000) p. 30

¹²⁷ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) p. 4

mirroring of the author's environment."¹²⁸ Elaborating on the look of estrangement as therefore being "both cognitive and creative," he argues that the very attitude of estrangement within science fiction "has grown into the *formal framework* of the genre."¹²⁹

Importantly, given the focus on America's historical myth-making above, Suvin also addresses the relationship between the function of estrangement within science fiction, and myth:

The use of estrangement both as underlying attitude and dominant formal device is found also in *myth*, a 'timeless' and religious approach looking in its own way beneath (or above) the empiric surface. However, SF sees the norms of any age, including emphatically its own, as unique, changeable, and therefore subject to *cognitive view*.¹³⁰

While it is perhaps precarious to apply literary criticism to the study of science fiction film or television, a problem to which I return, Suvin's theory is nevertheless of great import to the conception of science fiction as a distinct genre. He positions the formal characteristics of science fiction as "diametrically opposed" to myth, with its "cognitive approach" differentiating it "from myth, folktales and fantasy."¹³¹ As such, Suvin's argument is of great importance to the historical and theoretical foundation that this chapter presents. Suvin considers the opposition between myth and science fiction as stemming from the fact that the former "conceives human relations as fixed and supernaturally determined;" that myth, in effect, "absolutises and even personifies apparently constant motifs from sluggish societies." Science fiction, in response, "focuses on the variable and future-bearing elements from the empirical environment." This therefore explains why the genre is "found predominantly in the great whirlpools of history."¹³² An understanding of the variable and changeable elements of science fiction, the cognitive view that Suvin identifies, is thus of fundamental importance to this project. His definition of science fiction as a genre that adopts a creative approach, reflecting of and on society, demonstrates its inherent suitability to the concerns of this thesis, namely the interrogation of shifting subjectivities within a particular temporal context. In its opposition to myth it is also of great use in exploring this shift within an American national context, given its emphasis on the variable, changeable elements at play in contrast to historical, fixed, static reproductions.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 7

Annette Kuhn states that “writers on literary science fiction, who are less shy than film theorists about discussing science fiction as a genre, draw attention to a set of oft-repeated themes in science fiction stories. These include the conflict between science and technology on the one hand and human nature on the other, and themes of spatial and temporal displacement.”¹³³ Anne Cranny-Francis also highlights several prominent historical tropes of the genre, in which issues of subjectivity are most notably explored. Displacing characters or narrative proceedings in time and/or space is one such device, and is often used to locate events ambiguously.¹³⁴ Another is to adopt the character and viewpoint of the alien, a strategy used by feminist science fiction writers “to deconstruct patriarchal ideology and its practice.” This is often achieved through the “non-patriarchal alien experiencing the stress of positioning as a patriarchal subject.”¹³⁵ Cranny-Francis also notes a generic tendency to posit a narrative structure that is complicated by intersecting or framing narratives, and an engagement with – and critique of – current scientific and technological discourses. Additionally, it is worth noting that genre conventions are themselves sites of and for ideological contestation.¹³⁶ When utilised in practice, these may in fact have the effect of denaturalising that particular convention, thereby confronting viewers with their own expectations or even producing new meanings. Indeed, Cranny-Francis notes that the latter in particular may result in readers being “positioned discursively in a new space, realigned in relation to their former discursive position – a realignment which readers must then renegotiate in their own terms” which typically entails a shift in subject position.¹³⁷ While she is also writing with specific reference to science fiction literature, Cranny-Francis’s arguments and her engagement with issues surrounding gender representation in science fiction hold relevance in this consideration of the genre’s composition and viability as an object of study within the remit of this thesis. Her essay *Feminist Futures: A Generic Study* is intended as a response to feminist science fiction literature which offers such a challenge to the genre via its deployment of generic conventions “in ways which foreground their normative operation whilst also enacting a different, feminist discourse.”¹³⁸ The provocative nature of science fiction and the very flexibility which characterises it as a genre marks it as an apt forum through which such

¹³³ Annette Kuhn, ‘Introduction’ in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990) p. 5

¹³⁴ Anne Cranny-Francis, ‘Feminist Futures : A Generic Study’ in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990) p. 221

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223-224

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 219

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220

ideological contestation can be approached and advantageously utilised. As such, science fiction as it has so far been defined is inherently suited to the wider concerns which this thesis explores.

Science Fiction Film

This consideration of cultural intervention provides a useful bridge in negotiating the previously noted difficulties of applying literary criticism to film. The concept of cultural intervention, in relation to science fiction as a genre, is also noted by Kuhn, who advocates that what a film genre *does* is a more interesting question to approach than what a genre merely *is*. This, she states, should be considered in cultural terms: what a genre does can be described as, or embodied in, its “cultural instrumentality.”¹³⁹ Kuhn argues that this is possible by focusing on the ‘fiction’ in science fiction. This is fiction in terms of stories, narrative and cinema, and “it is through these two terms – narrative and cinema – and their interrelation, that a consideration of the cultural instrumentality of science fiction as a *film* genre may usefully be approached.”¹⁴⁰ (Emphasis added). In this sense, science fiction cinema combines aspects of narrative with particular iconographies, the latter being central to the language of film as a medium. Kuhn posits the question of whether science fiction can therefore be usefully understood as having an association with “particular modes of narration.” This question enables a distinction to be drawn between the previously discussed literary theory of the genre, and the specialised “language” of film: “its specific qualities as a ‘narrative medium.’”¹⁴¹ It also justifies the consideration of literary definitions within a broad contextual overview such as this, in that they clearly offer a useful basis for developing an understanding of science fiction as a genre, and a film genre at that. Such definitions proffer key features, narrative themes, and the “enactment of certain narrative viewpoints and modes of address.” From this, a more focused engagement with narrative aspects that “can be specified in relation to film” may take place, via the consideration of key “cinematic codes” inherent within the language of the medium: image, iconography and mise-en-scene being primary examples.¹⁴² As Kuhn argues, this “mobilisation of the visible, the spectacle,” is the process through which films produce their meanings. In science fiction cinema, this may be evident in the creation of “particular kinds of fictional worlds, worlds which present themselves as other, or outside

¹³⁹ Kuhn, p. 1

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

everyday reality;” or through iconographic motifs such as space, ships or alien beings.¹⁴³ This thesis takes as its focus 21st century science fiction television, a medium which has its own specificity distinct from that of film. The unique properties of the television medium as they pertain to the past decade are addressed further below. However, having drawn attention to key distinctions between the literary and cinematic aspects of the science fiction genre, it is necessary to further explore science fiction’s “cultural instrumentality” and the interrelation between narrative and cinema to which Kuhn refers. Charting and evaluating notable developments within the science fiction *film* genre will further substantiate the inherent suitability of science fiction to the concerns of this thesis, specifically in terms of the language of cinema and its ‘mobilisation of the visible.’

As I previously stated, defining what constitutes science fiction film has also traditionally given rise to potentially problematic issues. J.P. Telotte argues that such deliberations often come down to “concerns with what to include and what to exclude, and on what basis we can begin to make those assessments.”¹⁴⁴ He describes this task as one of “differentiation,” yet it is within this very process of differentiation that another central characteristic of science fiction is revealed: that of diversity.¹⁴⁵ Vivian Sobchack specifically addresses the relationship of science to society in the science fiction films of the 1950s, pointing to a key thematic development within a specific temporal period in the genre.¹⁴⁶ This development is worth expanding on here. Emerging from this context and proffering a study of anxiety and fear of the Other, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) is often cited as a classic example of the genre’s engagement with the communist paranoia of the 1940s and 1950s. Yet its meaning is also the subject of much debate between scholars. Steven Sanders highlights the conflicting readings *Invasion* has generated, stating that “nobody has established whether *Invasion* is a protest against the political and social conformity called for by right-wing anti-Communists or that demanded by the pro-Soviet collectivists.” The pods depicted in *Invasion* may “represent communism or McCarthyism, or, indeed, the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 8

¹⁴⁵ The following scholars, among others, have considered a varied range of characteristics associated with the science fiction genre: J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Ziauddin Sardar, ‘Introduction’ in *Aliens R Us*, eds. Ziauddin Sardar and Sean Cubitt (London: Pluto Press, 2002), Susan Sontag, ‘The Imagination of Disaster’ in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009 (first published in 1961) and Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁶ Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1997)

power structure that dominated Hollywood itself.”¹⁴⁷ While he interrogates Peter Biskind’s political interpretation (Cold War allegory) and Nancy Steffen-Fluhr’s feminist critique (it depicts a man terrorised by the prospect of falling in love) of *Invasion*, Sanders himself reads the film as an example of the “stylized psychological realism of film noir.”¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Telotte asserts that the film is largely about fear of the Other, but also “about what is ‘out there,’ and “what that otherness means for the self, the fundamental strike it makes at our own sense of security and identity.”¹⁴⁹ Sobchack elaborates that this concern within the text is demonstrative of the fact that within science fiction films “our fears are more confused and more complex than they are in the horror film, and – more often than not – we experience anxiety rather than terror.”¹⁵⁰ *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, then, is a useful case study in terms of considering the ability of science fiction as a genre to prefigure “an entirely earthly and contemporary metaphor” from a variety of critical, albeit potentially contradictory, perspectives.¹⁵¹ While this thesis focuses specifically upon representations of gender and subjectivity within 21st century American science fiction television, the trends that emerged from the 1950s are of substantial import in that they clearly establish science fiction’s concentration on issues of subjectivity within an American socio-cultural context. As such, these trends demonstrate the ability of science fiction film to interrogate such issues within a particular national context.

The link identified by Susan Sontag between science fiction film and the disastrous¹⁵² is also considered by Telotte, who argues it is “symptomatic of an anxiety built into these narratives about what we might make – and what we might make of ourselves.”¹⁵³ Indeed, this relationship between the imagery of disaster and technology, and an apparent anxiety about our very nature, can be seen as a central concern of science fiction cinema. Telotte sees a further example of this at the level of the individual subject, evident in the image of human replication. Within this image is bound up “all our qualms of artifice – science, technology, mechanism – and, what is more important, about our nature as artificers,

¹⁴⁷ Steven M. Sanders, ‘Picturing Paranoia: Interpreting *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*’ in *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film*, ed. Steven M. Sanders (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009) p. 59

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69

¹⁴⁹ Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 20

¹⁵⁰ Sobchack, *Screening Space*, p. 39

¹⁵¹ Sardar, p. 10-11

¹⁵² Susan Sontag, ‘The Imagination of Disaster’ in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009 (Originally published in 1961))

¹⁵³ Telotte, *Replications*, p. 3

constructors of the real, and of the self.”¹⁵⁴ Telotte points to an apparent increase in the emphasis on mediation and the technology of reproduction in recent science fiction films as evidence of this negotiation, whilst also recalling the dominant image of the replicated human within the science fiction films of the 1980s and 1990s as one emblematic of our tendency to get “caught up in a world of technological reproduction.”¹⁵⁵ It is through this necessarily uneasy relationship between technology as form, and technology as content, that science fiction is able to offer a forum for both social criticism and self-conscious reflection. This point is substantiated by Sobchack’s previously noted assertion that “in the SF film, science is always related to society, and its positive and negative aspects are seen in light of their social effect.”¹⁵⁶ This consideration of the science fiction film again feeds back into the core concerns of both the genre itself and its usefulness to the concerns of this thesis, as evidenced by its ability to interrogate subjectivity – for example, in terms of gender and race, further discussed below - in relation to society, within a specific national or cultural context. Yet already this brief discussion surrounding the competing definitions of what, exactly, constitutes science fiction (science and technology; humanity and culture; disaster), in conjunction with the example of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* considered above, also speaks to the difficulty inherent in prescribing a strict or fixed definition of what the genre ‘is’ or ‘does.’ As such, this thesis both acknowledges this point and, via the case study series explored in the following chapters, engages with science fiction as a concept which embodies competing and sometimes contradictory traits; in effect, as a genre that embraces fluid boundaries as opposed to fixed meanings, a quality which is acutely evident in the gendered protagonists represented by 21st century American science fiction television.

Science Fiction and Nation

Addressing the relationship between science fiction and social effect, Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis argue that if one considers subjectivity as a social being, the acquisition of an identity and sense of self, this identity is nevertheless “*subject* to the regulatory structures of culture.”¹⁵⁷ Following on from this, they discuss the traditional operation of science fiction in relation to the playing out of anxieties, in which they consider John Tulloch and Miguel Alvarado’s use of Tzvetan Todorov’s work on *The Fantastic*. Tulloch and

¹⁵⁴ Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 30

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Sobchack, *Screening Space* p. 63

¹⁵⁷ Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis, *Television Drama: Theories and Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p. 96

Alvarado draw on the notion that there are “two kinds of identity in operation in such narratives,” which concern ‘themes of the self’ and ‘themes of the other.’¹⁵⁸ Thornham and Purvis point out that in science fiction, then, these two themes are intertwined: “the monstrous ‘other’ is no less a ‘monster from the Id’ than the split-off self: both embody fears about the body and its (alien) desires, about sexuality and about sexual difference; both are preoccupied with the fragility of identity.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, this traditional operation of science fiction in relation to subjectivity, society and anxiety enables the genre to locate through its narratives historically specific anxieties which are perhaps more deeply rooted.¹⁶⁰

The exploration of the relationship between science fiction and social effect provided by Thornham and Purvis is also of particular importance to this thesis in that it is conducted as part of a wider examination of *television* drama. Referring directly to the series *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-1969) in addressing the issue of race within this interrogation, they state:

America in the 1960s saw the civil rights, anti-Vietnam war and student movements, and the beginnings of what was to become the Women’s Liberation Movement. Against these threats to the established order, *Star Trek’s* constant reassertion of the *rightness* of the USS Enterprise’s civilising mission, ‘to boldly go where no man has gone before,’ bringing scientific rationalism and American values, and organising its multicultural crew under white American leadership, clearly served an ideological purpose.¹⁶¹

This invocation of *Star Trek* and its “civilising mission,” played out against the fractious cultural climate of 1960s America, is an astute example of the genre’s overarching interaction with the prevalent issues and anxieties of a particular time. *Star Trek* is also a useful example in that it is television series which echoes American myth-making, given its preoccupation with the ‘divine mission’ of the Enterprise and the ‘universal ideals’ represented by the Federation, which also similarly subsume the contradictory properties of such myths. However, given the wider concerns of this thesis, Thornham and Purvis’s study also signals the adaptability of science fiction’s formal framework with that of television. As such, the broader generic concerns I have previously discussed in relation to literature and film, can be seen to be utilised within the specificity of the television medium. I offer a more focused consideration of this medium specificity below. However,

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

this point nevertheless demonstrates the viability of science fiction to work through these anxieties via this medium, justifying its use in addressing the concerns of this thesis.

As stated, this thesis recognises and explores a shift in the representation of gender and subjectivity within 21st century science fiction television. The influence of *Star Trek*, particularly in terms of its interrogation of (and relationship to) American culture has of course been well discussed elsewhere.¹⁶² However, it is a text which bears further consideration here, in that it too is a science fiction television series which is arguably emblematic of a previous shift in such representations. *Star Trek* is important because, as Lincoln Geraghty points out, it was “created as a style of social commentary, intent on criticising America in the late 1960s, during a period of extreme social and political turmoil.”¹⁶³ Geraghty’s examination of the historical, narrative and mythic roots of the franchise is of considerable use within this chapter, in that it draws together trends of historical American myth-making addressed in the prior sub-section alongside the generic functions of science fiction within a televisual context. Geraghty states that the futuristic and mythical times offered by the *Star Trek* series put forward “a way out of dealing with contemporary life,” not because audiences “want to live in a mythic past, but rather that history and myth offer a better template to fantasise about and create the future.”¹⁶⁴ He identifies this mythic past as inherently linked to concepts of American exceptionalism, a topic I have previously addressed, arguing that “*Star Trek* acts as a canonical reference to what makes America American, and what will make Americans more human.” While its roots and “topics of discourse” were expressed in the 1960s, they originated from America’s foundational history. As such, “this reliance on such an exceptional and wholly white male historical narrative is probably why so many critics...have studied *Star Trek*’s racial, national and gender implications.”¹⁶⁵ This opposition between foundational myth and the volatile cultural climate of 1960s America as expressed within the narrative of *Star Trek* demonstrates the significance of the series, both for the shift it embodied in the

¹⁶² See: Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Michele Barrett and Duncan Barrett, *Star Trek: The Human Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Lincoln Geraghty, *Living With Star Trek: American Culture and the Star Trek Universe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Jay Goulding, *Empire, Aliens and Conquest: A Critique of American Ideology in Star Trek and Other Science Fiction Adventures* (Toronto: Sisyphus Press, 1985)

¹⁶³ Lincoln Geraghty, *Living With Star Trek: American Culture and the Star Trek Universe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007) p. 72

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18

science fiction genre *and* television medium at the time, and its contrast to the 21st century texts this thesis interrogates in the following chapters.

Star Trek is a prominent example of how science fiction television is able to engage with issues of subjectivity and uncertainty within a particular national context. However, the opposition between myth and the potentially progressive elements within the text mark it as an inherently contradictory series, somewhat hindering its ability to fully interrogate these issues. The negotiation of race that takes place within its narrative is arguably the principal example of this. The show was noted at the time for its visibly integrated crew, a trait that was considered progressive during the cultural context of 1960s America. Nevertheless, *Star Trek* propagated a text in which, as Daniel Leonard Bernardi points out, minorities were often “relegated to the spatial and narrative background for most of the episodes.”¹⁶⁶ This, alongside a “racial project-in-the-text that ultimately advocates the evolutionary hegemony of whiteness,” undermines any progressive attempt to effectively interrogate race relations of the period. For example, the series’ reflection of a Cold War polarity, in which “the Federation is stereotypically honest, mostly white, and ostensibly democratic,” compared to the Soviet-like Klingons who are “evil, dark, and underhanded” illustrates how xenophobia, within the *Star Trek* universe, “becomes a polemical topic. The ideological spin on this form of bigotry smacks of liberal humanism, as *Trek* explains it as individual and irrational, rather than socio-political and systematic.”¹⁶⁷ Ultimately *Star Trek* thereby ends up emphasising what Sobchack refers to as the ‘speciality’ of white American culture, with this “new American ‘humanism’ literally [expanding] into and [colonizing] outer space.”¹⁶⁸ In doing so, William Blake Tyrrell states, *Star Trek*:

Creates a future world where the glories of the past are pristine and the failures and doubts of the present have been overcome. It gives us our past as our future, while making our present the past which, like any historical event for the future-oriented American, is safely over and forgotten.¹⁶⁹

Such a position is indicative of the continued propagation of foundational myths within the text, the historical roots of which I explored earlier in this chapter. In this sense *Star Trek*

¹⁶⁶ Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1998) p. 40

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51-52

¹⁶⁸ Sobchack, *Screening Space*, p. 297

¹⁶⁹ William Blake Tyrrell, ‘Star Trek as Myth and Television as Mythmaker’ in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 10.4 (Spring 1977) p. 713

itself is considerably mythic, in Suvin's sense of the word, because it is often absolute and contradictory. While it endeavours to comment on the political struggles evident in 1960s America, and is indeed commendable for its effort in attempting to undertake such a goal during this period, the series nevertheless "endures as a form of 'poetry as illumination,' because as a text [it] allows America to dream."¹⁷⁰ As the previous sub-section on such historical myths demonstrated, this dream has historically been conceived as a white, male enterprise. In contrast, I argue in this thesis that American science fiction television is uniquely positioned to offer new and intriguing representations of gender and subjectivity within the uncertain cultural climate of the 21st century, that go beyond static reproductions. In doing so, the television series produced in this context move away from and beyond previous examples such as *Star Trek*, by considering a *range* of gendered subject positions in a state of continually developing change.

The Television Medium

The following serves to establish the capability of television, as a specific medium, to offer a suitable forum through which the wider concerns of this thesis may be interrogated. Given that this thesis considers representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century science fiction *television*, this examination of medium specificity is particularly relevant to the chapters that follow. I offer a broad overview of relevant historical developments and trends in television studies, considering how these elements further justify my selection of television as an object of study. Focusing exclusively on American television, I chart significant shifts in industrial practice which have contributed to these trends in order to explore how these shifts have impacted on the contemporary context from which my own case study television texts have emerged. I pay close attention to the key trends which have helped situate American television in a unique position in the 21st century and, in particular, I consider how individual television series which have subsequently emerged from this era may be approached in a manner which illuminates television's specificity.

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, Wheeler Winston Dixon argues that film and television programming in the year following 9/11 embraced "a return to the past, revamping reliable formats and series concepts to create an alternative escapist universe."¹⁷¹ I contend that the programmes which form the focus of this thesis directly

¹⁷⁰ Geraghty, p. 24

¹⁷¹ Dixon, p. 12

challenge this. While they are science fiction series, they all work to clearly address the events of the 21st century within an American socio-political context. They are easily accessible, in terms of broadcast television, digital media or box-set availability. They share a particular focus on gendered subjectivities that I argue are manifestly fragmented and in-between. With the exception of *Battlestar Galactica*, they have received sparse academic attention. In recognising them as engaging with the significant events of the 21st century in intriguing and unique ways, this seems to be an evident absence of scholarship that I aim to redress. While this engagement with the socio-cultural issues of a particular era is not new generically, I argue that these concerns are uniquely foregrounded in a much more prominent manner by my case study series, due to the convergence of a number of key factors particular to the 21st century. The serialised nature of each programme, and the wider national context with which they debate, allows them to provide a clear political engagement with the socio-cultural events of the era through a particular conception of subjectivity that is frequently represented as multiple and in-between. It is this subjectivity, I argue, which is understood by these series as expressly manifest in the female body.

I also take the medium of television as my object of study because it typically deals with the contemporary.¹⁷² John Ellis states that television has taken the form of ‘working through,’ offering an “important social forum” in addressing “the feeling of uncertainty that haunts the modern world.”¹⁷³ He draws upon psychoanalysis in defining ‘working through,’ which is described as a process “whereby material is continually worried over until it is exhausted.”¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Bignell observes television’s traditional interest in “representations of the people,” wherein “questions of equality (especially in gender, race and class) and their resonance between representations and perceived shifts in cultural politics” are at stake.¹⁷⁵ Ellis also notes television’s contemporary nature, arguing that it “imbues the present moment with meanings. It offers multiple stories and frameworks of explanation which enable understanding,” allowing viewers to “work through the major public and private concerns of their society.” Therefore, television “has a key role in the social process of working through because it exists alongside us.”¹⁷⁶ Pointing to the consideration of television as a medium which possesses postmodern traits, a facet I

¹⁷² John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987) p. 22

¹⁷³ John Ellis, *Seeing Things* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 3

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Bignell, ‘Television and the Popular: Viewing From the British Perspective’ in *Journal of Literary Theory*, 4:2 (2010) p. 187

¹⁷⁶ Ellis, p. 74

further explore below, Ellis explicitly states that the process of working through is inherently an open one: “a forum of contending definitions with no final result.”¹⁷⁷ This point emphasises the medium’s natural fit with the wider concerns of this thesis, reflecting the ongoing nature of the representations with which I engage, and the characteristics of mobility and transition which are emblematic of the protagonists I interrogate.

Finally, television has been traditionally considered as embodying a sense of being very much of the ‘now.’ The ability to dramatize the now is also particularly pertinent to the wider concerns of this thesis and as such, I suggest that the specific capacity of television to address and make sense of the social concerns of a particular moment is a clear justification for its selection as an object of study. It is an ability further highlighted by Neil Postman, who argued in 1985 that television’s ascendancy is “the most significant American cultural fact of the second half of the twentieth century.”¹⁷⁸ Postman adds: “we now live in a culture where information, ideas and epistemology are given form by television.”¹⁷⁹ Having established television’s capability as a forum through which to work through distinctive representations of gender and subjectivity that I argue are very ‘now’ within a contemporary cultural context which is ongoing and changing over time, I now go on to address the impact significant industrial shifts and changing production contexts have had on television in the 21st century.

Industrial and Technological Developments

Given that I focus on American television as it operates in a 21st century context, it is pertinent to consider more fully those recent developments in how the medium has both functioned and been understood within a national industrial context. Until the late 1980s, US broadcast television was dominated by three primary television networks: ABC, CBS and NBC. This period was known as the network era; the aforementioned networks as the ‘Big Three.’ However, in the last twenty years, American television has undergone significant changes in terms of production practices that has seen it now arrive at what is commonly referred to as the post-network era. Such changes have been widely and adeptly explored elsewhere.¹⁸⁰ The aim of this section is to briefly consider the capability of contemporary

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84

¹⁷⁸ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986) p. 8

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

¹⁸⁰ See, for example: *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, eds. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (London: Routledge, 2009); *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007);

American television to offer a suitable forum through which the wider concerns of this thesis can be interrogated. As such, I only offer a brief synopsis of these changes here. They may be concisely summarised as encompassing the waning of the three-network system, the continued proliferation of new technologies and channels, and increased audience fragmentation. Amanda Lotz states: “changes in television have forced the production processes to evolve during the past twenty years so that the assorted ways we now use television are mirrored in and enabled by greater variation in the ways television is made, financed, and distributed.”¹⁸¹ Lotz differentiates between the post-network era and what she refers to as the “multi-channel transition” era, which she identifies as lasting from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s.¹⁸² This period was characterised by the gradual influence of several developments that functioned to change our experience of television, yet still allowed the industry to continue to operate in much the same way as it did previously in the network era.¹⁸³ The post-network era is distinct from both the network era and the multi-channel transition era by a number of characteristics. While the latter certainly provided a wider variety of options for television viewers, Lotz describes the post-network era as one which is free of constraints: viewers have more control over what, when and where they chose to watch, and as such it is indicative of “more comprehensive changes in the medium’s use.”¹⁸⁴ The case study texts which form the focus of this thesis emerge from the so-called ‘birth’ of post-network television. Defining what, exactly, constitutes the contextual post-network era in which they were developed and is broadcast is thus important in any consideration of how they might be understood.

Technological developments in the television industry have had a significant impact upon the viewing contexts of the multi-channel transition and post-network eras. Charting changes that he identifies as being in motion from the late 1990s, Robin Nelson cites examples such as advancements in technology, the involvement of established film directors and actors and an improved imagery as emblematic of this impact.¹⁸⁵ Further

Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will be Revolutionised* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁸¹ Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionised* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) p. 3

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 7

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15

¹⁸⁵ Robin Nelson, ‘Quality TV Drama: Estimations and Influences Through Time and Space,’ in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2007) p. 43

technological changes have also clearly contributed to television's developing distinctiveness during this transitional period, most notably in the growing availability of multiple modes of viewing. The increasing popularity of DVD box-sets and commercial free viewing means that television can now be watched in "uninterrupted fashion."¹⁸⁶ The widespread availability of these technological developments has subsequently been furthered by digital media and the ability to access television series through a multitude of devices. These new modes of viewing television have likewise served to challenge the idea that the medium can be understood as providing a continuous 'flow.'¹⁸⁷ Similarly, television's improved visual sophistication has also impacted upon how the medium is understood to function in relation to society. Ellis states that "the visual dimension of television has undergone a revolution of its own in the era of availability. The process of working through has been crucially furthered by television's increasing visual maturity, brought about by new technologies of image manipulation."¹⁸⁸ I contend that this argument further justifies television's suitability as an object of study in this thesis. This is evidenced in the linkage Ellis explicitly identifies between television's function as a forum which embraces the process of working through, and the technological production contexts of television as it transitioned into the post-network era.

As I alluded to above, several critics have interpreted the industrial changes that gave rise to the post-network era as emblematic of postmodernity; noting the multi-channelling, deregulation and the expansion of American television into international markets that has marked these new viewing contexts. This is worth expanding on here, in order to illustrate the continued impact these industrial developments have had upon television within this contemporary era. Such developments also serve at this point to more fully contextualise the wider concerns of this thesis, in terms of medium specificity. Writing specifically about television drama, Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis lay out what they identify as the television viewing contexts of postmodernity. While they also refer to British television, their points are clearly indicative of wider changes to the medium in the last twenty years. In particular, Thornham and Purvis note the expansion of plural screens

¹⁸⁶ Thornham and Purvis, p. 96

¹⁸⁷ Raymond Williams' theory of flow, outlined in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 3rd Edition, 2003 (Originally published in 1974)), argues that television adopts a continuous form in which programmes, adverts, trailers and breaks are taken as segments which blend into each other. The theory of flow has been subsequently developed by scholars such as John Ellis (*Visible Fictions* (New York: Routledge, 1982)) and Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch ('Television as a Cultural Forum,' in *Television: The Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 5th Edition, 1994)).

¹⁸⁸ Ellis, p. 89

and multiple images, new technologies and services that compete with each other “in the production, representation, distribution and consumption of images.”¹⁸⁹ This era has also seen an increased fluidity in television schedules and formats. With regard to American television, this is a key shift from the previously dominant three network system, during which “the form, genre and structure of programs were more rigidly defined than today.”¹⁹⁰ The relationship between postmodernity and 21st century television’s medium specificity is also echoed by Brian L. Ott’s differentiation between ‘hyperconscious’ television, as characterised by traits of eclecticism, intertextuality and self-reflexivity, and ‘nostalgia’ television, characterised by traits of purity, unity and security. He argues that structurally, these two forms “might be imagined as opposing poles on a continuum of textual possibilities.” In discussing the culture of television as postmodern, he states that:

As postmodern forms, hyperconscious and nostalgia television ‘screen’ the world, and thus orient us toward the world, through a postmodern lens. Hyperconscious television...revels in reference and reflexivity. Its impulse toward the present is one of reverie and it may therefore be thought of as belonging to the realm of postmodern imagination.¹⁹¹

Thornham and Purvis also agree that television series emerging from this context demonstrate a greater tendency towards experimentation and reflexivity.¹⁹² They conclude, importantly, that postmodern culture, as it relates to contemporary television drama, “threatens notions of the fully formed or whole ‘character,’ offering instead fluid, split or fractured ‘subjects.”¹⁹³ This final point is significant, in that it directly correlates not only to how this thesis defines the concept of subjectivity which I outlined in my introduction, but how this subjectivity is suitably positioned to be represented through the specific medium of television in unique and interesting ways.

It could be argued that television’s shift from the network era, the transitional multi-channel era and the post-network era may serve to question the continued relevance and sustainability of broadcast television. This is an important point that I wish to acknowledge here, given that my case study texts all aired on broadcast networks. Roberta Pearson argues that television in the 21st century is caught up in the “increasingly unstable industrial conditions of the post-network era,” citing the convergence of viewing platforms and

¹⁸⁹ Thornham and Purvis, p. 158

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Brian L. Ott, *The Small Screen: How Television Equips Us to Live in the Information Age* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007) p. 15

¹⁹² Thornham and Purvis, p. 157-160

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 160

audience fragmentation as aspects which have morphed the medium “into something rich and strange.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Michael Curtin sees contemporary television as a “matrix medium, an increasingly flexible and dynamic mode of communication.”¹⁹⁵ As I have discussed, this is a clear shift from the classical network era. These debates contribute to the context from which the case study texts which I focus on in this thesis have emerged. Yet it is also important to note that despite the possibilities offered by plural screens and changing media platforms, live viewers still remain of paramount importance to broadcasters. The continual developments in technology and distribution models that have defined the multi-channel transition era and the subsequent shift into the post-network era have, for example, had two consequences for the Nielsen Media Company, the organisation which retained a virtual monopoly on American television ratings during the network and multi-channel transition eras. On the one hand it required what Lotz refers to as “onerous adjustments” to the company’s measurement systems, while on the other it secured Nielsen’s continued centrality to the industry. The growing uncertainty about “emerging advertising strategies, distribution windows, and ways people were using television” have led to a demand for information about “audience behaviour” within this new context, safeguarding Nielsen’s importance and influence,¹⁹⁶ and pointing to the ongoing significance of broadcast television in this contemporary era. Rather than rendering broadcast television as antiquated or redundant, I would therefore suggest that the dynamism and flexibility that marks American television in the 21st century, taken alongside an increased visual capability that has impacted upon its ability to work through the socio-cultural concerns of the era, is demonstrative of the medium’s continued relevance and suitability as an object of study in this thesis.

Contemporary Specificity: Narrative Complexity and ‘Quality TV’

So far I have chosen to focus largely on the industrial and technological developments that have impacted upon television’s medium specificity in the last twenty years, in terms of how television is produced, consumed and understood. In doing so, I have aimed to establish a clear contextual review of how American television is situated in the 21st century. At this stage I wish to acknowledge that within a project of this nature, it

¹⁹⁴ Roberta Pearson, ‘Lost in Transition: From Post-Network to Post-Television’ in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2007) p. 239-240

¹⁹⁵ Michael Curtin, ‘Media Matrix’ in *Television Studies After TV*, eds. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (London: Routledge, 2009) p. 13

¹⁹⁶ Lotz, p. 195

may be argued that my own subjectivity is at play through both my interpretations of the case study texts considered in this thesis, and my analysis of the larger issues within US popular culture with which I engage. As Bignell points out, “academic interest in audience responses rather than textual aesthetics, and the waning of the assumption by the political Left that progressive texts produce progressive viewers, [has] led to instability in the ways that popular television is defined and discussed.”¹⁹⁷ I do not intend to explicitly engage with audience behaviour in this thesis given that, as I outlined in my introduction, I specifically draw on textual analysis alongside a number of key theoretical concepts in my methodological approach to the case study texts I focus on. As such, in what follows I retain a contemporary focus on the medium, whilst interrogating how these changes have impacted upon the shifting definitions of television’s specificity in this post-network era. In identifying several key trends that have emerged from this context, I aim to further justify the selection of my case study texts in terms of how they function with regards to the wider concerns of this thesis. The notion that television works to stage the present is reaffirmed by more recent critics like Ott, who states that television offers a “mode of discourse that repeatedly stages or dramatizes contemporary social concerns and anxieties.”¹⁹⁸ The technological and industrial changes I previously outlined have served to open up new ways for approaching individual television series. My own methodological choices in approaching the wider concerns of this thesis are therefore directly implicated by this. Given that I explore an ongoing shift in representations of gender and subjectivity in American science fiction television series emerging from a 21st century context, it is thus necessary for me to address more clearly how individual programmes are able to speak to both television’s medium specificity, and the socio-cultural concerns of this era.

I take the position that American television, as it specifically exists in the 21st century, has enabled a multitude of approaches to the study of individual texts through the establishment of several key traits which speak effectively to the medium’s distinctiveness. Ellis makes note of how television “drama and fiction” tends to eschew self-contained narratives, considering its “more habitual forms” as more “open-ended.” He states that “television refuses the advantages of certainty in favour of the pleasure and pain of living in the uncertain present. Television, in this sense, acts as our forum for interpretations.”¹⁹⁹ It is significant that, writing here in 1999, Ellis’s point comes during American television’s shift

¹⁹⁷ Bignell, ‘Television and the Popular,’ p. 190

¹⁹⁸ Ott, p. x

¹⁹⁹ Ellis, p. 99

from the multi-channel transition era and into the post-network era. Several scholars have engaged with the distinctive qualities of television in the post-network era.²⁰⁰ Ellis' observation is significant because it draws together television's increased proclivity towards open narratives and reflexivity amidst this transition, and his previous assertion that the medium serves as a forum for working through. I wish to draw attention to this point here as it serves to further demonstrate how the concept of working through, which I have argued is key to my choice of selecting television as an object of study, emerges at a time of change for television. Indeed, through my discussion of several key traits specific to television in this era, in relation to how individual texts may be recognised as demonstrative of the medium's uniqueness, I hope to illustrate how the concept of working through is in fact one that flourishes in understanding how television functions in 21st century America. Indeed, Kristin Thompson notes television's propensity for "spinning out narratives" in this 21st century context.²⁰¹ Given that she identifies a specific tendency within *science fiction television* for new, long-form series, Thompson's point is especially notable because it reinforces the relationship between that genre and television's medium specificity with which this thesis engages.

This notion is further illustrated by Jason Mittell's statement that when "charting out any historical moment of a genre, texts can serve as a crucial site of generic practice" because they work as "*sites of articulation*."²⁰² I return to the relationship between genre and television specificity below. At this point, however, I wish to continue this consideration of narrative complexity as it relates to how American television in the 21st century might be further understood by the individual programmes it produces. Mittell suggests that "in the last fifteen years, television's storytelling possibilities and practices have undergone drastic shifts in a medium-specific way."²⁰³ I contend that the case study television texts which form the basis of this thesis can be defined by what he terms

²⁰⁰ See, among others: Jason Mittell, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,' in *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 58 (Fall, 2006), Roberta Pearson, 'Lost in Transition: From Post-Network to Post-Television' in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2007), *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will be Revolutionised* (New York: NYU Press, 2007)

²⁰¹ Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 105

²⁰² Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, p. 124

²⁰³ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling, pre-publication edition*. (MediaCommons Press, 2012) Np.

“narrative complexity.” Identifying this mode of storytelling as emerging over the past two decades, Mittell describes narrative complexity as:

A redefinition of episodic forms under the influence of serial narration – not necessarily a complete merger of episodic and serial forms but a shifting balance. Rejecting the need for plot closure within every episode that typifies conventional episodic form, narrative complexity foregrounds ongoing stories across a range of genres.²⁰⁴

Narrative complexity has arisen within the changing industrial and production practices of American television which I have previously discussed. *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Fringe*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Caprica* all fit Mittell’s definition of narrative complexity, evident in their rejection of plot closure and the manner in which they embrace ongoing storylines. Their innovative status in this regard therefore clearly underlines their ability, as individual shows, to illuminate television’s medium specificity as it exists in the 21st century.

In this thesis I make a specific association between a particular genre (science fiction) and the television medium; an association I contend serves to illustrate how the study of individual programmes can be demonstrative of television’s medium specificity and beneficial to the field of television studies as a whole. Mittell has examined how “genre categories operate throughout the range of spheres that constitute television as a medium – industries, texts, audiences, policies, critics and historical contexts.” He argues that genres “work to categorise texts and link them into clusters of cultural assumptions through discourses of definition, interpretation, and evaluation.”²⁰⁵ Mittell states that television genres can thus be looked at as cultural categories and as such, “through the prevalence of generic mixing and niche segmentation, genres may be even more important today than in previous television eras.”²⁰⁶ Mittell’s point further serves to justify how these case study texts, which have emerged from a particular genre during a transformative period of American culture, are aptly positioned to interrogate specific gendered subjectivities within a specific socio-cultural context. Genre is a key aspect in this interrogation. As Bignell argues, genre has:

Become increasingly important to the study of television, led, no doubt, by the dominance of generic programming in the schedules. This has produced both a sophisticated notion of genre as a critical category and

²⁰⁴ Jason Mittell, ‘Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,’ in *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 58 (Fall, 2006) p. 32

²⁰⁵ Mittell, *Genre and Television*, p. xiv

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiii

a more sympathetic treatment of particular programmes and programme categories.²⁰⁷

Given that they operate in a historical process of category formation that is necessarily ongoing, it can be argued that “genres are constantly in flux, and thus their analysis must be historically situated.”²⁰⁸ Mittell’s position suggests that the convergence between genre and medium, the contextual bases of which are addressed in this introduction, must be situated within a particular historical moment in order to fully emphasise how a given genre or text may be seen to be constitutive of television as a medium. It is a position summed up by his statement that “instead of asking what a genre means (the typical interpretative question), we need to ask what a genre means *for specific groups in a particular cultural instance*.”²⁰⁹ The emergence of this figure of female subjectivity, represented as positively in-between, is central to my overall argument that these protagonists are emblematic of a shift not only in how the female body has previously been used as a site through which to play out anxieties, but how this body is utilised as a focal point through which to engage with contemporary socio-cultural concerns in a manner which is both positive and liberating. Therefore, the links this thesis makes between medium and genre, and subjectivity and nationhood, within a 21st century cultural context, further underline how the individual case study texts I interrogate in the following chapters are distinctly positioned to engage with this challenging period of trauma, anxiety and uncertainty.

The contemporary televisual context from which my individual case study texts emerge also offers an opportunity to consider the position of these series as they exist within a broader socio-political temporal context. The engagement these texts make with important events of this era enables them to be considered as examples of quality television, or ‘Quality TV.’ The concept of ‘Quality TV’ provides another approach to the study of individual programmes that also serves to illustrate television’s medium specificity. Bignell posits quality television drama as “an aesthetically ambitious programme type with the literary values of creative imagination, authenticity and relevance. As a mode of production, it is where writing and mise-en-scene are prioritised.” Its worth also lies in its

²⁰⁷ Jonathan Bignell and Stephen Lacey, ‘Introduction’ in *Popular Television Drama: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Jonathan Bignell and Stephen Lacey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) p. 11

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xiv

²⁰⁹ Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, p. 5

appeal to valued viewers, such as cable subscribers.²¹⁰ Interestingly, he sees quality television and medium specificity as linked by reflexivity; stating that “together these characteristics negotiate a shifting understanding of what television looks like and how its identity as a medium can be known.”²¹¹ Bignell concludes that “‘quality’ refers not only to character, dramatic logic and thematic complexity, but also to the distinctive use of visual and aural resources.” In terms of the institutional and technological changes I have discussed in this section, the development of the ‘Quality TV’ concept is also generically significant given that, as Bignell asserts, this contemporary context has “provided the conditions for this change in the aesthetics of popular generic programmes.”²¹² As such, the reflexivity of programmes denoted as ‘quality’ is “crucial to their play with contrasts between excessive or unconventional mise-en-scene and generic narrative, characterisation and dialogue.”²¹³ I have argued that the televisual context from which my case study texts emerge offers an opportunity to consider their position as they exist within a broader socio-political temporal context. Their narrative engagement with important events that have transpired within this context, with a focus on shifting representations of gender and subjectivity, also enables these texts to be considered as examples of quality television; offering another approach to the study of individual series that is illustrative of television’s medium specificity.

The concept of quality television is, I would suggest, inherently linked to the changing production and viewing contexts that have ushered the medium into the post-network era. As I have discussed, such changes have seen the rise of more visually sophisticated, and increasing narratively complex, television series. While Mittell notes that “complexity has not overtaken conventional forms within the majority of television programming today,” the era will nevertheless be remembered as one of “narrative experimentation and innovation, challenging the norms of what the medium can do.”²¹⁴ The case study texts that I focus on in this thesis have emerged from the convergence of these concerns and, as I have argued, exhibit traits of narrative complexity and visual sophistication. Bignell and Mittell both note that quality television is not solely denoted by its use of visual resources but also by its relevance, narrative ambition, characterisation and

²¹⁰ Jonathan Bignell, ‘Seeing and Knowing: Reflexivity and Quality’ in in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007) p. 162

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159-160

²¹² Bignell, ‘Television and the Popular,’ p. 194

²¹³ Bignell, ‘Seeing and Knowing,’ p. 170

²¹⁴ Mittell, *Complex TV*, Np.

inherent reflexivity. As the following chapters more fully illustrate, my case-study television series are aesthetically and thematically ambitious, and notably self-reflexive. Their engagement with representations of gender and subjectivity within a particular national context, taken alongside these characteristics, is therefore suggestive of their status as quality television texts. In their consideration of America within a 21st century socio-cultural context, as represented via multiple gendered subject positions, they all specifically engage with a challenging period of anxiety and uncertainty. As such, these case study texts are aptly positioned in a broader contextual sense to take advantage of the possibilities within series television for complex narratives. The complex, serialised nature of these texts enables them to pose a politicised engagement with the cultural events of this contemporary and transformative era. This engagement, as I have discussed, coincides with a convergence of key events within American television's own shifts in industrial practice. Taking advantage of their status as post-network era shows, my case study texts are able to advantageously utilise the platform provided by the shifts in television culture explored here.

Representing the Female Heroine

In this thesis I consider several key subject positions to examine how 21st century American science fiction television engages with representations of gender and subjectivity. I argue this convergence of genre, medium and socio-cultural context reflects an important and significant shift in how science fiction has previously dealt with American nationhood through the female body, which has often been utilised in film and television to evoke a sense of transition. As such, the focus of this interrogation now necessarily shifts from a consideration of wider issues of genre and medium to debates specifically surrounding representation. Considered an apt figure to play out anxieties in opposition to more fixed definitions of masculinity, past representations of women in film and television reveal a recurrent representation of femininity as often much more fluid than bounded male figures. It is these traits of transition and fluidity, often utilised to question or challenge a fixed, masculine and white ideal, that most directly speaks to my own choice to focus my interrogation of 21st century American science fiction television around the gendered subjectivity of the female body. As I now discuss, such a study is both timely and appropriate, given the increase in the number of strong female television characters which have emerged in the latter half of the 20th century.

While I focus specifically on television in this thesis, it is worth briefly drawing attention to the fact that gender has been frequently used as a marker of difference within science fiction film, and often to interesting effect. A prominent example of this can be seen in the figure of the android body, which Telotte points to as symptomatic of anxiety and self-reflection. This is a figure which Janet Bergstrom has also perceptively interrogated. She argues that the replicants featured in the film *Blade Runner* (1982), and the android figure more generally, are in fact “differentiated from other humans in these films with great difficulty.” The instability generated by this functions to create a disturbance, which subsequently emerges between categories that are normally kept distinct in terms of a human/non-human binary. As such, “another dimension is added to the standard representation of differentiation by gender in mainstream fiction film. Where the basic fact of identity as a human is suspect and subject to transformation into its opposite, the representation of sexual identity carries a potentially heightened significance, because it can be used as the primary marker of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms.”²¹⁵ Elaborating on this point, Telotte notes that the “image of the crafted body has proven extremely useful for exploring a variety of concerns raised by the women’s movement, especially the extent to which gender itself might be seen as a cultural construct.”²¹⁶ Telotte argues that this emphasis on the physical construction of these bodies and their limited function is demonstrative of how science fiction films “have managed to bring into mainstream consciousness (and even provided that consciousness with a useful set of metaphors) many of the most prominent issues raised by feminist and postmodern theory – particularly concerns with a culture of beauty, with limited, culturally determined opportunities for women, and with the invisible ideological controls that they would argue, effectively pre-program feminine aspirations and even a woman’s sense of self.”²¹⁷ The exploration of such issues demonstrates the ability of science fiction, via the language of cinema, to interrogate subject positions in terms of gender; while also acknowledging the wider socio-political implications manifest in any such consideration.

In her exploration of *television’s* ‘Warrior Women’, Dawn Heinecken argues that the female body is typically seen by Freudian psychoanalytic theory as representing a threat to

²¹⁵ Janet Bergstrom, ‘Androids and Androgeny’ in *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism and Science Fiction* eds. Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon and Lynn Spigel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) p. 35

²¹⁶ Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 110

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a masculine sense of self-completeness.²¹⁸ Heinecken's assertion, in conjunction with her reference to psychoanalytic theory, is evocative of concerns embodied by the figure of the femme fatale in film noir. The femme fatale addresses issues of gender and power, within a particular national context, in intriguing ways. Often utilised and represented as a disruptive presence, this figure possesses several important traits that are also evident in the protagonists I consider in this thesis. I specifically consider the figure of the femme fatale here precisely because of her function in a set of films that engage with a specific socio-cultural context.²¹⁹ The women of film noir are central to the intrigue of the films. Presented as simultaneously dangerous and desirable to men, they exist as an impediment to the quest of the male hero. This leads Mary Ann Doane to assert that "the femme fatale is a figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be."²²⁰ Engaging with psychoanalytic theory in her interrogation of this figure, Doane continues:

The femme fatale is an articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and the centrality of the self, the "I," the ego. These anxieties appear quite explicitly in the process of her representation of castration anxiety...The power accorded the femme fatale is a function of fears linked to the notions of uncontrollable drives, the fading of subjectivity, and the loss of conscious agency – all themes of the emergent theories of psychoanalysis.²²¹

I contend that the characters examined in this thesis provide a literal representation of the unease suggested by, for example, the femme fatale; given the destabilising nature of the characteristics they possess, such as in-betweenness and multiplicity, and the socio-cultural context which these representations address. The discursive unease embodied by the femme fatale, and the fact that the power afforded this figure is linked to fear, the representation of this body is equally suggestive of the inauthentic and paradoxical states to which Moi and de Beauvoir refer, as I noted in my introduction. While I outline these characteristics in more detail below, a crucial difference between the protagonists I consider in this thesis and the figure of the femme fatale is the fact that the latter is

²¹⁸ Dawn Heinecken, *The Warrior Women of Television: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003) p. 4

²¹⁹ Janey Place ('Women in Film Noir' in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (British Film Institute Books, 1980) and E. Ann Kaplan ('Introduction,' *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (British Film Institute Books, 1980), among others, have both perceptively considered the impact of film noir in terms of its specific representation of women.

²²⁰ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Studies and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 1

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

frequently punished or killed due to her configuration within film noir texts as evil.²²² Indeed, Doane elaborates that “her textual eradication involves a desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened, male subject.”²²³ Ultimately this figure is therefore restricted; often presented as evil, she must be contained and eradicated.

In addition to the femme fatale and android body, many scholars have considered the role of the female action hero as a significant figure for the challenge she poses to binaristic thinking, via her presence within the traditionally ‘male’ space of action films. I now consider previous estimations of this figure, as she has been represented in film and, importantly, science fiction television, before going on to assert the intervention this thesis makes in these debates. Elizabeth Hills argues that “female action heroes confound binaristic logic in a number of ways, for they access a range of emotions, skills and abilities that have traditionally been defined as either ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine.’” Indeed, Hills states that female characters who take up space in a genre such as action cinema “derive their power from their ability to think and live creatively, their physical courage, and their strategic uses of technology.”²²⁴ By operating in this manner, Sherrie A. Inness argues, “not only does the action heroine demonstrate that she can perform the same tasks as a man in an action-adventure narrative, but she also challenges the entire gender system based on the binary male-female relationship. She creates a new gender system in which she can enact ‘woman’ in non-traditional ways;” pointing to the figure of Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in the film franchise *Alien* as a particularly pertinent example.²²⁵

The challenge posed by the female action hero, identified by the likes of Willis and Inness above, is nevertheless tempered by markers of containment that emerge in representations of the female body that, while not necessarily wholly negative, may certainly be characterised as paradoxical. In a study of the female heroine in popular film from 1970 to 2006, Rikke Schubart recognises the female hero as “a contested site, a paradoxical and ambivalent creature open to feminist as well as post-feminist interpretations, a figure of oppression as well as liberation.”²²⁶ Identifying the challenge this heroine poses to the patriarchal status-quo, Schubart

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Elizabeth Hills, ‘From ‘Figurative Modes’ to Action Heroines: Further Thoughts on Active Women in the Cinema’ in *Screen* (1999) 40 (1) p. 39

²²⁵ Sherrie A. Inness, ‘Introduction,’ *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 8

²²⁶ Rikke Schubart, *Super Bitches and Action Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema, 1970-2006* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2007) p. 7

states that “the female hero is an ambiguous creature and wherever she appears, ambivalent reactions follow...a woman performing actions which society has so long associated with men has the instant taste of revolt against traditional gender roles.” Yet she also points to a level of conformity bound up in the ambiguous casting of this figure, arguing that “a closer look at the actress playing the female hero reveals a figure deliberately composed as ambiguous... As she breaks society’s gender expectations she also confirms them.”²²⁷ The ambiguity present within such representations of the female heroine leads Schubart, along with Judith Halberstam, to identify in-betweenness as a “site for subversion” for these ambiguously gendered figures. As Halberstam states, this gender ambiguity creates tension: “it is in-betweenness here and elsewhere in the history of butches in film that inspires rage and terror.”²²⁸ Sharon Willis reads in-betweenness as ‘difference’ in this context, acknowledging a similar tension: “As films read in our social field, they may mobilise and contain the conflict, uneasiness, and overwrought affect that so often accompany the confrontation of differences in everyday practices.”²²⁹ Such a difference is also evocative of an ambiguous presence.

Examining the gender politics of popular science fiction and fantasy American television in the late 20th century, Elyce Rae Helford considers how America’s socio-cultural context, both in the 1990s and in the decades prior she briefly explores, has previously impacted upon representations of gender in science fiction television. Helford states: “Over its fifty-plus years of broadcasting, television has given us complex and contradictory female characters who reflect, direct, and occasionally critique America’s fantasies and anxieties about historical gender roles and norms.” Referring to Laura Mulvey’s argument that the spectator’s point of view in classical narrative film is always masculine,²³⁰ Helford states that many female characters represented in television programming leading into the 1980s “fit well into the category of objects of the ‘male gaze.’”²³¹ Jan Johnson-Smith interrogates *Star Trek*’s portrayal of gender along similar lines, arguing that within the original series, women “offer a romantic interest, particularly in the case of Kirk’s blonde and blue-eyed Yeoman, Janice Rand (Grace Lee Whitney), or as the means of

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6

²²⁸ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) p. 192

²²⁹ Sharon Willis, *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) p. 1

²³⁰ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ in *Screen* (1975) 16 (3) pp. 6-18

²³¹ Elyce Rae Helford, ‘Introduction,’ *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, ed. Elyce Rae Helford (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) p. 2

communications, Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), or as healers and comforters – Nurse Chapel (Majel Barrett).²³² This ‘traditional’ and stereotypical representation of women within the 1960s is arguably later replicated in its successor *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (First-run Syndication, 1987-1994) in terms of the specific roles assigned to female characters.

Helford’s argument usefully provides a further contextual consideration of how the female body has previously been utilised in science fiction and television to evoke a sense of transition, notably asserting that in decades such as the 1960s and 1970s, ‘fantasy’ television might be employed to “challenge the boundaries of lived experience through speculative metaphors,” to address oppressive patriarchal structures, or to “display female potentialities.” However these strategies might also serve to leave the status of women unchanged by functioning to simultaneously contain any truly radical potentiality embedded within such a challenge.²³³ She concludes that in terms of feminist concerns and gender representations, the 1990s can be characterised as a period of “careful arbitration;” one of the most important media results of which was the emergence of strong, female characters in fantasy programming.²³⁴ Yet while she praises American television broadcasting during this period for providing a wider array of “fantastic women” than previous decades, she notes with caution that these characters remained “overwhelmingly white (or at least portrayed by white actresses), heterosexual, and silent on such issues as class disenfranchisement.”²³⁵

The points raised by Helford above regarding the privileged representation of white middle-class heroines in popular television are also demonstrative of criticisms levelled at postfeminist thinking. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra define postfeminism as encompassing a set of assumptions that have been disseminated within popular media “having to do with the ‘pastness’ of feminism,” and “whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned or celebrated.”²³⁶ Emerging in the late 20th century, postfeminism, Tasker and Negra assert, is defined by class, age and racial exclusions; yet “the themes, pleasures, values and lifestyles with which it is associated” are assumed to be, somewhat

²³² Jan Johnson-Smith, *American Science Fiction TV: “Star Trek,” “Stargate” and Beyond* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004) p. 80

²³³ Helford, p. 4

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7

²³⁵ Series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB/UPN, 1997-2003), *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001) and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (First-run Syndication, 1995-2001) are cited by Helford as indicative of this (*Ibid.*, p. 5)

²³⁶ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, ‘Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture’ in *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, eds. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) p. 1

contradictorily, both universally shared and accessible.²³⁷ Tasker and Negra argue postfeminism works to naturalise and commodify feminism via the image of the empowered female consumer: “assuming full economic freedom for women, postfeminist culture...(even insistently) enacts the possibility that women might *choose* to retreat from the public world of work.”²³⁸ These characteristics are also highlighted by Stephanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, who state that postfeminism’s consumerist traits are a point of contention, “viewed by many as a ‘selling out’ of feminist principles and their co-option as a marketing device.”²³⁹ Tasker and Negra state that postfeminism, ultimately, “works to invalidate systematic critique,”²⁴⁰ echoing McRobbie’s statement that “the new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique, to count as a modern sophisticated girl, or indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom.”²⁴¹

The X-Files (FOX, 1993-2002) is a series worth nothing here because it is an example of a science fiction television text which articulates "a panorama of contemporary fears, anxieties, and fantasies drawing on classic figures of the occult, present-day horrors, and political conspiracies as material."²⁴² Identifying a “twist” within *The X-Files* in terms of gender type in relation to the figure of the investigative woman, Yvonne Tasker observes that the series is structured by an “intellectual opposition.” In this opposition, Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), the female lead, is cast as the voice of rationality and scientific knowledge against her male partner’s mysticism and belief of the “supernatural.”²⁴³ However, Tasker notes that this structure is perhaps somewhat undermined by “the insistence on sexualising both stars in extra-textual representations;” demonstrative of a “reluctance to fully allow a woman to signify supposedly asexual qualities of reason.”²⁴⁴ This point is reinforced by elements within the text: for example Scully, despite her rational and scientific character traits, is repeatedly subject to irrational and glamorised costuming

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Stephanie Ganz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) p. 5

²⁴⁰ Tasker and Negra, p. 3

²⁴¹ Angela McRobbie, ‘Postfeminism and Popular Culture’ in *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, eds. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) p. 34

²⁴² Douglas Kellner, ‘*The X-Files* and the Aesthetics and Politics of Postmodern Pop’ in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Aesthetics and Popular Culture (Spring, 1999) p. 161

²⁴³ Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 99

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100

in the form of high heels, overtly-stylised hair and make-up, often regardless of the location of a particular crime scene she and her partner may be attending.

The postfeminist framework outlined by these scholars aptly reflects the limitations Helford identifies in terms of feminist concerns and gender representations in fantasy television programming in the 1990s, and is something this thesis directly challenges by considering representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century American science fiction television, via a focus on multiple subject positions. As such, this thesis is positioned to respond to aspects of postfeminism, notably those I have briefly outlined above, by considering representations of various subjectivities silenced and excluded by the “selectivity defined feminism”²⁴⁵ inherent in theories of postfeminism. Postfeminism is itself a contentious term in part due to its usage of the ‘post’ prefix in relationship to feminism, as Ganz and Brabon consider.²⁴⁶ As they point out, many debates regarding the merits, politics and contentious aspects of postfeminism centre on “what this prefixation accomplishes (if anything),” and “what happens to feminist perspectives and goals in the process.”²⁴⁷ Rather than signalling the end of feminism, the term postfeminism has also been invoked to signal the fact that the end of a particular stage of feminist histories has been reached, namely the aims and ambitions of second wave feminism.²⁴⁸ While it is beyond the remit of this thesis to engage in a lengthy debate regarding the significance and value of postfeminism in contemporary culture, it is useful to briefly consider the term here given that the case study chapters that follow aim to demonstrate how aspects of feminism, and female agency in particular, remains an important part of this culture. It is for this reason that this thesis adopts a methodology that allows for a diverse range of subject positions to be interrogated from a multitude of critical and theoretical perspectives, as I outlined in my introduction.

Eve-Alice Roustang-Stoller considers the emerging ‘genre’ of creative non-fiction by American women as a forum favoured by women to reflect on both feminine and social concerns. Roustang-Stoller’s exploration of this genre is especially useful to this discussion regarding representation, gender and the female heroine, as well as the concerns of authorship and agency which this thesis identifies as manifest in the female protagonists of contemporary American science fiction television. This is reflected in Roustang-Stoller’s

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1

²⁴⁶ Ganz and Brabon, p. 3

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

assertion that this type of writing is creative “in the sense that it draws from personal experience,” wherein “the ‘I’ of the author, named and recognised, is not afraid to reveal itself and to assume its identity, to speak of itself.”²⁴⁹ Yet Roustang-Stoller concludes her analysis of this genre with a note of caution regarding the advances purported by postfeminism outlined above, stating that “during an era in which political and social advances in favour of women are stifled, perhaps because essential needs have already been met, the creativity of American feminist reflection and its emphasis on the practical aspects of women’s everyday life” pose a reminder that, in an era “in which to be ‘denounced’ as a feminist is almost an insult,” meaning must be given back to the word.²⁵⁰ This is a challenge also noted by Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner, who state that many conservative women adopted the term “third-wave feminist (which was often used interchangeably with ‘post-feminist’) to promote their own political interests,” with the effect of both demonising and characterising as one-dimensional “other feminisms and feminists associated with the second-wave.”²⁵¹ This ‘othering’ of particular forms of feminism serves to underline the continued importance of feminism to contemporary culture, particularly when such othering works to isolate, silence or make invisible certain subjectivities or subject positions in service to a strategy of empowerment that is underpinned by consumerist values with ideals that are problematically purported to be universal.

As these textual examples I have considered in this sub-section demonstrate, certain gender representations in science fiction programming are not as incisive or challenging to cultural norms as others. Johnson-Smith provides ample verification of this in her analysis of *Star Trek*’s portrayal of certain gender roles; as does Tasker in relation to *The X-Files*. As such, it is clear that science fiction’s interaction with issues of identity construction, as specific to television and discussed in this introduction with regard to gender and race, has historically been undergoing its own process of working through in terms of how the genre engages with these topics. Yet these series are of use in considering the contextual issues which underpin this thesis, in that they serve as useful markers against which the case

²⁴⁹ Eve-Alice Roustang-Stoller, ‘Creative Feminine Nonfiction in the United States: A Model for French Feminists?’ in *Women, Feminism and Femininity in the 21st Century: American and French Perspectives*, eds. Béatrice Mousu and Eve-Alice Roustang-Stoller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 178

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185

²⁵¹ Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner, ‘Third Wave Feminism, Sexualities, and the Adventures of the Posts’ in *Women, Feminism and Femininity in the 21st Century: American and French Perspectives*, eds. Béatrice Mousu and Eve-Alice Roustang-Stoller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 224

study texts I interrogate can be seen as distinct. This is evident in how each foregrounds a particular form of subjectivity via representations of the female body, while making clear a wider engagement with the 'real events' of the 21st century. The concerns at the heart of my case study texts are also uniquely foregrounded due to the convergence of a number of key factors particular to the changing contexts of television production strategies during this period, which I discussed above.

The recurring theme of containment, considered thus far in relation to the *femme fatale* and paradoxical representations of the female body, is therefore also evident in science fiction television series produced in previous eras; again revealing the comprised nature of previous representations of the female body. As I have outlined via the brief overview above, existing scholarship has highlighted how previous representations of women in an active setting outside of the home has often taken the form of female characters adopting traditionally masculine roles, or the utilisation of the female body as a provocative impediment to the quest of the male hero. In each case, the representation of femininity has functioned to generate a discursive unease, particularly notable when such representations present a sense of gender ambiguity. Similarly, the female heroine who transgresses or crosses boundaries suggests an in-betweenness that also embodies a sense of unease, or of difference; a mediating effect that threatens mobility or challenge whilst simultaneously restricting or containing both. Previous engagements with gender via the female body can therefore be seen to possess a number of negative or threatening characteristics, made apparent by the phrases used to describe them; be they ambiguous, transgressive or uneasy. In this thesis I identify a shift in this tradition of the female body as a figure apt to play out anxieties, represented as fluid, as in transition, and yet simultaneously restricted. I posit this shift as one that has emerged in a specific convergence of genre, medium and cultural context. I consider the complex interrelation of the issues considered in this chapter as central to my thesis, wherein I contend that American science fiction of the 21st century engages with the socio-cultural events of the era by explicitly foregrounded the female body in a powerful and positive manner. In doing so, these series, and the representations of femininity therein, challenge both the oppressive structures of patriarchy and previous representations of the female heroine. While the protagonists I interrogate are of course subject to a contemporary socio-cultural context that works to restrict them, their own mobility – characterised by the recurring traits of multiplicity and in-betweenness – is recognised as a central facet in this; employed

by these series as part of their representational strategies pertaining to the female body that deliberately avoid static and ultimately negative depictions.

The protagonists I interrogate in this thesis via my four case study texts work to challenge the sense of self-completeness that is oft-coded as 'male.' This sense of male 'completeness' is also particularly apparent in historical conceptions of American nationhood, as I noted above. As I stated in my introduction, and reiterated in this chapter, their difference to this unity and completeness lies in their specific representation as fragmented subjects, a key aspect, I suggest, to this challenge that these female protagonists make. The science fiction series I consider work to explore how states of multiplicity and in-betweenness may be positively exploited without being ultimately contained. Tracing a recent trend of female leads in television, Heinecken also notes the more regular appearance in television of female action heroes that is made apparent by Helford above. She states:

The female hero is a great place to investigate the meanings of female power circulating in society because she so visibly assumes a role defined as masculine and powerful. As the 'star' of the series the female hero not only assumes the central role but destroys the conventional ideas of the female body as passive, as to be looked at, as controlled by men. The female hero *takes up space*.²⁵²

Heinecken goes on to argue that while the female body has historically been coded as "for-now-and-ever passive and victimised," it is perhaps "*more* effective at expressing a totalising view of oppressive social forces which constrict the individual."²⁵³ Of particular interest for the purposes of this thesis is Heinecken's point regarding the centrality of the female hero in series television, suggesting that it imbues the female body with a sense of activeness that has previously been under-represented. The recent growth of female heroines in lead roles suggests that this is an issue that requires further consideration. It suggests, I argue, a pressing need to consider the oppressive forces to which Heinecken refers by contextualising these female protagonists in relation to society, genre and the television medium, and to consider *representations* of the female body within this context beyond the fact that they work to adopt a role heretofore prescribed as masculine. As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, 21st century America proffers just such a context given the major events of the era which I have previously noted, and the continued anxiety and instability that has followed in their wake. These issues, which are ongoing, have

²⁵² Heinecken, p. 21

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 137

challenged the unified foundational myths that exist in America's historical conception of itself. As Kaplan argues, the link between the work of women and the nation is often "something that has to be artificially forged in times of crisis, like war, when states strive to incorporate women in a national sphere."²⁵⁴ Rather than being enveloped in such overarching national narratives, I argue that the subjectivities I interrogate in this thesis instead *embrace* their role as fragmented and in-between; articulating their selves through this trait. They negotiate their gendered subject positions within this changing context via a process that is fluid and not fixed, suggesting a potency in multiplicity rather than through a unified 'I' or 'we'. Crucially, these female bodies do not serve to simultaneously contain the challenge posed by the liberating characteristics they possess. As such, this thesis will demonstrate how these protagonists ultimately challenge Heinecken's assertion that:

The embodied quality of the feminine evokes both the potent sensuality and the threatened fragility of lived experience. In fetishizing the impermanent, the now is transformed into the forever. By doing so, the body as being becomes static, frozen in time, a spectacle, shored up against the process of decay.²⁵⁵

Rather, I read these female protagonists as resisting the limitations implied by such stasis through their very fragmentation. In doing so, they are able to challenge existing cultural imperatives present within unified narratives of national subjecthood and are thus inherently worthy of study. Indeed, Kaplan draws attention to Trinh T. Minh-ha's argument that "'nation,' as a boundary, has been constructed...for insertion in official narratives." Women must "raise possibilities of seeing differently" this cultural nation.²⁵⁶ The protagonists of these texts, I argue, take on this task of 'seeing differently' by establishing and negotiating their own gendered subjectivities within a specific socio-cultural context.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have endeavoured to provide a foundation from which the following chapters, which each engage with a key case study science fiction television text, may recognise a shift in how American science fiction television is suitably positioned to engage with issues of gender and subjectivity. The shifts in television culture I considered above are demonstrative of a trend that specifically allows 21st century science fiction television to foreground, with far greater prominence, a concentration on what it means to

²⁵⁴ Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, p. 51

²⁵⁵ Heinecken, p. 150

²⁵⁶ Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, p. 213

be American within this contemporary socio-cultural context. As I have outlined throughout this chapter, this concentration is seen to be manifest in the representation of a range of gendered subject positions. The specificity of series television, and the specific trend within 21st century science fiction television for open narratives, distinctly posits these case study texts as inherently suitable for an investigation of gender and subjectivity represented therein, and how they engage with the wider cultural concerns of 21st century America. This thesis therefore identifies an intriguing opportunity to investigate a shift in engagement with the American ideological subject that moves away from the type of historical myth-making delineated in this introduction. Additionally, this shift represents a clear divergence in how the historical concerns of science fiction have previously been portrayed. The concerns and tropes evident within the broader science fiction genre, which I previously explored, are of course still present. But it is my contention that the manner in which they are employed differs, and subsequently reinforces this newly identified divergence. Moving forward, I now consider the manifestation of this divergence in four key case study texts.

Chapter 2

“Words to live by”: 21st Century Motherhood in *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*

This chapter takes the eponymous character of the television series *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (*T:SCC*) as its focus. *T:SCC* premiered in 2008, following the first three films of the *Terminator* franchise: *The Terminator* (1984), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003). A fourth film, *Terminator Salvation* (2009) was released the same year in which *T:SCC* was cancelled by the FOX network. In the *Terminator* franchise, Sarah Connor is the mother of John Connor. John is the future saviour of mankind: a hero who leads a rebellion against machines that wage war against humanity, after a military computer network named ‘Skynet’ becomes self-aware and launches a world-wide nuclear strike. This future event is known as ‘Judgment Day,’ and the first three *Terminator* films depict John and Sarah’s present day attempts to prevent it from happening. Sarah must keep John alive by protecting him from the various machines, known as terminators, sent back in time to kill him. While *T:SCC* was released after *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, narratively it is set following the events of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* in which John and Sarah destroyed the laboratory of Cyberdyne Systems, a company that was unwittingly developing Skynet. In doing so, they were seemingly successful in preventing Judgment Day in this film.

The pilot episode of *T:SCC* begins with John (Thomas Dekker) and Sarah living in West Fork, Nebraska. The date is August 24th, 1999. They argue about continually relocating from place to place; the tone of their voices suggests it is a familiar conversation to each of them. John tells Sarah: “no one knows us, no one asks questions. It’s been almost two years and school starts in like, three weeks...the cops will never find us, we’re safe.” Sarah responds vehemently: “don’t you think that John, don’t you ever think that.” Grabbing his hair, she reiterates an oft-repeated mantra: “no one is ever safe.”²⁵⁷ Later in the episode, John is attacked at school by a terminator sent back to kill him. He is saved by Cameron

²⁵⁷ ‘Pilot.’ *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.01. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (January 13, 2008)

(Summer Glau), a female terminator who has also been sent back in time protect him. Towards the end of the episode, John begs Sarah to help him stop Skynet, expressing doubt in his destiny to be the future leader of humanity: "I can't lead an army. Maybe that's you but it'll never be me, so *you've* got to stop it. Please. Mom." (Emphasis added) Rather than run from the threat of Judgment Day, Sarah chooses to actively pursue Skynet. With the help of Cameron the three jump forward to the year 2007, to stop Skynet before, as Cameron puts it, "it's born."²⁵⁸ Yet jumping forward to 2007 did not merely establish a new temporal narrative setting for the rest of the series. In *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, the viewer learns that Sarah Connor has died of cancer. While the character is a central figure in the first two films of the franchise, she is unceremoniously killed off-screen in the franchise's third feature. By propelling its narrative forward in time by eight years *T:SCC* jumps over the death of Sarah in the pilot episode, thus disregarding the events of *Terminator 3*. The manner in which *T:SCC* positions itself narratively within the *Terminator* franchise is therefore crucial to its representation of Sarah Connor throughout the series. It is this representation, and specifically Sarah's characterisation as a mother, that I consider in this chapter.

Early popular reviews of the series make note of Sarah's role as mother to John. Mary McNamara argues that:

She is, by necessity, more drill sergeant than mother, screaming at him to never trust anyone, to never let himself feel safe...Mother as anti-nest. It is a provocative relationship, much more complex than the mother-warriors we are accustomed to, most of whom are standard lionesses defending the truly young - Sigourney Weaver in "Aliens" comes to mind.²⁵⁹

Ginia Bellafante refers to the Sarah Connor of *T:SCC* as "all anxious muscle," who "isn't fretting about nut allergies and tennis camp and early admission to Amherst...she is striving to save [John] from the government-sponsored nut cases of the microchip brains and titanium bones who seek to annihilate him." She sees the series as "a fantasy of technophobic paranoia, but...also a metaphor for mad, crazy blood love, for motherhood not merely as an honourable career but also as salvation."²⁶⁰ Yet I argue in this chapter that

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Mary McNamara, 'Her Future is Looking Brighter' in *The LA Times* (January 11, 2018) <<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jan/11/entertainment/et-sarah11>> [Accessed March 21, 2013]

²⁶⁰ Ginia Bellafante, 'Running and Fighting, All to Save Her Son' in *The New York Times* (January 12, 2008) <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/12/arts/television/12bell.html?_r=3&ref=television&oref=slogin&oref=slogin> [Accessed March 21, 2013]

T:SCC's characterisation of Sarah-as-mother is not only more complicated than the 'mother-as-anti-nest' or 'motherhood-as-salvation' roles that are referred to in these reviews, but is also significantly impacted by the time jump that Sarah makes in the pilot episode. By physically relocating Sarah from 1999 to a changed, 21st century context, the series is able to immediately establish a truly compelling character trait: Sarah's resistance to textual eradication. In doing so, *T:SCC* opens up a contemporary narrative space wherein the more problematic aspects of Sarah's earlier representation in the *Terminator* franchise to date can be challenged. It is this challenge, and its 21st century context, that provides the central focus of this chapter's consideration of Sarah Connor. It is necessarily informed by Sarah's position as a mother figure. As such, I therefore engage with theories of motherhood, and specifically how motherhood has been considered by second-wave feminism, to provide a contextual base for my reading of Sarah Connor. Following on from this, I explore the role of the mother as it has been considered from an American perspective, and, given this thesis' focus on science fiction, a generic perspective. I then move on to a specific consideration of Sarah Connor herself: her previous iterations in the film franchise as a necessary point of comparison, and *T:SCC*'s characterisation of Sarah as both a woman and a mother operating within a specific 21st century context. In doing so, I explore the various roles Sarah is associated with throughout *T:SCC*, her reaction to the event of 9/11, the home as a 'battlespace' and the importance of Sarah's voiceovers that permeate the series through the framework of autobiography. I aim to consider the significance of these aspects as they relate to Sarah's ability to cultivate her own authorial voice and the role that this process plays in her burgeoning autonomy and self-reflexivity. I argue it is these characteristics that form a key function in Sarah's own challenge to her environment, and the narratives that have previously been imposed upon her.

The Institution of Motherhood

Carol Smart states that motherhood is "an institution that *presents* itself as a natural outcome of biologically given gender differences, as a natural consequence of (hetero)sexual activity, and as a natural manifestation of an innate female characteristic, namely the maternal instinct."²⁶¹ In psychoanalytic terms, the mother is understood as a figure through which the subject comes into being. E. Ann Kaplan interrogates images of white, middle-class mothers in the historical and psychoanalytic spheres, and how this

²⁶¹ Carol Smart, 'Deconstructing Motherhood' in *Good Enough Mothering?: Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (New York: Routledge, 1996) p. 37

mother figure is represented in film and literary texts. She notes that the modernist discovery of subjectivity “produced the mother as the one through whom ‘I,’ the child, *becomes* a subject.”²⁶² In applying this psychoanalytic definition of motherhood to the series *T:SCC*, a tension is clearly made apparent between the subjectivity of the child (in this case, John Connor) and the mother (Sarah Connor). This tension immediately locates Sarah Connor as an ‘in-between’ figure and thus raises an important question I intend to address throughout this chapter: how does Sarah come to articulate her own sense of subjectivity and autonomy outside of the patriarchal definition of motherhood, wherein she is constructed as subservient to the subjectivity of her child? As Kaplan argues, while the Father has always been viewed as subject, “it is the mother’s very coming into *subjectivity* that produces a new set of issues in culture around day care, the combining of work and mothering, the impact of the mother’s work on the child.”²⁶³ Motherhood, therefore, holds a significant position in debates regarding the place of women in society. It can also be understood from a feminist perspective as something that is “historically, culturally and socially constructed” rather than a natural state of being.²⁶⁴ A particularly pertinent identification made by Kaplan in her study is the contention that historically the mother is not understood as speaking within the context of these definitions, but is rather “usually discussed as an integral part of discourse (because she really is everywhere) that [is] spoken by an-Other. She [is] a figure in the design, out-of-focus, or, if in focus, then the brunt of an attack.”²⁶⁵ It is these aspects of motherhood, in terms of its social and historical construction, and the mother’s configuration as non-speaking, that I argue *T:SCC* most concerns itself with in its representation of Sarah Connor. In this chapter I want to consider how Sarah Connor is figured as both central and speaking throughout the series. She is not told through the narratives of others and she is not studied “from an Other’s point of view; or represented as an (unquestioned) patriarchally constructed social function.”²⁶⁶ As opposed to what Kaplan describes as “an absent presence”²⁶⁷ she endeavours to become active within the context of the series and her wider environment by speaking her own narrative.

²⁶² Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, p. 8

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 26

²⁶⁴ Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva, ‘Introduction’ in *Good Enough Mothering?: Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (New York: Routledge, 1996) p. 1

²⁶⁵ Kaplan, p. 3

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The institution of motherhood was notably addressed in research that was produced during second-wave feminism in the 1970s. Second-wave feminism “can be understood as a response to the post-war period,” wherein theorists argued that “mothering was the source of women’s devaluation and lack of transcendence.”²⁶⁸ As Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer state, “To be a person, for the most part, meant to be a person like a man. Personness and subjectivity necessitated moving beyond, or avoiding altogether, home and motherhood.”²⁶⁹ Building on previous theoretical definitions of motherhood, this chapter seeks to illustrate how *T:SCC* moves to challenge the franchise’s more problematic representations of Sarah Connor evident in her representation in the first two feature films, to one in which Sarah is able to effectively negotiate both motherhood and personness. Indeed, while Bassin et al note the ambivalence that characterised some feminist writing on motherhood during the 1970s, they also note that for many writers, “there is satisfaction in speaking the unspoken and placing motherhood on the feminist landscape.”²⁷⁰ A key facet of this trend has centred upon an evolving consideration of what constitutes ‘Otherness’: while in the 1970s Bassin, Honey and Mahrer argue this was tied to notions of devaluation and oppression, it has, for some writers, become a central aspect of a “uniquely female experience and a source of liberation from patriarchal values.”²⁷¹ Pointing to feminist writers such as Julia Kristeva and Lucy Irigaray, they note how the role of motherhood has since been emphasised as one which offers access to previously under-represented, and unspoken, female experiences.²⁷²

In a collection of research that explores a multitude of perspectives on motherhood, Bassin et al also note that feminist theory of the 1970s paid considerable attention to “dismantling the ideology of motherhood” by understanding its patriarchal roots and emphasising how the experiences of mothers themselves were not represented. The subjectivity of the mother and “her ability to reflect on and speak of her experience,” has subsequently “become an important ingredient in altering myths and changing reality.”²⁷³ As previously noted, in this chapter I consider Sarah Connor’s ability to become an active presence in *T:SCC* through her capacity to speak; to represent her own subjective

²⁶⁸ Sherry B. Ortner, ‘Is female to male as nature is to culture?’ in *Woman, Culture and Society*, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974). Quoted in *Representations of Motherhood*, Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) p. 6

²⁶⁹ Bassin, Honey and Mahrer, p. 6

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 3

experiences through narrative. In naming the series 'The Sarah Connor Chronicles,' the text is acutely positioned as Sarah's story. Therefore, the point made by Bassin et al illustrates how the series is able to echo the concerns of second-wave feminism whilst also reflecting on a contemporary 21st century environment. Their argument is integral to this consideration of Sarah Connor's subjectivity, on both a literal and metaphysical level. As a mother, Sarah is again caught in-between these conflicting discourses of motherhood, between being an Other who brings a subject into being, and being a subject herself who challenges conceptions of 'natural' motherhood. *T:SCC* is Sarah's story, permeated by her reflective voiceovers throughout each episode. Her subjectivity is central to literally altering the future and negotiating the changing reality of her relationship with John. This relationship explores what Jessica Benjamin describes as maintaining the tension "between the child's developing sense of her or his agency and the mother's sense of her self and subjectivity." (Emphasis added.) This complex and conflicted process of learning to navigate and work through "feelings of power and powerlessness" is essential to the wellbeing of both.²⁷⁴

Motherhood and America

Given that this thesis focuses on subjectivity and American nationhood, it seems prudent to briefly consider how the institution of motherhood has been culturally and historically constructed in America during the latter half of the 20th century. As Ann C. Hall and Mardia J. Bishop point out: "Americans want a 'mom' definition of motherhood – a nurturing, accepting, easy definition. Mothers, moreover, are the reservoir of American expectations, so it is no wonder that when Americans say 'mother,' there are a host of images and expectations associated with the term."²⁷⁵ The image of the traditional American family formed by 1950s American culture was primarily conceived as heterosexual, middle and upper-middle class, suburban and financially secure. Amber E. Kinser states that the mother figure in this family was "fulfilled exclusively and completely in her domestic role."²⁷⁶ Yet as Kinser points out, given that this image was representative for only a very narrow selection of the population for a very narrow period of time, it can hardly be called traditional in any accurate sense of the word. Nevertheless, "the public imagination...[is] held captive and captivated by" this mythical, "deviant" image of the

²⁷⁴ Jennifer Benjamin, quoted in Bassin, Honey and Mahrer, p. 15

²⁷⁵ Ann C. Hall and Mardia J. Bishop, 'Introduction,' in *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture*, eds. Ann C. Hall and Mardia J. Bishop (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009) p. ix

²⁷⁶ Amber E. Kinser, *Motherhood and Feminism* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2010) p. 25-26

1950s traditional family.²⁷⁷ In her ground-breaking text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan states that the image of women in America during this period undergoes what she calls a “schizophrenic split.”²⁷⁸ She argues that women become redefined in the 1950s as solely being fulfilled through their femininity, a fulfilment which is only ultimately achieved through the roles of housewife and mother. Friedan traces this cultural shift through the pages of women’s magazines, from the “New Women, creating with a gay determined spirit a new identity for women – a life of their own” in the 1930s, to the “housewife heroines” of the 1950s, who “must keep on having babies, because the feminine mystique says there is no other way for a woman to be a heroine.”²⁷⁹ This false ideal was promulgated through the boom in advertisement and the capitalist consumer culture of the era; which worked to “link patriotism, consumption, and family togetherness.”²⁸⁰ Thus, motherhood was linked to a very specific conception of American nationhood; one in which the myth of the American Dream was directly tied to consumerism and materialism, wherein men wielded the financial power and women were restricted to the domestic space.

The representation of the mother ‘role’ in American culture underwent several shifts in definition between the 1950s and the advent of Freidan’s ‘feminine mystique,’ and in the decades that followed. In the 18th and 19th centuries, motherhood was seen as an overtly religious institution, wherein “mothers were responsible not only for their individual children’s souls but, collectively, for the very soul of the nation.”²⁸¹ Evoking a ‘good’ mother/‘bad’ mother binary, this conceptualisation of motherhood linked not so much the subjectivity of the mother to the nation, but envisioned the mother as an ‘incubator’ for the future subjects of the nation. The psychoanalytic definition of the mother as one who merely brings these future subjects into being certainly echoes this particular conception. While in the 1960s marriage and domesticity was supposedly all a woman needed for complete fulfilment, Kinser argues that at the turn of the 21st century, this fulfilment was presumed to be found in motherhood.²⁸² Judith Warner interrogates the sense of collective identity in ‘being a Mom’ that she argues is specific to America. Writing about American

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1992 (Originally published in 1963)) p. 40

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39

²⁸⁰ Kinser, p. 68

²⁸¹ Judith Warner, *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety* (London: Vermilion, 2006), p. 64

²⁸² Kinser, p. 122

women who “came of age with an unprecedented level of freedom, career potential and equality with men” and have become mothers in the 21st century, Warner describes the general culture of motherhood in America as “oppressive.”²⁸³ Identifying the operation of what she terms the “mummy mystique” within this contemporary cultural context, Warner explores how women seemingly liberated from the feminine mystique have subsequently become “equally burdened by a new set of life-draining pressures, a new kind of soul-draining perfectionism.”²⁸⁴ Warner points out that “Americans make a religion out of everything” and notes this historical trend, evident in the 18th and 19th centuries as noted above, has re-emerged in the 21st century: motherhood today has “been made into a ‘production’ of the highest consequence.”²⁸⁵ Rather than continuing the generally forward looking evolution of the mother’s role as becoming liberated from “total possession by her child” that persisted through the changing social climates of the 1980s and early 1990s, Warner argues that the end of the 20th century witnessed a halt to such progress. In its place came “‘The Sacrificial Mother’...the icon of the motherhood religion in our time.” This self-sacrificing mother is expected to embrace this loss of herself to motherhood “as though it were the highest evolution of all the forms of motherhood that came before.”²⁸⁶ Thus, the ideal mother figure at the beginning of the 21st century is conceived of as a woman “so bound up in her child, so tightly bonded and fused, that she herself – soul, mind, and body – [has] all but disappeared.”²⁸⁷ Indeed, while so much of Sarah Connor’s existence in the *Terminator* franchise is predicated upon her role as mother to John, the first film of the franchise in this new century, *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, acutely rendered this disappearance: Sarah Connor is entirely absent, her death from cancer is merely narrated to the viewer after the fact.

This ‘icon of ideal motherhood’ fulfils the desire America has for a simple representation of the institution of mothering. It has also, Hall and Bishop argue, recently found representation in the form of the ‘supermom,’ “the mother who could do it all, with a smile, with a perfect figure, and on a budget.” Indeed, “those who complained earned the most oppressive label in American culture, ‘the bad mom,’ the postmodern equivalent of a scarlet letter.”²⁸⁸ Hall and Bishop point out that while the American cultural ideal consists

²⁸³ Warner, p. 16

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66-67

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68

²⁸⁸ Hall and Bishop, p. ix

of this singular definition and representation of motherhood that can be neatly encapsulated by the image of the 1950s, apple-pie-baking-stay-at-home mother or the contemporary 'supermom,' "this longing is illusory; there really was no such time, at least not for women of colour or women of a certain socioeconomic status." This desire for an illusory image thus produces anxiety both culturally and individually, "because it cannot accommodate the realities of motherhood in American culture."²⁸⁹ Warner argues that this motherhood religion functions to soothe anxieties in the contemporary cultural climate of the 21st century.²⁹⁰ The pilot of *T:SCC* begins in this climate, situating Sarah and John in 1999 and on the verge of the 21st century. This temporal setting, followed by the sudden jump to 2007 at the episode's conclusion, therefore further locates Sarah as an in-between character; in this instance between reality and myth, between a cultural ideal and the truly real anxieties of the era. Sarah's negotiation of this environment is further explored below, specifically in relation to the significant events of this socio-cultural context.

Motherhood in Science Fiction

Science fiction, the genre with which this thesis is specifically concerned, has also utilised the mother figure to interrogate socio-cultural anxieties. As I discussed in Chapter One, the science fiction genre often adopts a creative approach to effectively engage with the prevalent social issues of a given era. Cyndy Hendershot explores 1950s horror films within a framework of discourses that sought to understand a society in fear of infiltration, and it is appropriate to consider her findings here in order to address previous generic treatments of motherhood. Hendershot explicitly notes the inclusion of films that are "hybrids" of the horror genre in her study, specifically referring to the science fiction/horror hybrid in her introduction.²⁹¹ Vivien Sobchack also considers the difficulty of classifying these hybrid films of the 1950s, noting the large number of films combining elements of both science fiction and horror that were produced during this period. Exploring the "uneasy connection" between the two genres, Sobchack states that "the horror film and the [science fiction] film have, at times, a tendency to cover the same dramatic territory."²⁹² While Hendershot refers to the ability of the 1950s horror film to draw on "the feminine's capacity to encode the monstrous and the destructive,"²⁹³ it is

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. x

²⁹⁰ Warner, p. 134

²⁹¹ Cyndy Hendershot, *I Was a Cold War Monster: Horror Films, Eroticism, and the Cold War Imagination* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 2001) p. 3

²⁹² Sobchack, p. 26, 29

²⁹³ Hendershot, p. 117

worth noting that Sobchack also identifies this period as hosting the first major emergence of the American science fiction film, wherein the genre engaged specifically with the anxieties of the era surrounding the Other.²⁹⁴ Indeed, as Hendershot points out, “sociologists of the cold war era saw monsters everywhere;” making specific reference to Philip Wylie’s “medusas hiding inside the deceptively reassuring bodies of mom.”²⁹⁵ She engages specifically with Wylie’s concept of ‘momism,’ which is described as a potentially subversive image of femininity that is both dangerous and degenerate. Hendershot argues that ‘momism’ “sought to instil in the reader a fear of a degenerative femininity, one which was present in contemporary society, but which partook of the mythological.”²⁹⁶

The Terminator Film Franchise

These historical and fictional invocations of motherhood provide an appropriate base from which to necessarily consider how Sarah Connor has been characterised within the *Terminator* franchise prior to the premiere of *T:SCC*. The religious themes present within the franchise are particularly useful within this context, linking as they do the conceptions of motherhood discussed above, with motherhood in a specifically American context. The notion that motherhood in the 21st century must, as Warner argued, be considered as a ‘production of the highest consequence’ is almost ironic within the context of *Terminator*’s multiple narratives; no less than the fate of the entire world is at stake. Indeed, even the promotional material for *T:SCC* referred to Sarah Connor as ‘The Mother of All Destiny.’ As I go on to discuss, this too is almost ironic when approaching the television series via theories of gender and motherhood, as the text’s representation of Sarah does much to challenge this religious and gender absolutism regarding the role of the mother in 21st century America. Within the narrative established by the *Terminator* films, Sarah Connor is arguably conceived of as the mother of a messiah; a figure akin to the Virgin Mary through whom the saviour is produced. As Donald Palumbo points out, what is established as exceptional about Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) in *The Terminator* is that her destiny is to give birth to John Connor, future saviour of mankind, rather than “any innate ability or any characteristic intrinsic to her personality.” As such, her destiny “entails becoming a warrior to effect a change in the status quo – humanity’s successful insurrection, led by John, against Skynet’s machine rule – yet she has not yet become a warrior, nor given birth to

²⁹⁴ Sobchack, p. 299

²⁹⁵ Hendershot, p. 1

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

John, by the film's conclusion."²⁹⁷ It is my contention that this is one of the more problematic aspects of her characterisation in the film franchise – the seeming irrelevance of Sarah's own subjectivity. Rather, she is what Kaplan terms a figure in the design but out of focus, an "absent presence."²⁹⁸

In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* Sarah first appears on screen in a mental institution, and, as I have already described, she is subsequently eliminated from the *Terminator* narrative off-screen in *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*. This raises two questions, which I now go on to address: how does *T:SCC*'s temporal resurrection of Sarah Connor, and the series' relocation of her into the 21st century, negotiate these competing images of motherhood? How does Sarah Connor, having been flung forward in time, negotiate her own agency and subjectivity within this cultural climate; between both competing narratives of motherhood and competing narratives of her self? At the beginning of the *Terminator* franchise, Sarah is already conceived of in terms of her role as 'mother' before even being pregnant or giving birth. As such, this mythical status seems to supersede her own subjectivity before it is even established. It is this representation of Sarah Connor that I argue *T:SCC* specifically endeavours to address and, in the process, is what enables the series to mount a challenge to this conception of motherhood as an absolute, theological constitution by foregrounding the *process* by which Sarah attempts to establish her own subjectivity. The emphasis on Sarah's development of her own subjectivity as a process, within the context of 21st century America, is deliberate. In episode 2.05, 'Goodbye to All That,' Sarah acknowledges this herself when a child asks her if she's a mother. Sarah responds that she is, and the child tells her "you kind of suck at it." Sarah simply replies: "I know. I'm working on it," pointing to her own awareness that she is a figure in-between – in-between competing discourses of motherhood and her own burgeoning narrative that seeks to challenge the absolutism of such discourses.²⁹⁹ In discussing what she refers to as America's "protection myth," Susan Faludi argues that the events of 9/11 "told us that we could not depend on our protectors."³⁰⁰ The search for an effective protector within a contemporary climate of national vulnerability and anxiety is a primary concern of *T:SCC*, and is interrogated by placing Sarah Connor, a single mother, as the central protagonist

²⁹⁷ Donald Palumbo, 'The Monomyth in James Cameron's *The Terminator*: Sarah as Monomythic Heroine' in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2008) p. 416

²⁹⁸ Kaplan, p. 3

²⁹⁹ 'Goodbye to All That.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.05. Dir. Bryan Spicer. FOX (October 6, 2008)

³⁰⁰ Faludi, p. 7

through which such anxieties are articulated. The figure of Sarah Connor has been established as a strong and effective protector of her son by those in the future, and via previous filmic representations of her character. In *T:SCC* she is characterised as having to reconcile this ascribed role in a changed (and changing) present, wherein there are no absolutes, with her own need to cultivate a subjectivity that is distinct from her son and an autonomy that exists beyond her role as mother. She must reconfigure her subjectivity, as produced through future trauma, in relation to her present family and nation and as negotiated around a discourse of motherhood. Through this she demonstrates what Kaplan characterises as “fragmented thinking, the moving backwards and forwards, the repetitions, the doubts about what [she is] doing,”³⁰¹ again evocative of her inherent in-betweenness.

As Jennifer Culver has noted, Sarah Connor is identified as a warrior early on within the narrative of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*; a warrior who apparently relies upon the “rules” she established in that film in *T:SCC*, which govern the relationship between her and John and their interactions with the world outside their family unit.³⁰² Sarah’s battle to change the future is consistently referred to throughout the *Terminator* franchise as a war which exists in the present. One way in which *T:SCC* negotiates Sarah’s own agency alongside the competing images of motherhood I have discussed that exist both contextually and within the franchise’s own narrative, is through performance. Echoing the theme of multiplicity that is present among all the female characters this thesis interrogates, within *T:SCC* Sarah adopts different personas in her pursuit of Skynet. Throughout the course of the series she performs many different roles in order to both protect her son and gain intelligence in her fight against the machines. One such role is that of a waitress, her original job in *The Terminator* and one that she continually reflects back on in *T:SCC*. In *T:SCC* she has also posed as an LAPD officer (1.07, ‘Demon Hand’), a janitor (2.02, ‘Automatic for the People’) and a rich divorcee looking to invest in a technology start-up company (2.10, ‘Strange Things Happen at the One-Two Point’). The fluidity of the role-play in which Sarah engages raises a key question: given the previous representations of Sarah as a mother figure within the *Terminator* franchise, alongside the representation

³⁰¹ Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, p. 59

³⁰² Jennifer Culver, “Sarah Connor’s Stain” in *Terminator and Philosophy*, eds. Richard Brown and Kevin S. Decker (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2009) p. 85

of her role as a mother in *T:SCC*, does motherhood therefore present, as Fanny Söderbäck asks, “a site of repression or liberation”³⁰³ for Sarah?

One manner in which Sarah challenges previous textual representations of her self, and in the process asserts her own subjective autonomy distinct from her role as mother, is her explicit rejection of prescriptive gender profiling. This is particularly relevant in terms of what Jeffrey A. Brown refers to as the “performance of masculinity” that is demonstrated by the “tough heroine” of early 1990s action films.³⁰⁴ Referring to Sarah Connor’s characterisation in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* as an example of what he terms a ‘masculine heroine,’ Brown describes Sarah as not just performing masculinity through her aggressive role, but “embodying it physically.” Brown argues that in this film, Sarah’s “thick waist, boy’s hips, no bosom, overlaid by combat boots and ammunition clips, worked for many critics to efface femininity altogether.”³⁰⁵ *T:SCC* explicitly rejects this gender absolutism wherein the female hero must adopt such typically male signifiers; embodying what Yvonne Tasker refers to as “the masculinisation of the female body.”³⁰⁶ In episode 2.13, ‘Earthlings Welcome Here,’ a blogger named Alan Park (Dinah Lenney), who is living in hiding disguised as a woman after writing about a secret government project, tells Sarah: “I’m a man who lives as a woman and you’re a woman who lives as a...”: Sarah cuts this line off by holding a gun to Alan’s face, and stating “stop.”³⁰⁷ In this scene, Sarah actively resists being defined according to the stereotypical men as active/women as passive binary, or what Jeanine Basinger refers to as “cinematic cross-dressing.”³⁰⁸ This scene represents a key divergence made by the television series from the film franchise. Much of what *T:SCC* presents is the complexity that is inherent not only in Sarah Connor finding agency and representation but questioning and exposing it. In doing so the series is able, as Amber E. Kinser puts it, to move beyond the simple question of whether women and mothers ‘have’

³⁰³ Fanny Söderbäck, ‘Motherhood: A Site of Repression or Liberation? Kristeva and Butler on the Maternal Body’ in *Studies in the Maternal*, 2 (1) 2010, pp. 1-15

³⁰⁴ Jeffrey A. Brown, ‘Gender and the Action Heroine: Hardbodies and the *Point of No Return*’ in *Cinema Journal*, 35, No. 3 (Spring 1996) p. 52

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59

³⁰⁶ Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre, and the Action Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1993) p. 139

³⁰⁷ ‘Earthlings Welcome Here.’ *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.13. Dir. Félix Enríquez Alcalá. FOX (December 15, 2008)

³⁰⁸ Quoted in Mandy Johnson, ‘Women as Action Heroes: Is Violence a Positive Direction for Females?’

Glamour (March, 1994) p. 153

agency or not and instead “invites us to examine a more multi-layered image of maternal power.”³⁰⁹

Söderbäck’s work is of great use in considering the characterisation of Sarah’s role as a mother, as it is represented in *T:SCC*. Focusing on the work of Julia Kristeva and the emphasis she places on maternity, Söderbäck notes that Kristeva has previously been criticised for her “alleged equation of maternity with femininity.” Critics, Söderbäck argues, have suggested that this is reductive in that women are potentially relegated through motherhood to a function that is purely biological.³¹⁰ Instead, Söderbäck seeks to argue that rather than reducing women to this function, Kristeva “returns to the maternal body in part to free women from this very reduction.”³¹¹ She states:

It is exactly the future that is at stake when Kristeva speaks of the maternal, and more specifically it is the possibility of temporal change that depends on it. The maternal body to which she urges us to return must, as I see it, be understood *qua temporalisation*: that to which we return is temporal, moving, displacing, renewing. The return is neither nostalgic nor aimed at preserving some essential notion of motherhood; it makes possible new beginnings, allowing for a future pregnant with change and transformation.³¹²

As Söderbäck points out, the experience of motherhood, according to Kristeva, is very much articulated in temporal terms that surface through two specific notions: “the instant (many of which, if collected together, would form a rhythmic movement) and the timeless (the dreamlike state of being ‘outside’ of time or ‘without’ time which, we know from Augustine, is equivalent to eternity).” These two types of temporality are present in Kristeva’s essay ‘Women’s Time,’ wherein “she proposes that cyclical and monumental time be associated with female subjectivity ‘when female subjectivity is considered to be innately maternal.’”³¹³ This notion of temporal displacement, as a body in-progress, is central to *T:SCC*’s representation of Sarah Connor within a 21st century context and indeed, in its evocation of in-betweenness, to all the protagonists this thesis interrogates. Söderbäck’s positive reading of Kristeva is therefore very apt to this chapter’s discussion of Sarah Connor and motherhood. The Sarah Connor of *T:SCC* challenges the label of ‘the bad mom,’ or as Hall and Bishop put it, “the postmodern equivalent of a scarlet letter.” She is

³⁰⁹ Kinser, p. 7

³¹⁰ Söderbäck, p. 1

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4

frequently accused within the *Terminator* franchise of being a bad parent, at least from the perspective of social and patriarchal institutions. She is a single, un-wed mother, she was sectioned at a mental institution and she gave her son up for adoption. In doing so, she arguably embodies many cultural anxieties that surround motherhood. Yet in *T:SCC* Sarah also actively resists definition in terms of an illusory, mythical image of American motherhood, and in terms of prescriptive gender roles as noted above, which is a significant shift to how she has previously been depicted in the franchise. As I have already mentioned, this is particularly evident in *The Terminator*, where her 'destiny' is solely to give birth to the mythical figure of John Connor. Part of Sarah's assertion of her own subjectivity, as both a mother and autonomous subject, therefore comes from her negotiation of such good/bad binaries. In doing so she exists, in *T:SCC*, in multiple in-between spaces: the past and future, life and death, good and bad. Sarah's own acknowledgement of her in-betweenness in terms of her role as a mother, the competing narratives – both cultural and personal – that define her, and in particular, her temporal displacement in a 21st century context is what, in Kristeva's terms, frees her from a reductive conception of motherhood. Instead, as I discuss below, Sarah Connor's new contextual environment empowers her by facilitating her ability to embrace self-representation. This is what, for Sarah, makes possible 'new beginnings' wherein transformation is coveted.

Homeland and the Home

As I have stated, key to *T:SCC*'s evolutionary representation of Sarah Connor is its 21st century socio-cultural context. The series was produced between 2008 and 2009, and deliberately relocates the franchise's temporal narrative from 1999 to 2007. This jarring shift places Sarah in an environment that is wholly unfamiliar. It is her negotiation of this environment that is central to the process of her ongoing pursuit of subjective autonomy. In episode 1.02, 'Gnothi Seauton,' Sarah attempts to obtain new identities for herself, John and Cameron. She visits a man named Carlos (Jesse Garcia), the nephew of Enrique (Castulo Guerra), a character who provided aid to Sarah in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Carlos quotes Sarah twenty thousand dollars for the new identities, positioning himself on the "front lines" of the War on Terror. He tells her that "9/11 doubled prices overnight." Sarah replies: "9/11, what's that?"³¹⁴ In the sequence that follows, Carlos and his friends

³¹⁴ 'Gnothi Seauton.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.02. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (January 14, 2008)

explain the events of September 11, 2001 to Sarah, demonstrating with animated hand gestures how planes flew into the World Trade Centre. Crucially, however, the viewer does not hear them explain these events. Instead, the scene is accompanied by a voiceover from Sarah, who states: "I could not imagine the apocalypse...I could not imagine three billion people dead. But I can imagine three thousand. I can imagine planes hitting buildings, I can imagine fire. If I would have witnessed it, if I would have been here, I would have thought the end was near. I'm sure I would have thought, we have failed."³¹⁵ By jumping over 9/11, Sarah Connor does not experience the event as a witness. But as an American, suddenly relocated into a post-9/11 American nation, she comes to directly experience its aftermath. As Clare Kahane states:

The sight of the World Trade Centre bucking, collapsing into a heap of rubble, was a trauma to our national identity as well as a real disaster to thousands who lost their family and friends....The collapse of the towers was unthinkable and at the same time the very image of what was thought. The rubble...marked our fall, our entrance into the culture of a globalised political violence with no safe boundaries.³¹⁶

What Kahane refers to as America's fall is evoked by Sarah's characterisation of her anticipated reaction to an already-occurred event as one of national failure. Anna Froula argues that *T:SCC* is marked by a temporal confusion that stems from the series' use of time travel that serves to transform flashbacks ("memories of war") into flash-forwards ("memories of future war," the apocalypse known in the franchise as Judgment Day). She states that these flash-forwards therefore "invoke both past terror and future horror," going on to argue that "combat trauma from John and Sarah's past and present – and from resistance fighters' future memories – conflates the anxiety from the United States' failure to prevent 9/11 with the fear of greater horrors to come."³¹⁷ She concludes that "rather than being a simple repetition of a past event, Sarah's trauma parallels that of the post-9/11 world, since it is also stuck in a state of anticipation of a future (Armageddon) that is much like the past."³¹⁸ I have several points to make about Froula's assessment and I shall begin firstly by considering John's 'combat trauma.' In episode 2.06, 'The Tower is Tall but the Fall is Short,' a child psychologist named Dr Boyd Sherman (Dorian Harewood) tells Sarah that John reminds him of war veterans. He makes specific mention of veterans from

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Kahane, p. 110

³¹⁷ Anna Froula, "'9/11 – What's That?': Trauma, Temporality, and *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*" in *Cinema Journal*, 51, No. 1 (Fall, 2011) p. 175

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Vietnam – a war that served to significantly damage America’s mythical idealism. This conception of trauma and loss is therefore on a national, and global, scale. While the national and the global are addressed throughout this thesis, and indeed, 9/11 was of course a national trauma played out on a global stage, in this chapter I want to argue that *T:SCC* is a very domestic show in how it addresses the events of the 21st century through, specifically, the character of Sarah Connor. This is not only evident in its setting within the American homeland, but also within the home itself. Where Froula sees Sarah’s trauma as paralleling the post-9/11 “world,” it is my argument that *T:SCC* presents a deliberately personal account of Sarah’s narrative within this context.

The series specifically foregrounds Sarah’s narrative through her voiceovers. While the personal nature of the series’ representation of Sarah certainly takes place within a socio-cultural context in which the aftermath of 9/11 and other significant events of the 21st century are apparent, I would argue that Sarah is far from being “stuck” in the anticipation of a future inevitability. Her contemplation of 9/11, “I can imagine three thousand. I can imagine planes hitting buildings, I can imagine fire,” is detached because of Sarah’s temporal dislocation but this does not imply that she is an inert character within this context. Rather, as I have already noted above, *T:SCC* presents Sarah as an active character who embraces the potential of her contemporary in-betweenness from the outset: she is asked by her more passive son John to pursue Skynet and she does so. It is a choice that is frequently reinforced throughout the narrative: in 2.02, ‘Automatic for the People,’ Sarah discusses her temporal leap over her death from cancer with Cameron. She asks “am I still going to get sick?” and questions whether her exposure to radiation as detailed by this episode is “how it happens.” She concludes: “What am I supposed to do, just wait? Like a time bomb, am I just going to go off someday?”³¹⁹ While this self-reflection is obviously illustrative of Sarah’s contemporary anxiety, it also suggests resistance within the context of the series. Her statement, “what am I supposed to do, just wait?” is a challenge – to herself, and to her environment. As I have argued throughout this chapter, Sarah’s journey towards her own independent subjectivity, balancing her roles of mother, soldier and autonomous woman, is just that – an ongoing process that necessitates movement as opposed to stasis. Sarah chooses to fight, rather than wait in anticipation of a future trauma – be it the global event of Judgment Day, the personal experience of cancer or her son to ‘become’ the future leader of mankind in her absence. In doing so, Sarah also

³¹⁹ ‘Automatic for the People,’ *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, Episode 2.02. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (September 15, 2008)

establishes her resistance to textual eradication: in the narrative of *T:SCC*, she has avoided her death that is merely recounted in *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*. Rather than wait for her death from cancer, or from Skynet, or from the many national concerns manifest in the wider events of the 21st century, Sarah *chooses* to be active. As I discuss further below, cancer is one of many narratives that has been imposed upon Sarah Connor within the context of the *Terminator* franchise. *T:SCC* details her realisation that she can, and should, speak her own account of her subjective experiences in order to challenge these narratives.

Froula states that *T:SCC* “fictionalises and replicates American trauma in the twenty-first century, for a country haunted not only by the memory of 9/11 but also by ongoing anxiety and the perpetual threat of future terror.”³²⁰ This cultural climate is clearly central to Sarah’s development of her own subjective voice, which, as I go on to discuss, certainly vocalises the ongoing anxiety of the era. Yet Froula concludes by arguing that the series “remains a critical cultural index for the ways in which war trauma seldom ends on the battlefield, but rather continues to haunt its veterans and survivors.”³²¹ The logical extension of this thought, then, is that this battle continues not only in the homeland but, crucially, the home. As such, it is important to specifically consider the impact this acutely domestic manifestation of wider events of the 21st century has upon Sarah’s subjectivity. Key to my exploration here is the term ‘battlespace,’ borrowed from Tim Blackmore.³²² The term is described by Stephen Graham as central to the new military urbanism, which he sees as emerging from “the creeping and insidious diffusion of militarised debates about ‘security’ into every walk of life.” The new military urbanism “is manifest in the widespread metaphorisation of war as the perpetual and boundless condition of urban societies – against drugs, against crime, against terror, against insecurity itself.”³²³ The ‘battlespace’ concept “prefigures a boundless and unending process of militarisation where everything becomes a site of permanent war.” The concept works by “collapsing conventional military-civilian binaries.”³²⁴ Graham uses the term battlespace in reference to the city space. In the following chapter of this thesis I explore the implications of the militarisation of the city as represented by *Fringe*, and the navigation of this military urbanism by central protagonist Olivia Dunham. While *Fringe* posits the 21st century American city as a present day

³²⁰ Froula, p. 179

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Tim Blackmore, *War X: Human Extensions in Battlespace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005)

³²³ Stephen Graham, ‘Cities as Battlespace: The New Military Urbanism’ in *City*, 13, No. 4 (December, 2009) p. 388

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 389

battlefield, *T:SCC* relocates this battlefield to the home. As such, I consider its application here in terms of the domestic and Sarah Connor – specifically, how the home itself is presented as a battlespace within *T:SCC*.

Instances that depict the relocation of the War on Terror to the home, and the manner in which the ‘battlespace’ concept permeates the domestic space in *T:SCC*, are multitudinous. In 1.01, ‘Pilot,’ we see Sarah Connor painting the walls of a house in New Mexico in which the Connors have just taken residence, as John arrives home from school (Figure 2.1). Later in the episode, when a terminator known as Cromartie (Owain Yeoman)

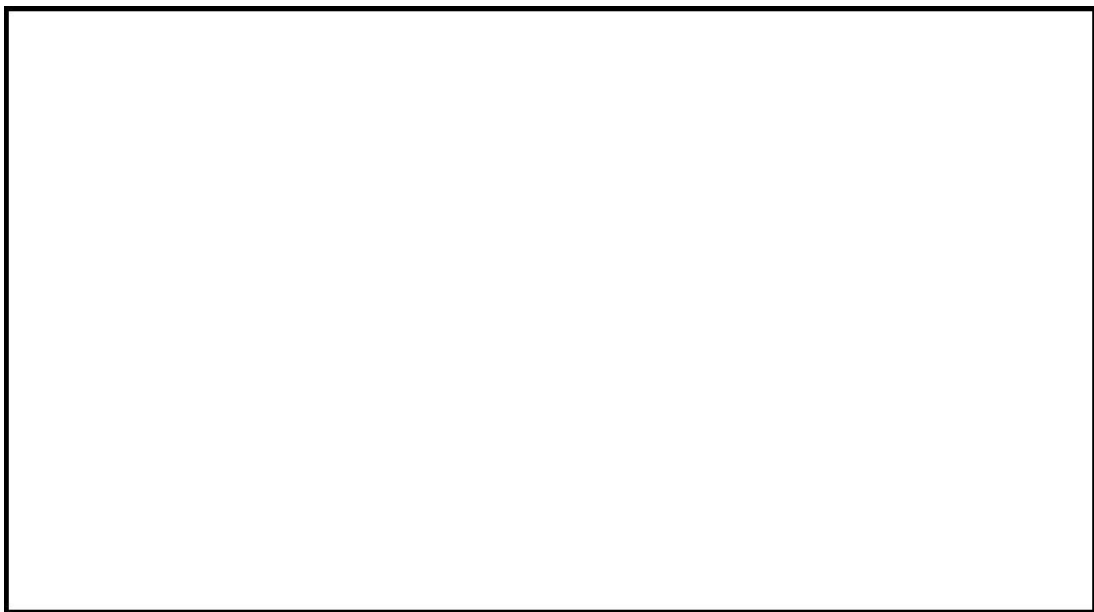


Figure 2.1 Sarah paints a wall, behind which she has concealed a shotgun, in 1.01, ‘Pilot.’

attacks them in the same house, Sarah Connor grabs a shotgun concealed inside the same wall she was painting. As a fight scene ensues, Sarah ducks for cover behind an armchair which she has reinforced with Kevlar (Figure 2.2). In 1.04, ‘Heavy Metal,’ Sarah and John decide to hunt Cromartie. She provides John with a list of weapons they should bring, concluding by requesting “the C4, from the bathroom under the towels.”³²⁵ In episode 2.12, ‘Alpine Fields,’ Sarah tries to protect a family who are targeted by Skynet. Anticipating an attack by a terminator, she searches their house for weapons and proceeds to demolish

³²⁵ ‘Heavy Metal.’ *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.04. Dir. Sergio Mimica Gezzan. FOX (February 4, 2008)

parts of it with an axe in order to set booby traps within the premises. Indeed, there are many more examples throughout the series: Sarah does pull-ups on the unused garden swing-set in 1.05, 'Queen's Gambit,' John grabs a shotgun from under the kitchen sink to fight Cromartie in 2.07, 'Brothers of Nablus,' and John comments that Sarah once bought him a flak jacket for his birthday.³²⁶ This emphasis, on domestic security and domestic

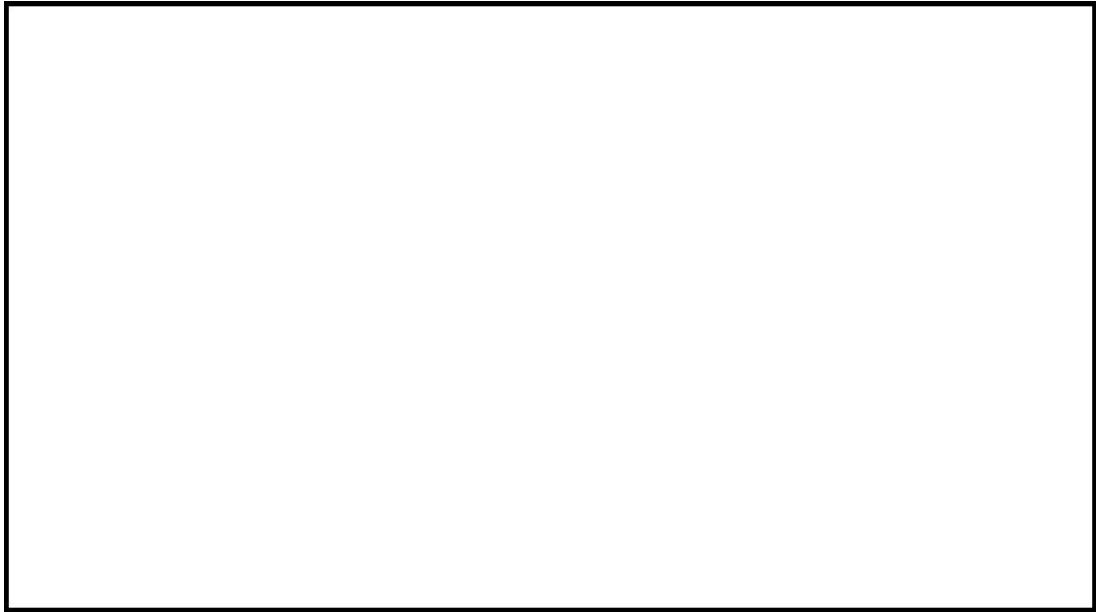


Figure 2.2 Sarah takes cover behind a reinforced chair in 1.01, 'Pilot.'

warfare both, is acutely acknowledged in a conversation Sarah has in her home with a representative from child protective services towards the end of the series. The representative notes: "I've heard you keep guns in the home, which, of course, is every American's right." Sarah responds simply: "for security. We were robbed."³²⁷ When considering *T:SCC's* representation of the battlespace concept, Sarah's statement can be read as one that points to wider concerns of urban insecurity prevalent within a 21st century cultural climate, wherein the nation as a whole continues to process the loss associated with the event of 9/11 and the ongoing War on Terror. Yet it also points to the distinctly domestic manifestation of this anxiety, wherein it is not only the homeland but also the home that requires protection within this context. This is exemplified by Sarah's

³²⁶ 'What He Beheld.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.09. Dir. Mike Rohl. FOX (March 3, 2008)

³²⁷ 'Ourselves Alone.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.17. Dir. Jeff Woolnough. FOX (March 6, 2009)

voiceover at the conclusion of episode 2.06, 'The Tower is Tall but the Fall is Short,' in which she states:

In 1678, doctors diagnosed the mental affliction soldiers suffered from as nostalgia. Homesickness. A longing to return to the past. The cruel reality of war is that there is no return home. No return to innocence. What is lost is lost forever. Like my father, war's wounds have bled them dry. No words of comfort. No words of forgiveness. No words at all.³²⁸

This speech underlines the theme promulgated by *T:SCC* of war as it exists on both the national and domestic fronts in the 21st century. While much of what Sarah says here evokes the wider themes of national myth-making I addressed in Chapter One, within this context it also speaks to the insidious nature of contemporary conflict that creeps into the home. It is effectively foreshadowed by an earlier episode in the series' second season. In 2.03, 'The Mousetrap,' Cameron says that the house they inhabit is moving; effectively sinking. She observes this by standing still in the middle of the house, and merely concludes that they will have to repaint the walls the following summer. While this is obviously intended to be an amusing line, the instability rooted in the foundations of the Connor's domestic space certainly speaks to anxieties prevalent within the wider cultural context of the series. It suggests an erosion of safety and stability that is continual. It makes the words on display above the bookcase in the same main room of the house – 'Enjoy, Relax, Dream' – which should speak to the domestic space as a supposedly insular, safe, middle-class ideal, wholly ironic. This irony, established between the conflicting images of familial, suburban safety and domestic instability and anxiety presented by the merging of warfare and the home, is further cemented by Sarah's construction of a safe in 2.08, 'Mr. Ferguson is Ill Today.' Her intent to install it under the floorboards of the house, which has already been established as sinking, effectively speaks to the incompatibility of these images, and Sarah's own internal conflict. While her mantra has always been "nothing is ever safe," and her actions here appear futile in their contradictory nature, I would also argue that this again points to Sarah's own active subjectivity – her refusal to remain still and do nothing, her ongoing resistance to her environment in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.

In-Betweenness and Authorship

Sarah's role as a mother, and her desire to embrace transformation and change in terms of her own subjectivity, exists within the domestic battlespace context I have

³²⁸ 'The Tower is Tall but the Fall is Short.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.06. Dir. Tawnia McKiernan. FOX (October 20, 2008)

outlined above. It is therefore important to further consider the key characteristic of in-betweenness I see as manifest in Sarah Connor, as represented in *T:SCC* within this socio-cultural context. The opening sequence of *T:SCC*'s pilot episode depicts a nightmare in which a terminator catches up with Sarah and John, and kills John by shooting him. Sarah responds that "nothing matters anymore" and is engulfed in flames before waking up. Echoing how she has previously been characterised in the film franchise, in this nightmare Sarah is defined as a mother only, with nothing to live for after her son dies. In a voiceover which accompanies this sequence, Sarah states:

There are those who believe that a child in the womb shares his mother's dreams...but what if you'd known since he was inside you what life held for him? That he would be hunted...that every moment of your life would be spent keeping him alive: would he understand why you were so hard? Why you held on so tight? Would he still reach for you if the only dream you ever shared was a nightmare?³²⁹

In this, Sarah directly acknowledges her role as a mother, and a mother dealing with a trauma that not only exists in the future but is also very present and personal. Yet the series rejects this narrative in its immediate opening sequence – Sarah wakes up from this vision, she resists death and hopelessness. She is given space by the series to begin speaking for herself and to fight. She affirms this in her closing voiceover at the end of the same episode: "it's going to be one hell of a dogfight."³³⁰ Between these opening and closing moments, she is flung forward in time, over the event of her own death. Time-travel is referred to as evoking the feeling of being "born" by Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn), John's father, in *The Terminator*. As such, Sarah is figuratively reborn here, too. She avoids death and is resurrected within a new, uncertain 21st century context in which her roles as both mother, protector and soldier are redefined. I now wish to consider how Sarah is able to balance her role as mother and protector to John within this context, whilst also working to develop her own individual subjectivity by gaining an authorial voice.

In her article 'Against Matricide: Rethinking Subjectivity and the Maternal Body,' Alison Stone seeks to re-examine Kristeva's view that "becoming a speaking subject requires physical matricide: violent separation from the maternal body."³³¹ Instead, she proposes a conception of subjectivity that is non-matricidal by drawing out strands in

³²⁹ 'Pilot'

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Alison Stone, 'Against Matricide: Rethinking Subjectivity and the Maternal Body' in *Hypatia*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter, 2012) p. 118

Kristeva's work – in particular, her argument for a triangular conception of early mother-child relations. Stone positively re-interprets this triangle as one of potential space that provides a maternal third term: "a relation of connection and difference between two," a definition that again evokes an inherent in-betweenness. For Stone, this connecting space "allows both mothers and children to emerge as subjects in their own right," before going on to propose that this space can also be extended into the realm of language, "so that language intrinsically allows the possibility of a speaking position of connection with the mother."³³² Kristeva sees becoming a subject as necessarily tied to authorship; as Stone puts it:

To be a subject is not just to undergo experience but to *author* its meaning, and for this one must implicitly situate oneself *as* its author, implicitly assuming a position as one uniting parts of speech into sentences and representations into judgments. This means ascribing oneself both unity under the function 'I' and a level of agency and autonomy sufficient to construct meanings.³³³

As I have already stated, following the event of her now-avoided death from cancer Sarah finds herself in a wholly new context to which she must adapt. When John is desperate to get his new identification papers in episode 1.02, 'Gnothi Seauton,' Sarah says to him: "can't you just be happy being yourself for just a little while longer? It's not so bad being a Connor." John responds: "that's easy for you to say." Importantly, Sarah questions this assertion, asking "is it?"³³⁴ What may appear a throwaway remark can also be interpreted as an expression of desire: as a character who adopts many roles and aliases within the series, Sarah simply wants to be herself. It is an important and self-reflective question that brings to light, early within the series, the restrictions placed upon Sarah Connor's ability to both define and embrace her own subjectivity. The Connor name does not have the same heroic connotations for Sarah in the present as it does for John in the future. It also isn't liberating; although I would argue that this is what Sarah, within *T:SCC*, is working towards it being - not just for John but crucially for herself. Sarah gains power and fluidity through the performance of her multiple aliases, but arguably not authorship. *T:SCC* therefore presents Sarah Connor's narrative, as manifested by her voiceovers, as a journey that will enable her to achieve both.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 120

³³⁴ 'Gnothi Seauton'

Sarah's voiceovers function as a pivotal device within *T:SCC*, specifically in relation to Sarah's development of her own narrative and, by extension, her autonomy and independent subjectivity. Considering the study of autobiography, Julia Swindells states:

The stress has been on the idea that all autobiographical statements show some process of mediation between the subject and author of the autobiography, and the ideological environment they inhabit. This demystifies the notion that the autobiographical act stands alone as a testimony to individuals, removed from their relationship to the social world.³³⁵

Furthermore, Laura Marcus asks whether autobiography does or should have to be understood as a specifically literary form, within the context of new disciplines and definitions.³³⁶ If, as Marcus suggests, autobiography can be understood as "material through which" certain forms, that is to say subjectivities, collective memory, self-fashioning and so forth, are constituted,³³⁷ then it seems an appropriate framework through which to consider Sarah Connor's narrative undertaking. Like the methodology of this thesis, which draws on a number of key theoretical areas including gender theory, theories of race and ethnicity, and constructions of motherhood, alongside textual analysis, this conceptual understanding of autobiography is distinctly interdisciplinary and allows for a consideration of *T:SCC* as the genesis of Sarah's autobiographical project. Indeed, such a framework gains further relevance to the focus on gender that this thesis maintains when utilised alongside Sidonie Smith's argument that reading and considering autobiographies that promote the significance of gender in the process of autobiography works to challenge "the naïve conflation of male subjectivity and human identity."³³⁸ Furthermore, as Claire MacDonald notes in her consideration of feminism, autobiography and performance, Smith "observes that the autobiographical strategies which question, play with and refuse unitary identities 'help us to hope by insisting on the possibilities of self-conscious breakages in the old repetitions.'"³³⁹ Autobiography is therefore considered here as a method by which Sarah Connor is able to actively insert herself into culture, within the specific, 21st century context in which she has been relocated. It is precisely this that Julia Swindells argues

³³⁵ Julia Swindells, 'Introduction' in *The Uses of Autobiography*, ed. Julia Swindells (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995) p. 1

³³⁶ Laura Marcus, 'The face of autobiography' in *The Uses of Autobiography*, ed. Julia Swindells (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995) p. 14-15

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16

³³⁸ Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) p. 51

³³⁹ Claire MacDonald, 'Assumed Identities: Feminism, Autobiography and Performance Art' in *The Uses of Autobiography*, ed. Julia Swindells (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995) p. 194

autobiography enables “people in a position of powerlessness,” in which she counts women (among others), to do; “via the assertion of a ‘personal’ voice which speaks beyond itself.” This is also necessarily political, as Swindells notes.³⁴⁰ In asserting her own authorial voice and autonomous subjectivity, Sarah Connor is contesting the accounts made by others of her selfhood and resisting narratives that have been imposed upon her.

In exploring women’s self-representation from a feminist perspective, Leigh Gilmore attempts to locate “autobiographical authority” within the discourses of such self-representation, seeking to analyse how women use these discourses and the possibilities inherent within them for agency and subjectivity.³⁴¹ Her consideration of how women seek to actively position themselves differently through an authorial voice bears much relevance to the wider concerns of this thesis, and as such, it is important to consider how these possibilities can be seen to operate in *T:SCC*’s representation of Sarah Connor. In this series, Sarah challenges a narrative of her self that has been established throughout the film franchise. As the ‘Mother of All Destiny’ she has been narrated in relation to her son John, by the voices of others. As Palumbo points out, while she is the protagonist of *The Terminator*, Sarah only becomes a heroine through the figure of Kyle Reese. While she ultimately saves herself from the terminator that hunts her, her understanding of herself – who she is ‘supposed’ to be – comes from the words of Reese: he refers to her as a “legend,” and the film’s conclusion points to her acceptance of this narrative when she records a tape message for her unborn son John.³⁴² Indeed, her secession to this narrative is foreshadowed at the beginning of the film. Sarah’s colleagues at the restaurant where she works as a waitress eagerly show her footage of a news report that details the death of another woman named Sarah Connor, executed (as the viewer is aware) by the same terminator that hunts the film’s protagonist. Her friend exclaims: “you’re dead, honey!”³⁴³ It is effectively true, in a metaphorical sense. Sarah’s life as a waitress ends when Kyle Reese enters her life. Her self becomes a part of his journey; it comes to fit the narrative others have expounded on her existence. She becomes, as Kaplan states, spoken of by ‘an-Other.’ No longer understood as a young, single and independent waitress, Sarah is instead redefined by a future narrative as not only a mother, but the mother of the future saviour of

³⁴⁰ Swindells, p. 7

³⁴¹ Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. ix, 12

³⁴² *The Terminator*. (1984) Dir. James Cameron. USA/UK: Hemdale Film/Pacific Western/Euro Film Funding/Cinema 84

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

mankind. She is also understood by the discourses of representation that exist in wider society; shaped by the historical and cultural constructions of motherhood I explored earlier in this chapter.

In response to this, it is my argument that *T:SCC* actively seeks to restore Sarah's own narrative to the forefront of her subjectivity. Considering Sarah's subjectivity within the series through the framework of autobiography offers a fruitful way of interrogating this. Gilmore states: "as formulated initially by Estelle Jelinek, men's autobiography follows patterns of coherence and unity that is characterised by a narrative that deploys the stable and autonomous I as its hero."³⁴⁴ This understanding of autobiography, as a unified, masculine practice, clearly opposes the multiplicity inherent in the female subjectivities this thesis interrogates. Indeed, as I have illustrated throughout this chapter, Sarah Connor's own fragmentation and in-betweenness as represented by *T:SCC* is rooted in performance, role play, resistance to death and her continually active status. These latter two points are neatly surmised by the wife of Miles Dyson, Terissa Dyson (Charlayne Woodard), whom Sarah meets in episode 1.03, 'The Turk.' Miles Dyson (Joe Morton) died during the events of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* when he assisted Sarah and John in sabotaging his laboratory at Cyberdyne. Meeting her for the first time in the 21st century, Dyson's wife states: "what do you want, Sarah? You never die and you always want something."³⁴⁵ Sarah Connor also uses the I throughout her voiceovers, rendering them an acutely personal account. In doing so, she simultaneously challenges this masculine unity, resisting the I as the representative site of an exclusively male subjectivity. She embodies Gilmore's consideration of autobiography as a visible act of self-definition, wherein "The I is situated in multiple identity constructions at once and functions in a range of representational politics, resisting some while reproducing the effects of others."³⁴⁶ Gilmore distinguishes here between autobiography as having come to "designate a stable I anchored within a relatively stable genre" and 'autobiographics', which she argues "as a description of self-representation and as a reading practice, is concerned with resistance, contradiction, and interruption as strategies of self-representation."³⁴⁷ Speaking as it does to the multiple and fragmented subjects upon which this thesis concentrates, this approach allows for a recognition of the I as existing in a range of discourses; as a site which allows for "multiple

³⁴⁴ Gilmore, p. 11

³⁴⁵ 'The Turk.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.03. Dir. Paul Edwards. FOX (January 21, 2008)

³⁴⁶ Gilmore, p. 184

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185

figurations of agency.” It positions the subject within such discourses, wherein the *I* is “emphasised as a point of resistance in self-representation.” As such, this approach stresses the fact that the *I* can be effectively utilised in the conceptualisation of multiple selves.³⁴⁸ Through this, Sarah is in-between in a positive, liberating sense; able to be both mother *and* an independent subject in her own right.

As I have detailed throughout the chapter, Sarah is represented as a figure of resistance in *T:SCC*. She interrupts existing narratives of her subjectivity - including that of her own death - and she is also a site of contradiction. She struggles to balance the competing roles of mother and autonomous woman that have historically been defined as almost binary opposites; her role as a protector in a world where nothing is safe. But it is my argument that her interruptions, and her negotiation of these contradictions, can be understood as wholly positive because the series presents her as an active character. She carries on, she is continually resistant. She is also able to interrupt narratives of masculine unity in her use of the autobiographical *I* whilst existing in this fragmented state, by conceiving her own name as “a site of potential experimentation rather than a contractual sign of identity.”³⁴⁹ Indeed, this is very much a gendered process for Sarah, known as she is as both ‘Sarah Connor’ and simultaneously the ‘Mother of All Destiny’.

Sarah Connor makes several key statements in *T:SCC* that are demonstrative of this, and episode 1.02, ‘Gnothi Seauton,’ provides a good case study. Earlier I considered this episode in relation to Sarah’s experience of 9/11. As the second episode of *T:SCC*, it is an early indicator of the series’ intent with regard to representing Sarah’s developing subjectivity and autonomy, and thus it is pertinent to interrogate it here through the framework of autobiography. As such, it seems most appropriate to consider Sarah Connor’s opening voiceover in this episode. Sarah states:

A wise man once said ‘know thyself.’ Easier said than done. I’ve had nine aliases, twenty-three jobs, spoken four languages and spent three years in a mental hospital just for speaking the truth. At least when I was there I could use my real name. Through it all I’ve always known who I am and why I’m here. Protect my son, prepare for the future. But lately it’s gotten harder to control. Even as I try to help John find firm ground in this new world, the battlefield shifts beneath our feet. Maybe it’s all catching up to me. Maybe if you spend your life hiding who you are, you might finally end up fooling yourself.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ ‘Gnothi Seauton’

Despite its length, I feel it is worth quoting in full as there is much to consider in Sarah's words within the context of the themes explored throughout this chapter. It expresses Sarah's desire to escape the performance of roles; the struggle to understand her own self. It hints at the instability of the domestic; later exemplified by the Connor's sinking house which I addressed above. It personifies the multiplicity of her character, the fragmentation inherent in this. It illustrates the uncertainty that comes with speaking your own truth, but hearing that truth be denied by the narratives of others. Sarah's assertion that she has known herself through all the events in her life and the roles she has played is inherently self-reflexive, followed as it is by the allusion that perhaps this narrative certainty isn't as firm as it could – or should - be. When she speaks of hiding her life, she is directly referring to the external nature of her own performance through aliases and, subsequently, acknowledging the internal repression of her own subjectivity. While Sarah has been able to gain power and abilities through her aliases, she has not gained authorship over her own experiences. *T:SCC* presents Sarah Connor's narrative expression as a journey that eventually proffers both.

Later in the same episode, Sarah reflects: "A new identity, a new life, a chance – you can't put a price on that. But unlike John I was never eager for that new life to begin. I liked having no name, no story. It was the only time I got to be me."³⁵¹ Sarah's assertion that she liked having no story is not rooted in stasis, or her desire to escape her own subjectivity. It is rooted in the knowledge that her story has always been dictated to her by others and she has struggled to negotiate this. Ever since her colleague told her "you're dead, honey!" she has always been, in essence, someone else. This is supported by a conversation with Cameron that follows: "I wake up this morning and you tell me...I don't know anything anymore. I don't even remember what my name is."³⁵² Sarah is clearly fragmented and displaced within the changed, 21st century context that *T:SCC* presents. But she also works to exploit this environment to find a way to speak for herself; rather than speak to the idea of what Sarah Connor is - or should be - to John, to the nation, or to the future. This is underlined by the conclusion of the episode, which ends with Sarah giving her own opinion of what 'know thyself' means:

My version is this: 'know thyself, because what else is there to know?' ...Our identities change, our names, the way we look, how we act and speak. We're shapeshifters. There is no control, no constant, no

³⁵¹ *ibid.*

³⁵² *ibid.*

shelter but the love of family and the body God gave us. And we can only hope that will always be good enough.³⁵³

In this statement, Sarah acknowledges the roles she must reconcile. She acknowledges and embraces her fragmentation and multiplicity, her position in-between these roles. She acknowledges her role as a mother. Most significantly, she acknowledges the importance of taking ownership of all of it for herself amidst the change inherent in an uncertain, unstable cultural climate. This is embodied in her opening proclamation “my version is this”; a proclamation that speaks to the project of her self-representation throughout the series.

Sarah’s assertion that *T:SCC* represents her own version of events, as demonstrated through the development of her autobiographical voice, is reinforced throughout the series. Indeed, the title of this chapter is taken from episode 1.06, ‘Dungeons & Dragons.’ In this episode, Sarah states in a voiceover:

On the night we first met, John’s father, Kyle Reese, told me words I remember to this day. He meant them as a warning; I think of them as words to live by. He told me of an apocalypse yet to come. Like a Pandora’s box he unpacked every horror, every evil, every dark thing that haunts our future. He also left me an unborn son, to whom he bequeathed what remained in the box after the nightmares fled. Hope.³⁵⁴

Again, this quote reveals the continued conflict inherent in Sarah between speaking and embodying the words of others, and those of herself. As I have argued, *T:SCC* continually acknowledges and explores this intersection. The representation of Sarah in the series, and the development of her subjectivity, grows from this gap; a gap made possible by Sarah’s temporal leap into the 21st century. She needs words to live by, and she is trying to find her own words and express her own narrative. Sarah acknowledges the difficulty of this; she directly addresses this conflict. In the same episode Charley (Dean Winters), her ex-fiancé, quotes her renowned line from *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*: “there is no fate but what we make.”³⁵⁵ Sarah responds: “the more I think about it, the more I realise my fate was made before we met. When John was born...[I’m] not trying to change mine, trying to change his.”³⁵⁶ But by speaking of this conflict, born from these intersecting narratives, she is

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ ‘Dungeons & Dragons.’ *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.06. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (February 18, 2008)

³⁵⁵ *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. (1991) Dir. James Cameron. USA/France: Carolco Pictures/Pacific Western/Lightstorm Entertainment/Canal+

³⁵⁶ ‘Dungeons & Dragons’

changing it. This acknowledgement is self-reflective, it provides a foundation for the active process of her own authorial independence. Her voiceovers often feature her reciting a folktale, or a myth, that correlates with the events of a given episode. Many of these monologues are about telling the story of who a person is, a prominent theme within *T:SCC*. Telling stories, and obviously telling her own story, is how Sarah Connor becomes and how she wishes to be remembered. In *T:SCC* she wants this to be her version rather than the quotes of Kyle Reese, or John, or the nation. This is demonstrative of how the series foregrounds Sarah's voice much more prominently than previous iterations of the *Terminator* franchise. Her subjectivity evolves because she gives her own account, rather than repeating, or being characterised by, the words of others.

It is significant, then, that Sarah continually insists on the importance of talking – despite the fact that this is not always an easy practice. In episode 2.01, 'Samson and Delilah,' she asks to talk to John about the death of a character named Sarkissian (James Urbaniak), whom John killed in self-defence. She says: "I think we need to talk about what happened back at the house...*maybe I need to talk about it.*" (Emphasis added). John denies her this opportunity by responding: "maybe you do but I don't, so let's not."³⁵⁷ Yet this denial does not stop her continued desire to speak her own thoughts. At the conclusion of 'Samson and Delilah' she talks to John about the events of the episode, kneeling outside the door of his room. While he doesn't respond, Sarah is not discouraged and continues to speak. The need – and continued struggle – to talk is further accentuated by a multi-episode arc that occurs midway through the series' second season, when Sarah visits Dr Sherman. Her first visit was strategic, part of the continued role play in which Sarah engages to obtain information. Yet she returns to his office in episode 2.09, 'Complications,' for the expressed purpose of talking about her dreams (Figure 2.3). He asks her: "would it be accurate to say that the central conflict is your son?" She replies that this is the case, and this is an important acknowledgement by Sarah. She tells Sherman that she has no one else to talk to, and he responds by saying "nothing is going to happen in here until you decide to be honest."³⁵⁸ Sarah gets up and leaves; not ready to talk further at this point but having again utilised a space to speak of, and to, her own subjectivity.

³⁵⁷ 'Samson and Delilah.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.01. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (September 8, 2008)

³⁵⁸ 'Complications.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.09. Dir. Steven DePaul. FOX (November 17, 2008)

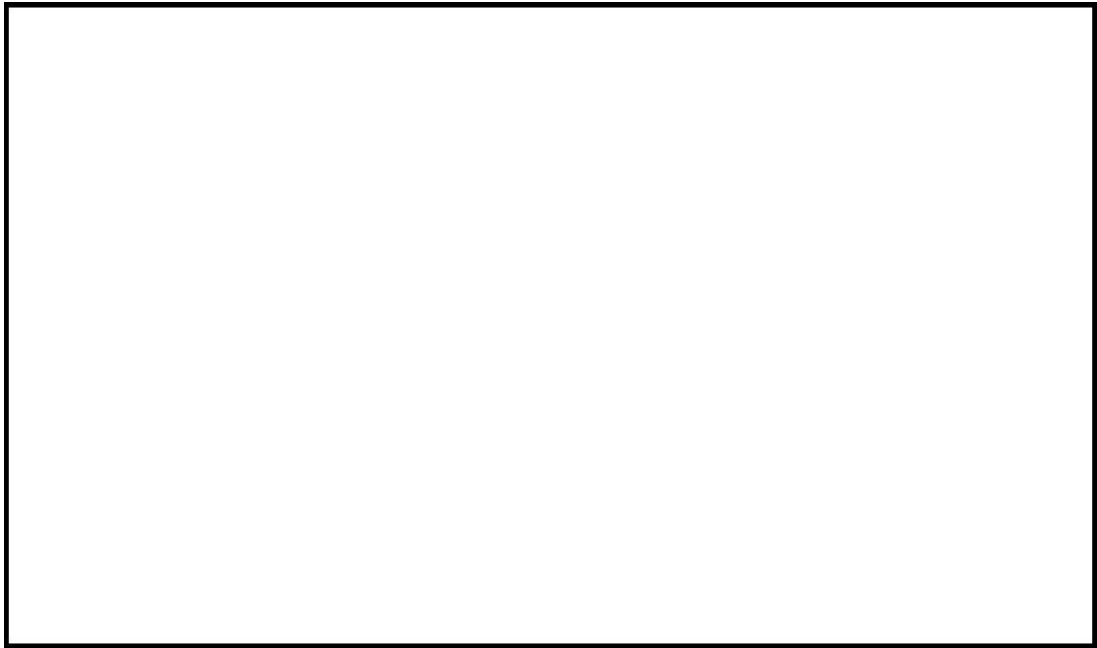


Figure 2.3 Sarah visits Dr. Sherman in 2.09, 'Complications.'

Finally, I wish to consider what I would characterise as a crucial scene that occurs in episode 1.07, 'The Demon Hand,' which I contend underlines *T:SCC*'s representation of Sarah Connor as an active, speaking subject that challenges the previously restrictive iterations of her character. In John's room, Sarah discovers a video tape of herself being interviewed during her institutionalisation at Pescadero Mental Hospital. It depicts her giving consent for John to be adopted, signing away her parental rights. In this episode she later tells John: "three seconds after I signed that paper, I knew I couldn't live with it."³⁵⁹ This suggests that it was the motivation for Sarah's attempted escape from the hospital that is depicted in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, where she is eventually 'rescued' by John (Edward Furlong). Yet it is in this series that she vocalises her own motivations; again, her own version of events. As Sarah watches the tape of herself signing the consent forms, it also underlines the fact that her subjective autonomy doesn't depend, and cannot depend, on the separation from her son as a necessary requirement. Her act, in this recording, is enforced: she is under state control at a medical facility, she is under the influence of drugs and imprisoned. Indeed, it is similarly enforced by the narrative of *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, the first film in which John Connor (Nick Stahl) is portrayed as an adult character. Sarah is no longer 'required' as a mother; she is unceremoniously discarded and

³⁵⁹ 'The Demon Hand.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.07. Dir. Charles Beeson. FOX (February 25, 2008)

has no say in the matter. However, at the end of *T:SCC*, when her separation from John within the series does in fact occur, it's on her own terms and she is the one who makes the active choice. In the series finale, 2.22, 'Born to Run,' John wants to accompany a character named Catherine Weaver (Shirley Manson), also a terminator, to the future. The final scene is largely shot at a wide angle; the characters stand in the middle ground of the shot. We see Sarah backing away from the centre of the room where the time bubble has opened. She tells John that they can't go. John pleads with Sarah, who simply responds: "I'll stop it." She continues to back away from the time bubble, which forms a barrier between herself and John. Through the wide angle shot we see Sarah standing on the other side of the orb. Her separation from John here is by choice; an active choice rather than one which is coerced such as the example discussed above. I would argue that this key difference suggests that Sarah's separation from John is not necessary within the context of the *Terminator* franchise. Instead, it is a proactive choice made by Sarah herself, at a time when she deems it to be necessary. To use her own words, she can 'live with it' in this context. This point is summed up by Sarah's final assertion to John: "I'll stop it."³⁶⁰ This is her version of the fight against Skynet: at the conclusion of *T:SCC*, Sarah has actively repositioned herself as the heroine in the present. Her use of the *I* cements her subjective autonomy and her last line of the series underlines this. In a voiceover as John stands in the future, Sarah says "I love you, too." It establishes not only the acceptance of her position as mother *and* autonomous subject, but also the positivity of her active choice and negotiation of these roles. In making this choice Sarah has opened up the possibilities of new beginnings, transformation and change, without discarding or rejecting the maternal.

Conclusion

I have endeavoured to illustrate throughout this chapter that Sarah Connor does not have to separate herself from her child or the maternal to be an autonomous subject. Instead, this separation, which only occurs in the series finale, is a choice she makes for herself. In *T:SCC*, Sarah is represented as a character who is very much fragmented: fragmented by the multiplicity of the roles she performs, the aliases she adopts, the narratives which she negotiates. I have argued that this fragmentation constantly locates her in a position of in-betweenness: between these roles and her self, between mother and autonomous subject, between her words and those of others. Throughout the series, Sarah

³⁶⁰ 'Born to Run.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.22. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (April 10, 2009)

interrogates this border within a 21st century context, wherein the domestic sphere is itself rearticulated as a site of conflict and warfare. Yet this context, and Sarah's growing mastery over both herself and her socio-cultural environment, has also provided her with a mode of liberation: the ability to speak her own version of events, to author her own subjectivity. In doing so, Sarah challenges not only previous iterations of her self that are present within the *Terminator* franchise, but is able to resist her own textual eradication. She does not abandon her role as mother in this challenge, she instead negotiates her own burgeoning subjectivity around it. Rather than accepting a future in which she is to be an 'absent presence,' the 'Mother of All Destiny,' or indeed, wholly absent through death, Sarah makes possible new beginnings by embracing such change and fragmentation. The project of Sarah's self-representation, which I argue *T:SCC* ultimately comprises, is, as I have discussed, not without its contradictions. Yet in acknowledging and addressing these contradictions Sarah becomes an active presence in this project and thus, this fragmentation is a positive and liberating trait. Enabled by her prominent voiceovers in each episode, Sarah is able to actively reposition herself within an existing canon. Adopting and reconfiguring the *I*, by nature of her own fragmentation and gendered subjectivity, Sarah reclaims her name and utilises it as the site of her own authorial agency. She provides herself with words to live by, and these words are her own.

Chapter 3

'Brave New World': The Multiple Roles of *Fringe's* Olivia Dunham

Upon its series debut, US television critic Matt Roush stated that *Fringe* should be re-titled "Cringe" due to its "freaky opening," "grisly twists" and "mumbo-jumbo science" that was merely reminiscent of *The X-Files*.³⁶¹ Elsewhere Travis Fickett agreed, labelling *Fringe* as "derivative" and stating that "the ground it covers has been covered elsewhere and better...at the end of the day, it's hard to imagine that *Fringe* will ever blow anyone's mind."³⁶² Blending elements of science fiction and horror in depicting paranormal incidents with an underlying current of conspiracy, *Fringe* was thus considered primarily as a television series that ostensibly based its narrative and thematic concerns upon the framework of *The X-Files*; an earlier success for the same FOX network.³⁶³ It subsequently struggled to distinguish itself as a distinct, unique series in its own right. In her review of *Fringe's* premiere episode, Gillian Flynn argued that "Fox's new sci-fi serial just might be a worthy successor - *finally* - to *The X-Files*,"³⁶⁴ whereas Alessandra Stanley stated that its only key deviation from the aforementioned *X-Files* blueprint was the pairing of "a trusting female FBI agent with a scientifically minded and sceptical male sidekick."³⁶⁵ The construction of the show was therefore fundamentally understood as a typical FBI procedural series which involved the investigation of different paranormal occurrences in each episode, with the pilot episode charting the establishment of the 'Fringe team,' set up to explore the science and the causes behind these incidents. Yet *Fringe* was able to overcome these early struggles in terms of its generic and format identity to distinguish

³⁶¹ Matt Roush, 'Critic's Notebook: *Mad Men*, *Fringe* Update' in *TV Guide* (September 16, 2008) <<http://www.tvguide.com/roush/Critics-Notebook-Mad-17401.aspx>> [Accessed April 8, 2011]

³⁶² Travis Fickett, '*Fringe* Pilot' Review,' *IGN* (September 8, 2008) <<http://uk.tv.ign.com/articles/908/908619p1.html>> [Accessed April 8, 2011]

³⁶³ See, among others, Alessandra Stanley, 'Spooky Conspiracy on Sci-Fi Frontier' in *The New York Times* (September 8, 2008) <http://tv.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/arts/television/09frin.html?_r=1> and 'Dying Networks Show Signs of Vitality' in *The New York Times* (December 17, 2009) <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/arts/television/20stanley.html?scp=23&sq=Fringe%20X%20Files&st=cse>> wherein Stanley refers to *Fringe* as an "odd update of *The X-Files*."

³⁶⁴ Gillian Flynn, '*Fringe*: TV Review' in *Entertainment Weekly* (September 17, 2008) <<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20226409,00.html>> [Accessed April 8, 2011]

³⁶⁵ Alessandra Stanley, 'Spooky Conspiracy on Sci-Fi Frontier' in *The New York Times* (September 8, 2008) http://tv.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/arts/television/09frin.html?_r=1 [Accessed April 8, 2011]

itself as a unique series in its own right. The show subsequently evolved beyond these early accusations of thematic replication, as its narrative became progressively more complex and serialised. The development arguably most responsible for *Fringe*'s ability to establish itself as an original series was the introduction of a parallel universe storyline at the conclusion of the first season, a standard science fiction trope but told uniquely through the perspective of 9/11 and the wider events of the 21st century in *Fringe*. This narrative posits two different worlds as being at war with one another, the consequence of our universe converging with its parallel counterpart, resulting in severe global disasters.

In Chapter One I documented Anne Cranny-Francis' identification of several significant conventions specific to the science fiction genre. Among others, Cranny-Francis notes: the effect of estrangement produced by science (where "high technology produces a fictional setting very different in appearance from the spectator's own world," or may simply give a "futuristic gloss to a dominant discursive formation),"³⁶⁶ the custom of narrative displacements in time and/or space which "function to locate events ambiguously," and a narrative complicated by intersecting and framing narratives.³⁶⁷ The manner in which *Fringe* utilises such tropes is pivotal in relation to the themes which I interrogate in this chapter. The 'reality war' narrative, the rhetoric and binary structures which figure in its conception, the issues of gender and patriarchy that stem from this and the centrality of the Olivia Dunham character to each are fundamentally important to this thesis' interrogation of gender and subjectivity within a 21st century US cultural context.

This chapter focuses on the representation of Olivia Dunham, the central protagonist of *Fringe*. Specifically, I explore the relationship between performativity and multiplicity that I argue are key elements of Olivia's representation by the narrative. Over the course of five seasons, the character has performed, adopted and has even been possessed by various iterations of her self. As such, this chapter aims to demonstrate why this key textual element of multiplicity is a positive and stimulating representation of a female lead that is specific to 21st century American science fiction television. In doing so I explore how *Fringe* is able to relocate and represent the War on Terror as central to the American city, via an exploration of the visual aesthetics and terminology utilised within the text itself to represent and characterise it. Following this, I consider how Olivia is able to continually resist textual eradication within this environment, the key textual element of multiplicity in

³⁶⁶ Cranny-Francis, p. 221

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224

Fringe's representation of Olivia and finally, how Olivia's status as literally 'in-between' suggests a progressive and pro-active response to the destabilised environment in which she is located.

Brave New World

The title of this chapter, *Brave New World*, is taken from the Season 4 finale of *Fringe*. It is also, of course, the title of Aldous Huxley's famous science fiction novel, which was originally published in 1932 and itself drawn from a quote from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Huxley's *Brave New World* depicts a totally planned society, described by Margaret Atwood as "one of conformity achieved through engineered, bottle-grown babies and hypnotic persuasion rather than through brutality, of boundless consumption that keeps the wheels of production turning...of a pre-ordained caste system ranging from a highly intelligent managerial class to a subgroup of dim-witted serfs programmed to love their menial work..."³⁶⁸ The protagonist of Huxley's novel, John the Savage, is an outcast in this society and faces the choice between living in an insane utopia or primitive wilderness. It can be read as a warning of the fateful consequences that uncontrolled scientific experimentation and advance may bring. As such, the subject matter at hand in Huxley's text is also most apparent in *Fringe's* own 'Brave New World' and indeed, in the series as a whole as evidenced by its representation of 21st century America.

In episode 4.21 and 4.22, 'Brave New World, Parts 1 and 2,' scientist William Bell (Leonard Nimoy), former colleague of *Fringe* team member Walter Bishop (John Noble), attempts to collapse the two universes that *Fringe* depicts in order to create his own new world, of which he would be God. In order to do so, he needs a power source. Throughout the course of the season he attempts to configure Olivia into this power source by dosing her with a drug named Cortexiphan, and in 'Brave New World', he intends to activate her and destroy each world. Throughout *Fringe*, Cortexiphan has primarily provided Olivia with the unique ability to cross between universes. It is described as a drug which works on perception; it has allowed Olivia to detect objects from the other universe as well as manifesting abilities that include telekinesis and pyro-kinesis. This plot culminates in Olivia's death, but not at the hands of Bell. In an abrupt and shocking scene, Walter shoots Olivia in the head. It prevents Bell's plan coming to fruition, and the universes of *Fringe* are

³⁶⁸ Margaret Atwood, 'Introduction' in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (London: Vintage Edition, 2007 (Originally published in 1932)) p. vii

saved. Yet Olivia does not remain dead for long: Walter is able to save her by surmising that the Cortexiphan in her system has made her brain tissue regenerative.

In another rather shocking moment, Walter uses what appears to be a letter opener to create an exit wound at the base of Olivia's skull, and pokes the bullet out by jamming a metal rod into the hole in her forehead (Figure 3.1). The entry wound starts to close, and Olivia stirs. At the beginning of this sequence Peter (Joshua Jackson), Walter's distraught

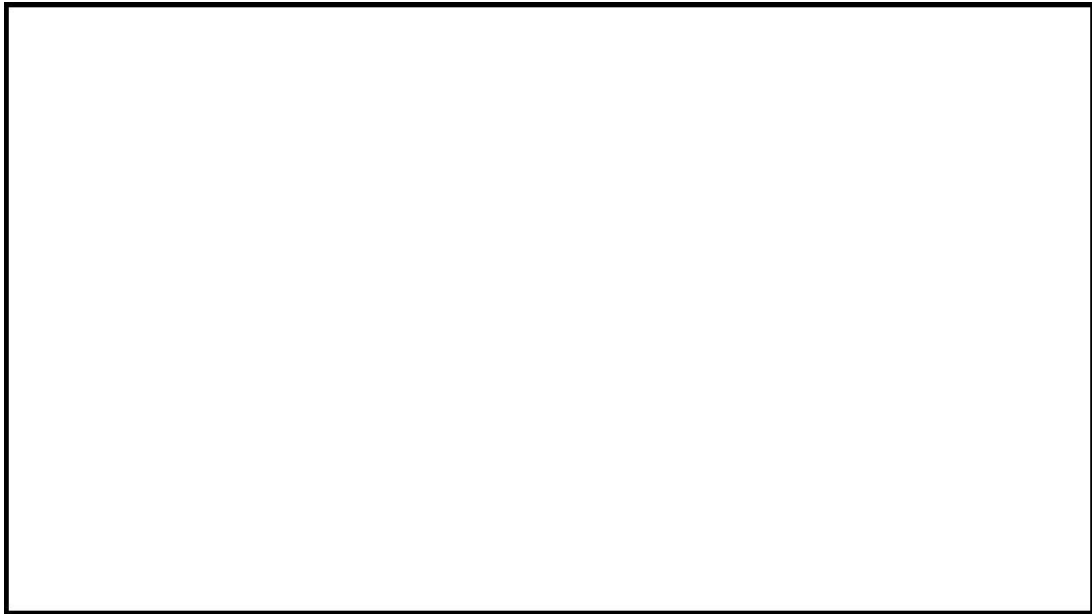


Figure 3.1 Olivia is shot in the head in 4.22, 'Brave New World, Part 2.'

son, tells his father Olivia can't be saved because she's dead. Walter replies that Peter should "know very well that hasn't always stopped me."³⁶⁹ As Walter's line suggests, the spectre of death in *Fringe* is exceptionally fluid, and has a lesser degree of permanence than it might elsewhere. Indeed, this is not the first time Olivia has 'died' over the course of the series – in Season 2 she is in a car accident; the result of which leaves her technically brain dead. Life support is about to be switched off when she suddenly awakens, and shouts that she has something important to do. The Season 3 finale, episode 3.22, 'The Day We Died,' is set 15 years into the future of 'our universe.' The parallel universe has been destroyed and Olivia is shot in the forehead by its last survivor in a killshot that is mirrored in 'Brave New World.' As such, I want to suggest in this chapter that the idea of a 'Brave

³⁶⁹ 'Brave New World, Part 2.' *Fringe*. Episode 4.22. Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX (May 11, 2012)

New World' can therefore be considered as a way through which to not only consider the events of the Season 4 finale, but *Fringe's* wider representation of its central protagonist, Olivia. Rather than functioning as a symbolic label for William Bell's crazy, destructive plot, or even as an evocation of the limiting choice faced by John the Savage, *Fringe's* Brave New World - in its conception of Olivia - envisions a television landscape in the 21st century in which, as all the chapters in this thesis explore, a new era in positive representations of women in science fiction television has taken hold.

The 21st Century 'Reality War' Environment

The Olivia character and the theme of 'in-betweenness' which permeates the narrative of *Fringe* are the key ways in which the show engages with gender and subjectivity specifically in relation to the wider cultural context of 21st century America. Rather than projecting its narrative into a future setting or displacing its characters in time, *Fringe* largely addresses this context through the framework of an alternate reality located in the present.³⁷⁰ This structure cleverly allows each reality its own individual narrative; narratives which also inevitably interact with one another as the walls which separate each world literally begin to erode. The impact of 9/11 upon this 21st century cultural context is explicitly evoked in episode 1.20, 'There's More Than One of Everything,' when Olivia crosses over to the alternate universe for the first time. This is revealed to the viewer by a sequence of events that begins when Olivia has her first meeting with William Bell. She enters his office and asks "Where am I? Who are you?" Bell replies that the answer to her first question is "very complicated," before stating his identity.³⁷¹ Olivia turns around to look out of a large window behind her. The following camera shot is positioned from outside the window looking in at Olivia, before pulling back to reveal the twin towers still standing in Lower Manhattan (Figure 3.2). E. Ann Kaplan cites 9/11 as an example of "a national trauma that was at the same time deeply personal and individual."³⁷² The usage of the twin towers in the instance detailed above is, in one sense, an obvious way for *Fringe* to demonstrate the fact that Olivia has crossed over to the other side. Yet to reference the

³⁷⁰ *Fringe's* fifth and final season, which spans 13 episodes, primarily takes place in the future setting of 2036.

³⁷¹ 'There's More Than One of Everything.' *Fringe*. Episode 1.20. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (May 12, 2009)

³⁷² Kaplan, p. 20

spectre of 9/11 in a fictional context, in such an overt and deliberate manner, is also inherently evocative of the uncanny. Freud states that:

An uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolises, and so forth.³⁷³

Claire Kahane argues that the events of 9/11 “were hyperreal but also surreal in their evocation of the uncanny...For a day we looked at what we couldn’t see and lost our bearings.”³⁷⁴ *Fringe’s* representation of the post-9/11 American city therefore takes place across the multiple intersecting narrative strands born from its ‘reality war’ concept: a world in which the towers have fallen and the other side, where they still stand.



Figure 3.2 The twin towers in 1.20, 'There's More Than One of Everything.'

In the former, the consequences of these rifts between universes, termed ‘fringe events,’ manifest in subverse and paranormal ways. In the latter, these fringe events are hugely visible and the fabric of society is literally being ripped apart at the seams.

Steven Jay Schneider discusses the nature in which, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, “cinematic images of the twin towers as they used to appear – “healthy” and in all

³⁷³ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 (Originally published in 1919) p. 150-151

³⁷⁴ Claire Kahane, ‘Uncanny Sights: The Anticipation of the Abomination’ in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11*, ed. Judith Greenberg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) p. 114

their unsuspecting and, now it seems, naive glory – were for a time deemed more deleterious than images of those same buildings at the exact moment of their destruction.”³⁷⁵ *Fringe’s* utilisation of the World Trade Centre to not only signify a narrative shift into an alternate universe, but to characterise an environment parallel to our own, is in this sense inherently destabilising. Schneider continues by describing the towers as buildings which can be “retrospectively viewed as the architectural signifiers of a city and of a country that until September 11 had little to fear from outside its borders and believed that personal safety, though never guaranteed, was at least assessable and a reasonable bet.”³⁷⁶ As an architectural image that has become uncannily associated with destruction, they now signal the opposite when depicted in their previously “healthy state.” The existence of the towers in *Fringe’s* alternate universe is symbolic of this. Far from exemplifying a more utopian, alternate reality in which 9/11 never occurred, they exist in a world where the very foundations of society have begun to decay. In this respect, they now signify a world which is completely changed from the ground zero site where they once stood on “our side,” in our own 21st century reality. Their significance in *Fringe’s* narrative is twofold in relation to this. Firstly, they are representative of an alternate world dealing with its own ‘zero event’³⁷⁷ in which the rift between universes was created. Secondly, and as a direct result of that preceding catalyst, this alternative world has subsequently been fighting to retain everything that was once considered stable in their society. Max Page argues that “a powerful sense of unease pervaded American culture immediately after 9/11,” stating that in works that “confronted 9/11 directly, or those that tackled issues of technology and the global economy or environmental degradation there was a sense that the enemy was invisible and elusive and its attacks inevitable.”³⁷⁸ As a 21st century American science fiction text that explicitly evokes the spectre of 9/11, *Fringe* is in many

³⁷⁵ Steven Jay Schneider, ‘Architectural Nostalgia and the New York City Skyline on Film’ in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) p. 36

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34

³⁷⁷ The actions of the Walter Bishop are directly responsible for this ‘zero event.’ Walter is a scientist whose son Peter tragically died from illness as a child. He discovers a gateway to an alternate universe populated by slightly different versions of his – and our – world. He sees that the alternate version of his son is also dying, so he crosses over to this other world and brings the alternate Peter back to his own reality. Although Walter saves Peter’s life, he never returns him to the world from which he was taken. Walter’s travel across universes subsequently creates a rift between these two worlds, which results in the manifestation of various catastrophes and crises. Episode 2.16, ‘Peter’ (Dir. David Straiton. FOX. April 1, 2010), details the events which led Walter to cross over and kidnap his son from the alternate reality in 1985. The location at which he crosses is named Reiden Lake, and later becomes known as the ‘zero event’ which set into motion the destructive chain of fringe events, putting the universes on a collision course with each other.

³⁷⁸ Max Page, *The City’s End* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) p. 202

ways indicative of the themes raised by Page. Indeed, as I argue throughout this chapter, the series specifically locates these themes within intersecting narratives set in multiple versions of the 21st century American city. The show's utilisation of 9/11 within this context is therefore inherently about how to belong, how to be, in this post-catastrophe, uncertain world(s). The notion of 'in-betweenness' and the Olivia character, in relation to the binary structures that other characters seek to establish in this conflict, is central to the manner in which *Fringe* both explores and negotiates these concerns and is inherently reflective of American society after 9/11. It is these concerns that this chapter now seeks to interrogate.

Fringe's use of the parallel worlds trope offers an intriguing allegory for contemporary fears of security and terror. I have previously interrogated the function of this trope by considering how the key visual motif of the twin towers is utilised within the series to explore such fears.³⁷⁹ I now consider here how *Fringe* effectively represents the relocation of the War on Terror to the American city space, before moving on to discuss how central protagonist Olivia Dunham is able to successfully navigate this environment. Indeed, the presence of the twin towers in *Fringe's* alternate reality is perhaps also representative of a porous "soft spot" within the 21st century American city and subject. The character Nina Sharp (Blair Brown) describes "soft spots" as "places where the fundamental constants of nature, the speed of light, gravity, the mass of a proton for example, have begun to decay." In these areas, "the membrane between realities is thinner, almost porous."³⁸⁰ The dialogue used by characters to discuss the fringe events that manifest within each world is central to *Fringe's* characterisation of its 'reality war' narrative and the 21st century American environment. Terminology such as "soft spots," "membranes," "breaking through," "breach" and "molecular cohesion failure" is common in addressing a developing fringe event and in discussing the wider interactions between the two worlds. The language of "breaching" reality and molecular disorder certainly points to a level of 'in-betweenness' in *Fringe's* portrayal of Olivia Dunham, and the socio-cultural context which she must navigate. Such concerns regarding the instability of the contemporary American city, in conjunction with the themes of in-betweenness and multiplicity which are central to Olivia's gendered subjectivity as it is represented by *Fringe*, are framed against an environment in which fringe events are configured as manifestations of what Page refers to as the inevitable attacks of an elusive and invisible enemy within.

³⁷⁹ Sophie Halliday, 'Urban Security and Collapse: *Fringe's* Portrayal of the American City as a site of Terror in the 21st Century' in *Reconstruction*, 12.3 (2012)

³⁸⁰ 'There is More Than One of Everything'

Put more explicitly, they are manifestations of a perpetual terrorism, spreading through a 21st century American city like an infection or a virus, existing under a constant threat.

(In)Between Worlds

The character Brandon (Ryan McDonald), an employee at the Massive Dynamic Corporation which conducts research into 'fringe' science, illuminates the relationship between the universes of *Fringe* and the nature of crossing between the two. He explains:

The thing is, to get 'over there,' that's really a misnomer. In truth, the two universes are overlapping. And to get to the other side, our universe needs to pass through you, literally, like water passing through a cheesecloth. Our cells need to separate on an atomic level. The problem is, when they come back together, they don't come back together with the same cohesion.³⁸¹

His statement, much like *Fringe's* overall narrative structure, emphasises the interactivity between each universe and the in-betweenness of the individual subject within this relationship. This relationship is exemplified by the Olivia character; and her in-betweenness and multiplicity forms the central focus this chapter. Prior to exploring this further, however, it is interesting to note that the 'reality war,' the confrontation with the self and the uncanny double that *Fringe* creates through this parallel universe trope, perhaps points to what Slavoj Žižek refers to as "the spectre of an 'immaterial' war."³⁸² Žižek argues that in this war, "the attack is invisible – viruses, poisons, which can be anywhere and nowhere...the known universe starts to collapse, life disintegrates." He asks, as does *Fringe*, "What will 'war' mean in the twenty-first century? Who will be 'them' if they are, clearly, neither states nor criminal gangs?"³⁸³ And, importantly, how does one learn to 'be' in such an environment? It is these questions, and in particular the latter, that *Fringe* interrogates via its representation of Olivia Dunham. Prior to more fully exploring this representation, I first wish to consider the character 'Walternate,' the alternate reality version of Walter Bishop, as he offers a useful contextual counterpoint to Olivia's own response to this 21st century US socio-cultural context.

It is significant that Walternate is the Secretary of Defence in the alternate reality. He refers to those characters that cross over into his world – characters that are ostensibly doubles, versions of the people who populate his own reality – as invaders; as monsters

³⁸¹ 'Over There, Part 1.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.22. Dir. Akiva Goldsman. FOX (May 13, 2010)

³⁸² Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (New York: Verso, 2002) p. 37

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

within one's own skin, as "creatures who have damaged the very fabric of reality."³⁸⁴ His rhetoric is deliberate in the way that it renders these doubles as Other, demonstrating the manner in which he chooses to respond to a world that is fundamentally breaking down by attempting to establish solid binaries of "us" and "them." Bruce Holsinger specifically identifies such Manichean allegories as emerging anew in the wake of 9/11. He argues that event:

Undeniably functioned as a prolific generator of new Manichean allegories, dualisms rooted in self-consciously medieval rhetorics of crusade, religious fundamentalism, and divine right. "This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take awhile," George W. Bush said days after the attacks; just weeks later, in one of his taped broadcasts aired by the Al Jazeera network, Osama bin Laden responded in kind: "This battle is not between al-Qaeda and the US. This is a battle of Muslims against the global crusaders...Bush stated that the world has to be divided in two: Bush and his supporters, and any country that doesn't get into the global crusade is with the terrorists."³⁸⁵

Douglas Kellner argues that such a discourse of "evil" is "totalising and absolutistic, allowing no ambiguities or contradictions;" assuming a binary logic in which 'we' are good and 'they' (terrorists, state sponsors of terror) are bad.³⁸⁶ Walternate's Manichean discourse exemplifies this logic and functions to underscore his asserted desire to "win" the war between these worlds as the gap between realities grows less distinct with each passing moment. His rhetoric is also deliberately dehumanising. The aim of such rhetoric is not merely the 'othering' of a particular enemy, but their de-legitimation. For example, in the build-up to the War on Terror, Iraq was characterised by George W. Bush as a threat which "arises directly from the Iraqi regime's own actions – its history of aggression, and its drive toward an arsenal of terror." Saddam Hussein was described as a "murderous tyrant" who had "already used chemical weapons to kill thousands of people."³⁸⁷ David H. Price argues that "in post-9/11 America, every claimed advance against terrorism (captured documents, claims of thwarted plans, heightened terror alert levels following presidential approval slumps) empowers and apparently justifies the expansion of Homeland Security

³⁸⁴ 'Olivia.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.01. Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX (September 23, 2010)

³⁸⁵ Bruce Holsinger, 'Empire, Apocalypse, and the 9/11 Premodern' in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring, 2008) p. 470

³⁸⁶ Douglas Kellner, 'Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Terror,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly*; 37; No. 4 (December, 2007) p. 628

³⁸⁷ George W. Bush, *President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat* (October 7, 2002) <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html>> [Accessed April 19, 2011]

and other national and domestic security agencies.”³⁸⁸ As the Secretary of Defence, Walternate is portrayed in Seasons 2 and 3 of *Fringe* as a character in charge of a society that appears to place an overwhelming emphasis on security, in a narrative where the ‘War on Terror’ has been reconfigured as a war between realities. The geographical bruises and scars from this war are represented through the proliferation of quarantines and the collapsing constants of nature, tears in the fabric of the universe that hold reality together.

The Destabilised City Space

As previously mentioned, Walternate’s attempts to establish a firm, binary order in response to his world’s ‘zero event’ and subsequent fracture stands in contrast to how the lines between each reality are characterised by *Fringe* as growing perpetually more blurred. The membrane between the two is literally described as becoming ever more porous. The narrative interrogates this inherent contradiction – and contestation - via the key site of the 21st century American city, relocating this war from any number of foreign states where it is said to currently be engaged. Within this city, the characters of *Fringe* are literally fighting to maintain the cohesion of their reality, and by extension, their very selves. Mitchell Gray and Elvin Wyly argue that after 9/11, the American urban state entered “a new and paradoxical era” that was both familiar and uncertain. They state that “Cold War anxieties of the middle twentieth century were revived and *revised* in accordance with the elusive spatiality of today’s terror.”³⁸⁹ (Emphasis added). *Fringe* literalises this familiar yet newly uncertain paradoxical urbanity via the parallel universe narrative established over the course of its run. To return to Freud, it is significant given this context that the uncanny is also marked by the fact that “a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other’s self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged.”³⁹⁰ *Fringe*’s reality war narrative and its manifestation of the uncanny double is emblematic of what Gray and Wyly refer to as the “discursive dualities of local and global, here and there, us and them.”³⁹¹ The expression of such binaries in *Fringe*’s representation of the 21st century American urban state can certainly be found in Walternate’s characterisation of the relationship between realities.

³⁸⁸ David H. Price, ‘Governing Fear in the Iron Cage of Rationalism’ in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the ‘War on Terror’* eds. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell (London: Continuum, 2010) p. 17

³⁸⁹ Mitchell Gray and Elvin Wyly, ‘The Terror City Hypothesis’ in *Violent Geographies* eds. Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 329

³⁹⁰ Freud, p. 142

³⁹¹ Gray and Wyly, p. 330

While all the characters literally refer to their other side as being “over there” versus “over here,”³⁹² Walternate deliberately constructs these binaries in the name of bolstering defence and security at home in the face of a war with the Others from “over there.”

The theme of defence and security in the 21st century American urban space is a fundamental concern to how *Fringe* presents the characteristics of in-betweenness and multiplicity manifest in Olivia. They are equally crucial to how she is able to foster a positive response to this socio-cultural context. Yet prior to addressing this point, it is pertinent to establish the manner in which *Fringe* represents the concepts of defence and security within its narrative world(s). The militarisation of American cities in the 21st century is a central aspect of this, and is an issue that Wyly and Gray also address. They state that:

In American cities, more and more aspects of everyday life and death now *take place* in the shadow of horror and fear, sustained by the manufactured certainty of uncertainty in an endless American war on terror. A culture of intensified (yet routine and almost mundane) militarization now pervades daily life in America’s roster of world cities.³⁹³

As I have already noted, the ‘fringe events’ which permeate each reality the series presents are evocative of the viral nature of this war on terror and its consequences. These are represented in geographical and environmental form, particularly in the alternate universe. The constants of nature begin to decay, society literally finds itself cracking and tearing apart. Indeed, the militarisation of the Fringe team that exists in the alternate universe provides another textual example of such binaries. Rather than dressing in the dark-toned, nondescript business suits or smart-casual clothes that characterise the Fringe team “over here,” the alternate Fringe unit exists as a subdivision of the Department of Defence. Their base of operations is designed like a military bunker, and their agents all wear military fatigues. The alternate reality of *Fringe*, and the militarisation of its Fringe unit as noted above, offers a more extreme and visible version of living in the face of what Cindi Katz terms ‘banal terrorism.’ Katz describes ‘banal terrorism’ as the “everyday, routinised, barely noticed reminders of terror or the threat of an always already presence of terrorism in our midst.”³⁹⁴ She argues:

³⁹² In fact, the final two episodes of *Fringe*’s second season, 2.22 and 2.23, were aptly named ‘Over There, Parts 1 & 2.’

³⁹³ Gray and Wyly, p. 330

³⁹⁴ Cindi Katz, ‘Banal Terrorism: Spatial Fetishism and Everyday Insecurity’ in *Violent Geographies*, eds. Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 350

Banal terrorism diffuses, reproduces, and reinforces these themes as common sense through such relatively innocuous mechanisms as the camouflagery, multi-coloured security alerts, airport and other forms of screening, the increased presence of explosive sniffing dogs, and the proliferation of background noise and imagery exhorting us – everywhere – to report suspicious activity, people, and things.³⁹⁵

Hence, the *literal* militarisation of the alternate world's Fringe team, in comparison with their counterparts "over here," is further demonstrative of how Walternate has established a military pre-eminence in terms of securing the 21st century city which finds itself under constant threat from an invisible, uncanny Other. Defence is therefore demarcated as inherently visible in the face of this threat, and as a clear extension of the state. This visibility also operates on another level in terms of binary construction and appropriation of resources in the name of homeland security. Camouflage is inherently subversive; it is worn with the explicit aim of rendering the wearer invisible, allowing them to blend in to their surroundings rather than stand out. As appropriated by Walternate, this quality of invisibility is subsequently transformed into a form that is wholly visible. This results in the militarised bodies of those who wear the Fringe Unit camouflage as "emblematic of a muscular state."³⁹⁶ The binary is thus established: the visible is secure and defensive, the invisible is dangerous. This foundation legitimises Walternate's Manichean logic: the "us" is the uniformed arm of the state, defending the world from the invisible threat of those from "over there," the "invaders."

In Walternate's universe, the consequences of this war between realities manifests in vast, destructive fringe events which destabilise the very structure of society. The war is immaterial; viral. The militarisation of the 21st century American urban state, and *Fringe's* representation of this, is one manner in which the city responds to the perpetual fear of an ongoing war, and the consequences of its "elusive spatiality."³⁹⁷ Another textual device *Fringe* adopts in illustrating the effects of this war upon the spatial form of the city and its inhabitants can be found in the form of the 'amber protocols.' Utilised primarily in the alternate universe, the amber protocol is a tool designed by Walternate to counteract the effects of the rift between the worlds, namely the vast destruction that permeates the landscape of this destabilised environment. The intended function of the amber is essentially that of a plug; acting as a quarantine device it aims to seal any developing tears in the fabric of society and hold the structure of the nearby surroundings together by

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Gray and Wyly, p. 329

solidifying their invisible porous state. The form of the amber protocols is intriguing, and their manifestation is visually striking. Episode 3.01, 'Olivia,' offers one particularly arresting depiction of the quarantine procedure. In this sequence, the camera pulls back from the lobby of an old theatre as the smoke from the protocol comes billowing out of the front doors of the building. It weaves its way up into the atmosphere, turning a slightly green colour before solidifying into amber (Figure 3.3). It seals the building, having moved up the outside walls and swallowed half a street lamp on the sidewalk. The proliferation of these amber quarantines in the alternate universe thus exist as the scars wreaked upon the city by the war between realities; a visual signifier of the geographical bruises which posit a constant reminder of the insidious, destructive nature of a war which might strike at any time, in any location.

Yet, this is not all that the amber protocols represent to *Fringe's* depiction of the post-9/11 terror city. They are also inherently a form of stasis. Developed by Walternate himself, they denote the manner in which he attempts to freeze and control the uncontrollable consequences of this reality war, to make it visible, material and fixed.

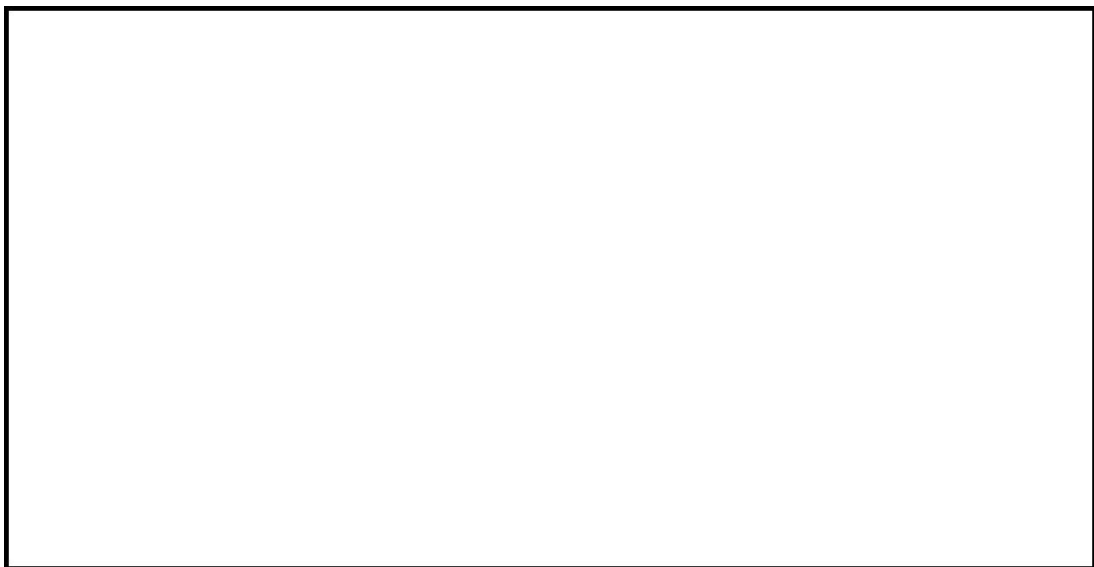


Figure 3.3 The 'amber protocol' in 3.01, 'Olivia.'

In many ways, this is an extension of his utilisation of camouflage. The strategy is similar in both method and goal. The amber is a physical manifestation of the reality war, which has emanated from the elusive, viral guise the terror of this war takes. This quarantine is a literal containment. The fact that the amber protocols are referred to as "quarantines" is

also evocative of the viral nature of the war and its subsequent ‘fringe events.’ Via the amber protocols, Walternate attempts not only to establish a boundary of visible defence in the face of invisible threat, but to avert the disintegration of his society by attempting to maintain order through a material, physical form of security. Katz argues that, post-9/11, “the fortress nation...is a spatial fiction. The nation is porous and perforated.”³⁹⁸ This assertion has been fundamentally established within the narrative of *Fringe* via the parallel universe trope, the relationship between each reality following the ‘zero event’ that marked their first interaction, and, essentially, the terminology used to characterise this relationship. Katz notes that the security state in fact invokes this porous nature via a “mobilisation of the nation as perforated.”³⁹⁹ This is evident through:

The creepy insistence that “they” may be anywhere and are everywhere, sleeper cells ready to be triggered, suicide bombers ready to roll, antimodern zealots hiding in the folds and interstices of “our” freedom...terror, in other words, is mobilised to solidify a porous nation.⁴⁰⁰

This, then, is Walternate’s end game in his appropriation of a visible camouflage and the materiality of the amber. They are lines of defence to solidify society – in terms of the physical structure of the city and environment, and how it is conceived at the subjective level. For Walternate, this takes the form of binary structures, both in terms of manifestations of security and in rhetoric. Walternate’s preference for the Manichean logic identified by Holsinger and Kellner, his methods of appropriation, and his desire for military pre-eminence in the reality war narrative are demonstrable examples of this. The manner in which this resonates within the 21st century terror city of the alternate reality is clear. Echoing the analysis of Wyly, Gray and Katz, Peter Marcuse states that “the War on Terror is leading to a contrived downgrading of the quality of life in US cities, visible changes in urban form, the loss of public use of public space, restriction on free movement within and to cities.”⁴⁰¹ While Walternate’s methods of defence in response to the reality war are predicated on an overwhelmingly visible and substantial security presence, such a presence is also inherently suffocating. The negative consequences of such absolutism are in this sense symbolised by the very tools *Fringe* uses to represent its construction. The amber protocols would be one such textual example. Certainly suffocating, the amber seals

³⁹⁸ Katz, p. 355

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Peter Marcuse, ‘The “War on Terrorism” and Life in Cities after September 11, 2001’ in *Cities, War and Terrorism* ed. Stephen Graham (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004) p. 264

collateral damage within its quarantine. Victims caught inside are declared legally dead but are still, in fact, physically alive and frozen in time. Additionally, there is a proliferation of breathing apparatus within the alternate universe, originally alluded to via an oxygen cylinder located in William Bell's office the first time Olivia crossed over to the other side. Indeed, oxygen deprivation is subsequently characterised as a common occurrence in Walternate's world. Members of the Fringe Unit carry small air canisters on their person when out in the field. While common, a loss of oxygen is also sudden, random and crippling when it strikes, an assertion best exemplified by episode 3.03, 'The Plateau,' which I discuss below. Of final note is the journey Walter and Bell take to the city of Boston in the alternate universe, in episode 2.23, 'Over There, Part 2.' The road they take is completely barren, grey and cold. As they approach, a large section of the Boston skyline can be seen to be encapsulated in the amber quarantine. Walter is told by Bell that this is a direct consequence of his first foray to the other side. This is a city literally starved of life, the citizens of which have been swallowed by an amber quarantine deployed to contain a disastrous fringe event.

Isabella Freda states that the events of September 11, 2001, "seemed to invert outside and inside, 'them' and 'us,' or fiction and reality, providing a potential and actual site of destabilisation of what we might call "American spectatorship."⁴⁰² Indeed, this correlates with Žižek's claim that what previously existed as a "spectral apparition" on the screen entered "our reality" on September 11th: "It is not that reality entered our image; the image entered and shattered our reality."⁴⁰³ As this chapter has so far discussed, *Fringe's* negotiation of the image and the real in relation to 9/11, the wider concerns of America in the 21st century and its interrogation of the kind of inversion that Freda highlights, takes place through the narrative framework of two universes ostensibly set up in opposition to each other. Yet unlike the binaries Walternate seeks to establish in support of this oppositional structure, the relationship between the two has always been inherently permeable. As I previously noted, this structure is characterised as one which is "overlapping."⁴⁰⁴ This term points to manner in which *Fringe*, then, implements an alternative response to the catastrophes which its characters must negotiate. Walternate's deliberate othering of the double and his attempts to build a binary foundation of "us" and

⁴⁰² Isabella Freda, 'Survivors in The West Wing: 9/11 and the United States of Emergency' in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) p. 227

⁴⁰³ Žižek, p. 16

⁴⁰⁴ 'Over There, Part 1'

“them” takes place while the world around him is literally breaking down, and while the gap which separates the two realities continues to become less solid. Yet such absolutism in the face of a war in which the enemy is, in *Fringe*’s narrative, literally the self, becomes an unsustainable position. As I argue below, it is my contention that the construction of the Olivia character deliberately avoids restrictive and static representation, such as that Walternate attempts to propagate via the implementation of Manichean dualisms. Instead, the element of multiplicity is central to Olivia’s ability to foster her own autonomy within the text, pointing to the ‘Brave New World’ *Fringe* envisions through its central protagonist.

Olivia Dunham: Multiple and In-between

Fringe positions its female central protagonist as key to the series’ reality war narrative and its representation of the wider concerns specific to America in the 21st century. At the beginning of this chapter, the theme of ‘in-betweenness’ was put forward as a central tenant of *Fringe*’s narrative. It is this theme that is proffered by the text as an alternative, productive response to the 21st century terror city, rather than the actions of the character Walternate. Olivia’s ability to cross over between each world is a primary facet of this in-betweenness; an ability that was engineered during her childhood by Walter and Bell. I previously mentioned that, in its utilisation of the parallel universe concept, *Fringe* is a show which, over the course of five seasons, has managed to create and sustain multiple worlds, timelines, and versions of lead characters. This is most evident with regard to Olivia: the different iterations of this character featured throughout the series go into double figures.⁴⁰⁵ As I discussed above, this key characteristic of multiplicity operates against a narrative background in which two parallel worlds are at war with one another, resulting in the literal destabilisation of society and subsequently, the self. Olivia has the unique ability to cross between these worlds. Therefore, while her multiple splits may appear demonstrative of this destabilisation, I contend that her character’s status as

⁴⁰⁵ The most prominent of these versions are: Olivia as herself, Olivia as the character Nick Lane (David Call) in episode 1.17, ‘Bad Dreams’ (Dir. Akiva Goldsman. FOX. April 21, 2009), Olivia as a fictional character in episode 2.20, ‘Brown Betty’ (Dir. Seith Mann. FOX. April 29, 2010), the Olivia from the alternate universe (nicknamed Fauxlivia), the Season 3 plotline in which Olivia believed she actually was Fauxlivia, resulting in a hybridised version of each (episodes 3.01 to 3.09), the Season 3 multi-episode arc in which Olivia was possessed by the consciousness of William Bell (episodes 3.16 to 3.19), an animated Olivia in episode 3.19, ‘Lysergic Acid Diethylamide’ (Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX. April 15, 2011) who is trapped inside her own mind, a future version of Olivia in episode 3.22, ‘The Day We Died’ (Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX. May 6, 2011) and both Olivia and Fauxlivia in the new timeline of Season 4.

literally in-between suggests a progressive and pro-active response to these concerns. *Fringe* does not simply position Olivia as a female character on the border between these worlds, but interrogates her negotiation of this border and the environments that exist on either side.

Olivia's relationship to the patriarchal figures in her life is inherently linked to her sought-after ability to cross over. In Season 2, William Bell refers to Olivia as his and Walter's "greatest creation."⁴⁰⁶ Bell uses Cortexiphan to appropriate Olivia's body for his own ends in episodes 4.21 and 4.22, 'Brave New World, Parts 1 and 2' – an appropriation that will end in her death – and Walter shoots Olivia to prevent this from happening, killing her before Bell can. However, this is not the first time Bell has sought to control Olivia. Olivia has been subjected to Cortexiphan since her childhood, wherein she was a subject in Walter and Bell's "Cortexiphan trials." William Bell's control over Olivia is also fantastically extended in Season 3 during a multi-episode arc in which his consciousness assumes control over Olivia's body and she is again threatened with death. Yet Olivia's ability to both see and cross over to the other universe is foregrounded most prominently during the first half of *Fringe's* third season, wherein Olivia essentially switches places with her double from this alternate universe – Fauxlivia. This switch was devised by Walter's own double, Walternate: Fauxlivia adopts the position of an embedded agent in "our" world, while Olivia remains trapped on the other side. Walternate's goal is to trick Olivia into believing she is her double, so he can appropriate her ability to cross over as a weapon and gain an advantage in the war he perceives as existing between each universe. This narrative arc effectively illustrates that the invasion from "over there" that *Fringe* depicts is literal and comes from the self, from doubt as to who the self is, who the self is supposed to be and who the self *can* be. When Olivia begins to realise she has been tricked, her ability to perform the role of Fauxlivia – to therefore deceive Walternate - becomes part of her challenge to the structures around her that have attempted to fix her in place. I would therefore suggest that *Fringe's* representation of in-betweenness here – between identities and between worlds - offers Olivia liberation.

Walternate's rhetoric of othering and his attempts to establish absolutist binaries, as discussed above, further demonstrates the manner in which *Fringe* engages with aspects of the uncanny. Freud argues that "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes

⁴⁰⁶ 'Over There, Part 2.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.23. Dir. Akiva Goldsman. FOX (May 20, 2010)

back to what was once well known and had long been familiar."⁴⁰⁷ The double within *Fringe* is the self, a genetically identical copy from a parallel universe. This establishes Walternate's patriarchal ambition with regard to the Olivia character: such binaries as those that he employs demarcate the Other, the uncanny double, as monstrous and dangerous. This is done in service of his own ambitions to retain power over his environment, as demonstrated via his emphasis on overwhelming security. However, Olivia's subjectivity is positioned as a central tenant in relation to his desire to "win" the war between each world. Subsequently, Walternate therefore needs to both gain and retain power over Olivia and Fauxlivia in order to achieve this. His primary goal, as stated, is to appropriate Olivia's ability to cross between universes. Control over each Olivia is central to this – one must masquerade, as per his orders, as the other. One must be reconstructed, literally, to embody the other; to believe she is the other in order to 'freely' consent to his strategy.

Judith Butler posits a viable theoretical framework through which to consider Olivia's fragmented subjectivity within the wider socio-cultural context with which this thesis is concerned. Her work is useful in reading gender construction, particularly through the connections she makes between gender and performance. Butler's discussion of Simone de Beauvoir in terms of cultural constructions of gender is interesting in relation to Bell's conception of Olivia as his (and Walter's) "greatest creation." Butler asks "can 'construction' in such a case be reduced to a form of choice? De Beauvoir is clear that one "becomes" a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to be one."⁴⁰⁸ This experience, with regard to Olivia's childhood, is interrogated within key episodes of *Fringe's* narrative, particularly episode 2.15 'Jacksonville,' and episode 3.15 'Subject 13.' Cortexiphan is described as a drug that works on perception, allowing Olivia to see objects from the other side during the experiments she underwent as a child. In episode 2.15, 'Jacksonville,' Olivia agrees to take Cortexiphan again in order to identify an incursion from the other side in Lower Manhattan that would cause a large number of civilian deaths. Walter tells her that:

"Perception is largely an emotional response. How we feel affects the way we see the world. That's how [Bell] and I reasoned that extreme emotions would stimulate this perception; that acute feelings of fear, or

⁴⁰⁷ Freud, p. 124

⁴⁰⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge; New Edition, 2006 (Originally published in 1990) p. 11

love, or anger would heighten the awareness, open the mind as it were
– the drugs, of course.”⁴⁰⁹

Olivia’s experiences in this episode demonstrate how she remains, in adulthood, literally under the influence of Walter’s drugs. In this episode, she performs to his script. He attempts to elicit an emotional response via a constructed scenario, in order to solve a case. In this instance she is a somewhat reluctant volunteer, but it is certainly under a wider cultural compulsion. Given her role as an FBI (government) agent, her position on the Fringe team, and the necessity of her ability in preventing the threat to Lower Manhattan, Olivia finds herself under a certain obligation to comply with the procedure. This constructedness is even more sharply pronounced through her childhood experiences of the Cortexiphan trials, as exemplified in the flashback episode 3.15, ‘Subject 13.’ Set in 1985, the episode details the aftermath of Walter’s kidnapping of Peter from the alternate universe. As Peter struggles to accept his literally new reality, Walter hypothesises that appropriating a young Olivia’s burgeoning ability to cross over may provide a way to return Peter to his home world. His method of doing this is much the same as that he uses in episode 2.15, ‘Jacksonville’ – to elicit an emotional response that enhances the effects of Cortexiphan. Yet in this instance, Olivia is a child. After failing to stimulate the required response from subjecting Olivia to a series of experiments in his lab, Walter realises the response he actually needs to elicit is one of fear. He goes so far as to suggest relocating the experiments to Olivia’s home, to exploit her fear of her abusive step-father, to essentially terrorise her in a way that he can’t artificially incite.⁴¹⁰ And of course, in episode 4.21 and 4.22, ‘Brave New World, Parts 1 and 2,’ William Bell tries to use Olivia’s Cortexiphan-saturated body to destroy the world(s) and make him a God-like figure. It might seem, then, that Olivia is a passive character who is essentially subjected to the whims of these patriarchal figures. Yet I argue that throughout the course of the series, Olivia’s inherent multiplicity and in-betweenness specifically locates her as continually active within the text. This is central to Olivia’s ongoing negotiation of patriarchal structures, and her ability to avoid the “dialectical appropriation and suppression” that Judith Butler identifies as a key tactic in the expansion and rationalisation of the “masculinist domain.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Jacksonville.’ *Fringe*. Episode 2.15. Dir. Charles Beeson. FOX (February 4, 2010)

⁴¹⁰ ‘Subject 13.’ *Fringe*. Episode 3.15. Dir. Fred Toy. FOX (February 25, 2011)

⁴¹¹ Butler, p. 19

Olivia's acceptance of her ability and its inherent capabilities therefore becomes central to how she is able to negotiate the destabilised 21st century environment in which she is located. It is what enables her to challenge the oppressive structures that try to both contain and reconstruct her subjectivity. Butler's point, noted above, is essential to understanding Olivia's relationship with Walternate and her position within his environment and the reality war as he has conceptualised it. Walternate seeks to legitimise his patriarchal power on two fronts: suppression of the other and expansion of security (defence). Olivia is central to each of these fronts: she is Other in terms of origin (reality) and Other in terms of subjectivity (she female, and she is not the Olivia from Walternate's reality; that being Fauxlivia). She is therefore simultaneously suppressed as Other (threat) and appropriated as Other (weapon). Her subjectivity is subsequently deliberately destabilised and fragmented. It becomes engineered by patriarchy in this sense. Olivia's multiple roles – soldier, weapon, agent, woman – and multiple selves exist in two worlds reacting to catastrophic events which have not only destabilised the foundations of the society they inhabit, but which have also fundamentally called into question the stability of the self in response to this. Yet Olivia's ability to cross over is also what generates her in-betweenness. This is what makes her unique, and ultimately allows her to positively challenge the patriarchal structures that not only shaped her childhood but attempt to appropriate her subjectivity in adulthood. This in-betweenness is where her individual agency and autonomy manifests, and from this perspective it is therefore inherently liberating in its ability to subvert the rationalisation of masculinist structures that Butler alludes to. Olivia's agency comes from her challenge to these patriarchal figures and the environment around her, the need and ability to recognise her own subjectivity in the face of its oppression, to protect it and prevent it from becoming fixed, subjugated and exploited. Such recognition is necessarily ongoing, as the nature of society continues to change as a result of the proliferation of fringe events.

Performative Modes

Olivia's subjectivity is strengthened only through a response that is necessarily fluid, not fixed. This is reflected by the narrative of *Fringe* in a multitude of ways. As mentioned above, Walternate's restructuring of the Olivia characters in Season 3 is a primary example of a patriarchal constructedness of subjectivity that is inherently destabilising. Multiplicity and in-betweenness are key aspects of this constructedness, yet they also offer a key site of positive resistance for Olivia. Performance plays a central role in *Fringe's* representation of this resistance. James Naremore considers performance as an outgrowth of the self, and

the self as an outgrowth of performance. He states that “‘performance,’ in turn, is understood in its broadest, most social sense, as what we do when we interact with the world.”⁴¹² Within Walternate’s framework, Fauxlivia adopts her position as undercover agent through a performance of Olivia. She ultimately comes to change as a result of this.⁴¹³ In Walternate’s reality, Olivia begins to perform Fauxlivia but of course she is not immediately aware of this – her performance is directed by Walternate himself, in a further example of what Butler refers to as the “dialectical appropriation” of her subjectivity. This construction of Olivia by Walternate deliberately seeks to remove any aspect of individual choice in terms of her ability to negotiate and express her own self through this performance.

This juxtaposition of performative modes is an intriguing angle through which to explore Olivia’s fragmented subjectivity and importantly, her simultaneously burgeoning autonomy. Annette Kuhn argues that, when understood in its everyday sense:

Performance is allied with acting, and acting is regarded as an activity that involves pretence, dissimulation, an intent to seem to be something or someone one is, in reality, not. An actor’s role is assumed like a mask, the mask concealing the performer’s ‘true self.’ The disguise is a cover, and in many schools of acting the more the audience is taken in by the performance, the better that performance is judged to be.⁴¹⁴

In terms of performance, Olivia’s mask is literally applied to her in an attempt to limit her mobility and fix her subjectivity in place. In accepting this fixed subjectivity, Walternate theorises that Olivia (as Fauxlivia) would willingly submit to his experiments to extract her Cortexiphan-induced ability to cross between universes. Indeed, this is exactly what Olivia does. In contrast Fauxlivia’s mask is adopted, although this is also with the objective to subvert Olivia’s subjectivity. Kuhn continues:

In effecting a distance between assumed persona and the real self, the practice of performance constructs a subject which is both fixed in the distinction between role and self and at the same time, paradoxically, called into question in the very act of performance. For over against the

⁴¹² James Naremore, ‘The Performance Frame’ in *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television*, ed. Jeremy G. Butler (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991) p. 111

⁴¹³ This is most notably demonstrated by her burgeoning relationship with Peter and how she interacts with Walter as Season 3’s narrative progresses. Before returning to her reality in episode 3.08, ‘Entrada’ (Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX. December 2, 2010), Fauxlivia tells Peter that although getting close to him was part of her assignment as dictated by Walternate, their relationship became something more to her.

⁴¹⁴ Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1985) p. 52

‘real self,’ performance poses the possibility of a multiple self, of a fluidity of subjectivity.⁴¹⁵

In this respect, this quality of performativity directly contributes to Olivia’s agency within the text. Posing what Kuhn refers to as the possibility of a multiple self, I contend that *Fringe’s* juxtaposition of performative modes in relation to the Olivia character, particularly evident in the series’ third season, is ultimately liberating through its link to resistance and self-recognition. By interrogating Olivia’s negotiation of the border between these multiple universes, *Fringe* generates a gendered subjectivity in her that is necessarily changing and adaptable. It is this which allows the character to cultivate her own individual agency. When Olivia begins to realise she has been tricked, this characteristic of in-betweenness, and her ability to perform, becomes part of her challenge to the structures around her that have attempted to fix her in place. In-betweenness here offers Olivia liberation – a literal liberation from Walternate’s environment. The mask which was forcibly applied thus becomes the weapon with which Olivia can secure her own subjectivity. By performing Fauxlivia, utilising the fluidity of subjectivity and embracing her inherent multiplicity, Olivia is able to use the very technology Walternate assembled to restrict and appropriate her ability to escape and undermine him.⁴¹⁶

Olivia’s ability means she is literally not restricted to place. It is also positive, in that it supplies a liberating mobility to her subjectivity. Doreen Massey argues that “the limitation of women’s mobility, in terms of both identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover the two things – the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted containment to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related.”⁴¹⁷ The character of Olivia, her position in the 21st century environment of the US terror city, and her ability, is distinctly emblematic of Massey’s point. The method through which *Fringe’s* narrative interrogates her ability and its liberating aspect of mobility is played out via a framework of patriarchal power in the form of Walternate, Walter and Bell. Olivia’s in-betweenness becomes central to the challenge she makes to this power and the negotiation of her own subjectivity that is necessarily generated by this challenge. To ensure her mobility is not compromised, this challenge to patriarchy and response to the environment in which she is

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ This is played out most prominently in episodes 3.05, ‘Amber 31422’ (Dir. David Straiton. FOX. November 4, 2010), 3.07, ‘The Abducted’ (Dir. Chuck Russell. FOX. November 18, 2010) and 3.08, ‘Entrada.’ The latter culminates in Olivia and Fauxlivia returning to their respective realities.

⁴¹⁷ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p. 179

located is ongoing. It is necessarily fluid. Kaplan notes that “the concept of being ‘in-between’ allows for multiple identities, co-existing and held in suspension...and that defy traditional national or female/racialised images.”⁴¹⁸ This concept is literalised by *Fringe* through its depiction of the Olivia character. Furthermore, it is considered in an American environment specific to the 21st century, and the wider events of this context with which this thesis is concerned. Olivia subsequently offers a perspective which intrinsically contrasts the binary structures represented, in particular, by Walternate. This interrogation of in-betweenness, which takes place via Olivia, demonstrates a level of recognition within the narrative of *Fringe* of the need to move beyond such binaries. Olivia’s response at the subjective level renders such frameworks, in comparison, as outmoded and incompatible with a society and reality that has become irreparably damaged and destabilised. Olivia is therefore a figure who can be literally characterised as what Simone de Beauvoir notes as “simultaneously *self* and *other*.”⁴¹⁹ De Beauvoir argues that this is a contradiction that entails “baffling consequences;” that “when [a woman] makes weapons at once of her weakness and of her strength, it is not a matter of designing calculation: she seeks salvation spontaneously in the way that has been imposed on her, that of passivity, at the same time when she is actively demanding her sovereignty.”⁴²⁰ This contradiction effectively speaks to Olivia’s inherent multiplicity and in-betweenness. However in *Fringe* it is a contradiction that specifically locates her as continually *active* within the text via the aforementioned performative modes, adopted by Olivia to undermine Walternate’s attempts to pacify her and appropriate her ability. This active subjectivity is central to Olivia’s ongoing negotiation of patriarchal structures, and her ability to avoid the “dialectical appropriation and suppression” identified by Butler as a primary tactic in the expansion and rationalisation of the “masculinist domain.”⁴²¹

Of significant note in *Fringe*’s representation of the Olivia character in this regard is the frequent use of reflections and reflective imagery throughout the text. This can typically be found in the proliferation of windows and mirrors, but becomes most prominent with regard to Olivia’s representation within the early episodes of Season 3. In this instance, such iconography exemplifies the doubling and destabilising of subjectivity that takes place with Olivia. Using images of reflection to represent this character *literally* conveys both a self and an Other encapsulated within her form. A particularly pertinent

⁴¹⁸ Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, p. 18

⁴¹⁹ de Beauvoir, p. 727

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ Butler, p. 19

example of this is a significant shot in episode 3.01, 'Olivia.' Having just escaped from Walternate's detention centre, where she has so far resisted the attempts of his scientists to convince her she is Fauxlivia, Olivia finds herself stranded in the Manhattan of the alternate universe. Coming upon the scene of a developing fringe event, an officer (recognising her as "Fauxlivia") escorts her away from a building that has just been quarantined. As the amber solidifies, Olivia stares at her own reflection on its surface (Figure 3.4). Given this chapter's earlier explication of amber and how it is utilised by Walternate, such a shot fundamentally underlines the inherent paradox of not only Olivia's multiplicity, but the environment she finds herself in. In this particular scene Olivia is also coded as Fauxlivia. She has fled from Walternate's compound where she was undergoing a literal reconstruction of her subjectivity. Subsequently her hair is the red of Fauxlivia's usual style and she is adorned with a tattoo that she does not recognise. The shot of her staring at her own reflection in the amber therefore works on a number of levels.



Figure 3.4 Olivia stares at her reflection in the amber in 3.01, 'Olivia.'

It certainly emphasises a potential loss of identity and subjective autonomy, as Olivia is staring at a reflection of herself that is characteristically unfamiliar. However, perhaps even more clearly it represents the threat of subjectivity becoming fixed; frozen in the stasis that the amber protocols and the environment in which they operate signify.

A second example can be found in episode 3.03, 'The Plateau.' This episode makes deliberate use of editing and split screens in its representation of Olivia's fragmentation at crucial moments in its narrative. By this episode Olivia, for all intents and purposes, truly believes she is Fauxlivia. The alternate Fringe team track a character named Milo (Michael Eklund), a mathematical genius who is killing people by calculating elaborate chain reactions that culminate in their deaths. They find him just as he sets in motion a chain of events which should end with Olivia being crushed to death by cinderblock carried on a nearby fork-lift. Olivia, however, doesn't die – she unconsciously ignores the warning of a sudden loss of oxygen when chasing Milo to capture him.⁴²² Her ignorance was due to her unfamiliarity with the alternate reality, an example of Olivia's 'real self' bleeding through into her constructed, unconscious performance of Fauxlivia. This, of course, is something Milo was unable to predict. During the progression of scenes which demonstrate Milo's anticipated chain reaction, the shots adopt an amber hue and split into multiple frames on screen at once, from two shots to four, six, and so on (Figure 3.5). These shots mostly feature Olivia alone, from different angles, apart from one which depicts the oxygen warning. The split screen depiction literally makes Olivia multiple here. Furthermore, this

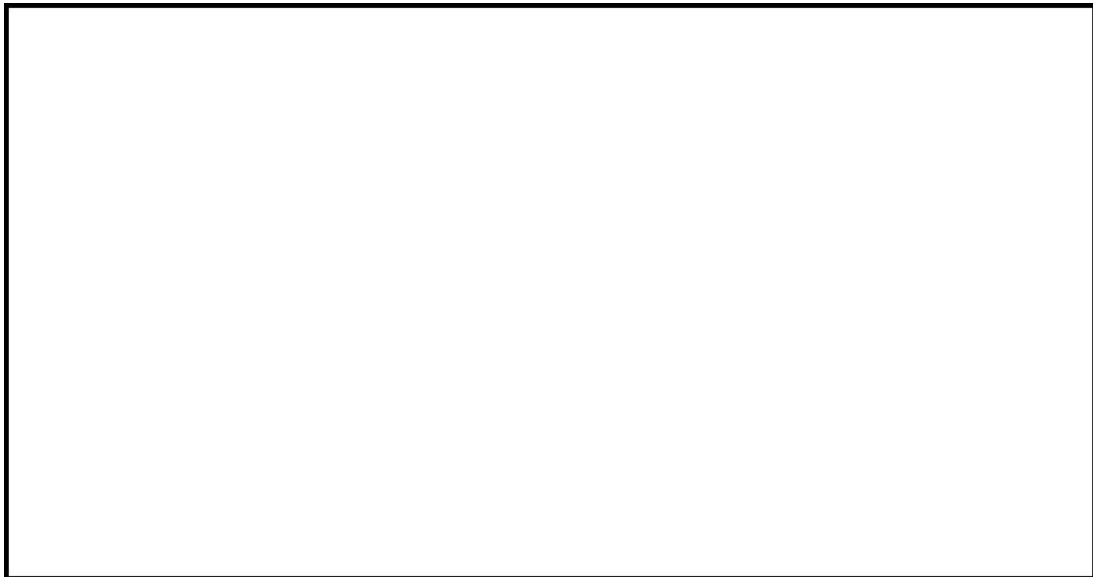


Figure 3.5 Split screen in 3.03, 'The Plateau.'

device visually demonstrates the destabilising effect of Olivia's in-betweenness in relation to the 21st century American environment in which she is located. Had the mask

⁴²² 'The Plateau.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.03. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (October 7, 2010)

Walterate applied to her in his own construction of her subjectivity remained fixed, she would have died. Yet in this instance, Olivia's in-betweenness is coded as positive by the narrative, enabling her to effectively navigate this unstable environment and avoid almost certain death.

Multiplicity and the Femme Fatale

Olivia's ability to resist textual eradication is necessarily considered further below. Yet this iconographic multiplicity is perhaps suggestive of a link between the Olivia character and the figure of the femme fatale made prominent by film noir; a figure I previously considered in Chapter One. Janey Place argues that "the attitudes towards women evidenced in film noir – i.e. fear of loss of stability, identity and security – are reflective of the dominant feelings of the time."⁴²³ *Fringe* is an American science fiction text which has emerged from the 21st century, the wider events of which its narrative explicitly engages with. The representation of Olivia Dunham arguably has much in common with the themes noted by Place, yet the Olivia character necessarily negotiates these themes in a positive and productive way. Her subjectivity is threatened by an overwhelming influx of security rather than a lack of it: loss of stability and security form a binary in *Fringe's* reality war. The reality war as conceived by Walterate, who prominently represents themes of security and defence within Seasons 2 and 3 of *Fringe*, would indicate that one can either have the former, or the latter. With the latter, stability and identity do not become lost so much as they become fixed. Olivia's in-betweenness destabilises this structure, and her split in Season 3 is a literal representation of this. Olivia's fear is a loss of security and agency over her own subjectivity, as this would compromise her autonomy and leave her powerless to resist the machinations of those who seek to control her, and powerless to negotiate the disintegrating environment she finds herself in.

Mary Ann Doane observes that "the femme fatale is a figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be."⁴²⁴ The dichotomy created by the Olivia/Fauxlivia character(s) is a literal representation of this unease, given the destabilising nature of Olivia's in-betweenness, the manner in which this split is constructed and the terror city environment in which she is located. As I noted in the first chapter of this thesis,

⁴²³ Janey Place, 'Women in Film Noir' in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute Books, 1980) p. 37

⁴²⁴ Doane, p. 1

Doane identifies the femme fatale as “an articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and the centrality of the self.”⁴²⁵ The crucial difference between Olivia and the figure of the femme fatale, however, is the fact that the latter is frequently punished or killed due to her configuration within film noir texts as evil and a threat to the male subject.⁴²⁶ It is this dichotomy that *Fringe* challenges via the relationship between Olivia and the patriarchal figures in her life. Walternate attempts to situate Olivia as a threatening, evil, Other, and literally eradicate her subjectivity. This eradication does not just come about via the repeated threat of death but through attempted appropriation, realignment and ultimately, control. Olivia’s in-betweenness therefore becomes a central site of resistance in terms of her ability to negotiate her own subjectivity within this dichotomy, and to remain active in avoiding Walternate’s patriarchal threat. She must necessarily and *literally* find herself in order to positively challenge Walternate and navigate the reality war environment.

As a genre or body of work that stemmed from a moment of historical crisis, film noir also features a prevalence of mirror shots. Place argues that a possible meaning behind this “is to indicate women’s duplicitous nature.” Women become visually split through this motif, underlining their situation as figures not to be trusted. Furthermore, “this contributes to the murky confusion of film noir: nothing and no one is what it seems. Compositions in which reflections are stronger than the actual woman, or in which mirror images are seen in odd, uncomfortable angles, help to create the mood of threat and fear.”⁴²⁷ Of course, like each of the protagonists this thesis interrogates, the Olivia character in *Fringe* is literally split and embodies the key characteristics of multiplicity and in-betweenness. The element of performance that manifests from this split certainly generates a level of duplicity to it, particularly when considering the role of Fauxlivia and her position as, essentially, a spy. However, the reflective imagery that surrounds Olivia not only generates fear, but evokes the very instability of subjectivity. Yet at the same time it locates a positivity and strength in this fragmentation. It threatens stasis, as demonstrated by the shot of Olivia staring at her own reflection in the amber quarantine, and her intrinsic resistance to this method of containment. Doane notes “the emphasis on procedures of masquerade and veiling” as a further manner in which women are aligned with the negative characteristics of “deception, secretiveness, a kind of anti-knowledge.”⁴²⁸ As

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Place, p. 48

⁴²⁸ Doane, p. 3

discussed with regard to Walternate and his appropriation of camouflage as a visible image of security, clothing plays a potent role in the performance of Olivia's multiplicity. Doane discusses the nature in which many noir heroines derive their power from their ability to manipulate their own image.⁴²⁹ Yet Olivia productively utilises her in-betweenness to her advantage with regard to such discourses of manipulation. Kuhn argues that "far from being a fixed signifier of a fixed gender identity, clothing has the potential to disguise, to alter, even to reconstruct the wearer's self." Furthermore, she states that "clothing can dissemble – it may be costume, mask, masquerade. Put another way, clothing can embody performance. As a means to, even the substance of, a commutable persona, clothing as performance threatens to undercut the ideological fixity of the human subject."⁴³⁰ The character Sam Weiss (Kevin Corrigan) refers to Olivia's business suits as her "uniform," telling her that "I don't think I've ever seen you in a primary colour. It's because it's more than a job to you. You're a soldier. Protector."⁴³¹ His comment offers an interesting contrast to the literal military uniforms of the Fringe team "over there." While Fauxlivia doesn't dress in camouflage she is certainly more aligned to this more military dress sense. She wears combat boots and combat trousers whether she is working or not. Each uniform is then subverted as disguise when the Olivia's "swap." This subversion works on an additional level, when contrasted with Walternate's appropriation of camouflage as a visible manifestation of security and defence. He applies this mask to Olivia in his appropriation of her subjectivity. She is subsequently able to convert this mask, this visible uniform, as a layer of disguise in her resistance to him. A final, interesting note with regard to Olivia and clothing is found in the first shot of her in episode 3.01, 'Olivia.' In this scene, Olivia is wearing a white gown whilst talking to a doctor who addresses her as if she was Fauxlivia, and as if she had suffered a mental breakdown. In this sense, at the beginning of the season's narrative arc, Olivia is represented as a blank slate, a tabula rasa that Walternate has broken down in order to set a fixed identity to it. Her body appears here as what Butler describes as "a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed."⁴³²

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107

⁴³⁰ Kuhn, p. 53

⁴³¹ 'Olivia. In the Lab. With the Revolver.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.17. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (April 8, 2010)

⁴³² Butler, p. 12

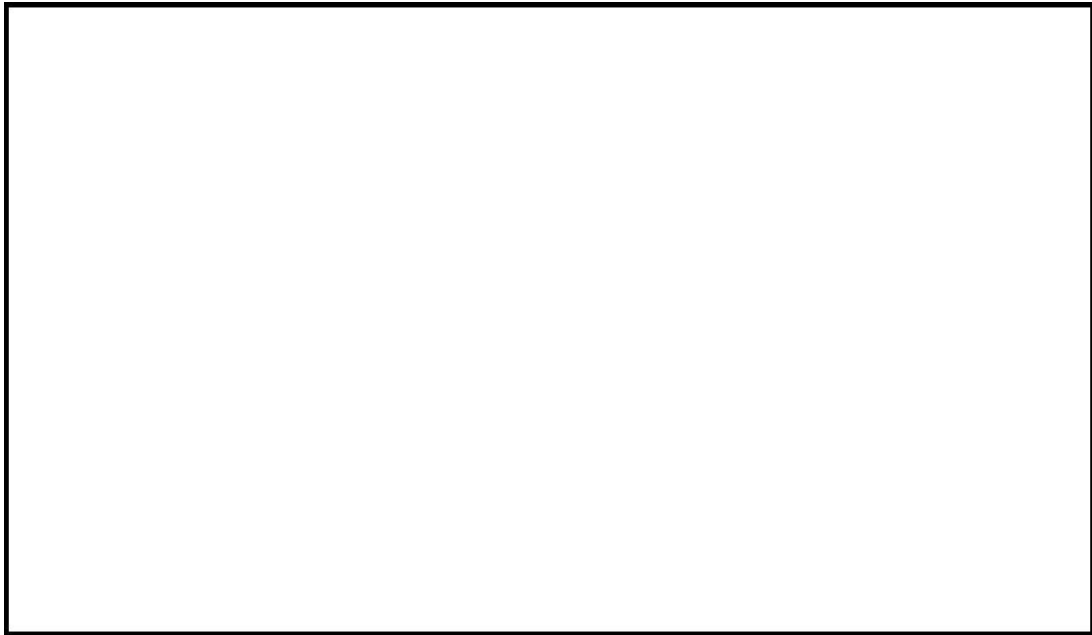


Figure 3.6 Olivia stares at the Manhattan skyline in 3.05, 'Amber 31422.'

However, this gown is also both reflexive and reflective. This is demonstrated when Olivia, who increasingly begins to doubt her subjective state as Fauxlivia as this narrative progresses, finally realises who she is when she engineers the chance for herself to briefly cross over. In this shot, from episode 3.05, 'Amber 31422,' Olivia stands in the same gown staring out of a window at the Manhattan skyline that is, of course, missing the twin towers (Figure 3.6). It is an image specific to the US city post-9/11 that is literally reflected back to her and allows Olivia to recognise her 'real self.' Her activeness here is what exposes Walternate's patriarchal machinations with regard to her subjectivity. Crucially, it is again explicitly evocative of the wider events of the 21st century; events which *Fringe* interrogates specifically through the multiplicity and in-betweenness of the Olivia character.

Olivia's relationship to representations of the femme fatale figure is therefore worthy of note. *Fringe* does not utilise the female subject to express alienation so much as a 21st century fragmentation and a literal displacement, evocative of a national displacement specific to this era. To repeat an earlier quote from Kahane, "we looked at what we couldn't see and lost our bearings." That the consideration posited by *Fringe* of America in the 21st century does not necessarily reflect a loss of national identity, so much as identity as out-of-sync, seems incredibly pertinent with respect to this. The terminology of the reality war and the relationship between each universe, played out within the

narrative in conjunction with the literal in-betweenness of Olivia, is demonstrative of the ways in which this consideration takes place. Walternate attempts to control this in-betweenness and relocate it within a patriarchal, binary order which he has constructed in response to the environment in which he finds himself. To him, Olivia's in-betweenness is not only something which should be contained, but appropriated. Yet his actions are ultimately futile, as the social frameworks he uses to create these binaries are literally eroding around him. Kuhn argues that "if clothing can be costume, capable of being modified at the wearer's will, it follows that gender identities conventionally signified by dress may be just as easily changeable. Change your clothes and change yourself."⁴³³ Olivia, as has been discussed, adopts numerous roles as an agent, a soldier, a woman, a weapon, and a protector. For Kuhn, clothing represents a "potential threat to fixed subjectivity and gender identity."⁴³⁴ Olivia's in-betweenness and the fluid nature of her subjectivity therefore offers a fundamental and productive challenge to the manner in which Walternate's patriarchal structures attempt to fix her in place. It confronts the concept of a fixed and unified subjectivity in and of itself, particularly in relation to the destabilised environment in which she is located. Just as Walternate appropriates measures to contain subjectivity and establish fixed, binary systems in deference to a patriarchal order, so Olivia's in-betweenness, her recognition of this and her own fragmented subjectivity, allows her to utilise these measures as a challenge to this very system.

The narrative of *Fringe* necessarily requires that Olivia occupy space within this environment, to negotiate and assert her own fluid subjectivity and challenge these systems. Dawn Heinecken questions what the current proliferation of female action heroes in television tells us "about contemporary attitudes towards the female hero, the female body, and female power."⁴³⁵ Of specific relevance to this question is her statement that "women's bodies...must never intrude upon public 'male' space."⁴³⁶ Walternate's "space" has been clearly demarcated, as previously discussed. *Fringe* positions the character of Olivia within the debate raised by Heinecken. Her body is configured as multiple, fluid and in-between. The latter is inherently threatening to Walternate's territorialised, militarised environment. As such, Olivia's body is a site of resistance. She is a figure who is emblematic of individual agency. Anne Balsamo considers the body as a "product and a

⁴³³ Kuhn, p. 53

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53

⁴³⁵ Heinecken, p. 2

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

process;” a process that is “a way of knowing and making a ‘self.’”⁴³⁷ Responding to this, Heinecken argues that “body studies are thus connected to epistemology and ontology, our ways of being and understanding ourselves and our place in the world. As such, representations of the body have philosophical as well as political implications.”⁴³⁸ The duality of the Olivia character exemplifies this, as per this chapter’s assertion that she is an example of that which is “simultaneously *self* and *other*.”⁴³⁹ The political implications of this are paramount, when placing such a figure within the context of a 21st century American environment; and within a reality - *realities* - that have been coded as terror cities and sites of contestation in the War on Terror. As a female character who is configured as the focal point of *Fringe*’s narrative, Olivia is a female hero who literally and therefore positively takes up space.

Heinecken sees the fighting female body as more poignantly expressive of the “cultural fear of a body under invasion;” that this body which has been historically coded as passive and victimised “is perhaps more effective at expressing a totalising view of oppressive social forces which constrict the individual.”⁴⁴⁰ Earlier in this chapter, I detailed the ways in which Olivia has been subjected to such constriction within *Fringe*’s narrative. The effectiveness of this character to interrogate such cultural concerns suggests why her representation shares some hallmarks with the femme fatale within film noir. Her character is evocative of a response to social pressures. As the central protagonist of an explicitly 21st century American television text, this portrayal is also born out of an historical moment of crisis. *Fringe* proposes a response that is necessarily changing and adaptable, as represented by Olivia’s burgeoning individual agency and subjective sovereignty. It doesn’t conclude by posing a binary choice between the Olivia “over here,” and the Olivia “over there.” Through such a representation, Olivia is able to actively resist what Heinecken describes as “the embodied quality of the feminine.” This “evokes both the potent sensuality and the threatened fragility of the lived experience. In fetishizing the impermanent, the now is transformed into forever. By doing so, the body as *being* becomes static, frozen in time, a spectacle, shored up against the process of decay.”⁴⁴¹ Indeed, as I have illustrated, Olivia fights to circumvent this stasis; symbolised in the text via the amber

⁴³⁷ Anne Balsamo, ‘Forms of Technological Embodiment: Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture,’ in *Cyberspace, Cyberbodies, Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: Sage, 1995) p. 217-218, quoted in Heinecken, p. 6

⁴³⁸ Heinecken, p. 6

⁴³⁹ De Beauvoir, p. 727

⁴⁴⁰ Heinecken, p. 137

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150

protocols and their oppressive qualities. Such stasis, in essence, is what arrests the very agency of the individual subject. For Olivia to remain as an active participant within a setting in which this fixity is pursued as the only viable response by the patriarchal figures she encounters, she must retain a level of subjective flexibility in her challenge to this environment.

Conclusion

At the end of episode eight of *Fringe*'s fourth season, 'Back to Where You've Never Been,' Olivia receives a visit from a character named September (Michael Cerveris). September is an Observer, part of an association of mysterious figures who appear to monitor significant moments in history and have the ability to travel through time. September tells Olivia: "I've looked at all possible futures, and in every one, the result is the same: you have to die."⁴⁴² While Olivia does indeed go on to die at the end of Season 4, she has, as I have described, already died prior to this point. Thus, a conflict is established between this absolute assertion of Olivia's destiny made by September, and the series' frequent depiction of her death and subsequent resurrection. Subsequently, Olivia is imbued with the necessary qualities to not only challenge the textual environment in which she is located, but to offer a resistance to this pattern of strong female characters whose lives are cut short. Her ability to cross between worlds means she is literally not restricted to place, infusing her with a liberating mobility. Olivia's acceptance of this ability and its inherent capabilities therefore becomes central to how she challenges the oppressive structures that try to contain and reconstruct her.

Fringe is a series which interrogates contemporary manifestations of disaster and fear via a representation of the War on Terror as central to the American city. It does so by constructing a complex narrative that encompasses two universes at war, and utilising powerful visual motifs that specifically reference the spectre of 9/11, the wider events of the 21st century and the increasingly militarised, yet paradoxically destabilised, city space. Attempts to construct binary foundations of "us" and "them," such as those employed by the character of Walternate, are deconstructed and shown to take place in a world that is literally breaking down. Yet unlike the binaries Walternate evokes in support of this structure, the relationship between the two realities *Fringe* presents is always characterised as inherently permeable and "overlapping." This in turn points to the manner

⁴⁴² 'Back to Where You've Never Been.' *Fringe*. Episode 4.08. Dir. Jeannot Szwarc. FOX (January 13, 2012)

in which *Fringe* is able to proffer an explicit engagement with the socio-political events of the era and interrogate the contemporary cultural anxieties and fears manifest in this context. As I have argued, it effectively does so via the representation of central protagonist Olivia Dunham as a character who is both multiple and in-between; and potently so.

While Olivia is not necessarily a character who can be defined as an “action” hero, she certainly performs many of the roles associated with the action genre. As an agent, soldier and weapon at various points within the narrative of *Fringe*, she demonstrates many of the qualities characteristic of this figure, as they are identified by Elizabeth Hills in Chapter One. Indeed, these are predominantly exemplified in the previously discussed ‘split’ of early Season 3. Sara Crosby comments on the repeated representation in many contemporary television shows of the untimely deaths of female leads that embody such characteristics. She states that “one compelling strand of criticism tends to theorise the deaths of tough females as a patriarchal reaction to political threat: Patriarchy criminalises and then violently eradicates the “monstrous-feminine” or metes out the ultimate punishment to women who have become just “too tough or too strong.””⁴⁴³ This again recalls the association this chapter has drawn between Olivia as a contemporary, positive representation of a fragmented female heroine and the figure of the femme fatale, who also inevitably meets a similar “textual eradication.”

Throughout this chapter I have argued that *Fringe*’s demonstrable efforts to characterise Olivia as inherently multiple and in-between has imbued her with the necessary qualities to not only challenge the environment in which she is located, but to resist the on-going threat of textual eradication. In episodes 4.21 and 4.22, ‘Brave New World, Parts 1 and 2,’ much is made of the regenerative properties of Cortexiphan. Olivia’s body, saturated as it is with the drug, is thus itself regenerative and, in essence, cultivates a healing process. Her understanding and negotiation of Cortexiphan, in *Fringe*, has always been a process - Olivia grows alongside her ability, she learns to use it and assert her own autonomy. Olivia embodies – and is embodied by - multiple characters; characters that are distinct from one another. Her multiplicity manifests not just different ‘versions’ of Olivia but, in some cases, entirely separate characters; and these aspects of multiplicity and performativity are central to Olivia’s characterisation and are most clearly foregrounded by

⁴⁴³ Sara Crosby, ‘The Cruellest Season: Female Heroes Snapped into Sacrificial Heroines,’ in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p. 153

the parallel universe arc. A bullet to the head has proven twice not to be fatal for Olivia. September's assertion that she must die in every possible future both did, and did not, come to fruition. The characteristics of multiplicity and in-betweenness don't merely save Olivia from death, they enable her continual growth, autonomy and resistance to death, stasis and appropriation.

Chapter 4

“That was then and this is now”: Race and Subjectivity in *Battlestar*

Galactica

“I wake up in the morning, and I wonder who I am. I wake up, and I wonder if I’m going to hurt someone.” So says Boomer, a lead character in Ron Moore and David Eick’s reimagined series *Battlestar Galactica*. The show follows a small human fleet in search of a mythical planet named Earth. Humanity flees across space seeking refuge from a robotic alien race named the Cylons, who destroyed their twelve home planets in an act of mass-genocide. Boomer’s line comes during *Battlestar Galactica*’s Season 1 finale. The fact that Moore and Eick’s show even reached that point and indeed, extended many seasons beyond it, is to be admired. The reception of the series in the US press made particular note of this: as Jonathan D. Glater pointed out, “it is unusual that a show more than 25 years old, and lasting only a single season, has been remade for contemporary audiences.”⁴⁴⁴ Laura Miller describes her recollection of the original series (1978) as “nothing but a dim, cheesy memory, a haze of well-scrubbed flyboys under the beaming paternal guidance of Lorne Greene.”⁴⁴⁵ Moore and Eick’s reboot of *Battlestar Galactica* was reintroduced to television in 2003, in the form of a three hour mini-series. It proved to be a ratings success for SyFy (formerly the Sci-Fi Channel), and the network subsequently commissioned a weekly series that directly followed the narrative events of the mini-series. *Battlestar Galactica* would go on to span five full seasons; airing seventy-five episodes and concluding in 2009.

Moore and Eick made several changes in their refashioning of the show. Starbuck (Katee Sackhoff), a confident, skilful yet insubordinate pilot (portrayed by Dirk Benedict in the original series), is given a gender switch. In the 21st century version of *Galactica*, Starbuck, played by Katee Sackhoff, is a tomboy but a character whom, as Miller argues,

⁴⁴⁴ Jonathan D. Glater, ‘Retooling a 70’s Sci-Fi Relic for the Age of Terror’ in *The New York Times* (January 13, 2005)

⁴⁴⁵ Laura Miller, ‘Where no TV Show has Gone Before,’ *Salon.com* (July 9, 2005) <http://www.salon.com/2005/07/09/battlestar_galactica_3/> [Accessed March 20, 2012]

no-one ever accuses of being “insufficiently feminine.”⁴⁴⁶ This chapter does not focus specifically on Starbuck and instead interrogates the multiple figure of the Cylon Number Eight; notably the characters Boomer and Sharon, who are iterations of this figure, as I outline below. However, given that this thesis focuses on representations of gender and subjectivity in 21st century American science fiction television, it is nevertheless appropriate to briefly consider the implications of Starbuck’s gender switch here.

Sarah Conly argues that Starbuck’s gender switch suggests that she is “the character to whom the traditional restrictions of femininity” mean the least.⁴⁴⁷ While this thesis is concerned with interrogating representations of gender and subjectivity via a *multitude* of subject positions, Conly’s point emphasises the initial controversy surrounding Moore and Eick’s decision to recast the Starbuck character as a woman.⁴⁴⁸ As Conly points out, Starbuck is active, she doesn’t give up her own principles to please men, and she is “physically unconstrained.”⁴⁴⁹ These characteristics are also balanced with Starbuck’s own acknowledgment of traditional feminine roles, which Conly argues she adopts in a performative manner. This is notably evidenced in episode 1.11, ‘Colonial Day,’ when Starbuck appears at a party “decked out in an evening dress with all the feminine accoutrements,”⁴⁵⁰ following her participation in a prisoner interrogation and a barroom fight mere hours before.⁴⁵¹ Conly specifically considers Starbuck’s acknowledgement of ‘traditional’ femininity in instances such as the example noted here via Butler’s theories regarding gender and performativity; a theoretical framework with which I engaged the previous chapter of this thesis in my consideration of *Fringe*’s representation of central protagonist Olivia Dunham.

Starbuck’s activeness and her unconstrained physicality are characteristics which, Carla Kungl states, seemed to “horrify” some fans upon the debut of Moore and Eick’s re-imagined series.⁴⁵² The fears expressed by fans, Kungl suggests, is rooted in the implication that this change in gender identity for Starbuck is indicative of “the worst of imagined feminist platforms come true: there is literally no difference between men and women.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ Sarah Conly, ‘Is Starbuck a Woman?’ in *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy: Knowledge Here Begins Out There*, ed. Jason T. Erbel (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) p. 230

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234

⁴⁵¹ ‘Colonial Day.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 1.11. Dir. Jonas Pate. SyFy (January 10, 2005)

⁴⁵² Carla Kungl, “‘Long Live Stardoe!’ Can a Female Starbuck Survive?” in *Cylons in America*, eds. Tiffany Potter and CW Marshall (London: Continuum, 2008) p. 199

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

Interestingly, Benedict became one of the more vociferous opponents of Starbuck's gender switch when the re-imagined *Battlestar Galactica* began to air. In an article titled 'Starbuck: Lost in Castration,' Benedict mourns the demise of 'his' Starbuck – a character he conceived of as a cigar-smoking flirt and a “blatant heterosexual.”⁴⁵⁴ Benedict elaborates on his loss as follows:

There was a time, I know I was there, when men were men, women were women and sometimes a cigar was just a good smoke. But 40 years of feminism have taken their toll. The war against masculinity has been won. Everything has turned into its opposite, so that what was once flirting and smoking is now sexual harassment and criminal. And everyone is more lonely and miserable as a result.⁴⁵⁵

The fact that Benedict bemoans Moore and Eick's contemporary “un-imagining” of *Galactica* as a series in which everything is “female driven”⁴⁵⁶ is a clear example of Kungl's assertion above, namely the “fear” held by fans and Benedict regarding the feminist implications inherent in Starbuck's gender switch. As such, Kungl is right to suggest that Starbuck is therefore representative of a “much bigger battle” than “just one man's castration anxieties.”⁴⁵⁷ While Starbuck is not the focus of this chapter, this consideration of the character's gender switch is nevertheless relevant given this thesis' specific engagement with gender representations. Starbuck is demonstrative of Moore and Eick's rejection of prescribed gender roles in their 21st century re-imagining of *Battlestar Galactica*. Starbuck's gender switch further justifies my focus on the series in this thesis, given the challenge it presents to its predecessor in terms of gender representations. As I go on to discuss in this chapter, I explore *Battlestar Galactica*'s gender representations from a different perspective. I argue that, in comparison to its predecessor and alongside Starbuck's gender switch, the 21st century, post-9/11 iteration of *Battlestar Galactica* also places a greater emphasis on race. In what follows, I specifically consider the series' engagement with race, subjectivity and the events of the 21st century via its representation of another central female protagonist, the multiple iterations of the Cylon Number Eight.

I stated above that Moore and Eick's reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica* challenges the restrictive gender representations of its predecessor, notably those articulated by

⁴⁵⁴ Dirk Benedict, 'Starbuck: Lost in Castration' in *Dreamwatch* (May, 2004) <<http://www.dirkbenedictcentral.com/home/articles-readarticle.php?nid=5>> [Accessed August 7, 2014]

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ Kungl, p. 201

Benedict. Yet as Glater points out, this 21st century series is also far darker than its predecessor: "the show's images of destruction are powerful, especially after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and its post-apocalyptic plot could appeal to viewers in this nervous new millennium, or turn them off."⁴⁵⁸ In the manifesto he wrote outlining his vision for the series, Moore himself states:

Our goal is nothing less than the reinvention of the science fiction television series. We take as a given the idea that the traditional space opera, with its stocky characters, techno-double-talk, bumpy-headed aliens, thespian histrionics, and empty heroics has run its course and a new approach is required. That approach is to introduce realism into what has heretofore been an aggressively unrealistic genre. Call it "Naturalistic Science Fiction." This idea, the presentation of a fantastical situation in naturalistic terms, will permeate every aspect of our series.⁴⁵⁹

This ambition is underlined by the most significant change Moore and Eick undertook. In their 21st century version of *Battlestar Galactica* the Cylons are now able to take human form, thus making them indistinguishable from the humans within the fleet. There is just one noteworthy caveat: there are only twelve Cylon models. Moore describes this as "initially a practical problem" because it was too expensive to consistently build convincing robots.⁴⁶⁰ However, this choice also speaks to Moore's aims for the series:

The key to the success of this series is to never, ever let the air out of the balloon - the *Battlestar Galactica* lives in a perpetual state of crisis, one in which the Cylons can appear at any moment, and where terrorist bombs, murders, rebellions, accidents, and plagues are the unfortunate routines of day to day life. There are no off days for our characters, no safe havens, nothing approaching the quiet normal existence they once knew.⁴⁶¹

The series thus continually acknowledges the fact that these characters have experienced a catastrophic event. As such, Moore's stated ambitions in approaching the reinvention and production of *Battlestar Galactica* are also demonstrative of the shift this thesis recognises as occurring within 21st century US science fiction television, across a range of series.

⁴⁵⁸ Glater

⁴⁵⁹ Ronald D. Moore, *Battlestar Galactica: Series Bible* (2003) p. 1
<http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.harvardwood.org/resource/resmgr/hwp-pdfs/battlestar_galactica_series.pdf> [Accessed March 22, 2012]

⁴⁶⁰ Ronald D. Moore, quoted in Glater, 2005

⁴⁶¹ Moore, p. i

This chapter aims to focus on the rebuilding and restructuring of society in the aftermath of the initial Cylon attack that is detailed in the mini-series. Contextually it considers *Battlestar Galactica's* narrative as a response to 9/11 and the War on Terror, and interrogates representations within the series of national ideological subjectivity post-catastrophe, specifically in terms of race. The invocation of a perpetual state of crisis and, crucially, the reconceptualization of the robot Cylon enemy as human, is therefore vital to this chapter's interrogation of the racial subject as it is configured within *Battlestar Galactica*. It is significant that *Battlestar Galactica* is a show with a racially diverse cast in which, as Christopher Deis points out, "racial difference and questions of the racial Other are not overt categories of meaningful social difference between and among the human characters."⁴⁶² Instead, as I to explore, the key motif of uniform becomes an explicit visual marker of race within the series. Similarly, I contend that themes of visibility, invisibility, agency and in-betweenness manifest as the central way in which the narrative engages with race and subjectivity.

This chapter is divided into two sub-sections that interrogate the figure of the racial subject as represented by the series from two different perspectives. The first sub-section interrogates early episodes within the narrative, focusing predominantly on Season 1. It explores the immediate reactions of characters as they orient themselves in an utterly new and unknown environment, in which they are constantly pursued by the terror threat of the Cylons. As part of this exploration, it considers attempts within these episodes to reflect on the influence of myth in the divisions presented by the text, the prominent visual motifs used in the series' representation of racial subjects, and the divisions that appear within the fleet. These episodes focus on establishing the Cylon figure as an Other within the fleet. This enterprise is instantly complicated by the fact that the Cylon enemy appears human, and thus indistinguishable from the self. Able to 'pass' as human within the fleet, the Cylon figure is ostensibly invisible. Yet paradoxically, I contend that such attempts to establish clear binaries within the text are based upon a key set of visual signifiers and motifs. Thus, they demonstrate attempts made by the surviving humans to explicitly identify and demarcate this Other, generating a fundamental uncertainty and anxiety within the self. Subsequently, the Cylon Other is conceptualised as both an externalised and internalised threat.

⁴⁶² Christopher Deis, "Erasing Difference: The Cylons as Racial Other" in *Cylons in America*, eds. Tiffany Potter and CW Marshall (London: Continuum, 2008) p. 157

The second sub-section of this chapter focuses on the first four episodes of Season 3, wherein I argue that the very framework of this negotiation is radically restructured via the narrative and temporal shift that takes place when this society is relocated to a colony named New Caprica. I consider the construction of this colony (which is discovered and subsequently occupied by the Cylons) in terms of the changed binaries that are employed, and what is produced in their conflict with those addressed in the first sub-section. Drawing on post-colonial theory and in particular the work of Franz Fanon, this sub-section considers the ramifications of the power shift that takes place in this reconstruction of society upon the now overtly racialised human subject. Via the structural split in subsections, this chapter aims to illustrate the manner in which *Battlestar Galactica* represents the racial subject within the shifting social and temporal conditions in a post-catastrophe environment. It is an environment which exists in a state of perpetual war; one that is specific to the 21st century US socio-cultural context with which this thesis is concerned. Reflecting on the aims of potentially evil 'outsiders' is central to the conception of *Battlestar Galactica* as an allegory of the 21st century American socio-political environment. Therefore, it is of justifiable focus given the wider concerns of this thesis. Indeed, that the series clearly establishes and then complicates the notion of a racial Other within this context further suggests that *Galactica's* allegorical function can be explicitly explored in terms of race and subjectivity.

This chapter considers race as a social concept based upon a hierarchal set of classifications. Inherent within this definition and understanding of race are the key aspects of visibility and invisibility. Michael Omi states:

Race itself is a slippery social concept which is paradoxically both 'obvious' and 'invisible.' In our society, one of the first things we notice about people when we encounter them (along with their sex/gender) is their *race*. We utilise race to provide clues about *who* a person is and *how* we should relate to her/him. Our perception of race determines our 'presentation of self,' distinctions in status, and appropriate modes of conduct in daily and institutional life. This process is often unconscious; we tend to operate off an unexamined set of *racial beliefs*.⁴⁶³

Following on from this, Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford describe 'race' as "a concept with a disreputable past and an uncertain future." It is a concept that "continues to trouble the present, both politically and intellectually. It is politically troubling because of its

⁴⁶³ Michael Omi, 'In Living Colour: Race and American Culture,' in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, eds. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 113

enduring, and in many cases increasing, practical significance as a hierarchal mode of social differentiation and exclusion – that is, as a fundamental form of *social division*.”⁴⁶⁴ I contend that the consideration of race as a form of social division is one that *Battlestar Galactica* effectively interrogates through the framework of 9/11 and the War on Terror, via a narrative which foregrounds the instability of subjectivity within such a context.

Within the structural frameworks outlined above, my focus in this chapter rests predominantly upon the figure of the Cylon model Number Eight. As I stated above, there are twelve Cylon models that appear human in the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica*. I contend that the model Number Eight proffers a particularly potent exploration of race and subjectivity within the series, and is emblematic of the fragmented, gendered subjectivity that is manifest in the protagonists considered throughout this thesis. It is important to note that the Cylon figures in Moore and Eick’s series are ostensibly able to resist permanent death through their ability to resurrect: when a model is killed, their consciousness is downloaded into a new body. Thus Number Eight, like the other humanoid Cylons, is an inherently multiple figure that is able to resist textual eradication. However, I argue in this chapter that the Number Eight model undergoes a number of transitions that distinguishes this figure from other Cylons in the series. The existence of Number Eight is first made known at the conclusion of the mini-series. Boomer, an officer aboard the *Battlestar Galactica*, is revealed as the character to whom this numerical designation refers. Boomer is not initially aware of her identity as a Cylon, and neither is anyone else in the fleet. Another version of this model exists simultaneously on the surface of the planet Caprica, where she meets a Colonial officer named Karl ‘Helo’ Agathon (Tahmoh Penikett). Helo believes the figure he meets to be Boomer, yet this Number Eight – known as Sharon – is fully aware of her status as a Cylon. The Number Eight model is thus immediately established by the series as a figure that is inherently multiple and, as I go on to discuss, caught in-between the racial binaries the narrative seeks to establish. As such, this Cylon figure is unique in that as a racial subject, I argue, she is deployed to specifically interrogate and complicate these binaries. Like the other protagonists considered in this thesis, the characteristics of multiplicity and fragmentation are manifest in the Number Eight model. These characteristics are central to the ability of this figure to interrogate such racial binaries; and they are also central to Sharon’s own ability to resist the restrictive definitions imposed by the binary structures she disrupts. Given the importance of Number Eight to

⁴⁶⁴ Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford, ‘Introduction’ in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, eds. Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford (London: Continuum, 2002) p. 1

the concerns of this chapter, I will briefly clarify the names I employ when discussing the different versions of this model. 'Boomer' refers to the character who is enlisted as an officer aboard the Battlestar Galactica upon the series premiere. She is the character who shoots Commander Adama (Edward James Olmos) in the Season 1 finale. Sharon 'Athena' Agathon refers to the character who meets Helo upon the surface of Caprica, after the Cylon attack. She leaves Caprica with Helo and returns with him to the Battlestar Galactica, where she is imprisoned. Helo and Sharon eventually wed, and Sharon is later enlisted as an officer in the fleet herself at the start of Season 3.

Season 1: "At this point there's no choice. It's either them, or us."

This sub-section focuses primarily on the characters of Boomer and Sharon "Athena" Agathon to interrogate the post-9/11 divisions noted in the introduction to this chapter specifically in terms of race and subjectivity. Utilising the framework of the racial epidermal schema set out by Frantz Fanon, I explore how *Battlestar Galactica* represents the experience of this schemata within a 21st century US cultural context. Fanon's two-fold schemata, the historico-racial schema and the racial epidermal schema, provides an interesting framework through which to consider *Battlestar Galactica's* conception of racial difference within the series' early episodes. Fanon's hypothesis rests upon the imposition of a narrative that fixes the meaning of a racialised identity: "the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories."⁴⁶⁵ Once this identity has been formed, it becomes a form of entrapment: "My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured (...) I sit down at the fire and become aware of my uniform."⁴⁶⁶ Fanon's racial epidermal schema results in a displacement of power with his own body. He states: "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without (...) I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality."⁴⁶⁷ Within this framework, the fear of the Cylon body is both an external and internalised threat. There are twelve Cylon models, each of which becomes a uniform when identified. However, anxiety and fear of the Other stems from doubt within the self as to whether or not one will be identified as Cylon and thus be stripped of the reality of one's subjectivity; a reality replaced by an imposed narrative of

⁴⁶⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, New Edition, 2008 (Originally published in 1952)) p. 84

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87

racial Otherness. The characters Boomer and Sharon Agathon are emblematic of this. Simultaneously existing as the same Cylon model and entirely different individuals they offer an intriguing focal point for this sub-section's exploration of *Battlestar Galactica's* early attempts to establish a visible, external other. Like all of the female protagonists focused on in this thesis, Boomer and Sharon are thus inherently multiple and in-between. As I explore throughout this chapter, the racial subjectivity of the Cylon model Number Eight is laid open to a narrative of difference imposed by others, such as Fanon establishes via his schemata. Boomer and Sharon's differences – their difference to each other, and their differing responses to those narratives which seek to fix them in place – result in a fragmentation that is born out of their displaced power over their own bodies. As this sub-section explores, Boomer struggles to regain a sense of subjective autonomy over her own self as a result of this. Sharon responds by fighting to regain authorship over herself. As I later argue, her self-awareness and recourse to authorship is necessarily bound up in the prominent themes of visibility, invisibility and in-betweenness that I contend are key to *Battlestar Galactica's* fluid representation of race.

The numerous attempts to visibly 'other' the Cylon figure in Season 1 suggests that *Battlestar Galactica's* immediate post-catastrophe conception of race is framed around Manichean allegories. In the third chapter of this thesis, I noted that Bruce Holsinger identifies these allegories as emerging anew in the wake of 9/11.⁴⁶⁸ The proliferation of these dualisms highlights the relationship between the catastrophic event of the Cylon attack on the colonies and an older Colonial myth which is a prevalent theme within the early episodes of the series. Indeed, this relationship is fundamental to how *Battlestar Galactica* conceives of race within its narrative, as the latter brings to the surface many older pre-existing anxieties that are confronted within this new socio-political context. As I noted in Chapter One, Susan Faludi has identified the re-emergence of such anxieties in the wake of 9/11; pointing to the importance of understanding the mythic underpinnings of the American response to the events of September 11th, 2001. Faludi argues that "to not understand ourselves" in such a fundamental way would be:

So unknowing about the way we inhabit our cultural roles that we are stunned, insensible, when confronted by a moment that requires our full awareness. To fail to comprehend the historical provenance of our reaction...is to find ourselves thwarted in our ability to express what we have undergone.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Holsinger, p. 470

⁴⁶⁹ Faludi, p. 15

As such, Faludi posits that the events of 9/11 “broke the dead bolt” on America’s protective myth, the notion that America’s strength made its “homeland impregnable.”⁴⁷⁰ She asserts that post-9/11, Americans were enlisted in a symbolic war at home to “repair and restore” this national myth. This reassembling of an historic national identity as a cultural response to 9/11 “seemed to have little bearing on the actual circumstances [America] faced” and instead focused on rebuilding and redeploying a myth that the nation has “been constructing for more than three hundred years.”⁴⁷¹ The early episodes of *Battlestar Galactica*, and their invocation of myth in the context of which Faludi speaks, support the narrative’s establishment of the binary structures which inform its conception of race.

Jean Baudrillard also provides a useful framework through which *Battlestar Galactica* is able, within early episodes of Season 1, to establish these binary structures in its conception of race. Baudrillard refers to the Cold War, an event which served to significantly challenge American national identity in the 20th century, as an historical period which maintained a balance of terror between two opposing powers; upholding a tension and equilibrium, a “balance between Good and Evil.”⁴⁷² He states: “As soon as there was a total extrapolation of Good (hegemony of the positive over any form of negativity...[the] triumph of values of Good all along the line), that balance was upset. From this point on the equilibrium was gone, and it was as though Evil regained an invisible autonomy, henceforward developing exponentially.”⁴⁷³ This binary structure, as it is employed by *Battlestar Galactica*, is predicated upon the Manichean allegories identified by Holsinger above. It is therefore similarly illustrative of the wider socio-cultural context of American in the 21st century, with which this thesis is concerned. While these Manichean allegories are introduced and then explicitly complicated by the narrative, in these early episodes one can identify a total extrapolation of ‘Good’ within the human fleet’s conception of itself. This is rooted in a pre-catastrophe, utopic myth of the Colonies’ understanding of their national ideological character; a manifestation of the concept of American exceptionalism that was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

The presence of the Cylons within *Battlestar Galactica*’s narrative structure necessarily positions them as the show’s Other. In Season 1 they are the “personification of

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13

⁴⁷² Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (New York: Verso, 2003) p. 14

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 14

evil, for the colonials” as Moore asserts.⁴⁷⁴ David Theo Goldberg, in his introduction to *Anatomy of Racism*, notes that “John Hodge identifies the dualism of good and evil as a structural framework in terms of which Western reason is defined.” Hodge argues that this framework “enables and motivates forms of group oppression like racism and sexism. The dualism here is taken to enforce a general conception that oppression is rational and thus acceptable.”⁴⁷⁵ Such a dualism certainly underpins the Colonials’ mythic conception of the Cylons. Created by mankind, the Cylons were originally used as ‘slaves’ within the Twelve Colonies. They were, due to their robotic nature, not considered human. Indeed, they were considered less than human: they were appliances. The opening titles to *Battlestar Galactica: The Mini-Series* (2003) informs the audience that “The Cylons were created by Man. They were created to make life easier on the Twelve Colonies. And then the day came when the Cylons decided to kill their masters.”⁴⁷⁶ The terminology utilised here is important. Referring to humans as the ‘masters’ of the Cylons, it explicitly suggests that at their inception the Cylons were conceived as a racial Other within Colonial society. Prior to their destruction of the Twelve Colonies, they never appeared in human form. Machines created for labour, they were a very clearly demarcated Other. Humanity’s oppression of the Cylons was literally about skin, and the Cylon’s lack of it. The decision by Moore and Eick to introduce Cylons who adopt human form in their reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica* immediately complicates this division. In the first chapter of this thesis, I made reference to how the science fiction television series *Star Trek*, despite its visibly integrated crew, was marked by segregation where, as Daniel Leonard Bernardi points out, minorities were often “relegated to the spatial and narrative background for most of the episodes.”⁴⁷⁷ This, combined with the typical narrative characterisation of evil as dark and good as white, served to undermine any progressive attempt by the series to effectively interrogate race relations in 1960s America. In contrast, via its narrative structure, Moore and Eick’s *Battlestar Galactica* is able to both adopt and destabilise the codes and conventions present in a series like *Star Trek*. In doing so, *Battlestar Galactica* is able to proffer a much more potent consideration of race and subjectivity via an explicitly allegorical engagement

⁴⁷⁴ Ronald D. Moore, Podcast. Episode 2.10, ‘Pegasus’
<<http://www.syfy.com/battlestar/downloads/podcast.php?seas=2>> [Accessed April 24, 2012]

⁴⁷⁵ David Theo Goldberg, ‘Introduction’ in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) p. xvii

⁴⁷⁶ *Battlestar Galactica: The Mini-Series*. Part 1. Dir. Michael Rymer. SyFy (8 December, 2003)

⁴⁷⁷ Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1998) p. 40

with the fears, anxieties and insecurities of the contemporary socio-cultural context in which it is produced.

It is evident that the aforementioned racial binary of human versus Cylon is made immediately obvious at the very beginning of the mini-series; the narrative of which establishes the Colonial myths upon which the fleet attempts to fall back in the wake of the Cylon attack. In this environment the binary of them or us, human or Cylon, emerges as the primary recourse of the human characters. This serves to clearly illustrate the link between Cylon and racial Other I outlined above. While reductive, it appears to be what enables the human Colonials to function in this environment. Indeed, this is substantiated by not only the absolute nature of this dualism but its prevalence throughout the mini-series. A particularly notable example presents itself in the debate between Laura Roslin (Mary McDonnell) and Lee “Apollo” Adama (Jamie Bamber) as to whether they should continue searching for survivors in the aftermath of the attack, or flee before the Cylons find them. Apollo states: “I’m sorry to make it a numbers game but we’re talking about the survival of our race, here.”⁴⁷⁸ Not only does this statement evoke the spectre of race, but it inherently establishes the division between ‘good’ humans and ‘evil’ Cylons. It is a division demarcated along racial lines: humanity is something to be preserved, the Cylons are an intrinsic threat by nature of their opposition to it. This takes place within the socio-political context from which the series emerges: 21st century America dealing with the aftermath of 9/11. This is a context of which the show is keenly aware, and one particular scene from the series premiere, episode 1.01, ‘33,’ is clearly demonstrable of this. It depicts character Anastaisa “Dee” Dualla (Kandyse McClure) walking to Galactica’s personnel archives to see if any of her family survived the attacks. The corridor where the archives are located has been refashioned into a wall of remembrance for those who died. Highly reminiscent of the images from Ground Zero following 9/11, this corridor encompasses shrines, photos, missing person posters and requests for information. It is a context which *Battlestar Galactica* deliberately and explicitly evokes throughout its narrative, underpinning the allegorical nature of the series and its representation of America living in the wake of its own catastrophic event.

Uniform as Visual Border

Linda Martin Alcoff notes that Cornel West and David Theo Goldberg have attempted genealogies of modern racism “that link Western fetishistic practices of classification, the

⁴⁷⁸ *The Mini-Series, Part 1*

forming of tables, and the consequent primacy of the visible with the creation of metaphysical and moral hierarchies between racialised categories of human beings.”⁴⁷⁹ She states that Goldberg, in particular, argues that “where rights require sameness, difference must be either trivialised or contained in the Other across a firm and visible border.”⁴⁸⁰ Deis suggests that “although racial difference and questions of the racial Other are not overt categories of meaningful social difference between and among the human characters, [*Battlestar Galactica*] is driven forward by a conception of racial difference where the Cylons are a carefully constructed Other.”⁴⁸¹ While Deis is, to a certain extent, right to argue that the thrust of *Battlestar Galactica*’s conception of racial difference is one in which the Cylons are constructed as Other, this chapter argues that this construction is in fact a much more complex and fluid concept than early episodes suggest. As I explore in the second sub-section of this chapter, this complexity and fluidity is greatly apparent in the narrative shift that occurs at the beginning of Season 3, wherein events complicate the previously established racial binary of human versus Cylon. Much of this lies in *Galactica*’s interrogation of visibility, invisibility, borders and sameness in its exploration of race; themes such as those Alcoff and Goldberg observe. This difference, between an apparent racial construction based on visual surface and a more complex, underlying depth to these divisions is a deliberate narrative ploy. *Battlestar Galactica* employs several prominent visual motifs through which to interrogate its conception of race, which I explore below. I argue that in Season 1, these motifs represent the attempt to further demarcate firm, visible borders through which an effective interrogation of race can take place. These firm borders are indicative of the rigid, binary thinking that underlines humanity’s conception of the Cylons at this stage in the narrative, which I have discussed above. Thus, establishing these borders and incorporating the careful construction of the Cylon as racial Other actively enables *Battlestar Galactica* to proffer a politicised examination of their usefulness within the social context in which they operate.

Perhaps the most prominent of these motifs utilised throughout the series is that of uniform. Paul Fussell states that “uniforms ask to be taken seriously, with suggestions of probity and virtue...expertise...trustworthiness...courage...obedience...extraordinary cleanliness and sanitation.” They differ from costumes “by their explicit assumptions about the way every element should look,” and by the fact that costumes are attended by “ideas

⁴⁷⁹ Linda Martin Alcoff, ‘Philosophy and Racial Identity’ in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, eds. Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford (London: Continuum, 2002) p. 13

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13

⁴⁸¹ Deis, p.157

of frivolity, temporariness, inauthenticity, and theatricality.”⁴⁸² For the purposes of this subsection, Fussell’s comments regarding the implicit ‘characteristics’ imbued by uniform are particularly useful. The visual power of uniform as a form of social division within *Battlestar Galactica*’s early conception of race is effectively highlighted in episode 1.03, ‘Bastille Day.’ Roslin and Commander Adama debate the merits of utilising the convicted criminals on board the ship Astral Queen for hard labour in the retrieval of essential water supplies. Roslin is adamant the men are not to be treated as “slaves,” and sends Apollo to negotiate an agreement. The Captain of the Astral Queen refers to himself as a “bus driver” rather than a prison warden. Illustrating the fixed subjectivity of the prisoners on board, he states: “they don’t even give me their names, hell – they’re just numbers.”⁴⁸³ Tom Zarek (Richard Hatch), a prisoner on the ship, asks the guard for permission to speak to Apollo, citing his prisoner number and stating “[I’m] not allowed to speak unless asked a direct question.” He goes on to tell Apollo: “They’re not my men. They belong to you. I belong to you, you own us. You’re the master, we’re the slaves.”⁴⁸⁴ This explicit reference to America’s national history of race, and thus the traumatic relationship between race and subjectivity inherent within this history, certainly suggests that race is a concern at the forefront of *Battlestar Galactica*’s narrative. Yet I would suggest that within *Galactica*’s post-9/11 allegorical framework this concern with race, as evidenced by episode 1.03, ‘Bastille Day,’ is predominantly framed via the employment of uniform rather than any literal racial difference between the human characters. Uniform becomes a visual signifier that denotes a fixed Other. Echoing Osborne and Sandford’s assertion that race operates as a fundamental form of social division, in this instance it is employed as a visible dualism between ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ This dualism presents itself here in the opposing qualities manifest in the uniforms presented: between the positive values prescribed to those who wear the uniform of the Colonial fleet, and the nameless prisoners who are only identified by the negative values of their red jumpsuits.

The scene that follows further supports this contention. Apollo speaks to the prisoners regarding the proposed arrangement of labour for freedom. His argument, which culminates in the statement “we’re offering you a new beginning,” is accompanied by shots of the prisoners in bright red jumpsuits.⁴⁸⁵ They are all in cramped, darkly lit cells. Apollo and the Colonial officers accompanying him stand at a high point within the ship, looking

⁴⁸² Paul Fussell, *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2003) p. 3-4

⁴⁸³ ‘Bastille Day.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 1.03. Dir. Allan Kroeker. SyFy (November 1, 2004)

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

down upon the prisoners. Two modes of hierarchal classification in terms of social division are employed here: uniform and geographical position. Both are explicitly and repeatedly related to the standing of a given subject within the fleet. Additionally, this episode makes use of CCTV-style shots in depicting the prisoners on the ship, suggesting these are subjects to be contained and placed under surveillance (Figure 4.1). This is again representative of the constant efforts to demarcate a visible other within the fleet; one which is of course immediately and repeatedly destabilised by the human face adopted by the Cylons. This is further substantiated by the clear similarity between Zarak's quote above and the titles from the mini-series which explicitly distinguish human from Cylon via a hierarchal relationship between 'masters' and 'slaves'.



Figure 4.1 Zarak on CCTV in 1.03, 'Bastile Day.'

Boomer: "I'm not a Cylon. I'm Sharon Valerii."

In the introduction to this chapter, I stated that the characters of Boomer and Sharon are the most prominent figures through which *Battlestar Galactica's* negotiation of race takes place. They are the same Cylon model, and thus appear visually identical. As such, in *Battlestar Galactica's* early episodes the visual motifs identified above are most clearly destabilised by the fragmented subjectivity of the Cylon Number Eight. A large volume of academic work has previously been dedicated to this character. Julie Hawk argues that "the push and pull between an essence-based subjectivity and an active, process-based construction of subjectivity is precisely what is at stake in the narratives of both Boomer

and Athena, and it mirrors the push and pull of signifier and signified that [postcolonial theorist Homi K.] Bhabha identifies as the locus of subjectivization.”⁴⁸⁶ Indeed, Hawk points to a host of scholarly work on Boomer and Sharon, and the multiple approaches that have been utilised in addressing the nature of their characters.⁴⁸⁷ Here, I consider Boomer and Sharon specifically in terms of race, without ignoring the wider context of *Battlestar Galactica*’s interrogation of racial subjectivities within a changing socio-political environment. Uniform therefore plays a key role in how each character perceives their own subjectivity and in turn, how they are perceived by those around them. This relationship between subjectivity and uniform is established as early as the mini-series. Preparing to leave the planet Caprica, which has been destroyed by the nuclear attack of the Cylons, Helo notifies Boomer of his intent to remain behind and give up his seat for renowned scientist Gaius Baltar (James Callis). She protests, and he tells her the future depends on who survives: “You can do this without me. I know you can. You’ve proven it.”⁴⁸⁸ Boomer’s integrity and character is not in doubt here, because of her military uniform. As I have outlined thus far in this chapter, at this stage in the series *Battlestar Galactica* is invested in the establishment of clear, visible markers of difference which are subsequently deliberately complicated. The supposed certainty of uniform in this scene is thus undermined by events that later occur in episode 1.03, ‘Bastille Day,’ as previously mentioned. They are also complicated in episode 1.01, ‘33,’ which follows the events which occur in the mini-series. The plot of this episode is premised upon repeated Cylon attacks on the civilian fleet that occur every thirty-three minutes. This narrative device is cleverly deployed: throughout the episode the human characters are seen to visibly collapse. Their mental and physical fatigue is portrayed by visual cues – they can barely stand or stay

⁴⁸⁶ Julie Hawk, ‘Objet 8 and the Cylon Remainder: Posthuman Subjectivization in *Battlestar Galactica*’ in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol.44, No. 1 (2011) p. 5

⁴⁸⁷ Hawk’s article offers a lengthy literature review of previous academic scholarship on Boomer and Sharon ‘Athena’ Agathon: “A brief tour through the highlights of scholarship touching heavily upon the Eight provides a snapshot of the kinds of issues brought to the fore by Boomer/Athena. Juliana Hu Pegues approaches the identity of the Eight model through a postcolonial lens, arguing that the racial identification of Sharon (or rather, of Grace Park) harkens back to the Madame Butterfly/Miss Saigon model, with all the attendant (and problematic) tropes (189 – 209). Amy Kind explores the persistence of Sharon from Boomer to Athena, examining and problematizing the personal versus physical theories of identity (64 – 74). Following Kierkegaard’s theories of subjectivity, Robert W. Moore argues that Sharon becomes a person through deliberate choice. The first step of the developing personhood is individuation, he claims. Then, Sharon maps her identity through the roles that she plays, primarily wife, mother, and colonial officer (105– 17). Robert Arp and Tracie Mahaffey, focusing primarily on the Eight model, lead their readers through syllogistic logic, proving that Cylons are, in fact, persons (55 – 63) (...) Daniel Milsky uses a Ricoeur-inspired narrative theory to highlight the ways in which both Boomer and Athena deal with narrative disruptions (both disruptions of fact and of belief) (3 – 15).” *Ibid.*, p. 6

⁴⁸⁸ *The Mini-Series*, Part 1

awake; they are bearded, dishevelled and dirty. Drawing out the supposedly clear contrast between humanity and machines, Commander Adama states “we’re getting slower.”⁴⁸⁹ While this occurs on Galactica, Helo is pursued on Caprica by robotic Cylon centurions. He is apparently recused by a figure he perceives to be Boomer, but is in fact a version of the Cylon model Number Eight that we later come to know as Sharon. The machine-like appearance of these older Cylon models effectively contrasts with Sharon’s human appearance, and suggests why he is so immediately trusting of her. Key to this is Sharon’s attire: she appears in Galactica’s flight uniform, a visible marker of her character and self. To Helo she looks just like Boomer – thus, she must *be* Boomer. A final example of the visual codes in play in 1.01, ‘33,’ is the fact that Helo is seen to be taking anti-radiation medication while on Caprica. He is pale at this point, and looks extremely ill. This echoes the appearance of those on Galactica, but interestingly also the appearance of the Cylons Leoben (Callum Keith Rennie) and Doral (Matthew Bennett) who first appear in the mini-series. Leoben and Doral both fall ill on a space station named Ragnar Anchorage, seemingly infected by an airborne toxin that affects their Cylon anatomy. As such, while these early episodes endeavour to establish clear, visible boundaries between humans and Cylons, portraying humans as ‘people’ and Cylons as ‘machines,’ these visible cues are also immediately utilised in a manner that begins to undermine the effectiveness of relying on such a binary within the wider socio-cultural context the series, and this thesis, is concerned with.

The Boomer and Sharon characters thus demonstrate the influence of uniform as a form of social division within *Battlestar Galactica*. The binaries that exist between humans and Cylons play a crucial role in this. At one point in episode 1.01, ‘33’, Apollo notes that Boomer is holding up better than anyone in the squadron under the relentless Cylon assaults. Boomer replies that she’s tired like “everybody else,” and Apollo responds that she never seems it. Starbuck jokingly states that “it’s because she’s a Cylon.”⁴⁹⁰ On the surface this is a simple deployment of dramatic irony. However, the audience might find this joke unnerving because they are already aware that Boomer is, in fact, a Cylon. Yet if one considers this scene within the narrative’s early conception of racial difference, it is clear that none of the characters actually believe there is any basis to this joke because Boomer’s subjectivity, her character, is inherently tied to the same military institution as their own. At this point her subjectivity is therefore fixed in place by the imposed narrative

⁴⁸⁹ ‘33.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 1.01. Dir. Michael Rymer. SyFy (October 18, 2004)

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

of certainty symbolised by the Colonial uniform they all wear. Symbolic of their natural, human subjectivity, this uniform is a visual marker of safety that contains their inherent 'goodness' and stands in opposition to the 'evil' Cylon Other. Starbuck's joke is therefore funny to them, because it obviously isn't true. The basis of this assumption is most immediately conveyed by the text in visual terms: Boomer's uniform, which matches theirs. In turn, this is why Helo is so instantly trusting of Sharon when she arrives, seemingly out of nowhere, on Caprica. He responds to the visual cues that signify, to him, a fixed and certain subjectivity – the figure who helps him is Boomer, not anyone else; a human soldier, not a Cylon enemy.

As this sub-section has discussed, the Cylon Number Eight functions as a catalyst through which *Galactica's* conception of race is interrogated. The importance of uniform as a marker of difference within this conception is also emphasised by the new titles that appear at the beginning of episode 1.02, 'Water.' The sequence, which precedes the actual episode, states "Some [Cylons] are programmed to think they're human."⁴⁹¹ Two versions

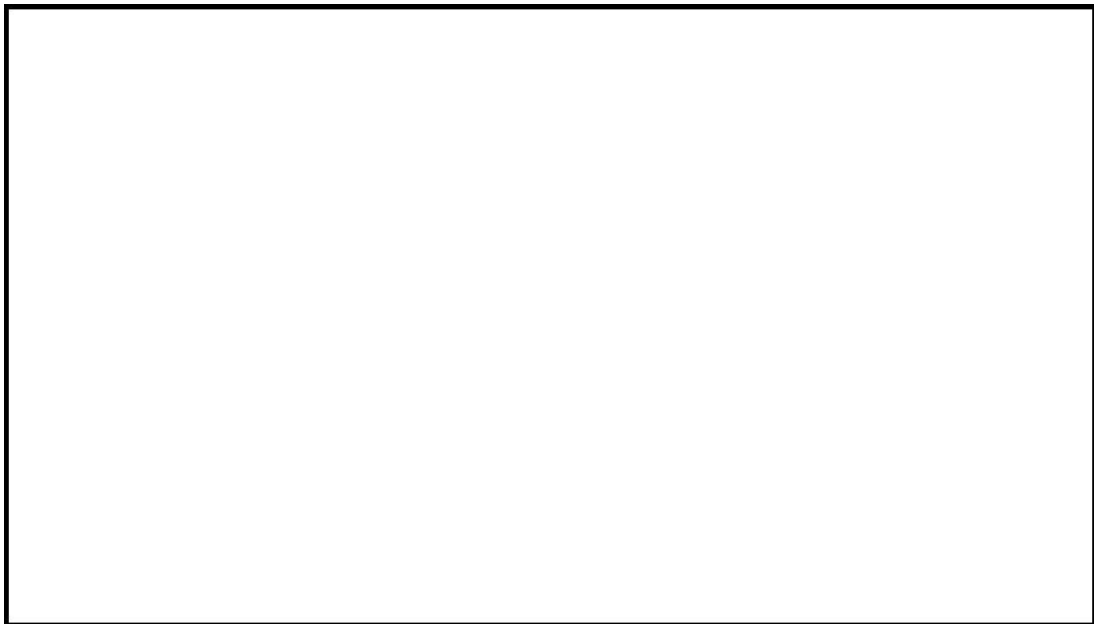


Figure 4.2 Sharon and Boomer in 1.02, 'Water.'

of the model Number Eight appear side by side. On the left is Sharon, dressed in a flight suit while on Caprica. On the right is Boomer, wearing a blue uniform representative of her status as an officer on Galactica. Superimposed on top of this image is the line "There are

⁴⁹¹ 'Water.' *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 1.02. Dir. Marita Grabiak. SyFy (October 25, 2004)

many copies” (Figure 4.2). This episode marks the beginning of a division between Boomer’s subjectivity as symbolised by the visual code her Colonial uniform, and the reality of her status as a Cylon. It emphasises the inherent multiplicity of the character and the inbetweenness of both the Boomer and Sharon iterations of this model as they attempt to negotiate this division. I now interrogate this split below.

As mentioned above, the Cylon model Eight has been interrogated from a variety of standpoints. Considering Boomer from the perspective of Manichean theory, George A. Dunn argues that as the character “comes to suspect her responsibility for the acts of sabotage against the Galactica she...feels more a victim of evil than its perpetrator. Her Cylon impulses feel like ‘ sleeper agents’ stolen aboard her psyche to subvert her own rationally chosen ends.” A Manichean worldview, previously considered by Holsinger specifically in relation to 9/11 “suggests” a resolution to this identity crisis: “since her moral character is fundamentally aligned to the cause of the human race, she’s really ‘a normal human being’ and not ‘an evil Cylon.’” Yet Dunn somewhat negatively argues that Boomer is often “too weak” to resist these Cylon impulses, despite them being “essentially alien to what she is.”⁴⁹² He sums up Boomer’s ‘plight’ as one of “*self-alienation*,” positing a restrictive binary by arguing that she is “either a human being whose captive will lacks *self-control* or a ‘broken’ Cylon whose deluded thinking lacks *self-knowledge*.” The question of which “form of alienation oppresses her” cannot be determined until the question of her identity is settled, which, in reference to Baltar’s ‘Cylon detector,’ is more complicated “than whether a test result is red or green.”⁴⁹³ While Dunn approaches this question from a philosophical perspective, considering Boomer’s subjectivity through a framework of race is equally intriguing as it allows for a fuller exploration of this ‘complicated’ question of subjectivity. Fanon’s concept of the racial epidermal schema, outlined above, is useful in relation to considering the question of Boomer’s subjectivity from a racial standpoint. His hypothesis rests upon the imposition of a narrative that fixes the meaning of identity. Fanon writes:

Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me not by ‘residual sensations and perceptions primarily on a tactile, vestibular, kinaesthetic, and visual character,’ but by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories (...)

⁴⁹² George A. Dunn, ‘Being Boomer: Identity, Alienation, and Evil’ in *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy: Knowledge Here Begins Out There*, ed. Jason T. Erbel (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) p. 133-134

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 136

Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. In the third train I was given not one but two, three places. I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved towards the other...and the evanescent others, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared.⁴⁹⁴

I contend that very early on within the post-catastrophe *Galactica* narrative, Boomer comes to the realisation that race, and the fragmentation to which Fanon refers, is the forefront of her persona. This occurs far earlier than Dunn suggests above. While Boomer certainly struggles to process this realisation, it nevertheless determines the pre-eminent aspect of her character. This is primarily evidenced by how the question of her race literally takes over her subjectivity like a form of entrapment. Fanon continues: "My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured...The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly (...) All round me the white man...there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me...I sit down at the fire and I become aware of my uniform."⁴⁹⁵ As I previously stated, *Battlestar Galactica* is a show with a racially diverse cast wherein uniform becomes an explicit visual marker of race within the series; a marker that is then destabilised by the human form the Cylons are able to take. Fanon refers to the writing of race on his skin, given to him, as he says, by "a thousand details" from the language of a white man. The displacement Fanon refers to is epitomised by Boomer, whose realisation of her Cylon impulses displaces her own subjectivity. It is important to note, however, that self-realisation is not absent in Boomer. This self-realisation results in fragmentation, whilst also realigning her relationship with her own body, agency and subjectivity. This is replaced by the decisions of others: crucially, both humans and Cylons.

In his introduction to *Unspeakable Images*, Lester D. Friedman notes Mark Winokur's description of "passing" as Hollywood's "strategy of racial compatibility, one that perpetuates the fiction that America has solved its race problems while it simultaneously denies depictions of true empowerment."⁴⁹⁶ As I have suggested, Boomer's race is represented as a uniform, or stereotype. This representation is employed *literally* by the series. Yet Boomer and Sharon are interesting because they wear more than one uniform,

⁴⁹⁴ Fanon, p. 84

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86

⁴⁹⁶ Lester D. Friedman, 'Introduction' in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991) p. 7

complicating any assertion of weakness on the part of each character. While Sharon's adoption of uniform will be addressed below, for Boomer the post-catastrophe, wartime fear of the Cylon body is internalised. This internalisation manifests in anxiety and self-doubt. She attempts to conceal this behind the visual code of the Colonial uniform, and the mythic past it represents in early Season 1. Thus, she is able to "pass" within the Colonial fleet. Her self-realisation makes this a conscious choice – while she is motivated by the negative quality of fear, Boomer is still able to make a subjective choice here. While she feels restricted by the absolute narratives available to her – 'evil' Cylon or Colonial human – she recognises she is in-between these categories. As such, her fragmentation immediately complicates them both.

Just as it never conceals the fact that its characters have survived a catastrophic and traumatic event, *Battlestar Galactica* is clear that Boomer's realisation brings with it an unavoidable inevitability. Fanon's description of Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of Richard Wright's novel *Native Son*, aptly evokes this inevitability: "He's afraid, he is terribly afraid. He is afraid, but knows that fear will fill the world when the world finds out. And when the world knows, the world always expects something of the Negro. He is afraid lest the world know, he is afraid of the fear that the world would feel if the world knew...in the end, Bigger Thomas acts. To put an end to his tension, he acts, he responds to the world's anticipation."⁴⁹⁷ As Caryl Phillips notes in his introduction to *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas makes "the unsettling discovery that it is the very act of violence that, in fact, sets him free." The narrative of Wright's text suggests "that both blacks and whites are likely to be ensnared in a nightmare of savagery and physical and emotional pain unless somebody addresses the problem of American racism."⁴⁹⁸ There is an element of this to Boomer. In episode 1.02, 'Water,' Galactica's water tanks are targeted by a series of explosions which are seemingly detonated from within the ship. Prior to this the episode begins by presenting Boomer waking up in an equipment room, soaking wet. She uncovers C4 and a detonator in her bag. Unable to recollect when or why she obtained them, Boomer fears she will be labelled a Cylon agent. Later, as the Galactica searches for water, Boomer struggles to relay information her scanning equipment picks up pertaining to a positive water source. Saying nothing while her screen reads "positive contact," Boomer is clearly uncertain about what she is experiencing. All she can say is "I don't know. I have this

⁴⁹⁷ Fanon, p. 124

⁴⁹⁸ Caryl Phillips, 'Introduction' in *Native Son* by Richard Wright (New York: Vintage Edition, 2000 (Originally published in 1940)) p. xv

feeling.”⁴⁹⁹ She runs a scan again and visibly strains to articulate what she wants to say; she blinks, breathes deeply and looks scared. Her realisation that the events in 1.02, ‘Water,’ may be more than someone framing her for the bombings comes at a time when it is not yet common knowledge within the fleet that the Cylons can mimic human form. Yet in episode 1.12, ‘Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2,’ she knows her Cylon identity is an inescapable fact. After encountering other model Number Eights on board a Cylon ship, Boomer returns to Galactica and shoots Adama in an apparent assassination attempt. This act echoes the parallels Eric Greene draws between Boomer and the abuse of prisoners during the American occupation of Iraq. Greene’s argument points to how this deeper problem of American racism can be drawn together with the 21st century context the series more specifically engages with:

There we were, like Boomer, becoming something we would never have thought possible...And as the revelations spilled forth, as we saw the truth of what we were doing, the nation was indeed like Boomer – a part of us which had always been buried within, hidden from plain view, could no longer be suppressed. Something ugly, violent, treacherous, and contemptible had been exposed. It might be ignored but it could no longer be denied.⁵⁰⁰

The Boomer character therefore not only offers an acknowledgement of America’s past negotiation of the trauma of race, but how this must now be confronted in the contemporary context of the 21st century. In this sense, Boomer’s fragmentation proffers an important sense of recognition. While the question of Boomer’s race operates like a form of entrapment over her subjectivity as the first season of *Battlestar Galactica* progresses, the ending of this season is demonstrative of a breaking point in which Boomer can no longer suppress what she knows to be true. Richard Wright draws attention to how racial stereotypes serve to create scripted roles in his autobiographical memoir *Black Boy*:

I began to marvel at how smoothly the black boys acted out the roles that the white race had mapped out for them. Most of them were not conscious of living in a special, separate, stunted way of life. Yet I knew that in some period of their growing up, there had been developed in them a...controlling mechanism that shut off their minds and emotions from all that the white race said was taboo.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ ‘Water’

⁵⁰⁰ Eric Greene, ‘The Mirror Frakked’ in *So Say We All*, ed. Richard Hatch (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2006) p. 16

⁵⁰¹ Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006 (Originally published in 1945)) p. 172

This “controlling mechanism” resonates with Fanon’s ‘racial epidermal schema’ – a veil that serves to separate a person from themselves. Boomer is unable to resist the control others have over her subjectivity in Season 1. Yet as I go on to argue, the narrative shift that occurs in Season 3 presents the Cylon model Number Eight as a character in transition through the figure of Sharon Agathon; a character who appropriates these controlling mechanisms to negotiate a narrative and subjectivity for herself that she is willing to embrace, not merely accept.

Sharon Agathon thus serves as an interesting comparison to Boomer, and adds depth to *Galactica*’s interrogation of race within the context of 21st century America. Having generated visual codes of social division, wherein the comforting aspects of a mythic national past are given prevalence, *Battlestar Galactica* presents Sharon as a figure who is able to destabilise these binaries in a productive way. As I have argued, while Boomer attempts to dismiss and resist being dominated, during her time on the *Galactica* she was not a character in total control of her own subjective autonomy. In contrast, Sharon uses her power of self-representation to control her own subjectivity, actively choosing to serve in the Colonial fleet against the Cylons. When Sharon arrives at the Colonial fleet for the first time with Helo, she is almost immediately executed as Roslin implores Apollo to “put that thing in the airlock.”⁵⁰² Apollo himself refers to her as “trash.” Sharon is subsequently adorned in the same red jumpsuit worn by the prisoners in episode 1.03, ‘Bastille Day.’ This uniform again becomes a crucial visual marker of race. Zarek referred to the prisoners on board the *Astral Queen* as “slaves.” By dressing Sharon in the same uniform, the human characters are not only invoking the hierarchal classifications at play in episode 1.03, ‘Bastille Day,’ but explicitly falling back on the Manichean allegories which characterised the relationship between Cylon and human in Season 1. The red jumpsuit becomes symbolic of a fixed narrative of race the Colonials seek to impose upon Sharon to contain her racial subjectivity as something known, controlled and negative. Yet from the outset, Sharon resists this fixed definition by frequently asserting her own autonomy. In episode 2.06, ‘Home, Part 1,’ she affirms her free will: “I am here because I want to be here,” asserting that she is not “wired in” to any controlling Cylon influence.⁵⁰³ Crucially, she also draws explicit attention to the influential power of uniform within the narrative. In episode 2.07, ‘Home, Part 2,’ Sharon tells Helo that being in the fleet makes her feel like she’s

⁵⁰² ‘Home, Part 1.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 2.06. Dir. Sergio Mimica-Gezzan. SyFy (August 19, 2005)

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

“come home.” When Helo points out that she was never in the fleet, “that was the other Sharon,” this Sharon responds that she knows, but remembers all of it: “the memory of being in uniform is so strong, is so potent, it’s like, I’m Sharon Valerii and this is my family.”⁵⁰⁴ Unlike Boomer, Sharon is aware these memories are not her own, yet she makes a conscious choice to embrace them as part of her subjective autonomy.

This is further emphasised in episode 2.07, ‘Home, Part 2.’ Like Boomer before her, Sharon finds herself holding a gun to the chest of Adama. An ally of Zarek attempts to manipulate her fragmentation by informing her that Boomer was murdered on Galactica by a crew member who faced minimal consequences for the act. He urges Sharon to kill Adama before the Colonial officers inevitably betray her. Yet rather than pulling the trigger, as Boomer inevitably did, Sharon tells Adama: “I need you to know something. I’m Sharon, but I’m a different Sharon. I know who I am. I don’t have hidden protocols or programs lying in wait to be activated...I make my own decisions and I need you to know this is my choice.”⁵⁰⁵ In handing Adama the gun she was pointing at him, she is fully aware of how her Cylon racial identity is perceived by those around her. Indeed, Boomer’s death at the hands of an angry mob occurred despite her own confusion over her attempted murder of Adama. Yet Sharon does not attempt to conceal or dismiss her Cylon identity. She rejects the theory that her subjectivity is something that merely operates as a form of entrapment, and the idea that her visual appearance is merely a uniform to fix her in place. Rather, she strongly asserts her right to be both Cylon and at home in the Colonial fleet. In affirming that her actions are her own choice, she posits her own racial narrative. In doing so, Sharon demonstrates the ability to resist the controlling mechanisms highlighted by Fanon and Wright, by speaking for herself in order to gain a measure of control and definition. As such, she not only emphasises the inherent multiplicity and in-betweenness of the Number Eight figure, but through her fragmentation she embodies a positivity that I argue is evident in each of the protagonists considered in this thesis. While Boomer’s initial realisation that she may be a Cylon is configured as a restrictive form of entrapment that she chooses to internalise, the events that occur in Season 3 allow Sharon to negotiate her own racial subjectivity with far greater autonomy and authorship. Boomer is not weak but rather, as I have argued, struggles to configure her racial subjectivity against the imposed binary

⁵⁰⁴ ‘Home, Part 2.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 2.07. Dir. Jeff Woolnough. SyFy (August 26, 2005)

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

narratives established within the series' first season. Sharon is aware of this and, as I explore below, is able to more actively forge her own sense of selfhood from the outset.

Sharon: "I make my own choices."

The previous sub-section of this chapter concentrated on the early episodes of *Battlestar Galactica* and illustrated how the series aimed to establish clear, visible binaries as part of its representation of racial subjectivities. In doing so, it paid specific attention to the Cylon figure Number Eight and the Boomer iteration of this model, who prominently articulated these binaries and their inherent complications. This chapter now shifts focus to Season 3 and interrogates the subsequent erosion of these binaries. Of particular concern to this interrogation is *Battlestar Galactica's* New Caprica narrative arc and the 21st century context of the War on Terror. To specify: the New Caprica arc I refer to encompasses the early episodes of Season 3 depicting the Cylon occupation of the planet New Caprica, the rescue of the humans on the planet's surface by the Galactica, and the return of the resistance to the Colonial fleet. These episodes are 3.01, 'Occupation' to 3.05, 'Collaborators'. In exploring this narrative arc and the contemporary cultural context in which it was produced, this sub-section pays particular attention to key visual motifs and the representation of the narrative space of New Caprica. It also considers how Sharon Agathon, a version of the Number Eight model, is able to appropriate the conditions of this context in a positive manner. This consideration largely takes place via a comparison between her response to this wider socio-cultural context, and that of key character Colonel Saul Tigh (Michael Hogan). This sub-section draws predominantly on post-colonial theory to interrogate these concerns. Interestingly, 1.03, 'Bastille Day,' an episode addressed in the previous sub-section, also functions to foreshadow the 'terrorist versus freedom fighter' binary that I argue is so crucial to *Battlestar Galactica's* post-colonial racial framework in its third season. Roslin's aide, Billy (Paul Campbell), describes Tom Zarek as a "freedom fighter," whose "colony was exploited by the other 11 for centuries. His people were marginalised, brutalised." Dualla responds that Zarek is a "butcher" who can have no excuse for blowing up a government building and doesn't speak for everyone from that colony.⁵⁰⁶ Producer David Eick acknowledges the presence of this binary within *Galactica's*

⁵⁰⁶ 'Bastille Day'

narrative by explicitly evoking the show's emergence from its own 21st century American context. Eick states:

'Insurgency' is a buzzword now because that's the phrase that we use to apply to all the violence taking place in this part of the world that we're so neck-deep in...It's that old adage about one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist. The nature of how we interpret these actions of our characters is for sure informed about what's going on in Iraq and that we use the word 'insurgency.' So there is that association. But I think we also relate to these actions in a different way because ironically enough, yes, that's how this country was born too. So, what does it really mean to be an insurgent?⁵⁰⁷

This question is addressed within the early episodes of Season 3, wherein the operation of visible codes of social division are very much changed within the context of this occupation narrative. The attempts to 'fix' subjectivity in uniform which the previous sub-section explored is contrasted effectively by the events that take place in the New Caprica arc, where uniform is largely absent. Indeed, stripped of this symbol the human characters are no longer able to visually evoke the inherent 'goodness' of the Colonial uniform. This visual signifier, previously utilised to demarcate a clear social division between 'evil' Cylon Other and human, is instead destabilised when it is appropriated by the Cylon figure of Sharon Agathon as she seeks to rewrite her own narrative of racial subjectivity within this changed socio-cultural context. The dissolution of a firm human versus Cylon binary complicates the establishment of clear, visible, racial Others. This representation operates with the explicit recognition of the 21st century context from which the show emerges, as illustrated by Eick's statement above.

The thematic construction of the New Caprica arc, the visual aesthetics used in the representation of this occupation narrative and the temporal context from which *Battlestar Galactica* emerges necessarily evokes the War on Terror and emphasises the allegorical nature of the text. This engagement with the socio-cultural context of the 21st century was also identified by the reception of the series in the US popular press. Spencer Ackerman draws what he believes are clear conclusions between *Battlestar Galactica's* depiction of the Cylon occupation and the American war in Iraq, stating that:

Season 3 finds that hope can be reconstituted through resistance: that is, through insurgency. The American public may be anti-war, but now

⁵⁰⁷ David Eick, quoted in Hanh Nguyen, '*Battlestar Galactica*: Plotting Political Insurgency,' *Zap2it.com* (October 6, 2006) <<http://www.zap2it.com/tv/news/zap-battlestargalacticaseason3political,0,2761168.story?coll=zap-tv-mainheadline>> [Accessed March 23, 2012]

[*Battlestar Galactica*] is going way beyond public sentiment. In unmistakable terms, *Battlestar Galactica* is telling viewers that insurgency (like, say, the one in Iraq) might have some moral flaws, such as the whole suicide bombing thing, but is ultimately virtuous and worthy of support.⁵⁰⁸

He continues by arguing that the motive of *Battlestar Galactica*'s producers is "to make you feel uncomfortable about being an American during the occupation of Iraq."⁵⁰⁹ While Ackerman believes the comparisons *Galactica* draws in relation to the insurgency in Iraq are clear, the show does not succeed as an allegory of the War on Terror because it simplistically aligns its narrative with the events in Iraq. It's not that reductive. In the following analysis, I utilise post-colonial theory to consider *Battlestar Galactica*'s narrative more specifically in terms of its representation of racial subjects and, in particular, the Cylon model Number Eight. Through this analysis I contend it is evident that the effectiveness of the series in terms of its commentary on the cultural events of the era manifests in its consistent attempts to destabilise absolute binaries of good and evil, rather than reinforce them. The episode that immediately precedes the 'New Caprica' arc explicitly states this in a scene that takes place between a Cylon named Brother Cavil (Dean Stockwell) and Galactica Chief Galen Tyrol (Aaron Douglas):

CAVIL: You're afraid you're a Cylon.

CHIEF: I'm not a Cylon.

CAVIL: Of course you're not...You may do a terrible thing but not because you're a Cylon; because you're a human, and human beings do terrible things all of the time.⁵¹⁰

Within the New Caprica arc *Battlestar Galactica* overtly engages with the context of the War on Terror and the American occupation of Iraq to interrogate the question of race and subjectivity in the 21st century. In doing so, the text is necessarily reflecting on America's past history in terms of race, which was discussed in Chapter One. I previously noted Eric Greene's consideration of the Cylon occupation of New Caprica within the context of the events that occurred at Abu Ghraib, during the American occupation of Iraq. In stating that like Boomer, 'we' were becoming something 'we' never would have considered possible, and in aligning the American nation with Boomer within this context of realisation and revelation, Greene's point touches on the wider exploration of racial subjectivity that this

⁵⁰⁸ Spencer Ackerman, 'Battlestar: Iraqtica,' *Slate.com* (October 13, 2006) <<http://www.slate.com/id/2151425/>> [Accessed March 26, 2012]

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ 'Lay Down Your Burdens, Part I.' *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 219. Dir. Michael Rymer. SyFy (March 3, 2006)

chapter contends is a central concern not only of *Battlestar Galactica*'s narrative, but the position of the text within a broader socio-political context. It also illustrates the centrality of the Cylon model Number Eight to the series' consideration of race and subjectivity. The previous sub-section of this chapter explored how Boomer destabilised the visual motifs and codes that underlined conceptions of race and the establishment of a visible Cylon Other, that Season 1 presents. As I noted, *Battlestar Galactica* is clear that Boomer's realisation brings an unavoidable inevitability. By comparison, in her transition from Cylon agent to Colonial Officer, Sharon Agathon also destabilises these visual codes. Yet as I argue here, Sharon's challenge to these codes is productive in a way that Boomer's destabilisation was unable to be. To a certain extent, her character allows the narrative its abrupt shift in Season 3, in terms of its interrogation of race. Sharon enables a transition to take place both in terms of character and narrative, opening up the series to the more effective disruption of its racial codes that takes place on the New Caprica stage. In direct opposition to Ackerman, I contend that *Battlestar Galactica* certainly does not advocate suicide bombing, nor does it portray this as a virtuous act. Instead, by positing humanity as the insurgents, the text is able to create a narrative space in which a far deeper examination of the racial subject in relation to this on-going war may take place.

The work of Frantz Fanon is again of particular importance to my approach in this sub-section. Homi K. Bhabha points out the necessity of Fanon in reminding us "of that crucial engagement between mask and identity, image and identification, from which comes the lasting tension of our freedom and the lasting impression of ourselves as others."⁵¹¹ In his seminal text *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes that upon finding that he was an object "in the midst of other objects" he turned to others, whose attention was a "liberation." But, Fanon continues: "just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there....I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together by another self."⁵¹² While Fanon recognises his ideas are the product of the times in which he lived,⁵¹³ his conceptions are as crucial now as they have ever been. As David Theo Goldberg points out, Fanon "offers a strategic understanding of how visibility

⁵¹¹ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Foreword' in *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon (London: Pluto Press, New Edition, 2008 (Originally published in English in 1968)) p. xxxvi

⁵¹² Fanon, p. 82

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6

and invisibility can be used contextually for contesting oppressive racial conditions.”⁵¹⁴ He argues Fanon’s work is underlined by the Hegelian concept that “human beings assume self-consciousness in and through recognising themselves in those they recognise to be their others.”⁵¹⁵ This sub-section considers these ideas as central to *Battlestar Galactica*’s New Caprica arc. They are manifest in the multitude of events that occur, from the actions of the humans during the resistance movement to a wider contextual consideration of America as recognising itself in the abuses committed while in a state of perpetual war. It is these events that this sub-section will now explore through this post-colonial framework.

As with *Battlestar Galactica*’s earlier episodes, the interrogation of race during the New Caprica arc continues through the framework of visual motifs. While the previous sub-section explored the purposes for which these motifs are emphasised in Season 1, the New Caprica arc illustrates how the visual certainty seemingly established by these motifs is entirely destabilised. Fanon is central to my consideration of this destabilisation, given that an emphasis on visibility and invisibility is at the forefront of his work. The New Caprica arc utilises themes of visibility and invisibility extremely effectively in its interrogation of race. As such it is appropriate to draw on post-colonial theory, and specifically the work of Fanon and Bhabha, in my exploration of these themes. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the influence of occupation and war upon the racial subject, an aspect I see as a central focal point of *Battlestar Galactica*’s engagement with the socio-political context of 21st century America. In writing about Fanon, David Macey notes that “the theme of the threatening white gaze and the trope of visibility/invisibility are, of course, not uncommon in black writing. Almost at random, one thinks of DuBois’s veil of invisibility, of Ellison’s invisible man, or, more recently, of bell hooks in *Wounds of Passion*: ‘The gaze of white folks disturbs me. It is always for me the would-be colonising look.’”⁵¹⁶ As Goldberg points out, the title of Ellison’s novel, *Invisible Man*, “indicates that the realities of dominant racial definition are all about the lived implications of visibility and invisibility.”⁵¹⁷ These ‘lived implications’ are what *Battlestar Galactica* explores at the level of the individual subject within the narrative space of New Caprica. As Ziauddin Sardar argues, Fanon’s text suggests the necessity of creating a new understanding of self: “How should the black man speak for

⁵¹⁴ David Theo Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 80

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81

⁵¹⁶ David Macey, ‘Fanon, Phenomenology, Race’ in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, eds. Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford (London: Continuum, 2002) p. 38

⁵¹⁷ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 79

himself?”⁵¹⁸ The assertion of subjectivity is therefore a pivotal concern within the colonised space of New Caprica, and forms a central aspect of my analysis of *Battlestar Galactica*'s representation of racial subjectivity through the Cylon figure Number Eight.

Linda Martin Alcoff states that “there is a visual registry operating in social relations that is socially constructed, historically enduring and culturally variegated, but nonetheless powerfully determinant over individual experiences and choices. And, for that reason, it also powerfully mediates subjectivity.”⁵¹⁹ This sub-section necessarily sees tropes of visibility and invisibility the focal point of what Alcoff refers to as the mediation of subjectivity within this colonised space. Goldberg echoes this centrality of the seen and unseen within social relations, stating that: “social invisibility, Lewis Gordon notes...manifests in not being seen (...) Invisibility also happens when one does not see people because one ‘knows’ them through some fabricated preconception of group formation.”⁵²⁰ As such, considering the representation of race within *Battlestar Galactica* in terms of expressions of power offers an insightful angle through which to further interrogate the destabilisation of previously established visual codes that takes place in the colonised space of New Caprica. How these are interwoven with the themes of visibility and invisibility are central to my argument, as they highlight the concept of knowing without seeing that Fanon dissects. As Bhabha states:

To exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look or locus... ‘it is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated.’ (...) The very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting (...) It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the white man’s artifice inscribed on the black man’s body.⁵²¹

The visual motifs employed by *Battlestar Galactica* within the New Caprica arc therefore highlights what Bhabha refers to as not the affirmation of a pre-given identity, but rather “the production of an ‘image’ of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.” As such, “identification...is always the return of an image of identity which bears the mark of splitting in that ‘Other’ place from which it comes.”⁵²² The narrative space provided by New Caprica allows the process of producing an ‘image’ of identity to be

⁵¹⁸ Ziauddin Sadaq, ‘Foreword’ in *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon (London: Pluto Press, New Edition, 2008) p.xiv

⁵¹⁹ Alcoff, p. 16

⁵²⁰ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 80

⁵²¹ Bhabha, p. xxviii-xxix

⁵²² *Ibid.*

represented by *Battlestar Galactica* as part of its wider interrogation of race within the series. As I aim to demonstrate via the Sharon Agathon character, the in-betweenness that Bhabha's quote explicitly draws attention to is pivotal to my exploration of this narrative space and the racial subjectivities represented therein. At the same time, this process enables the series to utilise this narrative space to clearly engage with the broader socio-political concerns of the 21st century context from which it emerges.

In considering the idealised Negro as a construction of the white man, Sardar comments that the idealised Negro is "constructed not as a real person with a real history but an image." This Negro, Sardar argues, was "born out of the need of European humanism to rescue itself from its moral purgatory and project itself, and displace, the original inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean."⁵²³ This is perhaps what the Cylons are doing in their occupation of New Caprica. As Brother Cavil puts it, some Cylons see their occupation as an act of "covering their existential asses."⁵²⁴ Yet in terms of a wider conception of race and racial subjects in *Battlestar Galactica* it underlies the multiple fractures and contradictions that exist in the supposedly firm binaries of Cylons and humans, collaborators and the resistance; a fragmentation I have argued is perpetually manifest in the multiplicity of Cylon model Number Eight. As Sardar states by utilising a quote from Fanon, "this 'neurotic situation' is not the route to emancipation. There is only one solution: 'to rise above the absurd drama that others have staged around me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and, through one human being, to reach out for the universal.'"⁵²⁵ Adopting Fanon's apt description, this sub-section considers the occupied New Caprica environment as an absurd and staged drama. The racial subjects represented therein are thus placed by the narrative in the position of trying to rise above the stage, to reject the constraints of a constructed image and speak for their own selves. There are multiple and conflicting performers in this piece: the New Caprica Police (NCP), Colonel Tigh, and the members of the human resistance. Yet I contend that it is the figures of Boomer and Sharon, each an iteration of the same Cylon model, who more actively articulate and mediate these conflicting narratives and response through their multiplicity and inherent in-betweenness. Sharon's desire to take ownership of her own subjectivity effectively enables the narrative rejection of binaries that the New Caprica arc heralds in *Battlestar Galactica*. Through her body this process becomes a productive project, with

⁵²³ Sardar, p. xiv

⁵²⁴ 'Precipice.' *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 3.02. Dir. Sergio Mimica-Gezzan. SyFy (October 6, 2006)

⁵²⁵ Sardar, p. xiv

inherent conflict and contradictions. For the racial subjects as they are conceived within *Battlestar Galactica* it is a process of working through how they intend to speak for their selves. This is a process that is crucially represented by the text as fluid, and is vitally portrayed at different stages. As such, the figure of Colonel Tigh offers an insightful comparison to Sharon's quest for subjective autonomy. Tigh is a character who becomes both absolute and broken on New Caprica. Similarly, in Lieutenant Tucker 'Duck' Clellan (Christian Tessier) there is a portrait of nihilism and in Chief Tyrol there is conflict and contradiction. Yet in Sharon Agathon there is the embodiment of a racial subjectivity that is in-between, as her Cylon and Colonial identities merge in a positive manner that enables healing, self-recognition and acceptance. The intricacies and importance of each of these characters as counterpoint to the Cylon Number Eight enables the fluid expression of *Battlestar Galactica's* exploration of race and subjectivity on New Caprica. This is necessarily interrogated below.

The utilisation of lighting and the emphasis on seeing within these episodes play a crucial part in the interrogation of visibility and invisibility. The frequent close-ups of and references to Colonel Tigh's blinded eye is a notable example, particularly when considered alongside a broader analysis of his character within this New Caprica setting. Tigh lives under occupation and has been tortured. His sight has literally been corrupted, in this sense. He no longer wears the uniform and insignia of the Colonial Fleet and instead operates as the leader of a guerrilla resistance movement. This movement forms part of a new binary that takes place on the surface of New Caprica. Rather than positing humans versus Cylons in terms of visual codes of difference, the New Caprica arc goes further by exploring the implications of positioning its human characters in opposition to their other selves. As I go on to explore in my analysis of Tigh, his actions as leader of the resistance movement are precipitated by his loss of uniform and subsequently, the clear, fixed narrative by which he previously understood his human subjectivity. Where Tigh loses his self along with his sight and responds to this uncertainty with violence and destruction, Sharon embraces the Colonial uniform and is able to reconceptualise it as an empowering symbol of her own narrative of subjective sovereignty. However, prior to this consideration it is necessary to consider the destabilisation manifest in the spaces in-between these oppositions, by first exploring the implications of New Caprica as a site of occupation for its inhabitants.

New Caprica: A Civilising Occupation

The Cylon view of humanity provides the premise of the absurd drama that the New Caprica arc presents. Their occupation of humanity in this space is seemingly a civilising mission. In a teaser trailer for Season 3, a Cylon voiceover states: “Humanity has surrendered, the war is finally over. We must now fulfil our true destiny – so we will love them, and take care of them. Show them the glory of peace. And, like God, our infinite mercy will be matched only by our power. And complete control.”⁵²⁶ But this view of humanity is a monolithic one, much like the human view of the Cylon as addressed in the first sub-section of this chapter. These views collide on the surface of New Caprica. The quote itself is fraught with conflict: power and control versus peace and love. Implicit here is the inevitability of fracture, because its imperialist tone pre-supposes a fixed human and racial subjectivity. This imperialist tone also echoes the colonial condition that Bhabha argues Fanon “most profoundly evokes.”⁵²⁷ This is most notable in his statement that the colonial is “overdetermined from without.”⁵²⁸ Bhabha argues that:

In-between the black body and the white body there is a tension of meaning and being, or some would say demand and desire (...) it is from that tension – both psychic and political – that a strategy of subversion emerges. It is a mode of negation that seeks not to unveil the fullness of Man but to manipulate his representation. It is a form of power that is exercised at the very limits of identity and authority, in the mocking spirit of mask and image.⁵²⁹

This sub-section therefore recognises New Caprica as a site where in-betweenness and resistance, subjectivity and autonomy are negotiated and reconfigured. This is articulated within the context of America in the 21st century, itself in the midst of the War on Terror. While racial subjects are in-between on New Caprica, this is not a monolithic ‘one-size-fits-all’ representation. The in-betweenness experienced by Boomer and Sharon is, clearly, very different from that which is experienced by Tigh and the other characters I noted above. It is these intricacies that this sub-section now aims to dissect, in juxtaposition with the visual motifs that have been previously discussed.

The first episode of the New Caprica arc, 3.01, ‘Occupation,’ begins with Laura Roslin narrating the current state of the Cylon occupation. In a voiceover, she states that the 134th day of the Cylon occupation of New Caprica falls on a day honouring the God of War. Roslin

⁵²⁶ ‘Season 3 Teaser.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. SyFy.

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0waFBp7ptw&list=PL72591505753033D6&index=2>>
[Accessed March 26, 2012]

⁵²⁷ Bhabha, p. xxvi

⁵²⁸ Fanon, p. 87

⁵²⁹ Bhabha, p. xxxiv

deems this to be oddly appropriate for a situation wherein “it feels like perpetual war is the only realistic prospect for us.” She references the insurgency, which “has been striking back against the Cylons whenever and wherever possible.” This she sees as crucial to morale, but for a more meaningful impact the resistance needs to strike a high profile target: “It is simply not enough to kill Cylons because they don’t die. They resurrect themselves and continue to walk among us. It is horrifying.”⁵³⁰ During her narration, Roslin states that the ‘Cylon Occupation Authority’ exerts complete control over the city of New Caprica. During this statement there is a shot of a ship named Colonial One, which is now grounded (Figure 4.3). The name of this particular ship, the specificity of the shot that depicts it and the new context in which it finds itself all combine to render a sense of a complete destabilisation within this narrative arc. While this moment lasts only a matter of seconds, much can be drawn from the precise collation of these shots. Colonial One no longer evokes the pioneering spirit of the mythical search for Earth, or even the last vestiges of humanity attempting to rebuild a government on the run from the Cylon threat. As Roslin says, the Colonial government as it exists under President Gaius Baltar “functions in name only.”⁵³¹

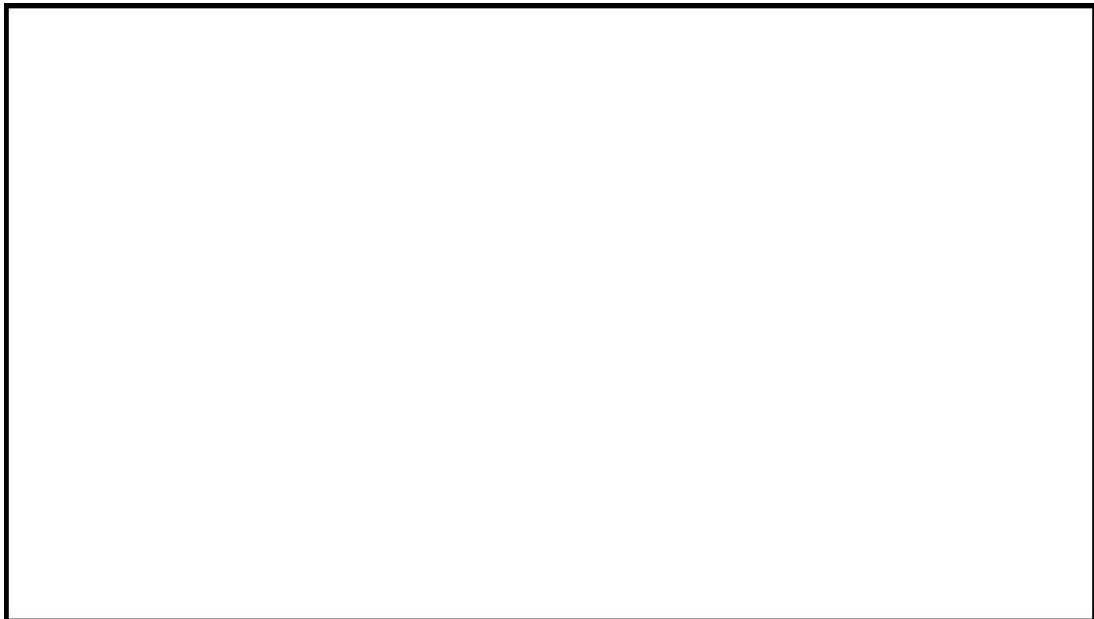


Figure 4.3 A grounded Colonial One in 3.01, 'Occupation.'

Propped up by the Cylon occupation, Baltar’s government operates from within Colonial One. It takes on an imperialist, twisted guise; complementing the tone of the Cylons’

⁵³⁰ ‘Occupation.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 3.01. Dir. Sergio Mimica-Gezzan. SyFy (October 6, 2006)

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

mission statement for New Caprica whilst also imbuing its fractious nature. The very fact that it is grounded and not in flight suggests that it is not fit for purpose, that it is being misappropriated, or both. It now rests as the Cylon centrepiece for the colonisation of New Caprica, and a powerful image of their domination.

In considering whether racism functions as an expression of hate or power, David Theo Goldberg notes that power offers, potentially, control. He states:

Racism is the assertion of power by perpetrators who often otherwise lack it, or it is the maintenance of relations of power, to remind an individual or class of people who it is that occupies the position of power. Such expressions therefore include the assertions of selves over others constituted as Other in a space of diminished, threatened, or absent control.⁵³²

In this conception of power and space, the New Caprica stage is essentially a paradox. It was ostensibly conceived as a refuge for the civilian fleet to settle and live on open ground rather than airborne, enclosed ships. While the environment is harsh, unforgiving and certainly lacking in the comfort offered by a ship like Colonial One (it is described a “luxury” passenger vessel⁵³³), it is not restrictive like the four walls of a ship in space. On New Caprica the ships themselves, as mentioned above, are grounded. Yet in this environment their flight now becomes something desired. Far from a free space in terms of both movement and expression, New Caprica is sealed. It is policed and its subjects are under occupation. This occupation is predicated on the exertion of power and control, something embodied by the static condition of Colonial One. Goldberg continues by pointing out that “racist expressions may serve ideologically to rationalise relations of domination, or they may serve practically to effect such domination by defining its objects and subjects. So these expressions may be taken as the condition of domination and subjection, the mode and fact of racialised oppression.”⁵³⁴ The drama of New Caprica effectively negotiates the relationship between domination and definition through an interrogation of multiple subjectivities in transition within this space. In utilising post-colonial theory as a method by which to interrogate this relationship, the key themes of visibility, invisibility and self-definition are brought to the forefront of this narrative arc. Thinking of race in terms of power substantiates the focus this chapter has on visual motifs such as uniform, and specific to this sub-section lighting and sight. In a hierarchal classification of subjectivity, in

⁵³² Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 21

⁵³³ *Battlestar Galactica: The Mini-Series*. Part 1.

⁵³⁴ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 21

which there is domination and suppression, seeing is crucial. As Goldberg states: “understanding racisms as relations of power leads us to acknowledge their diffusion throughout our culture and the history of their production. It underlies such expressions not as the idiosyncratic excesses of pathological individuals, groups, or societies, but as the (much more disturbing) normal manifestation of modern rationality.”⁵³⁵ As Colonial One demonstrates, visibility is a key aspect of the Cylon domination of New Caprica. Standing within that very ship, Cavil states in episode 3.01, ‘Occupation,’ that “yes, fear is a key article of faith, as I understand it. So perhaps it’s time to instil a little more fear into the people’s hearts and minds...We round up the leaders of the insurgency and we execute them publicly. We round up at random groups off the streets and we execute them publicly.” The act of calling for publicised demonstrations of power, in the maintenance of the social divisions established by the occupation of New Caprica, further illustrates the relationship between power and racisms as conceived in *Battlestar Galactica*.

Resistance in a State of Perpetual War

The beginning of this sub-section noted the acknowledgement by producer David Eick that the freedom-fighter versus terrorist binary operates explicitly within the New Caprica arc. In considering *Battlestar Galactica*’s representation of racial subjectivities within both the space of New Caprica and the series as a whole, this binary is also necessarily central to *Galactica*’s representation of the War on Terror and its impact upon the racial subjects that it depicts. Season 3’s narrative takes as its starting point the consideration that as humans, Tigh and the resistance fighters are characters with whom one would ‘naturally’ sympathise in their fight against the tyranny of the Cylons. This stems from the previously established racial binaries constructed in Season 1. Yet the techniques used by the resistance fighters, such as suicide bombings, are those which one would also ‘naturally’ consider to be abhorrent. In episode 3.01, ‘Occupation,’ Tigh states: “no boundaries for the Cylons, there’s no boundaries for us.”⁵³⁶ This line is pivotal to the destabilisation of these previously fixed racial binaries that takes place in the New Caprica arc. New Caprica itself is a place that is very much concerned with visible boundaries, but it is also a space that demonstrates how the invisible can undermine these. As such, it becomes a setting in which the human characters struggle to orient themselves following the erosion of the narrative certainty of social division established in Season 1. The

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23

⁵³⁶ ‘Occupation’

resistance movement, led by Tigh, thus becomes a violent, destructive and absolutist response to these conditions, fuelled by a desire to regain control from the Cylons. Yet Sharon Agathon is able to effectively exploit these conditions and reposition her own narrative as one which exists positively in-between the binary fight for power between human and Cylon on New Caprica. In doing so, she is able to assert her own racial subjectivity and reaffirm her autonomy and control over her self; an assertion that she first emphasised in episode 2.07, 'Home, Part 2.' This sub-section will now focus on key moments within this narrative arc that are demonstrative of this, whilst considering them within the wider post-colonial theoretical framework previously discussed.

By considering race and subjectivity within a broader conception of American nationhood this occupation narrative is discomfiting, because it deliberately sets out to destabilise fixed conceptions of character and race. The opening shots of episode 3.01, 'Occupation,' emphasise this by illustrating the fractious relationship between, primarily, the insurgency, the NCP and the Cylons. It encompasses frenetically edited shots of resistance members Sam Anders (Michael Trucco) and Chief Tyrol bombing Cylon targets. This is later followed by shots of the NCP, whom Roslin describes as "an extension of the Cylon's corporeal authority," conducting night raids and arresting civilians in episode 3.02, 'Precipice.'⁵³⁷ These scenes are filmed in night vision, with frequent close ups and an unsteady camera. They conjure the feeling of claustrophobia, and contextually they also echo the night raids conducted by American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan (Figure 4.4). Yet in *Battlestar Galactica's* exploration of racial subjectivities they again function to illustrate the shift the New Caprica arc makes away from a fixed Cylon versus human binary. This is primarily anchored by positioning the NCP in-between this category, and is later complicated by the appearance of Sharon on New Caprica which I go on to discuss. The NCP members wear uniforms akin to those of police officers, yet they must also disguise their own identity by wearing balaclavas. As such, these officers operate in a paradoxical role: they must be both visible and invisible at the same time. Given the emphasis this arc places on themes of visibility, seeing and lighting, the cloak of darkness provided by the night-time setting adds a further layer of disguise. During the light of day on New Caprica, civilians no longer question who among them is a Cylon agent but rather who among them is an NCP officer, creating a marked separation of race and ideological subjectivity.

⁵³⁷ 'Precipice'

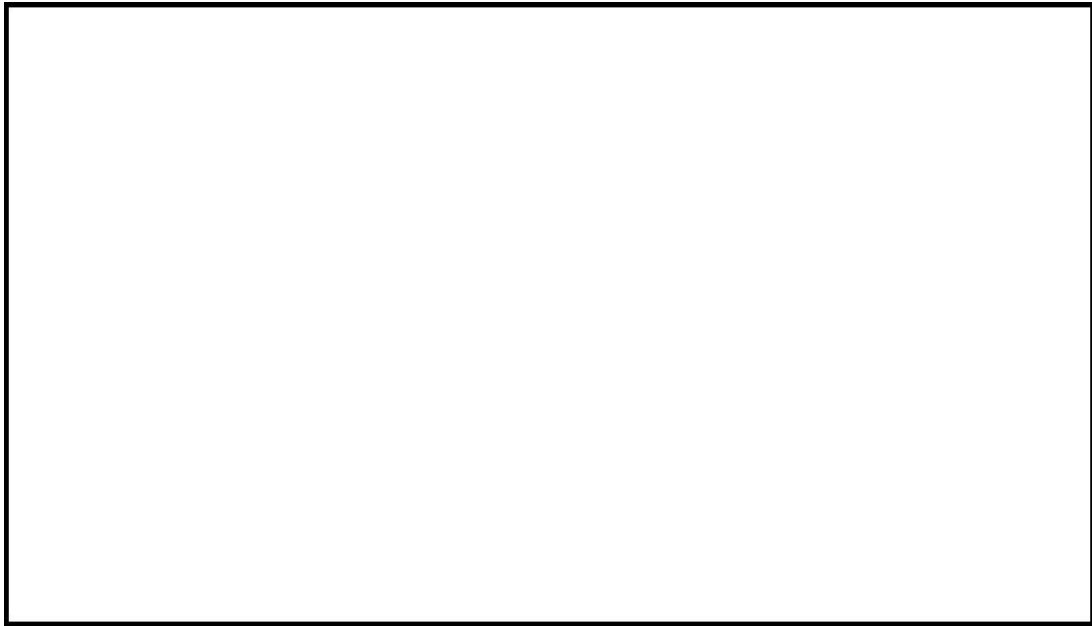


Figure 4.4 Night time raid in 3.02, 'Precipice.'

During the first two episodes of Season 3, Sharon Agathon is located on-board the Battlestar Galactica, which is orbiting the planet of New Caprica. She is still detained in a furnished prison cell when Commander Adama approaches her for advice. Sharon states: "A year ago, when you put me in this cell, I was at a crossroads." She characterises herself as a figure who was "consumed with rage" over the things that had happened to her. Sharon came to realise this was a manifestation of her guilt; that she was angry at herself for the choices she had made and for her betrayal of "her people." Sharon tells Adama that the only way she was able to move forward with her life was to forgive herself.⁵³⁸ Her statement, clearly illustrative of her fractured subjectivity, is underpinned by the self-realisation that she desired forward movement. Rejecting the stasis and absolutism of rage, Sharon responds positively through her desire to begin a new narrative. This forward movement is further fostered when she accepts a commission from Adama to serve in the Colonial Fleet. Taking the oath, Sharon declares the following: "I, Sharon Agathon, do now pledge my faith and my loyalty to the protection of the Twelve Colonies."⁵³⁹ The invocation of the *I* here is crucial. In the second chapter of this thesis I utilised the framework of autobiography to consider how *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* represented Sarah Connor as a figure who resisted the *I* as the representative site of an exclusively male subjectivity. Sharon's oath begins with her naming herself as the author of her narrative. As

⁵³⁸ 'Occupation'

⁵³⁹ 'Precipice'

such, it too is a visible act of self-definition; echoing Leigh Gilmore's assertion that "The / is situated in multiple identity constructions at once and functions in a range of representational politics, resisting some while reproducing the effects of others."⁵⁴⁰ Much like each of the multiple and fragmented subjects upon which this thesis concentrates, Sharon's pledge to herself recognises that the / exists in a range of discourses and is a site which allows for "multiple figurations of agency."⁵⁴¹ Her positive authority over her own subjectivity necessarily reconfigures her relationship with the uniform of the Colonial fleet: rather than something which owns her, it instead becomes symbolic of Sharon's ownership of her self.

Sharon's re-appropriation of the Colonial uniform is sharply contrasted by events that occur simultaneously on New Caprica, wherein this uniform is entirely absent. New Caprica is an environment where binaries and identities are uncertain and unstable. It is within this environment that suicide bombings are first proposed by Tigh, seemingly as an act of resistance. This occurs in episode 3.01, 'Occupation.' Tigh says the suicide bombing strategy is the only way their planned operation will work: Duck (the bomber-to-be) is a solider and it's "not the first time we've sent a solider on a one way mission." Tyrol says this tactic is different: "there are some things you just don't do Colonel. Not even in war."⁵⁴² Tigh says Chief Tyrol might feel differently when sitting in detention, as the camera zooms out and reveals the jail looming over the camp. The jail on New Caprica is central and visible, yet it too renders those inside invisible. Like Colonial One, it also operates as a visual image of domination and Cylon power. Tropes of visibility and invisibility, considered via the post-colonial theory that underpins this sub-section's approach to the New Caprica arc, are thus suggestive of Tigh's motivations for employing suicide bombing. My point is that for Tigh, this method of resistance is about gaining visibility. It is about a man without a Colonial uniform and stripped of both his sight and Colonial subjectivity, speaking for his self. Tigh was himself rendered invisible and erased within the walls of the jail, and he now wishes to reassert his visibility in a destructive manner. Of this, he is insistent.

As Tigh and Tyrol discuss potential targets, Tyrol proclaims in episode 3.02, 'Precipice,' that they "need to figure out which side we're on." Tigh replies "Which side are we on. We're on the side of the demons, Chief. We're evil men in the gardens of paradise sent by the forces of death to spread devastation and destruction wherever we go. I'm

⁵⁴⁰ Gilmore, p. 184

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186

⁵⁴² 'Occupation'

surprised you didn't know that."⁵⁴³ This statement underlines what this sub-section previously alluded to in describing the New Caprica arc's interrogation of racial subjectivities under occupation as a consideration of characters and selves in transition. This transition is necessarily represented by a set of characters at different stages in the process of understanding the self within this context. The statement demonstrates the absolution of Tigh's character within this space. He speaks in terms of devastation and destruction; not human life, survival or freedom. In this sense, there is no resolution for Tigh. He will remain in the perpetual state of war to which Roslin refers. By the same measure, the act of suicide bombing highlights the nihilism evident in the character of the bomber, Duck. The conclusion of episode 3.01, 'Occupation,' shows Duck preparing for his mission. He straps C4 onto his chest and zips up his jacket. He looks in a cracked mirror and the shot deliberately lingers on his literally fractured face. The jagged lines emphasise the in-betweenness of Duck at this stage. With the bomb strapped to his chest he is literally in-between life and death; at the same time, his time on New Caprica has left him irreconcilably fractured. He goes on to pick up his NCP uniform in a bag. Unlike the military uniforms of the Colonial fleet addressed in the first sub-section of this chapter, this uniform is, ironically, one that must be concealed from view. At the same time it is a uniform which, when worn, is one that encourages the wearer to conceal their true identity from the public. The scene cuts to a shot of Duck, now smartly dressed in uniform, walking through lines of people at the NCP commissioning ceremony. He stands in the foreground of the frame on the right hand side, his face strongly lit. He blows himself up, and the explosion rocks the camera. Papers float through the air, the sequence cuts to a shot of the hall. Bodies are strewn everywhere, among the twisted frames of the structure. Invisible in his NCP uniform, a uniform that is a paradoxical instrument rather than a visual code of certainty, Duck makes the most visible act of resistance with the only agency he felt he had left to exploit. It is one which, in its destructiveness, results in the loss of his life and that of many others. Unable to reconcile himself with his fragmentation, Duck chooses an ending which erases him: it is permanent and absolute.

Sharon's arrival on New Caprica offers an effective contrast to the actions of the human resistance. Dismissing Apollo's concerns, Adama sends her to the planet as a ground liaison officer. He cites her ability to penetrate the Cylon defences as crucial to the mission, stating that the older centurion Cylons who cannot take human form are unable to

⁵⁴³ 'Precipice'

distinguish Sharon from other humanoid models. This was deliberate: “the Cylons didn’t want them becoming self-aware and suddenly resisting orders.”⁵⁴⁴ Given the context of the discussion, this line becomes incredibly ironic. Sharon’s in-betweenness, the very multiplicity of the Number Eight model, her own self-awareness and desire for autonomy has led her to resist the imposition of multiple narratives of racial subjectivity: those prescribed by both human and Cylon. This in-betweenness is, similarly, what allows her to effectively destabilise the binaries at play on New Caprica. As Goldberg notes, “the struggle for visibility so insightfully and incisively interrogated by Fanon continues to be critically significant. It is, after all, the struggle for power, autonomy, self-definition. And it is, perhaps paradoxically and in the face of essentialising racial assumptions, a struggle for which the veil of invisibility can continue to offer strategic value.”⁵⁴⁵ Sharon is thus able to embrace her fragmentation to infiltrate the Cylons. Crucially, this is not predicated upon her hiding her identity. In contrast to the function of uniform as it pertains to the NCP officers detailed above, the very visibility of Sharon’s racial subjectivity is what gives her power in this scenario. Her mode of resistance takes the form of ownership of her self and her narrative. This is emphasised when she meets with Anders on New Caprica. Dressed in a Colonial flight suit, Sharon tells him it feels like a long time since they last met. He replies “I feel like I see you every day.”⁵⁴⁶ Sharon does not conceal her subjectivity regardless of the uniform she wears: indeed, the narrative imbued in a particular uniform does not solely determine her racial self. Rather, Sharon actively *chooses* how to represent herself; this destabilises Anders’ perception of the Number Eight model as a fixed racial subject.

Sharon’s actions on New Caprica also evoke the notion of ‘passing’ which I previously discussed in relation to Boomer in the first sub-section of this chapter. Boomer’s wartime fear of the Cylon body is internalised; she attempts to conceal this behind the visual code of the Colonial uniform. Motivated by fear, Boomer tries to ‘pass’ as human. Sharon, conversely, is motivated by her own self-empowerment. She accepts her Cylon self, she does not try to conceal it. In episode 3.03, ‘Exodus, Part 1,’ Sharon’s in-betweenness also allows her to ‘pass,’ yet in this instance she ironically works to pass as a Cylon. As she changes into a non-descript outfit in order to infiltrate the New Caprica detention centre, Anders advises her to remove her dog tags. Sharon refuses, stating “no. You’ve no idea how

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 107

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Precipice’

hard I've worked for these."⁵⁴⁷ This statement again affirms Sharon's positive struggle for autonomy and self-definition. The dog tags, which are a mode of identification, are thus symbolic of this and represent Sharon's authorship of her own narrative of racial subjectivity. Through her refusal to disguise her true self, Sharon is able to exploit the conditions of New Caprica to her advantage. By passing as a Cylon she gathers intel necessary to evacuate the resistance from the planet; by refusing to be branded by the dualisms at play in creating categories of social difference, Sharon is not fixed in place by narratives which prescribe her as a racial Other. Unlike Boomer in Season 1, Sharon chooses to embrace the visibility of her racial subjectivity. It is this which affords her power over her own self and, in contrast to Tigh, allows her to positively and productively forge her own narrative. Her actions aren't motivated by a desperate absolutism – as I have argued, her fragmentation and in-betweenness allow her to destabilise and negotiate such binary thinking. It is, as she tells Adama in episode 3.01, 'Occupation,' about moving forward.

The emphasis on the visual motifs of light and sight within the New Caprica arc also echo Fanon's discussion of colonial subjectivity and desire. Fanon states:

As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is, a world of reciprocal recognition.⁵⁴⁸

The complete destabilisation of visible binaries, coupled with the exploration of how desire is interwoven with the tactics of resistance, is central to subjectivity in the New Caprica arc. Tigh is a pivotal figure in this negotiation, and he provides a useful contrast to the Cylon model Number Eight as I now go on to explore. He clearly desires visibility at almost any cost, and visual codes of sight and light are crucial motifs in *Battlestar Galactica's* portrayal of this. I previously noted the absolutism that is fundamental to Tigh's subjectivity within the New Caprica arc. I have argued that this absolutism is founded in the desire for recognition that Fanon so aptly articulates, and now interrogate this further by paying close attention to the key visual motifs of lighting and sight. The opening of episode 3.01, 'Occupation,' features a top down shot of Tigh, curled up in a ball, in a holding cell.

⁵⁴⁷ 'Exodus, Part 1.' *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 3.03. Dir. Félix Enríquez Alcalá. SyFy (October 13, 2006)

⁵⁴⁸ Fanon, p. 170

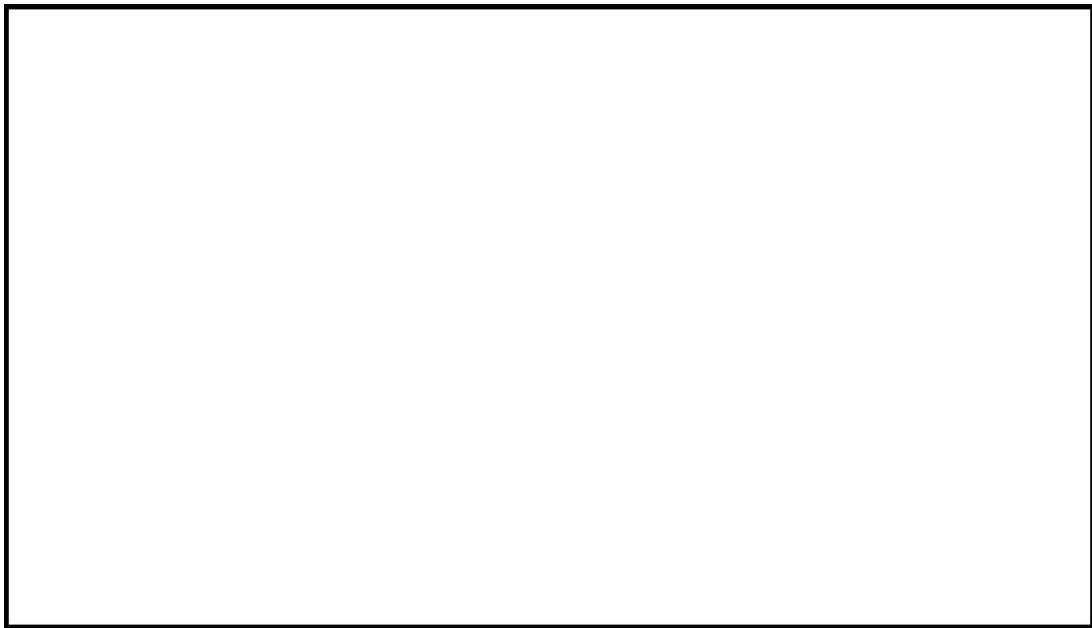


Figure 4.5 Tigh's missing eye is revealed in 3.01, 'Occupation.'

As he looks up to the light above him, the sequence reveals that he's missing an eye (Figure 4.5). He wears a grey jumpsuit. Later in the episode, a Brother Cavil Cylon, wearing sunglasses, looks in on him and laughs. The sequence employs frequent close ups of Tigh's eyes. His one good eye is drawn to the light conveying the fact that he is trying to literally see. Yet it also speaks to the loss of certainty that is inherently linked to Tigh's utterly disrupted subjective self. Conversely Cavil, his jailer, wears sunglasses in a deliberate attempt not to see too much (Figure 4.6). Overhead light is used frequently in the New Caprica arc to interrogate the instability of occupied, racial subjectivities and can thus be identified as a visual code utilised by *Battlestar Galactica* to explore themes of seeing and being seen within this context. The metaphor of sight is similarly employed in episode 3.02, 'Precipice,' where Roslin is also shot in an identical manner when in detention. The use of this lighting in this arc is also particularly interesting when placed in context with a scene from the mini-series. When Adama is trapped with the as-yet-unidentified Cylon named Leoben on Ragnar Anchorage after an accidental explosion, he shines a torch light into his face from a close distance and tells him he doesn't look good. Adama proceeds to keep his light constantly trained on Leoben as they search for an exit, conveying his distrust and suspicion that all is not what it appears to be on the surface. While this same visual motif is thus employed again in the New Caprica arc, rather than being utilised in an effort to identify an external racial Other it operates inversely to explore the subject's attempt to

locate and make visible the internal self. This is emphasised by a brief scene that depicts Tigh's release from jail. Chief Tyrol greets him by saying that it's "good to see you, Colonel."

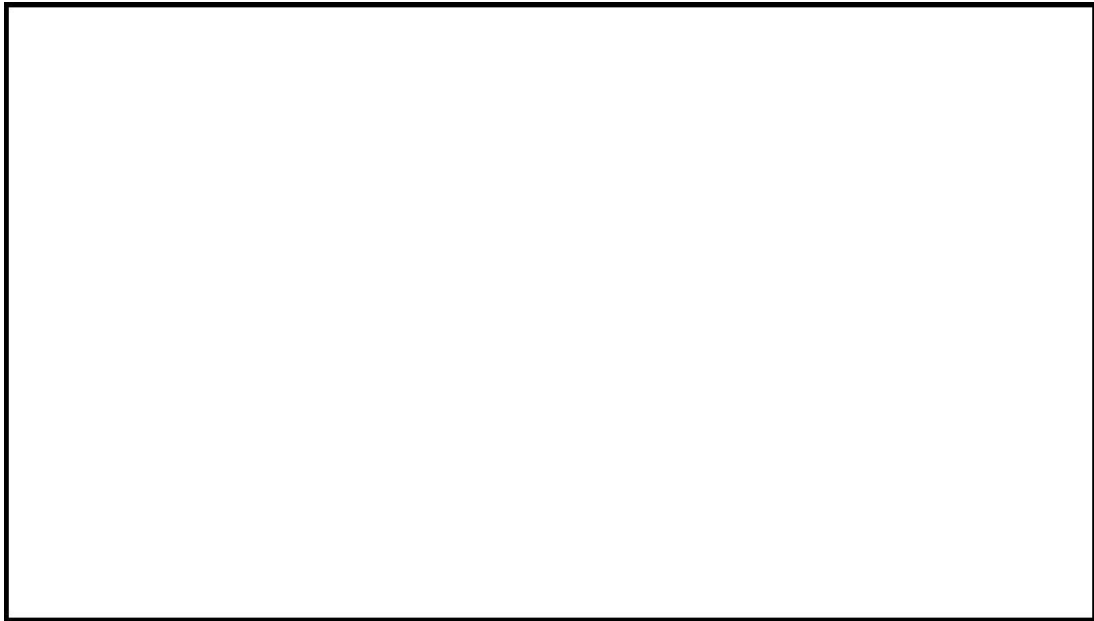


Figure 4.6 Cavil visits Tigh in 3.01, 'Occupation.'

Tigh responds that "it's good to be seen."⁵⁴⁹ While this may seem like an odd reply on its own, contextually it is crucial to how *Battlestar Galactica's* construction of racial subjectivity functions in the New Caprica environment. It echoes Fanon's quote above, demonstrating how Tigh represents the convergence of desire and consideration within *Battlestar Galactica*.

I contend that Tigh's need to be seen is predominantly represented by the absolutism exhibited by his character on New Caprica. This absolutism manifests, as I have argued, in an incredibly destructive and ethically questionable way. I suggest that it is also a key facet that distinguishes his response to the conditions of occupation on New Caprica from that of Sharon Agathon. It also operates as a manner in which he *communicates* his need to be seen. Fanon notes that "the educated Negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him. Or he no longer understands it."⁵⁵⁰ This statement resonates with the shifting contexts the characters that experience the lived space of New Caprica must negotiate. It is emblematic of the unstable subject positions of those living under Cylon occupation. They are unsure of

⁵⁴⁹ 'Occupation'

⁵⁵⁰ Fanon, p. 7

the self, the Other and the evolving continuum this spans. Tigh's progression, his dismissal of the boundaries that separate Cylons from humans and his identification with "evil men in the gardens of paradise" reflects Fanon's elaboration on this lack of understanding:

Then he congratulates himself on this, and enlarging the difference, the incomprehension, the disharmony, he finds in them the meaning of his real humanity...And it is with rage in his mouth and abandon in his heart that he buries himself in the black abyss. We shall see that this attitude, so heroically absolute, renounces the present and the future in the name of a mystical past.⁵⁵¹

The absolutism represented by Tigh stems from the Cylons' supposed 'civilising mission' and their desire to "cover their existential asses" by 'enforcing' peace and unity on New Caprica. Tigh (and the resistance, but he as their leader) is explicitly denied recognition within this contract. The insurgency on New Caprica speaks to this. As Fanon says "there is not an open conflict between white and black. One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognised the Negro Slave. But the former slave wants to *make himself recognised*."⁵⁵² Tigh's absolutism and his employment of suicide bombings are clearly never intended to be represented as virtuous, but rather as the *visible conflict* that is inherently part of the absurd drama of New Caprica and the 'neurotic situation' Tigh finds himself in.

Arguing from a philosophical standpoint, Andrew Terjesen sees Tigh as adopting a "consequentialist stance" within the resistance movement on New Caprica. In his opinion, Tigh "dismisses the sanctity of particular values like liberty and instead focuses on getting the desired consequence. It's no surprise...that Tigh endorses many actions that make his fellow insurgents uncomfortable. The fact that the desired consequence – stopping the occupation – is so important makes Tigh's consequentialism plausible."⁵⁵³ In his analysis of Tigh's methods, Terjesen draws on Thomas Aquinas and the "just war" theory alongside Burleigh Wilkins' "more radical doctrine" of who deserves to be attacked under what conditions.⁵⁵⁴ Such an approach, however, denies the aspect of recognition that this subsection argues is the fundamental underlying motivation to Tigh's actions. As previously noted, when leaving the jail on New Caprica Tigh himself says that "it's good to be seen."

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵² Fanon, p. 169

⁵⁵³ Andrew Terjesen, 'Resistance vs. Collaboration on New Caprica: What Would You Do?' in *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy: Knowledge Here Begins Out There*, ed. Jason T. Erbel (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) p. 114

⁵⁵⁴ Terjesen cites Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948) and Burleigh Wilkins, *Terrorism and Collective Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 1992)

The need for clarity of sight and visibility is what propels Tigh. The frequent discussion and close-ups of his blinded eye within the New Caprica arc substantiate this. He recognises that there are no boundaries between his actions and those that Cavil proposes; he does not claim that his actions are virtuous but recognises that visible conflict is necessary to achieve self-determination, in this sense. In contrast, as I argued above, Sharon's use of visible resistance is grounded in a much more positive assertion of self. Where Tigh seeks a certain outcome regardless of the consequences, Sharon seeks certainty without losing who she is. Indeed, she gains power by redefining who she is *in-between* the Manichean binaries and dualisms at play throughout the series. The contrast between the two key visual signifiers adopted by each character is symbolic of this. Tigh's eye-patch represents his blindness to any other recourse on New Caprica; it symbolises his absolutism and, of course, the conditions that led him to this point. Conversely, Sharon's dog tags represent her clarity of vision, her self-realisation and crucially, her positive self-determination and autonomy.

In considering racisms as expressions from a position of dominance, Goldberg argues that it becomes clearer to see why resistance to racisms is often cultural. He states that "the production, expression, and appeal of culture cannot be controlled as easily as material resources...to wrest control over one's culture is to pry loose the hold over naming and (self-)representation." A first step to self-determination, this "enables one to assert power over self-definition. And it is a necessary condition for taking command of the power to rationalise actions, conditions, and relations, for representation is always mediated by the prevailing discursive culture."⁵⁵⁵ The Cylon model Number Eight offers an insightful representation of this. The previous sub-section argued that although Boomer certainly attempted to resist being dominated; she was not in control of her actions. This displacement with her own body thus mediated her relationship with the humans of the Colonial fleet, evident in her attempt to initially pass as human, and then, finally, her inevitable act of violence when she shoots Adama. Sharon, the same model as Boomer, has a greater degree of autonomy and agency. Her resistance is cultural: she is able to preserve her power of self-representation and naming to control her own subjectivity, an act which Boomer is denied from the outset of the series. Importantly, Sharon retains this power within a socio-cultural context of fear, anxiety, insecurity and war. This power thus forms her response to these conditions, and enables her to resist being defined by the narratives

⁵⁵⁵ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 22-23

of others. An intriguing counterpoint to the Number Eight Cylon, Tigh lacks the autonomy that is present within Sharon. He retains the *desire* for self-representation and definition but he responds only with a destructive absolutism. Like Boomer, Tigh has fear. But his fear is not being seen at all, rather than being seen as something he feels he is not. As such, Tigh recognises and accepts both the externalised and internalised Other within his own subjectivity on New Caprica. He uses his fear and desire to that other extreme, which is the rationalisation of his actions in the resistance. Goldberg notes that “one’s visibility is predicated also on the assumption of self-determination. Being recognised, whether as self-conscious or as Other, and thus being visible, requires that one be outside the Other’s imposition, free of the Other’s *complete* determination.”⁵⁵⁶ (Emphasis added) Tigh’s rejection of the Other’s complete determination is thus to predicate the visibility of his *own* resistance at all costs. While he seeks a unified narrative he can understand, Sharon embraces her fragmentation and becomes positively empowered by its visibility.

Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, visibility and self-determination are pivotal aspects of *Battlestar Galactica*’s exploration of racial subjectivity within the shifting narrative contexts of its series. When the resistance movement of New Caprica arrives back on Galactica, a secret jury is established and tasked with exposing, charging and condemning Cylon collaborators on New Caprica. Witnessing the execution of a former Galactica crew member, Anders comments: “this isn’t what I signed up for.”⁵⁵⁷ His statement is clearly intended to question whether there is any possible ending to the absurd drama of New Caprica that is clean, complete, whole or unified. It again negates Ackerman’s charge that the actions of the resistance members on New Caprica are ever portrayed by the text as ultimately virtuous. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the multiplicity of the Cylon figure Number Eight offers an insightful interrogation of the racial binaries *Battlestar Galactica* seeks to establish and disrupt. Boomer and Sharon both respond to the socio-cultural context of insecurity, fear, anxiety and war in different ways. However, their inherent fragmentation and in-betweenness are characteristics which enable their survival and resistance of textual eradication. In the case of Sharon, it also provides a potent source of self-definition, mobility and rejection of a fixed, racial subjectivity.

⁵⁵⁶ Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*, p. 81

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Collaborators.’ *Battlestar Galactica*. Episode 3.05. Dir. Michael Rymer. SyFy (October 27, 2006)

Through a focus on the Cylon model Number Eight, I have endeavoured to illustrate how *Battlestar Galactica* has both represented and explored the shifting formations of racial subjectivity along social and temporal conditions in a post-catastrophe environment that exists in a state of perpetual war. As David Theo Goldberg asserts, “changes in the discursive representations of racism and the practices they inform are shown to be variously related to alterations in conception and articulation of ‘race’ and formations of races.” In short, racism is found to be “a function of the fashions of racial formation in given socio-temporal conditions.”⁵⁵⁸ Via the structural split in sub-sections, this chapter interrogated the transition that takes place between Season 1, wherein an independent fleet struggles to comprehend the implications of an invisible Other among them, to residing in the same space as this Other yet under direct occupation in Season 3. Considering the occupation and its aftermath as represented by the New Caprica arc reveals an interesting comparison as to how the human society within the fleet negotiates its own identity in relation to fear of the Other. By paying close attention to how prominent visual motifs are employed by the series in its interrogation of race, and how these are represented by key characters, this chapter has drawn out the centrality of visibility, invisibility, agency and in-betweenness to this interrogation. It may be argued that several events at the conclusion of this arc, such as the pursuit of suspected Cylon collaborators, have historical ties to, for instance, the events of the McCarthy era or even the Salem witch hunts. However, as a text that knowingly emerges from a 21st century American environment and explicitly engages with the cultural events of this era, *Battlestar Galactica*’s representation of race within this socio-political context deliberately renders simple binaries of good and evil as incompatible with an enemy that no longer exists as something instantly recognisable. Fear and doubt are both externalised *and* internalised. By destabilising these divisions within the environment of New Caprica, *Battlestar Galactica*’s narrative interrogates the manner in which such historical frameworks are, in a 21st century American environment, outmoded.

⁵⁵⁸ David Theo Goldberg, ‘Introduction’ in *Anatomy of Racism*, p. xiv

Chapter 5

“The children of Caprica are lost...we are all lost”: Virtual Realities, Caprica and Youth in the 21st Century

In the pilot episode of *Caprica*, the *Battlestar Galactica* prequel created by Remi Aubuchon and Ronald D. Moore, teenager Zoe Graystone says to her father Daniel (Eric Stoltz): “the children of Caprica are lost daddy, we are all lost.”⁵⁵⁹ More specifically, it is an avatar of Zoe that speaks this line; a digital version of the same character who exists in a virtual world, following the death of the ‘real’ Zoe Graystone in the series’ pilot episode. *Caprica*’s narrative is set 58 years prior to that of *Battlestar Galactica*, the subject of this thesis’ previous chapter wherein the remnants of humanity’s Twelve Colonies flee from the Cylons across space. Set on the eponymous planet of Caprica, this prequel presents the Twelve Colonies as largely at peace. The series follows the Graystone and Adama families as they struggle to deal with the loss of their daughters in the wake of a terrorist attack. They must also negotiate the consequences of an advanced artificial intelligence created by Daniel, which lies at the foundation of the Cylon race. It is the youthful subject of Zoe Graystone, and all her iterations both actual and virtual, that this chapter takes as its central focus. Following the analysis of previous chapters, I contend that Zoe Graystone is a further example of a televisual science fiction female protagonist that is inherently in-between and locates her agency through her fragmentation.

Caprica’s narrative ostensibly explains how the Cylon race came into being. Zoe is a fundamentally suitable focal point for this chapter, because her multiplicity is located at the heart of this narrative. Zoe dies less than ten minutes into *Caprica*’s first episode, when she boards a train with her friends that is bombed by a terrorist organisation known as the Soldiers of the One (STO). Zoe becomes inadvertently associated with this act of terrorism when she is implicated as one of the bombers. Her association with this organisation is subsequently explored throughout the series, which is inherently complicated by the absence of Zoe herself. However, it is revealed that before her death Zoe created her own advanced artificial intelligence, which comes to be known as her avatar program. This

⁵⁵⁹ ‘Pilot.’ *Caprica*. Episode 1.01. Dir. Jeffrey Reiner. SyFy (January 22, 2010)

program operates in *Caprica's* 'V-World' – a virtual environment that is accessed by wearing a tool named the 'holoband' around the eyes. Much of *Caprica's* narrative is set in V-World, and it is the site where the primary function of Zoe's avatar program comes to light. When one of Zoe's friends uses her holoband to access V-World after Zoe's death, she comes face to face with this avatar of Zoe. It is another version of Zoe, and the differentiation between the two is the subject of both *Caprica's* narrative and my own consideration of the Zoe Graystone character. The importance of Zoe's multiplicity is addressed throughout this chapter, so I wish to establish the designations I utilise when referring to the various iterations of Zoe's self. 'Original Zoe' refers specifically to the 'real,' physical body of Zoe who dies in the train bombing in *Caprica's* pilot episode. 'Avatar Zoe' refers to digital version of Zoe who exists in V-World, and subsequently manifests elsewhere. 'V-World,' as I have already mentioned, refers to a readily accessible virtual reality. I also frequently refer to the 'Zoe Graystone character' without any particular demarcation. In this instance, I am referring to her as a figure that embodies each of these different facets; as a subjectivity that is comprised of multiples and is as such fragmented and in-between. Finally, *Caprica* italicised refers to the series itself, while 'Caprica' refers to the eponymous location within the narrative.

This chapter primarily draws on theoretical approaches to youth, digital culture and space, interweaving these with close textual analysis of *Caprica* itself. In doing so, it argues that *Caprica*, a contemporary, science fiction television text, explicitly foregrounds a narrative of technological progress through the youthful subject. In a manner similar to the multiple narrative worlds presented by the series *Fringe*, which was the focus of Chapter Three, *Caprica's* representation of this narrative takes place across two worlds – one actual, and one virtual. Unlike the multiple universes of *Fringe*, *Caprica's* worlds are not 'parallel' to each other. Instead, this virtual world is a deliberate recreation of the actual Caprica City; it is a virtual environment that is dominated by youth. Drawing attention to the contemporary association between technology and youth, Julian Sefton-Green posits that "perhaps the most salient image of a contemporary child in western society is a picture of a rapt face staring entranced at, almost *into*, the computer screen." Sefton-Green considers this image as a powerful one not only because it "encapsulates the hopes and fears within popular narratives of childhood but because it also tells a parallel story, the narrative of technological progress."⁵⁶⁰ In this way, he argues, "new technology is seen

⁵⁶⁰ Julian Sefton-Green, 'Introduction; Being Young in the Digital Age' in *Digital Diversions: Youth Culture in the Age of Multimedia*, ed. Julian Sefton-Green (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 1

to offer the hope of transforming contemporary society into a better one, in the same way that adults speculate that their children's lives will be somehow 'better' than their own."⁵⁶¹ I contend that the Zoe Graystone character is the focal point for *Caprica's* engagement with the technological progress Sefton-Green identifies. In this chapter I interrogate how her transitions between *Caprica's* virtual and actual worlds is demonstrative of this; yet I argue throughout that these transitions in fact enable Zoe to foster her own autonomy and ultimately embrace her fragmentation. As such, I first offer a contextual basis for exploring representations of youth within an American cultural context by briefly considering how youth has been seen to function in America, and how American youth has previously been represented onscreen. Following this I directly approach the representation of Zoe Graystone within *Caprica* itself: how she is labelled as 'troubled' by characters within the text and the implications of this, the split that exists between the 'real' Zoe and her digital avatar, and how she is able to gain authorship and autonomy via her negotiation of V-World.

Caprica's popular critical reception by the US press was varied upon its premiere. Mary McNamara acknowledges the series' emphasis on technological ascent, stating that "using a mythology that both mirrors and mocks American culture, Moore gives us a planet too drunk on technology to notice that the digital revolution has done nothing to solve the cultural divides that can lead to actual revolution."⁵⁶² Heather Havrilesky, however, notes that the series is "stuffed with the worst sorts of flashy but skin-deep characters;" characters that include "a rebellious teenager with delusions of grandeur." Havrilesky is somewhat dismissive of technology as a narrative impetus for *Caprica*, a facet of the series I identified above. Instead, she contends that Zoe Graystone is immediately recognisable as a character who "is going to use her talents for evil rather than good," pointing to the fact that Zoe "hangs out in a virtual club where people virtually slaughter each other for fun and entertainment...or are we just prejudiced against the sensationalistic hobbies of this younger generation?"⁵⁶³ Given the wider aims of this thesis, I seek to challenge such superficial readings of Zoe by focusing specifically on the characterisation of the various iterations of her virtual and actual self. In doing so, I aim to explore how her character

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁵⁶² Mary McNamara, 'Review: *Caprica* has marvellous acting amid a creaky slowness' in *The LA Times* (January 22, 2010) < <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/caprica-has-marvelous-acting-but-also-a-creaky-slowness/> > [Accessed October 29, 2012]

⁵⁶³ Heather Havrilesky, "'*Caprica*': Prattlestar melodramatica!,' *Salon.com* (January 22, 2010) < http://www.salon.com/2010/01/22/caprica_2/ > [Accessed October 29, 2012]

represents both an acknowledgement of, and departure from, historical debates surrounding youth in America. This interrogation takes place within the particular generic context of the series, which enables *Caprica* to present the multiple worlds Zoe negotiates, and the wider socio-cultural context of America in the 21st century. As Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy point out: “to be subjects within the privileged twenty-first century first world is to be increasingly caught up in a network of technically and mechanically mediated relationships with others who share, to varying degrees, the same attitudes/tastes, pleasures and preferences.”⁵⁶⁴ Therefore, while Thomas Rogers considers the virtual nature of the club Zoe attends in *Caprica*’s pilot to be a disappointing reveal,⁵⁶⁵ I argue that this scene effectively prefaces the wider concerns of the series; namely, how agency and autonomy might be made possible within an increasingly fragmented, militarised society wherein the proliferation of (and absorption in) technology and surveillance has become a key site of anxiety and paranoia. Zoe Graystone’s youthfulness, her relationship with - and *embodiment* of - technology, is evocative of the image of the Western child posited by Sefton-Green. Importantly, then, *Caprica* addresses these concerns by placing Zoe Graystone at their centre, pointing directly to the contemporary relationship that exists between youth and an environment that is increasingly mediated by technology.

America and Youth

Youth has long held a central place in the American cultural imaginary. As Neil Campbell notes, America has retained a “particularly resilient cultural attachment to the idea of youth, viewing itself as a mythic nation of youthfulness formed out of the rejection of the Old World ‘parent’ culture and creating itself anew.”⁵⁶⁶ Youth is an ambiguous category that is both useful and problematic; a shared experience in which everyone grows up differently. While it is invoked for ideals of equality and freedom, there are certain values and ideologies inherent in casting America as a young nation. There is both a narrative of youth and a narrative of maturity, bound up with notions of a common citizenry and values of the past (however divided). As I sought to address in the first chapter of this thesis, any interrogation of the myth-making that underpins America’s

⁵⁶⁴ Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy, *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006) p. 17

⁵⁶⁵ Thomas Rogers, ‘Frak this Prequel,’ *Salon.com* (April 21, 2009) <<http://www.salon.com/2009/04/21/caprica/>> [Accessed October 29, 2012]

⁵⁶⁶ Neil Campbell, ‘Introduction; The Radiant Hour: On Youth Cultural Studies’ in *The Radiant Hour: Versions of Youth in American Culture*, ed. Neil Campbell (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), p. 2

historical conception of itself inevitably reveals the underlying power structures and contradictions that lay behind such unified, stable conceptions of American nationhood. Oscar Wilde humorously noted one such contradiction inherent in America's cultural attachment to youth as it is applied to the nation, writing that "the youth of America is their oldest tradition; it has been going on now for three hundred years."⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, like the aspects of American myth-making considered in Chapter One, such a statement raises an immediate paradox – namely that in its use, youth is often invoked as an 'old' tradition in America that has been relevant to US culture for some time. President Barack Obama's inaugural address in 2008 provides a recent and appropriate example of this paradox. Obama invokes this tradition of youth within a particular cultural context, positing America as a nation "in the midst of crisis:"

Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered.⁵⁶⁸

Obama states that America remains "a young nation" in the midst of this contemporary socio-cultural context.⁵⁶⁹ However, he also urges America to mature in response to these crises. His speech reaches back to the past in order to suggest a manner of maturation: quoting the bible, Obama compels the US "to set aside childish things."⁵⁷⁰ His address suggests an America that is waking up to the realities of its past, that it might like to believe have been overcome. Calling for a "new era of responsibility," Obama implored the nation to "begin again the work of remaking America."⁵⁷¹ Yet as his own speech reveals, America persists in envisioning and re-envisioning itself as young. Angela McRobbie argues that "youth remains a major point of symbolic investment for society as a whole."⁵⁷² America's attachment to youth, in terms of national selfhood, is clearly evocative of this symbolic investment. Given the wider concerns of this thesis, the fact that this persists within a contemporary 21st century context, as evidenced above, further justifies this chapter's focus on the youthful female subjectivity of Zoe Graystone. It is therefore important that

⁵⁶⁷ Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics Editoin, 2012 (Originally published in 1893)) p. 17

⁵⁶⁸ Barack Obama, *Inaugural Address* (January 20, 2009)

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>> [Accessed November 1, 2012]

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷² Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 155-156

this period of crisis to which Obama refers is characterised as distinctly specific to the 21st century, as illustrated through references made to the events of 9/11, the War on Terror, the collapse of financial markets and the subsequent global recession. As such, I contend that Zoe Graystone can be read as a figure upon which America's attachment to the conception of itself as a youthful nation, in a specific period of crisis, can be mapped. Like all the female protagonists this thesis has considered, I suggest that Zoe is able to positively embrace her fragmentation as a way to respond to such crises.

Youth as a Cultural Category

Having briefly explored America's attachment to the concept of youth as a site of symbolic investment, I now wish to consider how youth has been understood as a cultural and theoretical category to provide a further contextual basis for this chapter's interrogation of Zoe Graystone. Campbell has noted that "discourses such as popular music, fashion, television, advertising, fiction, journalism, education and medicine produce 'knowledge' about what constitutes 'youth' within our particular historical context."⁵⁷³ Yet, as McRobbie has argued, youth cannot be presented as an "essentialist category." It is necessary to recognise "that differences of social class," among other variances, "continue to play a considerable role in determining the landscape of opportunity for young people." Nevertheless, she notes that "there are...a sufficient number of shared age-specific experiences among young people which still allow us to talk meaningfully about youth."⁵⁷⁴ Charles R. Acland argues that "the sense that novel subjectivities typify the process of maturation is frequently taken as a reason for studying youth cultures." He refers to McRobbie's suggestion that "merely acknowledging the high volume and turnover of cultural forms associated with youth reminds us 'of the extent to which young people tell us a good deal about the scale and dynamics of social change itself.'"⁵⁷⁵ Indeed, Acland argues this viewpoint is important because it is revealing: it "reiterates an understanding of youth as both a product and measure of the 'tempo of change'" and as such, "youth is a way of seeing change and making the novel visible, as much as it is an engine of change."⁵⁷⁶ Given the wider concerns of this thesis, Acland's point that youth can be understood not only as a product of the 'tempo of change' but as a way of seeing change, underlines the

⁵⁷³ Campbell, p. 2

⁵⁷⁴ McRobbie, p. 178

⁵⁷⁵ Charles R. Acland, 'Fresh Contacts: Global Culture and the Concept of Generation' in *The Radiant Hour: Versions of Youth in American Culture*, ed. Neil Campbell (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000) p. 40

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

importance and relevance of this chapter's consideration of a youthful, gendered subject. This chapter considers the representation of Zoe Graystone as a character through which America's symbolic investment in the concept of youth is both explored and complicated in a 21st century context. The technological impetus which is central to *Caprica's* narrative is a key site of the series' engagement with this issue. It is prominently foregrounded by both the figure of Zoe Graystone and her creation of the digital Avatar Zoe, an act which enables her to not only see but also embody the social change to which Acland refers. In essence, this engagement is revealed through Zoe's literal authorship of her multiplicity; an authorship which is crafted by the technology of digital code. This authorship operates within a narrative context which features a proliferation of virtual spaces and the prominence of virtual, performed subjectivities. As Acland and McRobbie's arguments highlight, such a focus on youth within this chapter is both justifiable and necessary, given the possibility afforded by such youthful subjectivities for making change visible.

Campbell argues that various media "often articulate those discourses that define youth as a problem to be organised, controlled and surveilled; as a potentially wayward group in need of rules and adult-endorsed codes of practice to bring them into line within the social fold...whilst also dialogically suggesting the contrary impulse toward self-definition and empowerment."⁵⁷⁷ Importantly, given the concerns of this thesis and the definition of subjectivity with which it works, he also describes adolescence as the 'in-between' time, "quickly defined as one of potential trouble where the problems of being on the edge of two worlds gave rise to immense 'storm and stress' from which the adolescent emerged as an adult, either reconciled or antagonistic toward the existing 'parent' culture."⁵⁷⁸ Elaborating on this by referring to the work of Randolph Bourne, David Holloway writes that "the meaning of 'youth' for Bourne...lies precisely in its ideological duality. To experience youth is to be both fully contained within the extant order of things, while simultaneously 'going beyond' (Sartre) the ideological structures which secure and reproduce that order."⁵⁷⁹ This paradoxical status of in-betweenness, of being both 'self' and 'other,' is manifest in each of the female protagonists I have considered in this thesis. This characteristic is also clearly evident in Zoe, not only through her status as a gendered subject but also through her inherent youthfulness. As I explore in this chapter, Original Zoe

⁵⁷⁷ Campbell, p. 13

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁵⁷⁹ David Holloway, 'Ideologies of Youth and the *Bildungsromane* of S.E. Hilton' in *The Radiant Hour: Versions of Youth in American Culture*, ed. Neil Campbell (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000) p. 109

is repeatedly subject to the organising forces referred to by Campbell following her death. Yet through her representation as a multiple character, *Caprica* is able to effectively engage with the duality identified by Campbell and Bourne by focusing on two specific aspects of her subjectivity. These characteristics might be classified as ‘external’ and ‘internal.’ External ‘adult’ and societal forces attempt to fix and locate Zoe in contained and manageable categories, labelling her as a ‘troubled’ youth to regain order in the midst of disorder following the terrorist attack that occurs in *Caprica*’s pilot episode. Yet as I go on to illustrate, Zoe is able to resist this and gain autonomy through her internalised position as ‘hacker.’ This position is afforded through the creation of her avatar program, Avatar Zoe, and Avatar Zoe’s subsequent autonomy within *Caprica*’s virtual spaces, as she works to distinguish her own subjectivity from that of Original Zoe. Inherent within this is a fluidity and multiplicity, established through the key characteristic of in-betweenness that is perpetuated throughout those subjectivities interrogated in previous chapters.

Youth Onscreen

As I have so far outlined, this chapter interrogates how *Caprica* complicates historical ideas surrounding America’s attachment to youth by engaging with the cultural events of the 21st century via the figure of Zoe Graystone. As such, it is also necessary to briefly consider previous treatments of American youth onscreen. The first chapter of this thesis explored the generic concerns of science fiction and significant shifts in the television medium specific to the 21st century. This chapter aims to consider the televisual image of youth within this cultural context. Considering the image of youth in contemporary US film, Timothy Shary argues that youth films not only “comprise a legitimate genre worthy of study on their own terms, but that they are imbued with a cultural significance: they question our evolving identities from youth to adulthood while simultaneously shaping and maintaining these identities.”⁵⁸⁰ Echoing McRobbie’s earlier statement regarding the importance of youth as a site of symbolic investment, he sees the “imaging of contemporary youth” as “indicative of our deepest social and personal concerns.”⁵⁸¹ Such a statement further underlines the import of this chapter’s focus on youth, within the context of this thesis’ wider concerns. While Shary’s work is specific to film, his consideration of how youth has typically been represented in what he terms the ‘science film’ subgenre is particularly pertinent to this chapter. Noting a lack of transgressive or

⁵⁸⁰ Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003) p. 11

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1

challenging actions within these texts, he writes: “Sometimes science youth are tough and cynical teens who discover the value of humanity through a conflict with technology, although rarely do these kids commit any crimes or even push the boundaries of morality like most delinquents’ conflicts with adult authority.”⁵⁸² Shary identifies several key dimensions of the ‘science film,’ particularly the tendency of certain films in this subgenre to “up the ante of plausibility incorporating the current technologies of computers and electronic games, which youth manipulate for pleasure or parental attention.”⁵⁸³ According to Shary, the ‘science film’ also often presents caricatured parents as a “paradigm” many of the films in this subgenre follow: “they don’t understand their more intelligent child, and actually come to fear for him...they tend to be baffled by and suspicious of their children, calling attention to the image of adult discomfort at the access youth have to science and technology.”⁵⁸⁴ A key point of divergence between *Caprica* and Shary’s identification of how the onscreen image of youth has traditionally operated in generic terms lies in the text’s representation of Zoe Graystone as a youthful subjectivity that goes far beyond that of “troubled kid who makes good through rising above and exposing the bad behaviour of adults.”⁵⁸⁵ Instead, I argue that Zoe actively challenges socio-cultural anxieties that come to be articulated through a suspicion of youth, and the relationship between youth and technology that manifests itself within this articulation and response. As I explore, through her nature as both multiple and in-between, Zoe Graystone directly challenges Shary’s assertion that the “somewhat cynical” message of the ‘science film’ subgenre suggests that “already disempowered youth must work hard to gain an identity, that they may ultimately not define and an authority that may ultimately be more limiting than liberating.”⁵⁸⁶ Like each of the female protagonists considered in this thesis, Zoe does not merely function to rebel against the status quo whilst simultaneously restricting her own challenge. She instead pursues genuine agency *through* her fragmentation.

Technology, Youth and Subjectivity

A central argument this chapter makes in relation to Zoe’s negotiation of her status as a youthful subject in an age heavily mediated by digital technology is that *Caprica* positions her as a ‘hacker’ figure. It is through this characterisation that contemporary cultural fears of prolific and invasive technology and surveillance are explored. As I go on to

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 180

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 181

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

suggest, Zoe is also able to use this position to foster her own authorship within the text. As a preface to this argument, I now wish to consider the potential implications of technology's impact upon how subjectivity can be understood, to further interrogate the importance of Zoe's in-between status in her negotiation of *Caprica's* technologically-saturated environments. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Donna Haraway considers the "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" as inherent properties of what she terms the "cyborg myth."⁵⁸⁷ Arguing that the cyborg is a destabilising figure that actively challenges binaries, Haraway identifies a link between cyborg identities and "a potent subjectivity," which she describes as "synthesised from fusions of outsider identities" and "complex political-historical layerings."⁵⁸⁸ While Haraway specifically suggests that women of colour may be understood as cyborg figures in possession of such potent subjectivity, the concept as she defines it may be equally applicable to the character of Zoe Graystone and, indeed, the range of gendered subjectivities interrogated throughout this thesis. Catherine Driscoll argues that girls "are products and performances of the long history of Western discourses on gender, sex, age, and identity." Driscoll sees adolescent girls as "specific to late modernity and the dissemination of a concept of feminine adolescence." She posits girls as modern, evidenced "in their demonstration of the difficulty of becoming a subject."⁵⁸⁹ However, as I have already pointed out, Zoe Graystone is a character who is greatly implicated by the technological thrust inherent in *Caprica's* narrative. As I aim to demonstrate throughout this chapter, her youthful, gendered subjectivity is also emblematic of the postmodernism inherent in the term subjectivity, as it is outlined in the introduction to this thesis. It is therefore necessary to consider the cyborg figure, as it has been conceptualised by Haraway in relation to subjectivity, specifically within this technological context. Zoe Graystone is a multiple figure. Her avatar, Avatar Zoe, must certainly confront the difficulty of distinguishing her own subjectivity from that of Original Zoe. Avatar Zoe is not a unified individual and instead speaks directly to the multiplicity of Zoe Graystone. Through her presence in *Caprica's* actual and virtual worlds, and her status as a youthful subject within a national, historical and socio-cultural discourse of symbolic investment, she more clearly embodies a potent subjectivity. Given Haraway's definition, I contend that this is clearly a

⁵⁸⁷ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 154

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174

⁵⁸⁹ Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) p. 7

postmodern term. It is also one that effectively speaks to the positivity in fragmentation I have identified in all the protagonists addressed in this thesis; a gendered fragmentation that is specific to American science fiction television in the 21st century.

Writing about game cultures, Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy also speak to this postmodern fragmentation by seeing the figure of the cyborg as presenting “a complex rendering of the collapse of distinctions between the technological and the natural.” They argue that “human subjectivity is no longer figured as separate or distinct from the technological realm but is, on the contrary, formed through intimately embodied relationships between technologies and people.”⁵⁹⁰ Identifying the insistence on “technological agency” that is found in cybernetics as underpinning what they understand as ‘gameplay,’ they continue: “In this light, the technology – computer games – is seen as a vital part of the mediated circuit which is our environment, our nature, in the twenty-first century.”⁵⁹¹ I address this aspect of technological agency in greater detail below as part of this chapter’s interrogation of *Caprica*’s V-World. However, I contend that the embodied relationship Dovey and Kennedy refer to is most clearly manifested in the series’ positioning of Zoe as a ‘hacker,’ and her burgeoning subjective fluidity that emerges from this. Through Zoe and her youthful subjectivity, fragmentation and mobility are configured as empowering facets. Like the other female protagonists this thesis interrogates, this empowering subjectivity is frequently located as in-between: between a conception of subjectivity that is insecure and fragmented, and the proposed unity of a wider historical conception of American national identity. As a youthful female subject, it is wholly appropriate to consider the character of Zoe Graystone within the wider context of this thesis, given that she too exists as a fragmented subject that must negotiate America’s historical attachment to the concept of youth as a unifying national symbolic investment. In this sense, Zoe Graystone again illustrates the duality identified by Campbell and Bourne to which I made reference above. The mobility afforded by her in-betweenness is located in opposition to the representation of Original Zoe as a ‘troubled’ youth that must be contained, in order to regain symbolic order in the midst of disorder. It is my argument that Zoe’s multiplicity and authorship – and with it her transition towards subjective independence and sovereignty – is predicated upon the specific understanding of her as a ‘hacker’ figure. I contend that this understanding is explicitly fostered through her characterisation within the text. This characterisation operates in opposition to the overt

⁵⁹⁰ Dovey and Kennedy, p. 5

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

attempts by 'adult' society to frame her as a delinquent character; an embodiment of crisis. Utilising close textual analysis of key moments in *Caprica's* narrative, this chapter now seeks to interrogate these attempts to fix Zoe within a discourse of socio-cultural anxiety as the 'troubled teen,' before exploring the impossibility of her parents' attempts to relocate an idealised version of their daughter in the wake of her death. I then go on to fully develop my argument of how Zoe can be understood as a hacker figure, looking at how she is configured in this manner and how she operates both in, and in relation to, *Caprica's* virtual spaces.

Containment: Zoe as 'Troubled Teen'

As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, Original Zoe dies in *Caprica's* premiere in the terrorist bombing of a train. While Avatar Zoe may be understood as a copy, a version, or a distinctive iteration of Zoe, the fact remains that her original body is dead. I now aim to consider how Zoe's death can be understood via the theoretical, cultural and national conceptions of youth outlined above. A version of this youth died in the terrorist attack portrayed in *Caprica's* pilot episode – and due to the multiple Zoe Graystones that emanate throughout the series it is, explicitly, a version. Episode 1.01, 'Pilot,' features a scene in which Zoe leaves her home for the final time. However, as the bombing reveals, this finality does not manifest in the way she thinks it will: Zoe is, ostensibly, running away from her parents to another planet. From this point, however, she is fundamentally disconnected from the home and the patriarchal family unit. This disconnection, or incompatibility, is explored through the version of Zoe she leaves behind: her avatar, who Daniel and Amanda Graystone try to co-opt and configure into their own image of Original Zoe. Indeed, Daniel and Amanda (Paula Malcomson) become obsessed with Avatar Zoe largely because of their conception of her as a copy, a replica of Zoe. In thinking of her this way, Avatar Zoe becomes something they can rebuild, or perhaps resuscitate: a past, more-idealised version of their daughter. This domesticated response speaks to a national symbolic investment in youth: the work of 'remaking' Zoe is something that becomes a process that is subsequently publicly mediated by *Caprica's* wider society. It is a problematic response and *Caprica* explicitly interrogates this public mediation, which takes the form of managing Zoe's status as a figure of crisis, in episode 1.04, 'Gravedancing.' Utilising the site of a chat show to structure this interrogation, this episode explores the subsequent attempts to fix and frame youth according to particular social and cultural anxieties. While this chapter goes on to explore how Zoe Graystone comes to complicate and transcend these boundaries, I necessarily consider these attempts now.

Following the events of *Caprica's* pilot episode, Zoe's association with STO is further explored. Her mother, Amanda, discovers that Zoe wore a brooch in the shape of the infinity symbol; a symbol which is used by STO as its emblem. She subsequently suspects her daughter may have been involved with the bombing and eventually gives voice to her suspicions when speaking at a memorial for those who died in the attack, shouting: "My daughter, Zoe Graystone, died in the bombing of MAGLEV train number twenty-three. But I think she may have caused it." Waving the infinity brooch in the air, Amanda yells: "I found this! My daughter was part of the Soldiers of the One. My daughter was a terrorist! I'm sorry."⁵⁹² Following this, the opening scenes of episode 1.03, 'The Reins of a Waterfall,' depicts news crews covering large scale protests against Daniel's company, Graystone Industries. This point is notable, given that *Caprica* is a series which makes frequent use of intercut TV footage. Focusing on a character watching television, this intercutting typically occurs between news and entertainment; between coverage of the suicide bombing and game show or shopping channels. It is suggestive of a mediating process that exists between fear and entertainment and as I noted above, illustrates how *Caprica* presents Zoe Graystone as a figure through which this process is articulated. Illustrating the apparent need for social anxieties in the wake of the bombing to be pacified by commerce, *Caprica's* representation of societal fears and strategies of containment, highlighted in this instance by the device of intercutting, are most clearly explored through the debate that rages following Amanda's revelations regarding her daughter. In episode 1.04, 'Gravedancing,' Daniel and Amanda make an appearance on a popular chat show in order to respond to the commentary that surrounds their daughter in the wake of her death. This pivotal episode is further illustrative of the mediating process I noted above, as I now explore.

Daniel and Amanda participate in the show for different reasons. In episode 1.03, 'The Reins of a Waterfall,' Daniel's employees voice their fears over a potential public relations disaster that might implicate the Graystone Industries "brand" and the company's multi-million dollar contract with the Department of Defence. In spite of these concerns, Daniel insists that he will "not go and drag [his] daughter's memory through the publicity machine."⁵⁹³ Episode 1.04, 'Gravedancing,' continues this debate. Daniel's personal assistant and public relations representative try to convince him to portray Zoe as 'troubled' in order to distance her actions from their company, arguing that "If she had a pre-existing problem, it takes the onus off [our product] the holoband." People want

⁵⁹² 'Rebirth.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.02. Dir. Jonas Pate. SyFy (January 29, 2010)

⁵⁹³ 'The Reins of a Waterfall.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.03. Dir. Ronald D. Moore. SyFy (February 5, 2010)

contrition, they argue: “make it clear it’s not guilt over making a dangerous product.”⁵⁹⁴ Daniel eventually agrees to appear on the show. During his appearance, host Baxter Sarno (Patton Oswalt) states: “I see a lot of people growing up in a virtual world,” and explicitly refers to Zoe as Daniel’s “troubled daughter.” He frames his interview of Daniel around societal fears that teenagers are “growing up with holobands and learning that there are no consequences.” When Daniel tells him that Zoe didn’t like the holoband, Sarno is quick to reply that maybe her dislike stems from the fact “it was making her want to blow things up.”⁵⁹⁵ His comment is greeted with applause, and the interview takes on an oppositional structure: Amanda attempts to portray Zoe’s actions as normal and grounded in a typical teenage world, while Sarno and Daniel proceed to spar over the influence of the virtual world and holoband on her character. Amanda refers to Zoe as “angry...frustrated...defiant...rude...she slammed her door and played loud music,” imploring Sarno to show her a fifteen-year-old girl who didn’t demonstrate any such tendencies. In contrast, Sarno chooses to associate Zoe with the virtual space of V-World, casting her as “morally blank, because the virtual world is a poor teacher.” Daniel attempts to bridge this division with a compromise in order to contain his daughter’s actions and preserve his brand: “[Zoe] saw things in the virtual world...and she felt the absence of moral guidelines...like a lot of folks do.” He argues that the STO stepped into “that absence,” offering a “moral arbiter.” Sarno asks, accusingly, “isn’t technology the problem? Isn’t the V-World the problem?” and Daniel admits an ‘adult’ failure in controlling the content of V-World, “especially for the kids.”⁵⁹⁶ Yet their circular argument rejects any autonomy on Zoe’s part. Original Zoe is the subject of this debate but, given her absence through death, is left without recourse to respond. Similarly, her absence also problematizes this debate: Sarno, Daniel and Amanda all try to process societal fears by prescribing actions and motivations to Zoe; they try to explain her behaviour by positioning her within the understandable and containable narratives of ‘typical teenage behaviour’ or ‘corrupting influences.’ This reductive conversation thus stands in opposition to *Caprica*’s subsequent representation of V-World as a site of creativity, a tool that proffers the opportunity to create a space that is separate to the restrictive, regulated adult society. This distinction is central to how Zoe is able to challenge those narratives which are

⁵⁹⁴ ‘Gravedancing.’ *Caprica*. Episode 1.04. Dir. Michael W. Watkins. SyFy (February 19, 2010)

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

imposed upon her body via her very in-betweenness and multiplicity, and will be discussed in further detail below.

The attempts of society to fix Zoe as a 'troubled' 'teen terrorist' occurs in tandem with Daniel and Amanda's private attempts to recapture a fixed, idealised version of Original Zoe through their memories of her. Campbell's usage of the term 'in-between' to describe adolescence, which I previously noted above, offers a particularly useful avenue through which to consider Zoe within this context. Amanda becomes consumed with trying to remember the Zoe she knew and specifically tries to restore an idealised image of Zoe by frequently watching home videos of her daughter. It is a motif that contrasts the use of intercutting which I noted above, by dwelling on static images of the past opposed to juxtaposing violence, anxiety and entertainment in a continuous flow. In episode 1.02, 'Rebirth,' she watches a video of Zoe projected onto the large window panes of her home.



Figure 5.1 Amanda watches home videos in 1.02, 'Rebirth.'

Images of Zoe as a child flicker across this screen. Amanda pauses the footage and stares at a frozen image of Zoe as a young girl, which takes up the entirety of the window space (Figure 5.1). The use of a window pane as a screen for projection is interesting here. In one sense, it speaks to those wider attempts of society to fix Zoe in place that I previously considered, to capture and literally frame her within the safe, domestic context of the home and the patriarchal unit. On a national level, this is achieved by labelling Zoe as 'troubled;' as aberrant to a traditional, historical understanding of youth as a positive site

of symbolic investment. For Amanda, it is by returning to a younger, more innocent image of her daughter that restores the assumed unity of the patriarchal home. Yet the use of a window specifically suggests the act of looking through, giving consideration to what is beyond the pane. Amanda's inability to look beyond is underlined later in the same episode, when she watches a different video of Zoe spending time with her friend Lacy (Magda Apanowicz). In this footage Zoe is older, closer to the age of her death. Amanda says "stop" and freezes the image with her command, not looking through the pane as is its function, but instead staring at the image suspended upon it, trying to hold this version of Zoe in place that she wants to be, and indeed believed, was true. Yet these isolated images are no more real or unified than society's characterisation of Zoe as a 'troubled' teen. In the second video Zoe is seen wearing the infinity brooch that is symbolic of both the STO and her faith in monotheism, a facet of her character that her parents were completely unaware of. Therefore in her absence, in-betweenness and multiplicity, Zoe's subjectivity very much complicates the process both Amanda and society undertake of looking for and fixing a 'real' version Zoe. As McRobbie argues, the very notion of the 'real me' "suggests the fictive unity of the self and the essentialism entailed in the search for such a person. What is being questioned in this phrase as used by Stuart Hall (1992) is the possibility of ever finding a 'real me.'"⁵⁹⁷ These scenes I have analysed above thus convey the impossibility of Amanda's attempts to recapture an ideal version of her daughter. They also serve to accentuate Zoe's status as an adolescent female figure who is in-between; positioned as she is between society's representation of her as troubled and Amanda's wish to restore her innocence. This in-betweenness is then further established by the differentiation that exists between Avatar Zoe's existence as a copy of the original Zoe Graystone, and a unique character in her own right. It is this facet of Zoe's in-betweenness that I now go on to further explore.

Challenging Containment: Multiplicity

As I have discussed, *Caprica* initially foregrounds Zoe's in-between status by considering the essentialism prevalent in the attempts by Caprica's 'adult' society or 'nation' to map its own concerns and anxieties onto Zoe's youthful, yet also national, body. This endeavour is complicated when Original Zoe dies, as her death undermines those attempts to prescribe wholesale national values to her youthful body. I have already explored *Caprica's* representation of the nation's attempts to mediate this complication

⁵⁹⁷ McRobbie, p. 63

though the use of intercutting. In addition, I have considered Amanda's attempts to restore a different image of her daughter in response to society's attempts to fix her as a 'troubled' teen 'terrorist' as equally complicated. I now explore the essentialism evident in Amanda's attempts to locate the 'real' version of her daughter from Daniel's perspective. It is my argument that the series makes this essentialism evident by positioning Avatar Zoe's growth and multiplicity against Daniel's own attempts to recreate the Zoe he frequently describes as his "daughter;" specifically drawing attention to the in-betweenness of Zoe's adolescent status as it exists between her original and avatar characters. Daniel endeavours to cast Avatar Zoe in the role of Original Zoe, to restore the (mythic) unity of his daughter – in itself an impossible quest, like that of his wife – and to further his construction of the Cylons. In this endeavour he is literally attempting to rebuild his daughter. This is clearly represented through technology, a key facet that speaks to my consideration of Zoe as a gendered cyborg figure. In the pilot Daniel attempts to appropriate Zoe's avatar program for his construction of the Cylon prototype by downloading and installing it into a Cylon chassis that resides in his office. As the program is implemented, the Cylon robot starts to move its fingers, arms and head. Daniel half smiles as the Cylon tries to say "Daddy." Then it stops and falls. The screen on Daniel's computer terminal reads: "System warning: data stream unreliable," which is followed by "System error: data loss, irrecoverable error."⁵⁹⁸ Still endeavouring to combat the irretrievable nature of his own loss, Daniel later tries to further appropriate Zoe's avatar program for commercial use. In episode 1.13, 'False Labour,' he tries to market Zoe's program as a "resurrection" tool. Appearing in a promotional advert for this tool, Daniel states: "imagine a future without loss...imagine never having to say goodbye to your loved ones again."⁵⁹⁹ Yet in this episode Daniel demonstrates several hypocrisies that expose the inherent flaws in his quest to restore a version of his daughter for his own gains. The promotional advert uses a digital image of Daniel without his permission and he protests the "appropriation" of his self for a "marketing campaign." Similarly, he also admits that Zoe's code is so "intuitive" that he feels like "a hack" for trying to recreate it.⁶⁰⁰ However, Daniel's contradictory and problematic approach to Avatar Zoe in his quest to recapture his daughter is most clearly portrayed in episode 1.08, 'Ghosts in the Machine.' While Daniel is searching for a Zoe who no longer exists, his threatening and abusive actions in this episode allow Avatar Zoe to gain strength in her resistance of him and his literal attempts

⁵⁹⁸ 'Pilot'

⁵⁹⁹ 'False Labour.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.13. Dir. John Dahl. SyFy (October 26, 2010)

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

to control her body through the Cylon prototype. Not accepting the failure of Zoe's program to install itself into the Cylon chassis in his office, he devises a plan to compel Avatar Zoe to admit she still exists inside the Cylon body in the actual world, while simultaneously inhabiting V-World. Talking to the Cylon figure, Daniel recounts how their old family home burned down and that Original Zoe "has hated" him ever since. He waves a lit match around and burns his finger, causing the Cylon to flinch. At the same time in V-World, Avatar Zoe tells Lacy that Daniel cannot know she is in the robot because he would just "use" her for his "fat military contract." She states: "I have to turn me off. Just be the robot."⁶⁰¹ Thus, Avatar Zoe's resistance of Daniel explicitly takes the form of her rejection of Original Zoe's fears. Daniel addresses the robot as Original Zoe, attempting to emotionally manipulate her: "I know it's you...I took you out of a virtual playground and into the real world. But I guess you can't handle that...just the same scared little girl."



Figure 5.2 The Cylon chassis in flames in 1.08, 'Ghosts in the Machine.'

Aiming to prey on Original Zoe's fear of fire, he pours gasoline around the Cylon chassis and implores Zoe to step out of the circle of flames: "I'll know for a fact it's you" (Figure 5.2).⁶⁰² Avatar Zoe is able to refuse, staring at Daniel through the flames as fire engulfs the machine body (Figure 5.3). This sequence is significant in that it not only illustrates the impossibility of Daniel's attempts to relocate the 'real' Zoe, but because it underlines the

⁶⁰¹ 'Ghosts in the Machine.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.08. Dir. Wayne Rose. SyFy (March 19, 2010)

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

inherent multiplicity of the Zoe Graystone character by charting Avatar Zoe's explicit separation from Original Zoe and her own assertion of individuality. While Avatar Zoe literally possesses the trauma and memory of her creator, she is simultaneously able to gain subjective autonomy by actively resisting Daniel's exploitation of these memories. Original Zoe's memories enable Avatar Zoe's resistance rather than containing it, exemplifying Zoe Graystone's status as both self and other.

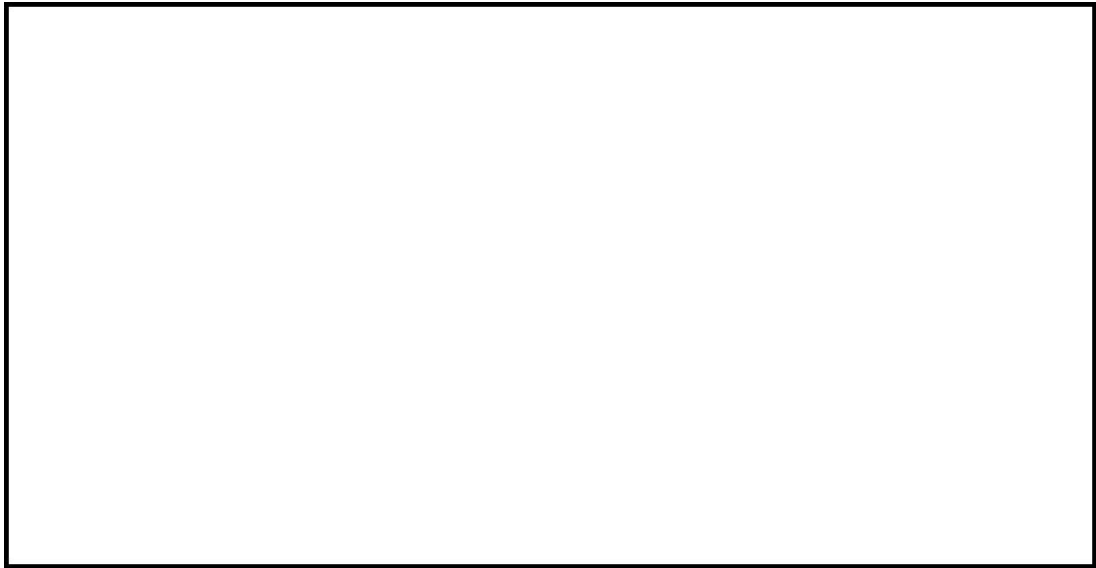


Figure 5.3 Avatar Zoe in flames in 1.08, 'Ghosts in the Machine.'

Caprica's pilot episode provides another key example this. I previously stated that *Caprica* engages with a duality that manifests itself in the wake of Zoe's multiple subjectivities; these being the 'external' and 'internal' forces that seek autonomy and power over Zoe's fragmented self. At her genesis Avatar Zoe exists as a copy or replication of Original Zoe. She arguably performs Original Zoe, yet as the narrative progresses this dualism is complicated. Avatar Zoe begins to evolve not only into Original Zoe, but subsequently multiplies. Avatar Zoe encounters Daniel for the first time in episode 1.01, 'Pilot.' He identifies her as an avatar, dismissing her as "a virtual representation of Zoe, nothing more." Avatar Zoe says she's a lot more: "[I'm] sort of her (...) I am her (...) I'm Zoe Graystone."⁶⁰³ Characterising her subjectivity at this stage as more than that of a twin or a mere replication, she states that she and Original Zoe possess "echoes of one another."⁶⁰⁴ In this episode Avatar Zoe asks "So I'm dead? She's dead?" She says she "felt" the train

⁶⁰³ 'Pilot'

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

bombing, even though she wasn't there; telling Lacy that Original Zoe wanted her "to feel what she felt, in real-time." While Zoe was never able to complete the technology behind this, something else happened: "it was like I felt her death (...) what am I without her? She's me. I'm her. I'm all that's left of her? What am I supposed to do next?"⁶⁰⁵ Zoe states that her goal in creating Avatar Zoe was to create life, not a narcissistic copy of herself. The dichotomy that exists between Original Zoe, Avatar Zoe and the attempts by both her parents and wider society to prescribe values to the 'real' Zoe Graystone, provides a useful context through which to consider *Caprica's* development of the relationship between Original Zoe and her avatar. By producing disruption in reality through the Cylon body, as detailed above, yet existing as a virtual construction, Zoe Graystone's inherent multiplicity complicates the ability of others to map narratives, be they personal or national, onto her body. As such, this chapter now shifts its focus to consider how Avatar Zoe's subjectivity is fostered as one that is in-progress, transitioning from a position that was primarily conceived as 'lacking' the 'real' of Original Zoe towards a subjectivity that entails a greater measure of autonomy. Earlier I stated that *Caprica's* positioning of Zoe as that of a 'hacker' is demonstrative of the embodied relationship between technology and people that Dovey and Kennedy refer to. This is most clearly manifested in her burgeoning subjective fluidity that emanates, I argue, from her status as a hacker figure. I now briefly provide a contextual background and definition of the term 'hacker' as applicable to this exploration, before going on to fully consider how this term operates within the text through the figure of Zoe and, more specifically, how Avatar Zoe is able to foster her own independent subjectivity in V-World.

Hacking: New Concepts, New Perceptions

Jurgen Nissen considers the problems associated with the word 'hacker' as being located in the multitude of ways in which it has been used. He states: "nowadays the hacker epithet is associated with illegal trespassing and with social recluses," who have, somewhat contradictorily, "also been portrayed as young computer geniuses who, with their brilliance alone have penetrated all of the world's computer systems."⁶⁰⁶ Nissen asserts that this confusion is in fact misleading: the term was created by the "computer-interested" themselves, wherein it is perceived as an "honorary title bestowed upon a

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁶ Jurgen Nissen, 'Hackers: Masters of Modernity and Modern Technology' in *Digital Diversions: Youth Culture in the Age of Multimedia*, ed. Julian Sefton-Green (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 149

person who has done something admirable.”⁶⁰⁷ Nissen argues that the culture of hacking, which arose from the original generation of hackers who emerged from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1950s, is built upon a foundation which argues for openness and propagates a belief in decentralisation. This culture historically mistrusted authorities for their attempts to limit the use of computers, and thus attempted to establish a resistance against economic superiority in different forms.⁶⁰⁸ In terms of considering how Zoe is positioned by *Caprica* as a hacker figure, it is pertinent to reflect on certain characteristics that can be associated with the hacker role. Indeed, such characteristics speak to her ability to gain autonomy and authorship within the text, in that they both underline the ‘technological agency’ which Dovey and Kennedy associate with the cyborg figure and the centrality of ‘gameplay’ to the 21st century socio-cultural environment. Nissen states: “in the history of hacking, three themes stand out: first, the development of an ethic; second, a tendency toward social and political alternativism; and finally, a trace of illegal activities.”⁶⁰⁹ Conversely, McKenzie Wark sees abstraction as being central to the role of the hacker, arguing that “we produce new concepts, new perceptions, new sensations...we are the abstractors of new worlds.”⁶¹⁰ He sees invention and creativity as pivotal assets of the hacker figure, stating that “hackers use their knowledge and their wits to maintain their autonomy.”⁶¹¹ These traits are evident not only in Original Zoe’s authorship of her avatar program, but in the very proliferation of Zoes and the manner in which each asserts their autonomy. Zoe’s creation of Avatar Zoe, and her subsequent development as a distinct, independent subject that is able to exist in both the virtual and actual worlds *Caprica* presents, encapsulates Wark’s key point of not only abstraction, but abstraction as explicitly linked to the production of the new. Indeed, this proliferation of abstracted, new and specifically youthful subjectivities is most fully explored in the virtual environment of New Cap City, itself a hacked space in *Caprica*’s V-World, and in Avatar Zoe’s navigation of this world; which I consider below.

I have argued that *Caprica* presents Avatar Zoe as a figure who gains subjective autonomy by embracing her independence from the figure of Original Zoe. In doing so, she complicates the ideals encapsulated by her youthfulness that others attempt to map onto her body, and the manner in which society attempts to fix her in place in order to allay the

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162

⁶¹⁰ McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) par. 002

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, par. 023

fear, anxiety and insecurity that followed in the wake of the MAGLEV train bombing. Yet by existing in both the virtual world as an avatar, and in the actual world through the Cylon body, Zoe Graystone's inherent multiplicity affords her further power. I contend that Zoe's status as a hacker therefore not only allows her to transform her digital self, but provides her with a sovereignty in both worlds through the authorial nature of the role. As Steven Levy contends: "To qualify as a hack, the feat must be imbued with innovation, style and technical virtuosity."⁶¹² He continues:

Hackers believe that essential lessons can be learned about the systems – about the world – from taking things apart, seeing how they work, and using this knowledge to create new and even more interesting things. They resent any person, physical barrier, or law that tries to keep them from doing this.⁶¹³

Zoe's hacker subjectivity therefore bestows her with the necessary authorship both she *and* her avatar need to gain subjective autonomy. In Chapter Two I previously explored the function of authorship in relation to *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles'* representation of protagonist Sarah Connor; specifically considering Sarah's self-reflexive voiceovers through the framework of autobiography. In this chapter I have posited Zoe Graystone as a figure who also gains agency through authorship, specifically via the active process of abstraction inherent in the act of hacking. *Caprica's* representation of Zoe's burgeoning authorial intent necessarily manifests itself through the technological thrust at the heart of its narrative. Indeed, in exploring the ambiguous difference between the natural and artificial, and the symbiosis of technology and human, Haraway also acknowledges the significance of writing: "Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."⁶¹⁴ While she refers here to the significance of writing to all colonized groups, Haraway's argument remains particularly useful in this consideration of Zoe and her multiples. This is evident not only in relation to hacking, but how Zoe's youthful subjectivity is literally represented by *Caprica* in a 21st century cultural context as a challenge to America's historical investment youth. As this chapter has discussed, Zoe is herself 'othered' to the extent that she is demarcated as 'troubled teen' in order to contain contemporary socio-cultural anxieties. She is categorised according to an

⁶¹² Steven Levy, *Hackers: Heroes of the Digital Revolution – 25th Anniversary Edition* (Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, 2010) p. 10

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁶¹⁴ Haraway, p. 175

innocent/delinquent opposition. However, Haraway notes the tools of authorship she identifies “are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalised identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture.”⁶¹⁵ Zoe’s attempts to remake and rewrite V-World is her authorship and, I argue below, the source of her potent subjectivity. It is this aspect of authorship, taken within the context of the technological impetus of *Caprica*’s narrative, which emphasises Zoe’s status as hacker. As such, I would again suggest that Zoe’s gendered manifestation of 21st century adolescence is also very postmodern. In this sense, she operates as what Haraway refers to as a ‘feminist cyborg,’ a figure whose stories “have the task of recording communication and intelligence to subvert command and control.”⁶¹⁶ Considering Avatar Zoe as youthful figure whose subjectivity is a distinctly on-going process, her establishment of a subjective sovereignty is both substantiated and sustained by her position as hacker. This also serves to underline and celebrate Zoe Graystone’s multiple and fragmented state: “the hack as pure hack, as pure production of production, expresses in a singular instance the multiplicity of the nature out of which and within which it moves as an event.”⁶¹⁷ This consideration of Zoe as ‘hacker,’ in terms of ethic and definition, is fully realised by *Caprica* within the virtual space of New Cap City. It is this realisation, and the function of this narrative space, that this chapter now explores.

Liberation: New Worlds

Caprica’s representation of the digital environment of New Cap City, a hacked space in V-World, astutely illustrates the abstraction Zoe Graystone cultivates and the autonomy she gains as a result of her disruptive hacks. The series’ representation of Zoe Graystone explicitly accentuates fragmentation and multiplicity, in opposition to a conceived unified wholeness of being. It is a representation that works to complicate America’s traditional remaking of itself as a youthful nation, as addressed at the beginning of this chapter, and the ability of society to prescribe national values onto the youthful body in this 21st century context. *Caprica*’s depiction of Avatar Zoe as a disruptive, complicating figure who bears the characteristics of a hacker as outlined above, taken alongside her inherent in-betweenness, is central to this. The body of Original Zoe is dead. Therefore, within the context of *Caprica*’s virtual worlds, and specifically the hacked space of New Cap City, the

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ Wark, par. 159

absence of Original Zoe's body is paradoxically liberating for her avatar. Avatar Zoe is afforded autonomy from the appropriation of her body and self by national narratives of youth, security and anxiety, or the personal narratives of her parents. Additionally, as a hacker in a digital space she gains authorship of herself: she is free to express herself on her own terms, to abstract the character of Zoe Graystone and, through her inherent multiplicity and in-betweenness, produce a new world and a new self. New Cap City is described in episode 1.05, 'There is Another Sky' as "a virtual Caprica. A digital recreation but it's lawless. Anything goes."⁶¹⁸ The whole city is depicted as a game, a version of Caprica City that is updated "so it matches...Even the place where the train blew up is there."⁶¹⁹ As an explicitly hacked space that operates beyond the confines of the standardised V-World, New Cap City is arguably emblematic of a 'subculture' that exists "outside the regulating space of the home or school" or even the actual; a space McRobbie contends is "more autonomous" and "contributes directly to the weakening of these other institutional ties. For this reason the attraction to subcultures lies partially in the modes of empowerment they offer."⁶²⁰ The digital space of V-World (which is controlled by the adult, corporate power of Graystone Industries) and the growth New Cap City (which is an unregulated, hacked space within it) renders the ability of adult society to regulate it as somewhat impotent. Indeed, the holobands through which users gain entry to V-World and New Cap City allow this subculture to be accessed and practiced anywhere. Considering New Cap City as a subcultural space explicitly ties its function within *Caprica* to the wider issues of youth that are explored through the Zoe Graystone figure.

Within the narrative, it is established that the New Cap City is a goal-oriented game, but crucially no-one knows how it ends or how to win. The commonly-held assumption by those who participate in the game, however, is that the key to victory lies in the accumulation of wealth. Considering the relationship between gameplay and technology, a relationship that New Cap City surely embodies, Dovey and Kennedy state:

[Game engines] are dynamic rule-based systems made up from millions of lines of computer code which create worlds that audiences clearly find compelling and immersive. Computer games can be seen as a form that compels the user's participation in the realm of spectacle, acting out, having agency within the pervasive media sphere that is such an important part of our national environment.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ 'There is Another Sky.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.05. Dir. Michael Nankin. SyFy (February 26, 2010)

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁰ McRobbie, p. 174

⁶²¹ Dovey and Kennedy, p. 12-13

Their point is particularly useful in thinking through New Cap City's literal function as a game, an object of consumption, and a potentially more fulfilling role as a site which encourages participation. It allows for a consideration of aspects of production, agency and subjectivity, which I have argued *Caprica* foregrounds through Zoe Graystone by positioning her as a hacker. New Cap City, then, in its nature as both game and play, embodies McRobbie's exploration of how "second-hand, do-it-yourself plundering of culture, particularly on the part of...young people who are as yet unformed adults, and relatively powerless as a result, can give them space to impregnate a scornful, often condemning adult social order with the politics of their adolescent identities."⁶²² New Cap City specifically operates as a plundering of culture in its recreation of 'adult' corruption. Indeed, the term 'plundering' in this context is particularly pertinent in that it echoes the oft-made association between hacker culture and the illegal actions of piracy. I now go on to examine how this culture is represented as specifically manifest in New Cap City.

The stylistic elements of performance and costume are most clearly expressive of this recreation New Cap City presents. Original Zoe is frequently represented and remembered in *Caprica* City wearing a school uniform, symbolic of a state-regulated institution and patriarchal power. This is also how she is captured in Daniel and Amanda's home videos, which Amanda continually watches following Zoe's death. This uniform stands in stark contrast to the clothes Avatar Zoe wears in New Cap City, which are more transgressive, flamboyant and assertive. This is particularly evident in the concluding scenes of episode 1.10, 'Unvanquished.' Avatar Zoe appears at the end of the episode in New Cap City, having destroyed the Cylon chassis she previously inhabited in *Caprica*'s actual world. Wearing a black hood and cloak, she walks down a derelict street, passing the burning debris of the crumbling environment that surrounds her. The sequence employs grayscale hues, with the exception of Zoe's red lipstick. The footage of her walking is intercut with shots of the Cylon chassis being 'boxed' – while this refers literally to the robot being packed away for storage, it also refers to the Cylon practice of permanently retiring one of their models that is more fully explored in *Battlestar Galactica*. Avatar Zoe, as a virtual construct, is able to resist this containment. While her fragmented subjectivity allows her to operate in *Caprica*'s virtual and actual worlds as previously discussed, it also crucially allows Avatar Zoe to circumvent permanent death. Her subjectivity was neither destroyed nor fixed in the Cylon chassis; similarly, she cannot be killed in New Cap City. This

⁶²² McRobbie, p. 3

ultimately empowers Zoe Graystone. Through her in-betweenness she is able to avoid the spectre of textual eradication. In Chapter Three of this thesis I argued that in-betweenness was a quality which enabled Olivia Dunham to resist a similar fate in *Fringe*. While Olivia's multiplicity afforded her the ability to exist in multiple universes and timelines, so Zoe Graystone's multiplicity allows her to exist in, and in-between, *Caprica's* virtual and actual spaces.

This point is reinforced in the concluding sequence to 1.10, 'Unvanquished.' Zoe encounters four men armed with various weapons. They attack her and Zoe fights back with a katana sword; the soundtrack employs a composition played on the piano to accompany the scene. Each man 'de-reses' (exits) from New Cap City as Zoe kills them, until the last remaining aggressor points a gun at her head and states: "I hear you can't die...but you can bleed, and you can hurt, a lot." Zoe clenches her fist and gains control of him: the man is unable to run or remove his holoband, thus he cannot safely leave the game.

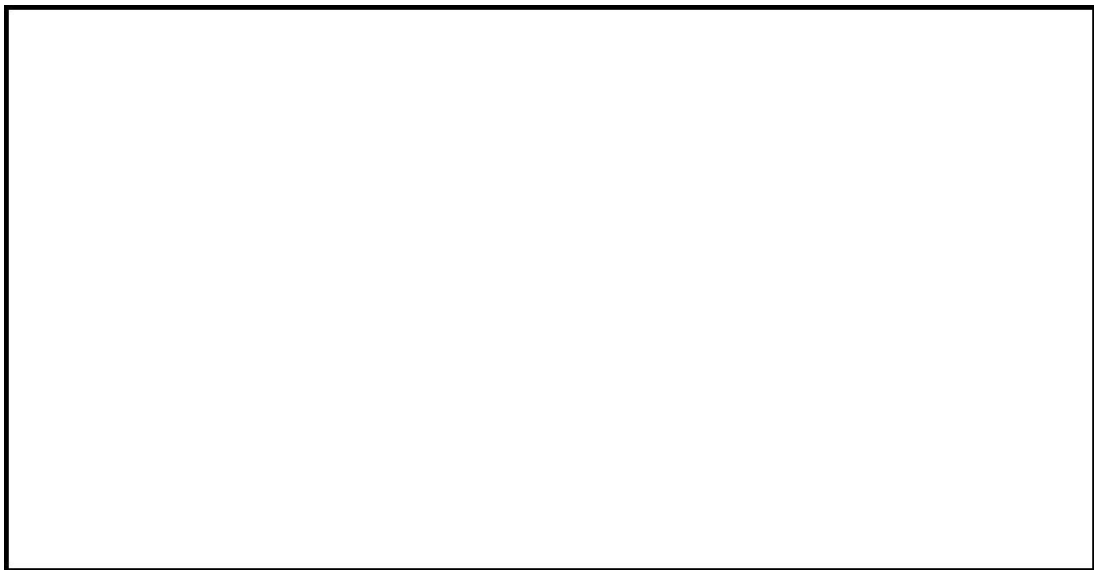


Figure 5.4 Zoe fights her attackers in 1.10, 'Unvanquished.'

Zoe kills him and he too de-reses (Figure 5.4).⁶²³ While the excessively stylised nature of this scene may seem out of place in the series, I argue that its emphasis on aesthetic and performativity, highlighted predominantly via costume and props, is appropriate to New Cap City as it operates within the text and more importantly, how Avatar Zoe comes to operate in relation to it. Zoe rejects the overtly-violent culture inherent to New Cap City's

⁶²³ 'Unvanquished.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.10. Dir. Eric Stoltz. SyFy (October 5, 2010)

replication of the actual, adult society of Caprica City. However, she is also able to exploit it to gain power, using the tools it provides for her own ends. In doing so, she is evocative of what Mary Ann Doane identifies as the discursive unease that is linked to the figure of the femme fatale;⁶²⁴ a figure I considered in the introduction to this thesis and also explored in relation to the Olivia Dunham character in *Fringe*. As I stated above, like Olivia, Zoe is also able to resist textual eradication. Olivia's split, and her resistance to those who seek to restrict her autonomy that manifests from it, is grounded in the specifically local US terror city environment. Zoe's own fragmentation, through the public nature of her death, and the national implications that manifest in its wake, is more overtly linked to a more globalised society. This is evident in the nature of her multiplicity, in that it is not restricted to the navigation of domestic borders as Olivia's is in *Fringe*. Instead, Zoe's burgeoning autonomy, in its links to a narrative of technological progress, evokes a negotiation of the actual and the virtual. In considering the overt costuming and use of exotic weaponry that this scene portrays as an appropriation of 'adult' culture, it further exemplifies Annette Kuhn's argument that "far from being a fixed signifier of a fixed gender identity, clothing has the potential to disguise, to alter, even to reconstruct the wearer's self;" a point I earlier considered in Chapter Three. Stating that "clothing can dissemble – it may be costume, mask, masquerade," Kuhn argues that clothing is able to embody performance that can threaten "to undercut the ideological fixity of the human subject."⁶²⁵ Avatar Zoe's rise to prominence in the virtual, her production within this context, and her ability gained through her status as a hacker to re-write code in order to foster her own autonomy and power, therefore suggests a necessity to move beyond the domestic to understand her place in this changing socio-cultural context. Underlining how *Caprica's* portrayal of both the virtual and the domestic maps onto not only a globalised 21st century context but also the domestic politics of the nation state, Zoe Graystone's flourishing agency in the environment of New Cap City thus echoes Acland's point that youth often functions to illustrate a "tempo of change," and, indeed, is a way of both seeing change and "making the novel visible."⁶²⁶

Imagery such as that I have identified above is repeatedly used within this hacked environment, most prominently in another key scene from 1.12, 'Things We Lock Away.' Many of the New Cap City scenes in this episode take place in a recreation of Caprica's

⁶²⁴ Doane, p. 1

⁶²⁵ Kuhn, p. 53

⁶²⁶ Acland, p. 40

sports stadium. Shot from above, this version of the stadium is falling apart (Figure 5.5). Spotlights focus on the centre of the arena, where two men again fight with katana swords. Similar to the closing sequence of 1.10, 'Unvanquished,' this is a highly stylised performance. Zoe enters the arena, asserts that she is not playing the game and locates Tamara (Genevieve Beuchner), a teenager who also died in the terrorist attack depicted in *Caprica's* pilot. Tamara tells Zoe that a lot of people in New Cap City had friends and family members on the train that was bombed. Avatar Zoe immediately distances herself from the actions of her creator, stating "you know that I'm not Original Zoe." She stands in the pit as a growing mob surrounds her, a member of which then moves to stab her in the gut. Zoe reacts, at which point another version of her self appears: seemingly an 'Imagined' Zoe.



Figure 5.5 The stadium in New Cap City in 1.12, 'Things We Lock Away.'

Heralding the proliferation of Zoes who appear in this episode, Imagined Zoe figures in a flashback Avatar Zoe has of Original Zoe's childhood, wherein she thanks this imagined subject for being her friend. In the arena pit, Imagined Zoe tells Avatar Zoe to sever her self from Original Zoe and embrace her own subjectivity: "you're not her. You're not the same. You keep walking in her footprints even after her footprints stopped...are you gonna lie down and pay for her sins or are you gonna own yourself?"⁶²⁷ Avatar Zoe subsequently tells Tamara to reject being "entertainment;" an appropriate statement which echoes *Caprica's*

⁶²⁷ 'Things We Lock Away.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.12. Dir. Tim Hunter. SyFy (October 19, 2010)

use of intercutting in relation to the television coverage of Original Zoe's death, which I discussed above. Avatar Zoe explicitly asserts her agency in this scene, marking a clear break between her own subjectivity and that of Original Zoe. Her motivation in doing so also becomes clear, revealed by the continual interrogation of her subject-in-progress that *Caprica* presents through the virtual space of New Cap City. This motivation is her desire to remake V-World: in essence, to resist the exoticised violence of New Cap City. In her resistance, Zoe also rejects the need for the appropriation of 'adult' culture that permeates New Cap City. Thus, much like Original Zoe, she chooses creation over play and embraces the positive production of the hack in-progress.

For Avatar Zoe and Tamara, their quest to 'remake' V-World is characterised as a cleansing operation. In episode 1.15, 'Dirteaters,' the two enter an establishment named Slash & Cuts. As they walk in many of the patrons immediately de-res, willingly removing themselves from the New Cap City game so as not to engage with either figure. Avatar Zoe states: "I don't think we need this in our world, do you?" "Let's just clean it," Tamara responds.⁶²⁸ Similar to Avatar Zoe's ability to traverse the virtual and actual, this endeavour is predicated on the eradication of threats to their subjectivity whilst avoiding eradication themselves. In transforming *Caprica's* virtual world, Avatar Zoe is literally rewriting code. Epitomising both fragmentation and subjectivity in-progress, she creates a new space that is free of corruption and adult domination. Avatar Zoe is able to break the one firm 'rule' of New Cap City: you die in the game, you are permanently exiled from it. She is in-between, or separate from, both New Cap City and the adult 'real' world (literally, since she is an avatar) of Caprica City. She attempts to create her own virtual world, to rid New Cap City of its corruption and greed, which are presented as the corrupting, 'adult' facets of Caprica City society that manifest in New Cap City's structure as a game which propagates the accumulation of wealth. In this, she embodies Wark's statement that "a hack touches the virtual – and transforms the actual." Zoe Graystone's transitional states, and the key trait of multiplicity that is inherent to her subjectivity, therefore work to foreground the manner in which *Caprica's* representation of 21st century youth diverges from traditional American 'recycling' of the nation as young. This culminates in her ability to transform both herself and the virtual spaces she navigates, and her interchanging presence in both *Caprica's* virtual and actual spaces. This fragmentation affords her freedom and mobility. As illustrated throughout the analysis in this chapter, Avatar Zoe gains mobility and autonomy

⁶²⁸ 'Dirteaters.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.15. Dir. John Dahl. SyFy (November 9, 2010)

as *Caprica's* narrative progresses. Yet her assertion of her individual subjectivity comes after a process of realisation. Zoe Graystone is not only able to recognise the categories she realises are necessary for her freedom – these being education (understanding of her environment; negotiation of those within it), labour (the production of the hack) and power – but she co-opts and reinvents them. Zoe, of course, remains in-between and inherently multiple. She is also no longer contained by external narratives. In her expression of herself through the virtual and actual, the production of the hack and its impact, her assertion of self is ultimately a configuration of how the 'I' becomes a fundamental value of her fragmented identity.

In Chapter Two of this thesis I argued that *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* represented its eponymous protagonist as a figure who resisted the I as the representative site of an exclusively male subjectivity. Much like Sarah Connor, Zoe Graystone's assertion of self, which culminates in Avatar Zoe's understanding of her own subjective autonomy, is a visible act of self-definition, echoing Leigh Gilmore's assertion that "The I is situated in multiple identity constructions at once and functions in a range of representational politics, resisting some while reproducing the effects of others."⁶²⁹ As I discussed in Chapter Two, Gilmore considers autobiography and women's self-representation from a feminist perspective. Her statement speaks to the multiple and fragmented subjects upon which this thesis concentrates, including Zoe Graystone. In recognising that the I exists in a range of discourses and is a site which allows for "multiple figurations of agency,"⁶³⁰ Gilmore's conception of self-representation as it relates to the I also encapsulates the complex relationship between the youthful, female, American subject and American's national investment in youth as a cultural symbol that *Caprica* interrogates via the Zoe Graystone character. The fragmented, in-between nature that imbues *Caprica's* representation of Zoe Graystone's subjectivity, which the series situates within a range of representational politics, suggests that Zoe's narrative as a youthful subjectivity in-progress can therefore be considered as a challenge to the manner in which youth has been historically conceived in America. As this chapter has explored, Zoe is a figure upon whom various socio-cultural concerns are mapped onto and worked through. By claiming her own authorship in this scenario - by nature of her position as a hacker - she resists definition by adult society and the prescription of national narratives onto her body. Indeed, her status as a hacker *is* Zoe's authorship, affording her mastery over both her environment and her own narrative. Wark

⁶²⁹ Gilmore, p. 184

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186

argues that “the hacker class does not need unity in identity but seeks multiplicity in difference.”⁶³¹ While Zoe’s rejection of unifying narratives speaks to her role as a hacker, it also demonstrates her acceptance of a fragmented subjectivity as an ultimately positive state *in* its very in-betweenness and multiplicity. Like all of the protagonists interrogated within this thesis, Zoe embraces the positivity in her fragmentation. Despite America conceiving itself as frequently young, new and future-oriented, it has historically done this by looking back into its mythic past. Zoe’s transition is founded upon the recognition of this process. It therefore makes her progression to self-ownership of the *I*, through writing her own (technological) narrative via the process of the hack, all the more momentous. Zoe’s fragmented state allows her to literally write herself into being; the virtual space of V-World and New Cap City is the site of this authorship.

Conclusion

Caprica’s conclusion depicts Daniel and Amanda’s creation of a virtual house for Avatar Zoe as they begin to foster a new relationship with her. Importantly, Daniel and Amanda recognise that this relationship cannot only be on their own terms. In episode 1.17, ‘Here be Dragons,’ Amanda tells Daniel that they’re going about their quest to ‘find’ their daughter the wrong way: “she’s contrary. If you chase her, she dodges. If you corner her, she lashes out.” Daniel then considers, “if we invite her...” as Amanda finishes his thought: “let her come on her own terms.”⁶³² At the end of this episode Zoe and Daniel meet in the virtual house he has created. Daniel says: “you’ll find it’s an exact replica of the home you grew up in,” featuring a “real time clone” of his computer network so that the two can operate in tandem, building her a new body with skin. *Caprica*’s final sequence, that appears at the end of episode 1.18, ‘Apotheosis,’ charts the future progress of Avatar Zoe and her new relationship with not only Daniel and Amanda, but within the spaces of the virtual and actual. Titled ‘The Shape of Things to Come,’ the sequence begins by depicting Avatar Zoe and an avatar of Amanda spending time together in the virtual house while Daniel extols the ‘virtues’ of the Cylons he has finally created. Daniel and Amanda work in a lab preparing Avatar Zoe’s new body in the actual, as a former STO leader preaches that “the children of humanity shall rise.” Zoe sits up in a bath, her face forms out of a mass of skin as she breathes. Marking Avatar Zoe’s ultimate transition from virtual to actual, she gets out of the bath in another new body: a physical body that, crucially, she

⁶³¹ Wark, par. 084

⁶³² ‘Here be Dragons.’ *Caprica*. Episode 1.17. Dir. Michael Nankin. SyFy (November 23, 2010)

helped create. It seems a pertinent point with which to conclude both the series and this chapter. For Zoe, this is a point of positivity. It is a conclusion which is aptly summed up by the following statement from McRobbie: it “might mean living with fragmentation, with the reality of inventing the self rather than endlessly searching for the self.”⁶³³ As *Caprica* has suggested throughout its narrative, Avatar Zoe’s separation from Original Zoe, her cultivation of a multiple self, the fostering of a subjectivity that is in-progress in its inherent multiplicity, stands in clear opposition to the conception of fragmentation as a state of negativity.

Zoe’s contrast to America’s historically idealised, unified conception of self is the root of her autonomy and power. At her genesis, Avatar Zoe has no power and is not recognised in terms of her own self. She exists outside historical conceptions of youth as a site of national symbolic investment; conceptions that are complicated by the actions and the death of Original Zoe. These conceptions therefore work to fix Zoe Graystone, to locate her within the containable labels of ‘troubled’ and ‘terrorist’ in order to allay contemporary socio-cultural anxieties. Even the realm of the virtual is restricted by patriarchal, adult culture. Yet Zoe is able to resist this through the process of the hack, ultimately transforming both the virtual and actual worlds through this role. Zoe’s avatar, Avatar Zoe, becomes a subjectivity that is not simply imposed upon her but that which she chooses to take on as her own, a fact which allows her to ultimately to assert her subjective power. By claiming the on-going process of this subjectivity, Avatar Zoe is able to think, speak and be recognised as an independent ‘I’. She realises what she must do in order to redefine herself in relation to the virtual and actual worlds; she adopts the hack as the means through which to subscribe her authorship in relation to this definition. By gaining mastery of V-World and New Cap City, Avatar Zoe demonstrates her ability to both adopt and then subvert the language by which she is written, or, given the technological imperative at the heart of *Caprica*’s narrative, coded. In doing so, she achieves physical and intellectual power - the subjectivity she strives to create for herself is able to take form. This form is present in both the actual and the virtual worlds: she works to create her new body in ‘reality’ through her navigation of virtual space. Ultimately, Zoe is able to recognise her own right to power and actively seeks to achieve it by negotiating with the tools of both adult and patriarchal culture, demonstrating the self-mastery and independence she achieves through progress and production in *Caprica*’s narrative. For Zoe, freedom comes

⁶³³ McRobbie, p. 71

not only through the subversion of the imperative of unity so prevalent in America's historical myth-making, but her ability to recognise her own self and represent this subjectivity through authorship.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have sought to explore representations of gender and subjectivity within 21st century American science fiction television. In my introduction and opening chapter, I endeavoured to convey why I chose to focus on science fiction (a genre known for concentrating on issues of identity and subjectivity) and television (a medium known for its 'nowness' and capacity to produce narratively complex series). Similarly, I aimed to justify my use of the term subjectivity (it is a term which emphasises agency and fragmentation) and my engagement with gender (the female body has often been represented as a contested site, apt to play out anxieties). Finally, I explicitly located these four focal points within a wider American socio-cultural context, wherein I could explore how science fiction television has addressed America's cultural response to the major events of the past decade. In doing so I identified a specific convergence of medium, genre and context, in which a shift in how American science fiction television of this era has engaged with issues of gender and subjectivity is manifestly evident. It is this shift which I have interrogated throughout this thesis, via the central protagonists of four case study series: *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Fringe*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Caprica*.

From the outset of this thesis I sought to provide a contextual base from which the wider events of the 21st century, as they are represented in American science fiction television of this era, may be usefully understood and interrogated. In Chapter One I interrogated a broad range of contextual issues which naturally arose from the different fields I have engaged with in this thesis. Specifically, I briefly explored the development of American exceptionalism, how this concept impacted upon national and individual identity, and how it can be seen as manifest in the American political sphere. Following on from this I considered the overall concerns of science fiction, the genre upon which this thesis has focused. Approaching the genre across the media of literature, film and television, I explored the form and tropes that have historically been evident in science fiction texts. Finally, I addressed wider developments in television culture that have occurred over the last twenty years. In exploring how the medium specificity of television has been conceived and understood, I argued that industrial shifts at the turn of the 21st century can be seen to have significantly impacted upon the production and viewing contexts of television. In doing so, I identified a specific trend within 21st century science fiction television for open narratives, enabling the series this thesis engages with to offer new and intriguing

representations of gender and subjectivity within the context of the events that have occurred in this era. The aim of this contextual foundation was to illustrate the manner in which my case study texts are positioned as inherently suitable series through which cultural anxieties can be considered within the specific temporal and national context of 21st century America, via representations of gender and subjectivity.

I have included this summary of my introduction and opening chapter here in order to reiterate the fact that my thesis not only concentrates on a period of significant change in terms of the television medium, but also in terms of the wider socio-cultural context of 21st century America. This project has thus emerged from the very context upon which it focuses. Therefore, prior to reflecting on the research aims I laid out in the introduction and Chapter One, it seems apt to briefly assess the landscape of 21st century American science fiction television as it stands at the point my thesis reaches its own conclusion. At the beginning of this thesis I sought to justify the selection of my case study series by considering their position within existing science fiction and fantasy programming. As I suggested in my introduction, several science fiction shows such as *Revolution* and *Falling Skies* continue to air on broadcast and cable networks respectively. In addition, I pointed to the proliferation of series that could be considered emblematic of the 'fantasy' or 'horror' genres, such as *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *American Horror Story*, *Supernatural* and *Grimm*. Again, each of these series have demonstrated longevity as evidenced by the fact that they have all been on air for more than two seasons. Many display traits of narrative complexity and quality television which have characterised the development of the medium in the 21st century, having emerged from the changing production contexts of television which I addressed in Chapter One.

While several of these series continue to leave an enduring impression on contemporary popular culture, their mention here also serves to underline what sets my case study texts apart from them. Distinctly science fiction series, *Fringe*, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Caprica* hold a unique status among the aforementioned proliferation of 'fantasy' series due to the convergence of generic, medium and socio-cultural concerns I previously outlined. In doing so, they explicitly challenge existing readings of post-9/11 television programming, such as the claim made by Wheeler Winston Dixon that American television of this period embraced a return to the past by attempting to create alternative escapist universes. Furthermore, in the first chapter of this thesis I argued that the formal framework of science fiction as one of cognitive estrangement marks it as a suitable genre through which to consider the wider

cultural and historical constructedness of multiple forms of subjectivity as they continually evolve in response to this challenging period of trauma, anxiety and uncertainty. As I have sought to demonstrate in the chapters which focused upon my case study programmes, each text explicitly foregrounds its engagement with this contemporary American socio-cultural context via distinctive representations of the female body that offer a markedly different approach to previous representations of this type. In what follows I summarise the chapters which interrogate my case study series, after which I revisit the key intervention this thesis makes by seeking to place this project within a larger body of work. I do so by reflecting on the questions raised in my introduction and by looking ahead to the potentiality for longevity in the particular representations of gender in science fiction I have considered throughout this body of work.

Chapter Two considered how *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* portrayed its eponymous protagonist in a manner that actively challenges the previously restrictive representations of the character in *The Terminator* film franchise. Jumping over Sarah's death and relocating the series to a changed, uncertain 21st century American cultural context, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* purposely disregards the narrative events of *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*. Instead, the series embraces a contemporary narrative space of its own creation, which I argued provides a crucial foundation to Sarah's own challenge to her environment and the narratives that have previously been imposed upon her. Engaging with theories of motherhood and autobiography, I explored the manner in which this series utilised the function of the voiceover to enable Sarah Connor to foster a mastery over both herself and her socio-cultural environment, crucially providing her with the ability to speak of her own experiences and to be the author her own subjectivity. Importantly, I suggested throughout this chapter that the Sarah Connor of *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, is also a fragmented figure by virtue of the multiplicity of the roles she performs, the aliases she adopts and the competing narratives which she must negotiate. This in turn locates Sarah as a character who is also 'in-between': between these roles and her own sense of self, and between competing discourses of motherhood and her position as an autonomous subject. In its representation of Sarah Connor, the series explicitly interrogates this in-betweenness within a 21st century context in which the domestic sphere, rather than the urban city space, is rearticulated as a site of conflict and warfare. Yet as I endeavoured to illustrate, Sarah also actively accepts the challenge of negotiating her own burgeoning subjectivity around her role as a mother figure. By embracing her own fragmentation and gendered subjectivity, Sarah is able to

make possible new beginnings through her own project of self-representation by repositioning herself within an existing canon.

Taking the television series *Fringe* as its main focus, the third chapter of this thesis explored the representation of central protagonist Olivia Dunham. I illustrated how *Fringe* effectively interrogates contemporary manifestations of disaster and insecurity by relocating the War on Terror to the American city space. The series' complex narrative structure, that encompasses two universes at war and multiple versions of key characters, utilises powerful visual motifs that explicitly reference the wider events of the 21st century within a militarised, destabilised urban environment. *Fringe* positions Olivia Dunham within this specific socio-cultural context, and charts her negotiation of this environment. I suggested that the characteristics of multiplicity, performativity and in-betweenness were presented by the narrative of *Fringe* as wholly positive traits, enabling Olivia to continually resist textual eradication. Olivia's multiplicity manifests in not just different 'versions' of her self but in some instances, entirely separate characters. Much like *Fringe's* representation of the destabilised American city space in which Olivia is located, her key characteristics of multiplicity and performativity are most clearly foregrounded by the narrative's parallel universe arc. Utilising gender theory alongside textual analysis, I argued that Olivia's status as a figure who is literally 'in-between' provides a progressive and proactive response to the destabilised environment in which she is located. Olivia's own acceptance of her fragmented and multiple subjectivity is pivotal to the challenge she is subsequently able to make to the oppressive structures attempt to contain her.

The re-imagined series *Battlestar Galactica* formed the focus of my fourth chapter. Divided into two sub-sections, this chapter explored the representation of the racial subject within that series from two different perspectives. Utilising theories of race and ethnicity, post-colonial theory, and textual analysis, I argued that visibility and self-determination are central to how *Battlestar Galactica* is able to effectively interrogate this racial subject within the shifting narrative contexts of its series. The figure of the Cylon model Number Eight and the characters of Boomer and Sharon, each different versions of this figure, was the focal point for my exploration of the series' representation of the shifting formations of racial subjectivity along social and temporal conditions. *Battlestar Galactica* is a series which clearly operates as an allegory of the 21st century American socio-political environment that specifically establishes and then complicates the notion of a racial Other within this context. My contention, in this chapter, was that an explicit interrogation of the series in terms of race and subjectivity was therefore justifiable. The multiplicity and

fragmentation of the Cylon figure Number Eight offered a perceptive interrogation of this racial Other. In analysing how several key visual motifs are utilised within the text in its interrogation of race and subjectivity, I posited the centrality of visibility, invisibility, agency and in-betweenness to the narrative's engagement with race, the 21st century American socio-cultural context in which it was produced, and how these concerns are foregrounded through the gendered subjectivity of the Cylon model Number Eight. As each sub-section sought to illustrate, both Boomer and Sharon responded to the socio-cultural context of fear, anxiety and insecurity in different ways. Yet as I argued in this chapter, their inherent fragmentation, and their status as figures who are in-between, are characteristics which functioned to enable their survival and resistance of textual eradication. For Sharon, these characteristics also provide a foundation from which she is able to positively embrace self-definition and mobility, enabling her to reject the concept of a racial subjectivity that is fixed in place.

The final chapter of this thesis focused on the character Zoe Graystone, central protagonist of the series *Caprica*. Following the analysis of the previous chapters, I argued that the Zoe Graystone character also positively embodied the characteristics of multiplicity and in-betweenness that I contend throughout this thesis are emblematic of American televisual science fiction female protagonists in the 21st century. Conceived as a prequel to *Battlestar Galactica*, *Caprica's* narrative explored how the Cylon race came into being. Much like the protagonists noted above, Zoe's multiplicity is a characteristic that is located at the heart of *Caprica's* narrative. While her character dies in the series' pilot episode, it is subsequently revealed that Zoe created an artificial intelligence program; an avatar of herself. This version of Zoe lives on in *Caprica's* environment of 'V-World,' a virtual world that recreates the actual Caprica City in which the series is set. This avatar is another version of Zoe, yet also a distinct character in her own right. The differentiation between the two is the subject of both *Caprica's* narrative, and of my interrogation of the Zoe Graystone character in this chapter. Drawing on theoretical approaches to digital culture and youth alongside textual analysis, I argued that *Caprica* addresses a narrative of technological progress through the youthful subjectivity of the Zoe Graystone figure. In this chapter I explored how Zoe's transitions between *Caprica's* virtual and actual worlds is demonstrative of the technological impetus which I contend is central to the series' narrative. Furthermore, I argued that *Caprica* is a series which is specifically concerned with exploring the possibility of agency and autonomy within an increasingly fragmented, militarised society wherein the proliferation of (and absorption in) technology and

surveillance has become a key site of anxiety and paranoia. By positioning the figure Zoe Graystone at the centre of this interrogation, I argued that *Caprica* explicitly acknowledges the contemporary relationship that exists between youth and a 21st century, socio-cultural environment that is increasingly mediated by technology. In doing so, the series effectively presents Zoe's contrast to America's historically idealised, unified conception of self as being a key aspect of how she is able to foster her own autonomy and power. Fighting to resist a narrative of youth as a site of national symbolic investment that seeks to fix her in place according to contemporary socio-cultural anxieties, I argued that *Caprica's* representation of Zoe as a hacker figure affords her significant authorial power over both her own subjectivity and mastery over her environment(s). Fragmentation, multiplicity and in-betweenness are therefore characteristics which allow Zoe to challenge the imperative of unity so prevalent in America's historical myth-making, positively affording her the ability recognise and represent her own subjectivity.

As the chapter summaries presented above illustrate, my focus on the unique representation of gendered subjectivities which I have identified as specifically emergent in science fiction television series of this era has provided a new understanding of how these series have function to represent – and engage with - this socio-cultural environment in a new way. As Jason Mittell states in his consideration of television genres, “instead of asking what a genre means (the typical interpretative question), we need to ask what a genre means *for specific groups in a particular cultural instance*.”⁶³⁴ At the outset of this thesis I identified a shift in engagement with the American ideological subject that moves away from the type of historical myth-making I explored in Chapter One. This shift, I argued, represents a clear divergence in how the historical concerns of science fiction have previously been portrayed. Each of my case study chapters has sought to identify and interrogate the representational strategies employed by contemporary science fiction television in relation to the female body which, I have argued throughout, are distinct from previous representations of this figure. The emergence of this figure of female subjectivity, represented as positively multiple and in-between, is central to my overall argument that this female body has in fact been utilised as a site through which the contemporary socio-cultural concerns of a specific era may be considered. Furthermore, the positivity of these representations lies in the fact that they are liberating, rather than restrictive. It is this point upon which I now further reflect.

⁶³⁴ Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, p. 5

Gender, Subjectivity and Authorship

In the introduction and opening chapter of this thesis, I stated that it is necessary to consider the implications of this particular cultural context of 21st century America upon how the female protagonists of my case study series are represented. Throughout this thesis I sought to consider how and why the representation of these fragmented protagonists is characterised by traits of fluidity, in-betweenness and mobility. Interrogating this, I argued that their explicit location in a national context that, historically, has held a much more unified and masculine conception of its own nationhood, significantly impacted on these representations; as did their explicit engagement with a contemporary national context of insecurity and anxiety. Indeed, I argued that the representation of the female body by these series can be seen as crucially ongoing and positive in the face of the concerns of this era. As such, I have relied on a methodological approach which ensured that my case study television series were not studied in isolation. Encompassing a range of theoretical approaches, this methodology allowed me to consider these series as products emerging within a particular context. Following this, it enabled me to interrogate the specific ways in which my case study series approached this context in a markedly new way through, as I have argued throughout this thesis, a particular focus on issues of subjectivity and femininity.

In *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture*, E. Ann Kaplan discusses women's awareness of confining codes. She states that such a moment might be characterised as the unconscious becoming conscious; that "a 'female' discourse manifests itself not in any return to some 'essential' femaleness, but in the very processes of struggle against dominant discourses that always position women in oppressive ways. It emerges, that is, in the 'gaps' of patriarchal hegemony discovered in moments of struggle, disruption, rebellion."⁶³⁵ Kaplan's argument regarding the manifestation of a 'female' discourse in the 'gaps' of patriarchy is evocative of the theme of in-betweenness which permeates this thesis. As I sought to demonstrate in my introduction and first chapter, the characteristic of in-betweenness has previously often been used in conjunction with representations of the female body to generate tension or a discursive unease. Throughout this thesis I have argued that the protagonists of my case study series also explore crucial intersections of culture within a particular national and temporal context. I contend that the emergence of this figure of female subjectivity within 21st century American science

⁶³⁵ Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, p. 16

fiction television, characterised by an in-betweenness that is both positive and liberating, is a key intervention this thesis makes in existing scholarship on how the female body has previously been represented; particularly within the field of science fiction and the medium of television. This focus on a mobile and fluid female body, across a range of indicative subject positions, is productive precisely because these protagonists are not ultimately repositioned within the confining codes of the culture from which they emerge; their challenge does not serve to simultaneously curtail or restrict their struggle or rebellion. In contrast to the figure of the female heroine I considered in Chapter One, I ultimately read these characters as genuinely heroic through their acts of resistance, their will to live, and the manner in which they take ownership of their contradictions.

In my introduction I established the framework of authorship as a way of exploring the manner in which each of the protagonists - and their varied subject positions - I consider are able to assert their subjective autonomy. Specifically, I referred to Leigh Gilmore's consideration of the subject of autobiography as "the object of production for the purposes of cultural critique," that possesses attributes "whose meaning must be *acquired*."⁶³⁶ Gilmore's reading of the function of autobiography was particularly useful to the wider concerns of this thesis, primarily due to her interest in how autobiography may work to explore "how women use self-representation and its constitutive possibilities for agency and subjectivity to become no longer primarily subject to exchange but subjects who exchange the position of object for the subjectivity of self-representational agency."⁶³⁷ This is a process I have considered throughout this thesis, via the protagonists of my chosen case study texts. The representation of these protagonists, which I considered in the previous chapters of this thesis, are demonstrative of an emergent theme in the portrayal of female subjectivity that I have sought to demonstrate is specific to the particular convergence of genre, medium and cultural context in 21st century America. Taking ownership of their selves is a process each protagonist goes through; emblematic of the characteristics that link each of these characters. In *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, Sarah's voiceovers permeate each episode, affording her autonomy over her own narrative. In *Fringe*, Olivia embraces her multiples to challenge the patriarchal structures which try to contain her; she takes ownership of the abilities resulting from her subjection to the Cortexiphan drug to assert her own subjective autonomy. In *Battlestar Galactica*, Sharon is able to reject the concept of a racial subjectivity that is fixed in place,

⁶³⁶ Gilmore, p. 12

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

instead choosing to author her own subjective status by challenging existing narratives of visibility and invisibility. In *Caprica*, Zoe Graystone uses code to author a digital avatar of herself, known as Avatar Zoe, who exists in a virtual reality and ultimately adopts the technological impetus at the heart of the series narrative to foster her own, distinct sense of self. Gilmore's approach to autobiography recognises that "the *I* is multiply coded in a range of discourses: it is the site of multiple solicitations, multiple markings of 'identity,' multiple figurations of agency." By positioning the female subjects I have considered in this thesis within a variety of discourses, and within a specific genre, medium and cultural context, I have been able to identify where and how the *I* is "emphasised as a point of resistance in self-representation" by these protagonists.⁶³⁸ In 21st century American science fiction television series, this is explicitly emphasised via a unique representation of the female body that engages with the socio-cultural concerns of the period. The representation of the *I* as a site of resistance within these series, via these female characters, is positive, liberating and enduring. I have argued throughout this thesis that this is an important shift in how representations of the female body have previously been considered and, as such, has been worthy of consideration here.

I have utilised the term 'subjectivity' to interrogate the protagonists of my case study series throughout this thesis. As I argued in my introduction, I considered this term to be appropriate given the wider socio-cultural issues I have been concerned with throughout my exploration of 21st century American science fiction television. I have purposely read subjectivity as intrinsically linked with an American concept of nationhood, therefore providing a space for the female protagonists at the heart of these series to challenge the patriarchal status quo inherent within this historical concept. As Kaplan's interpretation of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity demonstrates, considering his theory alongside Althusser's definition of subjectivity in relation to ideology enables a link between "psychoanalytic and social terrains."⁶³⁹ Therefore, this usefully provides a definition of subjectivity that allows for multiple approaches from a variety of theoretical positions – a definition that is an apt fit with the methodology I have employed in this thesis. My explicit use of the term of subjectivity in conjunction with my interdisciplinary methodological approach has, I contend, allowed the theme of authorship to emerge as the fundamental and active characteristic which binds the female protagonists foregrounded by my case study series together. Similarly, my argument that these

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186

⁶³⁹ Kaplan, p. 15

protagonists all share traits of multiplicity and in-betweenness, traits presented by the series which I consider via a clear engagement with the major events of the era, is what allows their authorship to flourish. Homi K. Bhabha sees in-between spaces as providing “terrain for elaborating strategies of self hood...that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”⁶⁴⁰ My focus on a variety of gendered subject positions in American science fiction television, within a specific temporal context and via multiple theoretical perspectives, has allowed me to identify what characterises these representations of the female body as new and different. Their authorship, which emerges through a representation of subjectivity as positive in its multiplicity and fragmentation, makes possible the resistance of these characters through self hood and agency. As I have argued throughout this thesis, this resistance - to the containing forces of historical narratives and a contemporary socio-cultural context marked by anxiety and insecurity - is explicitly presented as positive. Framed by their ongoing authorship, the subjectivity of these protagonists is both liberating and mobile; able to avoid static representation, restriction and textual eradication.

Looking to the Future

In the first chapter of this thesis, I noted that Michael Curtin sees television as “no longer a broadcast medium or a network medium, or even a multi-channel medium” but rather a “matrix medium, an increasingly flexible and dynamic mode of communication.”⁶⁴¹ Similarly, Graeme Turner states that perhaps “rather than witnessing the end of broadcasting or the beginning of post-national television, we are simply watching these two constitutive elements renegotiate their particular roles against an unusually volatile background of hyper-commercialisation and emerging technologies.”⁶⁴² I refer to these two quotes here, at the conclusion of this thesis, to ultimately reflect on whether the American science fiction television series I have considered throughout the preceding chapters can be considered as texts specific to, and representative of, a particular cultural era. I have endeavoured to demonstrate this to indeed be the case, utilising close textual analysis of my chosen case study texts alongside a variety of cultural and theoretical approaches. I have sought to intervene in existing scholarship by identifying the emergence of new representations of the female body, foregrounded in these texts via their engagement with

⁶⁴⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 2

⁶⁴¹ Curtin, p. 13

⁶⁴² Graeme Turner, ‘Television and Nation: Does this Matter Any More?’ in *Television Studies After TV*, eds. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (London: Routledge, 2009)p. 63

the major events of the 21st century, as both innovative and specific to the science fiction genre and television medium. The changing contexts of American broadcast television in the 21st century, in conjunction with the generic properties of science fiction, can be seen to have opened up a cultural intersection in which these representations have been given space to flourish. Yet to characterise the science fiction series which have emerged from this intersection in the first decade of the 21st century as *solely* a cycle of texts is in itself perhaps a restrictive perspective; indeed, it is a term I have avoided using throughout this thesis. Of course, I could not have hoped to consider every American science fiction show produced in the 21st century, ad infinitum. However, not wishing to end this thesis by suggesting these series and the compelling female subjectivities they foreground, could – or should – be contained within the first decade of the 21st century, I instead look ahead to the future potential offered by the protagonists I have considered for further study. Indeed, I contend that these protagonists – which *have* emerged from a specific convergence of genre, medium and national context – may serve to provide a potent blueprint for future representations of the female body within science fiction television; a blueprint that, much like the gendered subjectivities of the series I have considered, enables such future representations of this subjectivity to be ongoing and changing over time. It is this convergence, and the representations of female subjectivity that subsequently manifested therein, to which new series might now be seen to be productively responding to. I conclude by offering one unique example which is illustrative of this potential.

Premiering in 2012 and recently renewed for a third season,⁶⁴³ *Continuum* (Showcase, 2012-) is a Canadian science fiction series which details a group of convicted terrorists – or freedom fighters – who time-travel from the year 2077 to present-day Vancouver to continue their rebellion against the corporate powers who hold political power in their era, and their ongoing conflict with police officer Kiera Cameron (Rachel Nichols) who inadvertently travels with them. Cameron is the focal point of the series and shares similar characteristics with the protagonists I have interrogated in this thesis. She is a figure who is fragmented and in-between: *Continuum* makes frequent use of flashbacks, juxtaposed with its representation of present-day narrative events, to explore Cameron's life in each era. Located in a narrative space which is effectively both her distant past and

⁶⁴³ Matt Webb Mitovich, 'Exclusive: SyFy Picks Up *Continuum* for Season 3,' *TVLine.com* (1 August, 2013) < <http://tvline.com/2013/08/01/continuum-renewed-season-3-syfy/> > [Accessed 1 December, 2013]

subjective present, Cameron must learn to negotiate an environment which is unfamiliar, yet also contains echoes of her future (yet simultaneously past) existence. She joins the Vancouver Police Department to continue her pursuit of the terrorist group Liber8, with whom she travelled back in time. Liber8's goal is to alter their future timeline in which corporations function as the government. Using the technology she brought with her, yet not able to fully reveal her origin to those around her, Cameron becomes a multiple figure: she must balance her past/future subjectivity whilst simultaneously authoring her new self in the present.

I stated above that *Continuum* is, in fact, a Canadian-produced series. As such it obviously falls outside the remit of this thesis, which is an interrogation of 21st century American science fiction television. However, I wish to acknowledge and explore this contradiction here, as I contend that *Continuum* provides a useful example for further study within the wider context with which this thesis has been concerned. A primary reason for this is the fact that the series was originally developed for American broadcast networks, where the changing production practices in the 21st century that I have explored throughout this thesis have opened up new spaces for narratively complex science fiction series to flourish. Creator Simon Barry states:

I had developed the idea for US networks (where I had been selling for several years, but not getting picked up) and before I got a chance to take *Continuum* out and pitch it, I was hired by CBS to write a different pilot. In the middle of that job, my Director friend Pat Williams took a meeting at Showcase Network in Canada and called me in a panic because he didn't have anything to pitch. I gave him the idea for *Continuum* to pass on to the executives there. They immediately saw the potential and hired me to write a pilot script.⁶⁴⁴

Like the case study series I explored in this thesis, *Continuum* also makes explicit its engagement with the socio-cultural events of the era. While the series was ultimately commissioned by a Canadian network before it could be pitched in the US and is set in Vancouver, it can be read as an allegorical representation of any number of North American cities. It has many similarities to *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (its use of time travel and engagement with discourses of motherhood), *Battlestar Galactica* (its representation of 'terrorism' and 'oppression'), *Caprica* (the impact of technological developments and corporate greed) and *Fringe* (its provision of multiple narrative timelines

⁶⁴⁴ Simon Barry, interview by Charlie Jane Anders, 'The Origins of *Continuum*, Our New Favourite Time Travel Show,' *iO9* (24 June, 2012) <<http://io9.com/5920868/the-origins-of-continuum-our-new-favorite-time-travel-show>> [Accessed 1 December, 2013]

and representation of the destabilised city space). Each of these concerns are specifically foregrounded via the representation of protagonist Kiera Cameron, who must actively negotiate this setting and resist the containing structures around her. As such I read Cameron, an in-between figure striving for authorship and autonomy in an uncertain environment, as emblematic of the potency located in multiplicity proposed by the protagonists I have explored in this thesis. Their emergence, within a specific context, genre and medium, has ushered in a new era of representations of the female body in which gendered subjectivities can be both fragmented and positive, in-between and ongoing. The interdisciplinary methodological approach I adopted in this thesis, and the series I have considered, have enabled me to consider how we might understand this ongoing change across a range of subject positions. The success of *Continuum*, a series produced as this thesis approached its conclusion, therefore points to the future opportunities inherent in science fiction broadcast series to embrace the legacy left by Sarah Connor, Olivia Dunham, Sharon and Boomer, and Zoe Graystone.

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- 'There is Another Sky.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.05. Dir. Michael Nankin. SyFy (February 26, 2010)
- 'Unvanquished.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.10. Dir. Eric Stoltz. SyFy (October 5, 2010)
- 'False Labour.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.13. Dir. John Dahl. SyFy (October 26, 2010)
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- 'Dirteaters.' *Caprica*. Episode 1.15. Dir. John Dahl. SyFy (November 9, 2010)
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Continuum. (Showcase, 2012-) Canada: Reunion Pictures/Shaw Media

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- 'There's More Than One of Everything.' *Fringe*. Episode 1.20. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (May 12, 2009)
- 'Jacksonville.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.15. Dir. Charles Beeson. FOX (February 4, 2010)
- 'Peter.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.16. Dir. David Straiton. FOX (April 1, 2010)
- 'Olivia. In the Lab. With the Revolver.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.17. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (April 8, 2010)
- 'Brown Betty.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.20. Dir. Seith Mann. FOX (April 29, 2010)
- 'Over There, Part 1.' *Fringe*. Episode 2.22. Dir. Akiva Goldsman. FOX (May 13, 2010)
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- 'Olivia.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.01. Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX (September 23, 2010)
- 'The Plateau.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.03. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (October 7, 2010)
- 'Amber 31422.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.05. Dir. David Straiton. FOX (November 4, 2010)
- 'The Abducted.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.07. Dir. Chuck Russell. FOX (November 18, 2010)
- 'Entrada.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.08. Dir. Brad Anderson. FOX (December 2, 2010)
- 'Subject 13.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.15. Dir. Fred Toy. FOX (February 25, 2011)
- 'Lysergic Acid Diethylamide.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.19. Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX (April 15, 2011)
- 'The Day We Died.' *Fringe*. Episode 3.22. Dir. Joe Chappelle. FOX (May 6, 2011)
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Lost. (ABC, 2004-2010) USA: ABC Studios/Touchstone Television/Bad Robot/Grass Skirt Productions

Revolution. (NBC, 2012-) USA: Kripke Enterprises/Bad Robot/Warner Bros. Television

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Supernatural. (The WB/The CW, 2005-) USA: Warner Bros. Television/Wonderland Sound
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Pictures/Warner Bros. Television/The Halcyon Company/SyFy

- 'Pilot.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.01. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (January 13, 2008)
- 'Gnothi Seauton.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.02. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (January 14, 2008)
- 'The Turk.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.03. Dir. Paul Edwards. FOX (January 21, 2008)
- 'Heavy Metal.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.04. Dir. Sergio Mimica Gezzan. FOX (February 4, 2008)
- 'Queen's Gambit.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.05. Dir. Matt Earl Beesley. FOX (February 11, 2008)
- 'Dungeons & Dragons.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.06. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (February 18, 2008)
- 'The Demon Hand.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.07. Dir. Charles Beeson. FOX (February 25, 2008)
- 'What He Beheld.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 1.09. Dir. Mike Rohl. FOX (March 3, 2008)
- 'Samson and Delilah.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.01. Dir. David Nutter. FOX (September 8, 2008)
- 'Automatic for the People.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.02. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (September 15, 2008)
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- 'Goodbye to All That.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.05. Dir. Bryan Spicer. FOX (October 6, 2008)
- 'The Tower is Tall but the Fall is Short.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.06. Dir. Tawnia McKiernan. FOX (October 20, 2008)

- 'Brothers of Nabulus.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.07. Dir. Milan Cheylov. FOX (November 3, 2008)
- 'Mr. Ferguson is Ill Today.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.08. Dir. Michael Nankin. FOX (November 10, 2010)
- 'Complications.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.09. Dir. Steven DePaul. FOX (November 17, 2008)
- 'Strange Things Happen at the One-Two Point.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.10. Dir. Scott Peters. FOX (November 24, 2008)
- 'Alpine Fields.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.12. Dir. Charles Beeson and Bryan Spicer. FOX (December 8, 2008)
- 'Earthlings Welcome Here.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.13. Dir. Félix Enríquez Alcalá. FOX (December 15, 2008)
- 'Ourselves Alone.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.17. Dir. Jeff Woolnough. FOX (March 6, 2009)
- 'Born to Run.' *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*. Episode 2.22. Dir. Jeffrey Hunt. FOX (April 10, 2009)

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Wonder Woman. (ABC/CBS, 1975-1979) USA: Bruce Lansbury Productions/Douglas S. Cramer Company/Warner Bros. Television

X-Files, The. (FOX, 1993-2002) USA: Ten Thirteen Productions/20th Century Fox Television/X-F Productions

Xena: Warrior Princess. (First-run Syndication, 1995-2001) USA: MCA Television/Renaissance Pictures/Studios USA Television/Universal TV