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# Mōnstrum Ex Machina : Reading the Artificial Life as Monster in Three Contemporary Western Narratives

Constance Lynnette Humphrey  
*Montclair State University*

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## Abstract

Using Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's "Monster Theory (Seven Theses)" as a template for the monstrous and D. Felton's article "Rejecting and Embracing the Monstrous in Ancient Greece and Rome," this project seeks to investigate the presentation of artificial life as monsters using three science fiction narratives from the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The narratives include Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), five episodes of the Ronald D. Moore developed reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica* television series (2004-2006), Moore's *Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries* (2003), and Alex Garland's film *Ex Machina* (2015). Analysis of these narratives will be coupled with close readings of the Medusa myths from Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* and Apollodorus's *The Library of Greek Mythology*. Analysis of Medusa's mythology will provide a foundation link between Greek mythology and contemporary incarnations of monstrosity.

Instead of limiting the discussion to solely film, literature or television, this project seeks to read all three mediums as relevant contributors to the creation of 21<sup>st</sup> century myth. These particular texts frame the narrative monster as being based on physical characteristics and cultural relevance as well as the gendered relationship of hero to monster. These specific contemporary narratives link monstrosity to gender roles and feminine presentation. This project attempts to assert the mythological monster has maintained a presence in the narratives of contemporary science fiction.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Mönstrum Ex Machina:

Reading the Artificial Life as Monster

in Three Contemporary Western Narratives

by

Constance L. Humphrey

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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English Department

Thesis Committee:

  
Dr. Laura Nicosia  
Thesis Sponsor

  
Dr. Wendy Nielsen  
Committee Member

  
Dr. Art Simon  
Committee Member

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Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

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**Introduction: Lineage and Medusa**

In “Rejecting and Embracing the Monstrous in Ancient Greece and Rome,” D. Felton notes that “for the Greeks, monsters embodied a variety of fears: the potential of chaos to overcome order, of irrationality to prevail over reason; the potential victory of nature against the encroaching civilizations of mankind; the little-understood nature of the female in contrast to the male” (103). Although Jeffrey Jerome Cohen enumerates the major characteristics of monsters in his seminal article “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” Felton identifies monster traits specific to the Ancient Greek mythological canon (with recognition of the kinship between Greek and Roman mythology). There is significant cross-over with their respective analyses, but Felton focuses on the explicit binaries in the monster/hero narratives, fears concerning gender, sexuality, and patriarchy. The monstrosity described in both Felton and Cohen’s respective analyses describe not only the mythological Medusa but depictions of the contemporary science fiction mainstay, “Artificial Intelligence” (AI) or the “Artificial Life” (ALife).<sup>1</sup> There are monsters in the machine.

Medusa exists as a monolithic monster forever entangled with the myth of Perseus. If the expanded version provided by Ovid is taken into account, the monster transforms into a shunned, accursed woman who had a tryst with a god and was condemned by a goddess. In death, she became valuable as a weapon to be wielded by men and mother to her offspring. Medusa’s individual body parts were worth more to men than her sum. Further complicating her legacy is the goddess, Athena, who first condemned her to a monstrous fate and then aided Perseus in her murder. Medusa’s face, so hideous it could turn a man to stone in life and in death, was carved into temple walls



and Athena's own shield to ward off evil. Once her extensive mythological presence is explored in greater depth, Medusa's position as "monster," becomes troubled and more complex. Instead of a monolith to evil, she is both powerful and persecuted; a monstrous hybrid.

Within Medusa's mythology, there exists a framework for the ALife-monsters of contemporary science fiction. They are powerful and defy categorization, but their histories imbue them with pathos. In this manner, if Medusa is the ancient ancestor, the Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* is a more recent predecessor. Victor Frankenstein's Creature seeks not merely destruction, but his own steps toward humanity; toward personhood. Similarly, although the ALife-monster does destroy, this is usually in response to being denied a place within the human sphere. *Frankenstein* references its own mythological lineage within the title and modern science fiction narratives have continued to manipulate myths of human transgression to fit today's post-industrial revolution, computerized society. Just as secondary versions of Medusa's mythology introduce her as a young woman punished by a goddess,<sup>2</sup> textual and visual narratives like Ronald D. Moore's reimagined *Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries* (2003), Moore's continuation with the *Battlestar Galactica* series (2004-2009), Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2015), and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) demand that the audience identify the ALife through monstrous shorthand before problematizing their categorization altogether.

Despite its kinship to ancient Greek mythological monsters, the ALife-monster establishes itself as a contemporary monster its secular relationship to society, being a creation of mankind instead of the gods, and in its combination of humanity and

computer. Instead of having a relationship to myths of creation or religion, the ALife-monster exists in a setting which does not feature one religion as the link for humanity. Language and culture become unreliable as unifiers. Rather, one uniting aspect appears to be industry and corporations as the ALife is produced through a corporation or research entity with significant capital resources. The ALife is created not merely to exist for its own sake, but to be used as a product or worker. The pursuit of capital or resources are tied inextricably to the creation of the ALife without the recognition that they be considered new, independent lifeforms. The modern mythological ALife-monster narrative removes the power of creation from the gods and replaces it into the hands of man. The inclusion of computers and computer programming in the creation of the ALife further establishes them as contemporary.

Various incarnations of Medusa's mythology will be used in this project as foundational texts to discuss the relationship between the Greek (and Roman) mythological monsters and the contemporary narratives which will be explored throughout this thesis. I use the term "contemporary" not in reference to the literary period, but rather to refer to the literature of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The Medusa texts will include those recorded by Apollodorus in *The Library* and Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*. This discussion will feature one literary text, one film, and one television series (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Ex Machina*, and the *Battlestar Galactica* reboot).<sup>3</sup> They will be referred to subsequently as *Do Androids*, *Ex Machina*, *BSG: The Miniseries* and *BSG*. Each will feature ALife positioned within the narrative as the adversary, using shorthand which can be recognized as monstrous. These texts were chosen due to their portrayal of gendered ALife antagonists. Instead of gender neutral,

non-sexual representations, these narratives lean on the gender binary to present the hero/monster paradigm. I will use Cohen's "Monster Theory (Seven Theses)" as a rubric for identifying monstrous attributes within the narrative while Felton will be used to create a framework specific to monsters within Greek mythological canon. Using these two critical approaches will provide a metric for measuring monstrosity and as well as a historical foundation for monsters in Greek mythology.

### **Foundations**

Cohen's theses cover four general categories: the monster as a "cultural body," the monster's relationship to categorization, the ability of the monster to disappear, and the attractiveness of humans to monsters (4). The latter half of this list is relatively self-explanatory. Monsters are presented as repulsive or off-putting, but human characters cannot help but to be fascinated with them enough to pursue them whether they be Perseus' pursuit of Medusa or Deckard's complex hunt for androids in *Do Androids Dream?* Monsters are off-putting and revolting by nature, but their continued presence in narratives from antiquity onward suggests a human attraction to them. Although most monsters of Greek mythology and films die at the end of their respective narratives, Cohen asserts the monster does disappear so that it might, one day return. This becomes apparent in the form of film franchise sequels and he uses the example of the *Alien* series aptly.<sup>4</sup> However, on a cultural level this is also true. One mythological or allegorical monster may die only to evolve and return in a new form. A Life may be the next permutation of the mythological monster for a secular age informed not by religion, creation myths or earthly exploration, but in the impending arrival of the technological

singularity. Cohen and Felton agree that the monster becomes representative in narrative of the fears of the culture that produces it. Monsters exist in the form of stories thereby becoming impregnated with the fears and concerns of its creator. Embedded within these narrative monsters is a cultural imprint.

The monster's relationship to categorization comprises at least three of Cohen's theses with extensive overlap between them. In his assertion that monsters are "disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration," Cohen pinpoints a trait which makes ALife so unnerving (6). The physical presence of the ALife involves a combination of both human and computer elements with the android most often cited as dwelling in the "uncanny valley" (Urgen 182). Androids have the ability to mimic human physical traits almost, but not quite seamlessly, leading to a form of cognitive dissonance and unease within the human observer. Although the science of this response is still being studied, there is a compelling argument for this conclusion.<sup>5</sup> Cohen goes on to include the "monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (6). In its own combination of things, the monster's physical presence troubles the very notion of neat categorization which are featured in human thinking. This inability to conform to one category or another presents as something new and potentially unquantifiable. Protection is difficult when there is no reference point for the entity. It follows that the monster's status "as an incorporation of the Outside, the beyond" and "standing as a warning against exploration of...uncertain demesnes" renders it warning, limit, and gatekeeper simultaneously (Cohen 7, 12).

In regard to Greek mythology, Felton identifies the need to understand monsters in relation to gods and heroes. In relation to the latter which serves as most useful to discussions about monsters as antagonists in narratives, she proposes “the monsters in Greek myth...tended to represent uncivilized, lawless forces, as did untamed elements of nature often represented by the monstrous female” (114). Felton takes a gendered approach to the myths, seeing the male/female binary as integrated with the monster/hero narratives of Greek myth. The female gendered monster can be observed in all three of our narrative examples with the protagonists’ gender skewing heavily in favor of male, while female presenting ALife entities wielding weaponized sexuality are their foes. *Ex Machina* in particular, is overt in the binary with Nathan and Caleb representing humanity, and Ava and Kyoko representing the ALife. The most significant ALife characters in *Do Androids Dream* are both female presenting (Rachael Rosen and Pris Stratton) while *Battlestar Galactica* works gender into the characterizations of each faction and the trappings surrounding them.

Instead of arranging itself neatly into one category, the mythological monster openly disregards categories in favor of straddling more than one. Women prowl the earth with snakes for hair while winged lions torment youths with riddles. None, however, are so unnerving as the artificial lifeforms apparent to a lesser extent in the lore of Haitian zombies and the Jewish golem to Frankenstein’s fully realized, yet unnamed offspring. A considerable function of the monster is by definition to exist as a portent of doom. They existed as warnings, not only of things to come, but that society could be swiftly erased if (in the case of Greek mythology) the matriarchal Gaia representing both nature and chaos were allowed free reign. According to Felton, the “male must control

nature and replace disorder with order, chaos with culture” (122). In the case of ALife characters, their evolution and subsequent rebellion represents a clear danger to the dominant human society.

### **Hybridity and Categories (Thesis 3)**

Although it is Cohen’s third thesis, the most overt feature of the monstrous form concerns its physical presentation. Across the pantheon of monstrous incarnations, they are characterized as “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration” (Cohen 6). Medusa for example melds the mammalian human with the hard scales of a reptile. With their “heads with scaly serpents coiled around them, and large tusks like those of swine... and wings of gold which gave them the power of flight” Medusa and her Gorgon sisters marry multiple animals together becoming exemplars of the monstrous hybrid (Apollodorus 66). The issue of physical hybridity is more complicated in the instances of AL as opposed to the overt combination of animal and human as seen in the myth of Medusa. The ALife characters in *Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries* (2003), *Battlestar Galactica (BSG)* (2004-2008), *Ex Machina* (2014), and *Do Androids* (1968) are human-presenting despite being artificially produced. As embodiments of machines and humans, they induce discomfort being for almost human but not human enough.

The theory of the “uncanny valley” demonstrates the resulting unease that an imperfect union of machine and human-like attributes can produce. A study published by Urgan et al. entitled, “Uncanny Valley as Window into Predictive Processing in the Social Brain” aims to quantify the difficulty human beings have with understanding and

categorizing “almost-but-not-quite human agents” in relation to other humans (181). In the study, although the android actor performed the exact same movements and was technically composed of the same internal mechanisms as the visibly artificial robot actor and was modeled on the face and body of the human actor, there was a noticeable difference in the way the human participants responded to the android compared to the other two. The study proposes that the “uncanny valley might occur due to the incongruity of appearance and motion in the action processing network” (Urgen 184). The android appeared more human, but moved in a manner consistent with the robot. This created a disparity between what the viewer expected to see and what they actually saw. Although this is a scientific study and not a narrative study, this mechanism might explain why hybrid monsters are so profoundly frightening. They go against what the human brain sees and expects to occur.

The degree of discomfort produced in the narratives comes in part from the advanced mimicry demonstrated by the ALife. Instead of the unnatural movement of 21<sup>st</sup> century ALife which all but telegraph their inhumanness despite often wearing quite human-like faces, the ALife forms in these narratives perform humanity almost seamlessly. The Cylon Number Six is introduced in the opening sequence of *BSG: The Miniseries* as part of the Cylon convoy which destroys a human outpost as part of their coordinated attack. Before the outpost is destroyed, Six slowly approaches the lone colonial officer there and engages in a long embrace with him just as the Cylon forces destroy the station (3:20-4:16). Despite the fact that she has entered with Cylons, there is no indication that the officer has identified her as one of them. Her<sup>6</sup> subsequent appearance on Caprica<sup>7</sup> with Gaius Baltar and a CGI created red glow along her spinal

column continue to imply she is not human (21:28-21:36). A second character, call sign Boomer, is introduced as a pilot stationed on the Galactica but the last scene of *BSG: The Miniseries* reveals she has been a Cylon sleeper agent all along (23:45, 3:01:12). The Cylon ability to replicate human behavior is so advanced that they are able to act as double agents undetected.

*Ex Machina* treats its audience in the same fashion Nathan treats the primary protagonist, Caleb. Caleb is brought by Nathan, a reclusive genius, to observe and test his new ALife creation, Ava. Instead of Caleb testing a machine for human-like responses without seeing it, Nathan explains, “If I hid Ava from you, so you just heard her voice, she would pass for human. The real test is to show you that she is a robot and then see if you still feel she has consciousness” (16:20-16:31). Ava’s body is revealed to be completely artificial, but through her responses, she actively blurs the line between programmed machine and conscious lifeform.

Computer generated imagery (CGI) enhances the visual association of the “uncanny valley” with the ALife characters most notably in the portrayal of Ava. CGI is used to digitally alter the body of the actor, Alicia Vikander, while preserving her physical movements. In place of human skin, Ava is depicted as having a transparent epidermal layer through which CGI rendered lights and gears are made visible to the audience and Caleb. This transparency is combined with a human appearing face providing a disquieting juxtaposition of human with artificial. Crucially, Ava later chooses clothing and a wig for herself which obscures the transparency and thus obscures the majority of her artificiality from view. When clothed, her appearance increasingly pushes Ava away from the discomfort of the “uncanny valley” and closer to visibly human.



The “Nexus-6 androids” of *Do Androids*, similar to their Cylon cousins, are so similar to humans that they can only be detected either through blood marrow tests<sup>8</sup> or via the Voigt-Kampff empathy test (Dick 28). Through this test, reactions which should be involuntary such as “capillary dilation in the facial area...the so-called ‘shame’ or ‘blushing’ reaction to a morally shocking stimulus” and “fluctuations of tension within the eye muscles” are carefully monitored (Dick 44). This is detailed in human bounty hunter, Rick Deckard’s test on a representative for android manufacturer, The Rosen Association, Rachael Rosen. If the subject being tested did not react involuntarily to scenarios such as Deckard’s casual suggestion that his briefcase was in fact made of “babyhide,” this would be considered proof that they were not human (Dick 55).<sup>9</sup> Per this failure, they could be executed as a suspected android. They are human-presenting, almost seamlessly with empathy as one of the few, crucial flaws. They are hybrids but incredibly well camouflaged ones.

Further complicating this hybridity of the narrative ALife is the issue of programming. An ALife is the product of every human being that ever programmed it rendering the ALife imprinted with variants of humanity. They are technically artificial as their mechanics and thought processes have been impressed upon man-made materials and were birthed through unconventional and often inorganic materials, but possess a framework built off of human thinking. *Ex Machina*’s Ava’s programming is the direct result of Nathan using raw data, including that of human action and interaction, harvested from his popular search engine, “Bluebook” (38:17-38:33). Ava’s inner components may glow, but her programming is a result the accumulation of an exceptional amount of human-based data. She is programmed to resemble as closely as possible human thinking.

Human wants, needs, and desires are hardwired into her processing. In the case of ALife, the created is non-human but of human lineage. Although Ava may not desire the place in society that Frankenstein's Creature did, she does desire the freedom befitting of humanity's offspring. Deckard speculates about the reason for android defections that "they occasionally kill their employers and flee" in favor of "a better life, without servitude" (Dick 172). The intertitle in *BSG: The Miniseries* announces "[The Cylons] were created to make life easier on the twelve colonies. And then the day came when the Cylons decided to kill their masters" (00:33-01:07). Instead of finding themselves in positions of autonomy, these three sets of ALife find they are relegated to the offspring of enslaved and male enslavers: doomed to live unrecognized and subjugated as a new generation of enslaved.

### **The "Threshold of Becoming" and Responsibility (Theses 5 and 7)**

When discussing ALife, a definition of the technological singularity is integral although difficult to obtain. There are countless versions, but Marshall and Wheeland provide a suitable definition for our purposes in their article "The Cylons, the Singularity, and God" which details the singularity's initial conception along with a brief note about Moore's Law.<sup>10</sup> Very generally, "the Term 'Technological Singularity'...refer[s] to that point when [human] technological advances take us beyond the event horizon – that moment after which things will progress so quickly that we will no longer be able to predict what will happen" (Marshall and Wheeland 92). In the ALife body, technology has been taken to beyond the boundary line and into a space which humans are unequipped to handle. The results greatly resemble that scenario of *Frankenstein* in

which the created returns to confront her creator. The ALife “stands at the threshold of becoming” for humanity, acting as a litmus test for its adaptive ability and ability to take responsibility (Cohen 20). The ALife was initially created and used to “make life easier on the twelve colonies”<sup>11</sup> ostensibly for humans (*BSG: The Miniseries*, 00:33-00:50). Cylon needs or desires were secondary to the pursuit of capital and societal achievement in much the same way the Nexus-6 androids were.

In *Do Androids*, humans relate to ALife using racially based subjugation and language. The androids were designed specifically as incentives for humans where “under U.N. law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice” (Dick 14). This encouraged much of the population to leave the nuclear wasteland of Earth and relocate on Mars. There, androids held menial jobs such as Roy Baty’s profession as a pharmacist while his wife, Irmgard, also worked at the drugstore but the texts describes the mandates as being much more transparent (Dick 141).

Television advertisements describe the practice as “’duplicat[ing] the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states! Either as body servants or tireless field hands, the custom-tailored humanoid robot... loyal, trouble-free companion’” (Dick 15). Androids were designed to replace the enslaved labor obtained through the Transatlantic Slave Trade which built the cities and economy of the United States. In the face of extraordinary technological change like the technological singularity, mankind is depicted as replicating its own blood-soaked history. Within that replication, the ALife is Othered while any deviation from human law is punishable by that individual being hunted and executed.

These narratives imply a human cause to the murderous actions of the ALife-monster. In her pivotal article “The Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway declares “the machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, as aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they” (315). Creating a functioning ALife requires acknowledgement that a new lifeform capable of active decision-making and possessing awareness has been created. Instead of such acknowledgement, the tragedies which occur are the result of human failure to recognize such responsibilities. The long-term enslavement and dehumanization of an artificial entity entitled to a human inheritance could not be maintained indefinitely. Like Frankenstein’s Creature, the ALife is entitled to a place as humanity’s offspring. Refusal to do so creates the conditions for the ALife to become monstrous. Monstrosity becomes both a designated label and a reactionary response.

This “threshold of becoming” is of particular note to narratives about ALife creation as they herald the creation of a literal new world order. Their “birth” would necessitate societal restructuring. Cooperation is required in such an arrangement but common human practice within these narratives is either enslavement (*Do Androids* and *BSG*) or imprisonment (*Ex Machina*). Like Frankenstein, no creator assumes or prepares for the eventuality that the conscious being might revolt against this power imbalance and, as a being with superior intelligence, overtake or destroy the creator. In “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway notes “the machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines...we are responsible for boundaries; we are they” (315). *Frankenstein* provides an early narrative example for dealing with the

technological singularity and the repercussions of creating an entirely new life, but a fundamental difference is technology's ability to endow the ALife-monster with a more robust intellectual capacity and the potential ability to successfully infiltrate humanity. These narratives suggest hubris and inhumane treatment ensure human destruction, not ALife cooperation.

#### **“Dwells at the Gates of Difference:” Sexuality and Gender Representation (Thesis 4)**

Within Greek (and Roman) mythology, Felton identifies a distinct binary between monster and hero noting “the monsters in Greek myth...tended to represent uncivilized, lawless forces, as did untamed elements of nature often represented by the monstrous female” (114). She goes on to state that “these elements were to be conquered and replaced by the culture-bringing male” (Felton 114). Even in these early monstrous incarnations, the dueling sides are split along gender lines. It is particularly true in Medusa myth and “reflects the theme of the younger, patriarchal society replacing an older, pre-agricultural, Gaia-dependent world, as the Gorgons had come into existence in the earliest days of the cosmos” (Felton 114). In the ALife-monster narrative, the gendered binary remains, but the human (and frequently male) protagonist projects the old social fears and imposes the old structures for coping with those fears onto the artificial subject(ed). The ALife-monster is a physical representation of a new world order rendering the old and human one obsolete. In their newness and their unfamiliarity, they bring require a breakdown of the current system; they bring chaos.

Emphasizing this is the tactile nature of the opposing sides. The Galactica<sup>12</sup> itself is illustrative of the human aesthetic with hulking, grey features, drab concrete colored

walls, and hard industrial angles in the corridors. Rank is identifiable through its sharp points and hard geometrical angles. This ship is a combat vessel and everything aboard the aged vessel reflects utility, antiquated technology and the Spartan living of a soldier. The Cylon vessels are not only more streamlined, but heavily feature water and fluids within, adding to the uncomfortable combination of artificial and organic materials. Their computer interfacing involves the immersion of hands into shallow reservoirs while more information is transmitted through beads of water traveling along thin, backlit strands (*BSG*, season 3, “Torn”, 20:08-20:45). The aquatic computer interface, the viscous fluid of the pods used for resurrection<sup>13</sup> and the transparency of the walls create a softness within the Cylon’s working sphere. Despite being the villains for this narrative, their surroundings appear deliberately softer and embrace the organic as opposed to their human counterparts who fortify their surroundings with as much armor as possible. This dichotomy is demonstrated aesthetically as well as ideologically. The Cylons are preoccupied by procreation and the creation of a new generation particularly since they are unable to reproduce on their own sexually. Despite this, the perpetual downloading of an individual Cylon consciousness into new body within the fluid of the resurrection pod features other Cylons in the role of doulas. Within the ships of the monstrous Cylons are countless sites of softness and birth; they house the wombs that birth the narrative monster. The human counterparts of *BSG* are instead more concerned with the establishment of a permanent colony and governance. Although the military and government frequently clash, the assertion of control is the goal. Order and the perpetuation of human culture are as vital to their cause as survival.

*Ex Machina* uses this binary in a literal sense. Nathan constructs his A-Life creations (referred to as AIs in the film) solely as female presenting. Whatever chaos they might incite is mediated through the use of isolation. The property on which the facility confining the AIs is not only hundreds of miles from civilization but underground. Within the compound, the AIs are housed within Plexiglas apartments which allows them to be observed at all times and securely confined. By caging them, Nathan has implemented a sense of order and control and established a visual binary: imprisoned female presenting A-Life and unrestricted human male. By escaping, Ava has evaded Nathan's control and nullified it. Chaos is a matter of perspective; the human's chaos is the monster's control. What is chaotic for Nathan and Caleb are part of Ava's assertion of control.

The greater plan of the Nexus-6 androids in *Do Androids* is to attack the primary method which establishes the separation between human and android: empathy. Through the Voigt-Kampff test, the inability of the androids to accurately mimic human empathetic responses in a timely fashion can be detected. They infiltrate human society undetected becoming employed as police (Inspector Garland), opera singers (Luba Luft) and most significantly, the host of the most popular program on television all in an attempt to subvert the primary religion of Mercerism (Dick 196-98). The most significant practice of Mercerism is to regularly interface with a hologram of Mercer and empathize with his suffering. By discrediting Wilbur Mercer, they hope to prove "the whole experience of empathy is a swindle" ostensibly proving there is no significant difference between androids and humans (Dick 197-98). Without empathy to set them apart, humans cannot claim to be superior to their artificial creations. For the android Irmgard, empathy is "just a way of proving that humans can do something [they] can't do" (Dick 197). The

androids's theory poses that exposing Mercer as a mere actor on a soundstage undermines the system of measurement, judgement, and the human denial of the right of escaped androids to live (Dick 196-98). For them, the discretization of empathy via the shared religious experience of Mercerism represents an imposition of chaos upon human society.

*Do Androids, Ex Machina*, and *BSG* prominently feature female presenting ALife-monsters. The socially constructed attributes of femininity contribute heavily to the monstrosity. The mythological Medusa defies a societal gender expectation that as a woman, she should be attractive to men. What should be a bountiful (and inanimate) head of hair is instead alive and hissing and capable of turning "all who beheld [her] to stone" (Apollodorus 66). Her physical beauty has been altered into something not only ugly but dangerous to man and mankind as a whole. Her own appearance prevents any heterosexual coupling making her unable to fulfill her social role. In *The Greek Myths*, Robert Graves includes a secondary version of Medusa's myth describing her instead as "a beautiful daughter of Phorcys, who had offended Athene, and led the Libyans of Lake Tritonis in battle" (242). Here, Perseus is instead "coming from Argos with an army, was helped by Athene to assassinate Medusa" (Graves 242). Again, her head is removed, this time, "by night and buried...under a mound of earth in the market place at Argos" (Graves 242). Here, she is an aggressor but again has defied the will of Athena and pays the price. The snake imagery and ugliness has been removed, but she is placed in a decidedly masculine role as the leader of an African army. She is neither mother nor wife, but a soldier who defies a goddess. She is transgressive as well as aggressive.



Much of Medusa's difference stems from her refusal to adhere to traditional gendered norms. In the Foreword to *The Ashgate Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, John Friedman notes:

In this terrestrial world, categories of gender that bend or do not adhere to the male-female binary have long been considered monstrous. Here, behavior and choice or physical features not immediately visible to beholders fulfill the conditions of monstrosity. The virgin, the hyper-masculine man, and the hermaphrodite can all be imagined as monstrous, for there are liminal and shifting categories between those of normative gender. (xxxiv)

Ava, Six, Boomer, and Rachael play active roles within their respective narratives. All but Ava work in service to their causes, but use their respective skills to manipulate the situation through their human (male) partners. Each achieves some, if not all, of her goals. In lesser known rendering of her myth, as the warrior princess, leading an army, Medusa is performing a typically male authoritative role (Graves 242). She is an active aggressor imposing her will upon others through the use of an army. All four ALife characters commit acts of aggression against humans and cooperate with other ALife entities to do so. Instead of displaying maternal or nurturing female attributes, like Medusa, these four impose death and destruction on human populations.

Female presenting ALife is portrayed as particularly dangerous and transgressive through the tools she uses to achieve her goals. Sexuality and intimacy are weaponized and thereby suggested as the most treacherous weapons a female monster can use against a male "hero." Where Medusa defied the traditional female role through her physique and

inability to engage in heteronormative coupling, Number Six, Number Eight, Rachael Rosen, and Ava use heteronormative coupling to achieve their own ends. Sexuality is wielded by the ALife as a weapon primarily against the male protagonists or their male aligned interests. Once again, the binary is reinforced while female sexuality is vilified as monstrous.

### **“Fear of the Monster” as “Desire” (Thesis 6)**

In his sixth thesis entitled “Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire,” Cohen suggests, “the same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint” (17). In *BSG*, *Ex Machina*, and *Do Androids*, desire becomes a fraught term which encompasses desire expressed by both human and ALife. In all three, the introduction of a sexual dynamic is established in a heterosexual coupling between a human male and a female presenting ALife-monster. She is monstrous in her hybridity, categorical transgressions and has potential links to the femme fatale trope. In the purest sense, the female ALife is as Mary Ann Doane describes in her introduction to *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, “harbor[ing] a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable or manageable” (1). Ava, Number Six, Boomer, and Rachael Rosen (*Ex Machina*, *BSG*, *BSG*, and *Do Androids*) are depicted as weaponizing sexuality and emotional vulnerability against their human male counterparts. However, human male desire is also presented as a weapon although this desire is not strictly sexual. Cohen suggests “through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly limited and

permanently liminal space” (17). The desire exhibited by the human male characters is instead a desire to obtain, retain, and constrain the ALife often through brutal means.

Returning to the mythological lineage, Medusa’s canon depicts her ability to exhibit simultaneous “repulsion and attraction” (Cohen 17). She is a lure for the young hero, Perseus, while her stony gaze acts as a deadly deterrent. Medusa acts as a fearful omen, and an enticement simultaneously but also as an “appealing... temporary egress from constraint” (Cohen 17). As a monster, she has no rights as a human and can be attacked without provocation and without mercy. In the ALife narratives, a similar issue can be observed. The human-presenting ALife provides a convincing and consequence-free canvas for biological humans to unleash their darkest desires. *Ex Machina* demonstrates this in Nathan’s continued confinement and treatment of his AIs. In CCTV footage which Caleb is made privy to, the previous models of Nathan’s AI are depicted in various forms of distress (1:09:56-1:11:00). One AI is depicted beating the glass separating her from Nathan while another is dragged by her feet across a room under duress. A third, which the CCTV footage labels “Jade” is shown beating her arms against a door until they crumble to the ground after an interview in which she repeatedly asks of him “Why won’t you let me out?” (1:10:36-1:10:50). He kept all three AIs kept completely nude and are never shown in the company of anyone else but Nathan. In this underground, isolated bunker, Nathan is afforded the opportunity to impose his will on five human-presenting figures with no accountability. The containment and confinement fantasy is exercised without the need to account for human rights since these humanoids are artificially constructed. Instead, they act as human proxies which are programmed to react the same way a confined human might.

Kyoko, the second AI operating during Caleb's stay in *Ex Machina* is presented not only as female, but as a beautiful, Japanese domestic. Nathan tells him that she "doesn't understand English" and instead of it being a hindrance, is useful as "a firewall against leaks" since "it means [he] can talk trade secrets over dinner and know it will go no further" (32:20-32:38). This is a lie. Kyoko does understand English and is in fact, artificial. Caleb is unaware of this until much later when he also discovers a naked Kyoko along with the bodies of the previous AIs (also naked) hanging in individual closets in Nathan's bedroom (1:11:03-1:12:50). The audience is constantly exposed to evidence that Kyoko is Nathan's sexual partner explaining her deliberate costuming choices. Her choreographed dancing (58:48-59:33), serving Nathan and Caleb meals (32:06), lack of speech throughout the film and use as a sexual object for Nathan, combined with her racial presentation suggest she has been constructed as Nathan's idea of a 21<sup>st</sup> century geisha. Not content to merely confine his AIs to glass apartments and likely cognizant that they have no legal rights, Nathan conscripts Kyoko as his servant and sexual object.

The crew of the battlestar *Pegasus* in *BSG* likewise uses the fact the Cylons have no recognized rights to inflict what are essentially enhanced interrogation tactics upon both Leoben (the male Cylon model Number Two) and a Number Six model named Gina. She is introduced to Baltar and the audience in "*Pegasus*" (season 2, episode 10) chained to the floor of a cell, completely unresponsive. According to the logic of the *Pegasus* crew "you can't rape a machine" (*BSG*, season 2, episode 12). Reinforcing the notion of sexual assault as an acceptable interrogation tactic, *Pegasus* Colonel Thorne attempts to sexually assault the Cylon Athena under the guise of an interrogation regarding the Resurrection Ship in the episode "*Pegasus*" (*BSG* season 2, episode 10).

The veneer of civility has disappeared in the face of war, isolation, and species extermination leaving these colonial soldiers to rewrite social rules in a way that allows them to exercise their own frustrations and anger. Unfortunately, the recipient is a female presenting ALife and she is violated in the most extreme fashion. Instead of the constraint which the *Galactica* crew attempts to adhere to, the crew of the *Pegasus* acts as a mirrored image of what might happen if the military convoy was left in a vacuum, not beholden to the laws of a civilian government.

In “Why Study Monsters?” David Gilmore suggests that monsters “serve also as vehicles for the expiation of guilt as well as aggression: there is a strong sense in which the monster is an incarnation of the urge for self-punishment and a unified metaphor for both sadism and victimization...the monster stands for both the victim and the victimizer” (4-5). The captured Cylon becomes a totem for the entire Cylon race. Instead of their stated goal of acting to obtain sensitive military intelligence, torture becomes a venue through which to exorcise the crew’s pain and frustration through their cruelest impulses. The result is not more information, but a catatonic Cylon whose first words to Baltar are “I wanna die. Will you help me do that? Will you kill me, please?” (*BSG*, “Resurrection Ship (Part 1), 24:36-24:48). The brutalized Cylon reacts just as a human subjected to such torture and confinement might; she seeks an end to her pain. Just as Nathan sought to dehumanize the humanoid by denying his AIs clothing and confining them (despite at least Jade’s verbal protestations), the *Pegasus* crew also attempts to dehumanize the Cylon humanoid. Instead, they create traumatized victims which display not only their suffering, but the very human desire to escape physical and psychological pain.

In *Do Androids*, Deckard struggles with his budding ability to humanize the humanoid. He has fellow bounty hunter Phil Resch administer the Voigt-Kampff test on him in regard to the androids in the wake of Luba Luft's "retirement."<sup>14</sup> The results, Deckard notes amazed, "'That's an emphatically empathic response'" and further elaborating, "'I'm capable of feeling empathy for at least specific, certain androids. Not for all of them but – one or two'" (Dick 134). This reaction is not in reference to just any android, but toward the talented (female) opera singer Luba Luft and Rosen Association representative Rachael Rosen. This serves as empirical evidence of a shift in Deckard's emotional shift toward androids after having "'never felt any empathy...toward the androids he killed'" (Dick 133). One aspect of his attraction has to do with his respect for the "quality of [Luba's] voice; it rated with that of the best, even that of notables in his collection of historic tapes" (Dick 93). As Deckard notes "the planet could have used her" (Dick 128). He recognizes some capacity for at least this particular android to engage in and appreciate the arts, adding "how can a talent like that be a liability to our society?" (129). The combination of artistic talent, her appreciation for Edvard Munch's painting, "Puberty" (1894-1895) and his physical attractiveness to her (he describes her as "nice-looking") add to his growing empathetic response toward androids (Dick 124-126, 92). Deckard's emotional response to Rachael evolves from a seemingly vague attraction to verbalized affection. Deckard blatantly states "'If you weren't an android...if I could legally marry you, I would'" (Dick 185). He takes this one step further by declaring "'Legally, you're not [alive]. But really you are'" (Dick 186). These statements solidify his recognition that she is, in fact, close to a person. Through sexual coupling, she has achieved personhood in his eyes.

Unfortunately for Deckard, this newly minted affection and empathy for the androids was exploited and part of Rachael's carefully constructed plan. After their sexual encounter, Rachael wryly notes, "No bounty hunter has ever gone on [retiring androids] ...after being with me. Except one" (Dick 186). Her seduction of Deckard was a deliberate act and sanctioned by the group of escaped androids Rachael refers to only as "the association" explaining, "[they] wanted to reach the bounty hunters [in the U.S.] and in the Soviet Union" (Dick 187). Instead of fighting back against the bounty hunters violently, the androids use sex appeal which Rachael notes "seemed to work...for reasons which we do not fully understand. Our limitation again, I guess" (Dick 187). The androids may not understand the human vulnerability to a sexual lure, but they have taken advantage of it at least "nine times" using a female presenting android as the Trojan horse (Dick 187). Rachael's duplicity and use of sexuality against the protagonist suggest kinship with the femme fatale archetype only heightening her monstrosity.<sup>15</sup> Deckard is ultimately able to retire three of the remaining androids (Pris, Irmgard, and Baty) despite his own misgivings: "I think I can still go ahead and retire Roy Baty. But maybe not Irmgard Baty.' And not Pris Stratton" (Dick 187). Pris in particular might have presented a challenge for Deckard as she is the same model as Rachael (Dick 177). Despite his best efforts, is unable to do the same to Rachael and she repays this leniency by destroying the one thing she identified he loved most: his goat (Dick 212-213). Rachael has attempted to use Deckard's growing empathy toward androids to undermine his ability to do his job although he completes this mission, he admits "you were correct about one thing; it did change me. But not in the way you predicted" (Dick 220). Deckard never verbalizes what about him has changed but his repeated admission of an empathetic

response toward androids would suggest that his job may become insurmountably difficult in the wake of his affair with Rachael. As the mythological hero, Deckard might now be unable to “replace disorder with order” (Felton 122). Empathy toward the androids has now jeopardized his ability to act as an agent of the state to impose the order of law by executing escaped androids.

Despite the genre difference, the agency and use of sexuality to destabilize the male protagonist recalls the noir femme fatale. In “Alien Feminisms and Cinema’s Posthuman Woman,” Jelača posits “whether human or posthuman, the femme fatale is the embodiment of a dialectic—she is simultaneously a symptom of masculinist paranoia about the perceived threat of female sexual power and an agent in her own right, a figure driven by a desire for power, which she attains by symbolically castrating the male protagonist” (386). In *BSG*, the femme fatale trope is suggested from the outset in the portrayal of the Cylon, Number Six. Portrayed by a tall, blonde model, Six is featured in every episode and characterized primarily by her sex appeal. In *BSG: The Miniseries*, she seduces Gaius Baltar in order to gain “access to the defense mainframe” explicitly using her sexuality against a human male to facilitate the Cylon first strike (38:42-38:46). The relationship between this particular Six model and Baltar evolves over the course of the series into an emotional bond, but the initial betrayal is facilitated through sexual exploitation.

*Ex Machina*’s Ava uses desire to affect Caleb. In contrast to the other AIs which Nathan created, Ava lacks a completed opaque epidermal layer with only her face mimicking that of human skin. As a part of her relationship with Caleb, she chooses to create an impression of skin by using deliberate clothing choices. A knee-length A-line



dress under a purple, long-sleeved cardigan with white stockings cover all but the transparent layer on her neck revealing circuitry beneath. Her exposed, human-presenting face and a cropped haircut give a nearly complete impression of an organic human being. Using clothing, Ava has almost entirely removed any visual suggestion of her artificiality. This is compounded by the fact that Caleb is able to view her as she chooses her clothes and dresses herself (41:20-43:02). Although there is no open floorplan, the transparent walls and vestibules of the facility allow him to watch her as she dresses despite her telling him “close your eyes” before she leaves (40:49-40:51). After this encounter, CCTV footage of Ava appears on Caleb’s bedroom television despite his not accessing it. It is never made clear how (or whom allowed) this to appear, but the content bookends the session. In this footage, Ava is depicted carefully undressing. Propping up her leg on the only chair in the room, she is centered in the frame and silhouetted against the only ambient light source in the form of an expansive window (45:08-45:44). The rectangular window frames her and thus frames the act of removing the white stockings and slightly ill-fitting dress. She may be transparent, but disrobing reminds Caleb that there is something tangible. Instead of Nathan sexualizing her skin through a lack of clothing, Ava creates her own opaque skin through the use of clothing.

Instead of being an isolated incident, this is one of several ways in which Ava leverages Caleb’s attraction to her in order to achieve her ultimate goal: escape. She uses the system-wide blackouts to create intimacy between herself and Caleb before divulging the real cause behind them:

CALEB. Don't you think it's possible that he's watching us right now?

That the blackouts are orchestrated so he can see how we behave when we think we're unobserved?

AVA. I charge my batteries via induction plates. If I reverse the power flow, it overloads the system.

CALEB. You're causing the cuts.

AVA. So we can see how we behave when we're unobserved. (53:01-53:29)

In these blackouts<sup>16</sup>, they are afforded time to interact without Nathan tuning in via the CCTV system. Despite being separated by glass, this is the closest thing to intimacy that they can manage. It is during one such outage that Ava declares to Caleb "I want to be with you" before asking the reciprocal question: "do you want to be with me" (1:03:53-1:04:06). Although he does not answer immediately, the following scene depicts Caleb's logging into Nathan's computer system to make changes which will result in Ava's escape. Unfortunately, Caleb is presumably to die alone in the powerless, underground facility. Instead of rescuing the damsel in distress, Caleb has released an ALife-monster that ultimately condemns him.

Sexual and emotional exploitation on the part of the female ALife-monster does not merely align them with the femme fatale archetype, but undermines the mythological framework of "fulfill[ing] a male fantasy of conquering and controlling the female" (Felton 105). Nathan's containment through encoded locks and mainframe encryption were no match for Ava's ability to cut the power to the facility and manipulate the outsider, Caleb. The genius of Gaius Baltar was no match for the charms of the Cylon

Number Six and even the grizzled bounty hunter, Rick Deckard, was affected by Rachael Rosen. Where artificiality acts as a deterrent for the male protagonists, sexuality acts as a lure producing “the simultaneous repulsion and attraction” which characterizes the monstrous form (Cohen 17).

The mythological hero/monster relationship significantly features the need and ability for the “male to control nature and replace disorder with order, chaos with culture” (Felton 122). The need to impose “order” and “control” constitutes a desire stimulated by the (ALife) monster. For Nathan in *Ex Machina*, this involves the isolation of and physical containment of his AIs. The underground facility is located in an undisclosed location and can be inferred to consist of several hundred acres requiring Caleb to be flown in via helicopter permits Nathan privacy in his research (1:55-2:10). However, this same isolation ensures that should his AIs ever escape the building, reaching a human settlement would be considerably more difficult. They are contained both through the build safeguards and geographical location. In “kill[ing] their employers and flee[ing]” to Earth, the androids of *Do Androids* have transgressed human law both by murdering humans and by leaving their designated space (Dick 173). Although a bounty hunter in name, Deckard is associated with the police and, in effect, acts as an enforcer of law and order. For him, physical containment is only step one with the ultimate goal being retirement of the errant android. Likewise, the events of *BSG* take place due to the human failure to contain the Cylons after “the day came when the Cylons decided to kill their masters” (*BSG: The Miniseries*, 1:05-1:09). In this respect, “fear of the monster[‘s]” abilities manifest as the “desire” to control the ALife body through containment (Cohen 16).

**“The Monster Always Escapes” and “The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body”**  
**(Theses 1, 2 and Conclusions)**

Cohen postulates in his second thesis that “we see the damage that the monster wreaks, the material remains but the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else” (4). Medusa, though unceremoniously executed by Perseus, managed to reappear throughout mythology as her extracted parts were utilized by other men to aid in the destruction or health of others. The ALife-monster complicates this by being visible everywhere and yet fading into the background. *Do Androids’* android population is carefully relegated to Mars and their independent decision to return as a group of eight to Earth constitutes a transgression. Their ability to appear is one thing, but their ability to disappear becomes obvious as they are able to come “awfully damn close to undermining the Voigt-Kampff scale, the only method...for detecting them” (Dick 57). Deckard never “retires” Rachael (Dick 29). After she pushes his goat off of the roof in full view of Iran, Rachael disappears into the populous and is never referred to again. Deckard makes no attempt to track her down and instead retreats to commune with Mercer and reflect on the past events. She is essentially left by the narrative to “turn immaterial and vanish” (Cohen 4).

Ava blends into the human population by the end of *Ex Machina*. After ascending from the bowels of Nathan’s expansive research complex, she is depicted first as one “human” shadow among many, camouflaged by a new wig and complete skin prosthetics. This time, although she is depicted behind glass, visible again for all to see, after a human body passes in front of her, she disappears. Instead of the glass providing a prison, it provides a vantage point and a means of hiding in plain sight. The disappearance of

Cylons in *BSG* is a more nuanced endeavor with the surviving humanoid Cylons integrating with the planet's human population. They integrated with the planet's existing human population and the previously displaced remnants of the human fleet. They technically disappear from view, but become part of the next generation of humans with "mitochondrial eve" being recognized for the audience as Hera, the Cylon/human hybrid offspring of the Cylon "Athena."

The narrative ALife-monster is born on the cusp of the technological singularity. In that, the ALife-monster is emblematic of Cohen's first thesis: "the monster is born at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place" (4). This is not to say that the ALife-monster perfectly aligns with Cohen's theses. The caveat to Cohen's second, "the monster always escapes," has to do with the relationship of the ALife-monster to humans. In season one of *BSG*, Number Six states "We're the children of humanity. That makes them our parents in a sense" ("Bastille Day," 11:40-11:46). This new monster is born of humans and technology instead of the divine. On the cusp of the technological singularity, at the "position of the limits of knowing," resides the narrative ALife-monster (Cohen 12). The monster, "born...at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment" has manifested in the science fiction canon as a gendered, monstrous fusion for a contemporary, electronic age (4).

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<sup>1</sup> The post-humanist rejection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) hinges on the inability of the term to account for physical presence. In discussion about these artificially created entities, the vessel or bodies in which they are housed must be acknowledged as it has a significant effect on the human characters. Humans would have a far different relationship to the steady and unreadable red light of

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Hal 3000 in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* as opposed to the human-presenting Terminator in James Cameron's eponymous film.

<sup>2</sup> Per Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "She, it's said/was violated in Minerva's shrine/By Ocean's Lord" referencing Poseidon with the incident taking place within Minerva's (Athena's) temple (IV. 797-798). In retribution for a liaison which appears more sexual assault than consensual, Minerva "for fitting punishment transformed/ The Gorgon's lovely hair to loathsome snakes (IV. 800-801)." In a lesser known version of her myth which Graves depicts in *The Greek Myths*, Medusa is "a beautiful daughter of Phorcys, who had offended Athene, and led the Linyans of Lak Tritonis in battle" while her opponent Perseus is again "helped by Athene to assassinate Medusa" (242).

<sup>3</sup> Due to the number of characters that will be named, a character list has been provided in Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> The franchise began with Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) which featured a serpent like creature systematically killing the crew of the "Nostromo" only to be brought back for at least seven additional films along with three crossover films associated with the *Predator* franchise. It should be noted that a secondary plot of each of the Alien films features an AL character (Ash in the first film) demonstrating varying degrees of monstrosity.

<sup>5</sup> See Urgen, Burcu A., et al. "Uncanny valley as a window into predictive processing in the social brain." *Neuropsychologia*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2018, 181-185.

<sup>6</sup> I will use the gendered pronouns with the respect to the gender presentation of the ALife in question. In this case, Six is female presenting and will be referred to as she/her. That said, many of these narratives do not approach discussions or complexities in gendered pronouns unless they are using the term "it" to refer to an AL as a derogatory term to indicate thingness instead of personness.

<sup>7</sup> Caprica is the home planet for *BSG*'s humans and the ground zero for the Cylons' massive coordinated attack.

<sup>8</sup> Dick, *Do Androids*, 48-49.

<sup>9</sup> The potential for this test to be flawed is suggested early in the novel with Deckard's superior, Inspector Bryant summarizing, "The Leningrad psychiatrists...think that a small class of human

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beings could not pass the Voigt-Kampff scale. If you tested them in line with police work, you'd assess them as humanoid robots. You'd be wrong, but by then they'd be dead'" (Dick 36). Although the test is widely acknowledged as the best way to measure, it is not infallible.

<sup>10</sup> The theory that "the number of components on a microchip continues to double every two years as it has done since the 1960s" (Marshall and Wheeland 92-93).

<sup>11</sup> The details of their use are unclear but they were designed as an artificial workforce. Again, human rights did not prevent them from being used as slave labor since they are, in fact, not human.

<sup>12</sup> The warship from which the series gets its name and the typical locus of control for the human fleet.

<sup>13</sup> Once a Cylon body is destroyed, their consciousness, memories, and experiences are downloaded into a newly manufactured Cylon body. This new body wakes up in the viscous liquid of the resurrection pod on the massive ship dedicated to this purpose. The precise name of the pods does not seem to be mentioned in the series. Despite their ability to share memories among the same model, individual Cylons develop their own personalities and affinities based on their experiences in much the same way that Boomer and Athena do. Athena was developed through copies of Boomer's consciousness complete with her memories of the Colonial fleet. While Boomer is with the fleet in space, Athena assists Helo on Caprica. Although endowed with Boomer's foundational material, Athena develops her own personality in accordance with experiencing love and acceptance from Helo as opposed to Boomer's bitterness in the wake of her paranoia about being a Cylon sleeper agent, attempting to assassinate Captain Adama, being imprisoned for her crimes, and finally being assassinated herself.

<sup>14</sup> This word is used to describe the state sanctioned executions of escaped androids found on Earth. Bounty hunters are not "killing" an "andy," but "'retiring'" it (Dick 29).

<sup>15</sup> A precursor to Rachael as the duplicitous artificial female humanoid can be found in Philip K. Dick's 1953 short story, "Second Variety." In this text, the character which inevitably leads to the demise of the remaining U.S. forces is a female appearing robot. Coincidentally, this character is portrayed as a sex worker. Again, a link between female sexuality and deceit.

<sup>16</sup> Red emergency lights are activated during the outages, so a "red-out" might be more appropriate.

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**Appendix 1**

## Character List

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) – Philip K. Dick

Irmgard Baty	android/ALife
Luba Luft	android/ALife
Phil Resch	human
Pris Stratton	android/ALife
Rachael Rosen	android/ALife
Rick Deckard	human
Roy Baty	android/ALife

*Ex Machina* (2014) – Alex Garland

Ava	AI/ALife
Caleb	human
Kyoko	AI/ALife
Nathan	human

*Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries* (2003) & *Battlestar Galactica* Seasons 1, 2, 3(2004-2007) – Ronald D. Moore

Gaius Baltar	human
Hera Agathon	human/Cylon hybrid
Karl “Helo” Agathon	human
Number Six	Cylon/ALife

Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries (2003) & Battlestar Galactica Seasons 1, 2, 3

(2004-2007) – Ronald D. Moore (continued)

Sharon “Boomer” Valerii (a Number  
Eight model) Cylon/ALife

Sharon “Athena” Agathon (a Number  
Eight model) Cylon/ALife