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## Editorial: The Big Picture

**D**URING MY MANY DISCUSSIONS WITH RAY BROWNE OVER THE YEARS, invariably our conversations would track to issues involving a broad cultural analysis of society. For example, I would ask Ray a question about the hard-boiled detective story of the 1920s, and he would reply that if I really wanted to understand hard-boiled crime fiction of that era I would have to learn about such things as social-class structure, the economic and political effects of Prohibition on culture, the rise of gangsters and bootlegging, the influence of rugged individualism and the American frontier worldview of the nineteenth century, the major and minor writers of hard-boiled fiction and their influences on one another, the pulp magazine industry and publishing practices of the 1920s, and so on.

It was always an edifying experience talking about popular culture with Ray. He constantly reminded me that though the details of a given subject were important, the larger social and cultural context of that subject were even more important. I learned many lessons from Ray, but I think that this one was one of the most valuable. As a consequence, I am drawn to those scholarly books that examine society or culture from a broad perspective, books such as Patricia Bradley's *Making American Culture: A Social History, 1900–1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

I have always been fascinated with studying the first two decades of the twentieth century in America. This intriguing epoch in American history featured the rise of film and radio as popular culture, and the rise of popular fiction in the mass-marketed periodical; indeed, this twenty-year period heralded the emergence of the American middle class and the predominance of middle-class popular culture.

Patricia Bradley captures the very essence of this time in her book. Her chapters on vaudeville and silent film are among the best I have read on the subject. She easily moves her analytical focus from the specific, as in her chapter entitled “Isadora Duncan and the Spirit of Modernism,” to the expansive, as in her chapter “Culture and

Nationhood.” However, no cultural study, large or small, is worth the effort if it is poorly written. I found Bradley’s book a delight to read, informative, and highly accessible.

For anyone interested in American popular culture of the twentieth century, I think that Patricia Bradley’s *Making American Culture* would make an ideal choice.

My guess is that Ray Browne would agree.

–Gary Hoppenstand

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The 2010 William E. Brigman *JPC* Award Winner

*Objet 8* and the Cylon Remainder: Posthuman  
Subjectivization in *Battlestar Galactica*

JULIE HAWK

Introduction and Theoretical Moorings

THE RE-IMAGINED SCI-FI NETWORK TELEVISION SERIES *BATTLESTAR Galactica* (hereafter *BSG*) deals with some of the “big” philosophical questions of ontology and epistemology and ultimately serves as an epic origin story for the human race as we know it. In the final episode, “Daybreak: Part 2,” we learn that the human–cylon hybrid child, Hera, is the mitochondrial Eve of all humans living on present-day Earth. This narrative device serves to catalyze an ontological shift in the viewer that takes a turn to a sort of retroactive posthumanism. Part of the effect of the narrative is the viewer’s unwitting but inevitable role in the end of the story as always already part cylon. The Eight model, most specifically as represented by the versions Boomer and Athena, is of crucial importance to the catalyzing of the narrative of *BSG* into this overall ontological shift in the viewer. Genetically speaking, the Eight model is the mother of the mother of us all. As such, she is given several roles to play in the story (made easier by the fact that there are many copies of her). The various representations of the Eight model, but most importantly Boomer and Athena, point toward a hybridized, posthuman ontology, and, more specifically a posthuman subjectivization process.<sup>1</sup>

Subjectivization, here, means the process by which one is made a subject; note that this process includes both becoming a subject and being made subject to something (Foucault, Butler). Added to this,

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however, are Homi K. Bhabha's theories of hybridity in subject formation and a bit of cybernetic/posthuman narratology. Rhizomatically connecting these theoretical frameworks shows that the Eight model's ability to exceed her programming to foster a hybrid revision to her cylon ontology is the crucial legacy she leaves to humanity.

According to Foucault (following Althusser), we come to be as subjects because we live in a world wherein there exist, before our arrival, discursive and material structures of power. We are made subjects by the very processes by which we are made subject to these power vectors (*Discipline and Punish*). Judith Butler expands this idea, combining a psychoanalytic approach with the Foucauldian model to highlight the difference between the subject and the psyche. According to Butler, the psyche is not the subject, but rather the remainder of what cannot be reconciled in the process of subjectivation.<sup>2</sup> The psychic remainder, then, exceeds discursive limits (exceeds the programming?), includes the unconscious, and resists the normalizing forces that discipline humans to conformity to a model (Butler 86). Butler asserts that "[t]he account of subject formation is thus a double fiction at cross-purposes with itself, repeatedly symptommatizing what resists narration" (124). What one comes to know as one's self is not the whole story. In fact, what one does not (consciously) know always lurks in the margins of the self-story as a "lost object [that] continues to haunt and inhabit the ego as one of its constitutive identifications" (Butler 134). The subject, by this account, is only part of the story; the psychic remainder, that which does not fit neatly into the self-story, intrudes upon consciousness, insisting that it be acknowledged.

Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the subject is slightly different from Butler's or Foucault's, but it has interesting implications. He argues that "[t]he individuation of the agent occurs in a moment of displacement" (265). The temporal pulsion—a "split-second movement" (265)—creates an effect of being off sides (*abseits*), being beside oneself. This moment, for Bhabha, is the moment of the subject's individuation. He says, "When the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol, it also seizes the power to elaborate—through the time-lag—new and hybrid agencies and articulations. This is the moment for revisions" (275). Bhabha's formulation highlights a "third space" that allows for the individuation based on revisions of identity. Displacement creates the ability to negotiate one's identity based on the sort of push and pull of the signifier and the signified. Finally,

adding a bit of cybernetic theory to the mix, Bruce Clarke, addressing the theories of Bruno Latour, which account for the equating of humans with cybernetic forms of intelligence, argues that such a view of “life” provides liberation from essence (55). He states,

Latour’s parallel view of the morphism of the human is a neocybernetic turn putting operational flesh on the bones of the postmodern observation that the human is a rhetorical construction. Indeed, the human lies not in the possession of an essence but in the eliciting and instrumentalizing of a conviction, in a persuasion that is present—but also, in Latour’s terms, in the continuous translation of itself into being by social communications.

(Clarke 59)

This way of looking at human agency or subjectivity is profoundly in line with the ontological shift put forward by the narrative of *BSG*. 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 Bhabha identifies as the locus of subjectivization. The Eight model’s struggle, ultimately, is negotiating the space between essence and conviction in order to adapt and to create something new, something hybrid.

Part of that negotiation of essence and conviction revolves around creating and maintaining a self-story, a narratively organized account for one’s being. In his article, “Frak-tured Postmodern Lives, Or, How I Found Out I Was a Cylon,” Paul Booth highlights the connection between identity and narrative, arguing that the piecing together of the narrative whole by the *BSG* viewers (taking into account the webisodes and other marginal yet canonical texts) mirrors the piecing together of one’s own sense of self in a postmodern world (18–23). This construction of self and world through narrative should not be viewed as a finite process with the telos being either the self or the story. Rather, it is a recursive (and discursive) feedback loop between narrative and ontology. In short, who we are determines our stories and our stories determine who we are. Each moment of “determination” adds to the data that both constructs and gets constructed, resulting in endless movement (much like the numeral 8 itself), but not a prescribed telos. This narrative-ontology cycle plays itself out within the story itself, as each character both discovers and creates who they are.

The ways in which both Boomer and Athena negotiate their identities and their subjectivities through what is considered their essence and what is within the power of their choice inform what we take away from the narrative in terms of our own ontological moorings. Providing a rhizomatic yet readable cognitive map includes an overview of the Eight model and then analyses of Boomer and Athena individually.

### The Eight Model

The Eight model has incited a good deal of scholarly work already, most of which predates the final episode and thus the revelation of the Eight model's overwhelming importance. Indeed, none of the other cylon models figure as prominently in critical examinations, a testament to the time spent by the narrative developing Eight's importance to (post)humanity. 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). George Dunn argues that Boomer's struggle to accept a cylon/human hybridity has everything to do with drawing lines between good and evil, but that she ultimately must align with the cylons for the sake of creating and maintaining a coherent sense of self (127–40). Daniel Milsky uses a Ricouer-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). The Eight model incites so much critical discourse in part because her representations (particularly those of Boomer and Athena)

create, fulfill and/or problematize a variety of important narrative functions; the Eight model, more than the other models (with the possible exception of the Six), shows the struggle between humanism and post-humanism, between accepting one's prior narrative and asserting authorship privileges and revising the story to reflect a hybridized identity.

Despite all the critical attention the Eight has generated, no one seems to have entertained any psychoanalytic theories as they might pertain to cylon becoming, perhaps because of the belief that cylons, programmed to be who they are, do not fall prey to the psychological shortcomings of humans. But we must remember that cylons were programmed to be as close, psychologically, to humans as possible. They must be able to be programmed, like Boomer, to believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that they are, in fact, human. The psyche that haunts a cylon is at the very least quite similar to that of a human.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the two most evident traits of the Eight model, speaking generally, are her need to situate herself within a coherent narrative, even if that means compartmentalizing her psychic remainder in order to keep the narrative functional, and her insistence that she have the right and the ability to make her own choices. In short, she is compelled both to discover her self and to create her self.

The Eight model's subjectivization hinges on the narrative she tells herself. Daniel Milsky argues that for both Boomer and Athena, narrative disruptions (both disruptions of fact and of belief) drive how the Eight model finds/creates/constructs her identity. The way each version of the Eight deals with the competing internal narratives is consistent with the way that model specifically (and perhaps the cylon brain more generally, and perhaps still more generally, the human brain) confronts and deals with narrative disruptions (which bring with them a psychic remainder that proves difficult to eradicate); the results differ, of course, in that Athena aligns with the humans and Boomer with the Cylons (although Boomer seems to have a human remainder, as is evidenced by the fact that she repays her debt to Adama in an eleventh-hour decision that affirms her will to hybridity). Milsky's "narrative disruptions" are simply places in Athena/Boomer's stories of self that no longer add up, that call into question either her identity or her beliefs (Milsky 5–8). These moments of disruption result in sites of contestation and ultimately lead to the creation of a hybrid subjectivity, one that takes into account the psychic remainder and rejects the absolute authority of the discursive power structures attempting to

normalize the subjectivization process for each model (for the cylons) or soldier/citizen (for the humans).

The moments of narrative disruption often lead to determining instances, moments in the story where the Eight model must assert individual choice. Whereas the other models view their individual agency as subordinate to the collective cylon subjectivity, the Eight insists upon her individual subjectivity; she demands the right to personal choice. Whether choosing to be the best machine she can be and voting against her model or choosing to align with the humans despite the way the majority of them feel about her “essential” being, she demands a sort of Hegelian recognition. When Cavil, the One model and leader of the Cylons, reveals that Boomer has voted against her model, the leader Six reacts violently, declaring such a thing “unconscionable” and “wrong.” Six says, “Our identities are determined by our models. Each model is unique. We belong together” (“Six of One”). Cavil responds with Six’s own words from an earlier discussion: “Something has changed.” Something did change, and it began with the Eight model. While part of Boomer’s decision was likely Cavil’s influence and manipulation and part of it was her traumatic experience living among the humans, the possibility of voting against one’s model was not on the cylons’ metaphorical DRADIS. It simply was not done. Something about the Eight’s programming, or rather, the Eight’s ability to *exceed* her programming, allowed this change to occur. Much of the telos of the *BSG* narrative, and therefore the viewer’s origin, is dependent on the Eight model’s insistence on being free to choose her own path, to carve out her own individuality. We see this in both Boomer and Athena’s narrative trajectories.

## Boomer

For season one Boomer, being a cylon is itself a symptom. The fact of her cylon ontology as well as the episodes of programmed but unremembered cylon behavior slip into the margins of the narrative of her identity, resulting in a highly fractured sense of self (Milsky 10). Her cylon identity is, at this point, her psychic remainder. As a sleeper agent, she thinks she is human until Cavil, the One model stationed on the *Galactica*, gives her the signal that pulls her out of her sleeper status. Despite the fact that when she is out of sleeper status she is fully



cognizant of her mission as a sleeper agent, the human part of her haunts her. The psychic remainder, that bit of her that she could not get the story to consume neatly, ultimately sways her to botch her assassination of Adama, technically fulfilling Cavil's orders, but failing to do lasting damage to the humans. Before agreeing to shoot Adama, she says to Cavil, "I'm happier when I'm under. I'm happier when I'm human. I like myself, love myself, then" ("The Plan"). Cavil insists that the human cover is merely a construct: "They know your lies. I know you" ("The Plan"). Indeed, the cylon part of Boomer becomes like the unconscious. Gaius Baltar's angelic Caprica Six tells him that "deep down she knows she's a cylon, but her conscious mind won't accept it . . . her model is weak, always has been" ("Kobol's Last Gleaming: Part 1").<sup>4</sup> Baltar returns to this idea to get information from Boomer after she is imprisoned on Galactica. He says to her, "Deep down in that thing you call a subconscious, you remember" ("Resistance"). Baltar's word choices here are striking. The cylons, he implies, have copied humans so thoroughly that they, too, are saddled with that repository of all the baser fears, needs, and desires—the unconscious. Baltar forces Boomer to let her conscious mind touch this repository, no matter how painful.

Imprisoned after shooting Adama, the sleeper agent is awakened once more by Cavil to reprimand her for only wounding Adama. She tells him, "The only way that I could get this done was to turn myself into a centurion. I could feel my skin turning hard. I could feel the bullets making their way through the channels under my hard metal skin. I couldn't feel my heart beat. If there was any part of us that's human, in that moment, I killed that" ("The Plan"). Cavil argues that the eradication of all human roots is desirable, but she insists, "I lost the best part of myself" ("The Plan"). Even as a fully cognizant Eight model, then, she turns to the humanity she feels as part of her identity, rejecting a subjectivity defined as solely cylon. That is, she turns to the hybridity that she finds in that third space, the space between the fully cylon agent and the fully human soldier. This decision changes a few times, of course, due to constant feelings of betrayal by both sides and the Eight model's tendency to switch loyalties to suit her own agenda. Neither the humans nor the cylons are ready to accept the Eight model's turn to a hybrid identity.

After Boomer is shot and downloads into another body, she still finds it difficult to embrace a wholly cylon identity. Joining with

Caprica Six, Boomer attempts to bridge the gap between humans and cylons by trying to coexist with them on New Caprica. The project is an abysmal failure, however, and she eventually falls back under the sway of Cavil, who, she says, is “teaching [her] to be a better machine, to let go of [her] human constructs” (“No Exit”). When a downloaded Ellen tries to explain to Boomer that her human traits are gifts, the most important one being the capacity for love, Boomer replies, “Love? Who? Humans? Why would I want to do that?” (“No Exit”).<sup>5</sup> In spite of this malice toward humans cultivated in part by Cavil and in part by Boomer herself as a defense mechanism whose purpose is to deflect her attention away from the psychic remainder of being human, Boomer’s trust in Cavil begins to wane after she brings Hera back to the colony. Her crisis is twofold. First, the presence of Hera seems to remind her of her own possibilities as an individual open to a hybrid identity. Even though Hera clearly does not recognize Boomer as her mother, genetically, she is. Second, she had once again to lose the best part of herself by betraying Tyrol as well as the fantasy projection that helps her cope.<sup>6</sup> In Boomer’s projection fantasy, one cultivated carefully and passionately over time, her psychic remainder becomes clear. She is haunted by the potential, which her choices persistently deferred, to procreate. She longs for a child, a daughter; that is, she longs for precisely what her “sister” Athena already has. She admits that she still loves Tyrol and that it is with him that she wants a child, but she uses the fact that he still loves her to manipulate him in order to fulfill her mission. Boomer’s crisis hinges on the fact that she can and does love, and that that love can, but in her case will not, result in sexual procreation. Her betrayal of Tyrol is only part of what becomes her most insistent psychic remainder—the unfulfilled desire for heterosexual coupling that results in reproduction.

Boomer’s repressed humanity eventually returns. In the guise of repaying an old debt to Adama, Boomer saves Hera after having forsaken the only people she truly loved in order to capture her. She says to Athena: “We all make our choices. Today I made a choice. I think it was my last one” (“Daybreak: Part 2”). Boomer’s choice was not merely to help the humans. Her choice was the exercising of her ability to individuate and to refuse the wholly cylon subjectivization. She aligns with a possibility for a hybridized future by rejecting, and exceeding, her programming. It is too late for her to have a child of her own, but Hera represents the hybridity she desires, and that is enough to compel

her to return Hera to Athena and Helo. Cavil remarks that he simply miscalculated the Eight's need to indulge in "gestures of futility." For Cavil, the "gesture of futility" is a turn away from the cylon race or ontology. For the viewer, it is a turn toward a revision to the story, a hybridized ontology. For the viewer, Boomer at last becomes "human." It is precisely this humanity that Cavil rejects out of hand, but the acknowledging of her humanity—that is, her capacity and willingness to do so—is what qualifies the Eight model for the mythically momentous role she plays in the story.

## Athena

Athena's story has many of the same elements as Boomer's, but the order in which each presents itself differs, a difference that, it turns out, makes all the difference. Athena makes her decision early into her assignment to betray the cylons and align with the humans, and she must go to great lengths to win first Helo's and then Adama's trust in the wake of Boomer's betrayal. When Athena tells Helo, who has just discovered that she is a cylon, that she is carrying his child, she assures him that what she feels for Helo is genuine and that what is between them is "the next step" ("Kobol's Last Gleaming: Part 2"). Even this early in the narrative, Athena understands the importance of the child she carries. After telling Helo that she has to "take matters into [her] own hands," she proves to Adama that she can be trusted by averting an attempt on his life. Lowering the gun she has trained on Adama, she says, "I need you to know something. I'm Sharon, but I'm a different Sharon. I know who I am. I don't have any hidden protocols or programs lying in wait to be activated. I make my own choices and I need you to know this is my choice" ("Home: Part 2"). This Eight model makes that crucial choice early enough in the narrative to catalyze a hybrid subjectivization process. Unlike Boomer, she is able to address her psychic remainder productively, in a way conducive to embracing hybridity.

Robert Moore argues that Athena must create her identity in stages by solidifying her varying roles in the overarching story. She is simultaneously wife, mother, and colonial officer, and it is through living out the stories surrounding each of these roles that she creates a sort of hybrid identity (112–14). In this particular case of hybridity, she

actively accepts, even embraces, both the things that make her a cylon and the things that make her human. She *is* a cylon, but she *becomes* human. But because she *is* a cylon, she becomes not-quite-yet-more-than-human. She becomes posthuman and arguably postcylon. Bhabha's formulation of subjectivity is useful here: active subjectivity is "the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes" (63–64). The hybridity that results from this neither all cylon nor all human identity creates a third space—a space wherein Athena (and eventually Boomer) enacts "new and hybrid agencies," rearticulating and revisioning what constitutes being human, what constitutes being cylon, and what constitutes a possible hybridized human–cylon ontology.

The crucial role that Athena fills is, of course, mother. Hera is, after all, the endgame of the narrative. This fact belies a problematic valorizing of sexual reproduction and, with it, compulsory heterosexuality. Indeed, it is arguable that it is the fact that Athena gets pregnant so quickly and develops the parental bond with Helo that creates the conditions of possibility for her hybrid subjectivization. The narrative certainly shows less of Athena's psychic remainder than it does of Boomer's, presumably because Athena's status as mother trumps whatever residual cylon patterns she might need to work through. The problematic reification of sexual reproduction aside, however, Athena's ability to integrate her psychic remainder—her cylon essence—is crucial to a hybrid identity. That is, she does not completely reject her cylon-ness; rather, she accepts it for what it is and yet insists on her right to choose a different path of subjectivization. She ultimately answers neither to Cavil—the "evil" patriarch—nor to Adama—the "benign" patriarch—because she willingly disobeys orders from both in the service of her own personal choice. While she wears the uniform of the Colonial Fleet and usually follows orders, she is willing to cross lines when it comes to saving her daughter, particularly once she learns that Adama was party to deceiving Helo and Athena regarding Hera's supposed death ("Rapture"). To save Hera, Athena takes advantage of the cylon ability to die and resurrect into a new body. Brian Willems argues that the ability to know one's death, thereby experiencing the Heideggerian totality, makes cylons more human than humans. That is, the height of a Heideggerian humanity is reached by joining in the totality of death and then leaving this totality for the individualized life again (87–90). In this way, Athena embraces a sort of

posthumanity by utilizing, even exploiting, her cylon essence. Athena's greatest strength, and the reason she leaves her profound genetic legacy—is that she embraces the cylon *and* the human parts of her being and, from both, she makes something new.

## Conclusion

The telos of the narrative of *BSG* is the origin of our very own narrative. The Eight model is the mother of the mother of us all. Her genetic material, by this account, is spread throughout the species. Despite the turn to a very humanist reification of sexual reproduction, Athena's narrative trajectory suggests more than an entrenched humanist position. If not for the Eight's stretching beyond her programming to incorporate productively her psychic remainder and her resulting ability to individuate as neither wholly cylon nor wholly human, then the cycle of human–cylon war would likely continue. Neither human nor cylon can survive the cycle, but the optimistic ending suggests that a hybrid human–cylon ontology is the key to breaking the cycle and changing the story. To put it another way, the binary extremes are both rejected in favor of a third space, a space where revisions might yet be made. The Eight model plays a crucial role in catalyzing that shift. She is the other that we always already had inside of us. She is *our* cylon remainder.

## Notes

1. A note on names and brief summary of the plot as it pertains to the Eight models under analysis: The name Boomer designates specifically the first Eight model the viewer meets, the sleeper cylon agent who gives her allegiance to the cylons, with a few exceptions, until the very end, when she rescues Hera and gives her back to Athena. The name Athena designates the agent who was sent to make Helo fall in love with her on Caprica. The endgame is to see whether the addition of love will allow cylons to conceive. Athena succeeds in her mission, but she also falls in love with him. She breaks away from the cylons and sides with the humans, eventually donning the colonial uniform and carrying the call sign "Athena." Hera is the child of Athena and Helo.
2. Butler uses the term "subjectivation" rather than "subjectivization."
3. For proof of this retention of the human psyche, one need look no further than Cavil's dalliance with Ellen in a classic Oedipal chain of desire ("Razor").
4. Gaius Baltar is the scientist responsible for the betrayal of the human race. Manipulated by the Six model's ability to exploit his libido, he allows her access to the defense mainframe of the Twelve Colonies, though he is not consciously aware that she is a cylon when he does so. He is

thereafter haunted by a hallucinatory presence of the Six model who is revealed to be an angelic presence.

5. Ellen, introduced first as the wife of the Galactica's XO, Colonel Tigh, is revealed in season four to be the final cylon (colonel Tigh is also revealed to be a member of the final five). Ellen, along with the other members of the final five, created the seven models of which there are many copies.
6. Chief Galen Tyrol is another member of the final five. He was involved in a relationship with Boomer at the beginning of the series. After learning he is a cylon, Boomer shares her projection fantasy wherein she and Tyrol have a child. Tyrol's emotional vulnerability allows him to be easily manipulated, and Boomer uses this to her advantage to kidnap Hera.

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# “A Bookkeeper, Not an Accountant”: Representing the Lower Middle Class from Victorian Novels and Music-Hall Songs to Television Sitcoms

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IN HIS 2003 EMMY AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, *EVERYBODY LOVES Raymond* executive producer Philip Rosenthal notes how he hoped to make an “old fashion and traditional [...] sitcom.” While Rosenthal may have had in mind sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Honeymooners*, *I Love Lucy*, *Father Knows Best*, *All in the Family*, or *The Cosby Show*, I would like to push the show’s genealogy back a bit and explore how it and shows like the BBC’s *Are You Being Served?* draw upon notions of representing the lower middle class first developed and circulated by Victorian novels, periodical literature, and music-hall sketches and songs. In tracing this genealogy back to the Victorian period, I am not arguing that the origins of shows like *Are You Being Served?* or *Everybody Loves Raymond* have their origins in music-hall songs or Victorian novels, but rather that these shows are historical resonances of Victorian cultural practices.

Much like their Victorian predecessors, these sitcoms and their strategies for representing the lower middle class grow out of similar power structures and participate in discourses that serve as vehicles for the “propagation of knowledge” about the lower middle class (Foucault 12). That these shows share many of the same traits as music-hall performances, novels, and conduct books about the lower middle class illustrates the entrenched nature of transatlantic thinking about class. Further, the changes evident in these cultural forms illustrate the ways

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in which the present remediates the past, even as the present is informed and shaped by historical discourses and power structures. Remediation, specifically the idea that "media [. . .] become systematically dependent on each other and on prior media for their cultural significance" is a useful lens for revealing the cultural work both the Victorian and modern forms of media are accomplishing on their own and in concert with each other (Bolter and Grusin 347). Remediation helps us see the extent to which previous cultural forms are taken up and reworked by later generations in ways that do not hinge on the idea of origin, but rather that hinge on the idea that all cultural forms and the media through which they are transmitted appropriate and supplement a vast range of other cultural forms. Viewing television sitcoms like *Are You Being Served?* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* as examples of contemporary transatlantic remediations of Victorian cultural forms allows us to see those same Victorian cultural forms as remediations of still earlier cultural forms. All of these cultural forms have one thing in common, the goal of representing the lived experiences of ourselves and others to both ourselves and those others. What follows is concerned with looking at how and why late twentieth-century television sitcoms remediate Victorian music-hall performances and novels by taking careful account of these Victorian forms and their modern resonances. This is not to say twentieth- and twenty-first-century sitcoms are mere iterations of Victorian popular and literary culture; they are not. As Fredric Jameson argues, every historical break or shift results in new emphases coming to the fore that had previously been muted in these complex cultural forms and practices (Jameson 123). However much the form appears to have changed, much of the appeal and substance of the source remains. As Wai Chee Dimock notes, "no dates can tell us who is close to whom," (174) texts have a "resonance" that transcend historical and national boundaries, but in their transcending these boundaries the text often take on new shapes and meanings that are dictated by the text itself (179). The possibilities of meaning, while theoretically infinite, interpretations and meaning are still constrained by the text itself. Yet, while elements of the text endure and resonate across historical periods, we need to be aware that we bring as much to the text as it brings to us; that our own readings and uses of texts alter texts as much as they alter us.

The British sitcom *Are You Being Served?* as Mark Lewisohn observes, has "characters [. . .] sporting affectations designed to make recognition

and acceptance easier for an audience.” While Lewisohn does not explicitly link the characters and situations from *Are You Being Served?* to nineteenth-century music-hall sketches and songs and other Victorian representations of the lower middle class, knowledge of them makes it clear that the directors, producers, and writers of the show draw upon these modes in providing audiences with recognizable characters and situations. That these two programs draw upon Victorian music-hall strategies for representing the lower middle class is not surprising considering that many of the early American and British radio, television, and movie stars like Bob Hope, Charlie Chaplin, Gene Kelly, and Lucille Ball began their careers in music-hall and vaudeville shows. Throughout the nineteenth-century, music hall, vaudeville, and other popular performers regularly crossed the Atlantic. Performing in America provided British acts with financially lucrative tours during the off season in London as well as serving as a well spring of advertising copy to be used in promoting their acts back in Britain. Thus, while many of the examples this article draws upon to have their roots in British music hall, they did appear in an American context.

*Are You Being Served?*, which aired from 1972 to 1985, draws upon Victorian stereotypes of the lower middle class.<sup>1</sup> The show chronicles the work-a-day doings of Grace Brothers department store sales staff or “counter jumpers.”<sup>2</sup> Two characters, Captain Stephen Peacock (whose name itself seems to come straight out of a Dickens novel) and young Mr. Lucas illustrate this debt to music hall. In both characters we see what Victorian observers of lower-middle-class life and of the music hall knew as the cad, the gent, or swell. One key characteristic of the cad, the gent, or the swell that Victorian commentators often focus on is his counterfeit nature. He is, as Vest Tilly’s song “Sidney’s Holidays” highlights, nothing more than fraud. In “Sidney’s Holidays” a young shop assistant from London spends his summer Bank Holiday at the seaside posing as the scion of a wealthy middle-class family and wooing a young lady, only to be exposed as a fraud when she finds him behind his shop counter in London. Other characteristics of the cad, the gent, and the swell are his obsession with dress and deportment. This intense interest with style is ostensibly intended to attract the interest of the opposite sex, but as numerous accounts highlight only serves to raise questions about the sexuality of these men (though of course, Victorian commentators were far too circumspect to openly address the question of sexuality). *Are You Being Served?* viewers learn that Captain

Peacock, the floorwalker for the Men's Department, is not a captain at all but was a lowly corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps during World War II. Viewers further learn of his addiction to gambling as a young man—even gambling on his wedding night—until Mrs. Peacock cures him of this affliction. Peacock is also a meticulous dresser (he sports cuff links, a pocket handkerchief, a flower in his button hole, and wears tails), and imagines himself irresistibly attractive to women. This last delusion is borne out by his escapades in the episodes "Grounds for Divorce," "A Personal Problem," and "Oh What a Tangled Web" in which Peacock is either having an affair with another member of Grace Brothers staff or is suspected of doing so by Mrs. Peacock and his colleagues. These attributes along with his aloof manner and pretensions to a status he does not have all mark him as the cad, gent, or swell so often ridiculed on Victorian music-hall stages and in the pages of Victorian novels, magazines, and newspapers.

Responding to the *Daily Telegraph's* January 1869 "Young Man of the Day" letter writing campaign, *Tinsley's Magazine*, published by the Tinsley Brothers publishing firm of *Lady Audley's Secret* fame, printed articles highly critical of the lower-middle-class gent and of music halls in general.<sup>3</sup> In "Our Music Halls," the anonymous author describes the older gent as having perfected the art of "star[ing] through his eyeglass in the most finished manner," at the women he comes across, as well as perfecting the "assumption of the character of a gentleman" mostly by having his suits "carved [. . .] in obedience to the pattern presented by the outside of certain music-sheets, on which his favourite singer is represented."<sup>4</sup> These illustrations usually showed young men wearing fashionable jackets, tight waistcoats, and stylish shoes on their excessively small feet. This last aspect of the gent hints at the feminization of the gent and by extension of all lower-middle-class men that was a constant aspect of Victorian representations of lower-middle-class men.<sup>5</sup> This account of the gent places much emphasis on his "assumption of the character of gentleman." It is the "assumption" of a status he does not deserve along with his suspect gender and sexual identification that makes the cad, the gent, and swell particularly open to ridicule by a wide range of Victorian cultural elites and social reformers.

Numerous critics throughout the century find the counterfeit nature of the cad, gent, or swell particularly troubling. Earlier in the century, Albert Smith in his *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847) notes that the gent's lineage is common, having "sprung up from the original

rude untutored man by combinations of chance and cultivation” and who as a result of his propensity to “assume a position which he conceives to be superior to his own” is made “ridiculous” and “unbearable” to all people of true culture and breeding who are sure to be filled “with feelings of [. . .] contempt” (*Gent* 2) for such an “offensive body” of men (*Gent* viii). Central to Smith’s diatribe against the lower middle class is his concern that individuals like Captain Peacock fraudulently lay claim to social positions to which they are not entitled. Further, what observers of the gent like Smith object to is the mix of showiness and what they see as the misguided and socially disruptive attempt to mimic the sophisticated style of the aristocracy and well-off members of the middle class.<sup>6</sup> In mimicking the style and manners of their social superiors and in doing so laying claim to social position, such men threaten the social order and Victorian ideals of masculinity based on character and morality espoused by figures as diverse as Matthew Arnold, Charles Kingsley, Cardinal Newman, and Samuel Smiles.

Captain Peacock is just such a man, though like many of his Victorian predecessors Peacock’s behavior is often times more laughable than dangerous. It is by making men like Peacock laughable that these texts work to contain or manage the threat the lower-middle-class pose. Beyond Peacock’s pretensions to status, he is obsessed with his appearance and dress. In an early episode we see him giving handkerchief folding lessons as well as flirting lessons to young Mr. Lucas. The excessive attention men like Captain Peacock, Mr. Lucas, and their Victorian predecessors show toward dress was deeply troubling to Victorian critics in that it indicates a transgressive form of gender identity that threatens to spill over into dangerous forms of sexual eroticism.

This fear that lower-middle-class gents, especially those that frequented the music hall, somehow lacked an appropriate form of Victorian masculinity finds expression in music-hall songs, which were never afraid of satirizing themselves and their audiences. In the 1873 song “The Little Dark-Eyed Swell” sung by the Celebrated Virginia Female Christys, the female singer waxes poetic over her “little dark eyed swell” and takes on the role of the dominant partner in the relationship. Reversing the traditional gender roles, the woman in this song becomes the observer and pursuer:

I follow’d him I cannot tell you why  
But he had such a wicked killing eye

That Cupid with his dart made a capture of my heart as daindily  
[sic] he sail'd by  
I watch'd him to his home and at the door  
He stopped and smiled on me  
And from his little glove he trew [sic] a kiss of love  
With a wicked little laugh at me.

The descriptions of the swell offered up by the lyrics highlight the extent to which he has taken on not only the physical but also the behavioral characteristics stereotypically associated with women at the time; he is a "handsome little curly headed swell" with "little feet."<sup>7</sup> The lyrics continue noting how he is coy, innocent, and beguiling: "Oh he dances like a charm and his little heart is innocent of guile." Given the conventions of the music hall, it is likely that the action of the song would be acted out by the performers so that one of the all female troupe would play the part of the little dark eyed swell by dressing as a man. Both the lyrics with their objectification of the male by the female gaze and the performance highlight the conventional wisdom that many of the men attending the music hall and dressing the part were effeminate or somehow lacking an appropriate kind of masculinity. It was not just music-hall songs that took notice of the gender and sexual behavior of gents and swells, critics of the music hall focused on this aspect as well. The author of "Our Music Hall" hopes that some guiding hand will whisk wayward lower-middle-class men from the music halls and send them to "serve a couple of years before the mast," where "they might be woke up to something like manhood" (218). The implication is that lower-middle-class men lack an appropriate form of muscular masculinity as result of their occupations as office or retail clerks, their attention to dress, and their attendance at the music hall and other dens of "low" amusement.

But it was not just the potential for transgressive gender and sexual behavior that the critics of the lower-middle-class gent and swell rail against. Other critics of the music hall objected to what they saw as the uncontrolled heteronormative sexuality of the lower-middle-class gent. Smith objects in particular to the gents' misguided belief that "they have powers to fascinate every female upon whom they cast their eyes" (28). In Anthony Trollope's *The Three Clerks* (1858), Mrs. Woodward, an upright middle-class widow living near Hampton Court with her three daughters, fears that young Charley Tudor, a clerk living on £90 a year, who is fond of gin shops, cheap tobacco, dance parlors, and who

is secretly engaged to a bar maid, will spend his Sunday morning “smoking and attacking the parlour maid” instead of attending church services if she invites him down for the weekend (27). Television sitcoms repeat this pattern of representing some lower-middle-class men as insatiable sexual predators. In *Are You Being Served?*, young Mr. Lucas, depicted as the “cheerfully lecherous” and “oversexed” junior salesman who can unclasp a bra in six or eight seconds, fills the role of the dangerous lower-middle-class sexual pest who thinks himself attractive to all women, especially Miss Braun from Ladies Apparel (Lewisohn). Yet, as Captain Peacock’s romantic successes with Miss Hirst and with other women at Grace Brothers highlight, young Mr. Lucas has a thing or two to learn. Viewers never know if the rest of Peacock’s conquests are real or not and much the same can be said of Mr. Lucas’ supposed adventures. What these incidents do show is that the producers of *Are You Being Served?* draw upon the Victorian-derived stereotype of the sexually adventurous lower-middle-class gent or swell to help make the Captain Peacock and Young Mr. Lucas characters more recognizable to audiences.

Music-hall songs often focus on the infidelity of the married lower-middle-class man who is often seduced away by women he meets while serving behind a shop counter or on his way to and from work behind a desk in some dreary office. Often, as Captain Peacock always is, the husband in these songs is caught by his suspicious wife, who is often unintentionally tipped off by one of his friends. “Right Before the Missis Too!” in which Mr. Brown’s extramarital affairs are undone by the loose tongue of his friend Tommy Sheen is typical of this style of song. In this song, Mr. Brown professes no knowledge of the women the two spend the day drinking, dining, and carousing with, but Tommy is sure to let Mrs. Brown know that it was her husband who introduced him to the two women and even worse, that Mr. Brown boasted of having spent many a similar day in their company. The song ends with Mrs. Brown chasing Mr. Brown from the house with the fire poker.

The theme of the misbehaving husband and the shrewish wife is continued in Arthur Lloyd’s “Tooralooral Lee” a song sung by a henpecked husband who regrets his marriage because his wife objects to his fast ways. In the song the wife is overbearing and the embodiment of a shrew. Captain Peacock from *Are You Being Served?*, for all his bluster, is shown repeatedly to be in fear of his wife. As James

A. Hammerton illustrates in his article, "Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870–1920," the prevailing image of the married lower-middle-class man among journalists, novelists, music-hall song writers, and the general public was that of a henpecked braggart who boasted at work and in public of his domineering ways at home, but who at home was dominated by his wife (295). While Hammerton's aim is to disprove this myth, it is clear that the myth had and continues to have much currency.

Captain Peacock is reputed to have been a heavy gambler and a man about town while single. The implication is that his wife speedily put an end to such amusements. Like the husband in "Tooralooral Lee," "You Should Never Marry," "She Kept Them All for Me," and countless other music-hall songs one can almost hear Peacock singing, "We often have a flare up, and sometimes it comes to blows," as a result of his late nights spent gambling, drinking, or consorting with women (Lloyd). Captain Peacock, despite his public swagger and domineering ways at Grace Brothers, is often cut down to size by his wife. Beyond Mrs. Peacock's bullying and publicly embarrassing him—once by engaging in an "affair" with his boss Mr. Rumbold and stopping by Grace Brother's to confront him with evidence of his affairs, we learn that he is on the outs with her on a regular basis. Viewers are led to believe that it is Mrs. Peacock, like so many other fictional suburban lower-middle-class women, who wears the pants in the Peacock household.

Characters and plot lines found in novels by canonical authors like Charles Dickens also resonate in many of the characters and situations found in contemporary transatlantic television programming. Mr. Lucas is the type of fast young man that Dickens's David Copperfield must make a conscious decision not to become if he hopes to be the hero of his own story. Young Copperfield must choose between the life of the fast young man about town who spends his time drinking, smoking, going to the theater, and parading around town in shoes that are too small for him and that of an industrious, persevering, sober, and thrifty man of character. The first path we know from Mrs. Crupp's account of her former tenant leads to certain death, "he died of drink, [. . .] 'And smoke'" (346). Like the David that Copperfield must reject in order to achieve hero status, Mr. Lucas, as viewers are led to believe, often gallivants around town drinking, carousing, and otherwise

behaving badly. British viewers schooled in the Victorian narratives surrounding young men like Mr. Lucas are likely meant to interpret his sudden and unexplained disappearance from the show as the result of his fast life catching up with him and thus sharing the same fate as Mrs. Crupp's former lodger.<sup>8</sup>

Like *Are You Being Served?*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* draws upon Victorian stereotypes about the lower middle class for characters, situations, and plots. In this CBS sitcom viewers are invited into the Long Island suburban home of Ray and Debra Barone who live across the street from Ray's parents. One of the staples of *Raymond* is the meddling and overbearing mother-in-law. Victorian music-hall songs often focused on the domestic plight of the lower-middle-class man and his relationship with his mother-in-law.<sup>9</sup> In reversing the roles so that it is Debra who bears the brunt of her mother-in-law's meddling *Everybody Loves Raymond* is updating a tradition in literary and popular culture that has a long history and adding a postmodern twist in that it is the son's innocence and not the daughter's that is being protected by the overbearing mother-in-law character. One Victorian song that focuses on the meddling mother-in-law is "What Are You Up To Jane?" The song chronicles the antics of an obsessive mother-in-law who attempts to foil her daughter's efforts to consummate her marriage. In the song, it is not that Jane's mother is opposed to marriage per se, but she is opposed to the sex that often comes along with it. The male singer recounts how on their honeymoon "we'd a fright as I put out the light,/ A knock came at the bedroom door" and heard Jane's mother whispering through the key hole, "What are you up to Jane? now what are you up to Jane?" This, it turns out, is Old Mrs. Jones attempting to prevent the two lovers from tying the "bridal knot." Later when visiting the now happily married couple old Mrs. Jones faints "gracefully into the nearest coal scuttle exclaiming,/Why what are you up to Jane?" upon being confronted with the evidence, in the form of grandchildren, of her daughter's sexual activity.

"The First Time" episode of *Everybody Loves Raymond* recalls this plot. Debra and Ray revisit the first time they had sex. Rather than remembering it as pleasant evening spent in each other's company, they remember how Marie, Ray's mother, tries to foil their night of out-of-wedlock love. The episode ends with everyone from Marie (with lasagna in tow), to the family priest (in search of a lasagna dinner), to Ray's father Frank, and his brother, Robert, stopping by Debra's



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