

BIOETHICS IN FICTION, FILM & TELEVISION

The promise and perils of advances in technology, science, and medicine have long been fodder for creative literary and cinematic reflection. Consequently, a variety of resources exist exploring the realm of medical humanities and providing in-depth analysis of a given cultural medium or particular artifact. This column seeks to offer a more expansive listing of contemporary expressions of bioethical issues in the popular media (fiction, film, and television)—with minimal commentary—to encompass a wider spectrum of popular culture. It will be of value to educators and others for conversations in the classroom, over a cup of coffee, at a book club, or around the dinner table. Readers are cautioned that these resources represent a wide spectrum of genres and content, and thus may not be appropriate for all audiences. For more comprehensive databases of the various cultural media, please visit our website at cbhd.org/resources/reviews. If you have a suggestion for us to include in the future, send us a note at msleasman@cbhd.org.

BIO- FICTION

T. C. McCarthy, *the Subterranean War Series* (Orbit Books)

Germline (2011)
Exogene (2012)
Chimera (2012)

Artificial Intelligence, Genetic Engineering, Human-Computer Interface, Human Enhancement/Remaking Humanity, Neuroenhancement, Personhood.

Graphic futuristic wartime trilogy. Global super-powers have exhausted conventional and nuclear warfare options in pursuit of rare metals and turned to an escalating arms race of human enhancement and re-engineering. Each volume of the trilogy is told from a different perspective. *Germline* begins the Series following an embedded military reporter who is the first to be permitted on the frontlines, where he encounters “genetics” (re-engineered female soldiers) and struggles to come to terms with their “personhood.” *Exogene* picks up the narrative a few years later from the perspective of a female “genetic” grappling with her nature and purpose, while at the same time encountering evidence of further attempts to develop the ultimate soldier. *Chimera*, the conclusion of the trilogy, resumes the storyline some years later with a human soldier wrestling with the need to embrace “genetics” as they together face new generations of even more radically remade enemies.

Orson Scott Card, the *Homecoming Saga Series* (Tor Books)

The Memory of Earth (1992)
The Call of Earth (1992)
The Ships of Earth (1994)
Earthfall (1995)
Earthborn (1995)

Artificial Intelligence, Genetic Engineering, Human Enhancement, Neuroenhancement, Personhood.

This science fiction series picks up the narrative of the exiled human race 40 million years after its departure from a devastated planet earth. To prevent a recurrence, humans were enhanced to allow the subtle guidance of an artificial intelligence to protect them from developing advanced technologies that could again threaten destruction. The series follows their return to a revived Earth, where they encounter other sentient creatures that have developed during the human exile.



**BIOETHICS
AT THE
BOX
OFFICE**

A Little Bit of Heaven (2011, PG-13 for sexual content, including crude references, and language). End of Life, Physician-Patient Relationship



The Descendants (2011, R for language including some sexual references). End of Life, Withdrawing Treatment.



Cloud Atlas (2012, R for violence, sexuality/nudity, and some drug use). Cloning, Personhood.



Rise of the Planet of the Apes (2011, PG-13 for intense and frightening sequences of action and violence). Genetic Engineering, Human Enhancement, Research ethics.

**PRIMETIME
BIOETHICS**

Better Off Ted (2009-2010). Biotechnology, Emerging Technology, Human Subjects Research, Research Ethics. Comedy about a multinational corporation engaged in cutting-edge, and often over the edge, research.

Caprica (2009-2010). Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Uploading, Cyborgs, Human-Computer Interface, Personhood, Robotics. This prequel to *Battlestar Galactica* sets the stage 50 years before the latter, showing how a startling advance in artificial intelligence sets in motion a series of unintended consequences leading to the emergence of the Cylons and their subsequent wars with humans.



The New Normal (2012). Reproductive Ethics. This new series follows the life of a surrogate carrying a child for a gay couple.

