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Relke, Diana M.A.

University of Calgary Press

Relke, Diana M. A. "Drones, clones, and alpha babes: retrofitting Star Trek's humanism, post -9/11". University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta, 2006.

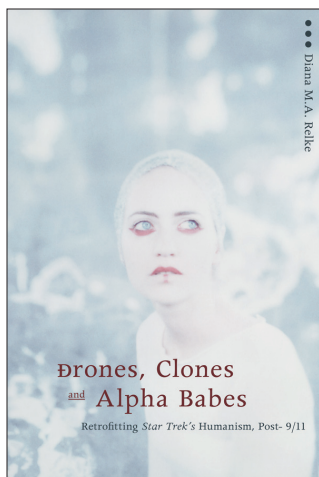
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DRONES, CLONES AND ALPHA BABES: RETROFITTING *STAR TREK'S* HUMANISM, POST- 9/11

by Diana M.A. Relke

ISBN 978-1-55238-667-5

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9: Holographic Love

Even in the age of the technosocial subject, life is lived through bodies.
– Allucquere Rosanne Stone, “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?” 113.

If the “post” in posthuman points to changes that are in part already here, the “human” points to the seriated nature of these changes. – Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 281–82.

THE HOLODECK IS *Star Trek*'s alternative to cyberspace and one of its more vulnerable targets for postmodernist critique – especially in *The Next Generation*'s representation of it. Cyberspace is often seen as the quintessential postmodern “object,” a “consensual illusion” (as William Gibson describes it) defined by the absence of central control – a place where anyone can have access to anyone else. In addition, it signifies a victory over phallogocentric anxiety by welcoming the technological penetration of the human mind. The holodeck, by contrast, reinforces the human/technology opposition. Phallogocentric anxieties are fended off by human retention of the prerogative of penetration: the illusion does not penetrate the human; the human penetrates the illusion. A firm boundary between reality and illusion is thus maintained through the confinement of illusions within the bulkheads that separate holodeck simulations from the “real” world of the ship. The human may cross that boundary at will, but holograms are prevented from crossing into the ship.

Many *Star Trek* episodes feature the theme of human control of holotechnology. For example, the *TNG* episode “Ship in a Bottle” is about the anxiety produced when the boundary between reality and holographic illusion becomes uncertain – or, more specifically, when control over that boundary shifts from the human to the hologram. A preference for holographic illusion over reality is defined as pathological – as in the case of Lieutenant Barklay (“Hollow Pursuits”), who suffers from chronic “holodiction.” Even

in *Voyager*, it is more than two years before the holographic Doctor is liberated from confinement in sickbay, thus transforming the entire ship into a hyperspace. Yet even now the crew still has the power to end his liberty with the tap of a few console controls that transfers his holomatrix from his mobile emitter back to sickbay. In sum, the holodeck is about humans remaining on the “right” side of the penetrator/penetratee opposition – a position from which the boundary between the humanist self and the posthuman Other can be policed.

However, another way of reading the holodeck is through the lens of the information/materiality opposition. Implicated in this opposition, critical theory reinforces Western culture’s profound ambivalence about the human body. As Katherine Hayles writes: “One contemporary belief likely to stupefy future generations is the postmodern orthodoxy that the body is primarily, if not entirely, a linguistic and discursive construction” (1999 192). For all of *Star Trek*’s uniquely American ambivalence about sexuality, homosexuality, and the body generally, the holodeck concept does appear to privilege embodiment over disembodiment. Humans are permitted to interact with holographic programs in their material bodies – whether sexually, athletically, militarily, or otherwise, depending upon the program – and all of the user’s senses are directly engaged with its simulations. Moreover, holograms – whether they represent organic beings or inorganic objects – are given substance in the form of partially stable matter created by transporter-based replicators, which transform energy into matter. Thus the holodeck can be seen as an implicit critique of transhumanism’s repudiation of the flesh in its genetically unenhanced form.

Holographic characters are also represented as intelligent and complex programs, not on a par with *Voyager*’s sentient and self-aware EMH, but certainly better than a Turing machine. Because they are often short-lived, or only intermittently active, the evolution of their intelligence is normally quite minimal. Their real genius is in their ability to interact in a realistic manner with other holograms and with human(oid)s in ways often indistinguishable from people in the world beyond the holodeck. Their personalities have integrity – that is to say, their emotional responses are in keeping with the personalities with which they have been programmed. Thus, their potential as bridges across the human/posthuman divide is considerable. While it’s Janeway’s relationship with Seven of Nine that plays the most important role in the evolution of the Captain’s humanism, the holodeck also helps her modify her notions about the relationship between

human and technology. In important ways, Seven's reclamation of her humanity and Janeway's evolving humanism – and the role of the holodeck in both – are inseparable.

The act that puts the first chink in Janeway's assumption of a boundary between humanity and technology – a chink that will widen as the series progresses – is her capture and detention of Seven of Nine. If the drone's assessment of the limited ability of humans to function smoothly in groups has validity, her perception of Janeway's behaviour is even more accurate. Seven of Nine quite rightly accuses Janeway of being "hypocritical" and "manipulative" for depriving her of agency and choice "in the name of humanity." This makes Janeway "no different than the Borg." Indeed, the violence with which the drone had been severed from the hive mind rivals the assimilation process itself. Convincing though Seven of Nine's arguments are in terms of Starfleet's own protocols (Barrett and Barrett 112), Janeway refuses to take the rap: "You lost the capacity to make a rational choice the moment you were assimilated. *They* took that from you. And until I'm convinced you've gotten it back, I'm making the choice for you" ("The Gift"). For Janeway – as for all humanists since Descartes – "the capacity to make a rational choice" is the boundary that divides humans from others, including the (cy)Borg. Indeed, the cyborg is only the most recent addition to a long list of those forced to clear the hurdle of reason before they could claim the prize of liberty. It's a list that has included "savages," "barbarians," peasants, labourers, Jews, gays, and "the sex" – indeed, everyone but white male owners of property.

What would convince Janeway that Seven of Nine has recovered her reason is revealed in a discussion between the Captain and the Doctor. According to the Doctor, there's a war being waged within the drone's body between the biological and the technological – a war that could be fatal to her. She lies unconscious in sickbay, and the Doctor wants to surgically remove the Borg hardware, but he is in an ethical bind. He knows that this surgery is the last thing Seven of Nine would want. He wants to save her life, but as a physician he is ethically obligated to respect what he knows to be her wishes. "This is no ordinary patient," advises Janeway: "She may have been raised by the Borg – raised to *think* like a Borg – but she's with us now. Underneath all that technology she's a human being, whether she's ready to accept that or not. And until she *is* ready, someone has to make the decisions for her." To Janeway, Seven of Nine's acceptance of herself as a *human* being would be proof that she has recovered her reason.

In Janeway's view, technology "is but an extension of the body of man." Therefore, the drone's "human being" is not *in* her Borg technology but rather, *under* it. It's the technology that separates her from her humanity. The drone understands this – which is why, post-op, she tells the Captain, "You can alter our physiology, but you cannot change our nature."

But her "nature" does change – although not through the force of Janeway's will, for Seven of Nine is equally willful. Rather, this abduction, together with the Doctor's transformation of the drone's appearance in accordance with his masculine tastes, sets in motion a process that occurs within the interaction of the cyborg and the members of her new "collective." In this way, Seven's transformation echoes that of the adolescent drone rescued and restored to health and individuality by the crew of Picard's *Enterprise*. In that *TNG* episode, Dr. Crusher and Chief Engineer La Forge unwittingly trigger in the lonely youngster the process of individuation simply by treating him as an individual, even responding to his curiosity about the possibility of his having a name, rather than a Borg designation. They also illustrate for the newly named Hugh what it is to have agency and choice: initially under strict orders to study the drone with a view to re-engineering it as a tool – a weapon – with which to destroy the collective, the crew eventually balk, arguing for this new individual's right to choose. Not until Picard is satisfied that Hugh is capable of making a "rational" choice is that right extended to him (*TNG* "I, Borg"). Agency, choice, and reason are bound up together.

The Next Generation's "I, Borg" aired in 1992, while the date of *Voyager's* "Scorpion" is 1997. The five years that separated these episodes were characterized by explosive growth in information technology. During that period, the World Wide Web transformed the Internet from a message delivery system into a mass medium. Correspondingly, the cyborg was no longer just a Terminator, a Robocop, or a Borg drone but, more importantly, a cultural icon of the information age and an image with which increasing thousands of Web surfers and virtual communities identified. Janeway's humanism comes up hard against this *fin de millennium* cyborg sensibility. Her characterization therefore had to evolve in ways quite different from Picard's. Near the beginning of "Scorpion," reading to Chakotay from Picard's report in the ship's database, Janeway quotes: "In their collective state, the Borg are utterly without mercy. Driven by one will alone – the will to conquer. They are beyond redemption, beyond reason." She is consulting this and other reports for insights on how she might prepare her own first encounter with the Borg,

but these “comrades in arms” don’t seem to help: “the truth is, I’m alone.” But if doing it her own way demonstrates anything, it’s that the humanist – and specifically scientific – framework through which she sees her world will have to change.

Picard and Janeway may be equal in rank, and they may even be comrades in arms in some kind of abstract way. But they are not equal in experience or influence. When Picard takes command of the *Enterprise*, he is already a seasoned captain – he has even survived a court martial. As the Captain of the Federation flagship, his opinion is regularly sought by Starfleet HQ on matters of Federation policy. By contrast, *Voyager* is Janeway’s first command, and she has failed her first test by getting herself lost and destroying the only known means of returning the ship and its crew in good order. Her story is about how she recovers from that initial failure – how she transforms failure into success. The learning curve she must scale in order to achieve this is especially steep. Moreover, unlike Picard, who must be either assimilated, suffering from post-assimilation shock, or otherwise under the sway of some evil alien influence before he can be corrupted, Janeway – like most of the rest of us – is by nature corruptible. The writers frequently place her in no-win situations – sometimes through a bad decision of her own, sometimes through force of circumstances. This provides an opportunity to demonstrate that even at the top of a hierarchy, choices can be limited and agency crippled. Sometimes Janeway is written into situations of moral murkiness in which individuality is set on a collision course with hierarchy, and the Captain is forced to eat her words. Consider, for example, this exchange between Janeway and Seven of Nine in an episode in which Seven is punished for disobeying orders by taking the decision to send a member of Species 8472 to its death in order to save the ship from almost certain destruction:

SEVEN: You made me into an individual. You encouraged me to stop thinking like a member of the collective, to cultivate my independence and my humanity. But when I try to assert that independence, I am punished.

JANEWAY: Individuality has its limits – especially on a starship, where there’s a command structure.

SEVEN: I believe that you are punishing me because I do not think the way you do, because I am not becoming more like you. You claim to respect my individuality, but in fact, you are frightened by it.

JANEWAY: [after a pause] As you were. (“Prey”)

As so often when Seven confronts Janeway with the dislocation between her principles and her actions, the Captain is rendered speechless. “As you were” is not so much a standard military command as an admission that Seven is too close to the truth for Janeway to risk a response. The Captain wants this confrontation to be about how hierarchy trumps individuality aboard a starship – *period*. But Seven can’t let it go; she sees it as part of the long-running conflict between them. To her, it’s about the politics of difference and the injustices perpetrated in the name of humanist universalism, and Janeway is not prepared to go there. Any one of a number of reasonable arguments could have been written into Janeway’s response – for example, that Seven is conflating individuality and independence; that individuality is always in constant interplay with *interdependence*; that it’s not difference a captain is conditioned to fear but rather, anarchy. But Janeway is not Picard: as a character, she’s not supplied with all the answers. More to the point, this is the closing scene of the episode: its purpose is to leave open all kinds of questions about Janeway’s humanism, about what exactly it is that frightens the humanist in her, and about how the writers will be rethinking it for her over the final three seasons.

Correspondingly, it’s at moments like these that we’re reminded of Seven’s determination to hang onto her cyborg identity. As viewers, we know that she will never be completely re-assimilated – otherwise her character will become a liability to the series, and she will go the way of the Kes character she replaced. This knowledge makes it possible, perhaps even inevitable that we will project upon Seven’s expressionless features in this scene the determination to become not so much a better human as a better cyborg. There is a link between this and Janeway’s ethics. Ironically, Seven of Nine is Janeway’s redemption from the moral murkiness that characterizes her behaviour in “Scorpion” and “The Gift.” For despite the drone’s gradual conversion to the Captain’s humanist doctrine, Seven never ceases to insist upon retaining enough of her Borg identity to qualify her as a hybrid. As she tells Janeway three years after her “liberation,”

When I was first captured by the Borg, I was young and frightened. I watched my parents assimilated. Then I was placed in a maturation chamber, and the hive mind began to restructure my synaptic pathways – purge my individuality. When I emerged five years later, the turmoil of my forced assimilation had been replaced with order. You may not be aware of this, Captain, but that order continues to be

a source of strength for me. I could not have regained my humanity without it. (“Collective”)

The “lure of perfection is strong” in the Borg (“Drone”), and order is the highest expression of Borg perfection (“The Omega Directive”). “I bring order to chaos,” says the Borg Queen in *First Contact*. It should be noted here that order and perfection are implicit in the word *extropy*, the neologism coined by Extropian Institute founder Max More as the binary opposite of *entropy* – the decay of order. Order and perfection are as highly valued by the Borg as agency and choice are by humanists. Read in this context, Seven of Nine’s *Voyager* experiences become occasions for her learning that each pair of values sometimes gets compromised for the sake of the other pair. An episode devoted to this lesson involves her use of the holodeck to work on her social skills and explore her (hetero)sexuality. The episode, “Human Error,” is an interesting illustration of the difficulties involved in pursuing a humanist vision in a posthuman setting. While it’s explicitly about Seven of Nine’s “failure” to accept the human struggle of balancing her personal and professional lives, it may also be read as the reaffirmation of her cyborg subjectivity.

There are several characteristics associated with humanist individuality, but the one most often made explicit in connection with Seven of Nine is *uniqueness*. When the Doctor reconstructs Seven’s appearance as an expression of his own sexual fantasies and then follows up with lessons in interpersonal relating, including a lesson in how to behave on a date (“Someone to Watch Over Me”), it’s clear that the “humanity” this character seeks to recover is – to put it mildly – heavily weighted in favour of patriarchal femininity. Many of the responses she evokes in her male crewmates operate as part of the feedback that guides Seven in her self-reconstruction. But the patriarchal feminine stereotype – especially the one so masterfully articulated in her physical appearance – is the binary opposite of a unique individual. Instead, Seven’s uniqueness is entirely dependent on her cyborg subjectivity. Therefore, the failure of the holodeck program she designs for herself, a simulation in which she is represented as fully human, is a foregone conclusion. Even in the concluding episode of the series, when her heterosexuality is fully operational, it’s her cyborg qualities, not her exclusively human ones, that are made crucial elements of the plot.

But “Human Error” is nevertheless interesting for a couple of reasons. Seven’s holographic fantasy – she calls it “research” – is quite clichéd, as if she had used an old Harlequin romance as her guide in programming it. Thus it’s consistent with the adolescent stage she is going through with respect to her sexual development. The “romantic interest” hologram she programs for herself is modelled on Chakotay. This holo-Chakotay is a bit like a traditional Harlequin hero in that he plays the older, wiser, more knowledgeable partner whose role it is to awaken the heroine’s passion; he even has the traditional scene in which he won’t take no for an answer. Seven spends several non-consecutive hours with her holo-lover. However, when she starts neglecting her shipboard duties to the point where she’s reprimanded by the Captain and lies her way out of it, she judges the program a failed experiment and decides to destroy it. Interestingly, instead of merely deleting the files, she re-enters the simulation to break up properly with her holo-lover. In other words, what she originally programmed as a research tool to assist her in her quest to be fully human has become a form of posthuman intelligence to whom she owes the decency of an explanation. The program’s biggest “failure,” it would seem, is in not helping her establish that humanist boundary between humanity and technology.

The second intriguing thing about Seven’s program is its subtle allusions to *Blade Runner*. There are two scenes in which we see her seated at a piano in the semi-darkness playing from the nineteenth-century classical repertoire. Her Borg implants are gone; she has exchanged her “efficient” catsuit for a pretty dress; and her lovely hair cascades over her shoulders. The allusions to the replicant Rachael playing Chopin in Deckard’s apartment are unmistakable. In the *Blade Runner* scene, Rachael is undergoing a self-exploration not unlike Seven’s. But Rachael’s transformation is in the opposite direction from the one Seven programs for herself. Although Rachael’s story also involves her sexual awakening, her subjectivity is changing from human to cyborg. Other similarities and differences cast some light on the futility of Seven’s search for uniqueness in feminine stereotypicality.

Rachael is just emerging from the trauma of learning that she’s a replicant – one of several female replicants, each of which is a variation on the “basic pleasure model” manufactured by the Tyrell Corporation as tools for human use in the off-world colonies. Rachael is grappling with the revelation that her memories are not her own but rather, implants – specifically, the memories of Tyrell’s niece. Her playing awakens Deckard, who comes

over and sits on the piano bench beside her. She has removed her jacket and taken down her beautiful hair, transforming herself from one biotechnologically engineered patriarchal simulacrum to another – i.e., from a 1940s *film noir* heroine in a business suit to a Pre-Raphaelite portrait in a soft feminine blouse. “I didn’t know if I could play,” she says: “I remember lessons, but I don’t know if it’s me or Tyrell’s niece.” Implying that it doesn’t matter, Deckard says gently, “You play beautifully.” This statement represents an important turning point in the film. In Deckard’s mind, Rachael is no longer just a biotech commodity devoid of empathy, a creature that does “not know what it is.” She is now a woman with subjectivity, emotions, and erotic appeal. In Seven’s holographic version of Chakotay, he has undergone a change not unlike Deckard’s. He is transformed from the first officer who has always suspected Seven of a technologically determined allegiance to the collective, to a lover programmed to respond to her deeply repressed sexual feelings. In the second holodeck piano scene, he sits beside her on the piano bench: “Bravo,” he says intimately, “I had no idea you were so good.” Unlike Deckard, however, who succeeds in breaking through Rachael’s sexual inhibitions by physically overpowering them, holo-Chakotay’s similarly aggressive response to Seven’s decision to end their affair meets with resistance from her cyborg reserves.

The emotions awakened in Seven by her holo-lover are so powerful, so “real” that they trigger a failsafe device in her cortical node that she didn’t even know existed. She experiences a short-out in her circuitry and collapses. The Doctor investigates and concludes:

Your cortical node was designed to shut down your higher brain functions when you achieve a certain level of emotional stimulation.... It appears to be a failsafe mechanism to deactivate drones who start to regain their emotions. Knowing the Borg, it makes perfect sense. Finding one’s heart is the surest road to individuality.”

This failsafe device also echoes *Blade Runner*, whose replicants are engineered with a four-year lifespan intended to prevent the possibility of their developing emotionally to the point where they would become indistinguishable from “natural” humans, and thus capable of escaping the technology used by the authorities to detect them when they escape their off-world enslavement and attempt to blend in with the human population on Earth.

Seven decides against undergoing the complicated procedure of having her microcircuitry reconfigured, even though the disappointed Doctor pressures her hard to consent to this difficult surgery and thus complete her transition. But his motives, like those of both Janeway and the holo-Chakotay, are a bit too self-serving for Seven's liking. Besides, over-medicalized as she is, her insistence upon setting her own time frame in this regard is understandable – and an affirmation of agency and choice. The more important thing here is that a hologram could elicit the most intense emotions she has ever experienced, for it says even more about the permeability of the boundary between her humanity and her posthumanity. As a human-Borg hybrid, she is as much at home in the hyperreality of the holodeck as she is in the human(ist) society of *Voyager* – perhaps even more so, given that she makes no real/unreal humanist distinction when it comes to treating her holographic lover with the same respect she would if he were Commander Chakotay himself. Undisclosed failsafe devices notwithstanding, she seems to have no ethical or psychological problem with the concept of holographic lovers. The same cannot be said for Janeway.

In “Fair Haven,” Tom Paris and Harry Kim have set aside their co-authored “Captain Proton” holonovel to program a simulation that the whole crew can enjoy. It is an enormously complex program set in an early-twentieth-century storybook Irish village, complete with village square, railway station, church, inn, and pub. Some of the crew have chosen their characters – Tom and Harry as young men about town, the Doctor as village priest – and interact freely with the holographic characters. Somewhat more sophisticated than standard holodeck characters, they are nevertheless programmed with something called “perceptual filters” – algorithms that keep the characters oblivious to anything outside the program's parameters. For example, crewmembers may visit Fair Haven in uniform, but the holograms will not react to the fact that the visitors are eerily out of fashion with the times. One such holographic character is the publican Michael Sullivan, who catches Janeway's eye. She lets him in on a little of her Irish heritage, and he processes this information: as a result, she is comprehended by the program's intelligence as “Katie O'Clare,” a traveller who has come to spend some time on her aunt and uncle's farm in County Clare. At the end of a long and pleasant after-hours visit with Michael in his pub, Janeway gets a surprise introduction to his wife. This jolts her into a reminder that she has merely been playacting, so she abruptly comes to her scientific senses and bids the publican and his wife a sheepish goodbye.

However, the following day, she takes the liberty of deleting Michael's wife from the program – and while she's at it, she brings his character a bit more in line with her tastes in men. Soon she's back on the holodeck – this time in costume. She finds herself spending more and more time in Fair Haven, interacting with the charming Michael who, consistent with her specifications, is now three centimetres taller and reads Irish poetry. Having approved the crew's request to keep the program running around the clock, she has tipped them off to her unusual enthusiasm for Fair Haven. Chakotay even teases her about it, remarking that he couldn't help but notice that Michael seemed a little taller than he used to be. "You can wipe that smirk off your face," she tells him, "it's not what you think.... He's a *hologram*." "You seemed embarrassed when I ran into you," says Chakotay: "There was no reason to be. It was nice to see you having a little fun." "He is rather charming, isn't he?" she says: "Too bad he's made of photons and force-fields." Provocatively, Chakotay replies: "I never let that stand in my way."

Nor does Janeway. Their flirtation develops into a quite serious love affair. But three days later, Nelix finds the Captain in her cabin feeding a stack of Irish poetry books into the recycler. She is unusually subdued. Declining Nelix's invitation to a party in Fair Haven, she explains: "Well, let's just say I'd rather stick to reality right now." Next day, the hurt and bewildered Michael is drowning his sorrows in the pub. When he explains that Katie has vanished without a word of explanation, Tom suggests that perhaps he's misread her feelings. This provokes an angry response from Michael, and a barroom brawl ensues. Tom and Harry end up in sickbay. As the Doctor, still in his priestly robe and clerical collar, treats their injuries, Janeway enters and angles for an explanation. Before he can be stopped, Harry blurts out enough of the story to make her know that she had been the cause of the altercation – whereupon the Doctor asks her to step out into the gangway with him for a moment. "I apologize for overstepping my bounds," he says. Michael's broken heart can be mended with the flick of a switch, continues the priestly doctor; her feelings, however, are more complicated. Thus he's been worried about her. Janeway is evasive, so the Doctor backs off: "If you decide you want to talk, I've been hearing a lot of confessions lately. Let me know." He turns to go back to sickbay, but Janeway calls out to him: "You want a confession, Doctor? Alright." She gives him a summary of a memorable three days, culminating in a picnic on the bank of the lake:

Michael drifted off to sleep, his head was lying on my shoulder, and I remember thinking “This is close to perfect.” Then he began to snore. Did I nudge him with my elbow, hoping he’d roll over? Did I whisper in his ear to wake him? Why bother, when I could simply access the computer and alter his vocal algorithms. And that’s exactly what I was about to do – when I realized that everything around me was an illusion, *including him*. So I left. I almost wrote him a note to say goodbye. Can you believe that!? *A Dear John letter to a hologram!?*

The Doctor is, of course, one life form guaranteed to believe it. But Janeway seems unaware that she’s not only having a deeply serious conversation with a hologram about the unreality of holograms; she is also confessing her sin against traditional scientific doctrine to a hologram playacting the role of priest. This gives added expression to the Doctor’s comment about his overstepping of bounds. Indeed, several levels of the real are collapsing into one another, even as Janeway expresses her relief at having escaped that very “illusion.” Her inability to recognize the contradiction she has created is easily read as her insensitivity to the politics of difference. While the Doctor may be programmed with the same humanist assumptions as everyone else aboard *Voyager*, he nevertheless takes just as much pride in his difference from them as does the Vulcan Tuvok or the cyborg Seven of Nine.

More important in this scene is Janeway’s scientism. As Robin Roberts has pointed out, “Janeway practices a more traditional science, arguing for caution, circumspection, objectivity, detachment” (2000 281–82). As a traditional scientist, Janeway’s character is defined by a whole host of binary oppositions upon which science rests, constructions such as culture/nature, objective/subjective, reason/emotion. Without a sufficient appreciation of the holodeck as hyperreality – a third-order space where simulation and reality implode – the boundaries that separate those traditionally binarized categories appear to be disintegrating before her very eyes, and it frightens her in much the same way as Seven’s cyborg hybridity does. Many thousand light-years from the Starfleet hierarchy that legitimizes her authority, she often relies on traditional categories to maintain her sense of control. Unconsciously insulting the Doctor is a way of defending against the breakdown of scientific certainty. It’s also consistent with the difficulty she has maintaining her acceptance of him as a legitimate life form. Indeed,

unique to this episode, Janeway's willingness to make herself vulnerable to the Doctor by sharing her private feelings is at odds with her tendency to patronize him. But it's nevertheless a sign that her humanist construction of reality is headed for an important expansion.

Somewhat uncharacteristically, the Doctor ignores these insults and the way in which they expose Janeway's assumption of the superiority of the "pure" human over the hybrid. Who, after all, should know better the interplay of sameness and difference than a hybrid life form? But he does seem to recognize that he can more effectively challenge her assumptions by focussing on the particularities of the immediate situation:

DOCTOR: I understand your trepidation. But you are the Captain. You can't have a relationship with a member of your crew – they're all your subordinates. So where does that leave you? The occasional dalliance with a passing alien? *Voyager* could be in the Delta Quadrant for a *very* long time. A hologram may be the only logical alternative.

JANEWAY: *He's not real!*

DOCTOR: He's as real as I am! Flesh and blood, photons and force-fields – it's all the same, as long as your *feelings* are real. He makes a joke; you laugh. Is that an illusion? He says something that makes you think. Does it matter how his molecules are aligned? Did it ever occur to you that it's not a question of whether or not he's "real"?

JANEWAY: What do you mean?

DOCTOR: I think you should stop trying to control every aspect of this relationship. Romance is borne out of differences as well as similarities – out of the unexpected as well as the familiar.

JANEWAY: Maybe I just needed to be sure that he'd love me back.

DOCTOR: But isn't that the risk you always take, hologram or not? ...

JANEWAY: I've never been afraid of taking risks.

DOCTOR: Then perhaps next time, you should just let him snore.

Within the framework of American anti-racist critique of *Star Trek* in which most differences tend to get read as displacements of racial difference, the Doctor would not score points here, as his logic borrows too much from the liberal ideology of "white, black – it's all the same." But his focus here is on *feelings* – something all *Star Trek* captains struggle with, but especially Janeway. With a few notable exceptions – such as the one represented in "Scorpion" – Janeway is represented as quite good at

integrating feelings for others into her command style because that style owes much to the ideology of maternalism: a harmonization of control and feeling is what she strives for as an authority figure. But where authority is out of the picture, her feelings feel out of control: in “Fair Haven,” it’s around the issue of control that displacement comes into play. It’s only through her reprogramming of Michael that she gives herself permission to get involved with him in the first place, but this gives her no assurance that she can control his feelings for her without a few more modifications to his program. Given that it’s Janeway he’s advising, the Doctor is doing a good job. He knows from her history of resistance to accepting him on an equal footing with his crewmates that he will never succeed in getting her to give up the binary mode of thought that gives Janeway her identity as a scientist, but he can help her deal with situations that require her to find ways of bridging the oppositions. *Feelings* are real, whether experienced on or off the holodeck. He even seems to get her to shift to a binary more useful to her in this situation: risk/control.

That the lesson has sunk in becomes apparent a few episodes later, in “Spirit Folk.” The Fair Haven program has been running continuously for months, and Tom has been periodically upgrading the characters, adding what he calls “a few bells and whistles.” As a consequence, the characters begin to evolve, many beyond their perceptual filters. The resulting malfunction gives them awareness beyond the parameters of the program. There was early evidence that this problem was already developing when, in “Fair Haven,” Michael took to drowning his unrequited love in Irish whiskey, despite the fact that Paris had specifically programmed the barkeep not to drink. Now, worried that Tom and Harry may not be able to correct the malfunctions and restore her lover’s perceptual filters, Janeway wonders how she might have to handle it. Chakotay advises her to tell him the truth. “Hate to break the news to you, Michael, but I’m a starship captain, and you’re a 300 deciwatt holodeck program,” Janeway rehearses: “I couldn’t do it.” “In that case,” says Chakotay, “you’ll have to get creative.”

As the holo-characters are not programmed with knowledge of twenty-fourth-century science, which would help them properly process what looks like magic to them, they use the only framework they have through which to make sense of the situation – Irish folklore. Interpreting the crew as faerie folk from the spirit world, they take Tom, Harry, and the Doctor hostage. The crisis escalates; some of the characters are in possession of antique firearms, and the holodeck safety protocols are offline.

Chief Engineer Torres wants to resolve the situation by cutting power to the hologrid, thus purging the program from the database, but Janeway considers that a last resort: “The people of Fair Haven may not be real but our feelings for them are. I won’t destroy these relationships if I can find another way.”

Things go from bad to worse when Michael gets possession of the Doctor’s mobile emitter, and finds himself transported to the bridge. Using Wells’ *Time Machine* as an analogy, Janeway is able to tell him the truth in a way that is comprehensible to him. But Michael fears for their relationship: “You’re the captain of a starship, I’m only a barkeep.” “Just because we’re from different worlds,” she says, “doesn’t mean we can’t care for each other.” Michael is able to pass on his understanding to the townsfolk, and Janeway follows up: “If you want, we’ll leave and never bother you again. But we’d prefer to keep our friendships alive.” Later, when asked if she wants the holograms’ memories of the last few days purged from their files, she says, “No, leave them. We’ve learnt to accept alien species with new technology; let’s hope the people of Fair Haven can learn to accept us.” For Janeway, this is a substantial improvement over the humanist assumption that “all invention is but an extension of the body of man.” But her progress in this regard does not end here: ten episodes later, in “Unimatrix Zero,” she voluntarily submits to Borg assimilation in order to infiltrate the collective and help liberate drones who have formed a resistance movement. Following the success of the mission, the Doctor reports that he has “been able to extract *most* of [her] Borg technology” [my emphasis]. So much for her obsession with the boundary between technology and humanity.

Janeway may be sexually abstinent almost to the point of celibacy, and this may certainly be read as connected with her humanism and the gender ideology it reinforces. But in no way does she come close to the repudiation of the flesh explicit in Extropian fantasies of Postbiological Man, a critique of which may be read in “Revulsion.” *Voyager* answers a distress signal from a malfunctioning hologram aboard a vessel, and B’Elanna and the Doctor transport over to see if they can help. The hologram tells them that all six members of the crew have succumbed to an infection. This hologram – or “isomorphic projection,” as his kind are called in the culture that manufactured him – is having trouble coping alone, as he is merely a maintenance drudge. In keeping with his culture’s treatment of all holograms, he is confined to the equivalent of a broom closet and let out only at night to clean up after the organic crew and scrub out the reactor core.

It eventually emerges that his resentment of his situation has grown into a psychotic loathing of all organic life forms. He has murdered his crew and stowed their bodies below decks, and in obsessive-compulsive fashion he now spends his time cleaning up non-existent messes. His psychotic ravings about the repulsiveness of organic beings, their filthy secretions and their carnal habits, and the superiority of digitized life, frighten B'Elanna, who almost meets a sticky end herself. Stunned by this encounter with a fellow being, the Doctor has a moment of "there, but for the grace of Captain Janeway's enlightened command, go I."

But the Federation has some catching up to do in this regard. Predictably, by the final season of *Voyager*, Janeway is required to come to the Doctor's defence in a crisis involving his rights as a sentient being. Over subspace communication with Starfleet HQ the familiar humanist arguments are trotted out. The Doctor has realized his desire to become more than the sum of his programming, even assuming command of the ship in Janeway's absence. He has actively embraced the cyberneticist Dr. Lewis Zimmerman as his father, thereby legitimizing his human origins. He has on occasion disobeyed direct orders, demonstrating his capacity for independent thought. Janeway's closing argument clinches it:

Your Honour, centuries ago, in most places on earth only landowners of a particular gender and race had any rights at all. Over time, those rights were extended to all humans and later, as we explored the galaxy, to thousands of other sentient species. Our definition of what constitutes a person has continued to evolve. Now, we're asking that you expand that definition once more – to include our Doctor.... The Doctor is a person as real as any flesh and blood I have ever known.
("Author, Author")

Imperialist allusion withal, this is probably the clearest expression of the way in which *Star Trek* approaches the posthuman – namely, by representing humanism as an evolving, expanding paradigm that enfolds the posthuman within it. This is not just *Star Trek's* optimistic spin on an artistic convention unique to the genre of science fiction. Rather, it is an illustration of what Katherine Hayles calls *seriation*: a depiction of the posthuman *not* as an apocalyptic break with the past but as existing "in a relation of overlapping innovation and replication" (2003 134). It challenges euphoric Extropian nano-fantasies of "the eclipse of man and the

dawning of the posthuman condition.” For one can leap from the human directly to the posthuman only in theory. In practise, the process is much messier. We have no choice but to take our humanism with us into the posthuman, for there is no Archimedean point outside our human selves from which we can proceed directly to the posthuman. As linear Vulcan logic might have it, we hang onto the past for balance as we reach out to the future; that makes everything in the present transitional.

Perhaps some of the more scathing postmodernist critiques of Captain Janeway and Kate Mulgrew’s interpretation of her can be explained in terms of projection, for Janeway can be read as a mirror held up to our own inability to let go of those particular humanist assumptions that keep us from realizing the cyborg’s liberating potential. “But finally,” writes Hayles with reference to science fiction novels, “the answer to questions about the posthuman will not be found in books. Rather, the answers will be the mutual creation of a planet full of humans struggling to bring into existence a future in which we can continue to survive, continue to find meaning for ourselves and our children, and continue to ponder our kinship with and differences from the intelligent machines with which our destinies are increasingly entwined” (1999 282). Viewed against the backdrop of our post-9/11 world, *Voyager’s* envisioning of such a future may seem hopelessly naive to many, profoundly inadequate to others, and even ideologically dangerous to some. But as a transitional text it can remind us that the future begins now, with the acknowledgment that humanist-posthuman hybrids are also cyborgs.

