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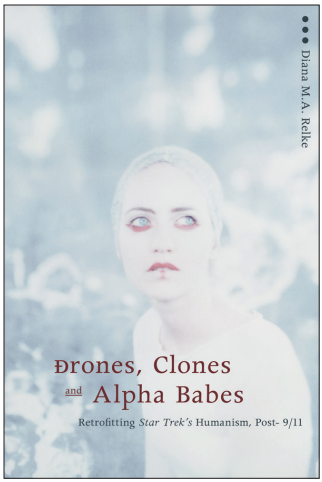

DRONES, CLONES AND ALPHA BABES: RETROFITTING *STAR TREK'S* HUMANISM, POST- 9/11

by Diana M.A. Relke

ISBN 978-1-55238-667-5

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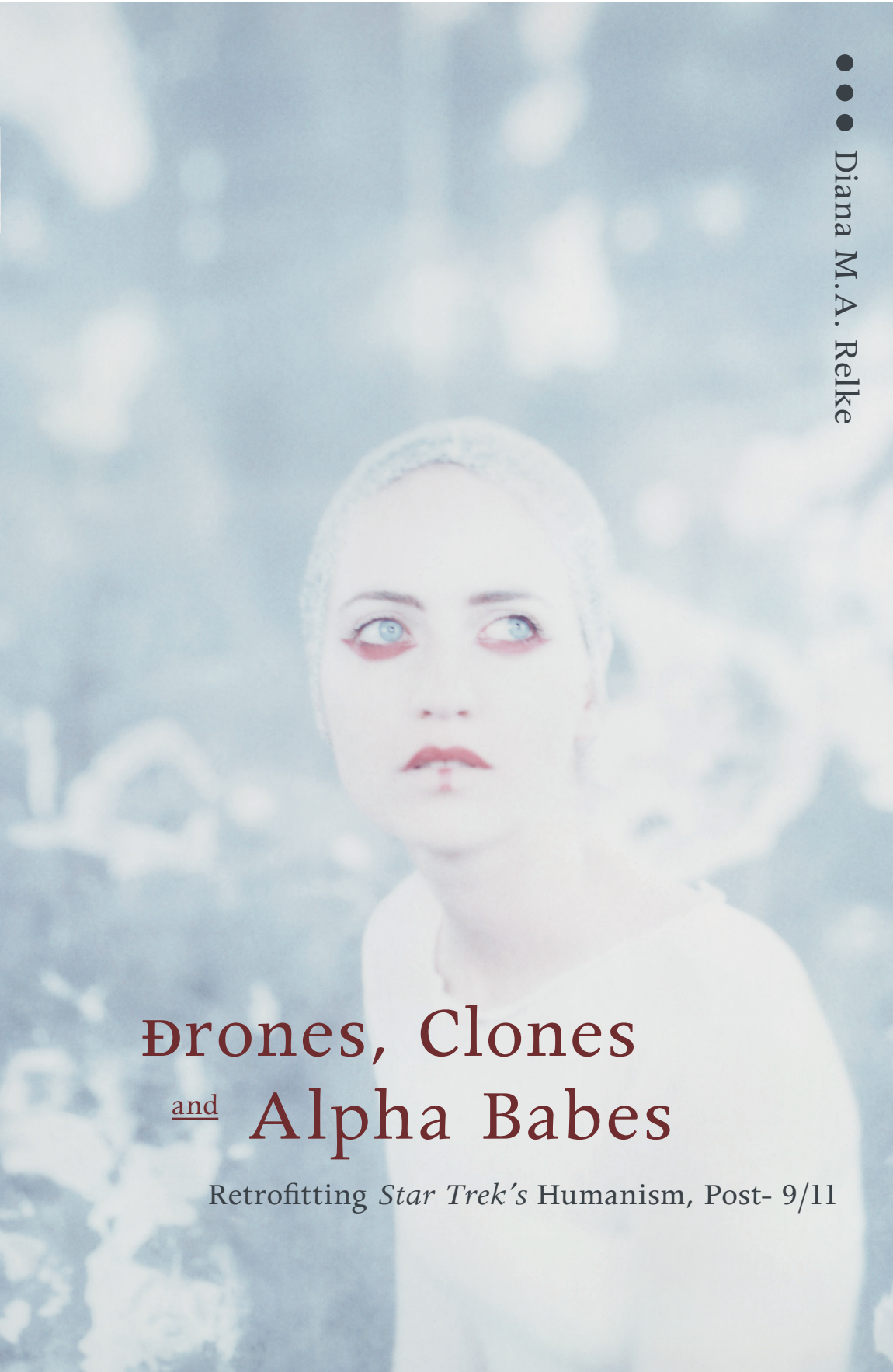

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS

Published by the University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4
www.uofcpress.com

The University of Calgary Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program. We also acknowledge the support of the Alberta Foundation of the Arts and the University of Saskatchewan, Divison of Research Services for this published work.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Relke, Diana M. A
Drones, clones, and alpha babes : retrofitting Star Trek's humanism, post -9/11 / Diana M.A. Relke.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 10: 1-55238-164-1 ISBN 13: 978-1-55238-164-9
Also issued in electronic formats: ISBN 978-1-55238-667-5, ISBN 978-1-55238-330-8

1. Star Trek television programs–Social aspects. 2. Star Trek television programs–Political aspects. 3. Star Trek television programs–Philosophy. I. Title.

PN1992.8.S74R46 2006 791.45'72 C2005-906992-9

Printed on 60 lb. Rolland Enviro acid-free paper
Printed and bound in Canada by AGMV Marquis

Cover design by Mieka West.
Page design & typsetting by Elizabeth Gusnoski.

For my kinswoman, Daria C. Danko,
who never lets her intelligent feminism
spoil her enjoyment of Star Trek.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This book is not exclusively the product of my life as a couch potato. Over the years I have discussed my love-hate relationship with Star Trek over cups of coffee and glasses of wine with many friends and colleagues who have had an influence on my thinking. Those who spring immediately to mind include my colleagues Wendy Schissel and Bernard Schissel, who are themselves big fans of Star Trek, and my sister Joan Relke, who definitely isn't. To Daria Danko, my chief inspiration for this book, I owe my conviction that many academic critics of SF need to get out more. My students – particularly those of the "Science and Society in Fiction and Film" and "The Celluloid Cyborg" courses of recent years – have contributed significantly to my take on The Next Generation and Voyager: these students will be able to trace through these pages some of the arguments we have pursued in class and some of the battles we've waged over *Trek*'s ambivalent gender representations.

I am also enormously grateful to the team at the University of Calgary Press – most especially the wise and patient John King – for seeing this project through to completion. And last but not least, I thank the University of Saskatchewan, Division of Research Services, for providing a generous grant in aid of publication.

Introduction: Why *Trek*? Why Now?

> *Interpretation is radically temporal in nature. It is also radically dependent upon context – or, we could say, it is radically historical. It is moreover guided … by our interests and by our expectations, by our prejudices and by our position in the world.* – Deborah Knight, "Women, Subjectivity, and the Rhetoric of Anti-humanism in Feminist Film Theory," 52.

> *We do not … allow ourselves to imagine a mode of criticism that is more speculative and fanciful, which allows you … to deal with the incompleteness of the text and to think through it and to use it as a starting point for thinking about other issues or thinking about our identities or our politics, as fans frequently have, and to work through the text in a new way. We do not allow ourselves the creative freedom that the fans allow themselves in the ways in which we engage with text, and I think that is painfully sad.* – Henry Jenkins, qtd. in T. Harrison, 270.

This book was written during the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. In the long months leading up to the war, I had become addicted to the news, obsessively surfing back and forth between American and Canadian network and cable channels, and compulsively trolling the Internet in search of those voices excluded by the mainstream media. When the bombs finally started falling, I couldn't endure the Shock and Awe of technological overkill, so I quickly established the habit of surfing around for something less obscene to give me some intermittent relief from it. Eventually I became conscious of how often I was stopping to catch a few scenes from various *Star Trek* reruns, any number of which one can find on any given evening of the week. I began to understand why so much of the anti-war washroom graffiti across our campus alluded to *Star Trek*. In addition to the old standby of student desperation, "Beam me up, Scotty," which normally appears only during final exams, there was a hilariously serious conversation in Borgspeak evolving daily, in chain-letter fashion. Since graffiti is not the genre in which I usually work, I decided

to enter the conversation in my own way – i.e., via the two extended essays contained in this volume. It was only after I'd got some friendly feedback on the first one that my real audience began to emerge for me. It includes those graffitists and any other science fiction fans who find that Orwell's *1984* isn't the only work that provides an accurate context for understanding the anxiety-provoking events of our bizarre post-9/11 world. If that fandom also includes some academics – welcome! But please be forewarned that these essays tend to be soft on essentialism, insufficiently respectful of anti-foundationalism, and unabashedly conversational – three sins that situate me on the less fashionable side of the modernist/postmodernist divide, whether I feel at home there or not.

Indeed, these essays were not written with the intention of challenging the many excellent American critical studies of *Star Trek*. The stories I tell are more inspiration than interrogation and reflect my new-found respect for the unusual story-telling talent of *Star Trek*'s writers and producers, a talent that made *Trek* the rival of McDonald's and Coca-Cola as America's most valuable "soft-power" export during the 1980s and 1990s. *Star Trek*'s huge base of fans has been "one of the most important populist sites for debating issues of the human and everyday relation to science and technology" (Penley 99). While virtually all television texts are polysemic in that they "allow for easy incorporation into a wide diversity of sub-cultures" (Fiske), what makes *Star Trek* unique is the sheer volume and variety of fan-authored fictions it spawned. For Henry Jenkins, author of *Textual Poachers* (1992), an ethnographic study of *Star Trek* fandom, these fan fictions shed light on the limitations of academic criticism – as he implies in the epigraph to this introduction. Indeed, while American academic studies of *Star Trek* are also a soft-power commodity, their sophisticated prose, intricate theoretical frameworks, and elaborate scholarly apparatuses – and, for non-Americans, their tendency to universalize American perspectives on the *Star Trek* text – often put them beyond the reach of a general readership. Jenkins implies that an alternative "mode of criticism" might use *Star Trek* as fans use it – i.e., "as a starting point for thinking about other issues or thinking about our identities or our politics." This is the spirit in which these essays are written.

A teacher of American popular culture since 1988 (and a news junkie since late adolescence), I have developed a habit of keeping a close watch on trends in American television, but never self-reflexively. This seems curious to me now – especially in light of the research I have done on

audience reception theory in order to develop several university courses in gender and popular culture. The phenomenon of media fandom figures prominently in these courses, and the case study I use is *Star Trek*. For as Jenkins notes, "*Star Trek* fandom, and its heavy female participation, set the model for subsequent developments in media fandoms" (Harrison 259). But teaching *Star Trek* and writing about it turned out to be very different experiences: the latter feels more like a rebellion against the anxiety experienced by many academics working in the field of popular culture. As Jenkins describes it, "we are caving in to an anxiety that our object of study is not worthy of serious study, that when we actually engage with the object of study we suddenly fear that it is too trivial, that it is not worth talking about after all, that we cannot take it seriously on its own terms" (270). The events of 9/11 and the succeeding wars jolted me out of some of that anxiety. Retracing my steps by reading back through these essays from a distance of two years, I now understand my experience as one of getting trapped between TV techno-war on the one hand and, on the other, the colonization of Prime Time by American evangelism. How else to account for why I felt compelled to write two essays, one on *Star Trek* as a challenge to the Christian Right's anti-feminist, homophobic family values, and the other on *Star Trek*'s cyborgs as a critique of technological determinism? Repelled by the continuing high-tech destruction of Iraq, and disdainful of the sermonizing of *Mysterious Ways*, *Touched by an Angel*, *Joan of Arcadia*, and George Bush's State of the Union addresses, I'm starting to see why the rational secular humanism celebrated by *Star Trek* was looking not so bad after all. It seems I displaced on to *Star Trek* my subjective response to two irrational trends in American culture.

I haven't been alone in finding intertextual connections between *Star Trek* and post-9/11 America. While I was writing these essays, there was a collection in press entitled *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics*, edited by Jutta Weldes. This volume appeared in May of 2003 – the month in which George Bush declared victory over Saddam Hussein – and features three essays on *Star Trek* which, in their different ways, find the American imperialist set of mind echoed in the Federation's military and diplomatic engagements throughout the *Star Trek* galaxy. In "Representation is Futile? American Anti-Collectivism and the Borg," political scientists Patrick Jackson and Daniel Nexon note that "artifacts of mass entertainment, such as *Star Trek*, are an important but neglected aspect of the study of world politics" (144). Jackson and Nexon

find "certain advantages to studying *Star Trek* in order to generate insight into U.S. foreign policy, as opposed to simply studying U.S. foreign policy directly" (148). Indeed, as a Canadian, I have found that exploring the links between U.S. politics and American popular culture has greatly increased my appreciation of both. For example, the influence of the Christian Right on American foreign policy provides a useful historical context within which to set the two *Star Trek* series with which I engage in these essays.

Like many Canadians, I have paid insufficient attention to the burgeoning body of work by American academics, journalists, and policy analysts on the question of the increasingly fragile separation of church and state in the United States. But the controversy sparked by Bush's "faith-based initiatives" – and the fact that the attacks of 9/11 were themselves a faith-based initiative – got me curious to know what policy analysts and cultural critics make of the clash of religious fundamentalisms that plays such a central role in current world affairs. I was interested to discover numerous references to the *Left Behind* literary phenomenon that began in 1995 – the same year in which *Star Trek: Voyager* was launched. *Star Trek* writers could hardly have been unaware of *Left Behind* – especially its encroachment upon their turf. For this series of post-Rapture novels by Tim LaHaye of Moral Majority fame and writer Jerry Jenkins is a kind of "beam me up, Jesus" scenario inspired by the psychedelic imagery of the Book of Revelation. The series borrows the conventions of science fiction in order to proselytize and promote its apocalyptic vision of the immediate future and has triggered a wave of fandom that rivals that of *Star Trek* to the point of eclipsing it.

Unlike the study of *Star Trek* as characterized by Jackson and Nexon, the *Left Behind* novels have not been entirely neglected as providing valuable insight into world politics. For example, while I was at work on these essays, Melani McAlister, professor of American studies at George Washington University, published her "Prophecy, Politics, and the Popular: The *Left Behind* Series and Christian Fundamentalism's New World Order." She judges the *Left Behind* phenomenon as "indicative of the reenergized political and cultural power of a Christian Right that in the late 1990s had seemed to be in retreat."

> In hindsight, that retreat may have been genuine at the political level, as exemplified by the decline of the Christian Coalition and the failure of several evangelical campaigns for president, but it is far less apparent

> when one considers the politics of culture: by 1996, the books in the *Left Behind* series were already under-the-radar best-sellers. These extraordinary novels marry their evangelical religious commitments to a political agenda that combines traditional social conservatism, an emergent evangelical racial liberalism, and a strongly developed interest in contemporary Middle East politics, in which Israel is central to the unfolding of God's plan for the end of time. (McAlister 775)

With one eye on "the resurgence of pro-Israel activism on the Christian right," the other on "the extraordinarily dangerous directions taken by the U.S. 'war on terrorism' in the Middle East" (774), McAlister is made exceedingly uncomfortable by the fact that *Left Behind* "has reached the very heart of mainstream media." With 59 percent of Americans anticipating the fulfilment of Revelation's prophecies within their lifetime, she fears that fundamentalism might well be the heart of mainstream American life itself (792–93). For McAlister, the excitement generated among *Left Behind* fans is very bad news indeed: "for those of us hoping to find the hard path to social justice and worldly peace, that excitement is nothing less than deadly" (793). By the time George W. Bush took the White House for the second time, two years into the bloody American occupation of Iraq, McAlister's fears had been realized.

Almost simultaneously with McAlister's article, *Left Behind* caught the attention of Peter Paik, a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin. His article, published in the online journal *Postmodern Culture*, is a capital-P political reading of *Left Behind* and related fundamentalist works of pop culture. Entitled "Smart Bombs, Serial Killings, and the Rapture: The Vanishing Bodies of Imperial Apocalypticism," Paik's article is a sustained analysis of the intersection of political and fundamentalist discourse in the United States. With millions of Americans awaiting Armageddon, it's not surprising that Paik focuses on the support that Bush has enjoyed for his "war on terror" – a crusade against evil which, for the Christian Right, encompasses the evils of environmentalism, internationalism, multiculturalism, Darwinism, feminism, human rights – and, most important, the United Nations. For the UN is the organization represented in *Left Behind* as the body through which the Antichrist will establish his satanic One World Religion. Paik reads the Christian Right as embracing Bush's radically *un*-Christian shifts in American foreign policy because they are required to kick-start the Rapture,

when the faithful will be instantly evacuated to heaven, from which perch they will be "treated to the spectacle of divine wrath being visited upon hapless non-believers during the time of the Tribulation…." (para. 11).

So, compared to the grimly enthusiastic apocalypticism of *Left Behind*, what could possibly be so bad about *Star Trek*'s naively optimistic secular humanism?

As neither a contributor to *Star Trek* scholarship nor to exuberant *Star Trek* fandom, I have been guilty of treating both phenomena with an equal amount of scepticism, for the more enthusiastic fans of *Star Trek* became, the more insidious many scholarly critics seemed to find it. This growing dislocation was more revealing than *Star Trek* itself of something curious happening in post-Cold-War American culture. There was an epic battle raging between exuberant optimism and gloomy apocalypticism in *fin-de-millennium* America: within the burgeoning body of *Star Trek* writings – popular books, academic critique, fan fiction, newsgroup discussion – the intense hysteria of the American culture wars and end-of-history thinking had collided head-on with the equally intense desire to celebrate the American imagination as unleashed by the emergence of new technosciences and their implications for the future in both outer space and cyberspace.

At the time, those academic studies didn't leave me much to say about racism or sexism in *Star Trek* – except that sometimes their authors didn't appear to be watching the same story I'd been following for years, nor were they experiencing quite the same narrative pains and pleasures I'd been getting from it. My only conclusion was that what fans value most about *Star Trek* is often what academic critics find especially dangerous about it. These radical differences of opinion often boil down to where one stands on the question of Gene Roddenberry's humanist vision. Fans tend to read Roddenberry's enlightened humanism as hope for the future, while many academic critics see it as business as usual. Both are right. Fans are right – by default – because humanism is the only discourse that can still talk about a future worth looking forward to. Critics are right about it as "business as usual," for humanism refuses to play the role we have written for it in our celebratory scripts about the death of man and the birth of the posthuman. It's not that we haven't gone beyond humanism in theory, but that in practice we can't live beyond it. *Star Trek* does a deal with humanism: in exchange for recognizing that it's still with us whether we like it or

not, we have the option of retrofitting it. Since theorizing it into oblivion isn't working, this seems like a reasonable option to me.

Watching *The Next Generation* and *Voyager* post-9/11 – especially the way in which the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have made Arabs a central focus of American racism and Muslim women the objects of a bizarre American postfeminism – put a whole different spin on those two series for me, particularly the episodes and films featuring the Borg collective. Because, as noted by Jackson and Nexon, the "Borg lacks an obvious referent and has no direct parallels with any human system of government" (144), the collective can stand in for almost any of America's enemies – and there have been several over the past few decades. Indeed, Gore Vidal has written of America's "'enemy of the month club': each month we are confronted by a new horrendous enemy at whom we must strike before he destroys us" (20–21). As a collective, the Borg are especially useful for illustrating the ideology that underpins American foreign policy and the Bush administration's preference for military solutions over diplomatic ones. As Jackson and Nexon point out:

> The suffusion of liberal values and its sense of divine mission tend to make U.S. foreign policy narratives overtly moralistic: cast in terms of grand narratives of "good against evil," "freedom against tyranny," and "civilization against barbarism." George W. Bush's reference in his 2002 State of the Union address to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as forming an "axis of evil" is but one manifestation of this Manichean tendency. It should not be surprising, then, that the very existence of collectivist regimes and ideologies constitutes an existential threat to "America." (146)

Many of Jackson and Nexon's insights into the Borg as a sinister reflection of the Federation and, by extension, America resonate with my own. Their focus is on the way in which the evolution of the Borg over several television episodes and the feature-length film *First Contact* slowly but inexorably flattens out the Borg's radical difference and makes them more comprehensible within the framework of a uniquely American ideology of liberal individualism and humanist universalism. While I, too, have pursued this theme, my focus is primarily on the gender transformations in the Borg that make them comprehensible within the context of the Christian fundamentalism's ideology of the American family and on encounters with

the Borg that have an impact on the evolution of the Federation as represented by its individual Starfleet captains and their crews.

Other essays in the Weldes collection reflect my own anxieties about the inability of American political discourse to move beyond the binary constructions so simplistically articulated by Bush – or, more accurately, by his neo-con handlers and speech-writers. Geoffrey Whitehall, for example, asserts that "the enabling foundational myths of modern world politics have been exceeded," and that "an adequate conception of the political, one that is capable of dealing with this profound, yet cliché, condition of indeterminacy, contingency, and change, has yet to be generated" (169). In other words, Bush and his team are recycling old stories from the Cold War era because they are incapable of constructing new ones. But, as Ronnie Lipschutz makes clear, this dilemma has been a long time in the making:

> In 1945, the United States was 'in control' and 'in charge.' Americans went out into the world to establish order, but things got sticky. Eventually, even familiar things became strange and had to be confronted in the only well-known and seemingly reliable way: with guns (see, e.g., the 'War on Drugs' and the 'War on Terrorism'). Now, we don't know what to do, except use guns and sell them, at home and abroad. (91)

I, too, have addressed this dilemma, but as a feature of postmodern culture more generally – and as a characteristic of postmodernist critique itself. To paraphrase American educational philosopher, Peter McLaren, postmodern America is oscillating between nostalgia for a past that hasn't arrived yet and a future that's structurally impossible. As for postmodernist critique, it may have brilliantly diagnosed this cultural malaise, but insofar as it is itself symptomatic of the ills it seeks to diagnose, it is powerless to prescribe a treatment or offer a prognosis. It's this lack of a program for change that makes postmodernist critique complicit in the kind of political dilemma articulated by Whitehall and Lipschutz. In short, politically and critically, the battle for the future is increasingly waged by those who can't imagine it. Perhaps we need new ways of reading those who still can.

In her essay in the Weldes volume, Neta Crawford notes that "world politics is already a science fiction dystopia," and that "the clear distinction between science fiction and our present world has dissolved altogether." Crawford cites techno-theorist Donna Haraway's memorable statement:

"the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (197). For example, noting that "fact" is simply the past tense of "fiction," Haraway has accepted that, to a large extent, the fictional and mythic structures inhabiting scientific discourse constitute the real situation of science (Haraway 1989 5). This is almost certainly old news to most writers of science fiction – including those who have contributed to the *Star Trek* saga. In my view, we have been too quick to dismiss *Star Trek* as merely a cheerleader for Enlightenment humanism's faith in technological "progress." In my second essay, I have tried to correct that view by lifting *Star Trek* out of its unwinnable debate with critics of the Enlightenment project and suggesting that there is enough techno-scepticism in *Star Trek* to qualify as a legitimate critique of the kind of wet-dreams of world domination apparent in those pornographic images of the techno-penetration of Baghdad.

Where I differ from most of the contributors to the Weldes collection is in my Canadian perspective. Like other non-American audiences, Canadians are not invested in the nationalist myths inscribed in *Star Trek*. It's not *our* national identity that's at stake in the debate between *Star Trek*'s adoring American fans and its academic critics. To be sure, Canadians are big consumers of American popular culture, but we do tend to adjust for the American ideology that infuses it; we simply accept that its flag-waving is there as a reminder that productions like *Star Trek* are uniquely American. If *Star Trek* is a gut-wrenching reminder to American critics of the evil underside of U.S. foreign policy, my gut is wrenched only to the extent that Canada is complicit in it. If I and other Canadians sometimes miss the more insidious implications of *Star Trek*'s humanism, it may have something to do with there being more than one kind of humanism. The United States is a *centripetal* union served by its myth of "one nation, under God," indivisibly colourless, genderless, classless. Its current division into Blue states and Red states constitutes a national crisis. Canada, by contrast, is a *centrifugal* confederation that clings to its myth of multiculturalism to keep its diverse constituencies from flying apart. Quebec separatism, Western alienation, Aboriginal self-government – these and myriad other regional and cultural divisions are business as usual in Canadian society. As "a nation of minorities," we really have no choice but to acknowledge that "the 'human' is a completely open-ended signifier, subject to endlessly different interpretations" (Halliwell and Mousely 12) – even if acknowledging such a progressive idea is not the same as living it.

For what it's worth, here is Canadian humanist Don Page's description of "the Canadian mindset":

> It is cautious, empirical, and very much concerned with what will work rather than with the rightness of any set of ideas. The Canadian instinct is to compromise and accommodate – to see all sides of an issue. It sees idealism and hypocrisy as two sides of the same coin. Canadians know that the beautifully crafted words of the Declaration of Independence led directly to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny – and as a result, to death and destruction beyond US borders.

This kind of extravagant over-generalization is fairly typical of Canadian humanism: the unpleasant streak of moral superiority evident here compensates for the profound inequality of economic and military power between our two nations. The passage also illustrates the way in which Canadians defer to the American standard of comparison – namely, competitiveness. Page highlights the difference between the rugged individualism of American libertarianism and the pragmatic humanism of our tepid version of social democracy – the latter being what motivates Pat Buchanan's dismissal of Canada as "Soviet Canuckistan." More important for my purposes here, Page raises a point that has some bearing on why American postmodernists are so hard on *Star Trek*: they do tend to read the American doctrine of Manifest Destiny as corrupting the entire *Star Trek* text.

Since the differences between our nations are rapidly melting away, thanks to the denationalizing effect of NAFTA on Canada, it might make more sense to refocus Page's argument on the issue of sovereignty – a word with a whole different meaning for Canadians than for Americans. For example, as Canadian journalist and activist Naomi Klein recently wrote upon her return from Iraq, where being mistaken for an American gave her some anxious moments: "At this perilous moment in history … Canadian security depends on our ability to maintain meaningful sovereignty from the United States. Being inside the U.S. security fortress isn't a missile shield, it's a missile magnet.… With 8,890 kilometres of shared border, geographical distance is not an option. Fortunately, political distance still is. Let's not surrender it." Klein is referring to the federal government's eagerness to participate in Bush's grandiose Star Wars missile defence scheme. After all, a multi-millionaire businessman and leader

of a country with a world-class technology industry can hardly be expected to think about ordinary Canadians' sense of self-preservation while eyeing all those available billions of research dollars in the Pentagon's bloated budget. Mercifully, Klein's worst fears went unrealized when, in response to public pressure and parliamentary opposition, Prime Minister Martin had little choice but to announce that Canada would not be signing on after all.

So, what has this to do with a Canadian reading of *Star Trek*? I can't speak for all Canadian consumers of *Trek*, but for this Canadian, its appeal is in its power to keep me believing that the ideological differences between the United States and Canada really matter. Many American critics of *Star Trek* begin their interpretations by collapsing Roddenberry's Planet Earth and his Federation of Planets into one ideological entity: imperialist America. Unlike these critics, I have tended to take more seriously Roddenberry's original modelling of the Federation on the United Nations, albeit a UN dominated by many American values and some U.S. interests – the former emanating from an American nation of which Canadians are fond, the latter imposed by an American state of which Canadians are fearful. Our fondness for American values is understandable, especially given that the United States holds no copyright on them. Indeed, a good number of the values that Americans advertise as theirs alone are equally Canada's, as we both inherited them from the same Western European tradition. So while it's true that until quite recently, the United States almost always had its way with the UN, it's also true that more often than not, it was Canada's way too – whether we want to admit it or not. Where we differ today is in our continued deference to the United Nations and international law, and the Bush administration's desperate resolve to crush the UN, which it sees as a threat to the neoconservative ambition of "full spectrum dominance." This difference is not unrelated to the issue of patriotic nationalism. In contrast to America's celebration of U.S. "exceptionalism," its belief that what's good for America is good for everyone else, and its determined PR campaigns to win the "hearts and minds" of those who disagree, Canada's most fervent expressions of nationalism and love of country are confined largely to beer commercials, hockey games, and election campaign rhetoric. Canadian nationalism is ironic, and perhaps that's what makes me more aware of the interesting cracks and fissures in *Star Trek*'s promotion of American-style idealism. But even more important is *Star Trek*'s ability to remind me that

geography is destiny – a fact that grows ever more unsettling, as our terror-stricken neighbour lurches from one self-inflicted crisis to another in its post-9/11 hysteria. American fear and paranoia can cross the border as easily as American capital and American popular culture.

As a Canadian reader of *Star Trek*, I identify more closely with British critics of *Trek*. Thus, my readings exhibit a reliance on the work of Michèle Barrett and Duncan Barrett, English writers whose geographical and ideological distance gives them a balanced view I admire and seek to emulate in these essays. Equally important, the strong tradition of Canadian myth criticism – the Other of Canadian postmodernist critique – has conditioned me to appreciate Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen's study of *Star Trek* as a secular American mythology – a mythology set in a spacious future rather than in the overcrowded past. They, too, seek a balance between the entertainment value of *Trek* and its role in the process of cultural production. Neither Wagner and Lundeen nor the Barretts seem anxious that their "object of study is not worthy of serious study," nor do they seem stricken by sudden "fear that it is too trivial, that it is not worth talking about after all," or that they "cannot take it seriously on its own [humanist] terms."

While, as a professor of gender and cultural studies, I have been well served by *Star Trek* as a handy reservoir of examples of how American popular culture reinforces Western race and gender ideology, as a fan I have also taken delight in the ways in which *Star Trek* often manages to contradict itself on these issues and offer up fragments of remarkably progressive insight. I wanted somehow to honour those contradictions, rather than merely expose them, as they are a reminder to non-American fans that not all Americans think alike – least of all the writers who make up the large team that has gifted us with the *Star Trek* saga. Those contradictions are another reason why there are two essays here, rather than one. Readers will note that the second essay revisits some of the territory covered by the first but from a different perspective. The first essay is fairly close to the surface of the *Star Trek* narrative and taught me a new appreciation for the elements good story-telling; the second essay addresses another level, where a completely new story began to emerge for me. Fortunately, the Borg, who figure centrally in both essays, have undergone such a spectacular evolution over the course of *The Next Generation* and *Voyager* that they are capable of supporting multiple levels of meaning. But what they all have in common is that they mirror things about

Western culture generally and American culture in particular that need to be said if we, as a species, want to survive long enough to get to the twenty-fourth century and find out what it's *really* like.

Diana M.A. Relke
Saskatoon, Canada
Canada Day, 2005/07/01

Alpha Babes IN THE Ðelta Quad:
Postfeminism and the Gendering of the Borg

1: Modernism/Postmodernism

You will be assimilated.
We will add your political and military distinctiveness to our own.
Your armies will adapt to service US.
NATO is irrelevant.
The UN is irrelevant.
Anti-war protest is irrelevant.
Hell, even Saddam's compliance is irrelevant!
Resistance is futile.
Have a nice day.
George W. Borg.

This item of women's washroom graffiti appeared during the anxious winter of 2003, when Bush and Blair were marshalling their "coalition of the willing." It belongs to the same genre of counterpropaganda that produced hilarious critiques of the war based upon visuals from other science fiction classics – "Start Wars," featuring Bush and Blair as war-obsessed Jedi knights; Bush as "The Turbanator"; and *Mad Magazine*'s depiction of the Bush administration as the cast of "Gulf Wars, Episode II: The Clone of the Attack." In addition, as a form of textual poaching, this reworking of the Borg mandate brings to mind the underground fanzines, originally inspired by women's wilful misreadings of the original *Star Trek*: reworking *Trek*'s stories forced it to deliver on its promise of gender equality on the final frontier. But, for me, George W. Borg mostly recalls Lynette Russell and Nathan Wolski's "Beyond the Final Frontier: *Star Trek*, the Borg and the Post-colonial." Published in the first issue of *Intensities: The Journal of Cult Media*, this article challenges the dominant critical view of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (*TNG*) as "a thinly disguised metaphor for colonialism." "Exploration, colonisation and assimilation are never far from the surface of the STNG text," they concede. "Less apparent, however, are aspects of the series which challenge the hegemonic view of this

narrative and which present a post-colonial critique" (Russell and Wolski). Challenges to the hegemonic view of *Star Trek* are also the topic of the present essay, although postfeminism rather than post-colonialism is its primary focus.

To my knowledge, no feminist reading of *Voyager*'s "Endgame," which features the Federation's final encounter with the Borg, has been attempted. Feminist critics have been somewhat dismissive of the *Voyager* series on the basis of its liberal (post)feminist vision of the future – a critique which is relatively easy to support because of liberal feminism's humanist assumptions. But I see plenty of space for resistant readings in "Endgame" and related episodes when considered together with *The Next Generation*'s encounters with the Borg, most importantly the feature-length film, *First Contact*. Moreover, viewed in the context of our post-9/11 world – a world characterized by a triumphant patriarchal revival that echoes the end of the first wave of political feminism during the Great War – *Star Trek* begins to look like a celebration of the good old days of the second wave. Indeed, when one looks back at *Voyager* from the perspective of *Star Trek*'s current series, *Enterprise*, with its two traditional female stereotypes – the compliant Asian beauty and the frigid bitch (see Minkowitz) – one is apt to long for those good old days, when Captain Kathryn Janeway, flanked by two other outspoken, science-savvy Alpha females, often left the male members of her crew gaping at her prodigious intelligence and appetite for risk.

"We are sometimes said to be living in a postfeminist era," wrote Susan Moller Okin in 1991. "Whether this is supposed to mean that feminism has been vanquished, or that it has lost its point or its urgency because its aims have been largely fulfilled, the claim is false" (Okin 309). Whether late twentieth-century women viewers of *TNG* were disappointed or heartened by the series' representation of gender, it was obvious that the twenty-fourth-century setting was postfeminist – although it wasn't always entirely clear just which of Okin's two possible definitions its writers subscribed to. Personally, I find that the best approach to *Star Trek*, as to all mainstream popular culture, is to begin with the simple observation that if popular culture told us things about ourselves we didn't want to know, popular culture wouldn't be popular for long. As Joseph Campbell famously noted, we must live by some myth or other; thus, if *Star Trek* were to overturn all the myths of gender by which we live our lives, we would not tune in to it, and corporate sponsors would withdraw their support. In other words,

even had Gene Roddenberry been the most radical of feminist television writers, he would still have been obliged to remain within the severe limits placed upon television by both its audience and its sponsors.

Still, the pilot episode of the original *Trek* in 1966 featured a highly rational woman as second in command on the *Enterprise*. Roddenberry created her to balance out his passionate and impulsive starship Captain. But he was coerced by the network into scrapping that pilot and creating a new one, in which the logical Mr. Spock of the planet Vulcan replaced the Earth-woman as Executive Officer. The network's excuse was that acceptance of a woman of intelligence and authority was too much to ask of the American public; an extraterrestrial was supposedly more believable. What Roddenberry did succeed in retaining in his second pilot was a communications officer who was not only female but also Black. Back then, in those pre-feminist days, I was no fan of television, and had even less interest in the silly genre of science fiction, yet I can distinctly remember sitting up and taking notice. This was an important first for television in an era when we had little in the way of an understanding of the relationship between racism and representation, and had not yet invented the word "sexism." The point I'm trying to make here is that, no matter how limited Roddenberry's depiction of gender equality was in the original *Trek* and continued to be in *The Next Generation*, it was his instincts about the inevitability of women's professionalism and authority that earned *Star Trek* a substantial female following.

At the risk of binarizing the critical conversation, I would say that feminist academic critique of *Star Trek* has tended to fall into two schools. The dominant approach – or, more accurately, array of approaches – is framed within a critique of the liberal humanism at the heart of Western thought. The critics within this school focus on the way in which *Star Trek*, grounded as it is within the humanist paradigm, can hardly avoid reinforcing the Enlightenment project, including its racist, sexist, and elitist constructions of Otherness. While not entirely ignoring the opportunities offered by the text for resistant readings, these critics differ from each other in the degree of emphasis they place upon these opportunities. With respect to some of the issues I want to pursue here, this approach is exemplified by Anne Cranny-Francis's "The Erotics of the (cy)Borg: Authority and Gender in the Sociocultural Imaginary." This brilliant article draws on the techno-theory of Donna Haraway to construct a feminist reading of how the use of the cyborg figure in *Star Trek* makes visible the crisis of

authority in Western culture. Noting that the Borg articulate social anxieties about the technological invasion of the human body, Cranny-Francis reveals how the crisis is always resolved in favour of the "white male body" as the locus of authority: "Unlike the cyborg conceptualized by Haraway," she concludes, "the *Star Trek* cyborgs do not enact a deconstructive narrative about origins, though their deconstructive potential is available to the resistant reader" (161).

It's this deconstructive potential that links the dominant critical approach to a school of feminist criticism that tries to account for *Star Trek*'s popularity among casual women viewers and more enthusiastic female fans by searching out the ways in which women may be reading – or willfully misreading – the text. The work of Robin Roberts exemplifies this approach. She is less concerned about *Star Trek* as hopelessly entrapped by its liberal humanist bias than she is with major feminist issues and the ways in which female (and "feminized") characters challenge entrenched attitudes about gender and women's roles. Her *Sexual Generations* (1999), a thematic study of gender issues in *The Next Generation*, and her article on women as scientists in *Voyager* (2000) give some credit to *Star Trek*'s creators and writers for repeatedly testing the constraints which Roddenberry's humanist vision places upon them. Roberts' take on Captain Janeway is essentially positive, especially as the character evolves over the early seasons of *Voyager* and comes to epitomize "a more feminist version of science" (2000 281). As might be expected, Cranny-Francis's view is negative: Janeway's "female authority seems mostly to be represented by being tight-lipped and motherly by turn" (158). If taken together, these views reveal a character more complicated and interesting than each reading on its own suggests. Unlike the female characters of *TNG*, Janeway can hardly be read as marginalized. Indeed, by setting the action of *Voyager* in the Delta Quadrant, far beyond the borders that define the locus of patriarchal power and the white males who embody it, the margin is quite literally transformed into the centre.

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"Speaking as a hierarchical, essentialistic, teleological, metahistorical, universalist humanist, I imagine I have some explaining to do," writes Terry Eagleton in *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996 93). This statement illustrates the defensive posture forced upon virtually all humanist projects by their postmodernist critics. But until postmodernist theorizing can

translate into something more substantial than unrelenting scepticism – something more than market solutions, that is – we are pretty much stuck with modernism and the humanist ethos that underpins it. Feminist theorists Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway have attempted to circumvent this modernist/postmodernist binary by offering the political fictions of the nomad and the cyborg, each of which represents a subject both multiple and situated, both inside and outside postmodernism. But while the nomad and the cyborg are seductive invitations of escape from the universal subject of liberal humanism, the jury is still out on just how effective these alternative political fictions are as substitutes for narratives of liberation directed at change in the real world. On the other hand, as the premise of *TNG* demonstrates, acquiescing to the modernist/postmodernist binary can reproduce the caricatures of the humanist and postmodernist subjects that are the product of the debate itself.

In 1987, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was launched into the teeth of a storm. The biggest intellectual revolution since the Enlightenment had provoked a crisis in Western knowledge that was beginning to trickle down from the academy. The insights of postmodernist and postcolonial theory, which had remained largely confined to academic discourse throughout the earlier years of the decade, were starting to creep into the work of a more widely read community of critics of popular culture – and of American culture more generally. Over against this was a resurgence of cultural and political conservatism that had swept the Reagan-Bush team to power and threatened to undo the achievements of the multiple liberation movements of the sixties and seventies. The uniquely American brand of liberal humanism that had made Roddenberry's vision so popular among the hardcore fans of the original *Trek* would have to renegotiate a space for itself between these two cultural currents. What made this so tricky was the not-infrequent difficulty in telling them apart. Wise enough not to try, Roddenberry and his team of writers decided to actively engage criticisms from both/all sides by embodying them in the character of Q, a member of an omnipotent species with seemingly unlimited powers. To Captain Picard and his crew, Q's motives and methods are as obfuscating as any postmodern text, while his arrogance and indifference to the plight of "inferior species" echo the elitism of ultra-conservatism's spiritual ancestors, the privileged classes of pre-Enlightenment Western culture. Pitted against Picard, the signifier of everything Roddenberry admired in the liberal humanism of the Enlightenment – not only its ideology of

individualism, rationalism, and secularism, but perhaps also its whiteness, its maleness, and its paternalist notions of the "civilized" – Q came to represent the challenges confronted by an America embroiled in "culture wars," while the struggle between these two archetypal figures established the binary terms within which *The Next Generation* was framed.

In *Star Trek: The Human Frontier* (2001), Michèle and Duncan Barrett look back on *TNG* as having dramatized the underlying issue around which *Star Trek*, in all its manifestations, revolves – namely, its "high-minded utopian humanism" and "the qualities and morality of humanity." And while it's precisely the dislocation between "humanism" and "humanity" that guarantees anti-Enlightenment scholars a limitless field of opportunities for critique, there is also no question that this gap is precisely what *TNG* set out to negotiate. In this regard, "there is a particular framing of the series in which the basic question is posed: can humanity be defended when charged with its manifest crimes?" (Barrett and Barrett 57). This question opened the series; it's also what closed it:

> Q then convenes a court scene, reminiscent of a surreal Spanish Inquisition, in which the characters in the dock are the captain and crew of the *Enterprise*. "Before this gracious court now appear these humans to answer for the multiple and grievous savageries of their species." Seven years later, as the final episode ("All Good Things …") concludes, Captain Picard finds himself back in the same courtroom, he hopes for the last time, he says. Q's reply sums up the series, and the whole of *Star Trek*'s interrogation of human morality: "You just don't get it, do you, Jean-Luc? The trial never ends."
>
> *Star Trek* is itself this trial. In the main, what we get is the defence: humanity's attempts to put wrongs right, to improve society and prevent war. According to *Star Trek*, the world of the twenty-fourth century has eliminated poverty, famine, social class and money. These are all seen as primitive problems that have been solved by an enlightened galactic democracy. The story is told from the viewpoint that the human race is more than morally credible; its crimes are all in the distant past. (Barrett and Barrett 57–58)

Q has a point: the trial never ends because history never ends. Indeed, it's Q himself who initiates the story arc that will take *Star Trek* history seventy thousand light-years into Borg space and to the Federation's encounter

with absolute difference – a collective consciousness utterly unlike the collection of individual minds that defines the humanist model. In Season Two of *TNG*, Q instantly transports the *Enterprise* to a region of the galaxy yet uncharted by the Federation. The ship is boarded by the Borg, one of which scans the *Enterprise* as the crew looks on in fear and wonder. "Interesting isn't it?" Q remarks: "Not a he, not a she, not like anything you've ever seen before" ("Q Who?"). That the Otherness of the Borg would be introduced in terms of the absence of gender is significant, for gender is one of the "primitive problems" that still remains to be "solved by an enlightened galactic democracy." It raises the question of how women are positioned within *Star Trek*'s vast constellation of Others.

Roddenberry and his co-creators took a lot of flak for the female caretakers of *TNG*. The characters of Tasha Yar, Chief Security Officer; Deanna Troi, ship's counsellor; Beverley Crusher, ship's doctor; and Guinan, bartender and confidante, constitute what Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen call a "female matrix" that provides an "umbrella of safety, health, and psychological security" that "echoes the functions once associated with home and hearth and, especially since the nineteenth century, with women of the middle class." Even the ship's computer, they note, speaks in the voice of *Star Trek*'s matriarch, Majel Barrett, wife of Gene Roddenberry (91–92). This female matrix is reflected in the design of the *Enterprise*, described by Daniel Bernardi as "markedly feminine – smooth, circular, … fetishizable, … bright clean and comfortable" (quoted in Russell and Wolski). Not only does this maternal environment provide "the frame within which the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the men stand for the human drama, the drama of everyman as everyperson" – in short, a drama in keeping with the humanist ideal (Wagner and Lundeen 92). It also stands in striking contrast to the vessels of the Borg, described by Russell and Wolski as "dark, cold, metallic cubes, … functional rather than aesthetic objects," which, like their virtually identical crewmembers, "lack any form of differentiation" – including gender difference. In the context of gendered life aboard the *Enterprise*, where sharp distinctions are made between the private sphere of family, romance, gossip, and leisure activity and the public sphere of exploration, diplomacy, technobabble, and military defence (Barrett and Barrett 181), the absence of these distinctions among the Borg is a big part of what makes them so terrifying.

Significantly, the point at which the boundary between Borg and human begins to break down is precisely the point in the saga where the

Borg become gendered. In Season Five, a year after "Best of Both Worlds," the episode in which Picard is assimilated by the Borg and turned into a weapon against the Federation, an Away Team discovers an injured drone on a deserted moon. It has been left for dead following a Borg assimilation raid. The drone is an adolescent – and male. Dr. Crusher persuades Captain Picard to transport the Borg to the *Enterprise* for medical treatment. While waiting for the drone to regain consciousness following surgery, the senior officers meet to decide its fate. They feel perfectly justified in their plan to reconfigure the Borg's biochips by introducing an "invasive program" – in essence, infecting it with a computer virus. Upon the Borg's rejoining the hive mind, the virus would act as a weapon of mass destruction against the Borg collective. The Doctor balks: "We're talking about annihilating an entire race." "We're at war!" insists Riker. Picard concurs: "They've declared war on our way of life: we're to be assimilated." Beverly is unmoved. "Think of them as a single collective being," the Captain implores, "There is no one Borg who is more of an individual than your arm or your leg." "How convenient!" the doctor shoots back: "When I look at my patient, I don't see a collective consciousness, I don't see a hive. I see a living, breathing boy who's been hurt and who needs our help." By the end of the episode, the drone with the "designation" Two-of-Five, is become a fully individuated teenager with the decidedly masculine name of Hugh ("I, Borg").

How the crew and the young drone settle upon "Hugh" as an appropriate name is an interesting play on the binary language around which this episode turns – namely, the self/other and I/thou constructions so central to humanist individualism. The drone's individuation requires that he learn the language of "self and other" in the context of one-on-one relationships, but it gives him some difficulty because he knows nothing of the distinction between "I" and "thou." He knows only the "we" of the Borg, and the plural "you" with which the collective addresses its Others. Exactly who gets to be a "you" in a personal relationship is something the drone can't get quite straight. Dr. Crusher coaches him: "I'm Beverly, and *you* …?" "I am *you*!" says the drone. La Forge stops Crusher before she can offer a correction because he hears the name *Hugh* echoed in the word *you* – and appears to find it appropriate for the drone to name himself. "I am Hugh," says the drone to the subversive delight of La Forge and Crusher. Indeed, on one level the drone has succeeded in becoming a single, individuated, humanist male with the freedom to name himself "Hugh," but on the other he remains identified with the Federation's Other – or perhaps the plurality

of *you's* that constitutes the Borg collective. Hugh's choice of name may be read as a subtle prefiguring of his choice to return to the collective, even though Picard has offered him refugee status aboard the *Enterprise*. As we later learn, in "Descent," Hugh manages to infect the Borg with a virus after all – the virus "I, Borg" which, in Borg language, is a non-computable paradox not so different from the one ordered up by Picard in the first place.

Despite having come a long way from not even registering as a life form on the ship's sensors ("Q_Who?") to becoming "a living, breathing boy," the Borg in masculine form represents the most logical phase of their gender transformation, for it is entirely consistent with the masculine coding of both technology and cuboidal forms. But by gendering the Borg and making them capable of individuation, the writers took some of the terrifying edge off their otherness. Hence, when it came time to deliver a feature-length film that would capitalize on the enormous popularity of "Best of Both Worlds," producer Rick Berman and screenwriters Brannon Braga and Ronald Moore were faced with the challenge of upping the ante. For these men, it would seem that the only thing more terrifying than a genderless horde with a group mind is a female with a mind of her own. Enter the Borg Queen. Her gender identity is prefigured in the opening scenes of *First Contact*. A Borg cube approaching Earth orbit is attacked by a fleet of Federation ships under the command of Captain Picard, who knows from personal experience just where to aim a coordinated volley of quantum torpedoes for best effect. As the cube begins to explode in a shower of green flame, a hatch on one of its faces opens and a vessel emerges which, in its spherical shape, echoes the contours of the *Enterprise*. The Queen is poised to rendezvous with human history.

In the conclusion to their article, Russell and Wolski note that "*Star Trek* has become increasingly self-reflexive," and that this "self-reflection is apparent in those episodes [of *TNG*] which focus on the Borg and on Federation citizens who reject Starfleet's colonial ideology." In other words, *Star Trek* is moving in the direction of postcolonialism. Barrett and Barrett would agree, but sum up their observations in more general terms:

> *Star Trek* is moving in a direction beyond the characteristic assumptions of what is called "modern" culture. In this sense, *Star Trek* is becoming "post-modern." But it is important to register that it is

> post-modern in terms of its *substance*. All too often post-modernism is reduced to the question of *style*, and for this reason we wanted to emphasize the ways in which the post-modernization of *Star Trek* is to be found in its rejection of some of the key *ideas* of western modernity. (Barrett and Barrett 194)

The postmodernization of *Star Trek* is apparent in *First Contact* – most notably in its questioning of the humanist assumption that equates white Western masculinity with rationality. Picard's grip on reason is revealed as fragile – a theme that had been prefigured in several *TNG* episodes subsequent to "Best of Both Worlds," which left the impression that the Captain suffers something akin to post-traumatic stress disorder. The self-reflexivity noted by Russell and Wolski with respect to colonial ideology is, with respect to gender ideology, also apparent in *First Contact*. This may be inferred in the postmodern irony that undermines traditional gender norms, even as it reinforces them. The Borg Queen, sexual temptress and signifier of Western patriarchy's most fearful sexual nightmares, is hilariously exaggerated in her threat to heroic masculinity. In the meticulous attention paid to the phallic details of Zefram Cochran's ship, the *Phoenix* is similarly exaggerated. Fetishized by Picard and Data, they caress its hull and murmur intimately to each other until they are interrupted by Deanna Troi: "Do you three want to be alone?" she mocks. These and other punctcurings of the masculine mystique suggest a level of self-reflexive irony one doesn't normally associate with the high-minded humanism of *The Next Generation*.

The shift from a weekly television series to a feature-length film requires a change of cinematic convention. Seven seasons' worth of *TNG* episodes had provided room to develop all of the main characters – including the women. For example, Deanna Troi was slowly transformed from the emotive "Counsellor Cleavage," with a talent for stating the obvious, into a competent and properly uniformed bridge officer with some intelligent lines to deliver. Similarly, Beverly Crusher, initially the nervously over-protective mother of a teenager, became a valued and respected scientist in her own right and a crucial member of important Away Team missions. But the shift to the big screen and the action-adventure mode often means that female characters get shifted to the periphery so as not to distract from the male stars. Indeed, stereotypically feminine women are often employed as a cinematic device for showcasing masculine heroics and superior intelligence.

For example, in the opening few scenes of *First Contact*, the most often repeated dialogue issuing from the lips of Dr. Crusher and Counsellor Troi are the monosyllabic lines: "Who?" "How?" "What?" "Why?" – to which the men respond by providing well-informed and often highly technical answers. Indeed, after the third time this occurs in an obvious way, one has to wonder if it isn't a send-up of the convention. At any rate, it does have the effect of shifting aside these two friendly and familiar females to make room for two unfamiliar ones – Lily Sloan and the Borg Queen – who are in many ways their diametrical opposites.

The African-American Lily Sloan, assistant engineer to Zefram Cochran, has not known the comforts and privileges enjoyed by twenty-fourth-century women like Counsellor Troi and Dr. Crusher. As citizens of a devastated mid-twenty-first-century Earth, she and Cochran have survived the nuclear Third World War and divide their time between fighting off the remaining hostile factions, perfecting warp drive, and building the *Phoenix* out of whatever leftover military equipment and materials they have managed to scrounge. Lily is a tough, outspoken, battle-hardened realist, who is perfectly capable of taking care of herself – and Cochran too, who drinks to excess and needs her help in keeping him dedicated to their joint project. Unlike Beverly, who is fully prepared to carry out Picard's suicidal order to defend the *Enterprise* against the overwhelming technology of the Borg "because he's the Captain," Lily is quick to see through Picard's fortress of psychological defences and into his tortured soul where, for six years, he has subconsciously nursed an irrational obsession with revenge against the Borg. In desperation to get him to agree to evacuate the crew and destroy the Borg infested *Enterprise*, she storms into his Ready Room and engages him in an angry exchange: "Oh, hey, I'm sorry," she spits out in a potent mix of sarcasm and rage, "I didn't mean to interrupt your little quest. Captain Ahab has to go hunt his whale." This shot comes very close to hitting the mark, and she presses harder. "Jean-Luc, blow up the damn ship!" "No!" screams Picard, as he swings out with his phaser rifle and smashes an adjacent display case of model starships.

Quickly sensing that she has penetrated his defences, Lily provokes him again – quietly, this time. "See you around, Ahab," she shrugs, and turns as if to leave. Stunned into self-insight, Picard begins to quote to himself the relevant passage from *Moby Dick*: "… and he piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the rage and hate felt by his whole race. If his chest had been a cannon, he'd have shot his heart upon it." "What?" says Lily,

echoing the feminine one-liners from the opening scenes. "*Moby Dick*," he replies. "Actually, I never read it," she answers coyly, thus giving Picard a stereotypical female invitation to show off his superior literary knowledge – thereby also nudging him into completing the working through of his madness. He proudly straightens into the manly pose so characteristic of the elegant and normally rational Jean-Luc Picard: "Ahab spent years hunting the white whale that crippled him – a quest for vengeance. But, in the end, it destroyed him and his ship," he lectures. "I guess he didn't know when to quit," says Lily in her best college freshman voice. Restored to himself at long last, Picard heads for the bridge to belay his last order.

Lily, the petite Black female "Other" from the "primitive" twenty-first century, is the voice of reason in this scene. Not only does she win in her confrontation with *Star Trek*'s signifier of Enlightenment rationalism, she also kick-starts a stalled plot-line. Picard has another fearsome female to confront before he can claim his redemption. Not yet conscious of the existence of the Borg Queen, he enters main engineering, where the phallic shaft of the warp engine throbs out in sympathy with the newly awakened sexuality of Data, who appears to have fallen under the Queen's spell. Astonished as he watches her slink into the open, Picard instantly recognizes her as the truth he has been repressing since his assimilation as Locutus of Borg. "What's wrong, Locutus," she asks, "Have you forgotten me so quickly? We were very close, you and I. You can still hear our song," she says, referring to Picard's lingering ability to detect the Borg telepathically – evidence of what Russell and Wolski would call "the enemy within." "Yes," he breathes, "I remember you – *you* were there all the time!" Split-second flashbacks to Picard's assimilation are cut into the scene. Picard now has to confront the truth of what was really involved in that terrifying assault.

Cranny-Francis relates Picard's assimilation to "the social crisis over authority, which characterizes late twentieth-century Western society" – the same crisis which, as I have argued, Roddenberry's team introduced into *TNG* through the character of Q. In "Best of Both Worlds," Picard's "white male body is actually blanched to bone-white as part of his assimilation by the Borg. Whereas the most literal reading of this transformation is that the loss of pigmentation signifies the elimination of humanity, another reading is that it is an overdetermined reference to the 'white male body' of liberal humanism – the site of ultimate authority" (Cranny-Francis 149). Picard is transformed from the autonomous subject

of liberal humanism into Picard/Locutus, a cyborg with "third term" status: "Like the transvestite or transsexual, or like the bisexual, he/it represents a breaking down of boundaries; familiar polarities are destroyed by a 'third term,' which is both and neither of the polar terms. In the case of transvestites, transsexuals, and bisexuals, those polarities are male/female and heterosexual/homosexual" (148–49). In addition to this reading, there is one whose analogues are more consistent with the exclusive heteronormativity that continues to inform the *Star Trek* text, despite its increasing postmodernization.

As Picard struggles to reintegrate his memories of assimilation, he orders the Queen to release Data, to which she replies: "Are you offering yourself to us?" "Offering myself?" he asks, momentarily puzzled. "That's it! I remember now. It wasn't enough to assimilate me. I had to give myself *freely* to the Borg – to *you*. You wanted more than just another Borg drone." In addition to illuminating the dominatrix aspect of the Borg Queen, these words recall John Stuart Mill's nineteenth-century insight into patriarchy:

> Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves, or religious fears. The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience…. (201–2)

Picard's fear of himself, fear of his possible collusion in his seduction by the Queen, is not unlike women's traditional fear of themselves – as, for example, in cases of sexual assault when women internalize the accusation of having "asked for it." Within the heterosexual imaginary of *Star Trek*, successful (cy)Borgification is not only like acquiring "third term" status but also like becoming a feminized Other. Clearly, the two overlap. However, resistance is not necessarily futile: "But I resisted, I fought you," says Picard to the Queen. "It's not too late, let Data go, and I will take my place at your side." But the Borg Queen cannot be taken in by one of her own seductive tricks. Significantly, it's Data – the android Other – who initiates the action sequence that deposes the Queen. And when she is finally

destroyed, he says: "Strange: part of me is sorry she is dead. For a time I was tempted by her offer." "How long a time?" Picard insists upon knowing. "Zero point six-eight seconds," Data replies. Thus a more intimate bond is formed across the divide between human and android. Within Roddenberry's original humanist vision, this kind of bond between man and machine is the preferred one.

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Cranny-Francis reads the defeat of the Borg Queen as "written in a complex of narratives that confirm the most conservative evaluations of the feminine":

> Rather than being a powerful female deity, she is Medusa, the Gorgon, a female monster (or monstrous woman) who renders men powerless (mythically, turning them into stone; metaphorically, turning them into slaves to her will). She is the succubus figure who tempts men from the path of righteousness and true (masculine) authority into being her slaves. She is the polluting temptress who turns men away from their authoritative roles as mind/authority/power by offering them (the pleasures of) the flesh. So although she does articulate a few good lines, the Borg Queen is constituated within some very conservative narratives (in which the role of the powerful feminine is unequivocally evil). (157–58)

All true, of course. Although her prey is Picard, she is nevertheless the perfect counterpart to Zefram Cochran, who in many ways is a send-up of early nineteen-sixties masculinity. High on bad booze and energized by hard rock-'n-roll, he hits on Counsellor Troi, who spends the whole of her first interview with him trying to keep his hands off her. His *Phoenix* is the Harley-Davidson of the early space age, right down to the shimmy it exhibits at impulse speed. Cochran's motives for building this phallic hotrod have nothing to do with ushering in a new era for humankind, and everything to do with making money so he can retire to some tropical island full of naked women. But this all adds up to the endearing quality of failing to live up to the whitewashed legend he will become in the twenty-fourth century. In short, for those more attuned to the playfulness of the *Star Trek* text – its ludic postmodernism – there are alternative ways of entering it.

For example, "since *First Contact*," writes Julia Houston, guide to the Sci-Fi/Fantasy site at About.com, "the Borg have offered us more than simple assimilating sameness":

> The Borg Queen is a perfect adversary for the turn of the millennium. I mean, she's fabulous. She's so evil and so powerful and so … pleased with herself. And her power, modeled directly on the natural order of the hive queen, is easy to perceive and easy to admire. She makes order of chaos, and she completely believes in what she's doing. Since her physical body can be destroyed without destroying her essence, she seems more an ideal than a person.
>
> So one way to look at her, especially if you're in a somewhat detached frame of mind, is as a creature of feminism. She exudes authority, feminine authority: absolute yet highly manipulative. The society over which she reigns is completely different from the patriarchal societies which oppose her … and which she conquers. Of course, since she's incredibly evil, I wouldn't want to elect her to Congress or anything, but she sure beats the crap out of the Wicked Witch of the West as a symbol of female power. (Houston 1999a)

An academic by profession, Houston speaks primarily in the voice of a *Star Trek* fan when writing for the Sci-Fi/Fantasy web site – although evidence of her erudition is seldom far from the surface. She also reads the Borg as reflective of changes in the political economy of Western society. "It's almost impossible to look at the inside of a Borg ship and see all those cubicles and drones and not think of the inside of a corporation," writes Houston. "Working for a corporation that does not value your individuality is all too easy these days. Standardized efficiency, compliance with company policy, business attire … and those horrid office cubicle partitions all conspire to assimilate you. Turning into an office drone is often the only way to survive until 5 PM" (Houston 1999). Houston goes on to enumerate examples of the horrors of cultural homogenization and its assimilating effects as it spreads around the world through globalization. But there is also an important sense in which the Borg are not merely a pangalactic corporation that reduces its workforce to automatons with no minds of their own. More tellingly, they are a reflection of postmodern culture. The Borg as described by Q are "the ultimate user," a technologically determined species interested primarily in Federation technology,

which they identify as "something they can consume" ("Q-Who?"). The Borg are the ultimate consumer society, obsessed with consumption for its own sake and embodying what Fredric Jameson calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism."

2: Regendering Command

> *It is perhaps too much to expect popular art which, in its commodity form, is produced and distributed by capitalist institutions to be directly radical or subversive. But its indirect subversiveness may be greater than most theorists have given it credit for.* – John Fiske, "TV: Re-situating the Popular in the People."

> *The family is a moving target and an evolving, ever-changing institution.* – Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen*, 144.

Julia Houston's position on the Borg Queen is a view expressed by many less articulate female fans who maintain personal web sites devoted to *Star Trek* – especially to *Voyager*, the series women viewers almost certainly played a part in saving from premature cancellation. *Voyager*'s maiden voyage took place in January of 1995. Its first three seasons were a near disaster for the new United Paramount Network. Not only had the market been over-saturated with multiplying *Star Trek* series; they were also up against an explosion of competing science fiction series – *The X-files*; *Odyssey*; *Babylon 5*. In addition, *Voyager*, with its female captain and its multi-racial crew, had been launched in a climate of political correctness backlash. It probably didn't help that this crew was constructed as less "international" than the crew of *TNG*'s *Enterprise*. In addition to the American ideology implicit in *Star Trek* philosophy, Americocentrism was written right into the characters and their dialogue. This hadn't been the original intention of *Voyager*'s creators. The Québécoise Geneviève Bujold had been engaged to play the Captain, who, like Picard before her, was envisioned as French. Had Bujold not quit the set during the first rehearsal, story arcs focussing on her character's non-American difference from the other human characters would likely have been developed, much as they had been for Patrick Stewart's Picard. With the last-minute recruitment of Kate Mulgrew, the Captain was rewritten as hailing from Indiana, and her

oft-repeated command to "set a course for home" seemed to evoke images of the American heartland. Perhaps this was part of what made it so easy for *Star Trek* newsgroup participants to project upon *Voyager* some of the ugliness of the American culture wars.

It wasn't a case of Mulgrew's being a poor substitute, for she possesses physical characteristics that are easily read as signifying the androgyny that the several female admirals of *TNG* had taught us to expect: unglamourous but attractive, Mulgrew has a strong profile and an authoritative voice. But these advantages didn't amount to much because the producers and writers hadn't a clue how to write for a female captain, and Mulgrew hadn't a clue how to play one. "Let's get one thing straight up front," wrote Michael Logan in *TV Guide* at the onset of Season Two: "Kate Mulgrew is *not* a feminist."

> "I just don't buy into it," shrugs the first actress ever to captain a *Trek* series. "I'm sure this is politically incorrect for me to say – but the history of the world will bear me out: *Any* time has been the right time for women. I've read too much to believe otherwise. If we'd just stop all this absolutely endless, nonsensical banter about sexual superiority, we'd realize that it just doesn't exist." (Logan 23)

While Mulgrew's brand of postfeminism was hardly uncommon among Americans in the mid-1990s, *Voyager* might have benefited had she possessed at least a basic gender analysis. Mercifully for the series and the female fans loyal to it (despite its problems), she did eventually acquire one. By the end of the series, she still had regrets about its bias in favour of the female characters, and about not having had a chance fully to explore the Captain's "femininity" (by which she means "sexuality"), but she had developed some gender insight. For starters, she had grown acutely aware of the importance of singling out Captain Janeway's female fans for special thanks whenever she had the opportunity to express her gratitude to *Voyager*'s fan-base. More to the point is a response she gave to a BBC One interviewer's question about Janeway's frequent changes in hairstyle: "I watched this with great curiosity because I love to see how men deal with their deepest anxieties … about will this franchise succeed or will it not, with this woman at the helm.… They changed it [her hairstyle] five times in the first season, two, three times in the second. You know, my message to Patrick Stewart is, 'You lucky devil.' I mean, it was just constantly a

source of anxiety for them, and of course it had nothing to do with the reality" (BBC Online). Whatever the reason behind the decisive Captain's indecisiveness about her hair, at least Mulgrew came to learn that it had something to do with gender and male anxiety about female authority.

If Mulgrew is not television's most intelligent actor, she is certainly a disciplined one. In those first three years she bravely grappled with the contradictory scripts she was handed and her contradictory responsibilities, which included captain, mother, and sex object. These may not be unlike the array of subjectivities characteristic of countless women in everyday life, but when the task is to create a coherent television character – the first female captain in *Star Trek* history, no less – one has to wonder about the wisdom of scripts that have her killing the enemy in one scene, soothing a homesick crewmember in the next, and looking alluring in pink lingerie in a third. Making her a hardheaded scientist overcompensated for her femaleness, which then had to be counter-compensated by giving her a feminine hobby: melting in the arms of her Victorian master in a holodeck novel, she gave the series something of the character of the afternoon soaps. These multiple contradictions, which oscillated wildly between the poles of stereotypical femininity and masculinity made for much confusion about the source of the Captain's power: was it sexual, was it maternal, or did it – like Captain Picard's – draw upon the rationalism of liberal humanist ideology?

"In America, slaying the enemy is *the* ritual that defines our identity," wrote Janice Rushing and Thomas Frentz in 1995, "for there has been as yet no feminine myth of equal longevity or power, no story that compels our fascination so many different times with so many variations" (2). It's hardly surprising, then, that the *Voyager* team experienced such a steep learning curve during those first three years. *Trek* writers and producers are famous for their consultations with practising scientists, who provide advice on how to make the science of *Star Trek* sound credible, and how to extrapolate convincingly from contemporary technologies to the technology of the twenty-fourth century. Given the explosion of feminist science fiction during the 1980s and 1990s, there was no shortage of potential consultants to assist in the development of a feminine mythos tailored to the *Star Trek* saga, but if one of these was also on retainer, her influence was nowhere to be seen. Executive Producer Jeri Taylor, who had written for *The Next Generation* and managed to leave her feminine fingerprint on a few episodes, already had her first *Voyager* novel in print by 1996 – a "biography"

of Janeway upon which the television character was apparently based (Poe 315). Offspring of a shotgun marriage between a popular boy's adventure story and a feminine romantic fiction, Taylor's Janeway was an interesting experiment but not much more convincing than Mulgrew's (Taylor 1996). *Mosaic* did, however, make quite clear just how fiendishly difficult it is to combine a pro-American myth and female authority in a period of evangelical revivalism and angry white men. Like Hillary Rodham, who had to change her name to Clinton and apologize to America for choosing a career over "staying at home and baking cookies," Kathryn Janeway would have to find a way of surviving the opinion polls.

By the end of Season Three, the Network was desperate to rescue *Voyager*'s plummeting ratings, so they reached for two tried and true *Star Trek* solutions: a highly sexualized woman and an asexual drone. Brilliantly, they brought these two solutions together in one female character: Seven of Nine. Not only did actor Jeri Ryan's portrayal of this glamourous cyborg boost ratings by an astonishing 67 percent ("Space Heater"), her character also took the pressure off the Captain to satisfy the sexual voyeurism of which male science fiction audiences are widely suspected. This left the writers and Mulgrew with a more manageable task: how to focus the Captain's uniqueness in her ability to integrate her military authority and her maternalism. As an equally unique kind of surrogate daughter, the character of Seven simplified the task. Physically overdeveloped (thanks to the wonders of foam rubber technology) but emotionally underdeveloped, Seven enables the emergence of Janeway's maternalism without the Captain having to deal with real children. Finally, in Season Four, a hairstyle for the Captain was agreed upon, and she was given a new holodeck hobby, one more in keeping with her role as the inheritor of Captain Picard's humanism: interacting with a holographic Leonardo da Vinci. Gradually, Mulgrew dropped the irritating body language that supposedly signifies authority. She relaxed in the role, and Captain Janeway began to wear her authority like a glove. While it's doubtful she could have slaughtered most of Starfleet and returned the next week to reassume command of her ship – as Picard did in "Best of Both Worlds" – Janeway's authority could nevertheless sustain a degree of complexity and survive some highly unethical command decisions.

But the thing that no starship captain's authority can sustain is a long-term heterosexual relationship, yet each captain appears to desire one. Indeed, *Star Trek: Generations*, the feature-length film that brings together

the crews of Captain Kirk's and Captain Picard's ships, explores this theme. Through SF wizardry, each captain is given the chance to realize his most cherished fantasy – a stable relationship with a woman – but neither man finds in it the masculine challenge of adventure he seems to need. But so perfectly realized is each captain's fantasy that separating himself from it becomes a heroic act in itself. For several reasons, this film is not judged to be one of *Star Trek*'s big-screen successes. Perhaps one of those reasons is the representation of Picard's family fantasy. The Picard character is a harmonious blend of Renaissance Man and Enlightenment humanist, whose great loves are Shakespeare and Bach, yet he is represented as desiring a Victorian style family life, complete with an Angel-in-the-House domesticated wife and a flock of overdressed children. The television series did somewhat better, giving him a relationship style more in keeping with the other aspects of his character. In "Lessons," Picard falls in love with the *Enterprise*'s new Head of Stellar Cartography, Lt. Commander Nella Darren, every bit as much the career officer as Picard himself – and an accomplished musician as well. The depth of their feeling for each other and their sexual compatibility are conveyed through the beautiful music they create together, she on the piano and he on the flute. But as her commanding officer, Picard cannot juggle the professional and the personal without one risking the other, and neither officer can give up a Starfleet career for love. Nella applies for a transfer, and as they say their goodbyes, they make plans to carry on their love affair on an intermittent basis as best they can. But it's clear from the tone of their voices that they both know they are seeing each other for the last time.

Patriarchal gender norms make it impossible to represent Janeway's sexuality in a similarly straightforward way. As Wagner and Lundeen summarize it,

> … a woman who holds legitimate authority is in a bind: if she is "responsively" sexual, she compromises her image of authority; if she is autonomously sexual, she casts doubt on the benevolence of her power; if she is asexual, she casts doubt on her "womanhood." Captain Janeway, whose authority and benevolence must remain beyond question, is constrained to take this last path; and as a consequence, she is seldom able to "let her hair down." "I'm the Captain," [Commentator John] Hiscock quotes Janeway as saying: "There's no time to jump in the sack." Time, however, probably has little do with it. (Wagner and Lundeen 96)

However, twenty-fourth-century technology does fulfil some of Kate Mulgrew's desire to explore Janeway's "femininity" – although it's not exactly the Captain's she gets to explore in "Work Force." In this episode, as a solution to a severe labour shortage on a planet whose culture is a hyper-advanced form of industrialism, most of the *Voyager* crew are abducted. The crew's individual identities are erased and new identities implanted. They are then put to work in the power plant of a vast industrial complex that bears an eerie resemblance to the interior of a Borg cube – so much so that Julia Houston could easily cite this episode to give added weight to her interpretation of Borg assimilation as an analogy for corporate culture's assault on the individuality of employees. On her first day on the job, Janeway meets a fellow worker with whom she quickly develops a sexual relationship. She moves out of her company-owned apartment and down the hall to his. When Chakotay, who has escaped abduction and identity erasure, tries to convince her she's not who she thinks she is, Janeway resists and betrays him to the plant authorities. But the identity transplant has not erased her humanist belief in the authenticity of individual identity, and when the evidence for Chakotay's story begins to mount, she feels compelled to check it out, despite the danger to herself and her lover, and even if it means the end of their blissful relationship. The Doctor is able to restore the Captain's authentic memories, and she bids her lover a tearful goodbye. "I'd offer you a position," she tells him, "I could always use another skilled engineer, but as Captain it wouldn't really be appropriate for me to –" "Fraternize with a member of your crew," he says, finishing her sentence. The restoration of Janeway's authentic – and celibate – authority is signified by a Starfleet protocol that is otherwise rarely invoked. As she emerges from her Ready Room following this heart-wrenching farewell scene, Ensign Kim snaps to attention: "Captain on the bridge!" he announces. The bridge crew spring to their feet in proper deference to her rank. "It may not have been real," Janeway says to Chakotay, as she resumes her place in the Captain's chair, "but it felt like home. If you hadn't come after me I never would've known that I had another life." "Are you sorry I showed up?" he asks. In a voice of utter conviction she replies: "Not for a second."

Janeway's invocation of the real/unreal binary allows her to escape the compromising of her authority which her female sexual responsiveness implies within the patriarchal paradigm. This is not the first time she has used this binary logic to protect her authority from the threat her sexuality poses.

In "Fair Haven," she abandons a love affair she has started with a hologram in one of Tom Paris's elaborate holodeck simulations. "He's not real," she tells the Doctor. "He's as real as I am," counters the holographic Doctor. But rather than deconstruct the real/unreal binary that helps keep her authority free of sexual taint, he points out that it's not a question of whether or not her holographic lover is real: her *feelings* for him are – and, besides, she can't have a relationship with a member of the crew, since they are all her subordinates. He also rules out the possibility of an occasional dalliance with a passing alien. In other words, the freedoms both Picard and Kirk have enjoyed with impunity are denied to her. "A hologram may be the only logical solution," the Doctor advises. Thus, protected from sexual contact with "real" male flesh, Janeway can assert her "femininity" without impeaching her authority.

Logical or not, on one level Janeway's ambivalence about holographic love interests is understandable, given how popular the notion of disposable women is among her male compatriots. *The Next Generation* alone features numerous examples of how popular made-to-order sex partners are. In this regard, it is worth quoting a passage from Wagner and Lundeen in which they summarize a feminist perspective on this issue:

> Rhonda Wilcox draws attention to the use of computer holographics to create "synthetic women" who suit the fancies of TNG's men. Although women seldom if ever show an interest in creating synthetic males, she points out, the men have a "fascination with synthetic women as opposed to real ones – in particular, with holographic, computer-created women." Wilcox touches on several examples, including the holographic image of the late Lieutenant Natasha Yar that Data keeps in a drawer, Barclay's secret holodeck fantasy of Troi as his "Goddess of Empathy," and Geordi La Forge's infatuation with a hologram of scientist Leah Brahms whom he initially summoned up for technical advice. The centerpiece of Wilcox's discussion, however, is "the beautiful Minuet," who appears to Riker in a holodeck nightclub.… Riker says admiringly of Minuet, "She already knows what I want her to say before I'm aware of it myself." When Riker asks Minuet how real she is, she replies, "As real as you need me to be." But Minuet's face goes blank when she is not being addressed by men; her very existence is a function of male needs. She is, as Wilcox observes, "the ultimate convenience female." (Wagner and Lundeen 101)

Perhaps it's not merely Janeway's binary notions of what constitutes the "real" as opposed to the "unreal" that accounts for her hesitation in getting sexually involved with a hologram. Perhaps it can also be read as a function of her feminine scruples about sex with a virtual gigolo – the ultimate convenience male. With regard to her sexuality at least, there's not much to stop female fans from reading what they want in Janeway, who obliged by developing into a sufficiently ambiguous character.

Time constrictions, binary notions of the real, and feminine scruples are only three of the excuses used to cover for the conditions patriarchy sets on female authority. Janeway's character is given a fiancé back on Earth, and for the first two seasons of the series this justifies her resisting the sexual tension that's building between herself and her first officer. But in Season Three, *Voyager* briefly establishes contact with Earth, and before the communications network that makes this possible is destroyed, Starfleet is able to transmit to the *Voyager* crew a batch of letters from home. Janeway receives a "Dear John" letter from her old suitor advising her that he had given up hope of *Voyager*'s return, moved on with his life, and is now happily married. "It wasn't really a surprise," says Janeway to Chakotay, "I guess I didn't really expect him to wait for me, considering the circumstances. It made me realize that I was using him as a safety net – you know, as a way to avoid becoming involved with someone else." Stating the obvious, Chakotay notes that she doesn't have that excuse any longer. But patriarchy allows her one final way to prove her "womanhood" and still keep her authority intact: rechannelling her libidinal resources into her maternalism.

The foregrounding of Captain Janeway's maternalism is related to a major recurring theme in *Voyager* that challenges what Lauren Berlant describes as "the moralizing hostility of Republican 'family values' rhetoric" that marked the 1992 presidential election. The "family values" theme echoed across America, as the pro-family movement and the Christian Right claimed authority on the question of "the best interests of the child" and repudiated the legitimacy of alternative family constellations, such as single-parent families, female-headed households, gay and lesbian partnerships, and the adoption of children by gay couples. Jumping aboard this reactionary bandwagon, organizations such as the Promise Keepers and the Nation of Islam argued for the return of men to their traditional place at the head of the patriarchal nuclear family. The Democratic response to this

trend took the form of what Berlant calls "an optimistic liberalism about privatization" such as that issued by Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1996:

> Clinton's book *It Takes a Village* argues in chapters such as "Children Are Citizens Too" that the most powerful motive for an expanded context of social justice in the United States is the world adults will bring into being for their children. In [the] 1996 [presidential campaign], the Republicans argued that it takes a "family," not a "village," to raise a child; the Democrats responded by claiming that raising nontraumatized citizens requires the beneficent service of a much more broadly defined population of trusted guardians that includes families, communities, teachers, childcare workers, police, social service agencies, and so on. Despite their differences, each of these positions locates the nation's virtue and value in its intimate zones, in personal acts of pedagogy and sustenance. (Berlant 262)

This "family values versus village values" theme was *Voyager*'s biggest concession to an increasingly conservative American television audience. It was perhaps the only theme that made sense to a largely male team of writers grappling with the idea of female authority, but it had to be played out in the context of a starship with no families aboard – a major difference from the *Enterprise* of *TNG*. The periodic introduction of alien societies featuring nuclear families virtually identical to those of middle America made something of a mockery of the *Star Trek* premise that there are "strange new worlds" to be sought out, for those in the Delta Quadrant seemed blandly familiar.

Constructing alien worlds and civilizations along lines familiar to Western audiences is a big part of what keeps *Star Trek* at some distance from the kind of science fiction that impresses academic critics. As Scott Bukatman notes, science fiction has always "served as a vehicle for satire, social criticism and aesthetic estrangement. In its most radical aspect, science fiction narrates the dissolution of the most fundamental structures of human existence. By positing a world that behaves differently – whether physically or socially – from this one, our world is denaturalised" (8). *Star Trek* falls short of denaturalizing our world because, whether as a television series or a feature-length film, it shares with Hollywood movies "its mainstream positioning and big-budget commodity status":

> Science fiction novels or comics need to sell only a few thousand copies to recoup their costs, so experimentalism is not discouraged, but the Hollywood blockbuster must find (or forge) a mass audience. Science fiction cinema's mode of production has committed it to proven, profitable structures, and so it is also more conservative. (Bukatman 9)

Radical experimentalism is out of the question for *Star Trek*, whose rumoured production costs are between one and two million dollars an episode. Recouping that kind of money requires a lot of corporate sponsorship. A female captain is a risky experiment, and the family values theme is a way of neutralizing the risk. In this regard, it's not just *Star Trek*'s alien families of high-heeled wives, breadwinner husbands, and all-American kids that fail the defamiliarization test, but Federation families as well – including the families of origin of *Voyager*'s bridge crew. Tom Paris's unresolved oedipal complex has resulted in estrangement from his authoritarian father. As a result, Paris is in a state of arrested development; his adolescent acting-out makes him an excellent project for Janeway's "tough-love" style of maternal care. A troubled child of divorced parents, B'Elanna Torres bears the scars into adulthood, and thus is equally in need of a nurturing mother. Kes is essentially a teenage runaway, and her boyfriend Nelix is an orphan. Although Harry Kim is the product of a functional nuclear family, he is barely out of his teens and thus too young to be so cruelly separated from it. Mother Janeway has her work cut out for her. Audiences who look to *Voyager* to denaturalize our world will have to begin elsewhere. That Janeway's assistants in this parenting project – Commanders Chakotay and Tuvok – are at once men and under her command is about as defamiliarized as the *Voyager* family gets. Yet in this ultra-conservative postfeminist era, perhaps we should be grateful for the message that the answer to dysfunction in the American family is not necessarily a return to the patriarchal kind.

There is a second way in which the family values theme can be read as a concession to conservatism – even a copout. For despite the way in which *Voyager* tries to recapture some of the spirit of the original *Trek* by setting the action seventy thousand light-years away from home and families, it substitutes maternalism for the kind of intense friendship that sustains Janeway's counterpart, Captain Kirk. Thus it prompts the question asked by Wagner and Lundeen:

> Why has *Star Trek* failed to exploit the possibility of enhancing the mythos of friendship/Philia by developing deep friendships among women? After thirty years, there are still no female friendships that carry anything like the emotional depth or the elements of self-transcendence that one sees in male friendships. It is hard to offer any explanation other than the most painful one: that *Trek* has remained so wedded to patriarchal notions of the "otherness" of women and their sexual (as opposed to social) nature that it has proven unable to take its own central mythos as far as it might. At least, not yet. (115)

Wagner and Lundeen published their study during *Voyager*'s fourth season, and if they were waiting for the series to cross the final frontier of patriarchal gender norms by representing female friendship as a bond equally "sacred" and egalitarian as the one between Kirk and Spock, they waited in vain. Federation family values forbid it. The bond that eventually develops between Janeway and Seven has its moments, but it is always carefully characterized as hierarchical: theirs is a relationship between superior and subordinate on both the professional and the interpersonal levels. Janeway's most intimate friendship is with Chakotay, and Seven's is with the Doctor – and both these relationships are complicated by heterosexual tensions that never let us forget "patriarchal notions of the 'otherness' of women and their sexual (as opposed to social) nature."

Gradually, the idea of Janeway and her crew as a family in every respect but the biological – a family at home on a ship where the gendered distinctions between public and private are destabilized (Barrett and Barrett 181) – came into sharper focus. While this destabilization can certainly be read in terms of what Berlant calls the collapse of "the political and the personal into a world of public intimacy, a nation made for adult citizens" (1), the fact that this microcosm of American nationhood is presided over by a female figure of authority gives *Voyager* a slightly progressive edge. The issue of family versus village is debated vis-à-vis the Borg, who undergo a final phase in their gender transformation across several key episodes, in which we see the Queen and her collective as a mirror held up to reflect American family values as Janeway and her crew (re)define them.

3: Phallic Mothers

> *The alternative to the female sex object is seemingly the active or "phallic mother." But the mother is not regarded as a sexual subject even in psychoanalysis – her emblem of power is the borrowed phallus that she loses when she becomes the oedipal, castrated mother.* – Jessica Benjamin, "The Alienation of Desire," 456.

> *It may be that any sympathetic account of mothering is heard as "idealization"; if so that is an indirect testament to the mother-blaming widespread in our society.* – Sara Ruddick, "Thinking about Mothering and Putting Maternal Thinking to Use," 5–6.

If Freud was right, all of us are haunted by infantile memories of an omnipotent mother with the power to grant our every desire and deny our every need. This figure, who apparently dominated our lives before we were even aware of the existence of fathers, bears the signifier of patriarchal power – the phallus. Patriarchal gender arrangements ensure that we never entirely get over this pre-oedipal fantasy, which is thought to be more acute in men, thanks to the punishing demands of masculinity. But even if, as it turns out, Freud was only generalizing from his knowledge of industrialized Western culture, that still includes most creators and consumers of *Star Trek* whose involvement with it is bound to produce evidence of that infantile fantasy. Indeed, a psychoanalytic critic could probably make a pretty good case for *Voyager* as the pre-oedipal *Star Trek*. And if *Voyager* is the pre-oedipal *Trek*, then *The Next Generation* is definitely the post-oedipal. Unlike *TNG*, which favours relationships among fathers, sons, and brothers – biological, spiritual, or technological, and almost always oedipal in their dynamics – *Voyager* prefers explorations of relationships based on the mother-daughter model.

The dutiful daughters who constitute the nurturing "female matrix" of *TNG* submit to the Law of the Father – as when, for example, in *First Contact*, Dr. Crusher commands the crew to carry out Picard's suicidal orders "because he's the Captain." Janeway, by contrast, operates far beyond the outermost reaches of the Federation and its Rule of Law. She is nevertheless constrained by it. Elizabeth Grosz's take on the Freudian-Lacanian construction of the phallic mother is easily adapted to the construction of Janeway: she "carries the Law of the Father within her.… She invokes 'his' authority on loan whenever she threatens or punishes [her subordinates] for wrong-doing. She requires the authority of he who is absent" (71). Even Janeway's violations of the Prime Directive constitute "submission through what appears to be resistance to the oedipal law, i.e., the so-called 'masculinity complex'" (150). But regardless of how easily a psychoanalytic framework accounts for Janeway's construction, it can never fully account for the way in which Janeway is apprehended by viewers – especially women viewers, who can be subversively wilful misreaders of patriarchal texts.

So, what might a wilful misreading of *Voyager* look like?

In an oedipal economy, the only power a woman has is sexual, and as we've seen in conjunction with the work of Wagner and Lundeen, that power has been ruled out as a possibility for Janeway. Phallic power is the only other option: it has worked for her predecessors, Kirk and Picard, but it can work for a female captain only within a pre-oedipal economy. Making it work requires investing Janeway with a certain amount of self-knowledge. In the pilot episode, she provides her crew – and herself – with a demonstration of the phallic mother's power to deny their most immediate desire. She destroys the Caretaker's array, the technology that stranded them in the Delta Quadrant and, so far as they know, the only technology that could have got them home within their lifetimes. Janeway spends the next seven seasons making up for that unilateral and unpopular decision by welding the unlikely assortment of Starfleet personnel, Maquis rebels, and Delta Quadrant tag-alongs into a functional crew: "family" is the only category that seems to her inclusive enough to accommodate the radical differences among them. Under that banner, she must now demonstrate the phallic mother's other power – the power to provide the necessities of life, and to nurture the crew's hope that they will find their way back to Earth. In short, Janeway instinctively relies on each member of her crew's having introjected the pre-oedipal mother, for it makes them susceptible to her style of command, which incorporates Starfleet's humanist principles

tempered by maternal compassion – a kind of "Law of the Phallic Mother." This far from the Federation, such power is a female captain's best defence against mutiny – or worse.

To arrive at this conclusion, one need only compare *Voyager*'s fate with that of the *Equinox*. Similarly stranded in the Delta Quadrant, the *Equinox* has fared poorly – and not just because the ship is technologically less well endowed than *Voyager*. The *Equinox* has suffered terrible losses, not the least of which is the moral compass of its Captain, Rudy Ransom. Ransom remembers what the Prime Directive is – indeed, it still weighs on his conscience, although it no longer informs his leadership. He exploits his crew's disciplined respect for the chain of command: like Dr. Crusher, they obey him because he's the Captain. Thus has he overridden their scruples and involved them in slaughtering aliens, whose corpses are then converted into a powerful fuel for enhancing the performance of their warp engines and speeding up their return to Earth. When Janeway discovers that Ransom has betrayed every Federation principle she has struggled to uphold, she is so furious that their argument degenerates into the polarized one of rigid moral absolutes versus complete moral relativism, the issue at the very heart of the American culture wars. In essence, theirs is a nasty conflict between humanism at its worst and postmodernism taken to its amoral extreme – an interesting departure from Picard's ongoing debate with Q in *TNG*. Fortunately, thanks to five years under her command, Janeway's crew carry within them her "Law of the Phallic Mother," invoking it even in those moments of crisis when Janeway herself violates it. As a consequence, it's her first officer who saves her from making a mistake as egregious as Ransom's – namely, torturing information out of one of Ransom's officers. By contrast, when Ransom's conscience finally erupts in a change of heart, his first officer, now thoroughly corrupted, leads a mutiny against him, bringing about Ransom's destruction as well as his own ("Equinox").

As a character, Janeway is constructed as an authority figure with an unabashed belief in women's maternal instincts (a point to which I shall return). If *Voyager* fan fiction is any indication, this is precisely what makes Janeway popular with many female fans, as she reconciles some of the internal conflict experienced by female inheritors of second-wave feminism's achievements. It's also what makes her an easy target for any psychoanalytic critic driven by a need to expose *Voyager* as a reproducer of the patriarchal status quo. The latter easily trumps the former. However,

as Stuart Hall famously told us more than twenty years ago, consumers of popular culture are not "cultural dupes" (232). As illustrated by the graffiti that serves as the epigraph to this essay, *Star Trek* viewers can be active and critical participants in the production and negotiation of meaning. But rarely do academic and other professional critics give themselves permission to read the *Star Trek* text as fans read it – perhaps because this would require our reading it on its own terms, and this is a skill that has been bred out of us (see Harrison 270). By proposing a "Law of the Phallic Mother," I am attempting to reconcile the desire of female fans with a critique of the mother-blaming that is bound to creep into any text that constructs female authority within a heteronormative framework. Besides, such a law can account for the enormous challenge faced by the Borg Queen in her power struggle with Janeway. The phallic mother's power is dependent upon sexual reproduction and the psychic blueprint laid down in the pre-oedipal period. But the Borg method of reproduction is asexual, and insofar as the Borg collective can be said to possess a psychic blueprint, it's not laid down psychosexually but rather, technologically. This poses all kinds of difficulties for Janeway vis-à-vis Seven of Nine.

In *Voyager*, the Queen of the Borg appears to have risen from the ashes of her demise, suggesting that she cannot be permanently defeated by either the brawny masculinity or the power of reason possessed by Picard and Data, the combination of which gives them the advantage in *First Contact*. In her confrontations with the Borg, Janeway succeeds by beating them at their own game. Upon her liberation of Seven of Nine from the Borg collective, the Captain informs her that she will remain on *Voyager* and work at reclaiming her humanity, whether she wants to or not. Janeway might just as well have said *You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile*. "Then you are no different from the Borg," Seven lashes out in anger and contempt. Even Janeway's most impressive attempts at sympathy and understanding are made to echo the Borg:

JANEWAY: I want to help you, but I need to understand what you're going through.
SEVEN: Do not engage us in superficial attempts at sympathy!
JANEWAY: It's obvious that you're in pain, that you're frightened, that you feel isolated, alone.
SEVEN: You are an individual, you are small. You cannot understand what it is to be Borg!

JANEWAY: No. But I can imagine. You were part of a vast consciousness; billions of minds working together. A harmony of purpose and thought; no indecisions, no doubts; the security and strength of a unified will. And you've lost that.

SEVEN: This drone is small now, alone. One voice. One mind. The silence is unacceptable! We need the others!

JANEWAY: I can't give you back to the Borg. But you're not alone; you're part of a human community now; a human collective! We may be individuals but we live and work together. You can have some of the unity you require right here on *Voyager*.

SEVEN: Insufficient.

JANEWAY: It'll have to do. And the fact is, this community needs you.… We need your expertise, your cooperation. *You must comply*. ("The Gift")

Janeway's mapping out of Seven's future for her in a language she can understand establishes the mirroring effect that structures all of *Voyager*'s encounters with the Borg. It also plays to the theme of "It takes a village to raise a child." For all its postfeminist appeal, this theme, as Berlant's summary of American political debate points out, is a sentiment that does not always harmonize with patriarchal family politics – and, I would add, with a post-9/11 world in which families are encouraged to close ranks and report any suspicious behaviour on the part of the neighbours, especially those of Middle-Eastern origin. Viewed in this new American context, these *Voyager* episodes seem more subversive than they did when they first aired. More to the point, as the above passage suggests, it's not captivity alone that accounts for Seven's successful integration into the ship's company but, more importantly, the tough-love maternalism that infuses Janeway's authority. This quality in Janeway turns out to be even more dangerous to the Borg than the toxin of individuality introduced into the collective by Hugh.

If Janeway is Seven of Nine's mother in this emerging family romance, then the Doctor is surely her father. As a hologram whose body is given substance in a complex interaction of "photons and force fields," he is the realization of his creator's fantasy. He is the motherless offspring of Starfleet cyberneticist Dr. Lewis Zimmerman, many of whose personality traits and desires are replicated in the hologram. Seven of Nine is, in turn, the realization of the hologram's fantasy, "a cross between Barbie and Tomb Raider Games heroine Lara Croft" (Cranny-Francis 158). Her

highly sexualized appearance, combined with her complete lack of interest in sexuality and the regimes of femininity, transforms her into the ultimate fetish – the phallic woman. Because her body is also a biotechnological war zone, through his management of it the Doctor also gets to play midwife in the drama of the drone's return to human female form:

> The iconography of this has caused much comment, as the Doctor performs a mixture of necessary and cosmetic operations on her. Under his ministrations her hair is regrown, blond, and at this stage up in a neat french pleat. Her complexion is peaches and cream, her eyes (one prosthetic) matching blue; the remaining sections of Borg implant are refashioned as ornamental body jewellery. Her figure (she wears skintight clothes) heavily accentuates the hourglass. (Barrett and Barrett 113–14)

Like Pygmalion presenting Galatea to Venus, the Doctor introduces his masterpiece to the Captain: "Fashion, of course, is hardly my forte. Nevertheless, I've managed to balance functionality and aesthetics in a pleasing enough manner" ("The Gift"). He will continue to play an active role in her rebirth, giving her lessons in the social graces associated with patriarchal femininity. And in the process – again, like Pygmalion – he will gradually fall in love with her. But, for Seven, resistance is not entirely futile: he is, after all, her father, and Janeway is no Venus. Seven will resist the Doctor's awkward advances, just as her body resists surrendering the last 18 percent of its Borg technology, and her ferocious will resists surrendering her Borg designation.

Like the Queen of *First Contact*, Janeway is not satisfied with merely assimilating Seven by force. She wants Seven's cooperation and her loyalty, and the welfare of the entire *Voyager* family is dependent upon the Captain's success in getting them. As one would with a difficult child, Janeway achieves this goal by assigning her duties and incrementally increasing her freedom of access to areas of the ship beyond the cargo bay that serves as Seven's quarters. Over time, despite several setbacks and confrontations that echo those of a stormy relationship between a mother and a pubescent daughter, the two women establish a relationship of trust. Slowly, Seven learns what it means to be part of another kind of collective – one bound together, not by physical force but rather, by force of circumstance and by loyalties borne of their success in working together

to beat the odds against their survival in an often hostile environment. Eventually, Seven is able to claim that she *freely* chooses to remain on *Voyager* under the command of Captain Janeway, who she calls "a resourceful leader" – which, in Borgspeak, is high praise indeed. In short, through the power of maternalism, Janeway achieves with Seven what the Borg Queen, through the power of sexual seduction, failed to achieve with Picard or Data. It's hardly surprising, therefore, that the Queen decides on a change of strategy. Following Janeway's lead, she will try to beat the Captain at her own game.

In the power struggle between Janeway and the Borg Queen, a third element is introduced, which allows for a slightly more complex treatment of the family values theme. In order to reconstruct the ship's company as a legitimate family, the biological nuclear family – specifically, Seven's family of origin – has to undergo a deconstruction. Initially, there is only a single entry in the Starfleet database on Magnus and Erin Hansen and their daughter Anika: "Her parents were unconventional," Janeway tells her first officer: "They fancied themselves explorers, but wanted nothing to do with Starfleet or the Federation. Their names were last recorded at a remote outpost in the Omega sector. They refused to file a flight plan. Apparently, they aimed their little ship towards the Delta Quadrant and were never heard from again" ("The Gift").

Seven is able to furnish a bit more information after she experiences an eruption of repressed memories of her childhood assimilation. Some months after her arrival aboard *Voyager*, her cranial hardware picks up a mysterious signal, which she interprets as the collective commanding her return. With two crewmembers in hot pursuit, she hijacks a shuttle and follows the signal to its source. It turns out to be an automated beacon still emanating from the eighteen-year-old wreck of her parents' ship. Aboard the wreckage, she recalls celebrating her sixth birthday there. Then, another memory fragment surfaces: "My father did experiments," she says, "They were very important and we had to travel a long way." *Voyager* is able to recover the Hansens' field notes and personal logs from the wreckage ("Raven"). These data reveal that the Hansens' had been exobiologists with a particular interest in pursuing highly suspect theories about the Borg.

Traumatized by the return of her memories, Seven begins to resent her parents and refuses to have anything to do with their journals and field notes. "My parents underestimated the collective," she tells the Doctor, "Because of their arrogance, I was raised by Borg." But in preparation for a

daring raid on a Borg vessel, Janeway puts pressure on Seven to study her parents' research: "Look for any data that might give us a tactical edge," she orders. "My parents were assimilated," Seven responds contemptuously, "obviously their tactics were flawed." Thus their journals, in her view, are "irrelevant." "You say they're irrelevant – and I say you've been avoiding them," Janeway accuses ("Dark Frontier"). There is something of the domineering mother in the Captain's handling of this, for the emotional and psychological demands she is making on her surrogate daughter are more exploitive than therapeutic. After all, if what she wants is merely useful information about the Borg, any one of her officers could easily carry out this research. But not only does Janeway require the Hansens' data. By pressuring Seven to get reacquainted with her human ancestry, she reveals her impatience and her ambition to make Seven over in her own image. "Perhaps I'm pushing you too hard," she says, manipulating Seven's pride in her Borg "efficiency" in dealing with matters she considers irrelevant. Clearly, Janeway is deeply invested in Seven's individuation, and this raises the question of the degree to which the Captain is abusing her power of command to satisfy her ego.

The action of "Dark Frontier" is intercut with flashbacks to Seven's childhood on the *Raven*, where we get to see how the Hansens handled their responsibility as parents and their careers as scientists. They are either preoccupied with the details of their work or debating their next course of action, but this work is made to seem self-centred, as little Anika, although loved – at least, by her father – copes with a certain amount of neglect. Represented in these scenes is what American politicians like to call "the working family," well-meaning parents who are nevertheless too focussed on work and professional ambition to spend adequate time with their children – a trend blamed for everything from armed street gangs of underclass Black and Latino kids to school shootings by neglected middle-class white boys. These scenes aboard the *Raven* give added substance to Seven's charge of parental irresponsibility. Only Janeway is unambiguous in her praise of the Hansens as brilliant scientists and "great explorers," and even finds herself defending them against disapproval by the Doctor, who leans toward Seven's view. What is being set up in this episode is a cruel testing of Seven's loyalties: the collective, the ship's company, and her family of origin represent three different takes on family values, and each purports to have a claim on "the best interests of the child." In this episode, Seven has to grapple with all three at once.

Having discovered Janeway's plan to raid a Borg vessel and make off with a transwarp coil – a propulsion device that will take several years off *Voyager*'s trip home – the Borg Queen decides to take advantage of the opportunity this gives her to reclaim Seven of Nine. Accessing the communications array that Seven still carries in her skull, the Queen makes her an offer she can't refuse: rejoin the collective or the Borg will assimilate *Voyager*. Seven's devotion to the *Voyager* crew is now so complete that she is willing to sacrifice herself on behalf of the welfare of her crewmates. When the raiding party transports to the Borg vessel and completes their heist, Seven refuses to leave, telling Janeway she has decided to rejoin the collective. Janeway and the rest of the Away Team narrowly escape, the Borg vessel disappears into subspace, and *Voyager* loses all track of it. Chakotay, relieved to report, "No sign of Borg activity – we made a clean getaway," intimates that Seven's decision to return to the Borg was probably inevitable. Janeway is unconvinced. With a rescue operation in mind, she searches the ship's sensor logs for even the flimsiest of scientific excuses for it – which is exactly what she finds. But combined with her "maternal instincts," it's all she needs.

Aboard the Borg vessel, Seven is expecting to be brutally reassimilated. But the Queen has other plans. Gone is her sexual seductiveness, and in its place the Borg version of maternalism. She begins by trying to convince Seven that the Borg did not abandon her these past two years, that in fact the Queen had placed her on *Voyager* so she could acquire experience that would add to the Borg's perfection. "You are unique," the Queen says, almost gently: "You must be tired.… We've adapted an alcove just for you. Go. It will help order your thoughts.… *Comply*." The following day, when Seven asks why the Queen has expended such significant resources to capture her, the Queen replies:

> Isn't it obvious? You're going to help us assimilate humanity. We failed in our first attempt to assimilate Earth. And we won't succeed the next time unless we understand the nature of their resistance. We want you to be our eyes. Let us see humanity.… We want to keep you exactly the way you are. Otherwise, you would lose your human perspective. We don't want another drone. We want you.

Thus does the Queen appeal to the value Seven places on her newly acquired individuality and even feigns a measure of selfless concern for

Seven's welfare. She weaves these sentiments into what Seven had valued most as a Borg drone: the collective's single purpose – to unite all species in pursuit of perfection. But besides uncannily echoing Janeway's tough but sympathetic exchange with Seven upon her liberation from the collective, the Queen's new spin on the old story is completely out of character with the Borg's brutality and rapaciousness, and Seven cannot be taken in by such transparent lies. The Queen *is* the collective, and the collective is the Queen; her selfishness is absolute.

While leaving Seven's individuality intact, the Queen attempts to rekindle Seven's allegiance to the collective by imitating Janeway's strategies. She reminds Seven of her origins – Borg origins, that is – and, like Janeway, orders her to carry out a task loathsome to her, namely, assisting in the assimilation of a culture the Borg have just conquered. The Queen senses Seven's resistance: "Maybe I've been pushing you too quickly," she says, echoing Janeway's words on the matter of the Hansens' journals. To entice Seven – or, more accurately, coerce her – to cooperate, the Queen summons into Seven's presence the drone who was once her father. Overwhelmed by memories of her affection for him, Seven's resolve begins to weaken, and the Queen leaps to exploit it: "Your family's here. You're here. Be one with us again." But this strategy backfires. Seven's trust in Janeway is rewarded when, at this moment, in an act that collapses the selfless/selfish dichotomy altogether, the Captain risks everything – her crew, her ship, her life – in a daring rescue operation. Janeway cleverly gains access to the Queen's chamber and completes the circle of competing family representatives surrounding Seven and demanding her loyalty. Heart on her sleeve, and armed with only a phaser rifle, Janeway faces down the Queen and all her superior technology – and wins.

Clearly, emotional blackmail is no substitute for trust. As Julia Houston notes, "[t]he Borg, after all, have no need to trust each other. Their thoughts are one. Trust only becomes necessary when there is the possibility of doubt. By trying to deal with Seven as an individual, the Queen puts herself in a situation she is ill-equipped to handle, for without trust the Queen's manipulations are all too obvious" (1999b). Thus, from Seven's perspective, there is no contest in this futile power struggle between her two formidable stepmothers. But the similarities between the two are as important as the differences. There is no foolproof way of distinguishing between selfish and selfless motives when it comes to parenting. The binary oppositions that furnish conservative family ideology with its moral certainty are every

bit as false as the Queen's performance of maternalism. However, Janeway may cross the line at times, confusing her personal ambitions with Seven's welfare, but unlike the Queen, she is capable of engaging the perpetual struggle to balance them out.

Because *Star Trek* is wedded to the heterosexual imperative, "Dark Frontier" tries to evoke terror through its obvious allusions to "Best of Both Worlds" and *First Contact*. Within that imperative, the reconstruction of the Borg as feminine means that the collective's threat is *ipso facto* sexual, and what it threatens is masculinity. However, in this particular episode, where the female characters occupy the whole of centre stage, most of the male sexual anxiety provoked by the Queen is behind the camera. Our only visual reminder of the extent of the sexual threat appears when the Queen presents Seven with an image of her castrated father. In this way, the Borg illustrate Anne Balsamo's disappointment in images of cyborgs that reproduce cultural gender stereotypes. In Balsamo's view, the best that can be said of female cyborg images is that they "do *more* to challenge the opposition between human and machine than do male cyborgs because femininity is culturally imagined as less compatible with technology than is masculinity."

> This is to say that because our cultural imagination aligns masculinity and rationality with technology and science, male gendered cyborgs fail to radically challenge the distinction between human and machine. Female cyborgs, on the other hand, are culturally coded as emotional, sexual, and often, naturally maternal. It is these very characteristics which more radically challenge the notion of an organic-mechanical hybrid. Female cyborgs embody cultural contradictions which strain the technological imagination. Technology isn't feminine, and femininity isn't rational. (Balsamo 148–49)

Balsamo's observation is useful for locating where the threat really lies in "Dark Frontier." Technologically determined, it's the Queen's inability to reproduce a convincing simulation of the maternal that marks her as monstrous. She has none of those maternal instincts with which Janeway's character is invested, nor do her technologically reproduced "progeny" possess a psychology that would incline them to respond to such instincts. Indeed, it's their absence that constitutes her phallic power. She can provide (in Janeway's words) "the security and strength of a unified will," but

by definition she cannot nurture the soul, which humanism regards as a necessary defence against precisely the kind of all-consuming mechanical materialism she represents.

But there is more to the mirroring effect in "Dark Frontier" than a simple contest between phallic mothers. Casting Janeway's *Voyager* in the role of the aggressor whose single-minded purpose is the appropriation of technology, and the Borg in the role of reclaimer of one of their own for the sake of her human individuality, defamiliarizes both roles by levelling the moral landscape between them. The resulting illustration of how easily enlightened humanism slips across the "Dark Frontier" and into the ethical shadows offers us a glimpse into how the demonization of the Other can sometimes rebound onto the demonizer. "By my count, we've added at least two years to our journey by avoiding the Borg," says Janeway: "I'm tired of turning tail every time we detect a cube." This is all the justification she needs for ignoring her cautious first officer: "Better safe than assimilated," he warns. Fans of Captain Kirk's style of command would likely approve of Janeway in this episode, for she is confident to the point of cockiness, relishes the danger of the mission, and exhibits no qualms about violating the Prime Directive. "This is no time for protocol," she says to her crew, as she orders them to get started on a plan for the heist. Her choice of target is a vulnerable scout ship, heavily damaged from an ion storm and "limping home" at low warp. Animated by the prospect of beating the Borg at the game they invented, Janeway likens her mission to the theft of gold from Fort Knox, and Tom Paris even makes a reference to a similar heist attempted by the greedy Ferengi, arch-capitalists of the galaxy whose acquisitiveness rivals that of the Borg.

The Borg's unambiguous construction as the evil Other makes it easy to justify Janeway's motives and methods in this episode. After all, she and her crew are the good guys; their desire for more resources is our desire. This makes their semi-crippled target fair game, just as the vulnerable and tempting targets of our own recent aggression – Afghanistan, with its strategic access to the Caspian Sea petroleum deposits, and Iraq, possessor of the second largest oil reserves in the world – are rendered fair game through the construction of them as terrorist-infested states that threaten the security of the "civilized" West. At this point in the *Voyager* saga, Janeway has not yet encountered Captain Ransom, whose slaughter of aliens as high-octane fuel to speed the *Equinox* back to the comforts of home is all too resonant with the atrocities and their political justification currently served up for us on

the six o'clock news. Janeway's reckless overreaction to Ransom's violation of the Prime Directive may be read as a psychological defence mechanism, a denial of her own questionable behaviour in "Dark Frontier," where shaving a few thousand light-years off her own journey home almost cost her the life of a valued crewmember and surrogate daughter. Indeed, when Ransom asks if she's ever broken the Prime Directive, her answer is something of a surprise: "Never," she insists, avoiding his gaze: "Bent it on occasion, and even then, it was a difficult choice." This lie signals a radical dislocation of her principles and her practise. While preaching rigid adherence to Starfleet protocol because "if we turn our backs on our principles, we stop being human," she prosecutes with evangelical zeal – and against the advice of her two co-parents, Chakotay and Tuvok – an appallingly inhumane punishment of Ransom and his crew. In this episode, as in "Dark Frontier," this behaviour almost costs her Seven of Nine. Clearly Janeway's "maternal instincts" are not so instinctual after all ("Equinox").

This theme of maternal instincts – or rather, the absence of them – is addressed again in "Unimatrix Zero." The episode is set in a *Star Trek* version of cyberspace – a virtual Garden of Eden constructed through the collective effort of several Borg drones who carry a genetic marker that protects their unconscious minds from annihilation by the assimilation process. Unlike the vast majority of drones, who experience nothing while they regenerate in their alcoves aboard various Borg vessels scattered throughout the galaxy, those who exhibit the genetic mutation slip into this shared dream, a virtual community where their individuality can flourish and their avatars enjoy interpersonal relationships. As they recall nothing of this dreamworld when they emerge from their regeneration cycle, it is impossible for the Queen to get the information she needs to correct this potentially destabilizing "imperfection" in the collective. Echoing the female monsters of myth who eat their young, she kills and dismembers drones in an unsuccessful attempt to retrieve the crucial information from their cortical implants. At one point in the narrative, the Queen devises a way to project a virtual version of herself into Unimatrix Zero, where she encounters the avatar of a small boy who the Borg have recently assimilated. In a conversation with him in which she performs a frigid imitation of Janeway's maternalist style, all her mystery as a personalized projection of the entire collective – a paradox that so intrigued us in *First Contact* – is stripped away. She reveals herself to be a drone like all the others in that she has a pre-assimilation

history as a humanoid individual who had been assimilated along with her parents and other inhabitants of her planet of origin. Within this new and mundane understanding of her being, she becomes not much more than an especially ambitious drone risen to the position of CEO in charge of corporate mergers, hostile takeovers, and ruthless quality control. The stage is now set for a conflict of Victorian proportions. Like a rapacious industrialist presiding over her dark satanic mills, this reconfigured Queen is an even more appropriate target for Janeway's maternal (post)feminism. Janeway triumphs by infiltrating the Queen's vast industrial complex, organizing the genetically marked vanguard of its oppressed working class, and liberating it to lead a revolution on behalf of its genetically less fortunate comrades.

Maternal feminism is not an unreasonable interpretation of Janeway's project in "Unimatrix Zero." The best that can be said of her act of piracy in "Dark Frontier" is that it is motivated by guilt for having stranded her crew in the Delta Quadrant; at worst, it's a case of self-interest masquerading as a justifiable act of aggression. But in "Unimatrix Zero," both Janeway and her officers are clear that their duty is to respond to the distress call from the drone resistance movement. Not even an offer from the Queen to speed *Voyager* home via Borg transwarp technology can tempt Janeway into abandoning her mission. Even the cautious Chakotay is on side. "The way I see it, risking the safety of *Voyager* is a small price to pay," he says: "If we help these people, this could be a turning point in our battle with the Borg." To put it another way, this mission is a matter of Janeway's extending her maternalism beyond the circle of the *Voyager* family. Given that she seeks to liberate drones who actually desire liberation, she makes amends for having forced it on Seven of Nine. Unlike the Queen, who destroys those drones over whom she cannot have absolute control, Janeway has no designs on those whose liberation she facilitates. Rather, she encourages them to embrace their liberty as they choose. In short, this is indeed "a turning point" in Janeway's competitive struggle with the Borg Queen. If this interpretation sounds like an "idealization" of Janeway's maternalism – or of maternal feminism – perhaps, to borrow Sara Ruddick's phrase in the epigraph to this chapter, it has something to do with "the mother-blaming widespread in our society."

* * *

Despite the strain she puts on the technological imagination of patriarchy, the Queen in these *Voyager* episodes is a disappointment for which even the most wilful of misreadings cannot entirely compensate. In *First Contact*, the Queen's character had been consistent with her visual presentation, and Alice Krige, the South African actor who played her so superbly, understood the Queen's postmodernist possibilities. The femininity of Krige's Queen is at once hilariously exaggerated and chillingly evil. In the *Voyager* episodes, she is played by Susanna Thompson, who was handed scripts that in no way correspond with the sexy costume and makeup of the character. But this is the challenge posed by all cyborg characters, who are by design – and Donna Haraway's definition – a bundle of contradictions. The binary opposition around which Thompson was challenged to work is patriarchy's oldest and perhaps most stubborn: mother/temptress. The possibility of being both is largely up to the actor and her director to realize, but in Thompson's Queen, mother and temptress cancel each other out. Happily for *Voyager* fans, Krige was engaged to reprise her interpretation in *Voyager*'s final episode – the ultimate battle for matriarchal domination of the no-man's-land between Delta and Alpha Quadrants, and Janeway's most daring exhibition of phallic power before returning to the oedipal stable for possible gelding.

Thompson's serviceable but less than inspired performance gave me a greater appreciation for Jeri Ryan's talent, even if the Seven of Nine character presented her with a different and perhaps easier binary around which to work: namely, sexual/rational. Ryan makes the dislocation between her character's highly sexualized visual image and her technological "efficiency" as conveyed through her dialogue the most engaging thing about the character. Her "phallic woman" image even provides an opportunity for a bit of postmodern fun. In "Night," Tom Paris takes Seven to the holodeck and coaxes her into playing the role of Constance Goodheart in a scene from his holonovel. A testosterone fuelled adolescent fantasy that draws on Tom's extensive knowledge of twentieth-century American popular culture, this cross between *Flash Gordon* and *Lost in Space* is a black-and-white simulation featuring all the requisite stereotypes: Dr. Chaotica, the dastardly villain; Chaotica's ungainly giant robot; Captain Proton, "Spaceman First Class, protector of Earth, scourge of intergalactic evil," played by Tom; and Captain Proton's "secretary," Constance Goodheart, who "tag[s] along on all the missions." She is the obligatory buxom blonde, vacant-eyed and programmed to emit an ear-splitting scream in all the appropriate places.

"Now, when we last saw our heroes they had just retaken their rocket ship," Tom explains enthusiastically, cuing Seven to get into character: "Dr. Chaotica has escaped, but he's left behind his trusty robot to foil Captain Proton." Tom activates the scene, and the robot lumbers noisily in Seven's direction: "Citizen of Earth, surrender!" it commands. The robot's accordion-pleated arms rise from the elbow joints like twin phalluses and thrust out at her: "Do not resist!" "I am Borg," says Seven superciliously. Clearly bored, she deftly opens a hatch in the robot's chest, reaches in, and yanks out its electrical wiring. Exaggerating the castrating effect Seven has on all males who dare to approach her with amorous intent, the robot winds down and whirrs to a stop; its arms fall, unpleat, and droop flaccidly to the floor. "The robot has been neutralized," says Seven flatly: "May I leave now?" "C'mon, Seven," complains Tom, "give it a chance – the galaxy's at stake!" This scene may well have been written as a cheeky response to all the critical flak about Seven of Nine as *Voyager*'s pandering to the puerile tastes of *Star Trek*'s male viewers. In addition, Tom's "Captain Proton" holonovel manages to poke a little self-reflexive fun at the SciFi TV serial itself, and even takes a shot at its appropriation by academics. When the Doctor criticizes the simulation as "a waste of photonic energy" and tries to shut it down so that he can use the holodeck to rehearse a scene from the opera *Don Carlos*, the hi-culture/lo-culture insult puts Tom on the defensive: "Take a look around you," he implores: "This is how the twentieth century saw the future. We're studying sociology!" The Doctor is unimpressed: "Perhaps you can teach a course at Starfleet Academy: 'Satan's Robot: An Historical Overview.'" It's unfortunate that a little of this ludic postmodernism doesn't spill over into the family values theme – which is not to say that humour is absent from *Voyager*'s representation of maternalism. Some of Ryan's most interesting work is apparent in those episodes where Seven, like the Borg Queen, is challenged to come up with a maternal style – which is where my narrative is headed now.

4: Techno-maternalism

> *Families are becoming cyborgian; their very forms are mediated or determined by technoscience. Just as different types of cyborgs are now proliferating, so are cyborg families.* – Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen*, 143.

As already noted, Janeway's *Voyager* as social space is very different from Picard's *Enterprise*. Children appear on Picard's bridge from time to time – usually evoking strong reaction from the Captain who, by his own admission, is uncomfortable in the presence of children. Children on the bridge serve as a reminder of the separation of public and private spheres on the *Enterprise*. The gender coding of professional and domestic life figures as a theme in several *TNG* episodes, the most interesting of which are those that deconstruct the public/private binary. One of these is "The Offspring," in which Data decides to become a parent. This episode was rated the eleventh most popular among *TNG* audiences in a survey conducted by *TV Guide* in 1994 (*Farewell* … 85) – perhaps because it challenges a whole series of gendered binaries: in addition to the public/private opposition, technology/biology, reason/emotion, and fathering/mothering are questioned in interesting ways.

Initially, Picard is incensed that Data has not consulted with him before undertaking the task of building a new Soong-type android. "I have not observed anyone else on board consulting you about their procreation, Captain," explains the bewildered Data. Picard is appalled that Data insists upon regarding this new technological construction as his child. Counsellor Troi takes a posthumanist position on the issue, advising the Captain to reign in his humanist bias: "Why should biology rather than technology determine whether it's a child? Data has created an offspring – a new life out of his own being. To me, that suggests a child. If he wishes to call Lal a child, then who are we to argue?" But Picard cannot understand how a

complex piece of technology with the strength of ten men can possibly be regarded as a child. "You've never been a parent," Troi pointedly reminds the ship's patriarch. Picard's behaviour is indeed surprising, given that he has been instrumental in challenging Federation law to recognize Data as a legitimate life form and won for him the rights, responsibilities, and privileges guaranteed to all humanoid citizens of the Federation ("Measure of a Man").

Counsellor Troi's only concern upon first meeting the new android is that Data has not given it a more human appearance, for in this early stage of its construction it has not yet been given primary and secondary sexual characteristics, nor does it have skin colouring or facial features. Data explains: "I have decided to allow my child to choose its own sex and appearance." This is especially significant in the context of our knowledge that Data himself came into existence in an almost totally opposite way. He was created precisely in the image of the egocentric Dr. Noonian Soong, the cyberneticist who built him. Actor Brent Spiner, who plays Data, also plays his "father," who shows up from time to time to exert further control over his technological son and heir. By contrast, Data takes his offspring to the holodeck to "try on" several thousand available subjectivities before a holographic mirror. This scene has important race and gender implications, since Lal chooses to be both human and female. That she decides to be human rather than Klingon or Andorian – two other choices she favours – is understandable, since her father is modelled on a human being and has invested much time and energy in becoming more like biological humans.

But it's Lal's choice to be female that defines the limits of *TNG*'s deconstruction of gender. Part of Data's charm is that he has no emotional awareness: he is the perfect embodiment of Enlightenment reason and human reason's highest technological achievement, and he has been programmed with the sum of human knowledge. Moreover, he flatters us in his attempt to be more like us and often expresses the android form of regret that he is incapable of experiencing human emotions. However, audiences don't share this regret – indeed, if *Star Trek* newsgroup participants are any indication, female fans are especially appreciative of Data. He is a man no woman has to fear: not only is he soft-spoken and polite to a fault; he's incapable of experiencing emotional injury and flying into a violent rage. In this way, Data is a unique exception to the failure of traditional males to make real the illusion of themselves as "the rational sex." Lal's choice in favour of femaleness implicitly identifies her with "the emotional

sex"; hence, it's hardly surprising that when she spontaneously develops emotional awareness, she is doomed. Technology is coded masculine, and at this point in the evolution of *Star Trek*'s humanist philosophy, the writers are still cautious about this gender distinction. It will have to wait until *First Contact* and *Voyager*.

Where "The Offspring" does begin to prefigure *Voyager*'s family values theme is in its representation of Data's parenting skills. Data turns out to be the best mother a father can be. The most obvious feminist reading of this would be that since the onset of the women's movement, popular culture has responded with multiplying images of men who turn out to be better than women at being women – including being better at mothering. Hollywood set this particular form of feminist backlash in motion with *Kramer versus Kramer*, and later films and TV series – *Diff'rent Strokes*, *Boyz N the Hood*, and *Mrs. Doubtfire*, for example – perfected it. The Data of "The Offspring" is therefore nothing new. But two things stand out for me. First, when Lal experiences difficulties relating to other children, Data seeks out advice from a mother rather than a father. Dr. Crusher shares her parenting experiences and advises Data that when especially difficult problems arise, the most important thing is to give the child guidance and love. "I can give Lal guidance," he tells her, "but I am incapable of giving her love." "Now, why do I have so much trouble believing that?" Dr. Crusher says to herself as Data exits her office.

Secondly, for my purposes here, what is interesting about Data's excellent parenting is that it reaches out across the human/posthuman divide and establishes the theme of techno-parenting – which is then carried forward in *Voyager*. Children do not appear on Janeway's bridge, in part because *Voyager* does not accommodate families of crewmembers, as the ship is not equipped with family quarters. Also, we need no reminders of a public/private split, as it is less of an issue in *Voyager* since the arrival of Seven of Nine. The flashbacks to the *Raven* had shown us a ship where professional life and family life were completely collapsed into each other because of the vessel's tiny size. Little Anika has trouble sleeping because she has to listen to her parents discussing their work and arguing about their options. In the final flashback, trembling in her bed, Anika is forced to listen to the rising panic in her parents' voices as the Borg detect the *Raven*'s presence and prepare to assimilate the ship.

Despite the absence of family quarters, there are nevertheless children aboard *Voyager*, acquired *en route*. In Season Two, Ensign Samantha

Wildman gives birth to her daughter Naomi, conceived back in the Alpha Quadrant. While Ensign Wildman is human, Naomi's father, who also serves in Starfleet but not aboard *Voyager*, is Katurian. Ensign Wildman is, in effect, a single parent of her "hybrid" child. As Naomi's godfather, Nelix fills in as best he can. From her biological father's side of the family, Naomi has inherited distinctive Katurian facial features and a short maturation period. Naomi matures rapidly so that at the age of two, she is more like a human child of seven. At first intimidated by "that Borg-lady," Naomi eventually develops a bond with Seven of Nine, who gradually takes over from Nelix the responsibility of Naomi's education. "Naomi Wildman," asks Seven with characteristic abruptness, "do you consider me to be family?" "Well, uh, *yes*," stammers the child, "is that okay?" "I have no objection," says Seven curtly. "Do you think of *me* as family?" Naomi nervously asks. "Yes," replies Seven and walks away, leaving Naomi to bask in the joy of having a big sister. As for Seven, this exchange is an example of the Borg-like efficiency with which she manages all her relationships, both professional and interpersonal ("Survival Instinct").

The interplay of sameness and difference played out in the mutual mirroring of Borg collective and ship's company is given an added measure of complexity in episodes that further explore the question of Borg family values raised in "Dark Frontier." *Star Trek* embraces the logic that all humans are individuals but not all individuals are human. This has implications for the definition of family that emerges in the context of Seven of Nine's recovery. For her, the task of recovering her humanity involves reconnecting with human emotions, which are both repressed and underdeveloped as a consequence of her Borg experience. The subtler emotions – the ones associated with love and related intimacies – give her particular trouble. To her, such emotions are "irrelevant," but under this dismissal lingers her fear of them. For example, in "Survival Instinct," she comes into possession of a small collection of Borg parts, "synaptic relays," she says, "from my original Unimatrix." Examining them, she experiences strange flashbacks and can't make sense of the imagery. "Isn't it possible," B'Elanna Torres asks her, "that what you experienced was simply nostalgia?" Seven hotly denies this: "I have no feelings for the past!" She quickly recovers her composure and apologizes. "You may not be nostalgic about the past," Torres advises, "but I'd say you definitely have feelings about it. Strong ones."

The evocative bits of techno-junk have been brought aboard by three Borg escapees, formerly "Two of Nine, Three of Nine, and Four of Nine,"

members of Seven's old Unimatrix. Although they are separated from the Borg collective, their parietal lobes are still linked together in a "collective triad," and they want Seven's help in separating them. But the procedure is highly risky, as it would involve Seven's linking in with her former colleagues and possibly getting trapped in the neural link. Seven is loath to take this risk but nevertheless "feel[s] compelled to help them." "Do you think of these people as family?" inquires Janeway. Seven asks why this should be relevant. "There's an old saying: 'Blood is thicker than water.' It means that the ties of family run deeper than any other kind of relationship. We'll often do things for our family we'd never dream of doing for anyone else." Janeway is raising the possibility that for Seven, her Borg Unimatrix is the technological equivalent of the crew's biological families back home. As it turns out, the situation is more complicated than that, but we are nevertheless left with the impression that if Seven is to possess true individuality, she must be allowed her cyborgness – which, indeed, she never relinquishes.

In "Drone," this techno-emotional theme gets played out in an episode on the theme of New Reproductive Technologies in which a Borg drone is conceived on *Voyager* as a result of a transporter accident that causes a "random convergence of technologies." This convergence involves the "infection" of the Doctor's mobile emitter by some of the Borg nanoprobes (cellular-size robots) that flow through Seven's veins – with a dash of human DNA from a male crewmember thrown in to determine the sex of the offspring. Merely a kind of sperm-donor, however, this male crewmember is quickly written out of the episode. The Drone is a Superborg by virtue of the twenty-ninth-century technology of the mobile emitter, a souvenir picked up on one of *Voyager*'s treks through time. As the superfetus floats in the green amniotic fluid of its Borg maturation chamber, Seven reports to Janeway: "The drone possesses superior technology. It will fully mature in less than two hours. However, its Borg shielding is not yet active. We can still terminate it, but we must act quickly." Janeway, however, takes the pro-life position: "This is the most advanced drone ever to exist! We could teach him our values, Seven! We could show him what it means to be an individual." Janeway gives this job to Seven, but her logic is lost on Seven: "I am to instruct the drone in the ways of humanity," she replies in a tone of utter scepticism. "Think of it as first contact – and you are our ambassador," says Janeway – *end of discussion*. Thus does Seven of Nine – with the father out of the picture – become a single parent.

Technologically determined, the drone has some initial trouble with the concept of individuality, but Seven enculturates him with megadoses of data which the hungry drone gobbles down like techno-pablum. Soon, echoing Hugh of Borg, the drone names himself "One," signifying his emerging individuality. But his Borg technology asserts itself, and while he's regenerating, his neurotransmitter automatically activates and transmits One's coordinates to the collective. A Borg sphere responds, and soon Janeway finds herself engaging the Borg. However, having bonded with his mother and the rest of his *Voyager* family, One puts his advanced technology to work upgrading the ship's shields and weapons systems. In order to disable the sphere, he transports himself over and destroys it. Protected by his advanced multi-spatial shielding, One survives – but not for long. He ends up in sickbay, in dire need of surgery, which he refuses: "No! I should not exist." The Borg are now aware of his existence, he argues, and they will come for him: "As long as I exist, you are in danger. All life on *Voyager* is in danger." Choosing to ignore this argument as similar to the one she herself had made in "Dark Frontier," Seven commands One to comply. But One expires, and Seven now faces another unwelcome lesson in dealing with emotions.

Like Data and his daughter Lal, Seven and her son One illustrate the difficulty of reconciling the maternal and the mechanical within a humanist framework in which the biological essentialism of the former and the technological determinism of the latter are in binary opposition. Both Lal and One crash on the rocks of this contradiction. In the end, it's up to Seven to find a way to bridge the divide – which is, at bottom, the divide between nature and culture. The character of Seven can be – and has been – read as satisfying neither the values of traditional humanism, nor the postmodernist critique of them. But this may also be seen as her strength. If we read her on *Star Trek*'s own humanist terms, it's possible to see her as signifying culture's troubled interface with nature. As Terry Eagleton puts it, "Nature is not just the Other of culture. It is also a kind of inert weight within it, opening up an inner fracture which runs all the way through the human subject. We can wrest culture out of Nature only by harnessing some of our own natural energies to the task …" (2000 110). As *Star Trek*'s premiere icon of fractured subjectivity, Seven can be seen to represent this process in reverse: she struggles to recover her lost "nature" – in this case, her nurturing potential – by harnessing some of her own technological reserves to the task. Such is the "essence" of her techno-maternalism.

Unfolding events in the American news media during the first four months of 2000 provide an interesting context within which to read three "American family values" episodes of *Voyager* aired in February and March of that year, episodes in which Seven of Nine gets to develop her unique kind of mothering skills. In the preceding November, a six-year-old Cuban boy, Elián Gonzáles, was rescued from the waters off the coast of Florida. He and his mother, along with other refugees, had been fleeing Cuba for Miami when their boat capsized. Elián's mother had drowned in the mishap, and the boy was delivered by the American authorities into the custody of his mother's extended family of Cuban exiles in Miami. Elián's father, grandparents, and the Cuban government demanded the boy's return. But the child became a political football in a legal struggle between the anti-Castro lobby, led by the Cuban American National Foundation, and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. The protracted battle ended on 22 April, when Elián was finally returned to his father.

For an American news media suffering scandal withdrawal symptoms since the conclusion of impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton, the Elián story more than satisfied the cravings. Television networks and cable news channels provided the American public and the international community with twenty-four/seven coverage, dramatizing events as they unfolded and exploiting Elián with impunity. In keeping with pro-family American ideology, public opinion polls reported that Americans overwhelmingly supported the return of the boy to his father, but this opinion was challenged by a loudly articulated view of Castro's Cuba that almost seemed to draw on the Federation's view of the Borg for its hyperbole. Media elites no doubt felt justified in exploiting the Elián story, and no doubt the American viewing public rewarded them with a significant jump in ratings. For the American pro-family movement had become a well-financed and highly influential force during the 1990s, and had made some spectacular and newsworthy gains during the latter half of the decade.

According to Jennifer Butler, United Nations representative and researcher on issues of gender and the Christian Right, at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995,

> Christian Right groups … protested abortion rights, lesbian rights and the [feminist] concept of gender. Led by Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America, the Christian Right went to Beijing to discredit

> the US NGO community in the eyes of its right-wing base in the US and sympathetic right-wing women's groups internationally. The enthusiasm and spirit of the liberal US women's movement largely drowned out its efforts. (11)

Undaunted by this experience, Mrs. LaHaye's CWA and other conservative American Christian groups, under the pro-family banner, established an effective international coalition with conservatives of other denominations and faiths, including Muslims and Jews. This pro-family coalition declared itself ready "to do battle against those enemies that threaten the traditional family: feminism, sexual liberation, abortion, and gay and lesbian rights" (Butler 9). At their second World Family Forum conference in 1999, the coalition drafted the "Geneva Declaration":

> It affirms "that the natural human family is established by the Creator and [is] essential to good society." The natural family is "the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and a woman in the lifelong covenant of marriage. The natural family is defined by marriage, procreation and, in some cultures, adoption." (Butler 12)

Instead of seeking to undermine or abolish the United Nations, as do many conservatives, the pro-family coalition began to advocate these positions, including their defence of patriarchy and their repudiation of gay and single-parent families, within the UN arena. Thanks to their efforts, the United States postponed indefinitely its endorsement of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and withdrew its support for international children's rights. Is it, then, any wonder that the return of Elián to his "natural" father had such overwhelming public support?

Read against the backdrop of the Elián Gonzáles media extravaganza, *Voyager*'s adoption of four "neonatal" drones abandoned by the Borg, their readjustment and recovery of individuality under Seven of Nine's supervision, and the return of one of the children to his biological parents play out the debate over Elián's fate in the context of Alpha Quadrant politics. In "Collective," the Borg collective has judged a group of young drones "irrelevant" and has left them to die aboard an abandoned cube. The adult crew of the vessel has been destroyed by a mysterious pathogen, which

the Doctor is finally able to synthesize for use as an anti-Borg weapon, should the crisis aboard the cube require it. In the complicated process of disarming the young drones and rescuing some *Voyager* crew they have been holding hostage, Seven establishes a relationship of sorts with the drones. The crisis is finally diffused, and the four surviving children – a girl of about nine, twin boys of about twelve, and an older adolescent boy – are transported to *Voyager*. Janeway, who initiates what she expects to be a long search for the children's families, commandeers Seven's techno-maternalism, which the Captain regards as essential to the rehabilitation of the children's individuality. "I've never been responsible for children," Seven protests, "Mr. Nelix would be a better choice." "From what I've seen," Janeway presses, "you're the one they've established the bond with. They'll be looking to you for guidance." Seven relents: "Perhaps I could help them avoid some of the obstacles I've encountered" ("Collective").

For Seven, the task turns out to be almost as difficult as Janeway's had been with her. Emulating the Borg Queen, in "Ashes to Ashes" Seven attempts to bring order to the chaos that erupts as the children's personalities emerge. She devises a meticulously detailed schedule of activities "to promote focus and unity." Every moment is accounted for in the children's day, and an hour of "Fun" is narrowly slotted between "Exercise" and "Navigation" class. Seven even works out an elaborate system of punishment protocols, which she implements when the children rebel – which is often. "You will exercise punishment protocol nine alpha!" she commands when she catches the twins cheating at a board game during a highly regimented "recreational activities" hour. The two criminals rise, turn, and stand with their faces to the bulkhead. Icheb, the oldest boy, protests, and a palace revolt ensues.

Seven applies to Chakotay for reassignment of duties, reporting: "My attempts to apply discipline only result in further disorder." Chakotay, perhaps recalling the mayhem of Seven's arrival on board, takes pleasure in denying her request, reminding her that the children are individuals and advising her to stop treating them as if they were still on a Borg cube. This comparison of her pedagogical style with that of the collective offends Seven, but the message is not entirely lost on her. In sculpture class, the boys are working in an orderly fashion on their sculptures – geometrical shapes, as specified by Seven. Mezoti, however, has decided not to comply with the terms of the assignment. She and her workstation are covered in smears and splatters of clay, but she has produced a fairly recognizable

likeness of Seven of Nine. Seven arrives to inspect. Her irritation with Mezoti visible, Seven claims not to see her resemblance in the sculpture and asks why Mezoti has disobeyed orders. "This was more fun," says the girl: "Don't you like it?" "It's crude," says Seven bluntly. Mezoti's features cloud over. "However," Seven continues, "it does demonstrate ingenuity and individuality.… Resume your disorder." Thus does the *Voyager* method of childrearing score a point against Borg pedagogy ("Ashes to Ashes").

This sculpture class recalls a scene from "Raven," in which Janeway attempts to kindle Seven's creativity by inviting her to help with a bust the Captain is sculpting. Janeway lectures Seven on the importance of art in the liberation of the imagination and, by implication, the nurturing of individuality. Significantly, this lesson takes place in Janeway's holodeck simulation of Leonardo da Vinci's workshop and in the context of all that it signifies in terms of Renaissance humanism. But the Captain fails to get through to Seven, who finds sculpture without utility and hence irrelevant. Now, however, two years later, Seven's decision to include sculpture in the Borg children's curriculum suggests that perhaps Janeway's lesson had not gone unlearned after all. The impishness of Mezoti's defiance is a reminder of just how much more challenging Seven's resentment and intransigence had been for Janeway.

The enriched environment of *Voyager*'s astrometrics lab – Seven's duty station and Icheb's classroom – is a startling contrast to the dusty little agrarian community on the Brunali homeworld, where *Voyager* has located Icheb's parents ("Child's Play"). Situated less than a light-year from a Borg transwarp conduit – a superhighway through subspace – the planet resembles a war zone. Several Borg raids have taught what's left of the planet's inhabitants how to hide the evidence of their technological know-how, which includes the only kind of advanced plant genetics that can make something grow in this desolate landscape. Icheb's scientific genius, which is considerable, will just have to be refocused from astrometrics and spatial harmonics to plant biology. But Seven has not been able to break the news to Icheb, who looks forward to continuing his education on *Voyager* and someday reaching Earth. After one failed attempt, Seven grimly appeals to Janeway: "I'd like the data you've collected on Icheb's species so I can prepare him for reassimilation." Janeway is not impressed with Seven's choice of words: "Maybe we could refer to it as 'getting reacquainted with his family.'" But this is a debate which Seven has experienced from both

sides: she knows the difference between *assimilated* and *acquainted* – and she knows Icheb.

Predictably, the reacquainting ritual on the Brunali homeworld goes badly: Icheb abruptly withdraws to *Voyager*; Seven insults his parents; and Janeway is furious. Seven defends herself: "those individuals may not be suitable guardians." The pro-family Janeway is appalled: "Those 'individuals' are his mother and father!" Seven points out that the Brunali will always be at risk of assimilation and should have relocated to another planet long before now. "*It's their home!*" rebuts Janeway, who is in the sixth year of yearning for her own home and thus admires the Brunalis' determination to protect theirs. "It's not worth protecting!" Seven insists: "Anyone who values their own goals over the safety of their children is irresponsible." Janeway goes for the jugular: "Are we talking about Icheb's parents or yours?" "It would be naive for me to claim objectivity in this case," Seven admits, "but I'm not prepared to return Icheb to parents who may be as careless as my own."

A few more efforts at re-establishing the family bonds pay off: Icheb makes the decision to remain on the planet; *Voyager* leaves orbit; and Seven is again in the grip of feelings she finds difficult to dismiss as irrelevant. Then, quite by chance, she discovers that Icheb's father's story of the boy's assimilation is highly inconsistent with the records retrieved from the abandoned cube from which Icheb and the other neonatal drones had been rescued. Now she must convince Janeway to return to the Brunali homeworld and demand a clarification. Janeway resists, reminding Seven that in the end Icheb *chose* to remain with his parents: "Just because they weren't completely candid with you doesn't mean they're unfit parents," she argues: "At some point, you have to let go." The Captain seems to have forgotten that not long ago, despite Seven's apparent *choice* to return to the collective in "Dark Frontier," Janeway could not let go, preferring to trust some inconclusive evidence and her instincts instead. Seven presses on: "if there's a possibility he's in danger – even a remote one – I have to do whatever I can to protect him. If I don't, I'll be no better than my own parents." Self-insight kicks in, and Janeway relents.

Voyager lays in a course for the Brunali homeworld. They reach orbit and hail Icheb's parents, who are uncooperative. Janeway orders a scan of the surrounding region of space, and *Voyager*'s sensors pick up a distant transport vessel headed for the Borg transwarp conduit; bioscans register one occupant, unconscious, and read the life-signs as Icheb's. Seven con-

cludes that Icheb has been sent out as bait to lure the Borg into battle. Janeway extracts a confession from the two Brunali: Icheb is "fighting for his people," who "don't have particle weapons or powerful starships at [their] disposal," and so are "forced to use the only resource [they] have: [their] genetic expertise." Janeway puts it all together: "Icheb's not bait. He's a weapon! The first cube that captured him was infected by a pathogen. Icheb was the carrier, wasn't he?" *Voyager* lays in a course for the transwarp conduit: they catch up with the transport, snatch Icheb from it in the nick of time, and narrowly escape assimilation by the Borg sphere bearing down upon them.

In sickbay, the Doctor explains the process whereby Icheb had been genetically engineered to produce the pathogen that had proved so deadly to the Borg. "He's going to need help coming to terms with what's happened," Janeway informs Seven: "Use your maternal instincts. They worked before." The closing scene of the episode has Icheb searching his soul, trying to come to terms with his parents: "Do you think they will ever forgive me? I could have destroyed that sphere. I failed them." "You would have been assimilated!" exclaims Seven. "I know," he answers, "Maybe it was my destiny." "Perhaps," replies Seven: "In the future you may choose to fight the Borg. But you'll do it in your own way. You're an individual. And you have the right to determine your own destiny."

This episode, entitled "Child's Play," is another debate about the best interests of the child. The role played by Seven in this debate qualifies Cranny-Francis's view that the "embodiment of Seven of Nine might be seen as a deconstructive analysis of female subjectivity, were it not for the infantilization that constantly robs her of any authority" (158). In "Child's Play," however, Seven's maturity and authority are apparent in the recognition that her own lack of objectivity is not a good enough excuse for backing down in the face of opposition from the *official* authority figure, whose own lack of objectivity is in question. The return to American family values is a return to biblical foundationalism – in this case, the orthodox reading of Solomon's Judgment, which assumes that the biological mother is the one who puts the child's welfare before her own. What is at issue here is whether King Solomon's methodology is capable of revealing the biological mother or just the better one. When Janeway advises Seven to "use her maternal instincts" to help Icheb cope with his first and third potentially lethal encounters with parental irresponsibility – the second one being the collective's rejection of him as

"irrelevant" – it's not Seven's so-called maternal instincts she draws on but rather, the authority of her own experience. "I know how difficult it is to acknowledge your parents' faults," she tells him, "but what they did was wrong. You don't have to forgive them." Seven could be speaking from her experience as a drone or as little Anika – probably both. As Anika, she knows that maternal instincts – if they exist – are at best unreliable; as for the Borg Queen, her maternal instincts software could use a serious upgrade.

As for Janeway, at least she's consistent: unexamined assumptions about the superiority of biological parents go hand in hand with unfounded claims for the existence of maternal instincts. And on the question of "destiny," Seven might well have spoken the word in scare quotes, for she knows from experience that chance has more to do with it. Indeed, as she says at the end of "Raven," "I find myself constructing scenarios, considering alternative possibilities. What if my parents and I had not encountered the Borg? What would our lives have been? I would have been raised by them, learned from them. They would have influenced what I became – who and what I am." And if her arguments for Icheb's remaining within the enriched environment of *Voyager* are any indication, she also knows that Starfleet's privileged culture is no guarantee of his choice of destinies, but only gives him a better shot at it than does the impoverished material environment of the Brunali homeworld.

Star Trek's writers – like most writers of popular television series – are skilled at producing narratives that appeal to viewers across the spectrum of public opinion, and are thus quite fearless in taking on themes from current affairs. Perhaps the most melodramatic detail in the media construction of the Elián Gonzáles saga was the representation of Elián as a motherless child – a boy whose mother had sacrificed her life to deliver her son from the evil of communist oppression to the land of liberty, where his individuality could flourish. This is a variation on a popular theme in American cultural mythology, and the theme upon which the liberation of the Borg children plays. Both Janeway and Seven of Nine are characterized by a uniquely American maternalism. As long as that remains a constant, writers have lots of latitude in choosing what constitutes the American pro-family principles of each character. But all around these two fiercely protective mother figures is the emancipating context in which they exercise their maternal authority – namely,

a context characterized by the absence of male figures with patriarchal authority. Thousands of light-years from "home," they do not have to contend with fathers or husbands, nor with the Federation President or the Admiral of the Fleet. That this extraordinary opportunity will end is a foregone conclusion. The more important issue is *how*.

5: Queen Bees

> *We probably have no cause to fear (or hope) that The Family will dissolve. What we can begin to ask is what we want our families to do.* – Jane Collier et al., "Is There a Family?" 80.

Seven years into their adventure in the Delta Quadrant, the crew – with the exception of Janeway and Harry Kim – is all but resigned to the probability that *Voyager* will not reach home in their lifetime. "Don't you *want* to get home?" Harry asks Tom Paris. "Harry," he replies, "I *am* home." Tom has finally emerged from his state of arrested adolescence and has settled down with B'Elanna Torres, who is now in an advanced state of pregnancy. The Captain and Seven have ironed out most of their difficult mother-daughter differences, and Seven is ready to leave the nest and start thinking about a family of her own. Finally having discovered – at least, within her surrogate mother's humanist paradigm – that recovering her humanity means recovering her femininity, she and Chakotay are playing the dating game. Nelix has recently left *Voyager*, but keeps in touch: he tells Seven that he is thinking of getting married to the single mother he met three episodes ago. But Captain Janeway is still conspicuously unattached, and she is about to discover that the condition may be permanent.

As in *First Contact*, "Endgame" features the element of time-travel. This brings Captain Janeway face-to-face with an older version of herself. The two-hour episode opens in San Francisco on the tenth anniversary of *Voyager*'s return from twenty-three brutal years in the Delta Quadrant. Janeway has been assimilated – not by the Borg, but by elite and stifling Starfleet headquarters society. She has been promoted to Admiral, but she doesn't wear a uniform. We see her first in a fashionable cocktail dress, complete with obligatory pearls; later, in her tasteful but sterile apartment, she wears a polyester pantsuit in pale lilac. Her hair is silver, professionally styled, and sprayed stiffly into place; the flesh at her neck has lost its

elasticity; her waist has thickened. She is nevertheless strikingly elegant, a quality which enhances her matriarchal authority. She is reported to be very excited about team-teaching with the tedious Reginald Barclay at Starfleet Academy. But a brief demonstration of her lecturing style suggests that a life of grading undergraduate papers is probably not the best career move for "one of the most decorated officers in Starfleet history."

Chakotay and Seven, two of Janeway's three closest friends, are dead. The third, Tuvok, has lost his mind and is confined to a private room at Starfleet Medical. Janeway visits him once a week, but he doesn't know who she is. Because these tragedies are all directly related to her failure to get *Voyager* home sooner, guilt is her constant companion. She has ways of punishing herself – for example, she deprives herself of coffee (Houston 2001). She had once been addicted to the stuff, which had kept her mind sharp and her body perpetually on the verge of jumping to warp. Now, she drinks only tea. When the newlywed Doctor suggests she try marriage, she brushes it off: "Oh, it's a little late for that. Marriage is for the young…." This image of the superannuated Janeway evokes the theme of family values in that we see her as the retired career woman, single, restless, and alone. But a husband is not the answer. For Janeway, there is only one solution to this bleak existence: get back in uniform, return to the past and the Delta Quadrant, take command of *Voyager* again, and rewrite history.

Two things stand in the way of Admiral Janeway's plan: Captain Janeway and the Borg Queen – two women every bit as formidable as the Admiral herself. As we already know, both are fierce mother figures, but they hold mutually conflicting views on the meaning and purpose of family. The Admiral's primary concern – to get the *Voyager* family back to Earth intact as quickly and directly as possible – comes into conflict with each of those views in turn. Her younger self shares this concern but wants to combine the operation with a much riskier one: destroying a massive Borg transport network of warp conduits, even while using it to catapult *Voyager* directly into the Alpha Quadrant. For the Captain, this is the preferred option, as it's her conviction that the family has responsibilities that exceed its concern with its own welfare. She wants her family safely back in the Alpha Quadrant, but she also wants an Alpha Quadrant that is safe from the threat of assimilation by the Borg, whose technological superiority continues to expand, despite some recent defeats suffered as a consequence of imperial overreach. By contrast, the Borg Queen is exclusively dedicated to enhancing the perfection of her collective, her "family." She is totally

indifferent to the families, communities, cultures, planets, and star systems the Borg annihilate in pursuit of this objective. In the context of the Borg's collective consciousness, this is – quite literally – a "single-minded" goal.

What I have come to appreciate about these three matriarchal figures is the way in which their significations change with the context in which they are read. The two Janeways can be seen to signify positions within a political debate that has preoccupied Americans since the end of the Cold War – namely, the national security of the United States versus its role in the wider world as the only remaining superpower. Admiral Janeway represents the former position and Captain Janeway the latter. But the radical changes in American foreign policy since 9/11 throw a slightly different light on the debate. The Queen's transwarp hub is, in effect, a delivery system for her weapons of mass destruction, and it's the Captain's responsibility to interpret if and how the Prime Directive applies in this vast expanse of space beyond Federation jurisdiction. To what extent do the Borg represent an imminent threat to the Alpha Quadrant in general and Earth in particular? Does Captain Janeway have the right to act unilaterally against the Borg? To whom or what does she owe her allegiance?

But whether we read "Endgame" in the pre- or post-9/11 context, what makes it unique is that it is mother figures who are actively involved in the conflict. This can be read as challenging the traditional way in which American ideology makes connections between militarism and motherhood. The sentimentalization of America's "Gold Star Mothers," women who have sacrificed sons to "the cause of freedom," plays an important role in promoting the ideology of militarism – almost as important a role as inculcating in young men a connection between militarism and filial duty: "Most men went to war, shed blood, and sacrificed their lives with the conviction that it was the only way to defend those whom they loved," writes Vietnam veteran Sam Keen (47). This ideology is consistent with the root meaning of the word "patriotism": whether it's your life or the life of your son, sacrificing it for the patriarchal state is the noblest act of all. But in "Endgame," it's mothers and families themselves who are on the front line. Not only do they seem perfectly capable of defending themselves; they also seem capable of deciding on whose behalf sacrifices should be made and who should make them.

The older Janeway's goal appears to have more in common with the Queen's, for the Admiral opposes the Captain's dual-purpose plan. Moreover, the Admiral's strategies for getting her own way are not all

that dissimilar from those used by the Queen on Seven of Nine in "Dark Frontier." An electrifying confrontation between the two Janeways – a scene for which Mulgrew must be commended, as she plays both roles – stakes out their irreconcilable positions. "We have an opportunity to deal a crippling blow to the Borg," says the Captain; "It could save millions of lives!" But the Admiral stands her ground: "I didn't spend the last ten years looking for a way to get this crew home earlier so you could throw it all away on some intergalactic goodwill mission!" The Captain can't believe what she's hearing: "I refuse to believe I'll ever become as cynical as you!" But Admiral Janeway is not above using psychological violence to win this power struggle with her younger self. After all, she does have the advantage: her knowledge of the future. She ruthlessly blurts out the fate of Seven, Chakotay, and Tuvok in her timeline and watches as the Captain's confidence begins to evaporate: "Even if you alter *Voyager*'s route, limit your contact with alien species, you're going to lose people. But I'm offering you a chance to get *all* of them home, safe and sound, *today*. Are you really going to walk away from that?" The Admiral is similarly brutal with Seven of Nine. She informs Seven that she will die if, in destroying the Borg facility, the Captain also destroys their shortcut home. "My future is insignificant compared to the lives of the people we'd be saving," says Seven. To the charge that she's acting selfishly, Seven replies: "*Selfish*? I'm talking about *helping others*." "Strangers, in a hypothetical scenario!" the Admiral shoots back; "I'm talking about real life: your colleagues, your friends – *people who love you!* Imagine the impact your death would have on them."

But emotional blackmail can't win it for the Admiral. Neither her coercive tactics nor pulling rank on the Captain has managed to weld *Voyager*'s crew into the kind of obedient collective that appears to give the Queen such a strategic advantage. Indeed, contrary to the Captain's declaration in an earlier episode that the *Voyager* command structure "is not a democracy, I can't take a poll every time I have to make a decision," the Captain decides to seek consensus among her officers – another significant departure from her behaviour in "Scorpion" and "Dark Frontier." For the present situation has little to do with blind obedience and everything to do with the values that make a family strong: trust, loyalty and, above all, respect for differences of view. Despite these differences, the crew elects to remain true to the values it is sworn to uphold and unanimously agrees to the Captain's plan; the Admiral must admit defeat. And over her first cup of coffee in ten years, she strategizes with the Captain, who insists that

"There's got to be a way to have our cake and eat it too." "There might be a way," replies the Admiral provocatively, "I considered it once, but it seemed too risky." She peers into her coffee cup and reflects: "I don't know why I ever gave this up."

To what is the Admiral referring? Is it just the coffee, or is she talking about command of *Voyager*? Is she finally being upfront with the Captain, or is this just another one of her psychological games? This is, after all, "Endgame," and thus far we've heard several games referred to and seen several others in progress. We've seen Seven at her weekly game of Kadeş-Kot, the board game she plays with Nelix over subspace. We've watched Icheb beat Tuvok at the intellectually demanding game of Vulcan Kal-Toh. As already noted, Chakotay and Seven are playing the dating game; they play according to very strict rules researched by Seven – and they even cheat a bit. Harry wants to squeeze in one more game with Tom on the holodeck before the latter gets too busy with fatherhood, and the whole crew are gaming – laying bets on when B'Elanna will give birth. In the Admiral's timeline, her Academy students play the silly freshman game of "We double-dare you to ask the lecturer a dumb question"; and the Doctor reminds Barklay that their golf game isn't until next week. And those are only the recreational games; the others are all deadly serious.

The Klingon Korath plays games with the Admiral. In exchange for her influence in getting him a seat on the Klingon High Council, he promises to provide her with the illegal time-travel technology she needs for her trip back to *Voyager*. After she has moved heaven and earth to get him that seat, he changes the rules of the game: now he wants her to throw in the shuttlecraft she's had specially refitted for the trip. But she's a lot better than he is at this kind of game. Agreeing to his new terms, she demands to be shown the device before she relinquishes the shuttle. He falls for it – and in a flash, she attaches a tiny mobile transporter to the device and snatches it out from under his greedy nose. Then, there's her elaborate game of deceit: she escapes San Francisco, leaving a trail of lies behind her, and when she's caught and confronted by Harry Kim – a middle-aged Starfleet captain in the Admiral's timeline – she tells him that her journey into the past will be a one-way trip. Now, here she is in the Delta Quadrant playing every psychological game in her repertoire – pulling rank, blackmailing, lying – to get herself a window seat on the return flight. So, what is she up to now? How is she planning "to have her cake and eat it too"? What is it she sees as she gazes into that cup of coffee?

As it turns out, what the Admiral sees is her redemption. Together, the two Janeways hatch a plan to which we are not privy at this point, but we do suspect that if indeed both of them are plotting in good faith, the probability of *Voyager*'s success in destroying the Borg installation while simultaneously getting home has just doubled. For if Captain Janeway is Mother-in-Chief aboard this vessel, Admiral Janeway must be its Grandmother Supreme. Their combined matriarchal power should be enough to ensure their success. However, it will necessitate a confrontation between Admiral Janeway and the Borg Queen, who turn out to have even more in common than we have seen thus far. A traditional "family values" argument has it that blood is thicker than water – as Janeway had suggested to Seven of Nine in "Survival Instinct." If this is so, then the Captain's and the Admiral's blood must be the thickest of the thick, since they share identical genes. But as we have seen in the case of Seven's Borg family values, in the cyborgian age, technology sometimes does blood one better, and this is certainly borne out in the similarities between the Admiral and the Queen, both of whom have the technological ability to project virtual-reality versions of themselves into the consciousness of their adversaries. This invasion of the Other gives new expression to the idea of "the enemy within" – thus extending both Houston's and Russell and Wolski's readings of the Borg. Just as the two flesh-and-blood Janeways can be read as a schizoid split within the Captain, so too do these projections of Self into Other transform the physical conflict between *Voyager* and the Borg into psychological conflict within the self.

In a scene that takes place shortly after the Admiral's arrival on board *Voyager*, the Queen projects herself into the mind of Seven of Nine as she regenerates in her electronically outfitted alcove, a device which also makes her accessible to Borg visual transmissions. The purpose of this virtual visit is to discover why the Admiral has come, and to warn Seven – and thereby the *Voyager* crew – against invading the nebula where the Borg transwarp network is hidden. When Seven demands to know the reason for this visit, the Queen asks: "Do I need a reason to visit a friend?" "We're not friends," Seven counters. "No, we're more than that: we're family," breathes the Queen seductively, the light reflecting evilly off her metallic eyes. Seven shoots back with a reminder that she is no longer a drone: "I don't answer to you!" The Queen's appeal to family having failed, she falls back on what she does best: outright sexual seduction. Jim Wright's online review of "Endgame" captures the spirit of the scene:

> Like a cobra, the Queen strikes; she launches herself at Seven of Nine – but not in anger. This Queen prefers the old-fashioned approach to assimilation – heart and soul. And she's willing to take the time to tease away one's self-control. "You've always been my favourite, Seven," purrs the Queen, as she caresses Seven's cheek, then both cheeks – then runs her hands over Seven's arms and other parts as she whispers evil nothings into her ears. "In spite of their obvious imperfections, I know how much you care for the Voyager crew, so I've left them alone.... Imagine how you'd feel if I were forced to assimilate them." (Wright)

Within the strict heterosexual imperative that governs the *Star Trek* universe, women would appear to have an advantage when it comes to the Borg. Unlike Picard and Data, Seven of Nine, who is currently getting acquainted with her feminine sexuality, is impervious to the Borg Queen's sexual advances. Perhaps more interesting in this scene is the way in which some of the evil of the Queen's patriarchally constructed sexuality rubs off on the ideology of "family." In Alice Krige's interpretation, the seductions of family and the seductions of sex do not differ in kind: they are interchangeable strategies for exploiting human vulnerabilities. Hers is an interesting spin on the phallic mother, for these twin seductions and the desires they exploit illuminate "the depth of cultural anxiety about species reproduction" represented by the cyborg (Balsamo 148). Impervious to the kind of sexual and familial needs she exploits, the Queen destroys in order to reproduce her kind. As we saw in "Dark Frontier," she is in possession of Seven's "natural family," now assimilated, and she is not above tempting the former drone back into the collective by brutally thrusting into Seven's consciousness her father's borgified image. In that episode, Janeway bursts in on the scene and inserts herself between Seven and that powerful temptation, thus preventing her from succumbing to it. Here, however, Seven no longer requires Janeway's matriarchal intervention. Having developed some of her own maternal potential, she shows only contempt for the Queen's tactics. After all, family is as family does, and Seven's brutalizing past appears to have taught her that the best family is sometimes the family one ends up choosing.

Admiral Janeway is also something of a cyborg, and she uses this advantage to project herself into the mind of the Queen. Activating a computer chip implanted in her brain – a "synaptic transceiver" which, in

another application, allows her to "pilot a vessel equipped with a neural interface" – she projects her virtual-reality self into the cyberspace of the Borg collective, where her confrontation with the Queen takes place:

> An interesting bit of blocking is going on here. The Admiral and the Queen, both doing the same power play – ducking and weaving, feinting and attacking, slinking and purring. It's a dance of seduction as much as of power. Here are two ageless Alpha Babes vying for dominance, with the stakes being the fate of the entire bloody galaxy.… (Wright)

As the Queen quickly discovers, she cannot assimilate the Admiral, for her body remains in her shuttlecraft, not far off but cloaked and undetectable. The Admiral's role in this sting operation is to keep the Queen distracted while the Captain gets *Voyager* into position. She has come, she claims, to make a deal with the Queen: "I've become a pragmatist in my old age. All I want is to get that crew back to their families." This reference to family resonates with the Queen, who replies, "You wish to ensure the well-being of your collective. I can appreciate that. I'll help you. But it'll cost more than you're offering." They negotiate an exchange: the Queen's help for the Admiral's shuttlecraft – technology which is, of course, twenty-six years in advance of anything currently possessed by the Borg.

However, as Captain Picard discovered in *First Contact*, one does not do deals with the Borg Queen. Her drones triangulate the Admiral's signal, locate her shuttle, and transport her – *bodily*, this time – into the Queen's presence, where the Queen thrusts her assimilation tubules into the Admiral's throat, injecting her with the nanoprobes that will transform her into a drone. But the damage goes both ways. As part of the Janeways' plan, the Admiral's blood has been fortified with Icheb's anti-Borg toxin, and as the Admiral begins to succumb to the nanoprobes, so too does the Queen begin to destabilize – along with the entire collective into which she is networked. "You've infected us with a neurolytic pathogen!" gasps the Queen. "Just enough to bring chaos to order," the Admiral cries out in triumph, thus inverting the Queen's definition of her collective self as that which brings order to chaos. Her redemption at hand, Admiral Janeway struggles to remain standing as she watches the Queen disarticulate and expire at her feet. At this moment, as the Admiral dies with her boots very much on, in *Voyager*'s sickbay the Chief Engineer delivers her baby girl

into the family. On the bridge, ship's sensors having detected the Admiral's success in setting the endgame in motion, the Captain orders a volley of torpedoes, and *Voyager* streaks into the Alpha Quadrant just ahead of the enormous blast. On Earth, at Starfleet Command, the brass in their grey suits, jaws agape, stare at the spectacular show on their viewscreens.

Having emerged from the collapsing transwarp hub only a few million kilometres from Earth, Janeway resumes her place in the Captain's chair and quietly issues the command we have heard her repeat so many times over the preceding seven years: *Set a course – for home*. Her facial expression in the semi-gloom of the bridge is subdued but otherwise unreadable, thus offering fans a *tabula rasa* upon which to inscribe their own version of the ending – as indeed they did, in a flurry of fan fictions that sprang up on the Internet during the weeks following the airing of "Endgame." But I was unable to find any that extrapolated from the character of the restless Admiral. These fans were apparently unconcerned about what might be going on in the mind of this intrepid younger matriarch, who has struggled through so many episodes to reconcile the irreconcilable contradictions of American postfeminism.

* * *

Many years ago, while leafing through a German magazine – *Stern*, I think it was – I came to an article entitled "Die elektronische Oma" (the electronic grandma) about the serious consequences of using the television set as a substitute babysitter. I remember none of the details of the article, but the image of the female machine as dangerous grandparent has stuck with me all these years. She combines patriarchy's fear of women, fear of old age, and fear of being rendered obsolete by machines. She signifies the mother-blaming that makes sympathetic accounts of mothering vulnerable to charges of "idealization." As a cyborg, she is the ultimate phallic mother for our times. This *elektronische Oma* was evoked most vividly for me by the character of Admiral Janeway. I knew from the moment she materialized on *Voyager*'s transporter pad that the new script she was bringing with her from the future had her death written into it. But death is preferable to living castrated.

Star Trek writers have always had a problem writing middle-aged female characters, who are invariably either evil or silly, but in "Endgame,"

their prejudices work in the service of their art, rather than against it. Their creation of the sixty-something female action hero, whose motives and methods are ethically questionable, is a *tour de force*. The streak of arrogance and self-righteousness that was only intermittently visible in Janeway's character throughout the series is developed in the Admiral to the point where it dominates her personality, so much so that we're never really sure – until the very end – if she's capable of being straight with the Captain. There are moments in her confrontation with the Borg Queen where we have to wonder if this woman who, as Reg Barclay informs us, "*literally* wrote the book on the Borg," got closer to her literary subject than was good for her. The irony of her life is that assimilation by the Borg is her only way out of an even worse existence: assimilation by the soul-destroying tedium of superannuation. But perhaps more than anything, what accounts for Admiral Janeway's success as a character is Kate Mulgrew's obvious pleasure in bringing her to life.

Trolling the Internet in the spring of 2001, I was interested to find so little discussion of the Admiral Janeway character – evidence of the *electronische Oma* syndrome, I suppose. Perhaps that syndrome also played a part in the general view of "Endgame" as an unsatisfying conclusion to *Voyager*. Many fans criticized the subdued mood of the closing scene. They wanted loud cheering and other explicit signs of celebration on the bridge, as unseemly as this would have been, given that Admiral Janeway had just made the ultimate sacrifice in order finally to grant her family what Captain Janeway had so dramatically denied them in the pilot episode. But fans' biggest complaint about "Endgame" was that they'd seen it all before: time travelling, going over the heads of the Starfleet brass, outsmarting the Klingons, romancing the babes, violating the Prime Directive, blowing up the Borg, and saving humanity. *Ho-hum*.... What most of these churlish critics failed to mention is that what they had *not* seen before is women doing it all. And in the case of *Voyager*'s ferociously efficient Chief Engineer, she not only plays the key role in refitting the ship for its encounter with the Borg, but she also manages to give birth to *Voyager*'s Next Generation. Was this tepid response evidence of fans moving beyond *Star Trek* in their SF tastes, or *Star Trek* moving on in its sophistication and leaving its fan-base behind?

Whether one wants to read the recurring family motif as progressive or reactionary, there is no question that *Voyager* at least makes us think about what we mean by "family," a word now thoroughly corrupted by an

advertising industry which is not above selling a multinational corporation or a huge investment conglomerate as "a family of companies caring for you" – a sentiment extended into North American politics during the first week of "Operation Iraqi Freedom," when the American Ambassador to Canada, annexing Canada as "part of our family," rebuked Canadians for betraying patriarch Bush by refusing to condone his war of aggression. *The Next Generation* came very close to this conflation of family values and foreign policy by presenting the Federation as a kind of "family of planets" and Federation citizenship as the highest ideal to which the individual family member can aspire. But *Voyager* offers an alternative view by presenting us with a very different style of leadership. As Barrett and Barrett note, "Picard's authority is rarely questioned": as he says to Lily in *First Contact*, "the crew is accustomed to following my orders." By contrast, Janeway encourages the expression of different perspectives among her crew: "I dread the day when everyone on this ship agrees with me," she says.

> That *Voyager* embraces different perspectives does not mean that it has no hierarchical control. Janeway's leadership demands obedience and those who disobey … are severely punished. The difference between this system and the version employed in *TNG*, however, is that the loyalty of Janeway's crew to the ideal of "The Federation," or any official authority, is far outweighed by their loyalty to each other. Janeway's decisions, often unpopular, are always in the interests of the crew or in support of the beliefs that they are sworn to uphold, rather than some abstract notion of citizenship. (Barrett and Barrett 179–80)

By representing Janeway's task as one in which she must chart the best course between her family's welfare and the family's responsibility to the wider community, *Voyager*'s writers and producers – like the Janeways – managed to have their cake and eat it too: they remained true to their Republican family-values theme while showing us things about this repressive ideology which, in our increasingly postfeminist present, we may have forgotten. Are we going to focus our energy exclusively on that consumer unit, "the working family," and leave the bigger issues to the likes of George Bush and Tony Blair? Or do we need to rethink the meaning and purpose of family and its responsibility to those bigger issues? Contrary to the claims of the Religious Right, the return to traditional American family values in this age of globalization and militarization does not nec-

essarily strengthen community. Indeed, since 9/11 the power elite has only increased its control of American families by cultivating even more fear of the hostile Other and the danger it poses to innocent American children. This climate of fear inspires a blind patriotism by dissolving the tension between nation and state – a tension absolutely necessary to the health of a democracy. As suggested by the PATRIOT Act – especially the racist rhetoric of fear it inspired – one needs to keep one's Muslim neighbours under constant surveillance. So much for the strength of community and the well-being of its families.

The trajectory of the Borg's gender transformation – from genderless, to masculine, to feminine/sexual, to maternal – may have been merely a matter of expedience on the part of *Star Trek*'s producers and writers, but it nevertheless reveals much about the anxieties that continue to plague a culture which, for the most part, considers itself postfeminist by one or the other of Susan Moller Okin's definitions of the phenomenon. Kate Mulgrew's call for an end to "this absolutely endless, nonsensical banter about sexual superiority" illuminates the reactionary nature of those anxieties, just as the erosion of Affirmative Action in the U.S. reveals the persistent anxieties of a nation eager to proclaim that its systemic racism is a thing of the past. Now that a growing majority of Americans, post-9/11, have fully externalized the enemy once more, the *Star Trek* narrative and its emerging self-reflexivity become important as a historical trace of a once-increasing willingness on the part of Americans to examine the enemy within. Political feminism, like the American movement for racial justice, comes and goes in waves, but *Star Trek* will be with us forever – at least, so it seems, given that on any night of the week, one can channel-surf through any number of episode reruns. This provides us with an opportunity – even a responsibility – to read them within the ever-changing culture that surrounds them.

Ðrones, Clones, AND Starship Captains:

Encounters with the Posthuman

6: Humanism/Transhumanism

> *What is lethal is not the posthuman as such but the grafting of the posthuman onto a liberal humanist view of the self.* – Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 286–87.

> *Postmodern cultural criticism is ingenious (and very usefully so) in exposing the political and hegemonic interests behind any point of view or line of inquiry.… But can this mode of criticism also serve as a positive point of reference?* – Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen, *Deep Space and Sacred Time*, 212.

The opening scene of the *Star Trek Voyager* episode "Scorpion" introduces viewers to Captain Kathryn Janeway's new interactive holodeck novel. It is set in the fifteenth-century workshop of Leonardo da Vinci. As the holographic Leonardo (played to perfection by John Rhys-Davies) tests a robotic arm constructed of wood to resemble a human arm and mimic a blacksmith's motions, the Captain – "Katarina," as Leonardo calls her – negotiates with him for space in his workshop where she can work on her sculptures and paintings. As the Maestro sets his contraption in motion, Katarina looks on in admiration. "Someone once said that 'all invention is but an extension of the body of man,'" she enthuses. As she moves about the workshop, her admiring gaze takes in Leonardo's sketches of flying machines and a model of one suspended from the ceiling. By agreeing to help him build another machine – one that will actually fly – she convinces him to rent her a workbench and take her on as apprentice. Thus begins a charming relationship to which *Voyager* will return in later episodes.

For those critics whose approach to *Star Trek* is grounded in the modern/postmodern opposition, this scene would be yet more evidence of *Star Trek*'s unwavering commitment to creator Gene Roddenberry's Humanist vision. And they would be right. After all, Leonardo da Vinci,

an iconic figure in the history of Renaissance Humanism, is here depicted as an appropriate role model for Captain Janeway, *Voyager*'s inheritor of the liberal humanism of *The Next Generation*'s Captain Jean-Luc Picard. But for me, Leonardo's robotic arm and Katarina's comment on it recall a passage from Katherine N. Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman* in which she quotes and interprets a statement from Kenneth P. Oakley's 1949 book, *Man the Tool-Maker*:

> "Employment of tools appears to be [man's] chief biological characteristic, for considered functionally they are detachable extensions of the forelimb." … Significantly, he imagined the tool to be at once "detachable" and an "extension," separate from yet partaking of the hand. If the placement and the kind of tool mark Oakley's affinity with the epoch of the human, the construction of the tool as a prosthesis points forward to the posthuman. (Hayles 1999 34)

Similarly, the slender wooden fingers of Leonardo's robotic arm point forward to the posthuman theme of "Scorpion": *Voyager*'s first real engagement with the Borg, and Captain Janeway's "liberation" of Seven of Nine from the Borg collective. In this episode, the Captain gets to see what intelligent life looks like when modelled on transhumanist philosophies that take Enlightenment humanism to its techno-scientific extremes.

The Battle for the Future

What I want to attempt in this essay is an extended reading of *Star Trek* that is not explicitly feminist but is nevertheless provoked by feminism – specifically, a passage from a feminist book review that's been haunting me since I read it back in 1996:

> Is it really enough to identify the Enlightenment as authority … without recognizing also the significance of thought's liberation and that the women's movement, including the feminist politics of difference, rejoices in just this freedom? It may not always be with us. Here, then, I also question [the] dismissal of "liberal feminism" … when, in the North American context and particularly in the United States, we (I and whoever else joins me in this) may well be looking

> back on liberalism as a honeyed country from which we are severed forever by forms of totalitarianism we never dreamed of. (Smith 766)

This is a passage from Canadian Dorothy Smith's review of a collection of postmodernist essays not unlike scores of others that poured from the academic presses during the 1980s and 1990s. It resonated with my growing dissatisfaction with postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment project. In the years since Smith made this statement, I have become even more curmudgeonly in my views: critical theorists have effectively extinguished the Enlightenment's light without providing an alternative for illuminating a possible way to the future. I'm with Smith in questioning the repudiation of liberal feminism – not because I want to rehabilitate the liberal humanist subject, given its complicity in sexism, racism, and economic Darwinism, but because no one has been able to come up with an appealing replacement for the liberties that adhere to it.

I took Smith's intention as trying to get feminist academics to wake up to the changes going on all around us in the 1990s. Her words seem even more prophetic today than they did in 1996. George W. Bush's rise to power, the PATRIOT Act's assault on civil liberties, and the militarization of U.S. foreign policy are all reminders that postmodernist critique hasn't even made a dent in the status quo – quite the opposite, in fact. As Terry Eagleton wrote in the mid-1990s:

> Postmodernism is radical in so far as it challenges a system which still needs absolute values, metaphysical foundations and self-identical subjects; against these it mobilizes multiplicity, non-identity, transgressions, anti-foundationalism, cultural relativism. The result, at its best, is a resourceful subversion of the dominant value-system, at least at the level of theory.... But postmodernism usually fails to recognize that what goes at the level of ideology does not always go at the level of the market. If the system has need of the autonomous subject in the law court or polling both, it has little enough use for it in the media or shopping mall. In these sectors, plurality, desire, fragmentation and the rest are as native to the way we live as coal was to Newcastle before Margaret Thatcher got her hands on it. (Eagleton 1996 132–33)

Indeed, we may have brilliantly deconstructed the master narratives of Western culture, its institutions and its codes, but much of our work still lacks a program for change; thus it is complicit in the very Enlightenment project it critiques. Moreover, there is something vaguely disingenuous about finding fault with a particular vision of the future when one has no vision of one's own. By default, therefore, the battle for the future is being waged between transhumanists, whose technophilic, anarcho-capitalist vision for posthumanity is notable for its indifference to issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, politics, militarism, public policy, civic debate, etc., and critical posthumanists who "think that serious consideration needs to be given to how certain characteristics associated with the liberal subject, especially agency and choice, can be articulated within a posthuman context" (Hayles 1999 5). Among the latter are those whose textual preferences include *Star Trek* – despite/because of its humanism.

Eagleton's advice to postmodernists is: "Why not just confess that your values are as precariously ungrounded as anybody else's? It would hardly leave you vulnerable to attack, since you have just craftily demolished any vantage-point from which any offensive might be launched" (1996 133). Eagleton is exposing both the great limitation and the great power of postmodernist critique: it demolishes all hierarchies of value, but at the price of an undifferentiated relativism – a critical landscape barren of moral and ethical contours. *Star Trek* has no vantage-point from which any offensive against its postmodernist critics might be launched: its humanist values – especially its utopian premise – make it *ipso facto* a loser. But by levelling *all* moral high grounds, postmodernist critique puts itself equally in question – which opens up a liberating possibility. It makes shifting the ground of critique an equally valid option. Therefore, I am making the shift from the familiar modern/postmodern binary to a humanist/transhumanist opposition. This alternative may well be as precarious as an orthodox postmodernist approach, but at least it avoids the foregone conclusions of the latter when applied to a text as frankly humanist as *Star Trek*. Placing *Star Trek*'s humanism in a contest with transhumanism's optimistic take on the techno-future gives it a fighting chance. Or, to put it another way, it clears a space for the kind of resistant readings that postmodernist critics gesture toward but seldom legitimize.

My focus on transhumanism requires some construction of the context within which *Star Trek* returned to television in the 1980s – in this case, the emergence of new technologies, their contribution to the creation of

transhumanist discourse, their influence on science fiction generally, and the rise of the cyborg as icon of the posthuman. These events helped shift the genre of science fiction from the peripheries to the centre of popular entertainment, but they also continue to remind us that humanism – much to the chagrin of those who think they've already interred its mouldering bones – is still very much alive. Cultural critic Neil Badmington sums up the present situation quite succinctly:

> [T]he "post-" of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism. "Post-"s speak (to) ghosts, and cultural criticism must not forget that it cannot simply forget the past. The writing of the posthumanist condition should not seek to fashion "scriptural tombs" for humanism, but must, rather, take the form of a critical practice that occurs *inside* humanism, consisting not of the wake but the working-through of humanist discourse. Humanism has happened and continues to happen to "us" (it is the very "Thing" that makes "us" "us," in fact), and the experience – however traumatic, however unpleasant – cannot be erased without trace in an instant. The present moment may well be one in which the hegemony and heredity of humanism feel a little less certain, a little less inevitable, but there is, I think, a real sense in which the crisis, as Gramsci once put it, "consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born." (Badmington 21-22)

Since humanism continues to happen to us, maybe we should cut it some slack. "I learned Gene's vision directly from Gene," says Executive Producer Rick Berman: "It wasn't my vision of the future, but it was at the foundation of *Star Trek*.... We bend it a little bit, but we try not to break it" (quoted in Poe 3). In my view, this understatement is an invitation to develop better critical tools for apprehending cultural productions that occupy the transitional space between humanism and the posthuman. The need for such tools among both academic and non-academic critics is borne out by the sheer number of movie reviewers, mainstream and marginal, left in the dark by the second and third films of *The Matrix* trilogy. Most could grasp the humanist values of agency and choice as the first film's central theme – indeed, a pair of academic critics even let us know their profound disappointment with this humanist bias (see Bartlett and Byers). But the failure to recognize that agency and choice may always be

what's at stake in the conflicted interface of human and machine – the theme of the second and third films – resulted in a lot of "thumbs down" reviews. Clearly, reviewers had unrealistic expectations for *Reloaded* and *Revolutions*. *Star Trek*'s presentation of this theme may eschew the stylish pomo-spectacle of *The Matrix*, but the theme is no less important for that. Berman and his team preserve the humanist structure of *Star Trek* in deference to Roddenberry's dying wishes, but they also work "*inside* humanism" to explore the problems and possibilities of the posthuman. In other words, *Star Trek* is not merely about Western anxieties concerning "the ethical viability of liberal humanism" (Cranny-Francis 154); like *The Matrix* trilogy, it's also about the challenge of representing "the working-through of humanist discourse." Indeed, by being quite particular about the kind of humanism *Star Trek* endorses, its writers can offer a critique, not only of those aspects of the humanist legacy from which Roddenberry tried to distance his vision, but also of those (post)humanisms they themselves find increasingly problematic.

Extropian Transhumanists

Although transhumanism is a relatively diverse movement, the American Extropian transhumanists are its best-established and most visible constituency. The term "transhumanist" is used to describe the current transitional phase of technological evolution, the end-goal of which is the "posthuman." According to Max More, philosopher and founder of the Extropy Institute in California, Extropians "see humanity as a transitory stage in the evolutionary development of intelligence" and "advocate using science to accelerate our move from human to a transhuman or posthuman condition" (More). The point at which the shift from the transhuman to the posthuman will occur is known as "the Singularity." Like Christian fundamentalists awaiting the "Rapture," these techno-fundamentalists anticipate a coming rupture in social life "comparable to the rise of human life on Earth," as mathematician Verner Vinge describes it (1993). Ray Kurzweil, a prominent researcher in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and artificial life (A-Life), sees the Singularity as "involv[ing] an accelerating increase in machine intelligence culminating in a sudden shift to super intelligence, either through the awakening of networked intelligence or the development of individual AIs." Kurzweil anticipates a post-biological future: "Biology will become an increasingly vestigial component

of our nature. Biological evolution will become ever more suffused with and replaced by technological evolution, until we pass into the posthuman era" (More and Kurzweil 2002). The Singularity will be the fulfilment of mankind's destiny as "the teleological animal," defined by Greg Burch as "simply nature's own spontaneously generated means of knowing and ordering itself" (Burch 1997).

Extropians tend to be white, well-educated, radical libertarian, anti-environmentalist males who, according to sociologist and bioethicist James Hughes, share the "belief that an anarchistic market creates free and dynamic order, while the state and its life-stealing authoritarianism is entropic." A transhumanist himself, Hughes nevertheless notes that transhumanism often exhibits an "ideologically narrow, apolitical, sectarian ahistoricality," but also points out that it's largely the anarcho-capitalism of Extropians that distinguishes them from other transhumanists. According to Burch, the movement is often referred to as "the New Enlightenment," not only because it embraces progress, but also because it rejects both the "explicit moral guilt of modern humanistic thinking" (1997) and "the pessimism of the so-called 'post-modernists'" (2000). Indeed, given our postmodern world, which oscillates in manic-depressive fashion within an eternal present, a "future anterior where we feel nostalgia for a time that has not yet arrived and whose realization is structurally impossible" (McLaren), is it any wonder that Extropianism, with its relentlessly optimistic focus on the future, is increasingly popular among techno-savvy young men?

Transhumanism's Critics

In a recent study of what he calls the "Extropian Invasion," cultural critic Eugene Thacker summarizes the Extropians' "growing body of research, both theoretical and practical," and their techno-teleological vision of the future. In addition to Kurzweil, Thacker also names Hans Moravec, Marvin Minsky, and Richard Dawkins as prominent scientist-theorists associated with Extropian thought. Interested in making a distinction between Extropianism and critical posthuman thought, such as that of techno-theorists Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, Thacker places special emphasis on where Extropianism overlaps with more traditional humanisms:

> … like the types of humanisms associated with the Enlightenment, the humanism of extropianism places at its center certain unique qualities of the human – self-awareness, consciousness and reflection, self-direction and development, the capacity for scientific and technological progress, and the valuation of rational thought….
>
> Like the Enlightenment's view of science and technology, extropians also take technological development as inevitable progress for the human. The technologies of robotics, nanotech, cryonics, and neural nets all offer modes of enhancing, augmenting, and improving the human condition. (74–75)

In keeping with these qualities of traditional humanism, the conception of technology as first and foremost a tool is crucial to the Extropian project: "This technology-as-tool motif … presupposes and requires a boundary management between human and machine, biology and technology, nature and culture. In this way extropianism necessitates an ontological separation between human and machine." In "asymmetrical" relationship, "the human subject is the actor and the technology is the prosthetic that the human subject uses" (Thacker 76–77).

Thacker's article, entitled "Data Made Flesh," is a contribution to a special issue of *Cultural Critique* devoted to posthuman futures. In her Afterword to the issue, Katherine Hayles identifies Thacker's as the most revealing of the contributions because of its "repositioning of biotech in the context of the dichotomy between materiality and information…."

> Thacker, looking at the biological rather than the computer sciences, reconceptualizes how the material/information dichotomy works in the biological sciences. Unlike artificial life, where the materiality of the organism literally translates into information patterns, the biological sciences do not lose sight of the carbon-based materiality in which the information is expressed. Rather, information is seen as the handle through which the materiality of the organism can be manipulated and transformed. "Change the code," Thacker observes, "and you change the body." (Hayles 2003 136)

Whether it's a case of "Data Made Flesh," as in biotechnology, or "flesh made data," as in infotechnology, it's the data that are unproblematically privileged. Where conflicts arise is when transhumanists "must consider

the fate of the human or its history. What often goes unconsidered are the ways in which the human has always been posthuman and the ways in which technology has always operated as a nonhuman actant" (Thacker 76–77).

Star Trek versus Transhumanism

The contrast between *Star Trek*'s humanism and that of Extropian transhumanism provides a framework for recognizing that like most science fiction authors, *Star Trek*'s writers take seriously their role as critics of science and technology. The Extropian "assumption of the neutrality of technology"; its disregard for "the historical, social, and political contingencies that enframe each technological development"; and its assumption that the human user "guarantees the right, beneficial use of otherwise value-neutral technologies" (Thacker 77) are frequent themes in the *Star Trek* narrative. And anyone familiar with the AI theories of Moravec, Kurzweil, and Minsky, and the "memetics" of Dawkins – all of whom have published their thought in books aimed at a general readership – will detect their influence on *Star Trek*. However, the *Star Trek* text needs to be read as only a partial endorsement of their ideas, and often an outright critique of them. But with so many writers contributing to the ongoing development of the *Star Trek* saga, critique is often fraught with contradiction as individual writers take turns at grappling with the ethical, political, and social issues raised by these ideas. But the contradictions mirror those within transhumanist discourse and critical techno-theory themselves.

As long as Roddenberry remained at the helm, *The Next Generation*'s Captain Jean-Luc Picard remained an unambiguous representation of what Hayles describes as "a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice" (1999 286). But with Roddenberry's death in 1992, *Star Trek* philosophy became more complicated. In the most recent film, *Nemesis*, Picard suffers a nasty shock with respect to a central principle of Enlightenment humanism – the human potential for self-improvement. Inspired by the android Data, whose programming, like that of Janeway's holographic Leonardo, exhibits a distinctly humanist bias, Picard attempts to teach this principle to his genetic clone Shinzon. But in true postmodern fashion it's Shinzon who teaches

Picard that self-improvement is radically relative. A product of politically motivated genetic engineering and a brutalizing childhood, Shinzon has ruthlessly risen to power as Praetor of the Romulan Empire, thus demonstrating a vast "improvement" over both genes and culture – not, however, in line with Picard's liberal humanist tastes. Similarly, Janeway's confident assumption that the precise location of the boundary between human and machine is easily distinguished is challenged in her conflicted relationship with Seven of Nine. As a consequence, she ends up being the most fallibly human of all *Star Trek*'s captains – especially in her dealings with the cyborg members of her crew, who gradually teach her that if there is a boundary between human and machine, it's a constantly moving target. The Extropian ideology Thacker describes as an asymmetrical relationship in which the human subject is the actor and the technology merely the prosthetic used by that actor is a conflicted issue for both captains, whose humanism is tested and transformed by it.

The presence of cyborgs and androids, sentient holograms and human clones, makes the *Star Trek* universe a posthuman one. Many of the personal and professional relationships that exist between biological humanoids and synthetic life forms are analogous to the symbiosis between the human and the machine that the critical posthuman position advocates. Others of those relationships are analogous to the asymmetry characteristic of transhumanist ideology. Thus *Star Trek* provides an opportunity to explore some possible answers to a question posed by Hayles. For her, "the question is not whether we will become posthuman, for posthumanity is already here. Rather, the question is what kind of posthumans we will be" (1999 246). Her own exploration of such celebrated works of posthuman imagination as Greg Bear's *Blood Music*, Cole Perriman's *Terminal Games*, Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2*, and Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* yields the same kinds of anxieties I see expressed in the *Star Trek* text:

> Underlying their obsessions is a momentous question: when the human meets the posthuman, will the encounter be for better or for worse? Will the posthuman preserve what we continue to value in the liberal subject, or will the transformation into the posthuman annihilate the subject? Will free will and individual agency still be possible in a posthuman future? Will we be able to recognize ourselves after the change? Will there still be a self to recognize and be recognized? As the texts struggle with these questions, the surprise, if there is one,

> is how committed the texts remain to some version of the human subject. (Hayles 1999 281)

With respect to *Star Trek*, it's not so much a question of the survival of the liberal humanist subject but more a question of what the characters who embody that subjectivity learn about it as a consequence of their encounters with the posthuman. As embodiments of the humanist position, Captains Picard and Janeway are at the centre of an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, they struggle to contain the posthuman within the circle of liberal humanist assumptions, sometimes even abusing their authority in the process; on the other, often putting themselves at risk, they actively engage in redefining and expanding the human so that it opens out onto the posthuman. Read in the context of the intersection of infotechnology, nanotechnology, and biotechnology, the character development of both captains can be seen to support Hayles' "insight that posthumanist productions are folded together with humanist assumptions," assumptions which – as Neil Badmington asserts – require a "'working through' … rather than a belief that we can simply leave them behind."

7: Cyborg Emergence

> *Cyborg is as specific, as general, as powerful, and as useless a term as tool or machine. And it is just as important. Cyborgs are proliferating throughout contemporary culture, and as they do they are redefining many of the most basic political concepts of human existence.* – Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen*, 19.

At the end of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Captain Kirk and his officers announce the birth of a new species, as they witness the fusion of their first officer with a digitized version of the ship's Deltan navigator, the beautiful Ilea, reconstituted in perfect detail as a machine. Released in December of 1979, the film can perhaps be seen as heralding the coming decade of the cyborg. For although artificial intelligence and artificial life had long been staples of the somewhat marginalized genre of science fiction, it was the 1980s that witnessed the arrival of the cyborg on the horizon of public consciousness. In 1982, Hollywood director Ridley Scott postmodernized Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and brought it to the screen as *Blade Runner*. Although James Cameron's *Terminator*, which appeared two years later, would have much wider box office appeal, *Blade Runner* nevertheless "initiated a whole tradition of cult movies later grouped under the label 'cyberpunk'" (Wong). In 1984, inspired by an Internet still in its infancy, William Gibson published *Neuromancer*, followed by *Count Zero* in 1986 and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* in 1988: "The *Neuromancer* trilogy gave a local habitation and a name to the disparate spaces of computer simulations, networks, and hypertext windows that, before Gibson's intervention, had been discussed as separate phenomena. Gibson's novels acted like seed crystals thrown into a supersaturated solution; the time was ripe for the technology known as cyberspace to precipitate into public consciousness" (Hayles 1999 35).

Trekborgian Origins

Among the scientists who helped to move the cyborg into the mainstream was the roboticist Hans Moravec. His *Mind Children*, published in 1988, appealed to cyberpunk readers and critics in its claim that it would soon be possible to download human consciousness into a computer, where it would be preserved intact. It was Moravec's work that shocked Hayles into an awareness of where informatics was taking the posthuman. "How," she asked herself, "was it possible for someone of Moravec's obvious intelligence to believe that mind could be separated from body? Even assuming such a separation was possible, how could anyone think that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment?" (Hayles 1999 1). But Moravec's vision turns out to be not quite so mysterious as these initial questions suggest. As Hayles' trace of the history of cybernetics reveals, Moravec is not alone in his transformation of the Cartesian mind/body split into an information/materiality split, which enfolds within transhumanist discourse the assumptions upon which humanism rests. If, after abstracting the information from its material instantiation, "we can capture the Form of ones and zeros in a nonbiological medium – say, on a computer disk – why do we need the body's superfluous flesh?" asks Hayles, taking the platonic metaphysics of transhumanism to its logical conclusion. "The clear implication is that if we can become the information we have constructed, we can achieve effective immortality" (1999 13).

It wasn't dreams of immortality that were on the minds of *Star Trek*'s writers when, within months of the appearance of *Mind Children*, *The Next Generation* aired "Measure of a Man," in which the android Commander Data is, in effect, declared a legitimate life form with "human" rights. The episode is a superb illustration of the "insight that posthumanist productions are folded together with humanist assumptions." Commander Maddox, Chair of Robotics at the Daystrom Institute, appears aboard the *Enterprise* with news of his intention to dismantle Data for research purposes. Data is unwilling to submit to the procedure, but he has no choice, as he has no legal status as a free agent. This precipitates a hearing in which Picard acts as Counsel for the Defence. Picard's argument is framed in humanist terms: Data is sentient because he possesses intelligence, self-awareness, and consciousness; therefore, he has the right to choose whether or not to submit to experimental refit. In other words, Data is

defined in terms of his mind, rather than his body. Interestingly, however, Picard reinforces his argument by having Data testify to the fact that he has engaged in "intimate" (i.e., sexual) relations. What seems to be in play here is *Star Trek*'s unique way of dealing with the posthuman – namely, by expanding the definition of human so that the posthuman can be embraced within it.

Data may be grateful to Picard for winning the case in his favour, but Data's sex life notwithstanding, Picard's argument pays little attention to Data's concerns about Commander Maddox's research as described earlier in the episode. The roboticist intends to dump Data's core memory into the Starbase mainframe computer and assures Data that his "memories and knowledge will remain intact." "Reduced to the mere knowledge of events," Data counters: "The substance, the flavour of the moment could be lost.... There is an ineffable quality to memory which I do not believe can survive your procedure." Hans Moravec would disagree, given that Data's memories supposedly exist in the form of ones and zeros. But Maddox isn't given the Moravecian argument – with which he might have won his case – while Data's concerns are virtually identical with those of Katherine Hayles: he is sure that the silicon, bioplastic, molybdenum, and other materials in which his memories are instantiated are inseparable from his posthuman being.

However resistant *Star Trek* is to Moravecian theory in Data's case, the credibility of holographic life forms does owe much to Moravec. Still, it's not his vision that informs *Star Trek*'s most important engagement with the posthuman but rather, the work of Marvin Minsky, who published *Society of Mind* in 1986. "This book," wrote Minsky in his introduction, "tries to explain how minds work. How can intelligence emerge from non-intelligence? To answer that, we'll show that you can build a mind from many little parts, each mindless by itself." Minsky's "society of mind" is a "scheme in which each mind is made of many smaller processes. These we'll call agents. Each mental agent by itself can only do some simple thing that needs no mind or thought at all. Yet when we join these agents in societies – in certain very special ways – this leads to intelligence" (17). MIT roboticist Rodney Brooks developed a computational model that echoed Minsky's biological model of decentralized human intelligence and used it to program a number of simple, insect-like robotic "agents" that slowly began to behave interactively, exhibiting something resembling an emerging intelligence. Brooks published a series of reports on his research, one of

which appeared in April of 1991 and bore the title "Intelligence Without Reason," a challenge to traditional AI models – and to traditional humanist rationalism. That fall, *The Next Generation*, then in its third season, introduced a race of cybernetic organisms whose collective, decentralized intelligence bears a striking resemblance to Minsky's society of mind. "How do you reason with them?" Captain Picard asks Q, the alien who has forced the *Enterprise* into this initial engagement with the Borg. "You don't," Q answers, "I've never known anyone who did." Like one of the "many little parts" of the mind described by Minsky, and like one of Brooks's robotic agents, each Borg is "mindless by itself." Individual Borg are beyond language and reason, beyond communication and understanding. But joined together, they form an intelligence capable of articulating and executing an ominous threat: "We have analyzed your defensive capabilities as being unable to withstand us," they announce in their computer-generated multiple voice, "If you defend yourselves you will be punished." Q describes the Borg as "the ultimate user," uninterested in "political conquest, wealth, or power" as humans know them. Rather, they are interested in the *Enterprise* and its technology, which they have identified as "something they can consume" ("Q-Who?").

Brave New Shopfloor

It should be noted that it's not just the emerging technosciences of the 1980s to which the Borg allude. The collective also resonates with the socio-economic changes sweeping through America – indeed, through all of the Western world during the 1980s. For this was also the decade that featured the shift from an industrial economy to a service economy, a shift that could better accommodate changing patterns in production and consumption requiring the kind of fast and accurate flows of information that only technological innovation could provide. This shift originated in Japan's challenge to the economic supremacy of the United States during the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially in the automobile and electronics sectors. Many American corporations were abandoning the Fordist regime of industrial production and adopting the Japanese model, which harnessed the intellectual as well as the physical capabilities of employees. Conditioned by forty years of anti-Soviet propaganda, most Americans were deeply suspicious of any organizational form that deviated from the American model of "market individualism" – especially a "welfare corporatist" model that

appeared to derive its team-based philosophy from cultural factors such as homogeneity, familism, and group loyalty (see Florida and Kenny). Images of Japanese office and factory employees performing early morning group calisthenics and repeating in unison an oath of allegiance to the corporation proliferated in the American media. Such images, combined with increasing Japanese participation in cross-national joint ventures located in the United States, played into American fears of a Japanese takeover of the American economy. Not only does this transnational corporatism form the context for Gibson's cyberpunk novels, American fears of Japanese economic power were also exploited by Hollywood in such SF films as *Johnny Mnemonic*, based on one of Gibson's short stories, *Freejack*, depicting America's loss of the U.S.-Japan "trade wars," and *Robocop III*, whose plot involves a Japanese takeover of the Detroit automobile industry. These same fears, further fuelled by the long-standing racist myth of the inscrutable Oriental, helped to make the unintelligible Borg collective the epitome of absolute Otherness.

Borg Subjectivity

The move from Minsky's single human mind composed of many little parts to the Borg collective, a single mind composed of many bodies, is, as Brooks' insect-like robots suggest, via the science of entomology, specifically studies of social insect colonies as "superorganisms." For American transhumanist Eugene Ott, a naturalist and environmentalist, the Borg exemplify his theoretical species *Homo multifarious*. Ott tells of introducing his concept in 1980 at the World Future Society's Global Conference held in Toronto, where he also circulated copies of two papers: "Future Humans: An Hypothesis" and "*Homo multifarious*: A Practical Approach to Achieving Life After Death." Arguing that "personal identity [is] our concept of continued life," and that this "concept exists only in our minds," Ott makes the case that a collective mind, like the one modelled by the Borg, would achieve the continuation of identity after individual human bodies joined in the collective have died. Thus does multifarianism, like transhumanism more generally, privilege mind over body as the essence of human being.

While Ott's naturalist and environmentalist bias makes him a marginal figure in the transhumanist movement, Anders Sandberg, a computational neuroscientist, is more prominent. A founding member

of the Swedish Transhumanist Association, he has been an active debater in transhumanist circles for many years. In a paper entitled "We, Borg: Speculations on Hive Minds as a Posthuman State," he discusses "borganization" from a cybernetic point of view, beginning with the following quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Gallactica*:

> Borganism: 1) An organization of formerly autonomous beings who have merged their individual wills to create one, collectively conscious being: 2) The social and political theory that advocates the creation of borganisms. Borganise: To form a borganism, to organise its structure. (quoted in Sandberg)

Both borganization and multifarianism might qualify as a kind of transitional step in the direction of one of several Moravecian fantasies – a transition from an embodied collective mind to a disembodied one. As Mark Dery reports: "Moravec imagines the subsumption of 'downloaded' cyberbeings into a 'community mind,' omniscient and omnivorous, which spreads 'outwards from the solar system, converting non-life into mind' through some form of data conversion. This process, suggests Moravec, 'might convert the entire universe into an extended thinking unity" (309).

But not all transhumanists share in either Sandberg's dream of borganization or Moravec's fantasy of a universal community mind. For example, in a recent discussion with Sandberg and others, T.O. Morrow (pun intended), an Extropian philosopher and a key founder of the Extropy Institute, says: "Though I cannot pretend to speak for every self-proclaimed Extropian, I for one do not aim at Borganization. I certainly aim to change and grow, understand; I do not aim to obliterate my individuality, however." Another participant in this discussion is Mark Walker, research fellow at Trinity College, Toronto, and Editor-in-Chief of the transhumanist *Journal of Evolution and Technology*. On "the question of individual identity," Walker contrasts the Borg, "meat creatures with a collective identity," with "the denizens of the virtual world of *The Matrix*" who "are individuals with virtual bodies" to make the point that "technology promises to allow any number of experiments in living and experiments in identity," implying that anyone will be able to opt in or out of any number of posthuman technologies (Turner).

What strikes me as curious about this exchange is that, while these men enumerate the technological choices that will supposedly be available to us in the posthuman future, the point of the representations they use to exemplify these new technologies is that these options are likely not the ones from which the rest of us would wish to choose. The social, political, and ethical questions raised by *The Matrix* and *Star Trek* seem to have gone right over their heads. If the future is anything like the present, these SF narratives say, some new technologies may well take away more choices than they deliver. Indeed, today, among those of us who operate computers, use telephones, or even drive automobiles, what degree of individual choice is involved? And for most of the 70 percent of the world's population that has never made a telephone call (Hayles 1999 20), choice probably doesn't enter into it. Reading this bizarre Extropian conversation, I am reminded again of Hayles: "When Moravec imagines 'you' choosing to download yourself into a computer, thereby obtaining through technological mastery the ultimate privilege of immortality, he is not abandoning the autonomous liberal subject but is expanding its prerogatives into the realm of the posthuman" (1999 287).

Locutus of Borg

Moravic must have missed "Best of Both Worlds," the episode of *The Next Generation* in which the Borg forcibly download Picard's mind, transform his body into a man-machine hybrid, and merge his subjectivity with a new identity, "Locutus of Borg." Or perhaps, because Extropians regard any resistance to their techno-vision as Ludditism, Moravec might read this frightening episode as *Star Trek*'s uncharacteristic lapse into a "passive reliance on Luddite ideologies" (Thacker 76). SF critics take a different view. In "The Erotics of the (cy)Borg," Anne Cranny-Francis offers a summary of the way in which "Best of Both Worlds" has been interpreted:

> Claudia Springer remarks that "Picard's abduction by the Borg was a type of seduction. Picard resists talking about his experience with the Borg, as if he were ashamed of a sexual transgression." She continues: "Popular culture often represents a collapse of the boundary between human and technological as a sex act." In "The Cyborg Body Politic and the New World Order" Chris Hables Gray and Steven Mentor describe Picard's experience: "This technological rape takes its toll on

> the body and psyche: for two episodes (an eternity on TV) he wrestles with the shame, the sense of having lost his integrity and self: He says, in effect, they took everything I had." (147)

Cranny-Francis builds her own interpretation upon this eroticization of Picard's experience in terms of "the 'third term' status of Picard/Locutus. Like the transvestite or transsexual, or like the bisexual, he/it represents a breaking down of boundaries" (148–49). But she also notes "the crisis of authority" embodied by the Picard/Locutus cyborg. As part of the process of assimilation, "Picard's white male body is actually blanched to bone-white." Noting that "the most literal reading of this transformation is that the loss of pigmentation signifies the elimination of humanity," Cranny-Francis also reads this as "an overdetermined reference to the 'white male body' of liberal humanism – the site of ultimate authority" (149). While this reading works from the postmodernist side of the modern/postmodern binary, speaking from the perspective of the humanist/transhumanist divide, I would give more credence to the "literal reading" as a legitimate concern for the loss of agency and choice and, in turn, a logical consequence of transhumanism. Extropian celebrations of "Man as the teleological animal" slide all too easily into Man the technologically determined animal. Similarly, Extropian anarcho-capitalism easily morphs into consumerism for its own sake. Add into the mix the wholly unfounded assumption that "'intelligence' and 'sentience' will remain constants over time and through successive transformations," and the Borg become a consequence of Extropianism's lack of clarity about "the extent to which the human can be transformed and still remain 'human.'" In other words, the Borg are a logical extrapolation of Extropian ideology. Extropianism's confident assumption that "new technologies will continue to be used in an unambiguously beneficial way" is ironically articulated by Locutus of Borg: "Why do you resist us?" he asks the *Enterprise* crew, "We only seek to improve quality of life for all species." Thus does he illustrate "that the situated, contingent effects of technologies are indissociable from the subjects that 'use' those technologies" (Thacker 76). In sum, if the Federation is an unambiguous celebration of the autonomous liberal subject of humanism, then the Borg, who clearly signify the impossibility of "expanding [that subject's] prerogatives into the realm of the posthuman" (Hayles 1999 287), certainly qualify as an explicit critique of transhumanism.

The Littlest Robot

Nanotechnology is another innovation that made its public appearance in the 1980s, in the form of Eric Drexler's *Engines of Creation: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology* (1986). A founding text of the Extropian movement, Drexler's book introduces the idea of building robotic machines (nanobots) smaller than living cells, machines that can travel along capillaries to enter and repair living cells, reverse the ravages of age, make the body speedier and stronger, revive and repair the cryonically suspended, and even replicate biomolecules and assemble them into intelligent machines. Of all the new technologies that have influenced the construction of *Star Trek*'s cyborgs, nanotech is perhaps the most important – and the most intriguing. Its special attraction for writers of science fiction is explained by Colin Milburn, who argues that

> …nanotechnology is an active site of … cyborg boundary confusions and posthuman productivity, for within the technoscapes and dreamscapes of nanotechnology the biological and the technological interpenetrate, science and science fiction merge, and our lives are rewritten by the imaginative gaze – the new "nanological" way of seeing – resulting from the splice. The possible parameters of human subjectivities and human bodies, the limits of somatic existence, are transformed by the invisible machinations of nanotechnology – both the nanowriting of today and the nanoengineering of the future – facilitating the eclipse of man and the dawning of the posthuman condition. (Milburn 271)

Milburn singles out Drexler's work as a primary example of this merging of science and science fiction, describing *Engines of Creation* as "a series of science-fictional vignettes. From spaceships to smart fabrics, from AI to immortality, *Engines of Creation* is a veritable checklist of science-fictional clichés – Drexler's insistence on scientificity notwithstanding – and the narrative structure of the book unfolds like a space opera: watch as brilliant nanoscientists seize control of the atom and lead humankind across the universe … and beyond!" (271, ellipsis in original).

Ray Kurzweil's prose is similarly extravagant in its transgression of the boundary between present and future, science and science fiction:

> The union of human and machine is well on its way. Almost every part of the body can already be enhanced or replaced, even some of our brain functions. Subminiature drug delivery systems can now precisely target tumors or individual cells. Within two to three decades, our brains will have been "reverse-engineered": nanobots will give us full-immersion virtual reality and direct brain connection with the Internet. Soon after, we will vastly expand our intellect as we merge our biological brains with non-biological intelligence. (2002).

Despite this "operatic excess of nanowriting," as Milburn calls it – an excess of rhetoric that discloses nanotechnology's "scandalous proximity to science fiction" (278) – nanotech is a real science and, like all major technologies that preceded it, it's bound to have negative as well as positive consequences. Indeed, nanotech promises to rival biotech for first place on the list of new technologies that terrify the public and constrain politicians to get involved in their regulation. For, as a truly postmodern technoscience, the dangers of nanotechnology are as great as the benefits it promises.

In 2001, an article entitled "Microscopic Doctors and Molecular Black Bags" appeared in the journal *Literature and Medicine*. Its author, Tony Miksanek, family physician, SF author, and co-editor of the Literature, Arts, and Medicine Database at New York University, traces the impact of nanotechnology on science fiction. Among the novels he examines is Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* (1996), which Miksanek finds "somewhat disappointing" because it "tends to concentrate on the more sinister developments achieved by the use of nanotechnology. Instead of highlighting possible nanotechnological breakthroughs such as eradicating cancer and aids [*sic*], Stephenson chooses to focus on some disturbing medical applications of this amazing technology." In addition, the novel "refers to 'nanotech warfare' and recounts an incident where, in a single night, fifteen thousand men were 'wiped out by an infestation of nanosites'" (60). Stephenson's apocalyptic view is in keeping with that of nanotech watchdogs, who fear an amplification of weapons of mass destruction far beyond the capability of anything in current nuclear, chemical, or biological arsenals. Miksanek much prefers James Halperin's pedestrian *The First Immortal* (1998), which envisions "a very positive and beneficent use of nanotechnology in the future, imagining ways in which it will alter and enhance modern medicine." The novel not only predicts "that scientists and society will possess the ability and ethical framework to harness and control nanotechnology,"

but also anticipates "a twenty-first century essentially devoid of death, in which biological immortality becomes a reality" (62).

Since the appearance of Miksanek's article, two novels have appeared that promise to move the nanotechnology debate closer to the centre of public consciousness: Michael Crichton's *Prey* (2002) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003). *Prey* is typical Crichton: as in *Jurassic Park*, the only things scarier than the monsters created in the lab are the arrogant and hubristic scientists who create them. The monsters in *Prey* are a swarm of microscopic machines – a product of a scientific *ménage à trois* that includes nanotechnology, biotechnology, and infotechnology. This swarm of self-organizing, self-replicating, rapidly evolving nanoparticles has been released into the desert, where it preys on animals and generally imperils the environment – not to mention the corporate scientists who have engineered it in accordance with U.S. military specifications. Although not as scientifically explicit in terms of the integration of bio- and nanotech, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* pursues a similar theme, and even features a race of designer (post)humans, who turn out to be the only humanoid creatures capable of surviving a global biotechnological holocaust perpetrated by a scientist who embodies all the characteristics of the typical Extropian male as described by both Thacker and Hughes – white, well-educated, radically libertarian, anarcho-capitalist – and who exhibits that streak of adolescent fantasy and irresponsibility implicit in the info- and biotechnologists described in Hayles' and Thacker's critiques.

Although not quite as relentless as Crichton and Atwood, *Star Trek* writers are much more critical of nanotechnologies than either James Halperin or Tony Miksanek. To cite just one example, they do not share Halperin's confidence that future humans will possess the wisdom to resist developing nanotech weapons. This is the theme of *Voyager*'s "Scorpion," in which audiences first learn about the role of nanotech in the process used by the Borg to assimilate other species. The assimilation process – a process that "facilitat[es] the eclipse of man and the dawning of the posthuman condition," to borrow Milburn's celebratory phrase – relates to a particular variation on the theme of reverse-engineering called "uploading by nanoreplacement," a procedure in which billions of nanobots are injected into the brain, where they take up residence in or near the neurons. Each machine monitors the input/output activity of its neuron, until it is able to predict perfectly how the neuron will respond. At that point, it kills the neuron and takes its place (Strout). The Extropian expectation is that,

despite this complete replacement of the medium, the message will remain the same: human consciousness will survive intact, although significantly enhanced in speed, agility, intelligence, and longevity. I read the Borg as a commentary on that confident – and contradictory – assumption. As Starfleet's variety of interactions with the collective seem to suggest, "the posthuman condition" is not as universalist as that phrase implies.

Weapons of Mass Consumption

Terrorism and consumerism are at war in post-9/11 America. The dust had not yet settled on the ruins of the World Trade Center when New York's mayor and the American president called upon patriotic Americans to fight terrorism with their credit cards. In a gesture of sympathy and solidarity with our American cousins, our prime minister travelled to New York with a busload of Canadian tourists for a shopping spree. What better way to commiserate with a kindred nation whose twin phalluses of economic domination had just been castrated? By contrast, in *Star Trek*, destruction and consumption are not at war. Rather, they are collapsed into each other, the borderline between them as effectively deconstructed as the ones between biology and technology, science fiction and science. The Borg destroy whole cities by consuming everything in them. Our first hard evidence of this is the immense empty crater where New Providence Colony used to be before it was raided by the Borg. "Why do you resist us?" asks Locutus of Borg, "We only seek to improve quality of life for all species." Today, Locutus sounds a lot like President Bush, bewildered because his troops were not welcomed in Iraq as liberators after they had Shocked and Awed the Iraqis into submission. Vastly out-manned, out-gunned, and out-technologized, its fleet in ruins at Wolf 359, what the Federation learns in "Best of Both Worlds" is a simple truth observed by Chris Hables Gray in *Cyborg Citizen*: "wars are not won by technology" (64). "By maximizing computerization and perfecting the warrior-weapon interface, military analysts expect to make war useful again" (56), writes Gray; thus the "U.S. military is perhaps the most cyborged in the world" (59). It's therefore hardly a stretch to read *Star Trek*'s writers as constructing an army of cyborgs for the purpose of mirroring the ways in which we have already transgressed the boundary between humanism and the posthuman.

8: Extropia of Borg

> *The danger of nanowar could lead to One World Government; perhaps a horribly effective one, otherwise what is the point?* – Chris Hables Gray, Cyborg Citizen, 64.

> *Whether positing the liberation of human potential or the total annihilation of organic life on this planet, nanologic demands that we think outside the realms of the human and humanism. Nanologic makes our bodies cyborg and redefines our material experiences, redraws our conceptual borders, and reimagines our future.* – Colin Milburn, "Nanotechnology in the Age of Posthuman Engineering," 291.

Ever since Jean-Luc Picard was assimilated by the Borg, decimating Starfleet and escaping as something less than his rational humanist self, *Star Trek*'s writers have created more opportunities to shine an unflattering light upon Starfleet's officers, especially its captains – and *most* especially Janeway. First, she's female; hence there is less anxiety on the part of the writers about keeping her moral integrity perfectly intact, since women are not thought to have much of it in the first place. Far more often than Picard, she is represented as being on the questionable side of whatever ethical issue happens to be up for exploration in any given week. In *TNG*, this role is frequently given to the Starfleet brass, but the remote setting of *Voyager* makes that impossible, so Starfleet's representative – Janeway herself – often stands in as the party that needs to be brought up to speed. This characterization of Janeway is nevertheless consistent with the morally suspect mission that brought her to the Delta Quadrant in the first place, a mission that relates to what can only be called, in this post-9/11 era, the Federation's "war on terror."

To the Federation and the ally they are defending in this war, the repugnant Cardassians, the Maquis are terrorists. From the Maquis perspective, they are freedom fighters on behalf of colonies betrayed and abandoned

by the Federation. The *Star Trek* team of writers set the conflict in motion across several episodes of *The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine* long before the pilot episode of *Voyager* aired. Drawing inspiration from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the writers took great pains to avoid representing the war in black-and-white terms. Nevertheless, the Federation comes off rather shabbily, and Captain Janeway has to make her first appearance bearing the baggage of some of the Federation's most politically expedient and ethically questionable decisions – including some by her distinguished colleagues, Captains Picard and Sisko. When her crew and the "terrorists" she has been pursuing are forced to amalgamate under her command, her immediate task is to confront her Starfleet arrogance and her Federation presumptuousness vis-à-vis the Maquis ("Parallax"). But this is only the first of a whole series of hard and humbling lessons the writers put her through. What keeps *Voyager* within the utopian frame established for *Star Trek* by Roddenberry – and thus unlike anything we have witnessed in post-9/11 Washington and Whitehall (or Israel, for that matter) – is that she does manage to learn some of them.

The upside of this is that she's a more interesting character than Picard, whose dignified European masculinity is always a constraint for the writers. More important, Janeway cannot be just another Picard, or even another Kirk, whose gung-ho Americanism she echoes. The character of Picard was appropriate for the Reagan-Bush eighties; the character of Janeway had to be shaped for the much more unpredictable and ambiguous nineties of Bill and Hillary. Initially, Picard's way of dealing with humanism's unfortunate legacy was to acknowledge it and then enact the ways in which humanity has evolved to the point where it now lives up to its noble ideals (see Barrett and Barrett). But in keeping with *Star Trek*'s move in the direction of the postmodern, Janeway *enacts* the limitations of humanism – some of them echoing Extropian ideology – but she will also get to demonstrate humanism's evolutionary potential. As the first episode of *Voyager*'s new lease on life, occasioned by the addition of the Seven of Nine character, "Scorpion" is more about the limitations than the evolution.

On its surface "Scorpion" is a typically American story about liberal individualism versus the enslavement of collectivism. Even with the counterproductive clash of opinion that often undermines human projects, individuality is shown to be superior to the collective because cooperation among clever independent minds gives rise to innovative solutions. But seen through the lens of the humanist/transhumanist opposition, it's about

valuing individuality because some technologically driven alternatives to it could be violently intrusive – physically and psychologically. Both the swarm intelligence of the Borg hive mind and the telepathy characteristic of some alien species in the *Star Trek* universe are used to illustrate this point. In this respect the episode stands in contrast to cyberpunk's enthusiasm about "jacking in" and surrendering one's consciousness to cyberspace. The cyberpunk scenario demands that the autonomy associated with humanist subjectivity be reconceptualized in a way that would have been totally inconceivable to Enlightenment humanists – as inconceivable to them as post-Freudian rationality would also have been. In other words, it's never really been a matter of what characteristics of humanist subjectivity get left behind as we move into the posthuman but rather, of how those characteristics have been redefined and accommodated within new contexts. "Scorpion" sets that process of redefinition in motion, and for that reason it's worth looking closely at how the story unfolds and at the tropes by which the issues are introduced.

The episode's teaser, the scene described in the opening of this essay, appears to be drawn from Drexler's *Engines of Creation*, specifically an odd little subsection entitled "The Lesson of Leonardo," in which Drexler sets his speculations about the future of nanotech in the context of a tradition that goes back to the Renaissance:

> Some of [Leonardo da Vinci's] "predictions" were long-range, but only because many years passed before people learned to make parts precise enough, hard enough, and strong enough to build (for instance) good ball bearings – their use came some three hundred years after Leonardo proposed them. Similarly, gears with cycloidal teeth went unmade for almost two centuries after Leonardo drew them, and one of his chain-drive designs went unbuilt for almost three centuries. (62–63)

This passage is one of the few in Drexler's book that does not conform to Milburn's description of it as "a series of science-fictional vignettes." Janeway corrects this inconsistency by turning it into one. By definition, her holonovel is a fiction. She has therefore programmed it so that Leonardo's gear-driven robot arm incorporating "one of his chain-drive designs" is represented as not only built but functional – until one of the cycloidal-toothed wooden gears fails. Leonardo removes the broken gear

and rummages around on his workbench: "Let's hope his big brother will be strong enough," he comments as he locates a larger model of the gear. If Drexler is correct, this one will fail too. Leonardo's "failures with aircraft are also easy to understand," writes Drexler: "Because Leonardo's age lacked a science of aerodynamics, he could neither calculate the forces on wings nor know the requirements for aircraft power and control" (63). Indeed, Leonardo da Vinci might have welcomed a scientist from the future with both knowledge and experience of aerodynamics. Enter Janeway, who steps in to corrupt the timeline. As she gazes up at the flying machine suspended from the workshop ceiling, Leonardo tells her: "I thought that because my imagination took flight so quickly, my body could do the same. I was *wrong*." "It's this flapping approach," says Janeway: "You designed your machine to mimic the way a bat or a sparrow would fly. So, what if you based it on the hawk instead?" "A hawk …," muses Leonardo – "a creature that *glides* through the air!" Leonardo is ecstatic: "We will design a new machine, and you, Katarina, will help me fly it!"

In its isolation from the complexity, contradiction, and unpredictability of life in the Delta Quadrant, Janeway's holographic recreation of Leonardo's workshop models the Extropian fantasy of "the safe, secure space of pure research [that] can provide for a range of utopian possibilities," a place in which "the human – or rather a humanist standpoint – becomes the safeguard against the threat of technological determinism." After all, as Janeway has just assured Leonardo, "all invention is but an extension of the body of man." Her imaginative transformation of the humanist past through the miracle of holotechnology mirrors Drexler's utopian vision of a posthumanist future transformed through nanotechnology. In Drexler's benign future, as in Janeway's delightful fantasy, "It is the human user that guarantees the right, beneficial use of otherwise value-neutral technologies" (Thacker 77). But back in *Voyager*'s reality, the Captain is about to learn that, unlike Drexler, she cannot write the future quite so easily as her vivid imagination rewrites the past. She quickly becomes caught up in the consequences of social and political questions which in Extropianist fashion she leaves dangerously unexplored.

The Borg and Species 8472 – a species heretofore unknown to the *Voyager* crew – are engaged in all-out war on the edge of Borg space, a vast territory through which the crew is unable to plot a safe course. Fearing a confrontation with the Borg, *Voyager*'s doctor – an intelligent life form inspired by an imaginative convergence of AI, the physics of matter-energy

conversion, and holography – has been studying a Borg corpse, which the crew had recovered in an earlier episode. The Doctor's dissection of the cyborg has revealed the mechanism whereby assimilation takes place. He has discovered "nanoprobes" in the corpse and concludes that these are delivered into the victim's carotid artery via twin tubules extruded from the knuckles of a drone – a gruesome demonstration of which we got in *First Contact*. The Doctor's computer simulation images the tiny machines affixing to red blood cells, destroying them and turning them to dark grey, thus draining all colour from the victim's complexion. These nanoparticles – "molecular assemblers," in Drexlerian parlance – recall the procedure of "uploading by nanoreplacement" in that they destroy organic material and assemble hardware in its place, thus accounting for the star-shaped implants that erupt to such startling Special Effect on the faces of their victims. As we saw in *First Contact*, these "efficient little assimilators," as the Doctor calls them, can rapidly transform a starship into a Borg installation, complete with regeneration alcoves for the drones. The Doctor and his assistant Kes – a telepathic Ocampan whose abilities are not yet fully developed – set to work on an "assimilation antibody" that might offer the *Voyager* crew some resistance.

The Borg appear to have met their match in Species 8472, and the *Voyager* crew are eager to learn more about a species who could inflict such damage on a force as unrivalled as the Borg collective. Upon their onsite inspection of the remains of a Borg cube and a Species 8472 vessel locked together in a fatal collision, the Away Team discovers that the alien vessel is a unique product of biotechnological engineering: it appears to be made of living biomatter with regenerative properties, and is in the process of repairing itself. Aboard *Voyager*, Kes has been receiving intrusive visions that convince her that "it's not the Borg we should be worried about" but rather, Species 8472, whose thoughts have been echoing through her mind: "The weak will perish!" She now experiences a horrific premonition and warns that the Away Team is in imminent danger. The team is quickly transported back to *Voyager* – but not before Ensign Kim is attacked by a monstrous alien that appears as if out of nowhere. Kim contracts a viral infection so aggressive that the Doctor has no way of treating it. Upon examination, the Doctor discovers that what began as a few alien cells contaminating Kim's chest wound have rapidly multiplied and are now consuming Kim's body, cell by cell. As the Doctor, with the help of a computer simulation, reports to Janeway, each alien cell contains more than a hundred times the DNA

of a human cell: "It's the most densely coded life form I've ever seen," he exclaims. As the simulation illustrates, these cells have an extraordinary immune response: anything that penetrates the cell membrane – chemical, biological, technological – is instantly destroyed. This would explain why the Borg are unable to assimilate the species. "Resistance, in this case," says the Doctor, "is far from futile." However, the Doctor believes that Borg technology holds the key to saving Kim. He plans to reprogram an army of Borg nanoprobes and inject them into Kim's bloodstream, where, upon contact with the alien tissue, they will momentarily assimilate it, then denaturate, taking the alien cells with them.

Still unable to come up with a strategy for crossing Borg space without being annihilated in the military crossfire, Janeway returns to the holodeck to see if Leonardo can return her the favour of inspiration. The old man sits in the semi-darkness watching candlelight cast shadows on the wall. "What do you see?" he asks her. She sees only candlelight reflecting on a wall. "There are times, Katarina, when I find myself transfixed by shadows on a wall.… I stare at it, the hours pass, the world around me drops away, replaced by worlds being created and destroyed by my imagination." Thus is the scientist Leonardo reinvented through investment with the subjectivity of an author of space fiction. But his literary imagination fails when applied to the Captain's dilemma. Leonardo can only suggest a visit to the abbey to make an appeal to God – a not unreasonable piece of advice from a Christian humanist. But this won't work for a secular humanist like Janeway. Suddenly, she looks up at the wall, her eyes widening: "But … what if I made an appeal to the devil?"

An appeal to the devil generally places one at the top of a very slippery moral and ethical slope, and Janeway's appeal is no exception. She assembles her officers and explains her intention to do a deal with the Borg: safe passage through Borg space in exchange for the Doctor's research, which will provide the Borg with a blueprint for how to reprogram their own nanoprobes for a biomolecular weapon that will destroy the enemy ships at the microscopic level. "It's only in the experimental stage, Captain," objects the Doctor, "I've only made a few prototypes." In other words, before this beneficial medical application of nanotechnology has even been tested, the Captain has already appropriated it for military use. She sidesteps the moral issue by grounding her defence of the plan in the difference between the epistemological styles of humans and the Borg which, in her view, gives *Voyager* a strategic advantage. The Borg know next to nothing

about their enemy, for the Borg acquire knowledge through assimilation: what they can't assimilate, they can't understand. "But we don't assimilate, we investigate," says Janeway, "and in this case that's given us the edge." To prevent the Borg from merely assimilating *Voyager* and obtaining the Doctor's research by force, Janeway instructs the Doctor to transfer all his data to his holographic matrix. That way, if the Borg attempt assimilation, she will simply delete the Doctor's program. This solution, in effect, means the annihilation of the Doctor. Not only does this highlight what has always been Janeway's difficulty accepting the Doctor as a legitimate life form, it also challenges the boundary she has just drawn between human and Borg intelligence. Clearly, she is every bit as capable as the Borg of valuing efficiency over ethics and compassion.

Bombarded by intrusive transmissions from the telepathic Species 8472, Kes functions as a kind of one-woman branch of the CIA. She reports that the Borg appear to be losing this war; therefore, contrary to their uncooperative nature, they may just be willing to strike a deal with Janeway. This is the only input from her officers that Janeway takes seriously. Ignoring their misgivings, she dismisses them, but her first officer, Chakotay, remains to give voice to their trepidation. "How much is our safety worth?" he asks. In an allusion to Federation policy against trading in weapons, he points out that "We'd be giving an advantage to a race guilty of murdering billions. We'd be helping the Borg assimilate yet another species just to get ourselves back home. It's *wrong*." "Tell that to Harry Kim," Janeway argues: "He's barely alive, thanks to that species. Maybe helping to assimilate them isn't such a bad idea. We could be doing the Delta Quadrant a favour," she says, rationalizing away the cloud of ethical murkiness gathering around her plan. Janeway chooses not to remember that Chakotay speaks from experience: he himself had once been forcibly "uploaded" by an interconnected group of Borg fugitives and manipulated into doing its will and still bears traces of Borg reengineering in his body.

But it's not the lingering after-effects of the experience that prevents him from getting through to Janeway but rather, his cognitive style. In contrast to Janeway's mind, honed to sharpness in Starfleet Academy's faculty of sciences, Chakotay's intelligence has been shaped by his Amerindian upbringing. He has tried to initiate her into the rituals and meditative techniques he practises, but she has never really got the hang of it. She sometimes recognizes this as an intellectual deficiency in herself. However, it wasn't her degree of multicultural literacy but rather, her exceptional

performance as a scientist that had greased her transfer to the command track. While her decisions are often a matter of choosing the most direct route through a maze of possibilities and then proceeding as if it were the only possible route, his preferred way of dealing with complexity is through narrative. He tells her the parable of the scorpion who made a deal with the fox. Promising not to sting the fox if he would give her a lift across the stream, the scorpion argues logically: "Why would I sting you? If I did, we would both drown." Half way across the stream, she stings the fox, and as the poison fills his veins he asks her why she did it: "It's my nature," she replies. Insisting she knows the risks, Janeway dismisses the parable and reduces their disagreement to a question of trust – which Chakotay immediately dismisses as beside the point. "The time for debate is over," she replies: "I've made my decision. Now, do I have your support?" "You're the Captain, I'm the first officer," he replies – and we are about to find out why.

Voyager locates a Borg ship and the Captain outlines her proposal, transmitting evidence of the viability of the weapon she is proposing. Suddenly, to the crew's horror, Janeway vanishes from the bridge, captured by a Borg transporter beam. She materializes within the cavernous interior of the Borg vessel. "State your demands!" orders the multiple voice of the Borg. "Let's work together, combine our resources. Even if we do give you the technology now, you're still going to need time to develop it," she argues: "By working together we can create a weapon more quickly." This is not exactly the benign joint project Leonardo envisioned when he said, "We will design a new machine, and you, Katarina, will help me fly it." Janeway goes for the bottom line: "If you escort us through your space we can perfect the weapon as we – ." Her Faustian bargaining is interrupted by an appropriately pyrotechnic demonstration of force, as several bioships coordinate an attack on a nearby planet, which expands to a molten mass and explodes in space. *Voyager* and the Borg ship warp into retreat. Rocked by the demonstration, the Borg agree to Janeway's plan. But, at the Borg's insistence, the work of designing a biomolecular warhead and a delivery system will proceed aboard their vessel. If there were ever a diametrical opposite of "the safe, secure space of pure research" where humanism "safeguard[s] against the threat of technological determinism," a Borg ship would have to be it. Janeway orders her tactical officer, the hyper-rational Vulcan Tuvok, to transport to her coordinates, where another conflict over cognitive style ensues.

Imperiously the collective announces that Janeway and Tuvok will be fitted with neural transceivers to uplink them to the hive mind. Janeway resists. "Your primitive communication is inefficient," the computer-generated chorus insists. "On the contrary," says Tuvok, "we work better with our individuality intact." "What about choosing a representative – a single Borg we can work with and talk to directly," Janeway suggests: "You did it before, when you transformed Jean-Luc Picard into Locutus. *We will not be assimilated*," she insists. "Choose a representative or the deal's off!" The Borg comply: a female drone is disconnected from the network. Unlike the pliable Hugh, this drone is definitely a company woman. "I speak for the Borg," she announces: "You may call me Seven of Nine." Seven of Nine is a human cyborg, although Janeway isn't fully aware of it just yet. When she later asks, she is curtly informed that "this body was assimilated eighteen years ago. It ceased to be human at that time."

But at this moment, Janeway is about to discover how far out on an unethical limb her deal with the devil has placed her. "You are proposing a large-scale weapon," says Seven of Nine, "we concur." Tuvok suggests mounting the warhead on one of *Voyager*'s torpedo tubes. "Your torpedoes are inadequate," the drone replies: "They lack the necessary range and force." "Do you have a better idea?" asks Janeway. "We are Borg," sneers the drone, thus revealing new insight into Borg psychology. Tapping out a schematic on a view screen, she states: "A multikinetic neutronic mine, five million isoton yield." "That would affect an entire star system," Tuvok notes. "Correct," says Seven of Nine, "the shock wave will disperse the nanoprobes over a radius of five light-years." Janeway's eyes widen, as if recalling Leonardo's vision of "worlds created and destroyed." "What you're proposing is a weapon of mass destruction!" she exclaims: "You'd be endangering innocent worlds!" Janeway might have avoided this gross understatement, had she used the word *annihilating* or *exterminating* instead of *endangering*, considering the possible fate of every biomolecule on every one of those "innocent worlds" – which could be many, given the incomprehensibly vast size of the target area. "It would be efficient," says the drone flatly, the Borg gift for understatement unrivalled anywhere in the galaxy. Janeway argues for smaller weapons, ones that would destroy only a few bioships, persuading their adversaries to give up the war. "You are small, and you think in small terms," answers the arrogant drone – and then backs down: "But the present situation requires that we consider your plan." As their uncharacteristic cooperation suggests, Janeway seems to

have estimated the desperation of the Borg's predicament quite accurately. Seven of Nine begins to recite an inventory of *Voyager*'s weaponry. "How did you obtain this information?" Tuvok asks. "We are Borg," she answers, recalling the biologically determined scorpion of Chakotay's parable.

There is a sudden attack on the Borg ship, and Janeway is seriously injured. The Borg quickly transport her, Tuvok, and Seven of Nine, along with assorted drones to *Voyager*'s Cargo Bay Two just as the Borg ship explodes in space. *Voyager* warps to a safer distance. Janeway has suffered neurological damage, and the Doctor must induce a coma in order to protect her higher brain functions while he operates, but he warns Chakotay that the prognosis is unclear. Chakotay must now take command – and we find out why he's first officer and Janeway is Captain. Seven of Nine uses the excuse of the loss of her vessel to press for a modification of the agreement. Chakotay jumps at the chance to extricate *Voyager* from the alliance, but Seven of Nine is unwilling to accept his terms. The argument between them echoes that of his earlier one with Janeway. The drone insists that Chakotay change his heading and make for the nearest Borg vessel, which would mean taking *Voyager* forty light-years off course. Chakotay refuses. "There is no alternative," argues the drone in Janewayesque fashion. By threatening Borg retaliation, she gets him to back down: "I'll think about it."

Chakotay calls a meeting of the ship's officers and announces his intention to end the alliance. *Voyager* will ferry Seven of Nine and her companion drones to the nearest habitable planet, give them the nanoprobes, then resume course to the Alpha Quadrant. But negotiating this new deal with Seven of Nine is beyond Chakotay's skill. She threatens; he threatens back. This standoff elicits the drone's withering assessment of human nature:

> When your captain first approached us we suspected that an agreement with humans would prove impossible to maintain. You are erratic, conflicted, disorganized. Every decision is debated, every action questioned. Every individual entitled to their own small opinion. You lack harmony, cohesion, greatness. It will be your undoing.

Seven of Nine has a point. "We work better with our individuality intact," Tuvok had argued aboard the Borg ship. But the recent behaviour of the Captain and her first officer would seem to suggest that individuals don't work at all well in groups. Indeed, the humanist values of autonomy and freedom do not preclude the imposition of hierarchy as a primary solution

to interpersonal conflict: without a military-style chain of command, a defence and exploration organization like Starfleet would drown in a sea of individualism. "Your archaic structures are authority driven," the Borg had announced to the *Enterprise* in "Best of Both Worlds," and both Janeway's and Chakotay's style of command up to this point would seem to bear this out. The power struggle between them and the conflicting messages the Borg have been receiving are part of what Eugene Ott's multifarianism and Anders Sandberg's borganization are intended to eliminate in their vision of the posthuman future.

If Chakotay's leadership style is wanting, his more self-reflexive style of intellection allows him to discover quite quickly that Janeway, selectively interpreting Kes's fragmented telepathic visions, has been misled by her assumption that it was Species 8472 who initiated this war. Chakotay provokes Seven of Nine into confessing that it was the Borg who started it. The drone explains:

> Species 8472 was more resistant than we anticipated. Their technology is biogenically engineered; it is superior to that of all other species we have previously encountered. They are the apex of biological evolution. Their assimilation would have greatly added to our own perfection.

Convinced that human agency and choice are inextricably linked to individuality, Starfleet officers may be overly invested in the humanist ideology of individualism. But it's transhumanist ideology that is suggested by the Borg's single-minded obsession with perfecting themselves through ever more advanced technologies. A technologically determined species *par excellence*, the Borg may be read as transhumanism's dream of the future turned nightmare. Indeed, it's fun to speculate on the origins of this rapacious collective: perhaps it was once not so different from us. Perhaps the Borg originated in some transhumanoid species who, like Colin Milburn in the breathless epigraph to this chapter, dreamed of the liberation of its potential and responded to the demands of nanologic to "think outside the realms of the human[oid] and human[oid]ism." But unlike Milburn, who assumes that this "liberation of human potential" is in natural opposition to "the total annihilation of organic life on this planet," perhaps that originary species ultimately found that their potential could be most easily liberated *through* the annihilation of other organic life. For is this not what Seven of Nine sees in the biogenic engineering technology of Species

8472, "the apex of biological evolution"? Indeed, the collective gives new expression to the Extropian concept of "the Singularity." Singularly focussed in purpose, they are only once removed from the apex of biotechnological perfection – and they are willing to risk their own annihilation in order to possess it.

A few scenes later, Seven of Nine proceeds to circumvent Chakotay's plan. He responds by decompressing Cargo Bay Two, where the drone and her companions have set up shop, and Seven of Nine is the only drone who manages to avoid getting sucked out into space. But the remaining drone is the least of Chakotay's problems. The Doctor has piped him to sickbay, where a recovered Janeway, briefed by the Doctor on the current state of affairs, is in a state of ill-concealed rage. She and Chakotay take up where they left off a few scenes back. "You never trusted me – you never believed this would work, you were just waiting for an opportunity to circumvent my orders," Janeway accuses. "Trust had nothing to do with it," he counters. They fling a few more stinging accusations at each other. She resolves once again to fight the aliens in full cooperation with the Borg. He insists once again that it won't work. "This isn't working either," she finally concedes. "There are two wars going on: the one out there, and the one in here – and we're losing both of them." Chakotay suddenly drifts off: "*It will be your undoing*," he murmurs. Janeway gives him a puzzled look. "Our individuality," he explains. "Seven of Nine said we lacked the cohesion of a collective mind – that one day it would divide us and destroy us. And here we are, proving her point." "I'll tell you when we lost control of this situation, when we made our mistake," replies Janeway: "It was the moment we turned away from each other. We don't have to stop being individuals to get through this; we just have to stop fighting each other."

We are not privy to their renewed plotting, but when Janeway returns to the bridge, where Seven of Nine is escorted to negotiate the final terms of the deal, the Captain informs her that Chakotay has been relieved of duty and confined to the brig. She orders Tuvok to give the nanoprobes to Seven of Nine and work with her to build the warheads and modify the weapons systems. "We've got to get this ship armed and ready in under two hours. We're going to war." In due course, several bioships are destroyed in a spectacular display of biogenic weapons-fire. Species 8472 retreats – whereupon Seven of Nine makes her move. "This alliance is terminated. Your ship and its crew will be adapted to service us." She plunges her assimilation tubules into the helm controls. "Bridge to Chakotay," whispers

Janeway into her communicator: "*Scorpion!*" On another deck, the Doctor fixes a neurotransceiver below Chakotay's ear and uplinks his thoughts to Seven of Nine's technology, throwing her into a state of confusion. "Seven of Nine, stop what you're doing. You're a human – a human individual. Our minds are linked; we are one." The drone struggles to resist. Drawing on his own Borg experience, Chakotay violently penetrates the drone's deeply repressed childhood memories and floods her consciousness with images. "I see a young girl; a family. Listen to your human side – to yourself. The little girl. *Anika*…." At this moment, Chief Engineer Torres throws a switch and initiates a power surge. On the bridge, a green flash arcs across Seven of Nine's body armour, and a circuit in her headgear shorts and sizzles out. She screams and slumps to the deck, her link to the collective severed. "Get her to sickbay," orders the Captain.

Usually, only an act of grace can deliver one from the ultimate consequence of a Faustian bargain – and for this, one should show some gratitude. Perhaps this is why the last scene of the episode takes place in Janeway's shrine: Leonardo's workshop, under the sign of a Christian cross that ornaments the wall behind her. "How's our passenger?" says Janeway to her first officer, as she records her entry in the ship's log with a quill pen, on antique paper: "This feels more human somehow." "The Doctor says she's stabilizing," Chakotay reports: "Her human cells are starting to regenerate." "I wonder what's left underneath all that technology – if she can ever become human again?" Janeway muses. "You're planning to keep her on board?" responds the startled Chakotay: "She may not want to stay." "I think she might," says Janeway: "We have something the Borg could never offer – friendship." This is the first intimation that what Janeway has missed most is the intimacy of female friendship. It sheds light on her insistence that Seven of Nine become as much like her as possible, and also on what she experiences when Seven insists on retaining much of her cyborg uniqueness, including her Borg designation. For her sins, this seems a small penance for Janeway to pay – although Seven will certainly take her to purgatory and back several times over the next couple of seasons. But for now, still in her body armour, Seven of Nine is stretched out on a biobed in sickbay, the camera angle accentuating her absurd foam-rubber breasts pointing at the deckhead and signalling an answer to Janeway's question. She will become human again. However, it won't be entirely on humanism's terms.

* * *

In most popular entertainment, war usually makes heroes (or martyrs) of its protagonists, but there is nothing heroic about the behaviour of the major characters in "Scorpion." For it's in the nature of Faustian bargains to set in motion a chain of events, each one less ethically defensible than the last. Janeway and Chakotay escape the consequences of this ethical slippage, but more because of the force of circumstances than by their wits – and not without some lingering damage to their relationship. The Borg aren't the only single-minded entity made up of inarticulate bodies. By brooking no opposition to her chosen course of action, the single-minded Janeway renders her crew as mute as drones – without the advantages of interlinked minds. Her intellectual style, modelled on Western scientific methodology, allows her to win small, short-term victories because she is good at sizing up her adversary in the immediate context. But like a scientist fixated on the microscopic, she misses the macroscopic. Chakotay, on the other hand, lacks her skill in dealing with immediate, moment-to-moment crises, but his cognitive style, together with his past experience as a Borg "upload," gives him insight into what it is that makes this particular species so successful – namely, technological determinism. The Borg give Janeway the small victories because they are "irrelevant." Instead, they've got their eye on the bigger prize: all the hardware, software, and wetware that constitutes *Voyager*. As with the scorpion, it's their nature: *We are Borg*.

Chakotay undermines his own moral credibility when, after sharply criticizing Janeway's plan to arm the Borg, he decides merely to hand over the weapon to Seven of Nine and beat a hasty retreat. His part in bringing the crisis to an end crosses the moral line in an especially egregious way: his brutal violation of Seven of Nine's mind, like Species 8472's invasion of Kes's, is an effective challenge to the cyberpunk euphoria of "jacking in." But despite these questionable acts, Chakotay is nevertheless correct when he accuses Janeway of the inability "to accept that there are some situations that are beyond your control," and when he advises her against needless involvement in war: "We should get out of harm's way," he tells her: "Let *them* fight it out." He sees that her linear method of reasoning blinds her to other options. But it's her loss of moral vision that's especially disturbing. The quickness with which she dismisses the Federation directive not to trade in weapons; the ease with which she renders her holographic Doctor as dispensable as any other high-tech gadget on the ship; and the willingness with which she engages in developing a terrible weapon without so much as thinking to investigate the political circumstances that had led to

war in the first place – all these ethically questionable behaviours resonate with Eugene Thacker's assessment of the Extropian set of mind. Watching a recent rerun of "Scorpion" in the context of the build-up to the Iraq invasion, I found myself experiencing the same sense of impending doom I felt watching Secretary of State Colin Powell deliver his dramatic presentation to a deeply suspicious UN Security Council.

As this episode suggests, the human user is no guarantee of "the right, beneficial use of otherwise value-neutral technologies." Furthermore, what does "value neutrality" mean when, as the Borg would seem to demonstrate, the line between the development of end-use technologies and technology as an end in itself proves to be non-existent? The Federation regulates the development and use of technology precisely because its members have no confidence in such value-neutrality, but Janeway is far beyond Federation jurisdiction and thus at liberty to ignore its rules. Although she escapes the consequences, the narrowness of that escape may be read as a critique of Extropian opposition to any kind of state regulation of science. In ignoring Federation regulations, an act that essentially abuses the liberty that humanism guarantees her, she sacrifices humanism's other two values – namely, equality and human solidarity. Thus, she echoes the Extropian contempt for "rational civic debate and democratic self-governance" (Hughes). While it's largely the introduction of Seven of Nine that makes "Scorpion" among the most popular of the *Voyager* episodes – for voyeuristic *and* posthuman reasons – online fans were also eager to wrangle over its unresolved ethical issues long after the episode aired. And since many of those fans are the techno-savvy young men who find Extropianism appealing, this can't be a bad thing.

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 phallocentric anxiety by welcoming the technological penetration of the human mind. The holodeck, by contrast, reinforces the human/technology opposition. Phallocentric 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 scientistic – 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 *inter*dependence; 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, overmedicalized 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 scientistic 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.

10: Time, the Final Frontier

> *If Europe is indeed the cradle of so much civilization, then it might at least have the decency to apologize for it.* – Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, 68.

> *… the argument that we are just meat machines or instruments for passing on genetic information makes for an incredible dehumanization.… If we become nothing but our genes, we will have bled most initiative and choice out of the world.* – Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen*, 125.

Thanks to militarist Donald Rumsfeld, chief architect of the American invasion of Iraq, France and Germany bear the designation "Old Europe" because the leader of each nation claims the humanist prerogative of having a mind of his own. To many of us who watched the prelude to war from the sidelines, these men stood in startling contrast to Washington's *Homo multifarious*, chanting its coalition-building mantra: *You will be assimilated*. Jean-Luc Picard is definitely Old Europe. Son of a distinguished family of French vintners that can trace its ancestry back to the French Revolution (*TNG* "Journey's End"), the Enlightenment flows through his dignified veins. But he differs from the unrepentant French and Germans: although he defends the high-minded ideals of humanism, he at least has the decency to apologize for humanism's excesses. Picard's reserve and rationalism signal an abrupt departure from the rugged individualism of his predecessor, the impulsive American James T. Kirk. But his high-mindedness does get a bit tedious at times, so it was fascinating to follow his intermittent struggle with a serious case of post-traumatic stress disorder brought on by his assimilation ordeal. What Neil Badmington says of posthumanist humanism might also be said of post-trauma Picard: "A working-through remains underway, and this coming to terms is, of course, a gradual and difficult process that lacks sudden breaks" (22). This working-through can be traced in the most recent film, *Star Trek: Nemesis*, in which the clarity of

self-insight Picard once possessed finally becomes self-scrutiny "through a glass darkly."

Picard's struggle to reach a new level of self-understanding begins in *First Contact*, when he is confronted by Lily Sloan, who torpedoes the elaborate defence mechanism Picard has constructed to help him cope with unresolved post-assimilation issues. He flatly refuses to destroy the Borg-infested *Enterprise* and thus ensure against the assimilation of Earth and the annihilation of human history. Lily accuses him of being interested only in seeking personal revenge on the Borg:

PICARD:	In my century, we don't succumb to revenge. We have a more evolved sensibility.
LILY:	Bullshit! I saw the look on your face when you shot those Borg on the holodeck. You were almost enjoying it!
PICARD:	How dare you!
LILY:	Oh, c'mon, Captain! You're not the first man to get a thrill from murdering someone. I see it all the time!
PICARD:	*Get out!*
LILY:	Or what? You'll kill me too? – like you killed Ensign Lynch? [an assimilated crewman]
PICARD:	There was no way to save him.
LILY:	You didn't even try! *Where* was your "evolved sensibility" then?
PICARD:	I don't have time for this!

Lily finally provokes him into a rage, and he smashes the glass of an adjacent display cabinet containing gilded models of every ship in human history that has borne the name *Enterprise*. Michele and Duncan Barrett's interpretation of this scene is a telling one:

> In smashing the ships, [Picard] is symbolically destroying not only his own ship but the entire culture of rational exploration and enlightened governance that Starfleet stands for. It shows us how selfish he has become – to satisfy his own desire for revenge he is prepared to watch over the death of all his crew. He is willing to sacrifice them (even to assimilation by the Borg, which he regards as worse than death), in pursuit of his personal "mad object." For Picard, the vendetta is not purely personal.… The *Enterprise* represents humanity. Picard says: "we have not lost the *Enterprise*; we are not going to lose the *Enterprise* … not to the Borg." To lose the *Enterprise*, even if this

> meant saving the crew and destroying the Borg, would be giving in. It would be allowing the Borg to take from him his personal symbol of humanity. (21, ellipsis in original)

Indeed, the *Enterprise*, the most complex – and the most fetishized – piece of technology ever humanly created (*TNG* "Booby Trap") is material proof of humankind's technological destiny, the humanist assumption upon which all of *Star Trek* has been premised to this point. But this techno-evolution would make no sense without a parallel Dawkinsian, or memetic, evolution. Humankind's evolved sensibility is taken for granted by Picard, who is, after all, the apex of humanity and the long-awaited fulfilment of the Enlightenment's Man of Reason. Together, Picard and the *Enterprise* add up to Extropian-style evidence that "[a]s a species, we are a technological and teleological force of nature" (Burch 2000).

But *First Contact* questions both the techno-destiny and the evolved sensibility of twenty-fourth-century humankind. Picard turns out to be no different from his twenty-first-century predecessors in that he is indeed shown "to get a thrill from murdering someone." Moreover, techno-history is represented as anything but foreordained, for humanity's success as a spacefaring species is merely a product of historical contingency – an effect of chance. Indeed, the chance encounter between Zefram Cochran, pilot of Earth's first warp-ship the *Phoenix*, and a Vulcan ship on a routine survey mission is precisely the historical happenstance that the *Enterprise* has travelled back in time to protect from a temporal incursion as decisive as the happenstance cosmic event that wiped out the dinosaurs. Much of the film is about the cognitive dissonance experienced by Cochran, as he struggles to reconcile his role in an accident of history with the *Enterprise* crew's radical reconstruction of it as the unfolding of humankind's techno-destiny. "*Please*," he begs, "I've heard enough about 'the great Zefram Cochran.' I don't know who writes your history books, but you people got some pretty funny ideas about me. I didn't build this ship to 'usher in a new era for humanity.' You think I wanna go to the stars? I don't even like to fly! *That's* Zefram Cochran! This other guy you keep talking about? – this 'historical figure'? I never met him." Above, in orbit, Cochran's twenty-fourth-century counterpart is frantically trying to avoid his own appointment with destiny. "I don't have time for this," he insists, executing a manoeuvre to evade Lily's incoming torpedo. But the shattering glass of his display case signals its impact. This shattering might also be the sound

of *Star Trek*'s humanist vision of the future crashing down in violent opposition to transhumanism's.

Picard emerges from his post-traumatic disorder a changed man. No longer is he the foreordained fulfilment of the Enlightenment's Man of Reason but rather, the outcome of the interaction between nature and nurture – specifically, his genes and his Starfleet training and experience. The interaction of chance and choice in the construction of subjectivity is the central theme of *Nemesis*. "Were we Picards always warriors?" asks his clone Shinzon, searching for a genetic explanation of his brilliant military career. "I think of myself as an explorer," Picard answers. "Well, were we always explorers?" returns Shinzon, hoping this time for an *Oliver Twist*-style revelation of destiny encoded in his genes. Picard's gaze turns inward upon distant memories:

PICARD: I was the first Picard to leave our solar system. It caused quite a stir in the family. But I'd spent my youth –
SHINZON: looking up at the stars dreaming about what was up there. About –
PICARD: new worlds.

His reverie interrupted by this curious completion of each other's sentences, Picard abruptly returns to the present, momentarily gripped by the biodeterminist myth that "blood will tell." Jean-Luc is the only surviving member of the venerable *Familie Picard* (*Generations*), and he is currently in the process of separating from the only "family" that remains to him, namely the members of his bridge crew who are going on to other things. What better way to ease his melancholy than by embracing this young man, this disturbing reminder of what he once was: "a damned fool – arrogant, ambitious, and very much in need of seasoning," as he describes himself as a young cadet to Dr. Crusher. For the duration of this nanosecond, Picard is caught by Shinzon's desire: "I want to know what it means to be human." But his own flash of desire dies in an almost imperceptible flicker of regret. "I'm trying to believe you, Shinzon," he says, as he exits the alcove where this conversation has been taking place and steps out onto the floor of the Romulan senate:

> If there is one ideal that the Federation holds most dear it is that all men – all races – can be united. What better example than a Starfleet captain standing in the Romulan senate. Nothing would make me

> more proud than to take your hand in friendship – in time, when that trust has been earned.

Jerry Goldsmith's musical underscoring of this passage captures everything seductive about its humanist sentiment – a sign that *Nemesis* wants to be a film about more than just blowing stuff up. Unlike *First Contact*, whose ludic postmodernism invites us to pay attention to the way in which the film comments upon itself, *Nemesis* exhibits none of the playfulness that would keep an audience focussed on its dazzling surfaces. There are, of course, lots of action scenes and special effects, but they function more as visual expressions of the psychological violence that gives the film its dark intensity. Places in the script demand more subtle acting than audiences are used to seeing in *Star Trek*, and Patrick Stewart's Shakespearian training sets the standard in these scenes. Besides hammering home *Star Trek*'s cyborgian definition of family as it evolved over the course of *TNG* and *Voyager*, the script reaches back to so many uncompleted story arcs in the *Star Trek* saga and makes so many allusions to previous films that one would have to be a Trekkie to appreciate them all. Indeed, one has to enter this film as one might a holodeck simulation. After all, if there is one thing that distinguishes *Star Trek* from all American pop culture phenomena that preceded it, it's the power of its ideas to inspire a Baudrillardian hyperreality, a Disneyland in which fans dress up in Starfleet uniforms and attend huge conventions where *Star Trek* actors are treated to a degree of deference usually reserved for NASA astronauts (see Jenkins).

But Trekkies aren't alone in finding uses for *Star Trek* that exceed the conventions of film critique. Within the academy, techno-theorists across the disciplines, taking their cue from Donna Haraway, have transformed *Star Trek* characters and other celluloid cyborgs into case studies – substitutes for technologies, biologies, and psychologies otherwise unavailable for close examination. Such studies are themselves illustrations of the permeability of the boundary between reality and illusion, real space and hyperspace, scholarship and science fiction. These studies have, in turn, influenced the cinema – the most celebrated example of which is *The Matrix* trilogy. My purpose in crossing the boundary and entering into the *Nemesis* fiction is to examine self-reflexivity, not as a postmodern cinematic device but rather, as a component of human psychology – a component that has so far eluded those AI and A-Life programmers who share the Extropian belief in the information/materiality split, assuming

that "human consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with human embodiment." *Nemesis* is especially useful for this kind of case study, since it offers us examples of two kinds of cyborgs: the infotechnologically constructed android and the biotechnologically constructed clone – or, more accurately, the genetically engineered human. Moreover, as I want to emphasize in my reading of it, the film assumes our ability to distinguish the differences and similarities between the two.

The difference between artificial and human intelligence is hardly a new theme for *Star Trek*. To cite just one example that closely parallels this film, *Voyager*'s "Equinox" contrasts the amoral behaviour of the holographic Doctor with the immoral behaviour of Captain Janeway. The Doctor's actions are a consequence of the deletion of his ethical subroutines by a member of the *Equinox* crew. Janeway's actions are a consequence of the very psychological dynamic that dealt the deathblow to the Enlightenment's notion of reason: the return of the repressed. Upon encountering the similarly stranded Starfleet vessel *Equinox*, whose Captain has been murdering aliens and stoking his warp engines with their remains, Janeway refuses the opportunity this affords her to examine some of her own ethically suspect behaviour by looking into the mirror of her fellow captain's crime. Sliding into a state of denial about her past violations of the humanist principles that underpin Starfleet protocol – principles intended to safeguard her humanity – she displaces her guilt by focussing exclusively on that of the *Equinox* crew, which she determines to punish by egregiously inhumane methods. Thus she enacts the ease with which interference from the irrational unconscious undermines simplistic notions of human rationality and autonomy. The solution to the Doctor's vulnerability is simple: "Perhaps you should enhance your program with security protocols," Seven suggests, "It will prevent such tampering in the future." But there is no one-time fix for Janeway, nor is there any absolute guarantee that she won't fall victim to her human frailties again. As she concedes in a later episode, the Prime Directive is only a statement of principle, not a practical document ("The Void"). Its power for good or ill is entirely dependent upon a captain's ability to exercise self-honesty and compassion in its application. In *Nemesis*, Picard enacts the complicated and unending human struggle to narrow the gap between principle and practise, a struggle that requires him to rethink his humanist assumptions. That the struggle can never close the gap completely might go under the heading of "the human condition."

In the scene I have already described, Picard is ending his first one-on-one meeting with the new Praetor of Romulus, ostensibly to discuss the possibility of political reconciliation. These negotiations have been contrived by Shinzon, and Picard cannot help but be aware that there are ulterior motives. He has no reason whatsoever to trust Shinzon and has already told him so, adding: "I cannot allow my personal feelings to unduly influence my decisions." It's this oblique admission of personal feelings for him that Shinzon has just exploited, hoping to undermine Picard's sense of responsibility to the Federation. But it hasn't worked. Recovered from his uncharacteristic lapse into a genes-will-tell moment, Picard's lifelong cultivation of the Federation worldview, reinforced by his Starfleet training, asserts itself. He is the embodiment of all that the Federation holds most dear, and he speaks of it as if, by some magic of twenty-fourth-century bioengineering, its humanist ideals have been encoded in his genes. To paraphrase Badmington, humanism has happened and continues to happen to him. It is the very thing that makes him *him*, and the experience cannot be erased in one out-of-time moment of intimacy with this stranger, this dangerously charming signifier of posthuman possibility. This scene is a perfect cinematic illustration of the "momentous question" Hayles identifies in other works of science fiction: "when the human meets the posthuman, will the encounter be for better or for worse? … Will there still be a self to recognize and be recognized?"

Extropians are not especially interested in the cloning of humans as they currently exist. They place a much higher value on biotech as a technique for redesigning rather than replicating the human species; and they regard infotech and nanotech as routes to a postbiological future. Extropian involvement in the cloning issue is chiefly around the question of state regulation: a government ban on human cloning is an excellent example of the state's "entropic" interference in technological progress. The Extropians' position is consistent with their anarcho-capitalism: like all other new reproductive technologies, human cloning should be a consumer choice. The World Transhumanist Association highly recommends and links to its web site Steven Vere's "cutting-edge" article on cloning, originally published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. There are, according to Vere, at least two advantages to human cloning: economic and cultural. The cultural and economic value of cloning Clint Eastwood would be enormous, says Vere, as "His films have grossed several billion dollars over thirty years." There would be a similar advantage in cloning

sports stars: "there is always the possibility that the twin [i.e., clone] might not be interested in sports. But with the prospect before them of earning millions of dollars, this does not seem very likely." Providing the decision is left up to "the DNA donor, the woman who will bear the child, and her husband who would help in raising the child," Vere stipulates, "any Nobel prize winner would be worth cloning for the potential future contribution which their twin might make" (Vere). The assumption underlying all these speculations is, of course, a biodeterminist one. Genes are destiny: culture will play little, if any role in the clone product. Million-dollar movie stars, sports legends, and science geniuses will result, regardless of when, where, by whom, or under what circumstances they are nurtured or neglected.

By contrast, *Star Trek* is generally opposed to cloning, sometimes as a threat to genetic diversity, often as a threat to human individuality and uniqueness. Whether in a lab (*TNG* "Up the Long Ladder"), in a malfunctioning transporter (*TNG* "Second Chances"), or on a planet where replication occurs as a result of phenomena unknown to Federation science (*VOY* "Demon"), the duplication of a Starfleet officer is usually an occasion for much soul-searching on the part of the original. *Nemesis* is no different in this regard. Where it does differ from other treatments of cloning in *Star Trek* is that it's not about cloning *per se* but rather, about the tangled relationship between biopolitics and geopolitics. Although Picard's first reaction to his clone is one of shock and anger at the theft of his DNA – "I want to know where the hell he came from!" – these feelings are quickly replaced by others. As intimated in the scene I've already described, nature versus nurture – a debate in which Extropians come down on the side of a eugenics-style biodeterminism – is a prominent theme in the film. Picard's struggle to understand the nature of his own subjectivity and that of his clone suggests that the evolving philosophy of *Star Trek* is informed by a more sophisticated understanding of biopolitics than is Extropianism.

The Borg's potential for terrorizing audiences exhausted by Janeway's spectacular victories in *Voyager*, they have been abandoned in this film for a much older adversary, the Romulans. The Romulans have been around since the original *Star Trek* of the 1960s, but they have never been fully gathered within the circle of liberal humanist assumptions. Described in *The Star Trek Encyclopaedia* as an "enigmatic offshoot of the Vulcan race," the Romulans "left Vulcan about a millennium ago" in rebellion against the philosophy of logic and pacifism, two qualities of enlightened humanism with which Roddenberry characterized the Vulcans (282). Although under

the authoritarian rule of its elite class, the Romulan Empire is nevertheless the equal of the Federation in terms of its technological and cultural evolution. But here, in *Nemesis*, under the leadership of Picard's clone, assisted by a prototype of Data, the Empire is a far more explicit mirror image of the Federation than were the Borg of *TNG* and *Voyager*. Through these doubles, we are invited to examine the ways in which biology and technology are politicized to bring them in line with traditional humanist assumptions.

Since the potency of Janeway's weapon as a signifier of nanotechnology's dangers has also been exhausted, the writers have upped the ante in this film by inventing an even more dangerous biogenic weapon, one that annihilates biomatter on the subatomic rather than the molecular level – an SF combination of the worst of nano and nuclear technology. However, the message has not changed. Shinzon, having been swept to power on a wave of discontent among the Romulan military elite, possesses a weapon of almost unimaginable destructive power. This weapon generates "thalaron" radiation. "Thalaron research was banned in the Federation because of its biogenic properties," Picard informs his officers. And no wonder! Thalaron radiation "has the ability to consume organic material at the subatomic level," explains Dr. Crusher: "A microscopic amount could kill every living thing on this ship in a matter of seconds." Indeed, the film's opening scene provides a demonstration: Shinzon's *coup d'état* is achieved by instantly turning the entire Romulan senate to dust in a shower of thalaron particles. The nanotech analogy for this effect would be "global ecophagy," or what nanotech watchdogs describe less formally as a "Gray Goo apocalypse," the obliteration of life that could result from the accidental and uncontrollable spread of self-replicating nanobot assemblers (ETC Group). Shinzon's state of the art starship, the predator *Scimitar*, is armed with this unspeakable weapon, which, as Chief Engineer La Forge explains, is designed to emit "a cascading biogenic pulse. The unique properties of thalaron radiation allow the energy beam to expand almost without limit. Depending on its radiant intensity, it could encompass a ship – or a planet." Shinzon intends to use this weapon to initiate the subatomic equivalent of a Grey Goo apocalypse on Planet Earth.

Shinzon's malevolence and megalomania are the logical outcome of his unusual history. As part of a complex Romulan plot against the Federation, Shinzon had been biotechnologically created with the intention of his replacing Picard on the bridge of the *Enterprise* from which

position Shinzon would serve the Empire as intelligence operative. But due to a change in the Romulan government, the plan was abandoned, and Shinzon was shipped off to die in the dilithium mines on the Romulan colony planet of Remus. Despite starvation rations, unceasing labour, and violent beatings, Shinzon managed to survive, thanks to a young Reman guard who befriended him and taught him how to survive. Embittered by eighteen years under the Romulan lash and toughened by his experience in the Romulan military's Reman contingent – renowned as the most brutal fighting force in the Quadrant – Shinzon's ambition is Napoleonic in style and proportion. Only one thing threatens his plans. As Dr. Crusher discovers upon examining a sample of his blood, Shinzon was created with "temporal RNA sequencing." He was designed so that at a certain point in his development his ageing process could be accelerated to reach Picard's age more quickly. Specifically, he was engineered to skip thirty years of his life. But with the abandonment of the Romulan plot, the sequencing mechanism was left unactivated. As a result, Shinzon is now in an advanced stage of cellular degradation. "Can anything be done for him?" Picard asks, permitting another glimpse into his personal feelings. Nothing short of a complete transfusion from a donor with compatible DNA, Beverly informs him. For this, Shinzon needs to capture Picard.

Shinzon's first attempt involves another clone. On a remote planet, a trap is baited with the body parts of a Soong-type android – a prototype of Lt. Commander Data. Picard and his Away Team investigate and are ambushed. But they escape, taking the android parts with them back to the *Enterprise*, where the android "B-4" is reassembled. B-4 is identical to Data in make and model but with a minimally developed neural net: he is barely sentient. Agreeing with Data that the B-4 was probably designed with the same self-actualizing parameters as Data himself, Picard approves the downloading of Data's memories into B-4's positronic matrix. In other words, Data differs from his organic comrades in that he has no anxieties about losing his uniqueness to a clone. Commander Data reasons that with his memories, the B-4 should have all of Data's abilities and be able to function as a more complete individual. "An individual more like *you*, you mean," says La Forge: "Maybe he's not supposed to be like you, Data. Maybe he's supposed to be exactly the way he is." "That might be so," Data replies, "but I believe he should have the opportunity to explore his potential" – spoken, of course, like the synthetic subject of liberal humanism he is.

But the download produces no evidence of B-4's having integrated Data's store of knowledge. What Data and La Forge have failed to interpret correctly is the purpose of a supposedly redundant memory port located at the base of B-4's neck. Like the sample of Picard's DNA that gave rise to Shinzon, B-4 has been re-engineered to serve as a secret operative aboard the *Enterprise*. Thus does Shinzon begin to fulfil the goal of his own designers' aborted plot. The manipulation of both Shinzon and B-4 for political purposes recalls the following passage from Vere's cloning article in which he addresses the fear that "Evil dictators might abuse human cloning":

> There is the possibility that unscrupulous dictators such as Fidel Castro or Saddam Hussein might try to perpetuate their power by creating a clone of themselves and transferring power to the clone when they die. There is also the possibility that such people might try to create a super army of thousands of clones of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and so on. These possibilities cannot be dismissed. However, it is important to keep in mind that passing laws in the US or other democratic countries cannot control the behavior of rogue dictators in totalitarian countries. The prohibition of human cloning in the US or Europe is not going to stop cloning in Iraq. If Saddam Hussein wants to clone himself, nothing short of a major military invasion can stop him. The evil in these scenarios derives not from cloning but from dictatorships. The proper solution would be a world-wide ban on dictators, which of course is not likely to happen. (Vere)

The absence of even the most rudimentary understanding of power prevents Vere from making the far stronger argument that the cloning of power – in democratic countries no less than in totalitarian ones – is both cultural and normative, not merely a future "possibility [that] cannot be dismissed." The cloning of George Bush Senior's Iraqnaphobia in George Bush Junior did not take place in a medical research facility or a fertility clinic. Nor did the fiasco by which the father's presidential power was replicated in the son contribute much to the distinction between democracy and dictatorship. Vere was no doubt pleased with the outcome of the Bush dynasty's second war in Iraq. But his defence of cloning is fundamentally contradictory: it resembles the American Rifle Association argument that "Guns don't kill people; people kill people," even as it blows that argument

apart. It's an argument that echoes the Extropian technology-as-tool motif in that it fails to acknowledge Thacker's observation of "the ways in which technology has always operated as a nonhuman actant."

The sentient android – even one as minimally sentient as B-4 – is an excellent representation of technology as nonhuman actant. In Shinzon's case, the tool is embedded in every cell of his body, engineered as a mechanism for advancing the political ambitions of those who brought him to life: the tool is as much a part of his genetic inheritance as are his Picardian facial features. Echoing Extropian anarcho-capitalist ideology, these two clones have the status of consumer products. They may be thrown out when they have outlived their usefulness, as in Shinzon's case, or they may be retooled for whatever other use the consumer has for them, as in the case of B-4. Whatever one thinks of Vere's *laissez-faire* position on cloning, he's got at least one thing right: "If you are afraid of human cloning, you are going to be petrified by human genetic engineering." Both Shinzon and B-4 raise urgent ethical questions about bioengineering – questions that cannot be left to technoscience to answer, nor to the corporations in whose service technoscience operates. This is where the political philosophy of Liberalism, given new expression through the cultural logic of late capitalism, fails us most profoundly – specifically, in its perpetuation of the fiction that a state wedded to *laissez-faire* economics is somehow also capable of regulating science and capitalism in the best interests of even those whose powerlessness prevents them from participating in the market and contributing to the GNP.

In Shinzon's second attempt to capture Picard, the Captain is beamed directly from the bridge of his ship to confinement in a lab aboard the *Scimitar*. Picard stands upright, bound within an apparatus conspicuous in its similarity to the Borg alcove in which we saw him narrowly confined in *First Contact*'s opening flashback scene. A sample of his blood is extracted in a process all too similar to the brutal Borg injection of nanoprobes we saw him endure in "Best of Both Worlds." And for those in the audience unlucky enough to have missed those previous encounters with the posthuman, Shinzon remarks: "What is it your Borg friends say? *Resistance is futile*." These echoes appear to trigger memories in Picard, which he then projects onto this all-too-similar nemesis: "If your issues are with me, then deal with me. This has nothing to do with my ship – nothing to do with the Federation." "O, but it does!" Shinzon insists.

SHINZON: It's about destiny, Picard! It's about a Reman outcast –
PICARD: *You're not Reman!*
SHINZON: And I'm not quite human. So what am I? My life is meaningless as long as you're still alive. What am I while you exist? A shadow? An echo?

As he stands before the entrapped Picard, Shinzon reveals his own entrapment between what he regards as two polar opposites. Like the hybrid creature of Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs," he is "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal [anarcho-] capitalism" (1990 193), yet he does not feel liberated by this but rather, hopelessly belated. His hostility is oedipal. Picard's forceful insistence that Shinzon is not Reman reveals his own entrapment in this oedipal struggle. The Captain's need to break free of this psychological confinement – which includes the ideological constraints of humanism – is as urgent to the plot as is his need to escape from Shinzon's Frankensteinian laboratory. Significantly, it's Data – the same Data who liberated him from his link to the collective ("Best of Both Worlds") and released him from the clutches of the Borg Queen (*First Contact*) – who will spring him in this film from the multiple levels of his imprisonment.

In true Freudian fashion, Shinzon feels compelled to annihilate the father and embrace the mother – the culture of the Reman who nurtured and protected him from almost certain death in the dilithium mines, the culture of all his "Reman brothers," the family who "showed [him] the only kindness [he had] ever known":

SHINZON: … We will no longer bow before anyone as slaves – not the Romulans, and not your mighty Federation. We are a race bred for war and conquest!
PICARD: Are you ready to plunge the entire Quadrant into war to satisfy your own personal demons?
SHINZON: It amazes me how little you know yourself.
PICARD: I'm incapable of such an act!
SHINZON: You *are* me! The same noble Picard blood runs through our veins. Had you lived my life, you'd be doing exactly as I am. So look in the mirror. See yourself. Consider that, Captain. I can think of no greater torment for you.
PICARD: Shinzon … I'm a mirror for you as well.

The only way Shinzon can reconcile what he experiences as an internal civil war between nature and nurture – between his human genetic inheritance and his Reman cultural heritage – is to find in the former the brutality of the latter. Despite what Picard knows of his own potential for brutality through the experiences just recalled to him – his vulnerability to Shinzon-like fantasies of revenge, his capacity to "get a thrill out of murdering someone," Locutus's slaughter of thousands of Starfleet troops – he declares himself incapable of the kind of destruction upon which Shinzon is bent. Like Shinzon, he is reluctant to embrace the inevitability of subjectivity's multiplicity. Both men are right: they are mirrors for each other. But as Picard has learnt and Shinzon has not, what each glimpses in the mirror must be struggled with as an option – not manifest destiny, not biological determination, but a matter of the agency and choice vested in the liberal humanist subject.

Psychology is not one of the sciences that *Trek* usually spends a lot of time and money on getting right – to wit, most of the narratives involving Counsellor Troi's handling of the crew's emotional problems. "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," says Troi, misquoting Freud (*TNG* "Phantasms"). But *Nemesis* is *TNG*'s swan song, and the writers have gone to great pains to show us a very different Picard from the one who assumed command of the *Enterprise* fifteen years earlier. He seems finally to have learnt something important about humanist individuality, namely, that its vaunted autonomy is an illusion – or, at best, relative. Human beings are not autonomous subjects but rather, interdependent. Psychologically, interdependence manifests as intersubjectivity. This realization is dawning on Picard, as he anticipates the future without his surrogate family, the web of interconnections in which his subjectivity is constituted and perpetually renewed. The concept of intersubjectivity not only works well as a framework for understanding how relationships are represented in the film; it is also consistent with the humanist-posthuman conversation, for like the cyborg it represents a crossing of boundaries – specifically, the boundary between self and other, I and thou – and represents the deconstruction of a binary at the heart of a theoretical impasse.

Dorothy Smith wasn't the only Canadian feminist rethinking the abandonment of a whole tradition of feminist knowledge in the rush for the rarefied uplands of anti-Enlightenment theory. In 1996, Deborah Knight dared to question such feminist luminaries as film theorist Laura Mulvey and literary theorist Toril Moi as participating in a self-perpetuating crisis-mode

of thought created and sustained by anti-humanist rhetoric. The theoretical displacement of the "politically and morally repugnant," unified subject of liberal humanism (43) by the "correct, progressive, politically efficacious," fragmented postmodern subject has, in Knight's view, resulted in "the structuring of a debate within a humanist/anti-humanist framework [that] trades on a series of remarkably overblown, virtually caricatured binary oppositions" (47). Because it seems to her "improbable that the only positions available are either the old, unfashionable humanist position or the new and more recently fashionable radically decentered anti-humanist position" (46–47), Knight argues for the rejection of both these caricatures, for "subjectivity is neither absolute and monolithic and univocal nor arbitrary and fragmentary and irreducibly polysemous." She favours a conception of the subject that acknowledges that "subjectivity depends upon intersubjectivity" (53). Read in the context of this understanding of subjectivity, cloning functions as a trope. The uncanny ability of Shinzon and Picard to anticipate each other's thoughts and actions, especially Picard's self-reflexive insight into Shinzon's character, is not explained by their having the same genes, thus being even more closely related than father and son and therefore experiencing their relationship as unusual in its oedipal intensity. These phenomena are better understood as intersubjective effects.

With the help of Data, impersonating B-4 in order to gain access to the *Scimitar*, Picard escapes his nemesis and returns to the *Enterprise*. As is his habit on the eve of battle, he makes ship's rounds, "And like a thousand other commanders on a thousand other battlefields, I wait for the dawn." He seeks out a consultation with Data. "'For now we see but through a glass darkly,'" Picard opens. "Sir?" says Data, taking the bait.

PICARD: He said he's a mirror.
DATA: Of you, sir?
PICARD: Yes.
DATA: I do not agree. Although you share the same genetic structure, the events of your life have created a unique individual.
PICARD: If I had lived his life, is it possible that I would've rejected my humanity?

Picard already knows the answer to this, of course. For Shinzon has reminded him of the role that privilege and opportunity have played in

making Picard who he has become and what he continues becoming. He could have remained safely on Earth and pursued a life of inherited comfort and social status, but he had exercised his agency and chosen to make a break with centuries of family tradition. Picard, the Starfleet Academy cadet, may have been "a damned fool – arrogant, ambitious, and very much in need of seasoning," but as Dr. Crusher had noted, "he turned out all right." Picard also knows how fragile his humanity really is. Shinzon has reminded him of that too. Data is not prepared to speculate upon Picard's humanity, but he does draw a parallel that leads to the next step in the logic these two have been pursuing: "The B-4 is physically identical to me, although his neural pathways are not as advanced. But even if they were, he would not be me." "How can you be sure?" asks Picard. "I aspire, sir, to be better than I am. B-4 does not – nor does Shinzon."

As the results of the download had suggested, B-4 seems not to have been designed with the same self-actualizing parameters as Data after all. B-4 cannot "aspire." Unlike Data, who is aided by ethical subroutines programmed in accordance with the Federation's humanist principles, B-4 is incapable of making the distinction implied in Federation culture's understanding of the word "better." La Forge appears to have speculated correctly: "Maybe he's not supposed to be like you, Data. Maybe he's supposed to be exactly the way he is." His role in Shinzon's plot now having been discovered, he has been deactivated, as Data tells him, "because you are dangerous." Like the Borg, B-4 is too technologically determined to be trusted. But Data's analogy breaks down as it reaches for an equation between techno-determinism and biodeterminism. More sophisticated than B-4 by several orders of magnitude, Data is nevertheless still a computer. His rationalism is programmed in binary code: he can recognize sameness, he can recognize difference, but recognizing the irrational way in which they collapse into each other has always frustrated him in his quest to become more human.

But – to paraphrase Thacker – change the code and you change the cyb/organism. The "translatability" between genetic codes and computer codes is an Extropian illusion, a feature of the "informatic essentialism" to which Extropians subscribe (87–90). Thus, in contrast to Data's coding, human genetic coding appears to give rise to another kind of understanding – the kind that Picard possesses. As he is coming to realize, it's not a matter of biological determination but rather, biological *potential*. As evolutionary biologist and historian of science Stephen Jay Gould has written,

Linnaeus, the seventeenth-century taxonomist, had it right when he wrote that *Homo sapiens* is both special and not special. Unfortunately, however, "Special and not special have come to mean nonbiological and biological, or nurture and nature. These later polarizations are nonsensical":

> Why imagine that specific genes for aggression, dominance, or spite have any importance when we know that the brain's enormous flexibility permits us to be aggressive or peaceful, dominant or submissive, spiteful or generous? Violence, sexism, and general nastiness *are* biological since they represent one subset of a possible range of behaviors. But peacefulness, equality, and kindness are just as biological – and we may see their influence increase if we can create social structures that permit them to flourish. (Gould 257)

Romulan imperialism is hardly a social structure in which peacefulness, equality, and kindness can easily flourish among its colonized Others. Indeed, the dilithium mines of Remus seem perversely designed to cultivate aggression, dominance, and spite in any boy tough enough and lucky enough to survive. Unlike Picard's, Shinzon's early choices had all been made for him. Deep below the surface of Remus, denied the stars that had triggered Picard's boyhood aspirations, Shinzon had internalized the only meaning of "better" available to him and aspired to it. He could not have come as far as he has in the absence of the necessary – if insufficient – genetic potential to do so. Shinzon and Picard are genetically identical, right down to their "aggressive strain of Shalaft's syndrome," a rare congenital condition affecting all the male members of the Picard family. It manifests itself in early childhood as a hearing disorder. Shinzon had suffered from it: "Finally I was taken to a doctor who had some experience of Terran illnesses.… Eventually, I was treated and now I can hear as well as you can, Captain."

Picard certainly hopes so. For, at their next meeting, nature versus nurture is the only item on Picard's agenda, and he needs Shinzon to hear this well:

> Look at me, Shinzon. Your heart, your hands, your eyes are the same as mine. The blood pumping within you, the raw material is the same. We have the same potential.… Buried deep within you, beneath all the years of pain and anger, there is something that has never been

> nurtured: the potential to make yourself a better man. And that is what is it is to be human – to make yourself more than you are.… Oh, yes. I know you.… I see what you could be. The man who is Shinzon of Remus and Jean-Luc Picard could never exterminate the population of an entire planet. He's better than that.… You still have a choice. Make the right one now.

Within both Shinzon and Picard is an identical potential to slaughter thousands. But from Picard's humanist perspective, it all comes down to a matter of agency and choice – *having* a choice and *acting* on it. At Wolf 359, in the absence of agency and choice, Picard as Locutus fulfilled that potential. Shinzon is about to fulfill it in Sector 001. But like Shalaft's syndrome, biological potential responds to cultural intervention – in this case, nurturing. Self-reflexively, vis-à-vis his clone, Picard knows that nurturing can change the trajectory of Shinzon's aspirations, help to make him the man who "could never exterminate the population of an entire planet," help to make him "better than that." And why not? Shinzon has an advantage over Locutus of Borg. Shinzon still has a choice. But does he have the self-insight required to act on it? Cadet Picard may have "turned out all right" in the end, but for Shinzon, the end is already here. As Picard delivers these impassioned lines, he advances toward Shinzon. Imminent death already disfiguring his youthful features, Shinzon backs away: "I can't fight what I am.… I'll show you my true nature. *Our* nature." Shinzon may have choices, but the fatal consequences of his perverse genetic engineering have caught up with him, ending the possibility of his developing what it takes to make the "right" ones.

Interestingly, it's in *Nemesis* that the Romulans are finally brought within *Star Trek*'s expanding definition of humanism. The disaffected military officers who have made possible Shinzon's *coup d'état* undergo a change of heart when they begin to get some insight into his megalomania. As Sub-Commander Donatra says to her commanding officer, "Are you truly prepared to have your hands drenched in blood? He's not planning to defeat Earth, he's planning its annihilation. And his sins will mark us and our children for generations." Commander Donatra offers Romulan assistance to Picard in his effort to prevent Shinzon from reaching Earth and detonating his weapon. And although Shinzon's *Scimitar* disables the Romulan vessels early in the battle, Donatra's later exchanges with Picard suggest that political reconciliation between Romulus and the Federation

may only be a matter of time. "The Romulans fought with honour," says Commander Worf. This is high praise from the Klingon, who had often given voice to what the Federation's human citizens were perhaps too "civilized" to say out loud; Worf had never made a secret of his opinion of the Romulans as a species of vermin.

In due course, Picard kills Shinzon in an especially gruesome scene on the bridge of the *Scimitar*, as the countdown toward detonation of Shinzon's terrible weapon advances toward its final few seconds. But this time, Picard gets no "thrill out of murdering someone." Indeed, the enormity of what he has just done paralyses him. Transfixed, he leans against the bulkhead, Shinzon's body slumped against his own. Our knowledge that *Star Trek* films must always be scripted to include a happy ending does nothing to relieve the tension created by the relentless pace of the chronometer – *four, three, two* … In the nick of time, Data appears, fixes his site-to-site transporter device to Picard's breast, and beams his Captain to safety – but at the cost of his own life. Fragments of his android being are scattered across space with the spectacular explosion of the *Scimitar*. The companion who had rescued Picard from so many potentially fatal predicaments is gone. The Captain is now on his own. Or…?

In the film's final scene, his surrogate family having disembarked for the last time, Picard sits in his Ready Room across from the reactivated B-4 trying to explain Data to him: "In his quest to be more like us, he helped us to see what it means to be human." Picard now seems to understand fully that the only being who can perfectly embody the ideals of humanism is a synthetic posthuman consciously constructed in the image of Enlightenment Man's ideal of himself. Assembled and programmed to specification, Data had been the only truly Rational Man aboard the *Enterprise* and *Star Trek*'s only consistently dependable repository of humanist values. All those years Picard had spent instructing Data in the value of the humanities – Shakespeare and Dickens, Bach and Mozart – were really years in which Picard was learning, through Data's efforts to process the data, what the process of becoming entails.

B-4 hasn't understood a word of what Picard has just said. With a sigh, the Captain rises and prepares to leave the android to whatever fragments of thought are flickering across his synthetic synapses. Suddenly, B-4 absent-mindedly sings a phrase of the song Data had sung at Riker and Troi's wedding early in the film. B-4 repeats the phrase but can't seem to get beyond it. Picard prompts him. B-4 responds but gets stuck again. A

second prompt gets the android only as far as the next phrase. Clearly, it's going to take time – the kind of time Shinzon ran out of.

* * *

Nemesis failed to impress American critics as one of *Star Trek*'s cinematic successes, perhaps because film critics do not look to the action-adventure genre for social commentary on topical issues. Besides, in the popular American imagination, the face of the enemy is no longer imperialist but terrorist. Hence, in their eyes, the theme of the illegitimate leader launching illegal wars of aggression against sovereign nations/planets might appear timeworn and irrelevant. Any similarity between their Commander-in-Chief and Shinzon, who is "ready to plunge the entire Quadrant into war to satisfy [his] own personal demons" is not an idea many American viewers of this film are prepared to entertain at the moment. As so often in the past, Americans may well have to wait for the next *Star Trek* Anniversary Special to be told just how timely *Nemesis* was in terms of the geopolitical reality at the time of its release in the winter of 2002. Its treatment of biopolitics and biogenic warfare may also be appreciated only in retrospect – and only at the prodding of those at Paramount Pictures whose responsibility it is to keep the lucrative *Star Trek* phenomenon alive. Whatever the case, we are sure to see more cinematic science fiction dealing with military applications of nanotech and its science fictional equivalents, since – despite the hype that focuses only on the pharmaceutical and manufacturing applications of nanotechnologies – it's within nuclear weapons laboratories that the field of nanotech was born a few decades ago, and where huge sums of public funding are being invested (Arnall).

Star Trek is rarely taken seriously as an effective critique of such technologies – indeed, it is most often treated as merely a naively technophilic and teleological vision of American manifest destiny. It is, after all, only a mass-marketed series whose technobabble is regarded by many as reinforcing the mystique of science. As suggested by SF critic Carl Freedman, *Star Trek* is a "filmic and televisional" equivalent of pulp fiction that fails miserably to live up to theorist Darko Suvin's authoritative definition of science fiction as a "genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework

alternative to the author's empirical environment" (Freedman 14–16). Besides, *Star Trek*'s defence of the indefensible humanist vision of Gene Roddenberry defines it as beneath the contempt of those postmodernist literary scholars who regard "serious" science fiction as a species of critical theory which, despite its anti-foundationalism, regards as foundational the Enlightenment as a dead project whose only remaining need is a decent burial. Yet many *Star Trek* scripts are not so very different from some of the most highly regarded SF texts. As I have argued, these scripts illustrate the way in which "posthumanist productions are folded together with humanist assumptions" and recognize that those assumptions require a "working-through," rather than "a belief that we can simply leave them behind." Moreover, *Star Trek*'s writers have not shrunk from their responsibility to question humanist assumptions of technological "progress"; nor have they avoided the question of what Michael Crichton calls "our self-deluded recklessness," which is on track to "collide with our growing technological power" (Crichton x).

The collective efforts of those to whom Roddenberry entrusted his vision upon his death have resulted in an interesting, if not always coherent, conversation across the humanist/posthuman divide. It's a conversation not wholly unlike the one promoted by Hayles when she writes that "[t]he best possible time to contest for what the posthuman means is now, before the trains of thought it embodies have been laid down so firmly that it would take dynamite to change them" (1999 291). Gramsci, as quoted by Badmington, may well be right when he says that the current crisis "consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born," yet this only invites the kind of complacency that has characterized much of our postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment project to date. When Badmington writes that "[t]he present moment may well be one in which the hegemony and heredity of humanism feel a little less certain, a little less inevitable," he might well have used the Captain Picard of *Nemesis* to illustrate the statement (Badmington 21-22). But in reality, the erosion of humanism's hegemony and heredity exhibits little of the dignity with which Picard backs away from some of his most cherished assumptions. Indeed, if the present moment in our geopolitical relations is any indication, those leaders of Western culture who purport to lead in the name of humanism – or "civilization," as Bush calls the avaricious culture unwittingly spawned by it – are not about to go gently into that good night. Extropian-style transhumanisms may well provide humanism

with a renewed lease on life – one even more rapacious and hegemonic than anything its legacy has taught us to expect. We therefore need to shift more of our critical attention from dead and dying traditions to these morally and ethically impoverished futures struggling with such explosive energy to be born.

Afterword

If *Voyager*'s relentless celebration of humanist individuality is obsessive in the extreme, in *Nemesis*, Picard's failure to get through to Shinzon, and Shinzon's psychological isolation, illuminate the downside of the autonomy and independence so relentlessly cultivated by those who cherish the ideology of liberal individualism. This is perhaps where the postfeminist family values theme – emphasized in both *Nemesis* and *Voyager* – tries to compensate for individualism's psychological loneliness, albeit rather cloyingly at times. But regardless of the spin writers choose to put on the topic, it pays to remember that *Star Trek* is a uniquely American phenomenon. Its obsession with the ideals of liberal humanism is much more understandable in the context of post-9/11. For example, even though it's been four years since the spectacular collapse of New York's twin towers, an "unpatriotic" public utterance can still do damage to your career, and brown skin can still "disappear" you for months in the labyrinth of the American "justice" system. Thus, watching *Star Trek* is – to echo the prophetic words of Dorothy Smith – a little like "looking back on liberalism as a honeyed country from which we are severed forever...." (Smith 766) A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since I wrote these essays. A lot of blood has flowed in the ruined streets of the elegant and ancient cities of Mesopotamia. But thanks to the ghastly torture photos from Abu Ghraib prison, the multiplying reports of abuse in the legal limbo of the Guantánamo Bay gulag, and the Downing Street paper trail confirming the web of deception spun by Bush and Blair before the war, American opinion is slowly turning against the protracted occupation. However, Americans are still somewhat fragile and vulnerable to the politics of fear – and the Bush regime now has Iran in its crosshairs.

We Canadians continue to eye our neighbour nervously, and most of us quietly celebrate every new scrap of evidence that we hope sends a

pointed message to neoconservative Washington: the Prime Minister's refusal to sign on to Bush's missile defence program; the 26 percent increase in American immigration to Canada in 2004; our government's passage of same-sex marriage legislation; the electorate's refusal to replace the scandal-ridden Liberals with a Conservative government headed by an anti-gay, anti-abortion evangelist; the University of Western Ontario's awarding of a long-overdue honorary doctorate to Henry Morgantaler, the physician whose activism was instrumental in getting Canada's abortion law struck down. In short, we make a fetish of any event that permits us to avoid the truth that no two nations on Earth are as alike as Canada and the United States. Like the Borg and the Federation, like Shinzon and Picard, we are mirrors for each other – and what we have recently seen in that mirror is a squadron of Israeli Defense Force bombers at a Canadian military base practising how to drop Israel's newly-purchased American bunker-busters in the impending war against Iran (Dyer; Reguly). So we're already implicated. But that mirror also makes Canadians much more likely than other nationals to appreciate the nuances of the American imagination. Perhaps the writers and producers of *Star Trek* – some of them raised during the McCarthy era, and all of them raised on Cold War propaganda – are more aware than younger Americans of just how uniquely fragile personal liberty and intellectual independence are in the United States. Nevertheless, those younger Americans' time has come.

For something else has changed since these essays were written: *Enterprise* – the most recent *Star Trek* television series – was prematurely cancelled for lack of sufficient ratings. In addition, I'm a little less likely these days to channel-surf through a rerunning episode of any of the *Trek* series when seeking relief from the increasingly newsless American television news. So, is the post-9/11 era also the post-*Trek* era? This is highly unlikely, given *Star Trek*'s record for meeting the challenges of changing times and tastes. Since the potential is already there, buried in the subtexts of *The Next Generation* and *Voyager*, what the demands of an enormously active, vocal, and globalized fan-base are likely to generate is a much more thoroughly postmodernized, postcolonialized, and posthumanized *Star Trek*. What our post-9/11 world continues to provide – for better or worse – is a vast reservoir of material for SF storytellers ready to take the *Star Trek* saga where no *Trek* has gone before.

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Ðrones, Clones and Alpha Babes

The *Star Trek* franchise represents one of the most successful emanations of popular media in our culture. The number of books, both popular and scholarly, published on the subject of *Star Trek* is massive, with more and more titles printed every year. Very few, however, have looked at *Star Trek* in terms of the dialectics of humanism and the posthuman, the pervasiveness of advanced technology, and the complications of gender identity. In Ðrones, Clones and Alpha Babes, author Diana Relke sheds light on how the *Star Trek* narratives influence and are influenced by shifting cultural values in the United States, using these as portals to the sociopolitical and sociocultural landscapes of the U.S., pre- and post-9/11. From her Canadian perspective, Relke focuses on *Star Trek*'s uniquely American version of liberal humanism, extends it into a broader analysis of ideological features, and avoids a completely positive or negative critique, choosing instead to honour the contradictions inherent in the complexity of the subject.

Diana M.A. Relke is founding member and professor in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, where she teaches courses in feminist theory, science fiction, and popular culture. Having served five years in the Canadian navy as a communications specialist, Relke is drawn to *Star Trek*'s kinder, gentler version of Anglo-American Naval tradition and intrigued by its imaginative projection of communications technologies into the future.

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ISBN 1-55238-164-1