

## Popular Imagination and Identity Politics: Reading the Future in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki

---

Through an analysis of the popular syndicated television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, this essay begins to theorize the relationship between collective visions of the future and the identity politics of the present. Focusing on the tension between the show's utopian rhetoric of the future and its representational practices with regard to race, gender, and sexuality, it is argued that *The Next Generation* invites audiences to participate in a shared sense of the future that constrains human agency and (re)produces the current cultural hegemony with regard to identity politics. The closing section calls for critics to continue politicizing mediated images that appeal to popular imagination and to develop and implement a pedagogical practice of counter-imagination.

---

**S**TAR TREK—by which we mean the four dramatic television series, the animated cartoon, the nine full-length motion pictures, the hundreds of novels and comics, the multi-million-dollar-a-year merchandizing industry of toys, games, recordings, and clothing, the unprecedented exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C., the science modules developed for teaching elementary school children about physics and medicine (Mestel, 1994; Anthony, 1994), the special topics courses at colleges and universities (Nagler, 1994), and the three distinctive fan co-cultures of Trekkers, Trekkies, and slash novelists each with their own annual conventions (Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995; Bacon-Smith, 1992; Penley, 1997)—has been entertaining audiences, young and old, for forty years now. By any measure of cultural iconicity—innovation, scope, resilience, recognizability, representativeness—*Star Trek* is truly a touchstone of U.S. popular culture.

In light of its impressive iconic stature, it is hardly surprising that the original series along with its numerous intertexts have been the subject of at least five book-length academic studies and countless

---

BRIAN L. OTT (Ph.D., Penn State University) and ERIC AOKI (Ph.D., University of Washington) are Assistant Professors of Speech Communication, Colorado State University. The authors are grateful to Thomas Benson and Henry Giroux for their comments on earlier drafts. A previous version of this essay was presented as the "Top Paper in Media Studies" at the 2000 convention of the Western States Communication Association Conference in Sacramento, CA.

scholarly articles.<sup>1</sup> With an almost childlike fascination, critics have sought to unlock its mysterious appeal, interpret its complex representations, and understand its unique fan following. Suppose for a moment, though, that *Star Trek* is more than just a cultural icon, that it is a cultural agent, that it actively and aggressively structures our socio-cultural landscape. Suppose that this futuristic fantasy furnishes audiences with more than mere entertainment, that it constructs a cognitive frame through which viewers are taught, not only *what* to imagine, but *how* to imagine. Suppose finally that the act of imagining, like the act of remembering, is central to defining who we are, to structuring our perceptions, and to the exercise of power. From this perspective, it is not sufficient to ask what does *Star Trek* mean; the critic must ask, "What does *Star Trek* do?"

This essay reflects an effort to investigate these suppositions and to begin to theorize the relationship between a symbolically shared sense of the future and the identity politics of the present. *Star Trek* is, of course, an expansive and dynamic text, and no single study could fully address its many iterations, incarnations, and intersections. But an analysis of the recent series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (*TNG*) affords an opportunity to wrestle with a significant and uniquely intertwined fragment of the larger phenomenon. Of the various *Star Trek* installments, *TNG* enjoyed the most popular success, ranking as the top-rated dramatic series in syndication from its debut episode in August 1987 to its final episode in May 1994.<sup>2</sup> More important than its popularity though, *TNG* is intricately woven into the vast tapestry that is *Star Trek*.<sup>3</sup> As the only series to be headed by both *Star Trek*'s original visionary (Gene Roddenberry) and its current visionary (Rick Berman), it bridges past and future. In fact, the characters of *TNG* are the only ones to appear in films and on TV with characters from all of the other series. Focusing on the tension between the show's utopian rhetoric of the future and its representations of race, gender, and sexuality, we maintain the *TNG* appeals to a collective vision of the future that constrains human agency and reinstanciates the current cultural hegemony with regard to identity politics. Before proceeding with our analysis, however, we explore the intersection of social imagination, utopian discourse, and the cultural politics of identity.

### *Popular Imagination, Identity Politics, and Utopian Discourse*

Attempts to understand contemporary social relations consistently privilege the past over the future. Indeed, the study of history has been reduced almost exclusively to the study of the past, as though histories of the future do not inflect upon the present. The privileging of the past over and at the expense of the future is a consequence of the standard Western perception of time as uni-directional. Linear time conceives of the past as being more authentic, authoritative, stable, and influential than the future, and subsequently the present appears to be causally

related to the past. Anticipating a postmodern perspective, however, philosophers such as Bergson (1912, 1991), Nietzsche (1995), and Heidegger (1992, 1996) have critiqued the notion of linear time, arguing that time is an infinite matrix of moments, each bearing traces of the already and the not-yet.<sup>4</sup> At any given moment, the self accumulates a past and anticipates a future.<sup>5</sup> The residue of past experiences is known as memory, and the projection of future possibilities as imagination. We selected “imagination” as the counterpart for memory because, like memory, it evokes the idea of mental images, and, unlike more temporal concepts such as forecasting, prediction, and prophecy, it lacks the stigma of speculation. Imagination, as we are using it, is closest to the term projection, but rather than forcing the present into the future, it considers how visions of the future shape the present.<sup>6</sup> As with past and future, memory may seem more ‘real’ than imagination, but both exist only as mental images of a not-now—images that are selective, biased, mutable, and acutely ideological. Consider the matter of memory, which has received substantially more scholarly attention.

Whereas the present involves direct sensory experience, the past is mediated by memories or mental images of the past (Burke, 1969a, p. 133). These memory-images are always incomplete and partisan, since every remembering is a positioned forgetting (Nietzsche, 1997). Memory-images are also subject to constant revision and reinterpretation as they mingle with experiences and representations in the present (Bergson, 1991). Thus, through discourse it is possible to alter one’s memory-images and hence one’s sense of the past.<sup>7</sup> To the extent that cultures and nations act in accordance with memory, rhetorical invitations to public memory are an intensely political activity closely tied to the exercise of cultural hegemony. Though this recognition has prompted cultural and media critics (Zelizer, 1995; Gillis, 1994; Simon, 1993; Young, 1993; Bodnar, 1992) to attend closely to the many sites of memory construction, public memory fails to account fully for the ways cultural texts generate and reinforce the collective visions that inform our identities, structure our perceptions, and guide our actions. Just as some messages invite audiences to share in a particular sense of the past, others encourage shared visions of the future—visions that, in turn, notes Jameson (1982), “restructure our experience of our own present” (p. 151). Thus, not only do the ways in which we remember and forget the past shape who we are in the present, but so too do the ways we envision and fail to envision the future (Heidegger, 1996). In this essay, we refer to the symbolically constructed sense of a shared future as popular imagination. To the extent that popular imagination is manufactured through representational practices, it provides a rich ideological terrain for critics concerned with power, culture, identity, and their intersection.

The form and sites of popular imagination production are many and varied, ranging from the policy initiatives of a Presidential Inaugural

Address to the dystopian vision of social relations in George Orwell's *1984*. In this essay, however, we are specifically concerned with identifying the nature and function of utopian appeals to collective imagination.<sup>8</sup> The invitation to a shared, utopian vision of the future, we contend, performs three interconnected socio-rhetorical functions. First, utopias perform a *synecdochic* function. By definition, utopias narrate a vision of society dissimilar to the one readers presently know and perceive, but they do not alter the whole of human relations (Backzo, 1989, p. 5). Every utopia represents only a partially altered future in which certain social norms, beliefs, and values inevitably remain the same. Part of the appeal of utopian texts is the presence of familiar and comfortable elements—elements with which readers already feel “substantially one” (Burke, 1969b, p. 21). In selectively revising society, utopian texts reduce the sum of social ills to a represented few, suggesting to readers both what is ‘right’ as well as what is ‘wrong’ with society.

Appeals to utopian imagination also perform a *prescriptive* function. In claiming to depict an ‘ideal’ society, utopias not only suggest *what* is wrong with society, but they also suggest *how* it ‘should’ be different. According to Roemer (1981), “[Utopias] encourage readers to experience vicariously a culture that represents a prescriptive normative alternative to their own culture” (p. 3). Utopian texts depict an alternative, endorse the alternative, and thus foster a desire for the alternative (Morson, 1981, p. 76). Non-utopian appeals to imagination do not make the same claim to ideality, and subsequently do not advocate a specific course of social action. Whereas utopian appeals create an *appetite* for a particular set of social relations, dystopian appeals foster *aversion*—a general movement ‘forward’ rather than a prescribed movement ‘toward’ (Burke, 1969a, p. 134). “Find what will bring you promises [in the future],” writes Burke (1969a), “and you have found what is worth doing now” (p. 334). Thus, utopias furnish a scenic background that motivates readers to pursue a prescribed purpose.

Third, we contend that utopias exercise a *predictive* function. By showing readers an ideal, alternative world, Jameson (1982) contends that such narratives accustom their readers to certain technological innovations and social relations and not others; they prepare our consciousness for both certain possibilities and impossibilities (pp. 150–152). Utopias demystify change, inviting readers to see certain alternatives as unthreatening; they foreshadow the future by naturalizing a particular vision of the future. Indeed, many of the purely fictional technologies of the original *Star Trek* series such as wireless communicators are now realities. Imagination cannot simply be reduced to fantasy, then, for as Ganesh (2000) explains, “[I]nstead of being an avenue for escape into impossibilities, [imagination] has become an expression of possibilities. And inasmuch as people consume, on a global scale, the ideas articulated by the media . . . the

imagination has consequently become a platform for social action” (p. 69). In examining the future envisioned by *The Next Generation*, our aim is to assess how this particular utopian vision operates as an instrument of social mobilization, action, and change.

### *TNG as Utopian Imagination*

Our aims in this section are to identify how *The Next Generation* is presented and presents itself as a utopian vision of the future, and to begin to suggest how this positioning bears upon viewers’ collective imagination. Working from the assumption that one text is never read in isolation, “that a range of textual knowledges is brought to bear upon it” (Fiske, 1987, p. 108), we begin by examining how studio publicity and journalistic reviews promoted a utopian frame through which to view the series and its vision of the future. The popular press consistently and regularly reported that *TNG* addressed contemporary social problems and, in the process, invited viewers to seek out those social messages. In the early stages of *TNG*’s production, creator Gene Roddenberry assured audiences that, like the original *Star Trek*, the new series would address contemporary social issues. Describing his vision, Roddenberry proclaimed, “Unless we shock and irritate people, we’re not doing our jobs. . . . We’ve got to be on the cutting edge” (Dougherty & Alexander, 1987, p. 63). Producer Rick Berman echoed a similar sentiment, promising that the series would feature weekly morality plays about justice, ethics, and other universal questions (“2<sup>nd</sup> *Star Trek*,” 1987). The initial reviews of *TNG* reflected the themes raised by Roddenberry and Berman, noting that “the social and moral messages are still hanging in there” (Terry, 1987, p. 5), that it projects “positive human messages relevant to today’s issues” (Stanley, 1987, p. 45), and that it offers “entertainment with a message” (Donlan, 1990, p. D3).

In addition to promising viewers that *TNG* addressed contemporary social ills, the popular press suggested that the series depicted a superior set of social relations. Reviews of *TNG* were so homogenous that by the close of season one, conventional wisdom held that the series carried “a message of hope, a belief that mankind is growing—and maturing” (Merrill, 1988, p. 39). As the series continued over the next several seasons, journalists described it as a voyage in “utopian futurism” (Doherty, 1989, p. 4) and a world where “what is best in the human spirit will prevail” (Coit, 1989, p. 88). When Roddenberry died unexpectedly in 1991, *TNG*’s fate was uncertain. But a short time later, Paramount named Berman the new executive producer, and he expressed his commitment to continuing Roddenberry’s vision of “a family of people in a future that’s much better than the present” (Cerone, 1992, p. B8). Little changed with Berman at the helm, and the *Star Trek* universe was still touted as a site of “utopian social interactions” (Davis, 1993, p. 46). Wrote one critic, “[*The Next Generation*]

projects a Utopian community into space," adding that, "[o]n the Enterprise, black and white, male and female, human and humanoid live and work together in peace—each and all ready to fly to one another's rescue. . . . The show's appeal lies in our longing for community—community utterly responsive and supportive of all its members. The Enterprise is Utopia" (Mason, 1993, p. 12). The day before the final episode, Siegel (1994) summarized both the voyage and the vision with the observation that *TNG* creates the "sense that the only shackles on the human imagination are those that we put on ourselves or that we allow social norms and institutions to place upon us" (p. 42).

The studio publicity and journalistic reviews surrounding *TNG* uniformly portray the social interactions of the *Star Trek* universe as ethically and morally preferable to contemporary social relations, and encourage viewers to internalize the *Star Trek* model as desirable. Hence, viewers come to the series without the symbolic equipment needed to question or interrogate its vision of the future. The rhetorical appeal to accept *TNG's* vision of the future as fundamentally superior, indeed to strive for this vision, is reinforced by the dramatic elements of the show. One central way that the series casts itself as a utopian vision is by making a ship, the starship Enterprise in this case, the locus of interaction. Since "utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces," according to Foucault (1986), "there are . . . in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (p. 24). Foucault terms these sites heterotopias, and identifies the ship as the heterotopia *par excellence* because it, more than any other place, reflects the hopes and aspirations of a society or people. Ships, writes Foucault, "[are our] greatest reserve of imagination [and] in civilizations without boats, dreams dry up" (p. 27). Staging the action of *TNG* aboard a (star)ship creates a space where frontiers of the imagination can be explored and charted. The Enterprise represents a social utopia because it is free from the fixed and mapped spaces of society.

Not only does the ship appeal to utopian imagination, but so too does the narrative. The Enterprise depicts a community in which every human need is fulfilled and technology has been perfected to serve humankind. The absence of any form of material suffering suggests that by the twenty-fourth century problems such as unemployment and poverty have been eradicated, a perception that is confirmed explicitly by the character Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) in the episode "Time's Arrow II."<sup>9</sup> In addition to claiming to have corrected the economic ills of the twentieth century, *TNG* claims that humans have evolved morally. The Enterprise purports to be a community without racism, sexism, or ethnic or religious bigotry, and viewers are invited

to believe that all cultural biases have been wiped out. During the show's two-hour premiere, "Encounter at Farpoint," Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) of the Enterprise is put on trial for the past crimes of humanity by a powerful being known as Q (John de Lancie). Ultimately, the Captain convinces Q, and subsequently the audience, that humankind has evolved beyond a cruel, hateful species. Through repeated reference to progress, perfection, and social harmony, the dramatic narrative functions as an invitation to perceive the future in *The Next Generation* as utopian. Thus, there exists an overwhelming consistency between how the show is represented in the popular press and how it represents itself.

In the context of utopian imagination, *TNG* not only invites a shared sense of the future, but also actively mobilizes agents toward the realization of that future. By routinely insisting upon the divergence of its handling of social relations from the status of contemporary social relations, *TNG* highlights twentieth century class, race, gender, and sexual relations as arenas vitally in need of social change. Change is not left open to chance though, as *TNG* aggressively presents its reconfiguring of social relations as ideal. Viewers, in effect, bear 'witness' to a better future, and the process of repeated witnessing (i.e., the viewing of subsequent episodes) ensures that this future becomes a more familiar, friendly place. In addition to naturalizing its vision of the future through display and repetition, *TNG* further naturalizes its future through appeals to the past. Within the dramatic narrative, characters frequently reference well-known historical figures and events to explain why their present (our future) appears as it does. These appeals to collective or public memory situate *TNG's* future in a historical timeline that furnishes it both with a sense of fidelity and inevitability. Ironically, *The Next Generation's* appeal to the linearity of time may be central to the way its future shapes our present, and constrains our ability to imagine and thus realize alternatives. Therefore, it is imperative that we tighten the critical lens and examine more closely the specific representations within *TNG*. Given the importance that the series assigns to social relations, we turn to representational practices concerning race, gender, and sexuality, and critically assess them in the context of contemporary identity politics.<sup>10</sup>

One of the persistent difficulties in trying to get at what representations 'do' is that readers can, provided they have access to the appropriate codes, always construct 'oppositional' reading positions. Such positions create openings, fissures, and even ruptures in ideology; they create politicized spaces where ideological messages can be productive as well as repressive. Short of the 'oppositional practices' of readers, Hall (1991) contends that, "ideologies do not consist of isolated and separate concepts, but in the articulation of different elements into a distinctive set or chain of meanings" (p. 271). The concept of 'freedom', for instance, can be transformed to serve radically different

ideological purposes depending upon how it is articulated within the logic of different discourses. In this particular essay, we are more concerned with how race, gender, and sexuality are structured into a chain of meanings, than in the multitude of ways that readers can break the chain. We are, of course, aware that to do the work of ideology the chain itself must be flexible enough to invite adherence from a wide range of readers.

### *Constructing Otherness through Specieality*

In the twenty-fourth century world of *Star Trek*, racial and ethnic prejudices have supposedly been eliminated within the Federation. Racial minorities hold positions of authority and persons of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds live and work together in harmony. Moreover, the fact that racial differences are never mentioned aboard the Enterprise would seem to suggest that race is simply unimportant. A closer examination, however, indicates that racial prejudices in *TNG* have been displaced, not erased, by projecting racial difference onto alien species (Vande Berg, 1996, p. 55). Since the Enterprise crew is comprised almost entirely of humans, who are played predominantly by White actors and whose culture (customs, habits, food, and attire) is eminently European, humanity (the dominant culture) is coded principally as White. In turn, the minority actors who play humans on *TNG* are stripped of their cultured identities and absorbed into the dominant (White) culture. There is no race consciousness on the Enterprise, then, because there is effectively no racial difference among humans. Yet, even as the representation of 'whiteness' is invisible to itself, it is the norm by which everything else is measured. To the extent that the humans are the locus (center) of action, alien species are constructed as Others, and whiteness is re-centered. In order to understand the ways that *TNG* 'others' race and ethnicity, it is helpful to examine at least one alien species in depth.<sup>11</sup>

We have chosen to focus our analysis on Klingons since they are among the most frequently depicted species and have appeared in all of the series. In the original *Star Trek* series, humans and Klingons were bitter enemies, but in *The Next Generation* the two species live peacefully, if somewhat uneasily, along side one another. Despite a seventy-year Federation-Klingon alliance, only one Klingon, Lt. Worf (Michael Dorn), has achieved the 'honor' of serving as a Starfleet officer aboard the Enterprise.<sup>12</sup> Though Klingon, Worf was raised by human parents. Given the absence of any other Klingons in Starfleet, Worf's background functions as the chief signifier for the permissibility of his 'difference.' In other words, his preferred status as a Starfleet officer is closely tied to his 'proper' upbringing, to his assimilation into the dominant culture, and to the rejection of his cultural heritage. Indeed, in every instance that Worf has decided to explore his 'Klingon-ness', he has left the Enterprise. Worf's presence, then, serves to value



difference only at the level of display, and promotes intolerance for cultural difference (pluralism) at the level of subjectivity. By inviting viewers to read his 'specieal' difference as 'cultural' difference, Worf functions to perpetuate numerous racial stereotypes. Worf, as with the other Klingons in *TNG*, is depicted as physically powerful, instinctively violent, and overtly sexual. He is, writes Salamon (1993), "a white man's nightmare of black masculinity" (p. 47), an amalgamation of the coarsest Black stereotypes.

Worf's position as chief of security as well as his aggressive behavior are complicitous with a warrior motif. While the other bridge officers rely on rationality and communication to solve conflict, Worf's response is uniformly characterized by anger and violence. As Gibbs (1992) explains, "Black males are portrayed by the mass media in a limited number of roles, most of them deviant, dangerous, and dysfunctional. This constant barrage of predominantly disturbing images inevitably contributes to the public's negative stereotypes of Black men, particularly of those who are perceived as young, hostile, and impulsive" (p. 268). Nor is instinctual violence the only damaging Black male stereotype that Worf perpetuates. When invited to go swimming with several friends in "Conspiracy," Worf declines, adding that, "I do not like swimming. It is too much like bathing." In suggesting that Klingons do not bathe, this remark legitimizes racist jokes about hygiene. Moreover, Worf's sexuality is constructed around Black male stereotypes, what Byrd (1998) calls, "the black buck mythic type" (p. 77). One archetypal media image of African American men is that they are sexual superhumans (Xing, 1998, p. 69) who are "violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh" (Warren, 1988, p. 57). In the episode "Haven," Worf claims that he cannot have sexual relations with human (White) women because, "Human women are too fragile. I would have to restrain myself too much." This statement reinforces racist jokes about the Black phallus (Whately, 1991), and exposes the link between Black male sexuality, violence, and racism in the U.S. (Hall, 1991). The cultural fallout, explains hooks (1994), is that unless such representations are contextualized within the frame of a "white [patriarchy] . . . we risk making it appear that the problems of misogyny, sexism, and all the behaviors this thinking supports and condones, including rape, male violence against women, is a black male thing" (pp. 115–116).

Though Worf is the only regular Klingon on *TNG*, several individual episodes have focused on Klingon culture. These episodes create some potentially progressive spaces for viewing race by constructing honor and duty as guiding Klingon principles, for instance. And yet, on balance, these episodes portray Klingons and their culture in a way that dangerously essentializes African American men and polarizes Black and White cultures. The first episode to explore Klingon culture in depth is "Heart of Glory" in which Worf is assigned to oversee two

Klingons who the Enterprise has rescued from a Ferengi attack. Proclaiming their dislike for the Federation-Klingon alliance, the Klingons implore Worf to listen to his heart, to reclaim the “true Klingon warrior spirit . . . and give up his life with the humans” (Nemecek, 1992, p. 51). Drawing on the stereotype that Black males are inherently violent and driven by a savage, tribal instinct (Hall, 1999; Martindale, 1996), this episode establishes the ‘warrior spirit’ as an innate, ‘natural’ quality of Klingons. The episode also implies that Klingon (Black) and human (White) cultures are mutually exclusive, a binarism that serves to marginalize Black culture and to re-center White culture. That Worf is unable to be truly Klingon while amidst the humans invites viewers to see his ‘Klingon-ness’ as too disruptive and threatening to the privileged and ‘civilized’ space of the Enterprise.

In a second episode addressing Klingon culture, “A Matter of Honor,” the Enterprise’s first officer, William Riker (Jonathan Frakes), is sent to serve aboard the Klingon battle-cruiser Pagh as part of a cultural exchange program. Soon after his arrival, the Klingon captain accuses Riker of spreading a dangerous bacteria and orders the destruction of the Enterprise. Though Riker is ultimately vindicated and the Enterprise spared, the characterization of Klingons as a race easily provoked to violence is rehearsed yet again. Even the description of the Enterprise as a starship and the Pagh as a battle-cruiser suggests a positive/negative binarism. Riker is accepted on the Klingon cruiser only after he appropriates Klingon culture, culture he completely sheds upon his return to the Enterprise. As with “Heart of Glory,” in this episode Black and White are structured as a “bifurcated system of representation” (Xing, 1998, p. 74) in which one concept is privileged over the other.

In *TNG*’s third season, viewers got their first look at the Klingon homeworld in an episode titled, “Sins of the Father.” This episode is significant visually, auditorily, and narratively for how it racializes place. The dreary backgrounds and dramatic sound-track used to depict the Klingon capital city are dark and foreboding and suggest an underlying savagery and barbarism that draws, at once, on stereotypes of ‘native’ Africa and depressed inner cities. This view is confirmed early in the narrative when Worf’s brother Kurn (Tony Todd) is jumped and knifed in a dimly lit passageway. Later in the same episode, two unnamed Klingons emerge from the shadows and attack Captain Picard as he travels in the capital city at night. But unlike Kurn, Picard manages to ward off his attackers and fulfill his mission. The scene captures vividly what Hall (1991) terms a “base-image of the ‘native’”:

[N]atives’ always move as an anonymous collective . . . likely to appear at any moment out of the darkness to . . . cook and eat the innocent explorer or colonial administrator . . . . And against them is always counterposed the isolated white figure, alone ‘out there’, confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the ‘heart of

darkness', displaying coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority—exerting mastery over the rebellious natives. (p. 276)

By also tapping into stereotypical depictions of 'the hood' and Black gang violence, the episode constructs an "imagined homogenous community" (Keith & Cross, 1993, p. 8) in which a place as well as its inhabitants are coded as criminal and threatening. Such localization of crime, notes Goldberg (1993), "magnifies the image of racialized criminality, and confines the overwhelming proportion of crimes involving the racially marginalized to racially marginal space" (p. 52). It depoliticizes the problems of contemporary inner cities, and suggests they are inherently 'Black problems.' *TNG's* spatial racialization is all the more evident in the stark contrast between the Klingon homeworld and the starship *Enterprise*. The *Enterprise* is not only well illuminated, but also a space where persons have faces, feel safe, and experience community. In the context of utopian imagination, *TNG* invites viewers to idealize the homogenous space of the *Enterprise* while, at once, allowing them to feel socially progressive by superficially cloaking that space in the guise of diversity.

Just as *TNG's* Klingon males are based on racist depictions of Black men, so too are the images of Klingon females constructed around the stereotypes of Black women. In the first five seasons, only three Klingon women appeared as primary characters on *The Next Generation*. The first female Klingon to occupy a principal role was Ambassador K'Ehleyr (Suzie Plackson) in "The Emissary." In this episode, K'Ehleyr is sent to assist the *Enterprise* in thwarting a Klingon battle-cruiser from attacking a defenseless world. Throughout the mission, she makes repeated and aggressive sexual advances toward Worf, and in one scene attempts to seduce him, by saying, "I don't bite. Well actually I do." These actions function to perpetuate the image of Black women as hypersexual and sexually deviant (hooks, 1992, p. 62). Though Worf struggles to resist K'Ehleyr's explicit sexual advances, he ultimately succumbs and the two consummate their passion. In accordance with Klingon custom, Worf proposes to K'Ehleyr, but she rejects his marriage proposal reinforcing her depiction as a harlot, and reproducing what Sims-Wood (1988) calls "the image of the black woman as impure and loose" (p. 240).

B'Etor (Gwynyth Walsh) and Lursa Duras (Barbara March) are the only other major female Klingon characters to appear in *TNG*. The Duras sisters appear in "Redemption," season four's finale and "Redemption II," season five's premier. The underlying story in these two episodes involves the *Enterprise* crew trying to prevent a Klingon civil war. B'Etor and Lursa betray the Klingon Supreme Council by forming a pact with the Romulans, the long-time "blood enemies" of the Klingons. In an effort to conceal their traitorous alliance, the Duras sisters attempt, at one point, to gain Worf's allegiance by seducing him. In attempting to manipulate Worf with their bodies, their actions further

code Black female sexuality as deviant and perpetuate stereotypical depictions of Black women as “hos” and “bitches” (Jones, 1992, p. 96; hooks, 1994, p. 57). Though Worf resists their advances, B’Etor and Lursa’s alliance with the Romulans ultimately plunges the Klingon Empire into a civil war. The intersection of racist and sexist coding in Klingon females is further evident in the Duras sisters’ attire, whose revealing bustlines are widely known in *Trek* circles as “Klingon klevage” (Nemecek, 1992, p. 169). The danger of such representations lies both in their complicity with historically oppressive images and their objectification of the Black female form. Explains hooks (1992),

Representations of black female bodies in contemporary popular culture rarely subvert or critique images of black female sexuality which were part of the cultural apparatus of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century racism . . . . Most often attention was not focused on the complete black female on display . . . . She is there to entertain . . . with the naked image of Otherness. They are not to look at her as a whole human being. They are to only notice certain parts. Objectified in a manner similar to that of black female slaves who stood on auction blocks while owners and overseers described their important, salable parts. (p. 62).

B’Etor and Lursa’s overt sexualization privileges a future in which both the racial and gender commodification of Otherness is acceptable, while their lying, scheming, and traitorous behavior suggests that those who define their subjectivities in relation to humanity (White culture) occupy a higher ethical ground.

The depiction of the Klingons on *TNG* suggests several important implications for identity politics. First, the fact that race is constructed as ‘alien’ and literally located at the border of the Federation sustains the dominant center/margin social structure. Unlike the “marginality one chooses as a site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility . . . [in] critical response to domination,” the marginality that we see at work in *TNG* is “imposed by oppressive structures” (hooks, 1990, p. 153) that continue to separate and alienate in the form of the Other. Second, by turning race into something that is ‘encountered’ only by travel to foreign lands (worlds), *TNG* exoticizes the racialized Other, transforming it into an object of cultural tourism, rather than an opportunity for cultural appreciation and exchange. Since the many species that the Enterprise encounters disappear after each episode, viewers have no sense of the histories or experiences of those species. Decontextualized and dehistoricized, alien species are reduced to crude racial and ethnic stereotypes. In contrast, the human characters return to the screen each week, where viewers learn about them and their (White) culture—all in the utopian context of the Enterprise. *TNG* invites viewers to participate in a collective vision of the future that feels socially progressive because it appears diverse, even as it makes diversity comfortable by driving out and alienating cultural difference.

*Gender Construction and the Recentering of Masculinity*

Charges of gender bias in the futuristic world of *Star Trek* have been leveled ever since the original series traveled across the television airwaves in 1967. During the development of *The Next Generation*, producers pledged that they would eliminate the gender biases that dominated the first series, and in a show of good faith, the prologue of the original series that professed "to go where no *man* has gone before" was changed to read "to go where no *one* has gone before." Executives also committed themselves to producing several *TNG* episodes expressly concerned with gender inequities. In this section, we consider how gender is constructed on *TNG*, not to judge the show as more or less sexist than its predecessor, but to understand and problematize the production, reproduction, and situating of masculinity as a cultural category (Grossberg & Treichler, 1987; Flax, 1990; Hanke, 1990; Nakayama, 1994; Wood, 1996). Specifically, in this section we examine the gendering of character roles, the construction of the male gaze, and an episode that overtly addresses the issue of gender inequality.

The captain of the Enterprise on *TNG*, Jean-Luc Picard, provides an interesting contrast to the original *Star Trek* captain, James T. Kirk. Whereas Kirk embodies the traditional tough and rugged space cowboy, Picard is sensitive and refined. His favorite activities include listening to classical music, reading Shakespeare, and sipping Earl Grey tea in his quarters. Unlike Kirk, Picard is not stereotypically masculine. The series further deconstructs some gender stereotypes by featuring two strong female characters, Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) and Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden). Troi serves as the Enterprise's psychological counselor and Crusher as the chief medical doctor. By expanding the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, *TNG* broadens its appeal. At the same time that it opens gender representations, it continues to define them relative to one another. The juxtaposition of the male roles of captain, first officer, chief of security, and chief engineer with the female roles of counselor and doctor suggests that the men act and that the women take care of the men acting. Masculinity is constructed as autonomous, authoritative, and active, while femininity is contrived as supportive, responsive, and passive. The consequence of conceptualizing masculinity and femininity as a mutually exclusive duality is that the duality implies a social hierarchy in which 'masculinity' is regarded as the preferred set of human norms and behaviors (Humm, 1995, p. 163). The projection of this duality into the utopian future of *TNG* invites viewers to internalize an unspoken hierarchy of gender roles and relations as ideal.

There are several instances where this hierarchy is turned on its head, however. The classic two-part episode, "The Best of Both Worlds," in which the Enterprise and humanity must battle a cybernetic collective known as the Borg is a prime example. In this episode,

nearly every idea and action that favors the Enterprise originates with a female character—Crusher, Troi, Guinan (Whoopi Goldberg), or Shelby (Elizabeth Dennehy). When Captain Picard is abducted by the Borg, the first officer Riker is quickly feminized in relation to the ambitious, quick-witted, and hypermasculine Shelby, Starfleet's "best tactician" (Nemecek, 1992, p. 130). Ultimately, Riker's more 'feminine' approach, involving collaboration, proves to be more productive than Shelby's competitive approach. Though *TNG* appears to equivocate on the matter of gender roles in this episode, traditional gender roles are reversed, not ruptured. The series continues to construct them as mutually exclusive categories and when the 'feminine' category is finally the more valued one, a male character is enacting it.

In addition to *TNG*'s gendering of character roles, narratively it "represents wom[e]n as the object of a phallogocentric gaze" (hooks, 1992, p. 126). Nowhere is this process more evident than in "The Perfect Mate," in which, Briam (Tim O'Connor) presents Alrik (Mickey Cottrell) with a 'priceless gift' intended to cease the years of conflict between their peoples. The gift is Kamala (Famke Janssen), a woman who has been prepared since birth to bond with Alrik. In true *Star Trek* fashion, Kamala—an empathic mesomorph—can read the thoughts of her mate and then transform herself into whatever he desires. Kamala's identity, then, is defined entirely in terms of male sexual desire. Throughout the episode, numerous men on the Enterprise struggle to resist bonding (i.e., having intercourse) with her, since she has already been promised to Alrik. At one point in the narrative, Dr. Crusher objects to the 'gift' because it prostitutes Kamala. But Captain Picard quickly dismisses this complaint citing the Federation's Prime Directive—the principle of non-interference in the natural development of alien cultures. Picard's suggestion that gifting women is 'natural' in some cultures obscures the constructedness of all cultural practices. Furthermore, since Picard has violated the Prime Directive on numerous occasions in the past when it suited him, his (in)action in this instance symbolically sanctions Kamala's prostitution.

In addition to its narrative objectification of women, *TNG* visually treats women as objects of a "controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey, 1988, p. 89)—a process Freud termed scopophilia. "In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed," notes Mulvey (1988), "with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (p. 62). When *TNG* launched, all of the officers aboard the Enterprise appeared in standard starfleet uniforms, except for Deanna Troi who was clad in a miniskirt for the pilot episode. In response to viewer complaints that it made her appear "loose" and "cheerleader-like" (Nemecek, 1992, p. 27), her uniform was lengthened, but her neckline was lowered. By dressing women in scantily clad apparel that accentuates cleavage, *TNG* reinforces their status as (passive) objects

to be owned and controlled. The centrality of the “male gaze” to the show’s treatment of women is even evident in the initial casting calls to talent agencies. The character of Dr. Beverly Crusher is described as having the “natural walk of a striptease queen,” while the character of Deanna Troi is represented as “An alien woman who is tall (5’8–6’) and slender, about 30 years old and beautiful” (Nemecek, 1992, p. 13). Asserts LeMoncheck (1985), “An important feature of our characterization of sex objectification is that the sex object’s ability to attract or excite her objectifier sexually is the vehicle . . . of her dehumanization. She is dehumanized through her sexuality, as if it were a feature of her personality that invited her dehumanization” (p. 44). By inscribing the “male gaze” within a utopian appeal to collective imagination, *TNG* structurally limits the ability of the uncritical viewer to envision a set of social relations that does not value women in terms of their ability to arouse desire.

The *TNG* episode that most explicitly addresses gender equity issues is “Angel One.” As part of a search to find survivors from a freighter that has been missing for several years, the Enterprise crew stumbles upon the matriarchal planet Angel One in which contemporary gender stereotypes are reversed. Men are portrayed as sexual objects, and are not allowed to participate in government because they are too emotional. In contrast, the women of Angel One control the government and work to support the men. When the Enterprise crew locates the survivors of the freighter, they learn that the survivors are rebelling against the social and political power structure of Angel One. Upon capturing these rebels, their government sentences them to death. Outraged by this decision, Enterprise commander William Riker appeals to the government to set the rebels free. Initially ignored because he is a man, Riker manages to use his body as an object of desire to seduce Angel One’s leader Beata (Karen Montgomery) and persuades her to forgo the death penalty in favor of exile. Though the episode openly depicts twentieth century gender inequities, it fails to rupture or even challenge the stereotypes that create those inequities. Given the gender reversal, Riker’s ability to persuade Beata using his body functions metaphorically to legitimate the construction of women as sexual objects. Additionally, Riker’s acceptance of the sanction leveled against the rebels suggests that segregating the minority reflects an ‘acceptable’ solution to gender inequality. In failing to explode hierarchies of gender, *TNG* reproduces them.

#### *Homosexuality Still Alien in the Future*

The portrayal of heterosexuality as the sexual norm is so pervasive in U.S. popular culture that the constructedness of (hetero)sexuality is often ignored in critical studies (Whately, 1991). In this final section of analysis, our aim is to disrupt heterosexuality as a normalized category by inquiring into the construction of sexuality on *TNG*. Toward

this end, we explore the general depiction of romantic couplings on the series, and analyze the narrative development of two episodes specifically concerned with sexual orientation. Adopting Plummer's (1992) definition of heterosexism as "a diverse set of social practices . . . in which the homo/hetero binary distinction is at work whereby heterosexuality is privileged" (p. 19), we contend that *The Next Generation* envisions and fosters a heterosexist future.

Among the most common plot devices on *TNG* is the exploration of romantic relationships and nearly all of the principal characters have been involved in multiple romantic couplings. The frequency with which the series employs this device suggests that loving, caring relationships are a vital part of life in the future. Though the couplings are often inter-specieal (racial), they have never been same-sex. In fact, in seven seasons of exploring unknown worlds and species, *TNG* has never depicted an openly gay character. The absence of same-sex couples and gay characters invites viewers to imagine a future in which homosexuality is nonexistent. Ironically, Silverstein (1982) observes that, "Gay men and women show more self-esteem than ever before, are more relaxed and participate openly as gays in business, education, and even labor movements. There are more social avenues open to gay people and more support from heterosexual segments of society" (p. 340). The "symbolic annihilation" (Gross, 1994, p. 143) of gay men and women in the self-proclaimed utopian world of the twenty-fourth century can be interpreted in a number of ways. Perhaps homosexuality is simply considered unnatural, or it was cured by advanced medical technology. If these readings seem drastic, consider the narrative development of the two episodes that take up sexual orientation.

Early in *TNG's* history, several gay activist groups waged a letter writing campaign insisting that the producers film an episode about sexual orientation. The executives responded with not one, but two episodes. In the first, "The Host," Dr. Beverly Crusher falls in love with Odan (Franc Luz), a member of the Trill race sent to settle a dispute between Peliar's Alpha and Beta moons. At the outset of their courtship, Beverly is unaware that Trill are comprised of a symbiont being and a host body. The symbiont carries the emotions, memories, and beliefs of the Trill—in essence, the Trill's soul. When Odan's host body is mortally wounded, the symbiont is placed into the host body of a woman. Unable to accept her lover in female form, Beverly ends the relationship, noting that her culture is uncomfortable with these types of changes. Though Dr. Crusher may be referring to the dramatic physical changes in general (her lover in a new body), that those changes are sex(ually)-coded cannot be ignored. In fact, as the Enterprise crew waited for the female host body to arrive, the symbiont being was temporarily placed inside Will Riker's body to keep it alive. During this time, Beverly continued her romantic involvement with



the Trill being, ending the relationship only after the symbiont acquired a female body.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the relationship was 'stigmatized' only when it became a same-sex coupling. As Goffman (1963) explains, "[t]he Greeks . . . originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (p. 1). In this case, the bodily sign marked as 'impure' is the shared sex of the romantic partners.

Perhaps more important to how this story functions ideologically than its narrative resolution are the unspoken assumptions embedded in it regarding sexuality. Since Odan's soul never dies (it is simply placed in a new body), Beverly's decision to end her romantic relationship defines sexuality as a binaristic choice concerning male or female sexual partners, rather than a range of experiences involving passion, love, and connection. This establishes a framework in which, Dyer explains (1999), "we are led to treat heterosexuality and homosexuality as sharply opposed categories of persons when in reality both heterosexual and homosexual responses and behavior are to some extent experienced by everybody in their life" (p. 250). A deeper examination of the way the episode constructs a 'structure of feeling' supports a related conclusion. Over the course of the episode, viewers are invited to care about the relationship between Beverly and Odan, so when the relationship ends, it evokes disappointment and sadness. But it does not encourage viewers to be critical of Beverly's actions, a move that would be potentially dangerous since she is a primary character on the series. Beverly's actions are framed as 'understandable' since she is, after all, not gay. The audience's acceptance of her 'choice' re-affirms the taken-for-granted notion that homosexuality and heterosexuality are mutually exclusive categories.

The second *TNG* episode to address directly the issue of sexual orientation, "The Outcast," aired during the show's fifth season. The plot is set in motion when the J'naii, an androgynous race, summon the Enterprise to help them locate a missing shuttlecraft. While looking for the shuttle, Will Riker is assigned to work with a J'naii pilot named Soren (Melinda Culea), and the two quickly develop a romantic relationship. Given Soren's sexual ambiguity, the relationship has, at least at the level of display, homosexual overtones. But the progressive possibilities of the representation are undercut, as viewers are repeatedly reminded that Will is not 'really' gay. First Will's status as a 'normal' man is consistently affirmed through his traditional masculine coding as strong, rugged, self-confident, authoritative, and active. Historically, the depiction of male homosexuality as abnormal, explains Chauncey (1994), has been closely tied to femininity:

The abnormality (or queerness) of the "fairy," that is, was defined as much by his "woman-like" character or "effeminacy" as his solicitation of male sexual partners; the "man" who responded to solicitations—no matter how often—was not considered abnormal, a "homosexual," so long as he abided by masculine gender conventions.

Indeed, the centrality of effeminacy to the representation of the “fairy” allowed many conventionally masculine men . . . to engage in extensive sexual activity with other men without risking stigmatization and the loss of their status as “normal men.” (p. 13)

Second, though Soren is without sex, she tells Will that she has always had female tendencies. Thus, despite her androgynous appearance, the relationship is framed in heterosexual terms. In fact, Soren’s feelings of ‘femaleness’ are central to the narrative’s structure. On Soren’s planet, sexual preference is banned and all nonconformists are diagnosed as mentally ill and then treated with therapy. When Soren’s family and friends discover her female tendencies, she is taken into custody and put on trial. Despite her pleas for acceptance and Riker’s attempt to defend her, Soren is deemed ill and sentenced to treatment. When Riker attempts a rescue, he learns that the therapy has ‘worked’ and Soren is now convinced her feelings were inappropriate. Though the audience is undoubtedly invited to feel angry that Soren has been robbed of her ‘true’ feelings, her feelings concerned her sex, not her sexuality. That it ‘feels like’ Soren has been denied her sexuality only serves to reinforce the framing of sexuality as a choice between two possible, and opposite sex pairings. Set five hundred years in the future, the episode does nothing to challenge the heteronormative present, and articulates, at best, ambivalence toward a political preference it ought to have.

### *Critical Reflections on Imagining the Future*

“Every epoch,” observes Baczko (1989), “has its modes of imagining, reproducing, and renewing the collective imagination” (p. 313). Late in the twentieth century, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* furnishes just such a mode, one that functions not merely as entertainment, but as symbolic inducement. After 178 episodes, *TNG*’s futuristic images—of space and species, of individuals and institutions, of technology and innovations—linger in the minds of its viewers, shaping the collective imagination. Based on an analysis of the series’ representational practices surrounding race, gender, and sexuality, we contend that *The Next Generation* functions ideologically to re-center White heterosexual masculinity by inviting viewers to imagine a future of reified present, a future that renews dominant cultural codes as progressive and utopian. Since our identities and actions in the present are connected to the ways in which we imagine the future (Jameson, 1982; Ruppert, 1986; Baczko, 1989; Wu, 1994), these images function to constrain the creation of a set of social relations outside current hegemonic structures.

Popular imagination must, therefore, be contested and struggled over in the same ways as popular memory. Cultural and media critics must politicize futuristic fantasies and critically examine their role in the construction of popular imagination. The politicization of images

that appeal to a collective sense of the future is all the more important in cases such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* where those images make claims to utopianism. When images are represented and represent themselves as utopian, the ethical and ideological grounds must be explicated, so that audiences do not uncritically accept that certain images represent a better future simply because they bear the utopian label. Utopian appeals to popular imagination, too often, present histories of the future as disinterested and authoritative and hierarchies of value as universally valid and consensual. This erasure of ethical and political considerations subverts the future as site of struggle and constructs human agency as a condition for adapting to existing sites of injustice. To the extent that utopian images are prescriptive, the ideologies that underlie them must be interrogated. Critics must ask, "for whom are the images utopian?" and "what are the social and political implications of those utopian appeals?"

Since "the ability of audiences to shape their own readings, and hence their own social life, is constrained by . . . access to oppositional codes" (Condit, 1991, p. 365), cultural workers must also equip students with oppositional reading strategies, strategies to 'see through' the ideology of media texts (Hall, 1992). More specifically, we advocate a pedagogical practice of counter-imagination, which equips students with reading strategies to evaluate how appeals to popular imagination inform, shape, and structure configurations of power in the present. Students must be taught to read individual representations within the larger scenic vision so that the depiction of racial and gender diversity is not simply allowed to take the place of a progressive politics.<sup>14</sup> Counter-imagination endeavors to provide historically marginalized subjects with decoding strategies that recognize and empower their voices and identities, rather than excluding and diminishing them. It is not simply enough to be critical of appeals to collective imagination, however. "To live well in the present, to live decently and humanely, we must see into the future" (Scholes, 1975, p. 75). Thus, in addition to teaching students to interrogate images of the future, we must encourage them to imagine a more just future, a future of radical possibility and opportunity. It is in the context of these visions that we will begin to realize a more democratic present. For as Alcoff (1988) explains, "you cannot mobilize a movement that is only and always against: you must have a positive alternative, a vision of a better future that can motivate people to sacrifice their time and energy toward its realization" (pp. 418–419).

In this essay, we have demonstrated that the utopian appeals of *The Next Generation* affirm and re-center White heterosexual masculinity in U.S. popular culture. Visions of the future will always serve particular political interests and relations of power. For cultural and media critics, the goal is to interrogate the sites of popular imagination construction and their relationship to the cultural politics of identity.

In pursuing this project, scholars can offer valuable insights into how individuals think about their world, social change, and themselves. Educators at every level can play an equally important role by equipping individuals to read cultural texts critically and encouraging them to examine the social functions they serve. The producers of cultural texts can also contribute by striving to imagine a future outside the current codes of inequality. In short, the challenge is not to allow our collective visions of the future to be reduced to existing codes of injustice simply because they are familiar and comfortable.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a comprehensive overview of the scholarly literature on *Star Trek*, see Appendix B of Harrison et al. (1996). For additional, especially popular resources, see Gibberman (1991).

<sup>2</sup>In all seven of its first-run seasons, *TNG* finished among the top three syndicated programs, an honor it shared with *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy*. According to Paramount executives, had *The Next Generation* been a network show, it would have ended up in the Nielsen's top ten every week (Nemecek, 1989). *TNG*'s final episode was, at the time, the highest rated show in the history of syndication. In addition to high ratings, the series received numerous industry accolades, including 16 Emmys and the Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting.

<sup>3</sup>We should note that the interweaving of individual *Star Trek* texts into the larger *Star Trek* phenomenon is a prominent attribute of the phenomenon. All of the films and television series reference persons and events in the other series as though they were actual historical figures and occurrences. In fact, there are a number of *Star Trek* books (Dillard, 1994; Okuda, Okuda, & Mirek, 1994) that situate the persons and events from the individual texts in a broad history. Our sense is that a majority of viewers come to the individual *Star Trek* texts having already been exposed to the larger phenomenon and thus experience the text in the prescribed context (i.e., an elaborate history of the future).

<sup>4</sup>In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson (1912) critiques Science's spatial treatment of time as quantifiable geometric units, and argues that the human experience of time is not scientific. For Bergson, humans experience time as a "flow" involving past, present, and future, and that flow does not form a straight line. "What I call 'my present' has one foot in my past and another in my future. In my past, first, because 'the moment in which I am speaking is already far from me'; in my future, next, because the moment is impending over the future; it is to this future that I am pending" (Bergson, 1991, p. 138). The Nietzsche's (1995) "On the Vision and the Riddle," Zarathustra encounters a gateway where two paths meet, one that stretches back an eternity the other stretching from an eternity. This gateway, which is inscribed "Moment," draws both on all that comes before it and draws after it all that is to come, suggesting a circularity of time (pp. 157-158). Finally, in *The Concept of Time and Being and Time*, Heidegger (1992, 1996) argues that Dasein, or the entity in its being, fundamentally has its being in three temporalities, its past (thrownness), its possible futures (projection), and its present (fallenness). That is to say, Dasein encompasses its not-yets as projections, living those projections now. For more on postmodern views of time, see Rosenau (1992, pp. 68-69).

<sup>5</sup>The term 'anticipates' is intended to suggest that the relationship between the now-self and the not-yet self has "form" (Burke, 1968, pp. 31, 124). The now-self is always coming towards the not-yet self. It is always already ahead of itself, always in a process of becoming (in an endless cycle of arousal and fulfillment). Thus, the future possibilities represented by the not-yet self are part of the now-self, and hence shape purpose and action in the present.

<sup>6</sup>In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon (1997) describes two types of

imagination: *reproductive* imagination, which calls up images of past experiences, and *creative* imagination, which summons things future and remote. What Bacon terms re-productive imagination we call memory, and what he terms creative imagination we simply call imagination.

<sup>7</sup>Psychologists have, for instance, occasionally distorted patient memories through the power of suggestion.

<sup>8</sup>We define "utopian visions" as literary or nonliterary texts that as a whole depict, or are taken to depict, an ideal society (Morson, 1981, p. 76). Working from a poststructuralist view, we will refer to the audiences for these texts, be they literary or otherwise, as "readers."

<sup>9</sup>In this episode, the crew of the Enterprise accidentally transports the historical figure Mark Twain into the twenty-fourth century. While Twain is onboard the Enterprise, Deanna explains to him that the social and economic problems of his time have been eliminated.

<sup>10</sup>Though we regard class as an important component of the series, in the interest of space we have chosen not to address it here. Further, we agree with Nakayama's (1994) assessment that "the intersections between 'race,' gender, and sexuality—white heterosexual masculinity in particular—have yet to be productively explored and confronted by those in communication and cultural studies" (p. 164).

<sup>11</sup>In earlier versions of this essay, we analyzed two alien species to illustrate *TNG's* racial and ethnic Othering, the Klingons and the Ferengi. We remained convinced that the Ferengi are an amalgam of grotesque anti-Semitic stereotypes, but had to cut this analysis to conform to length restrictions.

<sup>12</sup>The current Star Trek installment, *Voyager*, has introduced a second Starfleet officer who is Klingon, Belana Torres. Actually, Torres is only half Klingon, but like Worf, she is hot-tempered and aggressive.

<sup>13</sup>Admittedly, Dr. Crusher is uneasy about her relationship with the Trill being while it is inside Riker's body. But the explicit reason given for this uneasiness is not the change of body, but the fact that the body belongs to her long time friend, Will Riker.

<sup>14</sup>For example, chief engineer Geordi LaForge's (LeVar Burton) Black identity is erased by coding humanity as White in the futuristic world of Star Trek.

#### REFERENCES

- 2<sup>nd</sup> *Star Trek* family hurled into future. (1987, September 29). *Los Angeles Times*, p. VII.
- Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural feminism vs. poststructuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory. *Signs*, 13 (3), 405–436.
- Anthony, T. (1994, October 10). 'Star Trek' beams up science lesson. *Centre Daily Times*, p. 7A.
- Bacon, F. (1997). *The advancement of learning: With a brief memoir of the author*. Kessinger Publishing.
- Bacon-Smith, C. (1992). *Enterprising women: Television fandom and the creation of popular myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Baczko, B. (1989). *Utopian lights: The evolution of the idea of social progress* (J. L. Greenberg, Trans.). New York: Paragon House. (Original work published 1978)
- Bergson, H. (1912). *Time and free will: An essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. (F. L. Pogson, Trans.). New York: Macmillan. (Original work published 1889)
- Bergson, H. (1991). *Matter and memory*. (W. S. Palmer & N. M. Paul, Trans.). New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1908)
- Bodnar, J. (1992). *Remaking America: Public memory, commemoration, and patriotism in the twentieth century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Burke, K. (1968). *Counter-Statement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1969a). *A grammar of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1969b). *A rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Byrd, M. L. (1998). *Multicultural communication and popular culture: Racial and ethnic images in Star Trek*. New York: The MacGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Cerone, D. (1992, November 6). 'Star Trek'-Still on the beam. *Los Angeles Times*, p. B8.
- Chauncey, G. (1994). *Gay New York: Gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books.
- Coit, D. (1989, January). *Star Trek: The continuing saga of a sixties sensation*. *USA Today: The Magazine of the American Scene*, 117 (2524), 88-90.
- Condit, C. (1991). The rhetorical limits of polysemy. In R. Avery & D. Eason (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on media and society* (pp. 365-386). New York: Guilford Press.
- Davis, E. (1993, February 23). Space is the place. *Village Voice*, pp. 46-47.
- Dillard, J. M. (1994). *Star Trek, "Where no one has gone before." A history in pictures*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Doherty, T. (1989). *The Next Generation: Shakedown cruise*. *Cinefantastique*, 19 (3), 30-34.
- Donlon, B. (1990, November 5). Stranded with TV's best companions. *USA Today*, p. D3.
- Dougherty, M., & Alexander, M. (1987, August 31). 1987's stars of the fall. *People Weekly*, pp. 63-65.
- Dyer, R. (1999). The role of stereotypes. In P. Marris & S. Thornham (Eds.), *Media studies: A reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 245-251). New York: New York University Press.
- Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Flax, J. (1990). Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (pp. 39-62). New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1986). Of other spaces. *Diacritics*, 16 (1), 22-27.
- Ganesh, S. (2000). Mediating the imagination: Corporate involvement in the production of centralized subjectivity. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 24, 67-86.
- Gibberman, S. (1991). *Star Trek: An annotated guide to resources on the development, the phenomenon, the people, the television series, the films, the novels and the recordings*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.
- Gillis, J. (Ed.). (1994). *Commemorations: The Politics of national identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1993). Polluting the body politic. In M. Cross & M. Keith (Eds.), *Racism, the city and the state* (pp. 45-60). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gross, L. (1994). What is wrong with this picture? Lesbian women and gay men on television. In R. Ringer (Ed.), *Queer words, queer images: Communication and the construction of homosexuality* (pp. 143-158). New York: New York University Press.
- Grossberg, L., & Treichler, P. (1987). Intersections of power: Criticism, television, gender. *Communication*, 9, 273-287.
- Hall, S. (1992). The rediscovery of 'ideology': Return of the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran, & J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Culture, society, and the media* (pp. 56-90). New York: Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1999). Racist ideologies and the media. In P. Marris & S. Thornham (Eds.), *Media studies: A reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 271-282). New York: New York University Press.
- Hanke, R. (1990). Hegemonic masculinity in thirtysomething. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 7, 231-248.
- Harrison, T., Projansky, S., Ono, K., & Helford, E. (Eds.). (1996). *Enterprise zones: Critical positions on Star Trek*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1992). *The concept of time*. (W. McNeill, Trans.). Cambridge: Blackwell. (Original work published 1924)

- Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time*. (J. Stambaugh, Trans.). Albany: State University of New York Press. (Original work published 1927)
- hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw culture: Resisting representations*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1996). *Reel to real: Race, sex, and class at the movies*. New York: Routledge.
- Humm, M. (1995). *The dictionary of feminist theory*. Second edition. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Jameson, F. (1982). Progress versus utopia: or, Can we imagine the future? *Science Fiction Studies*, 9, 147–158.
- Jones, J. (1992). The accusatory space. In G. Dent (Ed.), *Black Popular Culture* (pp. 95–98). Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Keith, M., & Cross, M. (1993). Racism and postmodern city. In M. Cross & M. Keith (Eds.), *Racism, the city and state* (pp. 1–30). New York: Routledge.
- LeMoncheck, L. (1985). *Dehumanizing women: Treating persons as sex objects*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld Publishers.
- Martindale, C. (1996). Newspaper stereotypes of African Americans. In P. Lester (Ed.), *Images that injure* (pp. 21–25). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Mason, M. (1993, March 2). Today's problems tomorrow. *Christian Science Monitor*, pp. 12–13.
- Merrill, D. (1988, February 6). Review: Star Trek: The Next Generation. *TV Guide*, p. 39.
- Mestel, R. (1994, February 26). Education . . . the final frontier. *New Scientist*, p. 11.
- Morson, G. (1981). *The boundaries of genre: Dostevsky's Diary of a Writer and the traditions of literary utopia*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1988). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In C. Penley (Ed.), *Feminism and film theory* (pp. 57–68). New York: Routledge.
- Nagler, E. (1994, January 23). Analyzing culture through 'Star Trek.' *New York Times*, p. CN10.
- Nakayama, T. (1994). Show/Down time: "Race," gender, sexuality, and popular culture. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 11 (2), 162–179.
- Nemecek, L. (1992). *The Star Trek The Next Generation companion*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1995). *Thus spoke Zarathustra: A book for all and none*. (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York: Modern Library. (Original work published 1891)
- Nietzsche, F. (1997). *Untimely meditations*. (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1873–76)
- Okuda, M., Okuda, D., & Mirek, D. (1994). *The Star Trek encyclopedia: A reference guide to the future*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Penley, C. (1997). *NASA/TREK: Popular science and sex in America*. New York: Verso.
- Plummer, K. (1992). Speaking its name: Inventing a gay and lesbian studies. In K. Plummer (Ed.), *Modern homosexualities: Fragments of lesbian and gay experience* (pp. 3–28). London: Routledge.
- Roemer, K. (Ed.). (1981). *America as utopia*. New York: Burt Franklin.
- Rosenau, P. (1992). *Post-modernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads, and intrusions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ruppert, P. (1986). *Reader in a strange land*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Salamon, J. (1993, February 23). Race men and space men. *Village Voice*, pp. 46–47.
- Scholes, R. (1975). *Structural fabulation: An essay on fiction of the future*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Siegel, E. (1994, May 27). 'Star Trek' boldly goes. *Boston Globe*, pp. 33, 42.
- Silverstein, C. (1981). *Man to man: Gay couples in America*. New York: Morrow.

- Simon, R. (1993). Forms of insurgency in the production of popular memories: The Columbus quincentenary and the pedagogy of counter-commemoration. *Cultural Studies*, 7 (1), 73–88.
- Sims-Wood, J. (1988). The black female: Mammy, Jemima, Sapphire, and other images. In J. C. Smith (Ed.), *Images of blacks in American culture* (pp. 235–253). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Stanley, J. (1987, September 27). *Star Trek* boldly goes into new series. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. Datebook, 45.
- Taylor Gibbs, J. (1992). Young black males in America: Endangered, embittered, and embattled. In M. Anderson & P. Collins (Eds.), *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Inc.
- Terry, C. (1987, September 20). Trekkies: The message is still here. *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 5, 11.
- Tulloch, J., & Jenkins. (1995). *Science fiction audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek*. London: Routledge.
- Vande Berg, L. (1996). Liminality: Worf as metonymic signifier of racial, cultural, and national differences. In T. Harrison, S. Projansky, K. Ono, & E. Helford (Eds.), *Enterprise zones: Critical positions on Star Trek* (pp. 51–68). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Warren, N. (1988). From Uncle Tom to Cliff Huxtable, Aunt Jemima to Aunt Nell: Images of blacks on film and television industry. In J. C. Smith (Ed.), *Images of blacks in American culture* (pp. 51–75). New York: Greenwood Press
- Whately, M. (1991). Raging hormones and powerful cars: The construction of men's sexuality in school sex education and popular adolescent films. In H. Giroux (Ed.), *Postmodernism, feminism, and cultural politics* (pp. 119–143). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Wood, J. (Ed.). (1996). *Gendered relationships*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- Wu, D. (1993). Understanding utopian literature. *Extrapolation*, 34 (3), 230–243.
- Xing, J. (1998). *Asian America through the lens: History, representation & identity*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Young, J. (1993). *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Zelizer, B. (1995). Reading the past against the grain: The shape of memory studies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12, 214–239.