

THE RHETORICAL VISIONS OF STAR TREK 6: THE  
UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

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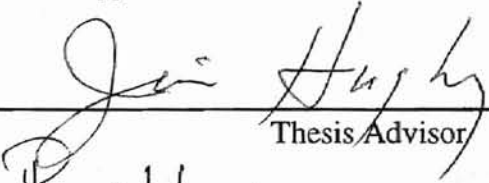
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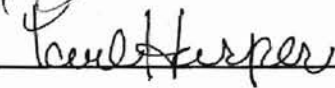
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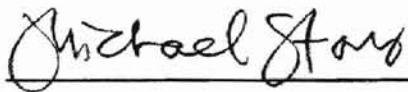
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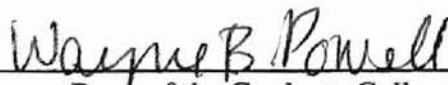
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Stories of other times, people, places, and points of view have been around for eons. Every culture passes down its stories, and invents new ones as circumstances dictate. These myths express cultural pride, and give a culture's explanation of events.

America was a very young country in the 1800's, so young, in fact, that it ached for what it could not have: a long cultural tradition of sagas and legends that speak of a society of people overcoming obstacles and succeeding at life. Since America had no past, the literary genius of this new nation created sagas of where America was going. Prediction of the future resulted in the literature of Science Fiction. Puttkamer (1982) explained how science fiction evolved:

Born in a young country with too little past to nourish the cultural roots of an intricate mythology like those in Europe and the Orient, science fiction was an attempt to grow its roots in the future, peopling its alternate worlds of imagination with the equivalents of knights, princesses, witches, sorcerers, ogres, dragons and magic chariots, and invoking contemporary science in order to lend its tales the appearance of plausibility, i.e., possible reality. The knight became the Buck Rogers (1929), Flash Gordons (1934) and Captain Kirks (1966), the sorcerers became alien superminds like Ming the Merciless, the ogres and dragons became BEMs (bug-eyed monsters), and the chariots turned into spaceships. Just as in the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, everything is possible in science fiction as long as a "scientific" explanation and rationale are offered in place of magic and the supernatural. (p. 141)

Science fiction as a label was first used by William Wilson in 1851 when he wrote a treatise on the poetry of science (James, 1994). No one used the phrase again until 1929 when Hugo Gernsback reintroduced the term for his new magazine, Science Wonder

Stories (James, 1994). Americans were not the only writers of science fiction, nor were they the only consumers of it in the nineteenth Century. It can be said, however, that Americans were influenced in no small way by the messages of science fiction.

Science fiction is particularly well-suited to explain differences in what people hold to be customary. Science fiction writers introduce unique characters and situations that defy reality. Reading about strange and unusual species that are not real exposes science fiction fans to unusual beings and circumstances and prepares them to meet real people and confront real events that are unique and unexpected. The messages of science fiction are intended to educate the audience about the world that exists beyond their tiny neighborhood. Science fiction expands on the idea of cultural exposure to unconventional beings. Instead of presenting a Hindu's strange (by American standards) lifestyle, science fiction presents the equally-different (by American standards) lifestyle of space aliens.

As a writer of science fiction, Gene Roddenberry, the creator of Star Trek, was a visionary who recognized the value of a culturally-diverse society. Roddenberry accepted and embraced all points of view. In fact, he revolted against his Baptist upbringing because of its intolerance on non-Baptists (Engle, 1994). Roddenberry believed in a future peopled with hope, compassion, honesty, forgiveness, and acceptance of diversity.

Through his work on Star Trek, Roddenberry drew on the need for the U.S. culture to find heroes and guidance in science fiction literature. Star Trek challenges us to make a better tomorrow. It does this by showing us that we can co-exist with people who are basically different. The U.S. was built on the idea of cultural and religious diversity. Indeed, "this nation has been a successful attempt at integrating race, language, religion,



political and philosophical ideology, and economic status” (Murdock, 1996, p.1). Star Trek exemplifies and expands these cultural visions of tolerance.

Star Trek is an important icon of the U.S. culture. Its success comes from in part, our sagas and legends that define us as a society, and from Roddenberry's desire to spread a message of diversity.

This study will focus on a Star Trek movie and attempt to determine how this movie speaks to the U.S. culture about values and behaviors.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study will examine a portion of the science fiction literature using fantasy theme analysis and attempt to assess the impact of the visions, types, and themes in science fiction literature. The science fiction literature on which this study is based is the movie, “Star Trek 6: The Undiscovered Country.” Using the methodology of fantasy theme analysis developed by Bormann in 1972, this study will attempt to answer four questions:

1. What are the major fantasy themes in Star Trek 6?
2. What are the fantasy types in Star Trek 6?
3. What are the rhetorical visions in Star Trek 6?
4. Who and where are the rhetorical communities watching Star Trek?

## **THE PROBLEM**

Fantasy theme analysis is used by researchers to find the rhetorical visions of a society. Rhetorical visions, as deduced by Bormann (1972), influence how those exposed to them view themselves and they affect future thinking and behavior. These visions are worth studying because the future is a direct consequence of what our goals are today.

This study is an important new twist utilizing fantasy theme analysis to analyze fantasy. Bormann's studies using fantasy theme analysis dealt with politics and the medium (television) that communicated political messages to the general public. The communication of messages to millions of listeners and viewers is best studied using fantasy theme analysis. A question of influence is the problem at hand. To what kinds of visions are viewers of Star Trek exposed? Are these visions realizable and worthy of distinction? This research will identify the themes, types, visions, and communities by using Bormann's descriptions of those concepts.

This author believes that the visions of Star Trek are partly responsible for this generation's current level of multicultural acceptance. The purpose of this thesis is to determine the truth of that belief, and to discern whether Star Trek has improved race relations caused by cultural differences and engendered respect for all creatures who may be less powerful than themselves.

## **SUMMARY**

Chapter I has suggested that the literature of science fiction makes a unique contribution to the shape of our future. This study will attempt to determine the impact on

part of the science fiction literature on societal goals, norms, and values. Star Trek 6 will be examined in detail using fantasy theme analysis. In the chapters which follow, fantasy theme analysis will be fully described (Chapter II), the methodology will be described (Chapter III), the content of the fantasy messages will be discussed Chapter (IV), and Chapter V will summarize the research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### PRIOR APPLICATIONS OF FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS

In his theory of dramatistic criticism, Kenneth Burke (1950) developed the concept of “identification,” which is related to the concept of “consubstantiality”. Consubstantiality is the degree to which a person has something in common with someone else. There are three types of identification: material identification, idealistic identification, and formal identification.

Material identification (Burke, 1950) occurs when individuals own, use, or share experiences such as owning the same computer, or driving the same model car. Identifying with one another by ownership or use of material objects is what makes material identification an important part of sharing and camaraderie.

Idealistic identification (Burke, 1950) occurs when individuals share attitudes, ideas, feelings, and values because of their interest in areas dealing with personal matters.

Formal identification (Burke, 1950) occurs when individuals formally participate in arranging or organizing an event. Identification occurs because people of similar interests attend events like club meetings and conventions.

Based on the idea of identification developed by Burke, Robert Bales (1970) performed research on small group communication. He found that to release tension, groups become dramatic and share stories. Bales (1970) found that anxious groups act out dramatistic narratives or fantasies. Some fantasies are repeated and become themes

for the group. These fantasy themes are unique to the group and set the group apart as a rhetorical community. According to Bales (1970), groups use fantasy themes to identify with one another.

Earnest Bormann (1972) took Bales' idea of fantasy themes and developed it as a tool for rhetorical criticism. In his methodology, Bormann laid out and defined a number of important concepts. Integrating Burke's idea of consubstantiality and Bales' idea of sharing dramatic stories led Bormann to conclude that narrative discourse is a story-telling activity similar to a theatrical production. All discourse, including plays, books, movies, and television productions, is capable of convincing an audience that the scenes portrayed are real. While being entertained, audiences will experience sorrow, fright, happiness, and a range of other emotions. Audiences are powerfully motivated to act upon the messages portrayed in this fantasy world of discourse. Participants who become active in the message will share stories with one another, and develop an identification with the story and one another as a result of the narrative.

Bormann (1972) used Bales' description of a fantasy theme as the theoretical foundation on which he built his own theory. Bormann writes:

The culture of the interacting group stimulates in each of its members a feeling that he has entered a new realm of reality- a world of heroes, villains, saints, and enemies- a drama, a work of art. The culture of a group is a fantasy established from the past, which is acted upon in the present. In such moments, which occur not only in-groups, but also in individual responses to works of art, one is "transported" to a world which seems somehow even more real than the everyday world. One may feel exalted, fascinated, perhaps horrified or threatened, or impelled to action, but in any case, involved. (p. 398)

Bormann (1972) used this idea to advance his concept of how fantasy themes expand:

My argument is that these moments happen not only in individual reactions to works of art, or in a small group's chaining out a fantasy theme, but also in larger group's hearing a public speech. The dramatizations, which catch on and chain out in small groups, are worked into public speeches and into the mass media and in turn, spread out across larger publics, serve to sustain the members' sense of community, to impel them strongly to action, and to provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes. (p. 398)

Smith (1988), clarifies the idea of a fantasy theme:

A fantasy theme is a story or dramatic reference in a message that presents characters, principally heroes and villains, performing action sequences somewhere other than the here and now. The principal characters may be living persons, historical figures, or envisioned future personalities. Moreover, they may be ordinary mortals or superhuman figures. The fantasy theme is essentially a myth, a story about a particular incident which is put forward as containing or suggesting some general truth. (p. 272)

Bormann (1982) developed the term, "fantasy type," a few years after his initial description of fantasy theme analysis. It was found that a theme or a vision would many times repeat itself in dissimilar stories. Bormann notes:

In the early stages of fantasy type development, the speaker will often assert the fantasy type and then list a series of allusions to the fantasy themes that fall into the type.

When a community of people have come to share the fantasy type until it is thoroughly ingrained in their consciousness, they will respond to the type or to code words that allude to the type without the supporting references to specific themes. (p. 295)

Smith defines a fantasy type as follows:

The fantasy type is a general category of recurring fantasy themes appearing in a series of related messages. Parables of good versus evil constitute a prominent type in much narrative discourse. Indeed, Other fantasy types are often the subsets of good, evil, or the conflict between the two. In sum, a fantasy type is a group of fantasy themes so closely related that they constitute a general thematic class. (p. 272)

Bormann (1982) gives an example of the witch-hunts of colonial Massachusetts and the Senator Joseph McCarthy communist roundup as being similar themes. People of this century now can speak of “McCarthyism” as a generic description of anyone who is falsely accused of being a criminal. Recurring themes can occur in the same story or in different stories, as in the example Bormann uses above.

Bormann (1972) developed the term “rhetorical vision” to describe how spreading messages to large groups of people (chaining out) affects people hearing that message. He gives the following example:

Just as fantasy themes chain out in the group to create a unique group culture, so do the fantasy dramas of a successful persuasive campaign chain out in public audiences to form a rhetorical vision.

A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy themes that chain out in face-to-face interacting groups, in speaker audience transactions, in viewers of television broadcasts, in listeners to radio programs, and in all diverse settings. (p. 398)

Smith again clarifies:

The rhetorical vision is defined from the audience’s perspective. It consists of shared fantasies or composite dramas that capture the imagination and allegiance of sizable groups of people, creating for them a unique but common symbolic reality. (p. 272)

Rhetorical visions are fantasy themes that have gained a sizable number of converts to that vision. A rhetorical vision is a statement of how things are or should be. Having a rhetorical vision is a means of coping in a world of irregularity. A vision gives the believer a set of expectations and assumptions that are compatible with his or her psychological makeup.

Individuals who share the experience of fantasy themes, fantasy types, and rhetorical visions, represent rhetorical communities. According to Smith (1988):

A rhetorical community consists of the people who share rhetorical visions. As such, they are active participants in a rhetorically inspired drama, which has created for them an involving social reality. Thus, rhetorical visions are shared dramas and rhetorical communities are unified dreamers acting out the reality of their special vision. (p. 272)

In rhetorical communities, people identify with one another, and are privy to an “inside joke.” Knowledge of specific themes, types, and visions makes them consubstantial, and more likely to identify with one another. This evolving drama of themes and visions gives the rhetorical community a social reality with a vocabulary and a culture specific to that group.

Littlejohn (1996) aptly summarizes Bormann’s central concepts:

Fantasy themes are part of larger dramas that are longer, more complicated stories called rhetorical visions. A rhetorical vision is essentially a view of how things have been, are, or will be. Rhetorical visions structure our sense of reality in areas that we can not experience directly but can know only by symbolic reproduction. Consequently, such visions give us an image of things in the past, in the future, or in far away places; in large measure these visions form the assumptions on which a groups knowledge is based.

As people come to share fantasy themes, the resulting rhetorical vision pulls them together and gives them a sense of identification with a shared reality. In this process, people converge or come to hold a common image as they share their fantasy themes. In fact, shared rhetorical visions and especially the use of fantasy types can be taken as evidence that convergence has taken place.

Fantasy themes therefor constitute an important ingredient in persuasion. Public communicators – in speech, articles, books, films, and other media-often tap into the audiences predominant fantasy themes. (pp. 172-173)



Bormann (1972) gives advice to researchers wanting to analyze a narrative using fantasy theme analysis:

The critic begins by collecting evidence related to the manifest content of the communication, using video or audio tapes, manuscripts, recollections of participants, or his own direct observations. He discovers and describes the narrative and dramatic materials that have chained out for those who participate in the rhetorical vision. When a critic has gathered a number of dramatic incidents, he can look for patterns of characterizations or dramatic situations and of setting. The critic must then creatively reconstruct the rhetorical vision from the representative fantasy chains. (p. 401)

## **RESEARCH UTILIZING FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS**

### **EAGLETON'S VICE PRESIDENCY**

Bormann (1973) used fantasy theme analysis to investigate Thomas Eagleton's short-lived candidacy for Vice President. Thomas Eagleton became George McGovern's vice presidential running mate after the Democratic Convention in 1972. The catchphrase of the McGovern camp was "New Politics," and it achieved the status of a rhetorical vision. The vision of purging this nation of villainous political parties became a mass media bonanza of reporting frenzy. Politicians like Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, and Lyndon Johnson became the evil villains when compared to the saintly George McGovern. The rhetorical vision of "new politics" was a runaway steamroller until delegates to the Democratic convention at Miami, Florida, chose Senator Thomas Eagleton as a running mate for McGovern. This vision seemed to have made an impression on many disenfranchised people. They were convinced to join McGovern's

campaign and elect their chosen leader by performing long hours of campaigning (Bormann, 1973).

On Tuesday, July 25, 1972, Senator Thomas Eagleton held a press conference and said; "On three occasions in my life, I have voluntarily gone into hospitals as a result of severe nervous exhaustion" (Bormann, 1973, p. 149). The press had a field day with this bit of information, and used it like it would any other scandal concerning a high-level politician.

The hero, Thomas Eagleton, had become the villain, as this fantasy theme chained out to millions of homes across America. Matthew Troy, who was a McGovern supporter, said that, "People are really scared that you're giving the power possibly to a man to... to... destroy this world with a nuclear holocaust if he buckles under the pressure of the Presidency" (Bormann, 1973, p.153).

Significant leaders of this nation had been drawn to this controversy and had begun to voice concerns about the significance of this presidential election dilemma.

Bormann (1973) says:

When a fantasy begins to catch on with a large group of people, the evidence of public interest tends to draw outsiders into the social reality for self-serving reasons. Thus, an unexpected outside complication is often a component of a major fantasy drama. (p. 153)

The perception of Eagleton's mental problems, however, did not get absolved by the public, and Eagleton resigned on August 1, 1972, which effectively ended the Democratic chances for Presidential control.

## RHETORICAL VISIONS OF THE IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

When Iran held American hostages in 1979 and 1980, the American public followed this ongoing crisis with intensity. The characters of Ayahtolla Khomeini, President Carter, and President-elect Reagan became as real to the American public as if they lived right next door. The vehicle on which these messages were sent was the extended television news coverage sponsored by all three television networks as well as newspapers and magazines.

Bormann (1982b) looked at the influence of television concerning the hostage situation and the politics of the presidency. On January 20, 1981, Ronald Reagan was sworn in as President. That same day, Iran released of the American hostages. Because the events as they occurred could only be experienced second hand via television, the fantasy theme analysis requirement for a story in places other than the here or now was satisfied.

This nation saw the impotence of President Carter in his handling of the hostage situation. It seemed as if Iran would not free its hostages until President Carter had officially stepped down. The fantasy themes are represented by the villains (the evil Ayahtolla Khomeini and the incompetent President Carter), and the heroes (the going-to take-charge President-elect Ronald Reagan, and the overworked news teams of three network affiliates who were dominant at that time, ABC, NBC, and CBS).

Bormann's (1982b) description of the fantasy type is what he calls "restoration". The Republican messages of conservatism and the good old days was the message repeated to the voting American public. The repeated vision of restoration earned enough

votes for Reagan to gain the Presidency. The inaugural ceremony was but another indication that Americans had done the right thing and started the long road back to the grandeur of the past.

The influence of television on its viewing public had a dramatic effect. The ability to simultaneously experience a live event as if a person was really there convinced the public that a drastic change was needed if America was to be great again. The rhetorical communities of viewing Americans saw President Carter merely going through the motions of his presidential duties.

### **PRIME TIME VISIONS**

Poindexter (1987) used fantasy theme analysis to examine the fantasies of prime time television shows in the United States. Network shows were taped from May 6, 1985, to May 12, 1985. After viewing a number of prime time shows, Poindexter counted a total of 641 fantasies. He discovered that some fantasies carry over from one show to the next. Many of the fantasies could not be categorized into general categories, but a large percentage of the fantasies did wind up as counted into the broad categories that Poindexter used to define a fantasy.

Poindexter developed 64 ideological statements from these fantasies. The visions he found were this society's goals and dreams about the way things should or ought to be. Some of the visions Poindexter (1987) found were:

1. There are people and conditions in the world that threaten the well-being of people.
2. People who occupy respectable positions may be corrupt.

3. A lack of agreement between image and reality will often end in punishment.
4. There are those who will falsely accuse others to further their own aims.
5. Innocent behavior does not guarantee exemption from false accusations.
6. There are people in the world who take advantage of the weak.
7. It is necessary to appear tough to be treated with respect.
8. Conflict between many types of adversaries exists.
9. Conflict is often prolonged and unresolved with no clear-cut winners or losers.

### **RESEARCH ON STAR TREK**

In Alien encounters: Multiculturalism and Otherness in Star Trek, Murdock (1996) discusses how important works of literature and drama has always been a mirror of contemporary society. In centuries past, stories were acted out for audiences via books or plays. In the Twentieth Century, dramatic messages have exploded on radio and television, and in film. Murdock posits that these elements of popular entertainment serve both as a reflection of and an influence on an industry that makes films like Star Trek and on an audience that appreciates Star Trek.

Murdock (1996) describes how “otherness” is depicted in Star Trek. Murdock’s research found that the crew of Star Trek deals with “otherness” in four ways:

1. The other is seen as a danger to be defeated or destroyed.
2. The other is acknowledged to have characteristics in common with the self.
3. The other is valued as much for its differences as for similarities.
4. The other is incorporated into the self (Murdock, 1996, pp. 10-13).

A number of studies look at how prejudice is handled in Star Trek movies and episodes. The Vietnam War was a reality during the time the original Star Trek series aired the first time. Franklin (1994) looked at four of the original episodes that dealt with war. The last two episodes, "The Omega Glory" and "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," call attention to the dichotomous roles that are always placed on opposing nations. In "Omega Glory," Yankees and Communists have been displaced sometime in the future and on a parallel world similar to that of earth. Known as Yangs (Yankees) and Kohms (Communists), these lifelong enemies have engaged in unending warfare. The Yangs have also switched roles with the Kohms: They are an overwhelming horde that is so barbaric and ferocious that nothing short of their annihilation will end the fighting. A tattered American flag, a garbled version of the Pledge of Allegiance, and a sealed-up copy of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States is all that would give proof that these savages were anything but a waste of human life.

This parallel to the Vietnam War of the time challenged the viewers of that show to see beyond "US" AND "THEM". When Kirk desecrated the seals of the device used to hold the sacred paper, The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, he read the words of The Preamble with the intention of convincing the Yangs that concepts such as liberty and freedom must apply to all people. Kirk was able to explain to the Yangs and the audience viewing the show that "These words were not written only for the Yangs, but for the Kohms as well...They must apply to everyone, or they mean nothing" (Franklin, 1994, p. 31).

Franklin also analyzed the episode "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield." It takes the black and white race issue and introduces these two opposites into a war that has

degenerated down to the last member of each race. Each race has black and white skin facial markings. The master race has black on the right side and white on the left; the other race has white on the right side and black on the left. The outcome of one race abusing and persecuting the other lead to the eventual destruction of both races. This exemplifies Gene Roddenberry's idea that, "We must learn to live together, or we must all soon die together" (Whitfield, 1968, p.40).

Mister Spock has been the focus of many studies concerning racism, sexism, and prejudice. Three studies which show how his uniqueness helps others identify with him will be briefly described.

Blair (1983) wrote a paper whose purpose was to discover what values and visions of the future, and what sex roles and images, both the television series and a Star Trek film affirm. Blair's (1983) intention was to show, via the character of Spock, how women "discover or create, by intellect or intuition, viable images of both female and male with which to replace outmoded and counter productive stereotypes" (p. 292).

Spock is masculine but not masculine. Spock is human but not human. He contains the aggressiveness that many women see themselves lacking and he expresses vulnerability that many men wish they could show. His uniqueness allows him no role models because he is the first to contain the assets and weaknesses of the Human and Vulcan species. Blair's evaluation of Spock is that his persona acts as a focus for the public and private consciousness of women and men as they attempt to articulate and image new alternatives for themselves (Blair,1983).

Anne Cranny-Francis (1985) came to same conclusion in her study called Sexuality and Sex-Role Stereotyping in Star Trek. Spock's "otherness" makes him more

prone to victimization because he is not in a traditional role. Throughout the series, Spock's separateness is an obstacle to acceptance and a matter of distinction. Just as women are stereotyped to occupy lesser roles in U.S. society, Spock's non-acceptance by humans keeps him from fully being a part of a role what he is capable of fulfilling. Spock has pride in who he is, and does not wish to be anything other than Vulcan. Spock is like the women who were part of this study. They do not wish was not to give up their identity as a Vulcan or a woman, and they attempted only to be accepted, and wished only to be given full benefits as befitting a sentient being.

Spock articulates the dilemma of women who want to be recognized as normal, productive members of society but who are, by reason of their gender, consistently excluded from the active, decision-making processes of society. So too, Spock is occasionally discriminated against or ridiculed for his non-human background. In fact, when sexism is given its most extreme, hysterical expression, women likewise are seen as non-human. They are then described by their lack of the characteristics commonly associated with the human species-aggression, activity, resourcefulness, intelligence, domination, strength, and power. Spock is thus a character with whom women can empathize because of his alienness. His strength, power, and intelligence might then be seen as positive reinforcement of his alien/female/other characterization. (Cranny-Francis, 1985, p. 277)

The problem of racism is also given some attention by Cranny-Francis (1985) in this study. Four major species are represented on the Star Trek series. They are Human, Vulcan, Romulan, and Klingon. Humans and Vulcans are the good guys, Romulans and Klingons are the bad guys. It turns out that the separation of "US" and "THEM" is not so easy to determine even though surface qualities would make this decision an apparent one. Romulans and Vulcans share an ancestry and physical features, which makes them much more related to one another than Humans and Vulcans. Humans and Klingons also share characteristics, which violate and contradict what seems on the surface to be a



natural dichotomy. Defining “US” is difficult due to these shared features. The characterizations of our enemies brought to tears by love and our allies as viscous scoundrels can make us recognize that there is a lot of “THEM” in us and a lot of “US “ in them

Spock’s childhood was fraught with prejudice. This was shown in the episode titled “A Journey to Babel” (Bernardi, 1997), Spock was mistreated both as a half-breed by his fictional childhood companions and by the network executives who would utilize his nonhuman characteristics. An episode called “Plato’s Stepchildren” originally had a kissing scene which called on Kirk (a Caucasian) to romantically kiss Uhura (an African). An interracial kissing scene between a white man and a black woman had the NBC executives worried about offending viewers in the south. NBC asked that Spock be substituted for Kirk. Even though Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) was as caucasoid as Captain Kirk (William Shatner), Mr. Spock’s representation of an alien made him kissing a black woman more acceptable (Nichols, 1994). The scene that was aired showed Kirk and Uhura in a pseudo kiss. Star Trek has the distinction of being the first television show to show an interracial kiss, even if it was only a pseudo kiss. Bernardi saw a message of racial blindness portrayed to the viewing audience by this scene depicting two human beings in a natural act.

## **SUMMARY**

Robert Bales and Kenneth Burke helped set the stage for the development of fantasy theme analysis. The idea of the inside joke and identification with others was the

prompt needed for Bormann (1972) to combine these two ideas into his methodology of fantasy theme analysis.

This chapter has described the method involved in fantasy theme analysis. Studies utilizing fantasy theme analysis have been reviewed, and studies of Star Trek have been summarized. In Chapter III, the precise methodology of this study is detailed.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### THE MOVIE

Star Trek 6 was chosen as the vehicle for this research because it is the culmination of the Star Trek movies and the original series phenomenon. The original series characters of Kirk, Spock, and crew were chosen because their personae have had 32 years to make an impact on the rhetorical visions of the U.S. mainstream culture.

#### PROCEDURE

An uncut version of Star Trek 6: The Undiscovered Country will be repeatedly viewed and transcribed by the researcher. Based on the transcription, the number and kinds of fantasy themes, fantasy types, and rhetorical visions, as those terms are used by Bormann (1972), will be listed. Rhetorical communities will also be identified.

This researcher defines fantasy themes as specific instances in which heroes and villains act out particular incidents in places other than the here and now. The movie, Star Trek 6 will be separated into a number of specific themes that include heroes and villains showing their characters.

The fantasy type repeatedly seen in messages is the parable of good versus evil. This research will see if this parable or others are a part of the ongoing messages of Star Trek.

For purposes of definition, this researcher labeled a rhetorical vision as a truism, an expectation, and the wisdom of our generation. Because a vision requires a large

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### THE CHARACTERS

Star Trek started out as a struggling sixty minute weekly series in the unforgiving world of network ratings (Engle, 1994). In the pilot series a female, Majel Barrett, was second in command of the starship Enterprise. This did not fair well with the network executives who were uncomfortable having a woman in a superior position to intelligent and capable men. Consequently, Majel Barrett was recast as Nurse Chappel, which is ironic, because the show wanted to stress that women were as capable as men in leadership roles. Star Trek was three hundred years in the future but the NBC network executives still had a 1960 style of what a “proper women’s position” should be.

Spock had a fair amount of resemblance to pictures of Satan. Spock’s ears were long and pointed which gave him a sinister look (Gerrold, 1973). His complexion also had a weird green cast to it. Spock’s actions, however, are honest and forthright. Murdock (1996) notes “Human beings have always found it difficult to accept those who differ radically from themselves either physically, culturally, or ideologically” (p. 2). Through Spock, Star Trek challenged viewers to consider more than external appearances.

Captain James T. Kirk was cast as the leader of this hodgepodge crew of nationalities, races, species, and sexes. Captain Kirk was a white male because network executives feared that the public would not accept leadership by another gender or race.

As with Nurse Chappel, Star Trek was about living with diversity, but rating pressure worked against creative casting in the case of Captain Kirk.

Hikaru Sulu, who was Japanese, was a helmsman on the bridge of the United Star Ship (U.S.S.) Enterprise. Star Trek premiered twenty-one years after the end of World War II. At that time, the Japanese race were feared by U.S. veterans and civilians alike; they were thought to be treacherous and untrustworthy by many people who had lived through the war and the propaganda years of post-Pearl Harbor. Even in 1966, accepting a person of Japanese heritage in a leading role was a challenge for many viewers.

The same challenge was presented in the casting of Pavel Chekov, a Russian. Chekov joined the crew of the Enterprise in its second season. The year was 1967, and Russian President Krushchev had intensified the cold war via his famous, "WE WILL BURY YOU!" Even though Chekov was good-natured and seemingly loyal, present fears of nuclear annihilation and communist domination made placing a Russian crewmember on the Enterprise risky.

Uhura, a female, was the communications officer on the bridge of the Enterprise. Uhura had several strikes against her. The first strike was gender. Women had always played subordinate roles of caretaker, maid, etc., on prior stories portrayed on television. Uhura was a valued lieutenant because she was loyal, dependable, and could offer good advice in life threatening situations (Nichols, 1994). Uhura's second strike was that she was an African. The civil rights movement had just started, and many citizens of this country still had prejudiced ideas of where blacks could eat, go to school, and work. It was controversial that a woman was in a command position; having a black woman

acting superior to whites subordinate in rank to her (men and women) was a concept that many could not accept.

Dr. McCoy was a gentleman country doctor from the American Deep South. McCoy is an important element in the crew of the Enterprise (Murdock, 1996). McCoy's presence tells us that even someone from the traditional south can work with blacks, women, Japanese, Russians, and aliens.

Chief Engineer "Scotty" is the last of the regulars that made weekly appearances on Star Trek. True to his name, he is from Scotland, and he adds diversity to the crew of Star Trek.

So, with some exceptions, early episodes of Star Trek challenged viewers to accept differences via casting which violated stereotypes and conventions. The crew of the Enterprise dealt with its own differences and did it in a convincing fashion. They also dealt with the differences and misunderstandings that always accompany the initial meeting of dissimilar cultures. Their five-year mission was to seek out new life and civilizations. Once they made contact, they would attempt to exchange ideas and establish formal patterns of communication so that a larger piece of this galaxy would be a place for individuals to grow and enjoy life.

## **FANTASY THEMES**

In September 1966, the first episode of Star Trek was broadcast on NBC (Shatner, 1993). Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Nurse Chappel, Chekov, Sulu, Dr. McCoy, Scottie, and Uhura became individuals to whom many Trekkies (Star Trek fans) would relate to as individuals in their everyday lives. The television show and resulting movies did not have

reality counterparts in the real world. These individuals watching Star Trek subscribed to a collective movement where certain words, concepts, and signals made them privy to a special knowledge. The participants of the story were relating through Bormann's (1972) concept of the inside joke. The narratives and visual entertainment that were experienced by those Trekkies became the fantasy themes that would become as real as any other experience.

Star Trek 6 is a story set in the future with villains and heroes involved in an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil. The villains and heroes that are represented are in part imaginary and symbolic of a reality with which the audience can identify. Because the story occurs in the future, imaginary beings have taken on a fantasy setting. Fantasy themes involve an audience by allowing them to identify with the actors in a story (Herrick, 1997). Having a common frame of reference creates camaraderie and a sense of affinity with individuals who watch and discuss Star Trek.

This research found a variety of fantasy themes in Star Trek 6. A fantasy theme in a story presents heroes and villains performing action sequences in places other than the here and now (Littlejohn, 1996).

The heroes in Star Trek 6 are clearly Captain Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise. Kirk shows himself to be a hero in a scene where he and Dr. McCoy have just surrendered to the Klingon ship Kronus 1. As a symbol of good faith, and as a sign of non-aggression, Kirk and McCoy beam over to a badly-damaged Klingon ship full of vengeful and violent Klingons. This heroic act prevented an all out war, because it effectively stopped the intended plan of the unjustified killing of the members of the Enterprise.

In another example of heroism, Spock expresses an unpopular but important message of peace between the Federation and the Klingons. Spock's courage in voicing an attitude of conciliatory initiatives of peace even meets resistance from Captain Kirk. Spock's heroic action of standing alone in a sea of resistance is the turning point he knows will bring peace.

Spock is represented as a hero when he agrees to be the bait in a deadly game. The game is one that will be used to flush out the traitor that exists on the Enterprise. When the traitor is finally caught, Spock risks his life by challenging the traitor to do what she had decided upon.

A final act of heroism comes in a scene where Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy have a chance to show compassion in the face of adversity. Kirk is in a violent fight with a large alien. Kirk is somehow able to defeat the alien by kicking it in a very sensitive place. The groans and cries of pain coming from the alien prompts Kirk to ask McCoy if there is anything his medical skills can do to ease the pain of the wounded alien. Heroes have this ability to empathize with their adversaries.

Despite the generally heroic nature of the Enterprise crew, there are events which portray them as having a villainous side. For example, Captain Kirk has an argument with Spock about his indifference about the extinction of the Klingon race. We hear Kirk saying, " Let them die, Don't trust them, They're animals, Don't believe them!" We see Kirk in a villainous role because he is prejudiced and uncaring because several Klingons had killed his son.

The villains in Star Trek 6 are equally clear. The villains of Star Trek 6 are the Klingon and Federation factions that fear a future denying them the mutual hate they have



always known. Klingon and Federation individuals plan to kill the envoys at the peace conference. These villains will kill innocent bystanders and those who were unfortunate enough to have been assigned the duty of making the peace process a success.

In another scene, the Klingon military community is villainous when it falsely accuses Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy of the death of Chancellor Gorkin. The trial that Kirk and McCoy received was fixed in favor of the prosecution before it started. Rules of logic and legality were forgotten in a farce of a trial. The Klingons who were participating in this intrigue were villainous indeed, because Humans and Klingons alike would be sacrificed to prevent peace.

Just as heroes are sometimes villains, so, too, villains are sometimes heroes. For example, Klingon Chancellor became a hero when he realized that amity had to replace enmity if his species was to survive. Because of the disaster of the exploding moon "Praxis", and its failure to supply the Klingon planet with the energy to screen out harmful gamma rays, Chancellor Gorkin knew his people had only 50 years of life left if his people did not change their methods of interacting with the Federation. His request of reconciliation started a process that would save his people, but his request cost him his life. Also, when Chancellor Gorkin's daughter became the new Chancellor after his death, the military command strongly recommended that war was the only option for a strong Klingon empire. Cliches such as, "Attack or be slaves to their world," and "It is better to live on our feet than to die on our knees" are seen by the new Chancellor as an arrogance that will only contribute to the Klingons' extinction. The new Chancellor performs an heroic act by discounting the recommendations of her villainous advisor

recommendations. She did not take her military counselors' advice to dominate through violence.

In summary, most of the fantasy themes in Star Trek 6 show heroes triumphing over villains. However, some scenes show heroes acting villainously, and villains acting heroically.

### **FANTASY TYPES**

A Fantasy type (the Star Trek parable of good vs. evil and the positive comments on the future of the human race) repeats the same theme over and over. The fantasy type of Star Trek 6 is in part taken from the basic story line of the 1950s western (Homans, 1981). Gene Roddenberry superimposed the characteristics of black and white hatted wild west individuals with the equivalent of futuristic good and bad guys and gals (Gerrold, 1973). Even the spaceships in Star Trek reflect the "western" idea: Federation ships are white in color, and Klingon ships are much darker.

Audiences can expect a battle between good and evil in most scenes. Star Trek 6 contains many scenes where good triumphs over evil. For example, the themes of Star Trek 6 show characters at odds with one another in situations where good guys succeed and the bad guys fail. Occasional scenes show the hero suffering and dying. The direction as the show nears its end, is, however, one that shows the audience that good always triumphs over evil. Audiences can expect to see good as the final outcome in encounters between the guilty and innocent.

## THE VISION

Bormann (1972) defines a rhetorical vision as a fantasy theme that has chained out beyond the small group. When a fantasy theme starts to resemble an inside joke, Bormann describes how the mere mention of the scene gives those who share the memory a special cue to its meaning. A vision is a theme that has chained out to many groups of people, and has been condensed down to a truism. Visions are beliefs about the way things are or will be. These values and beliefs are extrapolations of the theme which has chained out.

The visions of Star trek are the direct result of Star Trek themes. The villains and heroes in each theme acted out their roles giving the audience a message that became a vision.

The visions of Star Trek speak of a future with less crime, ignorance, and despair. The visions suggest that humanity should cope with human weaknesses by teaching its members how to take care of themselves. A list of the rhetorical visions in Star Trek 6 can be seen in Table 1.

## TABLE 1

### A SUMMARY OF RHETORICAL VISIONS

1. Military fanaticism, if not tempered with humanistic concerns, will lead a nation to ruin.
2. Regardless of race, sex, age, religion, culture, people are politically motivated.
3. Stereotypes are difficult to change.
4. People resist change.
5. We should not become so locked into our past accomplishments that we do not accomplish more in the future.
6. Mistrust of "Others" leads to violence, insecurity, prejudice, and, ultimately, to extinction.
7. To survive, we must learn to live with others.
8. Fairness sometimes has nothing to do with the law.
9. Good triumphs over evil.
10. Trust of an adversary may take a lifetime to accomplish.
11. People in power positions may be dishonest.
12. Sometimes it becomes necessary to forfeit one's security to help others.
13. Unscrupulous individuals always suffer because of their indiscretions.
14. People with evil intent often end up as the victims of evil.
15. Innocence may have little in common with appearances.
16. There are those that would betray us for personal or organizational gain.

## RHETORICAL COMMUNITIES

A rhetorical community consists of people who share rhetorical visions (Smith, 1988). In Star Trek's third season, 1968-1969, the chance for cancellation was eminent. Fans picketed the NBC headquarters to save the show, and the U.S. Postal service delivered massive amounts of mail to Star Trek producers asking for more episodes. There were also a number of petitions signed by the public to show support for Star Trek in its third season. Herbert Solow (then vice president of Desilu Studios) said Roddenberry used students from MIT and Cal Tech as picketers to influence the show's acceptance on the network (Phillips, 1996).

Viewers have been watching Star Trek for 32 years. This span of time includes generations of Trekkies and millions of fans. In 1972, the first Star Trek convention took place in New York. The expected turnout was three hundred fans. Over 3,000 people showed up. Convention turnouts have been gaining momentum since. There have been a number of books written on the Star Trek movement by outsiders and the actors themselves. A number of fan clubs are available to anyone who wants to share in these positive visions of the future. The Internet gives access to many Star Trek cites (uniform resource locators). The reference section of this thesis gives several addresses that point to unique explanations of Star Trek subject matter. Finding other information on the subject is a simple matter of typing in the key word "Star Trek" on any search engine.

The rhetorical community of Star Trek is a large one. An internet cite (Star Trek Conventions, 1998) gives names, addresses, phone numbers, faxes, e-mail addresses, with hotel names and cities for conventions held between April 10, 1998, to October 11, 1998.

Two will be held overseas, one in London and one in Berlin. There will be 24 conventions held in the United States during that time and will take place all over the country. An Internet site (Science Fiction Conventions, 1998) lists an assortment of Star Trek clubs all over the world. Outside the USA there are 57 clubs whose purpose it is to join like minded people together with the sole purpose of identifying with each other through their interest and knowledge of Star Trek. Within the USA there exists three hundred and twelve clubs doing the same thing.

### **SUMMARY**

The story line of Star Trek 6 starts with the good guys (Federation) being forced to deal with the bad guys (Klingons). The Enterprise is drawn into political intrigue when political factions from both sides attempt to negate the peace talks between these feuding species. A variety of themes, visions, communities, and one type were uncovered in this analysis. This research has also found a strong and growing rhetorical community that has been shaped and influenced by Star Trek.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

This thesis investigated four questions:

1. What are the fantasy themes in Star Trek 6?

The fantasy themes are the specific instances in which Star Trek characters act out particular incidents in that future place. There were a variety of themes contained in the movie Star Trek 6. These themes are described in Chapter IV of this thesis.

2. What is the fantasy type in Star Trek 6?

The fantasy type (recurring themes) are very similar (analogous) to the popular story line of the American 1950's and 1960's western television show.

Whitfield (1968) tells of Roddenberry copycatting the then-popular television series of Gunsmoke. Each week saw Matt Dillion (a.k.a. Captain Kirk), Chester or Festus (a.k.a. Mister Spock), and Doc (a.k.a. Doctor McCoy) fighting the bad guys (a.k.a. Klingons and Romulans) in an ongoing battle of good and evil. There was one type found in Star Trek 6.

3. What are the rhetorical visions in Star Trek 6?

The visions of Star Trek are the themes that have chained out to millions of people that speak about ethical and moral knowledge of the future. A vision of the future, as told in the stories of Star Trek, tells of optimism and the same sort of expectations that we have today. The visions of Star Trek are the dreams of where

mankind can go if it will only leave its prejudice and fears behind. A total of sixteen visions were found. (See Table 1)

#### 4. Who and where are the rhetorical communities watching Star Trek?

Rhetorical communities identify with each other and with the show through the themes, type, and visions that are portrayed on television and movies. The concept of the “inside joke” creates a fellowship and exclusive membership because of the knowledge of ideas that only Trekkies share. The Internet gives proof that the rhetorical community of Star Trek is very large indeed.

This study focused on the specific story of Star Trek 6 because of its positive renditions of future human conditions. Gene Roddenberry (creator of Star Trek) promoted his vision of the future with the vehicle of television and movies (Roddenberry, 1995). This study was an attempt to list the fantasy themes, fantasy types, rhetorical visions, and the rhetorical communities, which have grown up around Star Trek 6.

## **DISCUSSION**

Fantasy themes are dramatizing messages enacted in a setting other than the here and now and containing heroes and villains. The futuristic quality of Star Trek qualifies it in this sense because heroes and villains are part of an ongoing drama that takes place in the future. The themes of Star Trek are the mini-episodes of the story. They are the components that tell the viewer how the universe of the future is confronted with the same types of characters, relationship problems, and rewards for effort we encounter today. The fantasy themes of Star Trek help set the stage for the evolution of fantasy types, rhetorical visions, and rhetorical communities.



Fantasy types in Star Trek parallel western movies. Gene Roddenberry developed the Star Trek type because of a political necessity. He was convinced by the NBC network executives that the popularity, and therefore marketability, of the then-famous television western was an absolute necessity. He successfully developed the western theme into a futuristic venue. The bad guys were replaced with aliens, and the guns were replaced with phasers and photon torpedoes.

We are led to believe that good guys in the old west were supremely honest and without deviant thoughts. The bad guys in the same western are portrayed as the epitome of evil. The crew of the Enterprise are portrayed somewhere in the middle of good and evil. Real life tells us that this is representative of the average person. Expecting good to be the final outcome for most situations is a recurring fantasy type taken from stories long before television and movies presented similar narratives.

Roddenberry's portrayal of science fiction was a positive one that talks of an unencumbered imagination without the moralistic blinders of those who would say that we should have certain attitudes about certain subjects. Old superstitions and fears of an evolving humanity no longer bound his vision.

Rhetorical visions parallel a society's expectation of what should occur in a given situation. Presenting mass audiences with the same type of story each week helps focus an audience's appreciation on what is culturally acceptable. The rhetorical visions of Star Trek are about interracial acceptance, the futility of violent conflict, and the uniqueness of the human spirit.

The rhetorical communities of Star Trek exist on a planet-wide scale. The audience of Star Trek has banded together to form groups that believe a positive place

exists in humanities future. This community of like-minded individuals has been exposed to exactly the same futuristic ideas like peace, acceptance of differences, and optimism. Conventions and clubs that exhibit or offer Star Trek memorabilia and companionship show characters and inform the reader of an immensity of possible organizations with which to join and become a member. An Internet site (Star trek conventions, 1998) gives a large amount of data about the 312 United States clubs that exist with the sole concern of educating, entertaining, and offering camaraderie to the individuals joined through the themes and visions of the Star Trek phenomena.

Originally, the audience of Star Trek was made up of children, scientists, and college students. Star Trek now enjoys popularity outside these groups.

Poindexter (1988) generated 64 ideological statements that can be defined as rhetorical visions in a study he performed in 1985. His visions were based on a week's worth of prime time programming. The visions he developed came from sitcoms, dramas, and movies that occurred during the week that the shows were taped. Many of the visions occurred repeatedly from one show to the next. The last 6 visions of (Table 1) were visions that Poindexter found in his study. These are:

1. People in power positions may be dishonest.
2. Sometimes it becomes necessary to forfeit one's security to help others.
3. Unscrupulous individuals always suffer because of their indiscretions.
4. People with evil intent often end up as the victims of evil.
5. Innocence may have little in common with appearances.
6. There are those that would betray us for personal or organizational gain.

I found 10 visions in Star Trek that did not exist in Poindexter's (1988) dissertation.

## **EFFECTS OF STAR TREK VISIONS**

The skillful insertion of fantasy themes within the Star Trek 6 movie was accomplished by utilizing imaginative writers who were familiar with the visions of Gene Roddenberry.

What makes the story of Star Trek different from most other science fiction stories is the optimism of current projections being placed on future governments and individuals. A future that contains benevolence and acceptance must start with the education of the current generation. Showing unbiased treatment of all people is the starting point for the future.

There is a question of how Star Trek has affected the general population. The rhetorical visions needs to be implicitly stated before these questions can be answered. In my analysis of the messages of Star Trek, the vision that repeats itself over and over again is one of a better future. Earth in the next 300 years is portrayed as a combined people who see themselves as a species first and as nationalities last. The crewmembers of the U.S.S. Enterprise are a mixture of sexes, nationalities, races, and even species of nonhumans. Putting aside their differences and concentrating on their similarities turns them into a unified whole. Murdock (1996) wrote her thesis on this same idea of togetherness. Like the maxim from the Three Musketeers, "United we stand, divided we fall," this is the place of humans in the future. These principles show us how combining the best of what each man and woman has to offer can create harmony for all.

Recent joint efforts of the United States and the new Republic of Soviet Bloc States in the space effort is an example of the possible influences that the Star Trek phenomenon has given the world. These examples of détente existed long before any sign of actual consideration concerning joint projects of cultural exchange. The world seems like a much smaller place today than it did on the day that Star Trek premiered on television. Nineteen sixty-six was some four years after The Bay of Pigs Fiasco. It was also just a few years ahead of the Cuban Missile Crises. When President Reagan labeled the Russians the "Evil Empire," the goals and aim of the vision of Star Trek resided in the distant future. That future is here.

Practically speaking, the visions of Star Trek presented reasons why finding similarities between explosive neighbors was more intelligent than showing off machismo. The threat of nuclear annihilation is still a concern for many nations in this last decade of the twentieth century, but the danger has been substantially reduced. Star Trek presents humans surviving with hope and a dream in a difficult world. Surviving in the future gives us a future to work at accomplishing. The vision of the future offered by Star Trek must compete with many other opposing visions offered by other narratives. If visions compete for dominance according to the path of where they may direct a social movement, then the positive visions of Star Trek offset to some degree the doom and gloom visions offered by the stories that have opposite projections.

"Out of the mouths of babes" refers to the strange places that one can find answers to life's problems. Lex Luther (super criminal) refers to a similar set of circumstances when describing the following story on the movie 'Superman'. "Some men can read the entire contents of the Library of Congress and come away knowing little

more than how to get home and some men can read the ingredients of a chewing gum wrapper and solve the answers to the universe". The world of Star Trek may be that wonderful place viewed by the right person who does in fact solve the social problems of the world. Intelligent people look in all places because it is not good to leave any stone left unturned. The acceptance of diversified ideas may in fact be the bridge that connects new and helpful methods of organizing a better future for humanity.

The average audience recognizes that the reality on television is not the same as that experienced in real life. What makes the message acceptable and in part influential to the viewer is the attitude of how the message is presented. Being honest, as realistic as possible, and sincere in a message of hope gives a show like Star Trek as much influence as possible concerning the interpretation of the messages presented. An interpretation of parallelism of present behavior to future characters shows the audience that these things are how things could be.

## CONCLUSION

This study is one of the first attempts to apply fantasy theme analysis to the future-oriented medium of science fiction film. Whether the fantasy themes, fantasy types, and rhetorical visions will positively affect values in the future remains to be seen. Future research attempts should focus on the comparison of a sample population of ardent Star Trek fans to a sample of people unfamiliar with Star Trek. Creating the best possible future involves stressing what works and repressing what doesn't. It appears that the visions of Star Trek are leading the human race down the road to peace and harmony.

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