

## **BOOKS BY DAVID GERROLD**

### *Non-Fiction*

The World of Star Trek

The Trouble With Tribbles

### *Fiction*

Deathbeast

The Flying Sorcerers (with Larry Niven)

The Galactic Whirlpool

The Man Who Folded Himself

Moonstar Odyssey

Space Skimmer

When Harlie Was One

The War Against the Chtorr:

Book I: A Matter for Men

Book II: A Day for Damnation

# THE WORLD OF STAR TREK®

REVISED EDITION

Written by

**David Gerrold**

in association with *Starlog* magazine



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Dallas, Texas

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*For Henry and Gail Morrison, with love*

## THANK YOU

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*and of course,*  
Gene Roddenberry

The opinions expressed in this book are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the universe.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE 1984 EDITION

The first edition of this book was published in May 1973. Eleven years and ten printings later, I have finally gotten the chance to *finish* this book.

Let me explain that.

The original STAR TREK television series premiered at 8:30, Thursday evening, September 8, 1966, on NBC television.\*

At the end of its first two years on NBC, the show was in danger of being cancelled. Its followers—already a growing phenomenon—initiated a letter campaign to the network to persuade them to continue the series. Eventually over a million letters were sent in to NBC, and the series was saved for another year.

Unfortunately the network stuck it into what was probably the worst possible time slot for it: ten P.M., Friday night. At the end of its third year, in spring 1969, STAR TREK was finally cancelled. The network said the ratings were “weak.” A total of seventy-nine episodes had been produced.

A few months later, in the fall of that same year, those same seventy-nine hours of STAR TREK were made available by Paramount Studios—through the process of syndication—for rerun on local TV stations across the country. Over a hundred and fifty separate markets

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\*I submitted my first outline to the show on the following Monday. Producer Gene L. Coon was impressed enough with that outline to invite me to submit stories for the series’ second season. One of those outlines became the episode, “The Trouble with Tribbles.” I have been *involved* with STAR TREK ever since. If I had known then. . . .

purchased the show and scheduled it for airing between the hours of four and seven P.M.—

—where it was discovered by a whole new audience.

In fall 1969, the original seventy-nine episodes of the STAR TREK TV-series demonstrated a power to pull ratings that was amazing then—and continues to amaze even today. The show has become one of those *perpetual* TV shows—like “Twilight Zone” and “I Love Lucy.” You can always find it somewhere in the *TV Guide*.

That was when the STAR TREK Phenomenon truly began. Like Topsy, it wasn’t created, it just grew—often wildly and out of control. It was all the separate pieces—the letter campaigns, the fanzines, the film clips, the conventions—all coming together at once to become something *more*. It was one of the most unusual occurrences in American television history. Never before had a TV series become even more popular *after* its cancellation. And its popularity has *continued* to grow ever since!

STAR TREK’S fans have created a vast network of communication. There are countless clubs, newsletters, fanzines—even computer bulletin boards. STAR TREK conventions continue to be held every year—not only in the United States, but in England and Japan and Australia as well.

The first edition of this book was an (admittedly) incomplete attempt to chronicle the birth of the STAR TREK Phenomenon. Not surprisingly, the book became a part of that phenomenon itself, even helping to fuel its growth. Many hundreds of thousands of copies of *The World of Star Trek* have been sold over the past eleven years, because STAR TREK’S fans want to get as close to the show as they can.

Even more than that, they want to *be a part* of STAR TREK.

A history of STAR TREK’S fans would be a list of enterprising (pun intended) individuals who have built bridge sets, designed blueprints, sewn their own uniforms, written songs and plays, put on conventions, made STAR TREK home-movies or written their own STAR TREK novels. They’ve published STAR TREK fanzines, drawn cartoons, painted pictures (sometimes wall-size murals), built models, designed new costumes and makeup for convention masquerades, collected filmclips and videotapes and props from the original TV series—not to mention all those who have studied STAR TREK and analyzed it from this position or that.



This then is the essence of the STAR TREK Phenomenon: the fans have claimed the show as their own. They are its caretakers. They are the keepers of the dream.

And that was as much as I had to write about in 1973. The first edition of *The World of Star Trek* was annoyingly incomplete because we still didn't know how it was all going to turn out.

Throughout the seventies, STAR TREK'S fans kept the dream alive. They kept asking, "Please, Paramount, can we have some more STAR TREK? A new TV series perhaps? Or even a movie?" The mail sent to the studio was *unceasing*. Fans circulated the names and addresses of the studio heads and wrote hundreds of letters a month *for years*.

I admit it. Those of us who thought we knew how the film industry worked didn't believe it was possible. After all—nobody had ever revived a cancelled TV series before; not as a series, not as a film. Certainly, it was nice to think about—the *return* of STAR TREK—but those of us who thought we knew, admitted privately that it was probably never going to happen.

Boy, were we wrong!

The journey back has been a peripatetic one, but the faith of the fans has been amply rewarded. STAR TREK has come back, bigger than ever—as *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*, and *Star Trek: The Search For Spock*.\*

So, now—eleven years and ten printings later, I finally get to finish this book. This new updated edition of *The World of Star Trek* allows me to tell you how the STAR TREK Phenomenon *finally* worked out.

I just love a happy ending.

—DAVID GERROLD

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\*At the time of this writing it is still possible that the name of the third STAR TREK movie could be changed before its release.

# INTRODUCTION

The World of STAR TREK—

Or should that be the Universe of STAR TREK?

No. *World* is correct. *World* in the sense of a self-contained reality, an alternate to *this* reality. A universe to match is implied.

Actually, there are three worlds of STAR TREK. First, there's the STAR TREK that Gene Roddenberry conceived—the original dream of a television series about an interstellar starship. Then there's the STAR TREK behind the scenes, how the cast and crew made Gene Roddenberry's ideas come true, how they were realized and sometimes altered in the realization. And finally, there's the STAR TREK Phenomenon, the world that the fans of the show created, the reality that they built in response.

All three of these worlds are fascinating, and all three of them are dealt with in this book. Each of the worlds of STAR TREK created the next; and like interlocking rings, each had its effects on the others. The show created the stars, the stars engendered a fandom, and the fans kept the show on the air.

I've already written one STAR TREK book—it's called *The Trouble With Tribbles*, and it's the story of how I made my first sale to television, and how “The Trouble with Tribbles” episode of STAR TREK was written. This is the second part of that story, *this is the book to place it in context*.

This book is about the STAR TREK myth, what it was and how it happened—the truth behind it. The fascinating part about the myth is that even after you strip away the flackery, the studio puffery and ballyhoo—STAR TREK is *still* a piece of magic. The *Enterprise* and her crew

have become a new set of gods in the science fiction pantheon.

So the reason for this book is to try to preserve some of that magic so that years from now some yet unborn “Trekkie<sup>\*</sup>” may open it up and be able to recapture at least a hint of STAR TREK’S magic seasons.

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\*Yes, I know. There are some STAR TREK fans who object to the word “Trekkie,” preferring instead to call themselves “Trekkers.” I’ve heard the arguments on both sides—the best I can tell you is that both terms are used to describe people who like STAR TREK a lot. (Of course, STAR TREK fans don’t just *like* STAR TREK—they *love* STAR TREK. I’m reminded of the lady who loved pancakes: “You must come visit sometime, I’ve got closets full!”)

# **Part ONE**

**The First World of STAR TREK—**

**Gene Roddenberry's Dream**

First, there was Gene Roddenberry's dream, a television show called "STAR TREK."

The idea was described as "Wagon Train to the Stars," or "Hornblower in Space"—the adventures of a far-traveling starship and her crew.

Perhaps the best description of the show is in the lines spoken at the beginning of every episode:

"Space—the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*, her five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilization, to boldly go where no man has gone before."

Or, more exactly, from *The Star Trek Guide*\*:

(Excerpted from orders to Captain James T. Kirk)

III. You are therefore posted, effective immediately, to command the following:

The U.S.S. ENTERPRISE.

Cruiser Class—Gross 190,000 tons

Crew Complement—430 persons

Drive—space-warp

Range—18 years at light-year velocity

Registry—Earth, United Space Ship

IV. Nature and duration of mission:

Galaxy exploration and investigation:

5 years

V. Where possible, you will confine your landings and contacts to Class "M"

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\**The Star Trek Guide* (in its earliest form) was a twenty-page mimeographed book distributed to all writers and prospective writers for the series. It contained descriptions of all the characters and sets as well as notes on the capabilities of the *Enterprise* and what kind of stories the series could use.

It was revised twice as the show progressed. New material was added and old material was updated. In the third edition, for instance, the *Enterprise* was upgraded from Cruiser Class to Starship Class—the feeling being that a "starship" was a special kind of vessel with greater range, speed, power and other capabilities than other vessels in space. Much of this material was reprinted in Stephen Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry's *The Making of Star Trek*.

planets approximating Earth-Mars conditions.

VI. You will conduct this patrol to accomplish primarily:

- a) Earth security, via explorations of intelligence and social systems capable of galaxial threat, and
- b) Scientific investigation to add to the Earth's body of knowledge of alien life forms and social systems, and
- c) Any required assistance to the several Earth colonies in your quadrant, and the enforcement of appropriate statutes affecting such Federated commerce vessels and traders as you may contact in the course of your mission.

In sum—"Hornblower in Space." Just as Captain Horatio Hornblower was the highest representative of English law in the far waters in which he sailed, so would Captain James T. Kirk of the *Enterprise* be the highest legal representative of Starfleet Command in the far reaches of the galaxy.

He would be explorer, ambassador, soldier, and peacekeeper. He would be the sole arbiter of Federation law wherever he traveled—he would be a law unto himself.

The implication here is that *there are no other channels of interstellar communication*. At least, none as fast as the *Enterprise*.

Let's examine this for a moment, because it's essential to understanding the STAR TREK format. Captain Kirk is an autonomous power. Purely from a television point of view, he *must* be an autonomous power—otherwise the series lacks drama and he lacks interest. If Kirk could check back with Starfleet Command every time he was in trouble, he would never have any conflicts at all. He would simply be a crewman following orders. He wouldn't be an explorer or an ambassador at all—just the Captain of the local gunboat on the scene.

For Kirk to be a dramatic and interesting human being, he must be wholly responsible for his own actions as a representative of the Federation. As such, every decision he has to make becomes an important one.

Fortunately, the exigencies of space travel—especially faster-than-light travel—support

this kind of dramatic concept.

We must make one assumption, though—that faster-than-light travel is possible. This is the basic assumption of STAR TREK: that man *can* reach the stars. It is the only assumption we need to make, but it is the hook on which the whole series (and much of science fiction, in general) hangs. Without faster-than-light travel, we are stuck in our own solar system—and that's too much of a limitation for our storytellers. Why should we deny ourselves a background as broad and irresistible as a whole galaxy—or a universe?

Science fiction is the contemporary fairy tale, it's the twentieth-century morality play. At its worst, it's merely romantic escapism; but at its best, it is the postulation of an alternate reality with which to contemplate this one. Strictly from a dramatic point of view, we *need* the assumption of faster-than-light velocities. It is as necessary to the genre as the assumption that miracles can happen is necessary to the artistic success of a medieval religious pageant. (In either case, the implication is optimism about the workings of the universe.)

Despite the fact that almost everything we know about the workings of the universe suggests that it is impossible to achieve the speed of light or velocities faster than that, we can still make the assumption. We are violating Einstein's Theory of Relativity, as well as the vast body of scientific knowledge that backs it up, but we *can* make the assumption. Not just for dramatic reasons, but for scientific ones as well.

You see, if it *is* possible to travel faster than light, the method will not be discovered by anyone who has already decided that it is impossible. Rather, the discovery will require a man who assumes that it *is* possible, and who will speculate at length on the conditions necessary to achieve such. In fact, this is how the hypothesis of the tachyon was arrived at—a tachyon, *if it exists*, is a particle that cannot travel at less than the speed of light, only faster. If tachyons can now be proven to exist, then we will know that faster-than-light travel *is* possible. So, the assumption is not so outrageous as some science purists might insist.

STAR TREK postulates an alternate reality where faster-than-light travel is an established fact. Granted this one assumption, we can then proceed to establish the nature of an interstellar society. One of the things we must know is the nature and quality of that society's communications.

Given the STAR TREK format, given the workings of the universe derived from the one basic assumption that we have to make, we can establish that there are only four possible channels of communication between the planets of different stars.

Three of them are impractical.

If we examine them all, we'll see why they're impractical. And also, we'll see why Captain James T. Kirk can't help but be an autonomous power.

The first method of communication, of course, is radio. Or television. Or modulated laser beams. Or any kind of wave modulation that travels exactly at the speed of light. Obviously, if the speed of light limits our spaceships, it also limits our radios.

The nearest star to our own sun, Sol, is Proxima Centauri. It's 4.3 light-years away—that means that light, traveling at slightly more than 186,000 miles *per second*, will still take four and one third years to get there. *Any* quantity traveling at the speed of light will take that long. And that's assuming the signal was still strong enough to be detected when it arrived. (Even a pencil-thin laser beam will spread, when projected from the Earth to the moon, to cover an area more than a half-mile in diameter. And that's only to the moon. How far is it to Proxima Centauri?)

No, the reason why we can't use radio or light waves is that they're self-limiting. The key word is *limit*. Hang on a minute and you'll see.

STAR TREK *almost* got around this. The TV series postulated a “subspace radio.” While this was never explained in detail, the implication was that this was a method of communication much faster than light, *but still not instantaneous*.

A message to Starfleet Command sent by subspace radio might take several hours or days. Beyond that, either the time lag was too great or the *Enterprise* was out of range. The answer was too slow in coming.

This is the same limitation as with radio waves—only the scale is different.

When you are thinking in terms of interstellar distances, there is no such thing as a small number. Even the small numbers are big ones. If your subspace radio is not instantaneous, if it functions at a measurable speed, *then that speed is its limit*. And no matter how fast it is, the distances of the galaxy are still vast enough to make that speed seem insignificant. The point can be reached where, even if your ship is not yet out of range, a dialogue still becomes impossible.



Given enough distance, even the smallest time lag will magnify eventually.

Let's try another.

The third method of interstellar communication involves the use of robot-torpedoes; that is, unmanned faster-than-light ships, guided by inboard computers. They would be launched from one planet to deliver a message to another, light-years away. The torpedoes would not be spaceships per se; rather, they would be propulsion units, guidance system and payload only. There would be no life-support capabilities at all.

As couriers, these torpedoes would be as fast as their propulsion systems would allow; at least as fast, probably faster, than comparable manned ships.

This particular channel of communication was never used or shown on STAR TREK—but given the technology that could design and build a starship *Enterprise*, the capability to build robot-torpedoes as well also had to be there.

The use of such torpedoes would be highly practical for planet-to-planet communication. A robot can deliver mail just as easily as a manned ship.

On the other hand, the torpedo would be almost completely *impractical* for ship-to-planet or planet-to-ship communications. (How does a preprogrammed torpedo find an unprogrammed ship?) From the dramatic standpoint alone, the faster-than-light torpedo is as impractical as the radio and the subspace radio. There is still a time lag.

The torpedo is just an interstellar carrier pigeon. Like the other two methods, it can deliver a message or it can send one—but it cannot serve as the vehicle for a dialogue. And a dialogue is *precisely* the kind of interstellar communication that we are looking for. A *dramatic* story requires it.

If there were an instantaneous communication channel available, then a ship like the *Enterprise* would be unnecessary and her mission redundant. Obviously, there is no such instantaneous channel—at least, not in the STAR TREK universe. The existence of the *Enterprise* proves it.

You see, the *Enterprise* is the fourth method of interstellar communication. It is the only practical vehicle of interstellar *dialogue* between two far removed existences—and as such, it is the one we are primarily interested in as a basis for stories about divergent planetary cultures

clashing with one another.

The situation of this interstellar society is almost exactly analogous to the Earth of the eighteenth century. Then too, communications over vast distances were slow and uncertain. The arrival of a courier was always an event. Even if the news he was carrying was several weeks, months, or years old, it was still the most recent news available.

When one government had to deal with another, they used diplomatic notes and couriers—and in matters of highest policy, they depended upon their ambassadors. Because communications were so slow, an ambassador could be a particularly important individual. He was the arm and authority of his government. He was its voice. He was the man who determined and enacted the policies of his nation with regard to his specific area of authority.

Likewise, the Captain of the *Enterprise* must be just such an ambassador. He will be a minister with a portfolio of his own making. Carefully briefed as to Starfleet's goals and policies, it will be his responsibility to interpret them and act in the wide variety of situations he will confront. He is a piece of Starfleet itself. He is the piece entrusted with the mission of conducting the "interstellar dialogue."

Now, let's translate that into television.

A successful dramatic television series needs (a) a broad-based format about (b) an interesting individual or group of individuals whose responsibilities force them into (c) unusual situations and confrontations, requiring (d) decisive and positive action on the part of the protagonist and his cohorts.

Any successful dramatic series will fulfill these requirements. The *better* it fulfills them, the more likely it is to be a success.

Let's define our terms here:

*Dramatic*: synonymous with conflict. A confrontation is implied. The story is man against \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in the blank.) Man against man, man against nature, man against himself.

The protagonist, or hero, is prevented from reaching his goal by an obstacle or series of

obstacles. The more difficult these obstacles are, the more heroic he has to be in order to overcome them. How he overcomes them tells us what kind of a person he is.

The story is told as a series of climaxes rising in intensity, each more exciting than the one before. Every climax involves a confrontation with an obstacle, until the final climax when either the obstacle or the hero is defeated.

In drama *other* than series television—say, a play or a movie—the event that is being told is the most important event in the hero's life. It is the whole reason for the existence of a story about this person. We are not interested in Robinson Crusoe *after* he's rescued; we don't care about Dr. Frankenstein after the monster has been killed; we are through with Robert Armstrong after *King Kong* topples from the Empire State Building. Only the final confrontation is important—and what the hero learns from it.

What the hero learns from the event is what makes it the most important event in his life. The hero *must learn something*. (Or *fail* to learn something, but in that case, the audience has to recognize that he has failed.) Scarlett O'Hara learns that she really does love Rhett Butler. Dorothy learns that you need brains, a heart, and courage, and that it's inside you all the time or you never had it at all. Ryan O'Neal learns that Being in Love Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry.

The story is about the lesson that this person has to learn—and these are the events that teach it to him. Hamlet learns how to make a decision. Oedipus learns humility.

This is the point of *all* drama. It is the sole justification for any play—  
—except on series television.

Or for that matter, in any kind of a series. Whether it be Doc Savage, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, or James Bond.

In a series the form has to be turned upside down—the events depicted must *not* be the most important events in the hero's life. Otherwise, there's no point in going on with the series. Everything after that would be anti-climactic.

This is the dilemma of series television. On the one hand, the producer must present dramatic stories week after week—on the other, he must not be *too* dramatic. Otherwise, he damages the series as a whole, ending up with a cumulative body of work that is essentially

*melodramatic*. And then the ho-hum reaction sets in. Thus, the television producer's problem becomes one of how to tell exciting stories week after week without descending into melodrama.

The single dramatic element which provokes excitement in a play is this: *your identity is in danger*. All others are merely variations: your life is in danger, your country is in danger, your girlfriend might leave you, your wife might find out, your brother might die, the police might catch you. Something threatens to prevent you from being the person you already are or want to be. This is the hero's problem and we identify with him. He copes with it and learns something about his identity and why it's so precious to him. The audience identifies with him and his problem and learns something too.

But if you endanger the hero's identity week after week on a TV series, not only do you run the risk of melodrama—you also run the risk of falling into a formula kind of storytelling. This week Kirk is menaced by the jello monster, he kills it by freezing it to death; next week Kirk is menaced by the slime monster and kills it by drying it out; the week after that he is threatened by the mud monster and defeats it by watering it down; the following week Kirk meets the mucous monster . . . Again, the ho-hum reaction. Or even the ha-ha reaction.

Fortunately for the dramatic arts, the number of possible identities and the number of ways of endangering them is unlimited. And therein lies part of the answer to the TV producer's problem.

You don't have to endanger *the hero* every week. You can endanger someone else, someone around him—and it is his responsibility to come to that person's aid. If he incidentally has to endanger himself in the process, so much the better. The result is a semi-anthology format, and it is the only way possible in which to avoid falling into the trap of doing formula stories.

Thus, a good series format should be one which allows its hero to be primarily a decision-maker, especially as concerns other people's lives. Of course, the decisions can *and should* hurt. (That makes them *tough* decisions.) The requirements of television also necessitate a certain amount of excitement and danger—so that if there is not true drama (i.e., identity-danger) there is at least a passable imitation of same.

This is the reason why there are so many doctors, cops, cowboys, and private eyes on television. Also spies and lawyers. (And variations thereof.) These are the professions that fill

the needs of series television exactly. Each of them revolves around a human identity that provides services to other human identities, thus the hero *has* to be involved with other people—and due to the nature of the services he is providing, the people are generally caught in tense and dramatic situations. The hero will have to make decisions that will affect their lives. And sometimes his own life will be endangered in the process.

The number of professions that lend themselves to excitement and danger is not all that limited—but the number of *genres* that provide a broad background to play a multitude of stories against *is* limited. How many *different* stories can you tell about a fellow who puts out oil-well fires for a living?

The number of genres suitable or practical for television is small. Despite thirty years of experimentation (and sixty years of film history before that) the field remains remarkably limited: cowboys, cops, doctors, and soap operas.

Science fiction, as a genre, has had a singularly unhappy representation on American video. The few *true* science fiction TV series that have managed to have any impact at all have been primarily anthology-type series, like Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*. A series about a set of continuing characters had never quite made it on American network television—until STAR TREK.

But STAR TREK was a genre unto itself. And it opened a whole new range of possibilities for the television series.

A galaxy is an unlimited background. In it a writer can postulate any kind of individual and any number of ways of endangering his identity. Captain Kirk, as representative-at-large for Starfleet Command, is the perfect hero. The viewer identifies with Kirk and his commitment to fulfill the duties of a Starfleet Captain. The viewer also identifies with those around him whose identities are endangered. If in helping them, Kirk is *occasionally* endangered himself, the viewer's excitement is increased. (The viewer's excitement can be increased by this trick only so many times. If Kirk *persists* in placing himself in danger, we begin to question his credibility as a Starfleet Captain.\*)

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\*It is by a character's actions that we discover what kind of a person he is. If a person hedges in a clinch, we will think him unsure and uncertain. If he does a foolhardy action, we might consider

Kirk is the Captain of a mighty starship. He commands a crew of 430 persons. He is the highest Starfleet authority in the quadrant.\* And his responsibilities are manifold—to himself, to his ship, to his crew, to his mission, and to the government that commissioned him.

He is interesting because he is a decider. A Captain's job is *to make decisions*.

A Captain is not a scientist, not an explorer, not a soldier, not a policeman. He can easily add a specialist to his crew to handle any of those jobs—and handle them better than he could. These things are only a small part of his responsibility. His real job is to be the executive decision-maker, to decide what research is of primary importance for the scientists to consider, to decide what planets should be explored for their resources and civilizations, to decide when and where a military operation is necessary, to determine which laws should be enforced and how. And once those decisions are made, it is for his crew to implement them; their jobs are to execute the orders that are given them.

Thus, the true function of a Captain is to *lead* a team; he must know how to delegate authority to those best able to handle the specific tasks at hand. Considering Captain Kirk in particular, we must refer again to the *Star Trek Guide*:

“With the starship out of communication with Starfleet bases for long periods of time, a starship captain has unusually broad powers over both the lives and welfare of his crew, as well as over Earth people and activities encountered during these voyages. Kirk feels this responsibility strongly *and is fully capable of letting the worry and frustration lead him into error.*”

That last sentence (the italics are *not* mine) is especially important. Obviously it was realized quite early in the conception of the series that Captain Kirk would have to be aware of himself and his duties—and that he would be very much affected by the decisions he would have to make.

Otherwise, he simply would not be a very interesting human being.

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him a decisive risk-taker; but if he makes a habit of it, we will know him for a crazy fool. If his actions are all reflexes without thought, he becomes a stereotype, a cardboard puppet that the writer is arbitrarily moving around. It is only by variation that a character comes alive; the more varied his actions, the more depth he has dramatically.

\*A large big space, one-fourth of a larger, bigger space.

And it's human beings that we're primarily interested in. Captain Kirk *should* worry—that's what distinguishes him from an android. The viewers will identify with his concern for others.

It is Captain Kirk's concern that makes the story important. If a decision is less than crucial, it can be made by a subordinate officer. Only the crucial decisions will be passed up to the Captain. And if it isn't important enough to make him sweat, then it's not worth telling a story about.

Thus STAR TREK neatly fulfills all of the requirements for a good TV series: a broad-based format allowing a wide variety of stories, an interesting hero, an unusual set of situations and confrontations, and the requirement of decisive and positive action from a protagonist whose job and training is to do just that.

Plus, STAR TREK has that one added virtue mentioned before—it is a genre unto itself. And that makes it unique.

Let's consider some specifics now. We'll start with the crew of the *Enterprise*.

To make good decisions, a Captain needs good advisors. Good decisions can be made only when *all* the facts can be considered. A Captain needs advisors who are experts in the many fields he will have to deal with.

Aboard a ship like the *Enterprise*, one of the most important officers would be the Science Officer. If the *Enterprise* had been purely a military vessel, this would not be so. In that case, military advisors would have outweighed science officers.

But because the *Enterprise's* mission is the exploration of new worlds, the Science Officer is second in importance only to the Captain.

“His bridge position is at the library-computer station which links the bridge to the vessel's intricate brain, a highly sophisticated and advanced computer which connects all stations of the ship, collects information, makes computations, and provides information. While personnel at other posts can feed in or extract information relating to their specific duties, the Science Officer from his central panel can tap the resources of the entire

system—including a vast micro-library on man’s history, arts, sciences, philosophy, including all known information on other solar systems, Earth colonies, alien civilizations, a registry of all space vessels in existence, personnel information on any member of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, or almost anything else needed in any of our stories.”

Those are the requirements of the job—now who is the best man to fill it?

From a dramatic consideration alone, he must be an interesting person. Just as the Captain must be the man who will be most affected by his responsibilities, so must every other character in the story be an individual who is aware of the conflicts in which his job places him. (This is a series we’re talking about—we don’t have just one hero, we must have a set of heroes.)

The Science Officer must be able to correlate vast amounts of information presented very rapidly and synthesize accurate summaries for his Captain. This demands a being of superior mental prowess, either human or otherwise.

STAR TREK postulated an alien race called Vulcans—originally from the planet Vulcanis, but this was later shortened to Vulcan.

Physically, Vulcans resembled human beings—except that they had pointed ears and arched eyebrows. Their skin had a distinct yellowish tinge<sup>\*</sup>—but that’s because their blood was green, it was copper-based. (Instead of iron-based as in human beings.) They were capable of great feats of physical and mental prowess, and they had unique powers of telepathy: the Vulcan mind-meld allowed a Vulcan to enter into another being’s thoughts. The Vulcan nerve-pinch could be used to momentarily stun a human being (and probably a Vulcan as well. After all, how would a culture develop such a weapon if it didn’t work on its own kind?)<sup>†</sup>

Most importantly, the Vulcan culture placed a great premium on rationality. Open

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<sup>\*</sup>Actually Spock started out with reddish skin, but the makeup tests on almost all colors, while okay for color broadcast, made him look as if he was wearing phony makeup on black & white TV. Therefore it was decided to use the yellowish hue. It was the local station mixers who made Spock look green on some sets. In another color freakout, the green command level shirts never looked green on the color TV screen, but rather a kind of gold.

<sup>†</sup>The Vulcan mind-meld required the Vulcan to be in physical contact, or at most, only a short distance away from the being with whom they were in telepathic touch. The farther away, the less clear and distinct the impressions received.



displays of emotion were worse than gauche—they were savage. Barbaric. An unpleasant reminder of the animal origins of every Vulcan. The bestiality of the Vulcan heart had to be stifled.

Vulcans were consciously trying to forget their past—or at least, live it down. According to STAR TREK episode “All Our Yesterdays” written by Jean Lissette Aroeste, Vulcan had had a long and savage history, with wars much more vicious and destructive than anything that has ever been experienced on Earth.\*

The Vulcan culture finally rejected its savage heritage—rejected it so thoroughly that they rejected anything that smacked of it as well. Wars are emotional experiences that stem from individuals and groups of individuals and nations acting irrationally, reacting with their adrenals instead of their brains. In rejecting war and savagery, Vulcans were forced to also reject emotions.

Just as Freedom and Opportunity are the spoken goals of most Earth cultures, so did Rationality and Logic become the keystones of the Vulcan culture. Vulcans carefully bred emotionality out of themselves. They conditioned themselves and their children to be logical. They consciously altered the direction of their evolution.

The result is the supra-rational Vulcan society that produced the First Officer of the starship *Enterprise*, Mr. Spock.

Spock’s father was a Vulcan who married an Earthwoman, because “it seemed the logical thing to do.” It was never stated whether there were any other offspring to this union, but if so, they would also be half-human, half-Vulcan, like Spock, and prey to the same internal conflicts.†

The half-and-half nature of Spock’s persona is part of what makes him such an interesting character. There is too much Earthman in him for him to be completely Vulcan, and there is much too much Vulcan in him for him to even try to be human.

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\*A fact that I fervently hope will remain true.

†Dorothy Fontana, story editor for STAR TREK’S first two seasons, as well as author of the script “Journey to Babel” in which Spock’s parents were introduced, comments thusly: “To stamp out all the obvious stories in which half a horde of Spockian brothers, sisters, half-brothers and half-sisters showed up, I arbitrarily decreed he had no other siblings. And, in my own mind, this vastly strengthened the drama in the conflict between Spock and his father in ‘Journey to Babel.’”

Spock was raised on Vulcan, consequently he thinks like a Vulcan. More importantly, he thinks of himself *as* a Vulcan—not a human being, not even a half-breed, but a *Vulcan*. He shows pride only in his Vulcan heritage, he almost flaunts his Vulcan rationality and inherent superiority to emotional human beings. He is ashamed of his human inheritance. He tries to hide it as a weakness, as one would be ashamed of the great-uncle who was hung as a horse thief. Thus, Spock is ashamed of the fact that he has feelings. (An interesting paradox, that.) He tries to pretend he doesn't, or that he has them strictly under control, but occasionally we see that this just isn't so.

From a dramatic point of view, Spock is a beautiful character—he is the perfect character to be the ship's Science Officer. His superior brain powers give him the ability to accurately handle the large amounts of information that are his responsibility. But the fact that he is the only Vulcan on an all-human ship sets up a host of internal pressures and conflicts. All around him are individuals flaunting their emotions—a disgusting display of fears, prejudices, loyalties, and friendships. While the human part of him wants to react to this and yearns to express itself too, the Vulcan half must keep a continual tight control.

His job as Science Officer aboard the *Enterprise* is probably one of the most difficult tasks he could be assigned. As such, it forces him to continually reexamine his own identity; but it also provides him with an unparalleled opportunity to exercise his intellectual capacities. So if Mr. Spock suffered the need to feel at home anywhere, the *Enterprise* would probably be it.

Captain Kirk's second advisor—one who is every bit as important as Mr. Spock—is Dr. McCoy, the ship's Medical Officer.

In many respects, Dr. McCoy is diametrically the opposite of Spock. Just as Spock is responsible for the ship's "mind," McCoy is responsible for its "body."

McCoy cares about the people he treats—he cares about them as individuals and he treats them as such. He is very much an emotional being—not simply that he expresses his emotions, but that he recognizes that there are fundamental biological, physical, and mental reasons for the existence of emotions. Probably he feels that Spock is somehow incomplete because the Vulcan deliberately suppresses even those feelings he does experience.

To McCoy, Spock is a bit of a neurotic—the annoying kind, the one who brags about his neurosis as a strength. To Spock, McCoy is also an annoyance because of his unscientific demeanor. McCoy not only is not logical, he doesn't even *care* about logic.

The doctor realizes that people *aren't* logical, never were meant to be, so why worry about logic at all? Because of this, he is the most outspoken officer aboard the *Enterprise*.

And, just as Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock would seem to be the perfect dramatic entities for their responsibilities, so is Dr. McCoy. Because one of the worst failings a doctor can have *is to have feelings*.

A doctor has to be callous. Really. Given the amount of suffering that he will have to deal with, he can't allow himself to care about his patients as individuals—that would mean taking on their pain and sickness as his own. Even the best of doctors will not be able to save all of his patients; many of them will die. A doctor, in order to preserve his own sanity, has to think of them as anything but human beings. How many friends can you lose—especially when it is your responsibility to save them—and still continue to function rationally?

Granted that future science and technology will provide fantastic advances in medicine. Granted that doctors will be better trained and better equipped. But planetary exploration will still be a dangerous business and men will be encountering threats and menaces that will be totally unfamiliar. A ship's doctor is going to be continually reminded that all of the people around him are mortal. For his own sake, he had better not get too close to them.

And yet, McCoy is a man with emotions—he wants to feel for other human beings. He wants to, but he must not.

Understand the contrast here: Spock prefers logic over emotions. McCoy prefers emotions over logic. But each is in a position where they must stifle part of who they are in order to fulfill their duties aboard the ship. Spock is continually reminded of his own emotionality and McCoy is continually forced to reject his.

Perhaps each of these characters recognizes the dilemma that the other is in, and more than anything else, this could be the reason for the unspoken affinity between them—the mutual shock of recognition in a topsy-turvy mirror.

They are united also by a deep-seated regard for the Captain. And make no mistake,

Spock does indeed have strong feelings of loyalty and respect for Kirk. The Vulcan betrays himself in this respect time and time again. For McCoy, of course, his relationship with the Captain is one of deep affection and warmth—an old, tried friendship.

In another respect, McCoy and Spock are symbolic opposites.

Remember that Captain Kirk's job is to be a decider. These two are his chief advisors. As such, they will represent the two aspects of every decision he will have to make—especially the difficult ones that will affect other people's lives.

As advisors, each of them will express his opinions; but their opinions will not only be derived from the nature of their jobs, they will be colored by who they are as individuals. Spock represents Rationality, McCoy represents Compassion. Thus, the two of them are more than just characters aboard the *Enterprise*; they symbolize Captain Kirk's internal dilemmas. The two of them serve to verbalize the arguments that the Captain must consider. Because we cannot get into the Captain's head to hear what he is thinking, Spock and McCoy are doubly important to the series' ability to tell its stories well—it is primarily through them that Kirk's internal conflicts can be dramatized.

The symbolism can be extended into the other crew members of the *Enterprise*:

Lieutenant Uhura represents the ship's ability to communicate. Mr. Scott represents the ability to take action once a decision has been made. Mr. Sulu, as helmsman, is the tool of that action. Ensign Chekov, as a Kirk-in-training, represents the next generation of command that must be raised to understand its responsibilities.

Actually, it is not the characters themselves that represent these elements, it is their jobs as crew members. Think of the starship as a living being itself, a single entity of which her human complement is merely the equivalent of individual cells within a body. These are the pieces of the *Enterprise's soma*.

Like any living creature, she needs judgment centers—a Captain; centers of rationale and emotion; organs of communication and action. It is not the personalities of the individuals that establish these symbolisms; rather these are the basic conditions of intelligent life. The people who execute these functions for the living *Enterprise* become symbols of these conditions not

because of any inherent personal distinguishment, but because it is the nature of the jobs that they have assumed.

It doesn't have to be Captain Kirk at the helm, or Mr. Spock at the library-computer station. It could just as easily be Captain McGillicuddy and Mr. McGuffin. Or Captain Klutz and Mr. Cool. Anyone. It doesn't matter.

The situations they will find themselves in will remain very much the same, will call for specific patterns of response from each position, and will be precisely tailored *to test each individual the most*.

The responsibilities of Captainhood are such that whoever were to be commissioned to the helm would feel the same self-doubts in the equivalent situations. If not, then he'd be neither *human* nor interesting. And if he's not interesting, then the writers—the good ones, anyway—will tell their stories about someone else. Any writer who hacks out an adventure in which the hero *isn't emotionally involved* is not only a bad writer, he's cheating his audience.

This analysis of STAR TREK is based on the (unlikely) assumption that the full measure of creative ability can be brought to every aspect of the series' production. (We *will* deal with this later.) Purely in terms of story, however, the key word is *human*.

We are all human beings.

At the moment, we are *only* human beings. There are no other intelligences or entities with which we can establish dialogues.

As human beings, we are self-centered. It is a natural human trait, common to all of us. We like nothing more than to see ourselves in mirrors—especially the kind of mirrors that distort us, or show us the backs of our heads, or make us look prettier than we really are. And this is reflected in our arts.

Our drama is oriented to the study of man and the human experience—what it means to *be* a human being. Human beings don't come with instruction books, and we have to learn who we are every step of the way. We gaze into the mirror of drama not just because we want to be entertained, but because we want to get closer to other people by sharing a piece of their lives—and by learning about others, we hope to learn more about ourselves. We are delighted when we can gain a piece of new insight. We treasure it and cherish it as a piece of wisdom—and polish it

so frequently that we reduce it to cliché. (Given enough time, all of the world's great wisdom will be expressed in clichés.) But this is the highest mark of success that an idea can achieve—to become so familiar to all men that it becomes a shorthand statement for a whole experience.

Whether a story is true drama or merely hackwork melodrama, our reasons for being interested in it remain the same—we are interested in ourselves and how *we* would react in a similar situation. Hence, we look for interesting and unusual situations in our drama, puzzles and exercises with which to test ourselves, problems against which we can measure the strength of our own identities.

We want to be as brave as our Captain Kirks, as cool as our Mr. Spocks, and as outspoken as our Dr. McCoys. We long to be as colorful and as larger-than-life as they are. But failing that—being trapped into a nine-to-five, consume or be consumed existence—we have to let our actors and writers provide these dreams for us vicariously. We will content ourselves with just *identifying* with Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy. If we can't *be* them, well, we can still *dream* about being them.

The other characters in the series, Mr. Scott, Mr. Sulu, Mr. Chekov, Nurse Chapel and Lieutenant Uhura were not as fully developed as the three major leads.

This is not to say that they were not important to the series—they were very important—but they were never treated with the same depth of feeling. We rarely, if ever, were allowed to see if any of these individuals had any *inner* conflicts.

It was as if Kirk, Spock, and McCoy were consciously designed to be the most dramatic possible individuals for their responsibilities, while the others were merely individuals assigned to their specific jobs without much regard for any inherent dramatic conflicts. Scotty was known to love his engines, Uhura liked to sing in her off-hours, Sulu was a hobbyist, a botanist as well as a swordsman, Chekov showed great pride in being Russian, and Nurse Chapel had a crush on Spock. Period.

In *The Star Trek Guide*, each is treated with only a paragraph or two of personal

description—but the descriptions are all of surface characteristics. We are not told what *drives* any of these people. We don't know what they think about, or what they fear. There simply hasn't been enough presented to let us picture these individuals as fully rounded people.

Of course, things were developed for each of these characters in the course of the series, but too often this was only the result of specific story needs. Attempts to redefine (or maybe just define in the first place) the subordinate characters *as human beings* were minimal. There were too many other things to be worried about in the hectic production schedule.

A great deal of this stems from the exigencies of television production and the basic series format. Subordinate characters are meant to be just that—*subordinate*. They are supposed to do their jobs, support the main characters, and be otherwise unnoticeable. They are not to detract from the story. They are never to be treated as if they were a main focus of an episode—there are usually only two focuses; the regular star and the guest star.

If a subordinate character starts becoming too important, the impact of the series is changed. And this is dangerous, because it's equivalent to changing the series itself into a whole new concept. A series is designed to appeal to a specific audience; if you change too much, you might lose part of that audience. If a producer does decide to make changes in his format, he has to be very careful that they are the right ones, that he is emphasizing what the audience will react well to.

An example of this is the character of Mr. Spock. As STAR TREK progressed, the role grew in importance until finally STAR TREK was no longer the adventures of Captain Kirk and the crew of the *Enterprise*, but Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. The relationships of the rest of the crew, and even the starship itself were downplayed in favor of the relationship between Kirk and Spock. It was only because the relationship between the two was so interesting that the change was justified.

None of the other subordinate characters ever commanded that kind of interest, however, and so, they remained subordinate. They remained functions of the starship rather than becoming *dramatis personae*. Lt. Uhura continued to open hailing frequencies—any robot could have done that; Mr. Scott found some trouble with the doubletalk generators—but fortunately he fixed it in time; Mr. Chekov had trouble with the helm because some superior force had overpowered the

ship—he didn't know what to do about it.

As such, none of these aspects of the various STAR TREK plots required these characters to be individuals concerned about themselves and their responsibilities. They were simply there to dramatize the external conflicts of the leading characters. They were functions of the starship, not of the story.

Among the subordinate characters, the only exception to this rule was Nurse Chapel. She was the only regular character who was not a function of the starship as such. A doctor's nurse simply is not important to the overall hierarchy of command. She has no purpose except to be someone for the doctor to talk to—and anybody in a nurse's uniform could fulfill that role.

Nurse Chapel was the only subordinate character whose internal motivation was seriously developed. We were never told the trifling facts of her ancestry or her preference in music. Instead we were shown quite bluntly that Nurse Chapel loves Mr. Spock—and make no mistake, it is a tragic love because it is doomed to be unrequited. Mr. Spock could never allow himself to respond to her interest. It might be the best thing in the world for him—but he would never do it.

This is probably the primary reason for Nurse Chapel's existence aboard the *Enterprise*—to love Mr. Spock. She fulfills no other dramatic function, and no other symbolic function either. The most important continuing event in her life is her love for the ship's First Officer. She was obviously created specifically for this. The need to dramatize Spock's Vulcan aloofness requires that a woman fall in love with him and be continually rebuffed. Hence, Nurse Chapel.

This is why Nurse Chapel sometimes seems slightly out of key with all of the other subordinate roles. Hers is a basically human motivation, while the other characters are basically symbolic with human aspects superimposed upon them.\*

The characters of Uhura, Chekov, Sulu, and Scott might seem a little uncomfortable with

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\*This was probably the reason why Nurse Chapel was the least popular member of the STAR TREK family. It was because of her love for Spock and his occasional moments of gentleness toward her that Christine Chapel was largely disliked among the Trekkies who adored Spock. Female fans saw her as a threat to their own fantasies and male fans saw her as a threat to Spock's Vulcan stoicism.

But those fans who have been lucky enough to meet Majel Barrett in person (now Majel Roddenberry) at science fiction or STAR TREK conventions have been surprised and delighted. The most frequently heard comment is, "But, she's beautiful!" And she is. They just couldn't see it in her as Chapel because of the relationship between her and Spock.



Nurse Chapel, unable to deal with her except strictly on the most professional level. The bridge crew have minimized their inner drives, Nurse Chapel has not. Perhaps there is a mutual recognition of this, perhaps not. In any case, although there may have been trust between them, there did not seem to be a great deal of affection.

What this means to the format of the show, however, is that the characters of Uhura, Chekov, Scott, and Sulu have a great deal more dramatic versatility than Chapel. She has been too thoroughly limited by her creation to a single dramatic function, while the others, having been created for no specific dramatic function at all, can be assigned various dramatic responsibilities throughout the course of a season.

The roles of the others have been left open for development, they are blank books for the series' writers to fill as they choose. We haven't been told what drives Uhura or who Sulu loves—this can be developed later. The only flaw is that there is no guarantee that any of it *will* be developed later. We might end up with just as many questions about these people as we started with. Or maybe not. It depends on the man who sits in the producer's chair.

Fortunately, STAR TREK struck a reasonably safe middle ground with these characters. They were developed enough to be personalities, but never so much as to damage their ability to reappear the following week in the same role. If a story required a particularly violent upheaval in a character's life, generally, a character was created specifically for that upheaval. (Part of it, of course, involved keeping the lesser roles from becoming too complex to be handled by individual writers. No writer is going to know all the scripts that went before, or all the other scripts in development, hence the subordinate roles must be kept fairly simple and unchanging from episode to episode.)

The real strength of these roles is shown by their cumulative effect on the viewer. Although very little is presented about these characters in any specific episode, the sum total feeling after viewing five or six episodes is that these *are* real people.

The involvement that results is quite deep. In a sense, the involvement is very much akin to real-life relationships. One does not meet a person and immediately find out who they are—we do not very often meet people when they are at the height of an emotional crisis. We rarely meet them even in situations which would distinctively delineate an overall set of reactions for

them. Rather, we meet people as they are “maintaining”—moving from one situation to another. Or just existing between situations.

Generally, if there is a situation, it is one of “I am on my guard while I am meeting you, and you are on your guard while you are meeting me.” It takes time and several exposures to an individual before the guard is relaxed. During that period, data is gathered and correlated. Little things, like whether one prefers peanut butter or mildew, big things, like attitudes and angers. A total picture is built up, but only gradually.

Such is the way the lesser STAR TREK characters developed in the viewer’s mind. He wasn’t shown much in any given week—but over a period of time, he was shown quite a bit, developing a feeling of recognition and familiarity. Enough data was eventually presented to bring the characters completely to life, and the result was that despite the hasty treatment given them in any specific script, they still seemed as real and as fully developed as the three major leads.

STAR TREK’S “bad guys” however, were never fully realized as characters. As villains they were more symbolic than individual, and consisted primarily of two distinct groups—

*The Klingons and the Romulans.*

Klingons first:

Klingons are professional villains. They are nasty, vicious, brutal, and merciless. They don’t bathe regularly, they don’t use deodorants or brush their teeth. They don’t even visit their dentists twice a year. They sharpen their fangs by hand because they think pain is fun. They eat Blue Meanies for breakfast.

Think of the Mongol Hordes with spaceships and ray guns. To the Klingons, Genghis Khan was a phony and Attila the Hun was a fairy. And Hitler was only a beginner. Remember Ming of Mongo from all those old Flash Gordon serials? Well, these are his descendants, selectively inbred for sheer awfulness.

A Klingon is a good person to invite to a rape—or even a murder, providing it’s your

own. Klingons build their battlecruisers without toilets; it makes them nastier. Klingons pick on old ladies. Klingons fart in air locks. Klingons drop litter in the streets. Klingons pick their teeth in public. And those are their good points.

Klingons do all the things that men pretend they don't—only Klingons are proud of it.

The Klingons are perfect villains.

They were introduced in an episode entitled “Errand of Mercy,” by Gene L. Coon. In that episode, the neutral planet Organia is threatened by a Klingon takeover. Kirk tries to persuade the Organians to accept a Federation base on their planet for their own protection, but the Organians refuse. Although they are seemingly unprotected, they insist that they are able to cope with the Klingon threat unaided. Kirk doesn't see how, the planet is totally unarmed, and the Organians are confirmed pacifists. The Klingons are murderous butchers and Kirk fears a massacre.

When the Klingons arrive, Kirk naturally ends up getting into a fight with the Klingon captain. Excuse me, a confrontation. At which point, the Organians reveal themselves to be superior energy beings with the power to nullify the weapons of both sides. “Thou shalt not fight!” insist the Organians. At this, Kirk gets mad, “How dare you forbid us to fight with each other! It's our right!” And then he realizes that the whole purpose of his mission was to *prevent* a war. The Organians are right! The Organians have the power to enforce a peace treaty between the two empires. Grudgingly, Kirk and his Klingon counterpart, Kor, agree to a *détente*. They have no choice.

The Klingons were such delicious villains, however, that they began to crop up in other episodes: this author's own “The Trouble with Tribbles,” Gene Roddenberry's “A Private Little War,” Jerome Bixby's “Day of the Dove,” Dorothy Fontana's “Friday's Child,” and so on.

—But all of the Klingon episodes were, in one way or another, restatements of the original: Klingons and Earthmen must *not* fight.

The Organian peace treaty is a convenient limit. Otherwise any confrontation with the Klingons would immediately result in an all-out war.

From a series point of view, if the Klingons are going to appear regularly as villains in stories, then they need to be “controlled” villains. That is, the situation should be equivalent to

the American-Russian cold war. Not only does this provide a good background for a wide variety of stories, both humorous and dramatic, but it is a lot more optimistic and (hopefully) believable than a space war.

After all, a race that can achieve space travel is going to have done so only through large scale programs of social cooperation, and it is hoped, in the process will have learned that there are better ways than aggression to accomplish one's goals. Perhaps they would have even forsaken goals that require aggression (in any of its forms) for their accomplishment.

Besides, if STAR TREK needs to tell a *real* war story, that's what the Romulans are for. . . .

The Romulans were precursors to the Klingons, they were developed first. They weren't quite as nasty, but they were a lot more intelligent and that made up for the missing nastiness.

Romulans first showed up in "Balance of Terror" by Paul Schneider. They also figured in "The *Enterprise* Incident."

In both of these stories, the *Enterprise* was shown in direct battle with Romulan ships, thus implying that a state of war existed between the Earth Federation and the Romulan Empire. As long as each government's ships kept to their own side of the line, however, the war was limited to minor skirmishes. If at any time it had been shown that a state of *all-out* war existed, then STAR TREK would have had to either become a space war TV series, or the two groups would have had to run into some more Organians. . . .

Turning to the *Enterprise* itself, the ship was designed more for its visual impact than out of any particular sense of "this is what it will be like."

Matt Jefferies, designer for the show and the man responsible for the overall STAR TREK "look," submitted several designs to Gene Roddenberry. Roddenberry winnowed, suggested and corrected, and Matt tried again. Eventually, the familiar disc and pylons began to take shape and proportion.

One of the early forms of the *Enterprise* had the disc *below* rather than above the central engineering pod.

The capabilities and design of the *Enterprise* as presented in *The Star Trek Guide*, as well as seen on the show, were an incredible mixture of the clumsy and the brilliant.

For instance, the bridge set was one of the best designed science fiction sets in motion picture history. There are few that can equal, let alone surpass, the bridge of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. (Offhand, I can only think of two: the interiors of the spaceships used in *Forbidden Planet* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.\*)

As a design for the control of a giant starship, the bridge is a model of logic and efficiency. The Captain's eyes are before him in the form of a giant viewscreen. So is the pilot console, which is the equivalent of his hands. The Science Officer is to his right, ready to present whatever information is needed. Communications and Engineering are to the rear, right and left respectively, where they are out of the way, but convenient.

The upper walls are lined with information screens and the Captain's chair swivels so he can survey the whole bridge easily. The lights and controls on each panel are set in curved banks—curved to match the reach of the human arm. Whatever operator is seated at a console, he will find all of his controls in the most convenient possible position.

So workable is this design that the United States Navy sent a delegation to the studio to examine the bridge set in detail. They were considering a similar layout for a new aircraft-carrier bridge. (The new *Enterprise* maybe. . . ?)

That's the brilliant part.

The clumsy part is that so many writers and directors continually *misused* this beautiful set.

Example: (A familiar scene.) The *Enterprise* is under attack. She's hit by a photon torpedo—*kaboom!*—everything tilts and everybody falls out of their chairs! They climb back into them and another torpedo comes zooming in—*kaboom!*—again, they're knocked to the floor! A third time—*kaboom!*—the camera tilts and they all fall down again!

And Scotty reports, "All defenses out, Captain. The next one will get us for sure."

Several years ago, Bob Justman, associate producer of the show, was asked by a fan about this: "Why don't you put seat belts on the chairs?"

"Because," he replied, "if we did, then the actors couldn't fall out of them."

—But the above scene—and Bob Justman's easy answer—are *wrong*. Both scientifically

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\*This was written before *Star Wars*, of course.

and dramatically. There has been little thought put into either.

From a scientific standpoint, the scene is fallacious. Each of those torpedoes would have had to have been a direct hit in order to shake the *Enterprise*. If they had been misses—even *near misses*—the ship wouldn't have been shaken at all. Shockwaves don't travel through the vacuum of space. Hence, in order to shake the ship, they must have been direct hits. If they were direct hits, the ship should have been destroyed three times over.

Or try it another way. Let's assume that a near miss *does* have the power to jolt the *Enterprise*. But the *Enterprise* has an artificial gravity—no, not just an artificial gravity, a whole force field to neutralize the effects of momentum, acceleration, and inertia. Assuming the speed and maneuverability already postulated for the vessel, a protective force field is a necessity to keep the ship's crew from being smeared into jelly every time she makes a rapid change of direction or speed. If this is so, a near miss with a photon torpedo would no more be able to rattle the crew of the *Enterprise* than it would be able to dislodge a fly trapped in amber.

(And assuming that such an artificial gravity/force field did exist, isn't it amazing that it was never knocked to hell and gone by one of those missiles?)

Actually, I could just as easily argue the other side of the question:

Well, you see, the *Enterprise* had her shields up. The torpedoes exploded against the ship's force screens and the shock of the explosion was transmitted to the ship via the shields. Or: the shields didn't stop all of the explosion, part of it leaked through. Just enough to shake everyone, but not kill anybody.

Sure.

It doesn't really matter. Whichever side of the question you argue, it's only doubletalk. But when doubletalk is designed to justify a piece of *bad* writing, that's a reprehensible cheating of the viewer. "Let's make it look exciting. We'll have all the actors fall out of their chairs. Three times."

The same scene could have been a lot more tense—and a lot more believable as science fiction—if it had been written with even the simplest awareness of the postulated capabilities of the *Enterprise*.

The purpose of the scene is to dramatize the menace of the attacking ship. Fine. Very

simple. Instead of three missiles, just one. The *Enterprise* tracks it all the way in—and can't stop it. The officer at the weapon control console (let's put him at the upper left side of the bridge) reports all of his attempts to intercept the torpedo—phasers, anti-missile missiles, force screens, tractor beams, and various other doubletalk devices—and also reports the failure of each device to stop the approaching torpedo. The torpedo strikes the *Enterprise's last* set of screens and detonates, and in the process knocks out that line of defense. This is all reported on the bridge—at the moment of detonation, nobody falls out of their chairs and no sparks fly from any panels (somebody has invented fuses). The lights simply dim momentarily, then come back up again as (implied) the emergency power supply cuts in.

Kirk calls for a status report and Scotty replies: “All defenses out, Captain. The next one will get us for sure.”

And that brings us to the exact same place that the first scene did.

The major difference is one of credibility. The scene with the people falling out of their chairs is visually exciting, but is not dramatically valid. We are abruptly and arbitrarily *told* that the *Enterprise's* defenses have been knocked out.

The latter scene—admittedly a harder one to write—*shows* how those defenses are taken out, and in the process, it builds to a tense climax. The scene involves the viewer in the destruction of each line of defense and makes him more a participant in the action. The real point of the scene is to leave Kirk with no defenses at all—that's when he has to open his hailing frequencies and start talking. Fast. But it feels a lot better if the writer has brought us to this point *honestly*.

Science fiction is not a western with ray guns and spaceships. It is a genre so demanding that few of its practitioners are more than moderately competent at it. The responsibility to be logical and scientifically accurate, while at the same time telling a good dramatic story, will continually defeat any writer who approaches the field with less than total respect for its requirements.

Because so few screenwriters are well versed in science fiction, STAR TREK should have had a full-time science fiction writer on its staff, someone with a good background in science as well as science fiction. Such a staff advisor could have worked closely with the writers, the

directors, the producers and the actors, as well as the designers and the decorators, to make everything as logical, believable, and accurate as possible.

There were too many instances of clumsiness in STAR TREK'S production that a science fiction advisor could have corrected. Doubletalk cannot disguise bad writing—and it will only hurt good writing. It's a little harder, yes, to be accurate, but the results are worth it.

Consider:

The *Enterprise's* corridors seemed awfully roomy, they were about twice as wide as they should have been. In fact, the whole ship was too roomy. Space is at a premium in any kind of enclosed environment. Anyone who's ever been aboard a submarine—or even an aircraft carrier, for that matter—knows that they are designed for the maximum utilization of their volume. Efficiency is a necessity, and a spaceship is going to have to be designed the same way.

In fact, the requirements of a spaceship are much more stringent—for instance, the interior atmosphere must be maintained with the correct combination of gases, at the right temperature, pressure, humidity, and ionization, to maintain not just the lives, but the comfort as well, of the crew. The margins for deviation are narrow; therefore, *every* cubic inch of interior volume means airspace that must be maintained—and maintenance requires the expenditure of energy. When you have to conserve your ship's power, you don't waste airspace.

The reason for such broad corridors? They had to be wide enough for a camera dolly, cables and a film crew.

To attempt to show that the ship was cramped would have required the construction of cramped sets—which are harder to work with and would have meant much more in the way of production time.

(So, instead, we're told that the ship has power to waste—it's implied, not specifically said. But if that's so, then we should never see a story in which maintenance of life-support functions become a critical factor for building suspense. A ship can't be both wasteful *and* limited.)

Another example: the turbo-elevators. These were the machines that took the various crew members from one part of the ship to another. Good idea; especially as we are told that the thickest part of the *Enterprise's* disc is twelve stories thick.



*But*—the elevators seemed to be the *only* way to get from one deck to another. If the ship’s power supply were cut off, every deck would be separated from every other. Oh, well, not really—somebody could always crawl through the air vents, or through the Jefferies Tube, or down one of the ladders which we saw very infrequently. *All except for the bridge*. Cut off the turbo-elevators and you isolate the bridge. Tsk. That’s *bad* designing. Illogical.

Another one: the Captain’s cabin. Or anybody’s cabin for that matter. They were all redresses of the same set. If any of those cabins had a bathroom, it was never shown. There weren’t even any doors to *imply* a bathroom.\* We were never shown the cleanup facilities on the whole ship—not even the sick bay. And the *Enterprise* was on a five-year mission—isn’t that a long time to hold it? Isn’t that carrying it a bit too far?

Also, about those cabins—all of the major officers aboard the ship had their own cabins, and roomy places they were too. No complaint here, but what about the crew’s quarters? Those were never even shown or suggested. Did each member of the crew have a cabin too? That would have made the *Enterprise* more of a hotel than a starship. Or did they have bunkrooms?

If they did have bunkrooms, how come they were never mentioned or shown? How come we never got into the crew’s lives?

Or was the crew just a collection of some 400-odd androids to walk up and down the halls—scenery behind the main characters, to be moved around as necessary, but not really important to the story except as another part of the background to support the overall illusion?†

These examples are not just casual errors in the STAR TREK format. They are part of a general pattern. The glossy surface and flickering lights of the show’s gaudy technicolor

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\*On this one, I was wrong. Elaan of Troyius (from the episode of same name) in one emotional scene did lock herself behind a door, which was presumed to be a bathroom. Or a walk-in closet. When she comes out we’ll ask her.

†About this, Gene Roddenberry says, “Well, yes, we did make mistakes. There were things that worked and things that didn’t work, and if we were ever to do STAR TREK again, we would make improvements in those areas. The one elevator to the bridge *was* a mistake, and no emergency exit in sight. Yes, we would correct that. And we should have had a head in Captain Kirk’s stateroom, certainly.

“We had hoped to build on the basic format as the show progressed. Each year we would have a little more money to spend on new sets and we had intended to add more and more sets gradually to answer some of these questions. My feeling about the crew was that indeed they did have their own staterooms. The services today have always annoyed me, putting up enlisted men like cattle. I think all men deserve dignity and it was my feeling that by that century, we would have come to understand that.”

production could not make up for what was *not* there. In its execution, STAR TREK tended to lack the kind of *deep* extrapolation that characterizes good science fiction.

Consider the ship's galleys, for instance—they were never clearly defined. In “Charlie X” there are references to the ship's cooks, yet when I worked on “The Trouble with Tribbles” I was told that there was only a Mess Officer, and everything else was done by machines. But what machines?!! A slot in the wall? Whatever a character ordered appeared almost immediately behind it. While this may have been admittedly convenient, the processing machinery necessary to perform this miracle—just the myriad moving parts necessary to bring the food from storage to the wall slot—seems prohibitively wasteful of *space*.

And those damned wall slots were *everywhere*. In “Tomorrow Is Yesterday” we were even shown that the transporter room had a food slot.\* It makes you wonder what's going on behind the walls of the *Enterprise*.

A justification can be made for any of these elements of the show's conception. The wide corridors are necessary to prevent claustrophobia in the crew. Separate cabins for everyone are necessary because the culture of the future places a high premium on privacy. Food slots must be plentiful for the same reason—the crew needs to be reassured as to the security of their basic requirements. (And a dumbwaiter system isn't all *that* complex.) Okay—but if you accept this, then what does that imply about the culture that built it?

What kind of a culture would place such a high premium on privacy and security? It does not seem likely that it would be a totally healthy one, or even likely that it would be a spacegoing culture. Space travel implies hardships—insecurity as well as being thrown together with the same group of people for a very long time. The amount of energy needed to establish security and privacy for 430 people is enough to make a starship prohibitively expensive, especially if it is designed in a wasteful manner. The first commandment of the Universe is very simple: Thou Shalt Not Waste. (There are no other commandments, there are only variations.)

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\*Quoting Dorothy Fontana: “There was a food slot in the Transporter Room in ‘Tomorrow Is Yesterday’ because production people wouldn't let me take the Air Force Sergeant out of the Transporter Room or send an extra for some chow for him. It was, of course, never used again. Same reason, essentially, for never seeing bunk rooms and other variations of crew quarters. Have to build a set which might be used once—for one scene—costly, etc. You had to fight with Bob Justman (Associate Producer) on this. And mostly, writers lost.”

These flaws are all part of a pattern—but not a pattern of commission, rather one of omission. And the omission is a serious one. At no point was the *Enterprise* given a background culture.

Oh, we know that Kirk is an Irishman, Spock is a Vulcan, Scotty is a Scot, Sulu's an Oriental, Uhura is African, and McCoy is from the deep South. But these aren't cultural attributes, they're matters of inheritance and have very little to do with the environment that produced this ship and this crew.

In general, the viewers were given so few clues about the social background of the starship that the result was occasionally grotesque. The walls of the recreation rooms were barren even of the simplest decoration. There were no paintings, no screens, nothing to look at, not even patterns of tile or enamel, just a simple stark gray. The basic bulkheads of the ship seemed as grim as a prison, as utilitarian as a hospital.

If these were real people, vitally alive, as intelligent and able as postulated in *The Star Trek Guide*, they would make the impact of their individuality obvious on their “home away from home.” They would make the ship their own. They would decorate their galleys and rec rooms, they would make the sick bay a cheerful place with bright walls and colorful artwork. These people are not automatons—and they would not live in an environment seemingly designed for such.\*

A starship is not an independent entity—no more than a jet plane is independent just because it can leave the ground.

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\*Shortly after the first printing of this book, I received an angry letter from a young man who was obviously quite upset about some of these criticisms. He accused me of *hating* STAR TREK and demanded to know why I would say such things. I wrote back, asking if his mother had ever told him to dress warmly, finish his soup, and not put beans up his nose. “Obviously,” I wrote, “she tells you these things *because* she loves you and wants you to be at your very best. Right? The same is true with these criticisms.” (In fact, many of these same questions were first asked by STAR TREK fans themselves.)

Of course, most of these comments apply only to the TV series. The motion pictures were produced with more time, bigger budgets, and a correspondingly greater attention to detail. The films filled in a lot of background. I was pleasantly surprised—and flattered—to be told by Gene Roddenberry that he found this book useful in the planning of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. More recently, Harve Bennett, producer of *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan* and *Star Trek: The Search for Spock*, also noted that this analysis was a help in the planning of both of those pictures.

Now, if we could just get them to dress warmly, finish their soup, and stop putting beans up their nose. . . .

Imagine for a moment, a fully loaded 747 jet airliner flying from Los Angeles to New York. That's several hundred thousand pounds of airplane and three hundred people. First of all, there's the technology to build that airplane. (Not just one factory in the city of Seattle—but aerospace contractors all over the United States supplying components for every part of the plane, from blades for its jet engines to light bulbs over the seats.) Then there's the technology to maintain it; the schools to train the mechanics, the teachers to teach the stewards; the simulators and mockups on which they'll learn; the equipment with which the plane will be serviced, the specialized trucks and tools and devices; and the men and the training to support *all* of these levels. There's more than the airplane alone. There are airports. Lots of them.

That means the equipment and technology to lay down a perfectly flat runway two miles long. There are ground controllers—that means radar and scopes and computers. And reservation desks and communications systems to service those desks. Luggage-handling systems, porters, allowances for taxis, parking lots, restaurants, rest rooms—and the people to clean, maintain, and work in them.

Then you have to be ready for emergencies—so there will be rescue planes and fire trucks and medical equipment on hand. And detectives to protect the passengers and Federal Marshals to look for hijackers with metal detectors and psychological profile charts.

An airplane burns fuel—a lot of it. A 747 gulps enough petroleum in a single flight to drive an automobile for a year. That requires refineries to crack that oil (men to build and operate those refineries) and trucks to deliver it, tanks to store it. Passengers need meals, that demands another whole service industry. And entertainment—and specialized insurance—and airsickness bags in the back of each seat.

None of these things just *happen* by chance; they are designed into the system as it grows. The 747 could not exist until most of the support technology has already developed. What did not exist had to be built. All of it was oriented to fit the needs of the passenger as our culture has determined them. The very existence of the 747 as the kind of plane it is, is a direct result of what our culture considers important to the traveler. Imagine an airplane with fourteen bathrooms!

That airplane is a piece of living America. (In fact, I'm told it's the state bird of Hawaii.)

It is an active vital symbol of our national technology, but it is no more independent of that technology than is a bird independent of the air in which it flies. The air holds up the bird. Our technology holds up that airplane.

Now. Apply that to a starship.

Extrapolate the needs of the *Enterprise*. Her fuel requirements, her crew requirements, her maintenance and training needs, her supply needs, her communication and control structures, her relation to the culture that produced her—and *why* that culture produced her.

Think about it.

Do you think the *Enterprise* is really an independent entity?

It isn't. It never could be. Her independence is an illusion, just as the independence of the 747 is an illusion. Sooner or later that ship is going to have to return home to have her exhausted energies recharged. Or, if not home, then to a base with an equivalent technology.

And if all of this is true technologically, then it must follow sociologically too. The men and women who crew the starship are no more independent of their cultures than is the starship independent of her technology. They're going to take their culture with them to the stars—and even if they were stripped of every physical aspect of their home cities, they would still reflect their social conditioning in their attitudes.

Yet, the *Enterprise* that we saw on NBC television was a strangely stripped *Enterprise*. Too often, she seemed to be independent of the rest of the galaxy, only occasionally taking orders from Starfleet. She seemed also to be sociologically independent. Indeed, there seemed to be nothing at all which could really be pinpointed as distinctive to the Starfleet culture.

Not in the people. Not in the ship.

Part of the answer is in *The Star Trek Guide*:

*What is the Earth like in STAR TREK'S century?*

For one thing, we'll never take a story back there and therefore don't expect to get into subjects which would create great problems, technical and otherwise. The "U.S.S." on our ship designation stands for "United Space Ship"—indicating (without troublesome specifics) that Mankind has found some unity on Earth, perhaps at long last even peace. References by our characters to Earth will be simply a logical projection of current scientific and social advances in

food production, transportation, communications, and so on. If you want to assume that Earth cities of that future are so splendidly planned with fifty-mile parkland strips around them, fine. But for obvious reasons, let's not get into any detail of Earth's politics of STAR TREK's century; for example, which socio-economic systems ultimately worked out best.

Right there, in one paragraph, we are told that we cannot *really* postulate where these people or this starship came from. We may find out what drives various individuals aboard the ship, but we do not know, nor do we have any way of finding out, what drives them culturally—what motivates their government in sending them out on this mission and equipping them for what eventualities? We can only surmise from what is implied. Nothing has been told to us to let us guess what is culturally important, what is approved and what is taboo.

We can only imply the basic cultural overview by the cumulative actions of the crew of the *Enterprise* and the people they meet. On our first meeting with them, because we want to identify with them, we might surmise them to be like ourselves—but after observing them for several weeks or months, we begin to see that they have a much nobler outlook than most of us seem to have. At least, they appear to be more able to live up to those goals that too many of us only pay lip service to in our own lives.

Of course, it's easy to be noble in any situation, when it's only for an hour and you'll be leaving it for a new situation next week. But that's neither here nor there. We also saw that our crew of the *Enterprise* could sometimes be less than noble—quite often we discovered charming human weaknesses. Scotty's drinking, McCoy's sarcasm, Kirk's impetuosity.

To really understand *who* these people are, we have to look to another section of *The Star Trek Guide*:

*But projecting the advanced capabilities of your starship, wouldn't Man by that time have drastically altered such needs as food, physical love, sleep, etc.?*

Probably. But if we did it, it would be at the cost of so dehumanizing the STAR TREK characters and surroundings that only a small fraction of the television audience would be interested, and the great percentage of viewers might even be repulsed. Remember, the only

Westerns which failed miserably were those which *authentically* portrayed the men, values, and morals of 1870. The audience applauds John Wayne playing what is essentially a 1966 man. It laughed when Gregory Peck, not a bad actor in his own right, came in wearing an authentic moustache of the period.

The giveaway words here are: “1966 man.”

Or, what they really mean: “contemporary man.”

The crew of the *Enterprise* is in no way meant to be representative of future humanity—not at all. They are representative of the American Sphere of Influence *today*. Their attitudes, their manner of speaking, their ways of reacting, even their ways of making love, are all *contemporary*.

We have met the *Enterprise*—and they are *us*.

The crew of the *Enterprise* is twentieth-century America in space.

And—although it takes a bit of justification—that’s the way it *has* to be.

Remember, this is drama we are talking about, as well as *American television*. It *has* to make money.

That means it has to have appeal and that its characters must be attractive and interesting—an audience has to be able to relate to them. Even if the show is alien to the audience’s experience, the characters have to be recognizable.

Neither “Gunsmoke” nor “Bonanza” are really about 1880. They are about contemporary men in an 1880 world. “The Untouchables,” when it was still on, was about 1966 men in a 1929 world. And STAR TREK also is about 1966-69 men in a 2??? world.

This is the essential appeal of drama. As mentioned earlier, we watch a story because we are really testing ourselves. We are curious as to how we would react in an equivalent situation. In science fiction, we are also testing our culture. Thus, both the characters and the culture have to be recognizable parts of ourselves. They have to reflect contemporary values—not totally, but enough so that the viewer can follow.

STAR TREK is *not* pure science fiction. It is not predictive science fiction, and it is not accurate science fiction.

It was never meant to be.

Anyone who tries to shoehorn the series into that kind of arbitrary definition will be making the same mistake that every hardcore aficionado who grumbles in his beer about SF and the dramatic arts (grumble, grumble) has been making since the very first episode of STAR TREK began.

What STAR TREK is, is a set of fables—morality plays, entertainments, and diversions about contemporary man, but set against a science fiction background. *The background is subordinate to the fable.*

I'm going to quote my earlier definition of SF:

Science fiction is the contemporary fairy tale, it's the twentieth-century morality play. At its worst, it's merely romantic escapism; but at its best, it is the postulation of an alternate reality with which to contemplate this one.

That definition could almost be applied to STAR TREK, but the difference between STAR TREK and science fiction is that *true* science fiction requires that the background be logical, consistent, and the overall shaper of the story. The world in which the character moves determines the kind of actions he can make, and hence the plot of the tale. In true science fiction, the background is never subordinate to the plot.

As we have already seen, the *Enterprise* and her crew were able to function almost independently of their backgrounds. The only thing about them that remained consistent was their contemporary attitudes.

STAR TREK's backgrounds were always subordinate to the story—and because of that, it never quite achieved the convincing reality of true science fiction. Its use of a science fiction background gave it the appearance of science fiction; but in reality, STAR TREK was a science fiction-*based* format for the telling of entertainments for and about the attitudes of contemporary America.

The format is a flexible one—in other hands, it could be about other people. It doesn't have to be Americans. The STAR TREK idea could easily be translated into Russian or Chinese or Swahili or Polish. The basic format is that of reflections of the viewer confronting a wide variety



of alternate realities.

These realities are so varied as to provide opportunities for high comedy (“The Trouble with Tribbles”), satire (“Bread and Circuses”), farce (“I, Mudd”), tragedy (“The City on the Edge of Forever”), psycho-case studies (“Space Seed”), morality fables (“Errand of Mercy”), soap opera (“Is There in Truth No Beauty”), theology (“Who Mourns for Adonais?”), melodrama (“The Lights of Zetar”), and even high camp (“Spock’s Brain”).

As such, STAR TREK is the most flexible format for a television series ever to have been postulated for commercial network broadcasting. And as such, STAR TREK had the opportunity to be one of the finest dramatic series in TV history.

The reflection of American man—no, make that just Man—freed from the context of the American culture (or any specific culture) and placed in a series of alternate realities, would be a powerful dramatic vehicle for educating, enlightening—and especially for entertaining the American public. *If* the dramatists scripting the series were allowed to do so with no holds barred.

Just as Archie Bunker was forced to confront his own attitudes week after week, so would such a STAR TREK allow its heroes to examine their attitudes in a multitude of situations—and the viewer with them. Captain Kirk would become a symbol not for American ingenuity—but more important, for the American dilemma: how best can we use our strength? Each week, he would be making crucial decisions about problems that we would see relating to our own lives and environments.

There’s no question that STAR TREK was a show of incredible potential.

But, potential must be realized. An unfulfilled potential is a very special kind of failure.

We’ll consider that aspect of STAR TREK later.