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Refiguring Hybridity in Star Trek

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REFIGURING HYBRIDITY IN *STAR TREK*

by

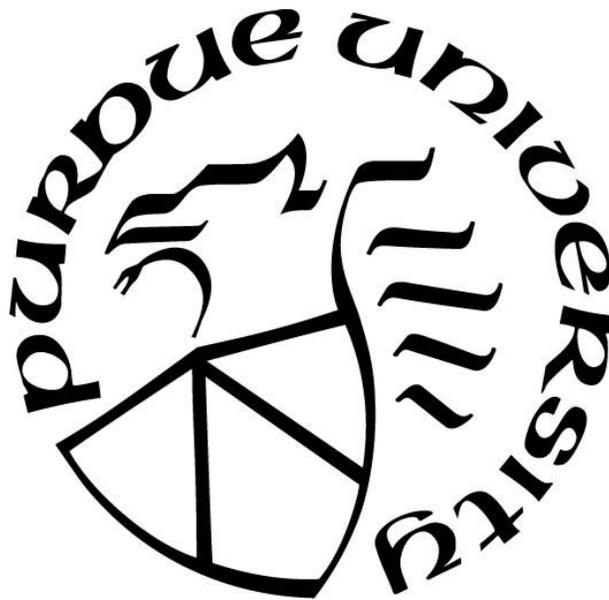
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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



Department of English

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*To my parents, who taught me to love learning, inspired me to pursue knowledge for its own sake,
and, most importantly, raised me to be a Trekkie.*

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I explore the ways in which the *Star Trek* franchise posits hybridity. Examining three hybrid characters—Spock and B’Elanna, both half-human, half-alien, and Data, an android—I explore how each character relates to their hybrid identity and envisions their own hybridity. Rejecting previous models for hybridity that use an additive, percentage-based logic, I use these characters to create a new framework for hybridity. Beginning with the figure of the Jew as an example of alternative Otherness, I posit hybridity as an emergent entanglement, a unifying force that reconciles and reinforces the disparate parts of the self—while retaining an Otherness all its own. Ultimately, I envision this hybridity as a useful framework not only within *Star Trek* and science fiction, but as a larger framework to carry throughout theoretical explorations of identity and selfhood.

INTRODUCTION

*

“To be human is to be complex. You can't avoid a little ugliness—from within—and from without.”

– James T. Kirk, ST: TOS: “Requiem for Methuselah”

“I am pleased to see that we have differences. May we together become greater than the sum of both of us.”

– Surak, ST: TOS: “The Savage Curtain”

*

Last year, the *Star Trek* (ST) franchise reached its landmark 50th anniversary. Actors, writers, production staff, and fans came together at conventions and events across the United States to celebrate a franchise that spans seven television series, thirteen films, and countless works of related fiction (both official and fan-created). Not bad, for an old TV show from the 60s that was cancelled after three seasons (and almost cancelled once before that).

Clearly, ST matters to people. It has staying power. But why? At its worst, ST is remembered for the cheesy special effects and melodramatic acting of *The Original Series* (TOS), the overwrought allegory that can seem pedantic and verbose, and the poor and inconsistent writing that plagued later series like *Voyager* (VOY) and *Enterprise* (ENT). But at its best, ST is remembered as a series that not only attempts to engage with the pressing cultural and political issues of its day, but also attempts to offer a vision of a more diverse, tolerant, and positive future for humanity. It encourages us to envision ourselves not as we are, but as we could be.

ST has remained relevant and meaningful for more than half a century because it engages with big-picture questions; it asks viewers to think critically about themselves and their beliefs—even their prejudices. Ultimately, it poses that fundamental, perhaps *the* fundamental question:

what does it mean to be human? And science fiction offers the perfect opportunity to examine this question—as ST so often does—by simultaneously exploring what it means to *not* be human. Thus, non-human characters in ST are particular fan favorites; Spock, for example, the half-Vulcan, half-human first officer in TOS, has become one of the most easily-recognizable figures in popular media, nearly synonymous with the franchise itself.

In fact, hybrid characters—that is, characters who are part-something, part-something else—like Spock offer a particularly interesting method for exploring the way ST posits identity, culture, and even being human. These characters are at once deeply foreign and yet strikingly relatable as they attempt to navigate their own self-discovery (in addition to plenty of asteroid fields and subspace anomalies). This relatability exists because viewers are interpellated into their quests for self-discovery. While these characters attempt to navigate a complex and multiplicitous identity, they obviously show viewers cultures and customs that are quite literally alien. But they also show the ways in which we are as much similar to as we are different from these characters. Their struggles to understand themselves are relatable in a deeply human way. For like Spock, like so many others, we too are looking up at the stars and wondering who we are.

*

In this project, I aim to examine the rhetorical function of Otherness and hybridity in ST. As Others, these characters serve as foils to human characters, and allow the audience to consider the human condition by examining both what makes these characters different from us, and, perhaps more importantly to the franchise, what makes them similar to us. Thus, this project will analyze the portrayals of hybrid characters in ST as each searches to define themselves and seek meaning in their hybrid identity. In this thesis, my goal is to explore the

ways in which ST understands, or fails to understand, identity as complex, fluid, and resistant of binaries and boundaries. I plan to analyze three such characters: Spock (TOS; portrayed by Leonard Nimoy), Data (*Star Trek: The Next Generation* [TNG]; portrayed by Brent Spiner), and B'Elanna Torres (VOY; portrayed by Roxann Dawson).

As ST frequently relies upon universalism, which itself sometimes devolves into essentialism, I wish to deconstruct the underlying binaristic premises that characterize approaches to hybridity in ST, as well as explore the specific hybrid characterizations of Spock, Data, and B'Elanna. Previous approaches to these, and other non-human, characters has so far been limited by a framework that envisions hybridity as binary and oppositional. For example, as Margaret Rose writes, “hybridity is a dual process,” which, quoting Robert Young, she theorizes as “a doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation” (1200). Using this definition to explain why ST sometimes falls short in its portrayal of non-humans, Rose argues ST often locks itself into a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't fallacy: “*Trek* can't win: if Worf drops the knife, the plot validates assimilation; if he uses it, the story racially essentializes Worf. Either way, *Trek* is racist” (Wagner and Lundeen qtd. in Rose 1201). While this approach reveals the shortcomings of ST, it is also restrictive, in that it traps viewers in a no-win scenario, where the only interpretation is a negative one: either ST is racist, or it's assimilationist.

In our discussions of identity and its relationship to broader cultural ideologies we often speak of a dominant/marginalized dichotomy in which the marginalized identity or culture either resists or assimilates into the dominant culture. And often, assimilation is perceived as a moral failure on the part of marginalized people for failing to preserve their “authentic” identity. Indeed, syncretism is a “blending”-type of assimilation “often employed negatively to refer to

the contamination of one religion [or culture] by another” (*Larousse Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions* qtd. in Levenson 20).

A necessary antecedent of assimilation is the notion of a presumed authentic identity (and thus also an inauthentic one in opposition to it). Such beliefs of authenticity stem from notions of essentialism: that there is one monolithic, defining experience for a particular group. As Brian Kwan points out:

The liberal humanist message of the Star Trek franchise, which advocates a future without racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice, is admirable...However, this utopian vision of the future is undermined by the inadvertent assumption of racial and cultural normativity. By relying on allegory to address the issue of race, the producers created a future that privileges one race as normal as opposed to a future without racism. (69)

This essentialism, the fact that in many cases a character’s personality is determined by their culture, and that their culture is synonymous with their race, means that “Star Trek replicates the buried structures of scientific racism” (Rose 1201). While it is true that this essentialist approach might present a simplistic view of identity (after all, among humans there is wide variation in beliefs and experiences, even within a culture), it also takes a simplistic view of the nature of television production and its limitations.

Here, as interracial tension is transposed onto interspecies tension, so too is the status of mixed race transposed onto the status of mixed species. For example, as Daniel Bernardi argues in “‘Star Trek’ in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race,” Spock as half-human and half-Vulcan is a “racialized alien half-breed” (216). Yet even as Bernardi posits Spock as allegorical, he also speaks of “the duality of Spock, his half-breed condition” being “a space for signification” (212). In the above example, and in the Worf example earlier, one can see the pervasiveness of the binarism: human/alien, authentic/assimilated. While I laud Bernardi’s criticisms, which I believe are a necessary part of understanding ST, in taking a

somewhat surface-level approach to race—and by failing to deal with hybridity in any meaningful way—he falls into that “no-win” trap of either-or dualism: in “pos[ing] the alien as a special theme,” Bernardi and others with this dualistic thinking “have missed it already. For it means to begin from the place of the familiar and the known, and if the journey goes as planned, to expect to return to the same place” (Waldenfels 3). Therefore, I wish to present an alternative way of thinking about hybridity, one which posits hybridity as an other Otherness, an alternative category offering more open-ended potentialities for realization.

This previous conception of hybridity ultimately fails, in that, while it hints at the creative fusion of hybridity, it still does not allow one to see the product of this cohesion as more than the sum of its parts. Hybrid identity is not merely a percentage of this, and a percentage of that. Instead, hybridity must be approached as fusion out of which is born something new, like a chemical reaction in which a new substance is formed from several materials. True, hybridity carries with it vestiges and memories of its “parent” influences, but it also represents the deconstruction of binarism and the creation of a new space of identity. This also shows the ways in which identity is continually a process of self-examination and introspection—a kind of “becoming,” in the Deleuzian sense of that word: an ongoing, generative process in which influences are transformed, “rectif[ying] an assemblage”—in this case, the assemblage of a hybrid identity—“in which it is deterritorialized, and conversely, for which it provides a line of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari 306).

Yet this conception too relies upon the binary: this “deterritorialization is always double...” (ibid.). They freely admit this, noting that binary logic “doesn’t get us very far,” presenting the rhizome, a tuber, as an alternative to the bifurcating system of roots upon which Western logic has so long relied (5). But their notion of becoming is useful, if we take it in a

rhizomatic way, in that provides a basis for viewing identity as a process, a construction of something new, rather than a mere assemblage of parts. In this model, hybridity is not a preconstituted patchwork but rather an emergence. As Andreea Decui Ritivoi puts it, “One’s life/identity is a story in constant making and remaking...” (64). This conception of identity breaks down the binary between us/Other, in that it allows for the creation of a third space, a truly hybrid space. That is, “[a]lienness presupposes that a self (ipse) should have a sphere of ownness and its own being, and that this self should not be confused with the same (idem), which is discernable as a third party”—except that in the hybrid, self and same become ambiguous; the distinction between self, Other, and same blur into a new category that retains elements of all but carries its own unique signification (Waldenfels 12).

It is important and worthwhile to critique the failings (both in terms of critical implications and special effects) of a show as important to pop culture as *ST*. But it is also important—especially if we are to understand why, despite these failings, it still speaks to so many viewers—to construct a more fruitful framework for understanding hybridity. Thus, my goal for this thesis is to reconceptualize hybridity from *ST*’s portrayal of hybrid characters. As Spock became a sort of prototype for alien, and particularly hybrid, characters on *ST*, it is thus fitting that he should also be used as the formative example of hybridity. As I will show in my first chapter, focusing on Spock, Nimoy’s Jewish identity allows us to understand Spock’s hybridity in a new light; rather than half-human and half-Vulcan, we can thus conceptualize Spock using the figure of the Jew as an “other Other,” a hybrid that is both within and without a culture—and thus something different entirely.

The figure of the Jew is a fraught one in Western culture, signifying not only an ethnic ambiguity but also a cultural one, an Otherness that not only coexisted and thrived within larger

normative culture, but that is, as a forbearer of Christianity, an integral part of European culture itself. It is, as Bernhard Waldenfels writes, that “[t]he self-referentiality of drawing boundaries consists of self-withdrawal...[The self] appears as a cavity, as an inside which separates itself from the outside and thus produces a preference in the difference” (15). But in the Jew—and, I will argue, the hybrid—this self-bounding is not a line, but a recursive entanglement, endlessly folding back on itself while at the same time projecting forward to produce something familiar and yet somehow new.

Using this refigured hybridity, I will then examine B’Elanna, as another half-human, half-alien character. Where Spock is characterized by his rejection of human culture, though, B’Elanna is characterized by her refusal of her alienness. Complicating her identity is her gender and her Latina human heritage. For B’Elanna, hybridity is a struggle because of the fragmenting affects of dualism and internalized xenophobia from traumatic events in her youth. The daughter of a Klingon mother and a human father who abandoned them, B’Elanna grapples with her hybridity and the heritage it signifies both internally and externally. Ultimately, I will argue that as B’Elanna accepts Klingon culture and prepares to have her own mixed-species child, she begins to accept herself as a hybrid, demonstrating the potential of hybridity as a unifying, rather than bifurcating, force.

Lastly, the final chapter will examine Data, the android second officer of the *USS Enterprise-D*. While Data may at first seem an unusual choice for a hybrid, he represents the fusion of two previously separate entities, the human and the machine, into something entirely new—a being which incorporates aspects of both, and is yet far more than a simple amalgamation of human mind and mechanical body. Using Data, I will explore authenticity and performativity as they relate to hybridity, ultimately arguing that “cyborg”—in both the science

fiction and theoretical meanings of that term—is not the best approach for understanding Data because it reinforces notions of dualism and dichotomy. Rather, understanding “android” as a type of hybrid allows us to realize one of the multiple potentialities hybridity offers. Data is an Other who emerges both from and outside humanity, and grows to inhabit a space that belongs in some ways to both and in some ways to no one but himself. In this way, I will show, Data is an unexpected but useful example of hybridity.

*

Hybridity is a meaningful concept to explore in ST because its hybrids mean something to us. Ultimately, I am less concerned with what the franchise has to say, for good or ill, than what we might do with it. In confronting the Otherness of aliens, ST, as a franchise that has embraced social criticism, is also asking us to confront the Others around us and in ourselves. Constructing a useful and open-ended framework for hybridity is therefore important in that we can then transpose this framework—not only onto other characters, or even other SF, but also onto broader cultural issues. And, perhaps more immediately, it offers something for people who themselves feel like an Other, who have Otherness embedded in them. As Diane Davis argues in “Addressing Alterity,” when we encounter the Other, there is always something of the Other that escapes us (193). Through hybridity, where the normative identity and the Other identity are in constant interaction, Davis’ concept of non-hermeneutical understanding can be applied to the self as well as the Other. That is, something may escape us even as we encounter the Other in ourselves.

CHAPTER 1: SPOCK

*

“Each of us, at some time in our lives, turns to someone—a father, a brother, a god—and asks, ‘Why am I here? What was I meant to be?’”

– Spock, *ST: The Motion Picture*

“Being split in two halves is no theory with me, doctor. I have a Human half, you see, as well as an alien half, submerged, constantly at war with each other. Personal experience, doctor. I survive it because my intelligence wins over both, makes them live together.”

– Spock, “The Enemy Within,” *ST: TOS*

*

TOS’s Mr. Spock has become not only one of the best-loved characters of the entire *ST* franchise, but one of the most well-recognized pop culture icons of the past century. Spock is a half-Vulcan, the child of a human mother and a Vulcan father. Raised on Vulcan, as a Vulcan, Spock attempts to live according to Vulcan principles and “pass” as fully Vulcan, but his human ancestry makes it more difficult: Vulcan philosophy requires the suppression of all emotion in favor of a lifestyle based totally on logic. Spock’s human heritage complicates his ability to suppress his feelings, and he is not fully accepted on Vulcan. Spock defies his father’s wishes for him to attend the prestigious Vulcan Science Academy, and joins (the mostly-human) Starfleet¹, presumably to escape the judgment and isolation he feels on Vulcan to live in a space

¹ Starfleet is the exploratory and protective arm of the United Federation of Planets, of which Earth and Vulcan are two founding members. The Federation is something like the European Union, but in space. Although Starfleet’s goal is exploratory and scientific rather than military, it does function as armed protection for the Federation when necessary (on contentious border regions, during war, etc.).

where he can more easily enact his Vulcan identity. After all, no one in Starfleet initially knows he is anything other than fully Vulcan.

Part of Spock's appeal is that despite all the advantages lent to him by his refined intellect, he remains, for viewers, the underdog, the outcast. In fact, Spock meant a lot to me as a young girl. The only other Jews I knew and lived amongst were my parents and a couple of my father's cousins (who were old even to him). I certainly didn't have any Jewish friends or people my own age. But I had Spock. Somehow I seem to remember knowing Nimoy was Jewish before I even looked it up. Spock just—felt Jewish. I identified, even at a young age, with his feelings of isolation and the prejudice—sometimes subtle and unintentional, sometimes...not so much—that he faced. It was, as Waldenfels describes, the ecstasy of “my own...alienness [being] reinforced by the duplicating alienness of the Other,” that is, the validation of my own Otherness (54).

In this chapter, I aim to show that Spock's enduring popularity stems from his relatability, that is, his ability to occupy a liminal space: both us and not us, strange and yet strangely relatable. In Spock, the uncanny is inverted: the foreign becomes familiar. Thus, he is both ST's quintessential alien and its quintessential hybrid. Heretofore, work on Spock and/or hybridity in ST has focused on the transposition of race onto species, and thus, the role of the hybrid as simply an allegory for a mixed-race character. As Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. puts it, “[S]pecies is a metaphor for ethnicity in all incarnations of ST. ST hybrids are not inter-species, they are biracial” (202). While I do not contest the oftentimes simplistic treatment of race and species in ST, I wish to complicate the assertions of Wetmore and other theorists who argue that hybridity in ST is *only*, is *nothing more than*, an allegory for the mixing of races.

Not only does this fail to fully address the complexity of the issue, it also ignores Spock's distinctly Jewish undertones, and the ways in which this Jewishness-as-Otherness and Jewishness-as-hybridity influenced the treatment of non-human and hybrid characters to come. Other ST series created characters to emulate Spock's role as resident alien on the bridge. And Nimoy's portrayal, which would come to define the role of "alien" or "Other" on ST for decades to come, was deeply influenced by his own Jewishness—not only in the feel and performance of the Vulcan culture, but also in the particular kind of Otherness the character inhabited. Thus, I argue that as Spock sets the precedent for alienness and hybridity in ST, he also imbues that role with a Jewish sensibility, engaging with and challenging Jewish tropes and stereotypes. This Jewishness ultimately allows us to envision hybridity as an entanglement, an alternative Otherness to the binaristic division of human/alien. It is worth noting that, to my knowledge, of the works sourced for this thesis on the subject of ST and identity, none that mention Spock address this Jewish identity in any meaningful way but one.

*

Nimoy has often spoken about how he imbued his character with a certain subtle Jewishness. Perhaps the most famous example is the Vulcan salute: one hand held aloft, forming a "V" shape with the pinky and ring fingers held together and separated from the index and middle fingers, also held together. This is also the priestly blessing given during Shabbat (sabbath) services, although for this benediction, both hands are used. Nimoy describes being inspired to create the salute by an experience he had as a child at synagogue (Gershon 38-9). As the Vulcans needed to feel different from humans, it was important to construct a unique culture for them—and given the large number of Jews on ST's production staff, not to mention Nimoy's own upbringing, it made sense to give them a Jewish flavor; producer Harve Bennett, himself

another Jew, even went to far as to say that Vulcans were meant to “serve as stand-ins for Jews,” which indeed highlights “how ‘alien’ the Jews feel in the society at large” (Gershon 34). They inhabit a desert planet, not dissimilar from the Middle East; their musical cues have a distinctly Oriental flair²; and their culture plays into one of the most pervasive cultural characteristics (or stereotypes, depending on how you look at it) of Jews: their perceived bookishness.

As Rabbi Yonassan Gershon explains, “Perhaps the most Jewish of all Spock’s characteristics is his extreme intellectualism. Spock’s world is ruled by precise, disciplined, logical thinking...Similarly, traditional Judaism places great value on developing the mind” (44). In Jewish culture, studying religious texts is seen as both a spiritual *and* an intellectual enterprise; thus, study (of both a religious and secular nature) has become an important aspect of Jewish life. This proved especially true of Jews in higher education in the sciences and the humanities during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, when Jews became more welcomed (and assimilated) into mainstream European culture and its academy. In “Smart Jews in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna,” Sander L. Gilman explains how this bookish tendency came to be seen in an increasingly anti-Semitic light as shrewdness without creativity or originality: “This is the general understanding of Jewish superior intelligence in the late nineteenth century, with intelligence simply masking bad character. Bad character, in turn, is manifested in the Jew’s innate inability to be original in the creative arts, where he makes the claim for his own originality” (45).

Indeed, Spock is often positioned in contrast with Dr. Leonard “Bones” McCoy, an emotional man who often teases and even debates with Spock about their differing worldviews. Together with Kirk, they form a trifecta, with Spock popularly representing the “mind,” Kirk the

² See Tim Summers. “Star Trek and the Musical Depiction of the Alien Other.” *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2013.

“body,” and Bones the “soul.” We can thus see how Vulcan culture as purely logical and devoid of emotion reinforced perceptions of Jews as Other. But at the same time, Spock is a necessary piece of this triumvirate; rather than being castigated as “parasitic” to the creative energies of Kirk and McCoy—which, Gilman points out, is how modernity posited Jewish intelligence—Spock balances them out and provides an alternative perspective—one that often helps lead to a solution (46). Thus, Spock reimagines this Otherness not as a detraction but as an attribute.

*

In the episode “Journey to Babel” (TOS: 2x10),³ Sarek—the Vulcan ambassador and Spock’s father—along with his human wife, Amanda, join a party of Federation delegates aboard the *USS Enterprise* on their way to a conference. This is the episode where, for the first time, Spock reveals that he is in fact *half-Vulcan*. Thus, it represents a critical moment in Spock’s character development, one in which he is forced to confront the alien within. Spock is forced to confront his estranged parents, and through them symbolically, his own identity-driven internal conflict. The episode deals explicitly with Spock’s hybrid nature, using the intra-family tension to situate hybridity within the ST universe.

After much family squabbling and an exciting espionage subplot, this conflict comes to a head when it is revealed that Sarek needs immediate heart surgery. Because the procedure requires constant blood transfusions, Spock must also be present, in order to supply the blood. But even this, the very essence of him, contains both human and Vulcan elements:

CHAPEL: I've checked the blood bank. There isn't enough Vulcan blood and plasma to even begin such an operation of this type.

KIRK: There are other Vulcans aboard.

³ Each episode will be identified by the season and episode number (using the airdate). Thus, 2x10 means that “Journey to Babel” is the tenth episode of the second season of TOS.

SAREK: My blood type is T-negative. Somewhat rare, even for a Vulcan.

MCCOY: Yes, I'd say that's rare.

SPOCK: My blood is T-negative, Doctor.

CHAPEL: We've run a number of blood tests on Mister Spock. It isn't true Vulcan blood, either. It has human blood elements in it.

SPOCK: It should be possible to filter out the human factors (TOS: "Journey to Babel").

"Filtering out the human factors" is what Spock has been attempting to do his entire life. Blood traditionally symbolizes the essence of one's being; thus, the image of Spock's hybridized human/Vulcan blood—and the positing of those human elements as imperfections to be filtered out—transfers onto the image of Spock himself, the literal difficulty of filtering blood transposed into the emotional difficulty of filtering human emotional tendencies. In this we can see a metaphor for assimilation, and the tension it imposes upon the hybrid: the conflict does not come from the existence of the hybridity itself; the trouble only comes when the attempt is made to alter it. Thus, the episode demonstrates a notion of authenticity antithetical to the most common of such narratives, which rely on notions of purity: the hybrid, the mixed elements, represent the "authentic" self, the lifeblood. And though the human elements have been removed from Spock's blood, one does wonder if something that is the alien within Spock passes also to Sarek.

Blood is a complicated thing when discussing hybridity, for it brings to mind notions of racial purity. And indeed, such conceptions of racial purity were driving factors in the development of modern antisemitism in the Renaissance⁴—but blood works at different registers, and here, it is primarily at the medical one: blood purity cannot be argued, for Sarek's blood type

⁴ For more, see: Janet Adelman. *Blood Relations*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

is so rare that even other Vulcan blood is insufficient. It is not the blood type, but the blood line that is significant. Only a blood relation of Sarek would have the necessary blood, and so the issue becomes primogeniture, and the fact that a child is a product of genetic recombination and mutation—always a sort of hybrid. And when that child is a product not only of two people but two *peoples*, plural, then culture gets tangled up in that hybridity as well.

Sarek and Spock became estranged after Spock's decision to attend Starfleet Academy, rather than the Vulcan Science Academy, as his father had hoped. Starfleet is comprised of many species, although (no doubt for budget reasons) the crew of the *Enterprise* that viewers are shown is, apart from Spock, exclusively human. Amanda, commenting on this (admittedly unseen) diversity, says, "It hasn't been easy on Spock. Neither human nor Vulcan. At home nowhere except Starfleet" (ibid.). Starfleet here is portrayed as a home for the misfits of the galaxy, a place for wanderers, outsiders, and yes, hybrids. When Kirk points out that Starfleet offers Spock more "real world" opportunity, as it were, to study astronomical phenomena than the Vulcan Science Academy, Amanda replies that Sarek "wanted Spock to follow his teachings, as Sarek followed the teachings of his own father" (ibid.).

Yet Sarek, in his own way, disrupts tradition, too: he married a human woman, for example, and as an ambassador he chose to live among humans and serve the Federation, rather than working for a purely Vulcan institution like the Vulcan Science Academy. Yet in other ways, he maintains Vulcan tradition, namely his strict adherence to Vulcan logic. Thus, while tradition may be modified or even disrupted, there are acceptable and unacceptable ways of doing so. Starfleet takes Spock out of the sphere of acceptable Vulcan culture, and represents a break with tradition. As Z. Qian points out in "Options: Racial/Ethnic Identification of Children of Intermarried Couples," in a patriarchal culture—which Vulcan is established as—racial

identification is usually based on the father's race; thus, Sarek's displeasure reflects not only a disapproval of Spock's personal decision, but a censure of the ways in which that decision ruptures patriarchal continuity.

Identity is thus posited as fluid and contextual, with Starfleet at once disrupting and stabilizing. Starfleet, then, is seen as a force that allows one to break away from tradition and generate new self-narratives. Amanda establishes Starfleet as a place where the familiar and the unfamiliar, the human and the alien, not only meet but coexist to form a cohesive, but heterogenous, unit. We are reminded that just as Spock appears alien to us, so too does he appear alien to the very people we consider him a part of. As Whetmore writes, within the framework of Starfleet, "[a]ccommodations are made for individual identity and group cultures, but ultimately assimilation within that framework is expected" (202). As Starfleet's internal structure is pseudo-military, with ranks, uniforms, protocols, etc., this makes a certain amount of sense; it also offers a level of acceptance to those who, like Spock, do not fit neatly into a particular cultural framework.

Interestingly, Spock has no direct discussions with his father about Vulcan-ness; these conversations are mitigated by Amanda, who speaks with both Spock and Sarek on the subject. Early in the episode, Amanda seems ambiguous about Spock's humanity, saying, "After all these years among humans, you still haven't learned to smile" (TOS: "Journey to Babel"). On the one hand, this seems to deny Spock's human side; "among" in this case could denote a difference of type, an outsider in the midst of an otherwise homogenous group. But later, Amanda speaks of Spock being human as well, as having a human part of him; thus, I struggle to fully accept this reading. For one could also see this line as Amanda saying, "All this time among [other] humans [and you still haven't learned to embrace your own human side.]" Although there is a certain

ambiguity in Amanda's statement, Spock removes any doubt as to his own self-perception (or at least, self-presentation) in his reply that "[h]umans smile with so little provocation" (ibid.). He, on the other hand, does not.

While Amanda may be ambiguous towards Spock's humanity in this scene, Sarek acknowledges it, during a later conversation with his wife. During a reception, Amanda tells Bones about Spock's pet selat growing up, and Bones affectionately teases Spock about it. Later, in their quarters, Sarek tells Amanda, "You embarrassed Spock this evening [with that story]. Not even a mother may do that. He is a Vulcan" (ibid.). And yet, as Sarek points out, he is a Vulcan *who is also capable of feeling embarrassment*: human and Vulcan all at once. Here, Amanda seems ready to acknowledge this, which she was not able to articulate in front of Spock himself, saying, "He's also human." Not either/or, but also, some combination thereof, and yet, something entirely new and different as well, for, as Sarek retorts: "He's a Starfleet officer."

Starfleet in this instance is positioned as something other than humanness *or* Vulcanness—and yet mutually exclusive to neither. In a speech, Nimoy once said he saw his character as reflective of the Diasporic experience because "[o]nly on the starship does he feel accepted, because it is a meritocracy. I totally identified with that" (Arnold). Meritocracy, then, becomes a means of entering the dominant culture without necessarily sacrificing Otherness, which, here, is positioned in a place of value. The skills or traits necessary to succeed are positioned either as neutral or as a meeting-place of shared cultural values and point of connection. While "one must place one's identity as a member of Starfleet over and above one's identity as a particular species or ethnicity" on the one hand, on the other, Starfleet also allows one mitigate, if not totally overcome, the unbelonging of an Other, or worse still, of a hybrid—so long as they assimilate successfully into the culture of their workplace (Whetmore 203). If

Starfleet is not itself an entirely hybrid space, it is, to a certain degree, at least conducive to fostering hybridity.

Spock establishes his hybridity, and in some ways, the hybrid role, as Jewish. Nimoy, who got his start in the Yiddish theatre, saw his character as being particularly and uniquely Jewish in the sense that, as a hybrid, he is at home nowhere and everywhere. In an interview with the Yiddish Book Center, Nimoy says that:

Spock is an alien, wherever he is. Because he's not human. He's not Vulcan. He's half and half—what we used to call a half-breed...He's not totally accepted in the Vulcan culture because he's not totally Vulcan. Certainly not totally accepted in the human culture because he's part Vulcan. And that alienation was something I learned in Boston. I knew what it meant to be a member of a minority — and in some cases, an outcast minority. So I understood that aspect of the character, and I think it was helpful in playing him.

It is not only that identity is situational, but also that hybridity offers a different perspective on this contextuality. As Waldenfels writes, “The act of drawing a boundary [for one’s self-identification] takes place at a zero point which lies neither at the hither side nor beyond the boundary” (15). Whereas Waldenfels goes on to argue that “we cannot utter a word our carry out a gesture of action without a third [party] coming into play, which can be neither be reduced to the behavior of the addressee not that of the addresser,” and that this third represents “rules, orders, and laws,” I argue rather that the third is the zero is the hybrid (81). That is, the hybrid mitigates and contains parts of each, yet is irreducible to one or the other, or even to some sort of both; it lies without, within, and beyond, nowhere and everywhere. This, I think, is all a rather fancy way of saying what Nimoy was saying all along: that Spock felt Jewish to him because to be a Jew meant to be a part of society and yet apart from it. If, as Waldenfels argues, “self-referentiality...leads to in-bounding and out-bounding,” then the figure of the Jew reproduces itself in Spock as that which is the product of, but irreducible to, either act (15).

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Spock's Otherness becomes especially poignant when understood in the context of "the wandering Jew" trope. In this trope, Jewish or Jewish-coded characters like Spock wander the Earth (or in this case, the stars) in exile, having no permanent home or place of safety. The legend of the wandering Jew is believed to have arisen in Europe in the Middle Ages; in it, a Jew who struck Jesus Christ on the way to the crucifixion is cursed to never die, instead walking the Earth until the coming of the Messiah (Edelman 4-5). Other sources attribute it to a 1602 German chapbook (Schaffer 28). Often, the figure appears in the character of "Ahasver," a bearded and grizzled old man; the legend was well-known throughout Western, Northern, and Mediterranean Europe, and, later, America. It relies on the larger early Christian myth that the Jews are exiled from their homeland and forced to wander as punishment for failing to accept Christ. "Infamous [and] transgressive," the wandering Jew became "the figure through which feelings about the Jewish Question have been most popularly articulated in Europe since the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition...when Jewish refugees were literally dispersed throughout Europe, having been expelled from Spain" (Davison 1-2).

In many ways, the wandering Jew is a defining trope for anti-Semitic stereotypes. It is a Christian invention, one that reflects Christian Europe's encounter with an Other who is also their cultural and religious ancestor and relative. Leo Pinsker's 1882 essay, "Auto-Emancipation," puts it this way:

Among the living nations of the earth the Jews are as a nation long since dead...[A]fter the Jewish people had ceased to exist as an actual state, as a political entity, they could nevertheless not submit to total annihilation—they lived on spiritually as a nation. The world saw in this people the uncanny form of one of the dead walking among the living. The ghostlike apparition of a living corpse, of a people without unity or organization, without land or other bonds of unity, no longer alive, and yet walking among the living — this spectral form without precedence in history, unlike anything that preceded or

followed it, could [not] but strangely affect the imagination of the nations (qtd. in Davison 1).

Pinsker, himself a Jew, reveals the transgressive nature—spiritual, political, and physical—of the Jew in the European consciousness. The legend of the *particular* wandering Jew, then, functions as a synecdoche for the larger Jewish Diaspora⁵. Furthermore, it lays bare the harsh reality of Jews throughout the ages, particularly in Europe: a life of forced expulsions and pogroms, where one existed forever as a stranger in their own land. “Diaspora,” meaning “dispersion,” is itself a foreign word; the Jews called it *galut*—exile.

And Spock is exiled from Vulcan, in a way, self-exile though it may be; he has completely cut off ties to his family on Vulcan, and he mentions no family on Earth. It is true that all his crewmates traverse the stars, but unlike them, Spock is (that we know of) the only one with no permanent home to return to: he is too human for Vulcan and too Vulcan for Earth. Again, Starfleet as a space of hybridity becomes important, in that it allows for movement and transgression of boundaries. Removed from the physical space allocated to any one culture or people, the *Enterprise* allows for transcendence—literally rising above the particularism of Earth or Vulcan. As a vessel not only of transport—as in the episode, where it ferries ambassadors—but mainly of exploration, the *Enterprise* symbolizes a continual pushing, adjusting, breaking, and re-forming of boundaries and self-identifications. Thus, the sense of movement is both physical and figurative. Interestingly, R. Edelman points out that the Christian myth of the wandering Jew has parallels to the Talmudic figure of the *Ba'al Teshuva* (literally, “master of

⁵ It should be noted that here, as elsewhere in this analysis, I refer to the particular experience of European, Ashkenazi Jews. Essentially, these are Jews of European descent, but not those of the Iberian Peninsula (who are known as Sephardi Jews). In many ways, the Ashkenazi experience is the archetype (or perhaps stereotype) that defines the Jewish narrative—particularly the American Jewish narrative. There are, of course, issues with this, for it eclipses the experiences and narratives of other Jewish groups, who are often marginalized within both the Jewish community and their larger non-Jewish community. While it is important to acknowledge this—for it proves that the “Other” is itself a heterogenous and complex group, often with its own internal structures and hierarchies—the Ashkenazi experience is the type of Jewishness that defined Spock and is thus what I limit myself to here.

repentance”)¹, the penitent wanderer, an exile (9). But the word “teshuva” also relates to responding or returning, which eventually—by the films at least—Spock does, having come to peace with himself (Kamczycki 80).

Thus, Spock—and by extension, the other non-humans, Others, and hybrids to follow—fulfill certain aspects of the wandering Jew trope: they are in some way exiled from their homeland or home culture, literally, emotionally, or both; yet they are not truly accepted in their adoptive homeland, either. Their sense of home—and identity—is unstable and impermanent, as necessity (or an order from Starfleet Command) continually dictates that they uproot to new places. But despite the trope’s anti-Semitic origins, and the sometimes troubling depictions of Otherness and hybridity in ST, I think it possible to use this lens as a productive method for examining Spock and the role of the alien in ST. That is because it lends insight into the ways in which the Jew exists as a figure of cultural and ethnic ambiguity—and the ways in which characters like Spock speak to such lived experiences.

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In European culture, cultural hybridity was first occupied by Jews, and even to this day, in many ways, Jewishness retains its ability to be ethnically ambiguous and avoid dichotomous notions of identity. Dating from the period of the Babylonian Exile,⁶ over 2,500 years ago, the Jews existed simultaneously as (conquered) citizens of a land whose majority culture, religion, and ethnicity they did not share; yet even as they maintained their distinct group identity, its boundaries were permeable, employing “both the rhetoric of inclusion and the rhetoric of

⁶ The Judeans—that is, the Jews—were conquered by the Babylonians and forcibly exiled from Jerusalem a little after 600 BCE. The Babylonians were then conquered by the Persians, who set up shop for a few hundred years, before being conquered themselves by Alexander the Great about 330 BCE. With the Babylonians began the Exilic Period, but even after this technically ended under the Persians, when Jews were allowed to return to Persian-controlled Jerusalem, the Jews remained a conquered, diasporic nation. See Peter R. Ackroyd. *Israel Under Babylon and Persia*. Oxford University Press, 1970, and Robert B. Coote and Mary P. Coote. *Power, Politics, and the Making of the Bible: An Introduction*, Fortress Press, 1990.

exclusion simultaneously, albeit in a dynamic tension...[in] an ongoing construction involving both similarity and distinction between self and other” (Lim 407, 410). This ambiguity has persisted, and took on particular complications after the post-Holocaust mid-20th century, when American Jews began assimilating into mainstream white culture, and when American culture began absorbing Jewish culture, in unprecedented ways.

By the time TOS premiered, the figure of the Jew and their Jewishness had become even more fraught and complex—Other enough to be marked, but not so Other as to be unfamiliar or unrelatable. Thus, Spock’s Jewishness provides an interesting and useful metaphor for hybridity because, “[o]ccupying more than one position at once, [European] Jewishness simultaneously signifies whiteness and racial otherness; furthermore, the confusion over whether the label ‘Jewish’ refers to race, ethnicity, religion, or culture is emblematic of its complex meanings across categories of identity” (Harrison-Kahan 22). That is to say, Jewishness allows us to interrogate the complexity of Spock’s Otherness and hybridity in more nuanced, less binaristic ways. Thus, Spock is the quintessential alien *and* the quintessential hybrid. Hybridity does not preclude alienness, yet it is not the same Otherness as alienness, nor is it merely alienness mitigated or lessened in severity. Waldenfels writes that “Something is only the *same* if it distinguishes itself as *other* from others,” which belies the trickiness of sorting out Same and Other when one begins to create multiple oppositions and intersections, thus deconstructing the very binary of Same and Other upon which the discourse relies (72). Thus, I envision hybridity as one natural result of such deconstruction—which in itself necessitates, I believe, a reconstruction as well. Hybridity is not someplace on a scale between “us” and “them.” Rather, like the example of Jewishness, it is Other and yet not, both at once and yet neither, its own third

category. It is the meeting-place and joining-together of the foreign and the familiar, and must occur elsewhere than either.

As the defining character for the role of “alien” in ST, Spock sets a precedent for how other non-human characters come to be portrayed—and an indelible part of that precedent relies not so much on his alienness, but on his hybridity. While the other non-human characters I analyze are not Jewish in the way Spock is, the understanding of hybridity and the particular sort of Otherness it provides lend a useful framework for considering non-human characters who are biologically hybrid, like B’Elanna, or culturally a sort of hybrid, like Data. Rending asunder the dichotomous structure of us/Other, we can then better analyze hybridity for what it represents in ST: parts of the human self—sometimes the parts we don’t want to see—conjoined with something new, something different—but not so different it could not become a part of us (and us, a part of it). Indeed, as Janet Adelman writes, “[Because of] Christianity’s theological lineage in Judaism...the Jew is not the stranger outside Christianity but the original stranger within it” (4).

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Despite the prominent role that logic plays in Spock’s life, Nimoy said he felt the essence of the character was embodied in the “*neshamah*,” the soul, he brought to ST (Arnold). That is, as Waldenfels writes, “[T]he alienness of the Other announces itself in terms of pathos. We are touched by others before being able to ask who they are...” (53). Spock is, after all, perhaps the most enduring legacy ST has left to pop culture. The alien who, despite his pointy ears and green blood, is able to offer us a glimpse of ourselves reflected and refracted in an/Other. Spock means something to us as viewers—especially to viewers who identify, in some way or another, with his internal struggle, his feelings of difference and Otherness. To paraphrase Waldenfels, it

is the alienness within ourselves that opens paths to the alienness of Spock—or perhaps it is rather that the alienness in him that opens paths to the alienness in ourselves, for, after all, “we are never entirely at home with ourselves” (76).

CHAPTER 2: B'ELANNA TORRES

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TOM PARIS: It's more than that. You want to change who [our daughter] is, her individuality, her. You don't want her to be Klingon. That's what this is really about, isn't it? You're trying to protect her from being Klingon because you had a rough time when you were a kid.

B'ELANNA TORRES: I was treated like a monster.

TOM: That isn't going to happen to our daughter. Everyone on *Voyager* will accept her for who she really is.

B'ELANNA: That's easy for you to say. You're human...Meaning you don't understand what it's like...When the people around you are all one way and you're not, you can't help feeling like there's something wrong with you.

TOM: *Voyager* isn't just one way. We've got Bajorans, Vulcans, a Talaxian.

B'ELANNA: And hundred and forty humans.

– “Lineage,” ST: VOY

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ST's first Latinx main character,⁷ VOY's B'Elanna is estranged from her overbearing Klingon mother and the human father who abandoned them when B'Elanna was a child. She rejects the Klingon traditions her mother attempts to instill because of the prejudice she faced from her human peers as a half-Klingon, and because of her father's rejection of her and her

⁷ The actor Robert Beltran, who plays *Voyager*'s Native American first officer Chakotay, is Latino. However, his character is not explicitly written as such. Thus, B'Elanna is the only canonically Latinx main character in ST.

mother's Klingon-ness. After dropping out of Starfleet Academy, B'Elanna joins the Maquis⁸. She and her crewmates end up on the *USS Voyager* when both ships are flung 70,000 lightyears from Federation space into the Milky Way's unexplored Delta Quadrant. As many of the Maquis are former Starfleet personnel, they choose to integrate into *Voyager's* crew and Starfleet structure—B'Elanna herself serving as Chief Engineer—banding together with their former Federation comrades for the long voyage home.

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B'Elanna, as a mixed-species character, is almost the antithesis of Spock: where he embraces his alienness, she wants nothing to do with hers. With B'Elanna, there is not so much an urge to be a particular thing as there is an urge to *not* be something—in this case, Klingon. Klingons are “ascribed with racial signifiers” as well as cultural ones that are markedly different from humans (Bernadi, “Infinite Diversity” 70). Portrayed as passionate and intense (or aggressive and argumentative, depending on whom you ask), they live by the Way of the Warrior and center their philosophy around honor. As Victor Grech notes, their fictional philosophy draws on real-world elements of warrior traditions from Viking, Greek, and Imperial Japanese cultures (73). Their most noticeable physical difference is the presence of pronounced cranial ridges across the forehead. In appearance they also have dark skin, and from TNG onwards, they are styled with curly, black hair, which they wear long (it was the 80s, after all). Half-Klingons like B'Elanna tend to have lighter tan skin and softer cranial ridges in terms of their physical appearance.

My conception of hybridity outlined in the previous chapter helps resolve the issues posed by a binaristic conception of hybridity, which I see as contributing to B'Elanna's overall

⁸ The Maquis is a rebellion of former Federation colony planet settlers. After these planets that have were ceded by the Federation in order to end the Cardassian Wars, some of the settlers rebelled.

struggle with her identity. With a framework for hybridity that is open-ended B'Elanna has the opportunity to explore and enact her hybridity. In Deleuzian terms, we might speak of the process of becoming-hybrid. Part of B'Elanna's appeal to fans, as we saw earlier, is the frank manner in which she navigates this process. That is, rather than existing within a hybrid space, B'Elanna represents an enactment, not only an embodiment but a movement.

If we conceive of the hybrid using the figure of the other-Other, the Other-inside-ourselves—and the self-inside-Others—then we have a particularly fruitful framework for understanding a character like B'Elanna, who has been fragmented by the bifurcating dualism of “additive” hybridity. B'Elanna's story is, at its core, a story of accepting the parts of yourself you don't, or have been taught not to, like. None of us are half-alien, but some of us are mixed race, multiethnic, or otherwise between cultures—and most, if not all, of us have things within ourselves we struggle to accept. Using B'Elanna as an example of an open-ended hybridity thus allows viewers to identify in a positive way with this process of acceptance, ultimately offering us a model for hybridity as self-unification.

Throughout much of the series, B'Elanna struggles with anger management, much of which stems from her internal conflict. She at once loathes the Other in herself for what makes it different, and yet her behavior plays right into those Klingon stereotypes, locking her in a negative cycle of frustration and self-rejection. Much of B'Elanna's frustration with her hybridity stems from the bigotry she faced, particularly in her formative childhood years, as referenced in the epigraph to this chapter. For example, during a flashback in the episode “Lineage” (VOY: 7x12) we learn that as a child, B'Elanna's human cousin once snuck worms in her sandwich to startle and upset her, mocking the Klingon dish *gagh* (made of serpent worms). What is important to note is that B'Elanna's disdain for Klingon culture is the internalized result

of the bigotry and speciesism she faced. After all, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power...” (16). That is, ST’s portrayal of B’Elanna shows that her self-hatred is not because Klingons are inherently worthy of hatred; it is because she was *told* so all her life by others—by humans.

Even B’Elanna’s own human father expresses such bigotry, and directly names it as the motivation behind him leaving his wife and child. In one particularly poignant flashback, John Torres, unaware his daughter is listening, says of B’Elanna, “She’s gotten moody, unpredictable, argumentative. Just like her mother... Mom warned me not to marry Miral... [S]he never thought I had the constitution to live with a Klingon. And now I’m living with two of them” (VOY: “Lineage”). Her father’s rejection may be especially stinging because, “given the importance of the patrilineal line of descent in our society, children’s race/ethnicity is most often identified with that of the father,” which we also see in Spock’s situation (Qian 763).

Considering her own father expresses such invalidating and demeaning opinions—not to mention such gendered and raced assumptions about emotion and disposition—it is no wonder B’Elanna struggles to accept her identity. Kwan notes that “her character is primarily an allegorical representation of the ‘tragic mulatta’ stereotype (Roberts, 2000, p. 206), but the anxiety her character expresses over her racial hybridity is one of the few moments in the Star Trek franchise that destabilizes its own racial normativity” (66). As Kwan points out, the series does so because it envisions a future for humanity in which racism is a thing of the past, where humans of many diverse backgrounds live and work in harmony: “Acknowledging that the characters featured in each series are the first “ciphers for humanity” the audience sees when

they watch Star Trek, each series uses a multicultural cast along with the assumption of race and cultural normativity to portray a future that has overcome 20th century racism” (60).

Roxann Dawson herself promotes this viewpoint; in a 1995 article *Hispanic* magazine, she is quoted as saying, “What would be nice is if, in the future, there can be Hispanics who can be Hispanic and just play people, like Caucasians are able to do” (qtd. in Spelling 15). Dawson raises an important point: by accepting the richness of Others’ lives and experiences—and by acknowledging that they are more than their race, ethnicity, gender, etc.—we can help chip away at that Otherness. Yet this is also a double-edged sword, for as Kwan writes, “by simply ignoring race issues completely,” ST “attempts to progressively address the issue of racism but also inadvertently perpetuates the contemporary America’s mode of normative Whiteness...” (60).

I argue that my conception of hybridity offers us an alternative to the normative whiteness Kwan describes. Furthermore, thirty years on from Kwan’s analysis—written in the 90s, when identity politics was still in its initial stages—we now require a more complex and fluid understanding of hybridity, race, and culture. Because it opens up the potential for multiplicity and negates the dominating hierarchy of authenticity, my conception of hybridity is a framework that allows us to interpret characters like B’Elanna as navigating their multiple identity to forge a cohesive sense of self. By cohesive I do not mean that her identity is unified in the sense of being singular, monolithic, or binaristic—an either/or scenario. Rather, by cohesive I mean that identities can be multiplicitous without being fragmented, incongruous without always being in conflict—that one can have a complex subjecthood and still remain a whole subject. Indeed, “cohesive” means to exhibit qualities or the process of cohesion—the coming-together-ness of many parts into a whole. After all, “One’s life/identity is a story in

constant making and remaking...” (Ritivoi 64). Not only is this recursivity important for ongoing personal or character development, it reflects the entangled nature of hybridity: forming and reforming new selves from the same self.

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One of B’Elanna’s most pivotal moment in the series for coming to terms with herself is the episode, “Barge of the Dead” (VOY: 6x03). B’Elanna slips into a coma and has a vision of her mother, dead and damned. In Klingon mythology, dead Klingons are borne to Sto’Vo’Kor, home of the honored dead—or on the Barge of the Dead to Gre’thor, the Klingon Hell where the dishonorable are damned for all eternity. B’Elanna’s mother, Miral, is onboard the Barge, bound for Gre’thor—because B’Elanna has lived without honor. B’Elanna must either risk her own life to save her mother, or to condemn her to Gre’thor.

As a Klingon, Miral signifies to B’Elanna all the parts of herself she doesn’t like. “The forehead and the bad attitude,” as B’Elanna puts it—the sum of what she feels she inherited from her mother (VOY: “Barge of the Dead”). Thus, her relationship with her mother represents her relationship with her Klingon heritage. Onboard the Barge of the Dead, B’Elanna and Miral argue about her relationship with her Klingon heritage:

B’ELANNA: If you hadn't tried to force me to become a warrior—

MIRAL: I tried to guide you in the ways of a Klingon.

B’ELANNA: You tried a little too hard.

MIRAL: If you had listened to me when you were younger, we wouldn't be on the Barge of the Dead. You were always running away.

B’ELANNA: You drove me away. The same way you drove away my father.

MIRAL: He abandoned us.

B'ELANNA: You pushed him to the point where he couldn't bear to be around anything Klingon, including me (ibid.).

In this exchange, we see B'Elanna grappling explicitly with her hybrid identity: a bit Klingon, but too human to honor those traditions fully; a bit human, but too Klingon for her father to love her. B'Elanna's anger at her mother reflects not only the belief that Klingonness drove her father away, but the fear that it was not only her mother's, but also her, Klingonness that did so. Her language demonstrates an ambiguity about her own identity; she at once identifies as a Klingon but distances herself from what it means to *be* Klingon, to live by the Way of the Warrior. Implicit in this ambiguity is the assumption that her hybridity must reflect both her parents' heritages, alongside the belief that human and Klingon philosophies are mutually exclusive. Being a hybrid is, in this way of thinking, a paradox—a paradox that I would argue is the source of much of B'Elanna's frustration.

For example, in the episode "Faces" (VOY: 1x14), B'Elanna is split into two separate selves: a fully human woman and a fully Klingon woman, each with the components of B'Elanna's DNA from that species. The two argue the entire episode, externally signifying B'Elanna's internal identity struggle. The Klingon B'Elanna eventually sacrifices herself to save the human B'Elanna, whose DNA is beginning to degrade. At the end of the episode, the two sets of DNA are re-integrated into one person. Of the separation and forthcoming re-integration, the human B'Elanna says, "I'm not sure [how I feel]. It's been a pretty strange experience. I do know that right now, the way I am, I'm more at peace with myself than I've ever been before...[but] I'm incomplete. It doesn't feel like me. I guess I've had someone else living inside of me for too long to feel right without her" (VOY: "Faces").

Being at war with oneself is a common enough trope, for hybrids and non-hybrids alike. It is, in a way, like trying to become one with what Davis describes as “an other Other in which/whom [one] precisely does not recognize [one]-Self” (206). What’s striking about B’Elanna’s statement, though, is her positing of Klingonness as a separate Other inhabiting or co-opting the space rightfully reserved for the human self. Clearly, this is a reflection of B’Elanna’s ongoing resentment towards her Klingon heritage—and yet she acknowledges that without that heritage, she is not capable of realizing herself at her fullest potential. How can one be “at peace with oneself” and yet not feel like oneself? B’Elanna suggests that she sees this conflict as a core part of her experience as a hybrid. Again, we see the fracturing effects of a hybridity that relies on duality and bifurcation: “Alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self” (Anzaldua 20).

B’Elanna’s statement about the Other inside her also reflects the physical process of reunification, in which Klingon DNA is re-inserted into the genetic code of the human B’Elanna to restore her to her original genetic makeup. The human, then, is the “base” into which Klingon is inserted. If the Other is that which is withdrawn from, as Waldenfels argues, and the Other and the self both emerge in this withdrawing, then what happens when they are reunited? If the self moves away from the Other, the Other must then move back towards the self. This recursive process of emerging and rejoining reflects the entangled nature of hybridity, which constantly creates potentials that reflect both the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar. In describing a non-hermeneutical encounter with the Other, Davis writes that “when you address me you present yourself as an interpretable phenomenon from which you are always already busting loose, as a theme or concept that nonetheless cannot contain you” (193). But what if the

Other is also the self? Then, I argue, in encountering one another, inviting and escaping interpretation at the same time, they constantly engage in an ongoing process of entanglement and creation. And, I would further argue, we all know the more tangled up something becomes—a cord, a thread, the chain of necklace, the core of a hybrid self—the more impossible it is to unravel.

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Several seasons later, as B'Elanna attempts to complete the ritual that would save her mother, she still has not fully come to terms with herself. She has yet to accept this rights of passage, which involves the transference of her mother's sins to her, thus damning B'Elanna and sending Miral to Sto'Vo'Kor; instead B'Elanna initially plans to cheat her way out of Gre'thor and save them both. As Miral points out, this reticence reflects (apart, of course, from a healthy fear of death) a less-than-wholehearted embrace of Klingon culture: "You still understand nothing about being a Klingon" (VOY: "Lineage"). B'Elanna's issue is that—perhaps because of the nature of ST and its over-reliance on essentialism—she is trapped in binaristic thinking about hybridity, which in this case locks her into a paradox. Ritivoi points out, "When applied to personal identity, essentialism quickly breaks down in paradoxes...how [can we] reconcile the notion of an essential determination with the notion of individuality, which by definition is supposed to be unique and unrepeatable?" (49). In other words, I argue that B'Elanna struggles to do just that: conceive of herself as a hybrid who also has a unique personhood not wholly determined by her mixed-species background.

Essentially, B'Elanna struggles because she cannot make this reconciliation; that is, she cannot accept herself as an individual, utterly unique, because she is caught up in a feedback loop of competing essentialisms that ultimately paralyze her. This dualistic thinking about

hybridity has a history in Western culture, and B'Elanna's ongoing frustration with her own identity demonstrates the inherent issues of such thinking. Whether a failure on ST's part to engage with hybridity in a meaningful way, or an attempt on ST's part to engage by showing how such thinking is problematic, the result is the same: hybridity cannot be dealt with in an either/or manner. As mentioned earlier, this binaristic interpretation was a common one in the 90s (VOY ran from 1995-2001), and so B'Elanna is as much a product of her time as Spock is of his.⁹ But today, we realize its limitations: the implicit (or explicit) confrontation of Other and us ultimately means a hybrid figured in such a paradox will eat itself alive.

B'Elanna—indeed many of ST's hybrid characters—often fall victim to the “tragic mulatto” trope. In the trope, hybrids struggle their entire lives, finding neither peace nor fulfillment, and finally meet with a tragic end, often death—their punishment for confounding the racial binary (and purity). As Rhonda V. Wilcox explains, “Standard patterns of the tragic mulatto story involve the beautiful young mulatto woman being sold down the river and/or dying in the agony of the realization of her mulatto nature...in the standard tragic mulatto story [they are] made less threatening by being made female” (270). This is, sadly, something of a recurring trope in ST: the imaginary Venn diagram of major characters who in some way exhibit hybridity, and major characters who in some way, however minor, encounter the tragic mulatto trope, is probably pretty close to a circle.

As Larissa Maestro points out on the feminist ST blog, *Women at Warp*, “Many Trek characters are actually listed as examples on the Wikipedia page for the [tragic mulatto] archetype. For all of Star Trek's accomplishments regarding diversity and inclusivity, it doesn't

⁹ The 60s were distanced by precious few years from the shadow of the Holocaust, and as Jews had finally begun to fully assimilate into white Christian America, it is no surprise that decade's figure of the hybrid alien should have such a Jewishness.

get everything right.” She continues, “Though I do think it’s dangerous to put the responsibility of unifying two race-torn cultures on the shoulders of a mixed race person (we’re not the answer to racism, guys) [hybrid characters are] in a perfect position to make a difference” both to the plotline and to the franchise’s overall message of acceptance. For example, as one anonymous fan recently wrote, B’Elanna—and ST’s hybrid characters in general—helped them deal with the real-life anxieties of being a mixed race person. In a post they submitted to a ST Tumblr blog, ds9vgrconfessions, they wrote, “My favorite thing about Trek in general is that they portray just how hard it is to be half one race and half another. Being half white and half Hispanic means both sides of my family deny or totally hate the other part of my heritage. [Tora] Ziyal [a half-Bajoran, half-Cardassian character on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*] and Torres are fascinating and my favorite characters for how they deal with it.”

Clearly, there are more than one way of looking at ST’s treatment of hybrids. On the one hand, Meastro and other show the limitations of ST’s engagement with the tragic mulatto trope, due to its overreliance on racial essentialism, which “often (unwittingly) participat[es] in and facilitate[es] racist practice in [ST’s] attempt to imagine ‘infinite diversity in infinite combinations’” (Bernardi, “Infinite Diversity” 62). On the other hand, though, we also see the ways in which ST’s representation of hybridity matters to real people in their daily lives, showing that identity is continually a process of self-examination and introspection—and sometimes of struggle and frustration. For we also see the perseverance, the strength and depth of character, and the beginnings of self-acceptance. B’Elanna gets her happy ending: her reward is not death, but new life, her daughter with husband Tom Paris, a subject I will return to later in the chapter.

To truly understand hybridity, we must avoid what Ange-Marie Hancock calls “an additive logic” to identity, where identities are merely tallied or stacked on top of one another, with no recognition of their interactions (61). That is, we should not understand B’Elanna as sometimes human, sometimes Klingon—presenting a “half and half” notion of hybridity, which fractures the subject by partitioning it. Because B’Elanna had a troubled childhood, at least part of which can be traced to her Klingon heritage, B’Elanna intertwines that difficult childhood with her hybrid status. What would B’Elanna’s feelings towards her hybridity be if, like Spock, her childhood had been more stable? Hybridity is thus a *pharmakon*—either the poison or the cure, depending on the dosage, and the type. Thus, B’Elanna demonstrates the difficulties characters in *ST* can face when trying to grapple with their hybridity while maintaining a sense of self—indeed, how these unique facets become an integral part of forging that sense of self.

One way of approaching non-additive identity is through intersectional methodologies: “For intersectional researchers...it is potentially productive to conceptualise individual narratives as multidimensional and as comprised of multiple analytical layers, in which the story told is an intra-action (see Barad, 2007) between ideological and material ‘master narratives’ and concrete events and experiences” (Chadwick 11). Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined that term, “intersectionality,” when she wrote about the unique experiences and forms of oppression faced by Black women due to the interplay of their race and gender. But as she points out, “My focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (2).

Intersectionality does not mean the same thing as hybridity, nor is my conception of hybridity merely another way of saying “intersectionality.” But they do share a key component: the rejection of binary and additive approaches to identity. Intersectionality is therefore a useful

way of looking at multiplicity, in that it understands that layers of identity cannot be separated or parsed out from one another—using Crenshaw’s example, her Blackness is inseparable from her womanhood, and vice versa; it is not a matter of being “Black + a woman.” This notion contributes to a hybridity framework that can adequately address the paradoxes arising from a binaristic approach. Thus, the term provides a useful way of thinking about a framework that understands hybridity as an entanglement: a way of being that cannot be reduced to “this + that.” As threads woven together become a single cloth, a hybrid entity consists of many facets but cannot be reduced to any one, lest the tapestry unravel itself.

In hybrids, then, we can find a solution to essentialism and binarism through fusion, through blending, through the deconstruction of bifurcated identity into a new hybrid space. Thus, joining the Maquis, and later, working as Chief Engineer on *Voyager*, allows B’Elanna to explore a neutral zone, so to speak, a territory amenable to hybridity. After all, *Voyager* itself is a hybrid space: a ship containing both Starfleet and Maquis personnel who join forces to make the long voyage home, as both see the partnership as the only chance for survival. Similarly, this framework for hybridity represents a solution to the either/or conflict B’Elanna experiences as she grapples with her mixed heritage.

Finally, B’Elanna declares she is tired of fighting; she throws her bat’leth, the Klingon ceremonial weapon, overboard. The fighting she describes is both literal—she has been challenged to a duel—and figurative. Whereas in “Faces” she begrudgingly accepts that she will be in constant conflict with herself all her life, by “Barge of the Dead,” B’Elanna begins to accept that such conflict will only further rend herself asunder. It is not sustainable. When hybridity is envisioned as a process not of conflict but of complication, entanglement, and emergence, the same sense of motion or action can finally be productive.

As her Otherness and hybridity are marked on her body by her blend of facial characteristics and her skin tone, it is thus appropriate that her relationship with identity is also symbolically embodied, here, with the weapon. Indeed, the entire challenge itself, although playing out in B'Elanna's mind, is embodied, in that fulfilling the ritual means risking death; as B'Elanna begins to accept the reality of the challenge and prepares to die, her brain activity begins sharply destabilizing. An interesting metaphor for the physical embodiment of emotions, this detail also reminds us that hybridity is not simply a theoretical concept; it is a lived, embodied experience—and that embodiment goes beyond the visible markers of Otherness some hybrids may bear.

Grech argues that the Klingons are a particularly ritualistic culture, signifying not only a certain dedication to tradition but also a particular engagement with spirituality (77). The episode also reveals the way in which ritual and tradition in ST can go beyond coded cultural signifiers: there is a true sense of spirituality, a lingering otherworldliness that is never outright confirmed or denied. B'Elanna's willingness to engage in larger Klingon narratives—at the cost of her own life—speaks to a development in how she engages with her own hybridity, namely that she is beginning to see past binarism. I argue that the spiritual and ritual elements in this process allow B'Elanna to transcend that dualism and encounter the Other emergent within her. This, in turn, allows her to forge a cohesive sense of self as a (part-Klingon) hybrid. Once an object of shame and self-loathing, B'Elanna's Klingon identity becomes a place of healing and self-enablement. But as Miral reminds her, “You've taken the first step of your journey”—the process is ongoing, a constant opportunity for exploration and reinvention (VOY: “Barge of the Dead”).

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Late in the series, after she marries her human husband, Tom Paris, the two conceive a daughter. B'Elanna, dismayed to discover the child will exhibit some of her Klingon phenotypes, attempts to genetically modify her own child to remove its Klingon genes. Tom is the epitome of classic WASPish good looks: shiny blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and a tall, fit frame. He represents everything B'Elanna doesn't have: a stable family (his father's a Starfleet admiral, to boot), a sense of cultural belonging (having an admiral for a dad helps when you're in the same service as he is), and, most importantly, a face that looks human.

So, when B'Elanna sees a projection of what their daughter will look like during a prenatal checkup, she's deeply upset to see her own dark hair and distinctive Klingon cranial ridges. Explaining her distress to Tom, she says, "When the people around you are one way, and you're not, you can't help but feel that there is something wrong with you" (VOY: "Lineage"). B'Elanna's feelings stem from seeing hybridity—here, her daughter's—as based on percentage; under this theory, the human should "outweigh" the Klingon. That is not, of course, how genetics works, but this isn't really a matter of genetics; it's an issue of 1) the debilitating effects of normativity upon the Other and especially the hybrid; and 2) B'Elanna blaming herself for her father's departure and projecting this unhappiness onto Tom and her unborn daughter. As Kwan argues, "the root of her fear is the racial normativity in which she grew up" (67).

Thus, accepting her daughter's hybridity is more a matter of accepting her own. Reproduction is both literal and metaphorical in this sense: the reproduction of a child signifies the potential replication of her own troubled family dynamics. (Luckily, this is not to be the case.) But reproduction also offers a pathway out of B'Elanna's own trauma and the dualism that accompanies it, in that allows for new beginnings, new narratives. Moreover, it is also a

matter of accepting that hybridity is dynamic: her hybridity will not necessarily closely resemble her daughter's. If hybridity opens up the potential for multiplicity and evolution in the self, so too can it create space for multiplicity in the way different people inhabit and express hybridity.

CHAPTER 3: DATA

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“The Starfleet officers who first activated me on Omicron Theta told me I was an android, nothing more than a sophisticated machine with human form. However, I realized that if I were simply a machine, I could never be anything else. I could never grow beyond my programming. I found that difficult to accept, so I chose to believe that I was a person, that I had the potential to be more than a collection of circuits and subprocessors. It is a belief which I still hold...I made—a leap of faith.”

– Commander Data, “Rightful Heir,” ST: TNG

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“Well, maybe you should approach this from a more human standpoint. You're right that machines can't have hallucinations, but then again, most machines can't grow hair.”

– Dr. Julian Bashir to Data, “Birthright, Part I,” ST: TNG

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TNG's answer to Spock, the not-so-creatively-named Data is an android, an artificial life form whose positronic brain gives him sentience. Lacking the “emotion chip” developed by his creator (whom he not insignificantly calls “Father”), Dr. Noonian Soong, Data cannot experience emotion as humans do. This is a major motivating factor in Data's ongoing quest to understand and embrace humanity. Oftentimes, this gets played for laughs, albeit affectionately; Data's misunderstandings of human customs and emotions are the source of much comic relief throughout the series. But they are also taken seriously when the moment calls for it, thus allowing Data necessary character growth and depth.

Another motivating factor in this desire to become more human is the alone-ness he experiences: Data is the only one of his kind besides his “evil twin,” Lore. Lore was originally created with an emotion chip, but because of his violent and malicious nature, Soong deactivated him, afterwards creating Data without installing the emotion chip in order to prevent similar issues. Towards the end of the series, Data discovers he can install this emotion chip and eventually begins to integrate emotions into his programming. Thus, Data offers us unique insight into notions of assimilation and its relationship with a perceived authentic identity or experience. I argue that hybridity is a more useful approach to Data’s character and his interactions with identity. This chapter will not be concerned with, as many studies on Data are, Data’s status of personhood, or what makes him a person. While undoubtedly a complex and interesting subject, and one well worth pursuing, I am more interested in examining how Data can offer a viewing audience a new understanding of hybridity.

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When discussing how a character on a television show “performs” their identity, there is, of course, a double entendre, from which arises a dual analysis. We can thus examine a character’s portrayal in the show itself, behind the fourth wall¹⁰—that is, in the context of their interactions with and reception by other characters within the show, how they’re written, etc.; and the portrayal itself, beyond the fourth wall—that is, the actors’ choices and decisions for how to inhabit their characters. Let me illustrate what I mean more clearly: take Data, an android totally devoid of emotions. Many scholars discuss how Data is written; how he interacts with other characters; how he makes choices and why. But what about Spiner’s portrayal of

¹⁰ “The fourth wall” is the term for the conceptual barrier, or wall, between actors onstage or onscreen and their audience. It comes from the idea of an invisible wall between the stage and the seats (the other three walls being the back and sides of the theatre stage).

Data? How a human can enact and interpret unhumanity is as important, I think, as how a nonhuman like Data can enact and interpret humanity.

Interestingly, Spiner posits Data as something of an actor like himself. Responding to a question posed in a Reddit Ask Me Anything (AMA) session, where celebrities reply to comments from Reddit users, Spiner says, “I don’t think I [as Data] became more robotic [over the course of the show] at all. I think we continued to see Data trying on the faces and elements of humanity.” That phrasing, “trying on,” highlights the elements of play and performativity in Data’s hybridity: like an actor in the costume shop, trying on different costumes, getting their hair and makeup sorted out, figuring out the “look” for their persona. As Spiner points out, the process of “becoming” Data isn’t static: as Data the character grows and adapts, Spiner’s portrayal necessarily evolves as well.

Portraying an android was understandably difficult at times for Spiner; responding to a question regarding the differences between playing both Data and Lore, he says, “Well, I just played myself when I [played Lore]. It was playing Data that was the stretch. I have all the foibles that humans have, like ego, anger, and selfishness. It was easy to play Lore because he is closer to who I am in real life. Closer to who you are too, I bet!” (qtd. in Caron). In this case, Spiner imagines Data as further removed psychologically from the average person, and yet more admirable for that distance. Importantly, Spiner names only negative emotional and psychological experiences, the “foibles” rather than the positives, like love, respect, and generosity, thereby implying, to some degree, that Data—who stands in opposition to Lore—does possess these (equally human) qualities.

What Spiner seems to be getting at is that Data is no *less* of a person, he’s simply very different. And as Taylor Soper of *GeekWire* notes, Data became an accidental icon for some

autistic fans precisely because of the way he processes emotions: “[Data] was an inspiration for those suffering from autism and Asperger syndrome. Often struggling to understand human emotion, ‘Data’ was one of the few characters on TV that people with autism or Asperger syndrome could relate to because he was trying to understand feelings and humanity in the same way they did.” Data does, though, experience negative emotions at certain points: when he is kidnapped and held as a slave, for example, he is willing to kill his captor to secure the freedom of himself and the other captives (TNG: “The Most Toys” 2x22). And in another example late in the show, after Data installs his emotion chip, his brother is able to remotely control the chip and remove Data’s ethical programming, making him experience unbridled anger, bloodlust, even hatred (TNG: “Descent, Part I” 6x26).

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In order to proceed, a quick clarification of terms may be helpful: “android” refers to a machine built to resemble a human, whereas “cyborg” refers to a being that is part-human, part-machine. Thus, an android may also be—but is not always, such as in Data’s case—a cyborg. Despite Data’s lack of organic elements, he is often addressed in terms of the cyborg, a fact which at times is both helpful and a hinderance. For while the cyborg necessitates a certain hybridity, it still relies on the old metaphor of different parts of other original things coming together to make something “new” but derivative.

Data is not a hybrid in the sense of being half-something and half-something else. Rather, he is a hybrid in the sense that he is a machine in body, yet sentient of mind, a part of an otherwise organic world and a member of the still-predominantly-human Starfleet. Rather than being a hybrid of two previously-established identities, like, say, human and Vulcan, Data is in totally uncharted territory, with the potential to explore an entirely new sort of identity. In this

way we see the enactment of a hybridity that is truly Other: no conglomeration, no amalgamation, nothing of that which we normally associate with the cyborg. Rather than the joining of two unlike things, emotion and machine, Data represents the person “without” emotion learning to experience them in his own way. Perhaps “android” and “cyborg” really cannot be conflated; for if the latter is the sum of its parts, the android is something else entirely. That is, a cyborg is an amalgamation, a bricolage: person + machine. In its crudest and most frightening rendering, the cyborg is ST’s Borg, a collective of beings from many species joined in a hivemind, intent on “assimilating”—their words—the known universe. ST’s answer to J.R.R. Tolkien’s orcs, the Borg assimilate beings by forcibly mutilating them into part-machines, suturing and cauterizing mechanical elements in organic flesh, until the personal individuality of the being is eradicated.

This is not Data. Data is not a man’s mind in a machine’s body, or a machine in a man-shaped form. Nor even is Data simply an amalgamation of unfeeling machine + emotion chip. That is, he is not lacking; his difference is not an empty data port. I thus take issue with Rose’s characterization of Data’s humanity as “always just out of reach.” Like all of us, Data is in a continual state of emotional¹¹ and psychological growth—becoming, in Deleuzian terms. Do we not continuously seek to better ourselves? Is our humanity then also “always just out of reach”? (Well, perhaps.)

In fact, it is easy to characterize Data in exactly these Deleuzian terms: a machine becoming a man. Yet this too is not without complication, for by adding beginning and end points to the process of becoming, the transitionality, and indeed the hybridity, of the becoming,

¹¹ I say “emotional” in that Data grows to better understand emotion, even if his experience of it is different than ours, and at first, more external than internal.

is somewhat lessened: it becomes a race to the finish line, rather than the journey itself¹². These are perhaps somewhat hackneyed turns of phrase, but I hope they at least explain, in clear and simple terms, my meaning. Let me elucidate: Data's hybridity, his "other Otherness," is concentrated on his growth as a person—and therefore adaptability. Hybridity, as an entanglement, as an alternative Otherness emergent from both the Self and the Other, is in a constant state of dynamic tension, of which Data is an excellent example. He is always experimenting, always attempting to engage and develop. Doing, that is, movement and action, characterize Data's hybridity (as opposed to *being*). His hybridity thus demonstrates the liminal and fluctuating nature of such an Otherness as the android.

It is almost impossible to mention the word cyborg in the field of rhetoric without bringing to mind Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto." In it, she uses the cyborg as a feminist model for constructing a new myth: "The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and it cannot dream of returning to dust" (293). But Data does dream, and if he does not dream of ashes, maybe he dreams of stardust. For my argument is precisely that mud is not a prerequisite for personhood, and that hybridity, being recursive, depends on its origin in so far as it always remakes it. As discussed earlier, the cyborg is perhaps not the most useful model for interpreting Data for a number of reasons—namely, that Data is not attempting to make a new myth: rather, he wants to join the ongoing myth, and in joining, he will necessarily rupture and remake it. Thus, I disagree with Sue Short's assertion that because "[o]ur definition of humanity does not have to be extended to meet such figures," Data must at once "aspire to be more than [he] is" and "also deny [his] origins" (221). In fact, I would argue just the opposite is

¹² As Captain Jean-Luc Picard argues in the episode "Measure of a Man," "Do we deny that [Data is a machine]? No. Because it is not relevant. We too are machines, just machines of a different type." So, in context, the distinction between person and machine is essentially meaningless, because it's about the *sort* of machine, and indeed, the *sort* of person.

true: if we approach Data from the perspective that he is an android (not a cyborg), and thus an embodiment of hybridity, then he necessarily forces us to meet him on his own terms and to modify our understanding of humanity. If, as Roberta Pearson and Máire Messenger Davies argue, we are reminded of Data's honorary status as a person in order to cement "Data's 'narrative-threatening logic,'" then let that logic actually threaten the narrative (Ono qtd. in Pearson and Davies 181). That is, let us find in Data a conception of hybridity that makes us face it as it is—and embrace it. Rather than Haraway's "new myth," for an android, a more useful metaphor might be a "new riff on an old song," or even (to use the model of Jewishness again) a new "member of the tribe." This is not a new story; it's a new chapter in the ongoing story, a replication with modification.

If an android such as Data is neither a cyborg, nor a biological person, then what is he? He is the only one of his kind, as is Spock. For most of his life, he doesn't even know he has a brother, and the discovery of this has little change on Data's overall story-arc—perhaps because Lore was born with emotions inherent, and so, in experience, Data is still alone. His Otherness is different than the Otherness of a whole species in that he is unique among living beings. And as Spock is more than the sum of his parts, human and Vulcan, so too is Data more than a series of neural nets and personality subroutines. His Otherness, then, must account for his unique nature: he represents more than the mere joining of the human mind with the mechanical body.

The model of hybridity laid out in Chapter One thus functions equally well, if in somewhat different circumstances, here. In fact, the word "android" itself has some interesting etymological implications for understanding hybridity. Dating to the mid-19th century, it comes from the Ancient Greek *anḗr*, "man" (ἄνθρωπος) combined with the suffix *-eidēs*, (-ειδής), itself a derivation of *eîdos*, meaning "form, image, shape, appearance, look" (εἶδος). More interestingly,

our modern English “android” had an equivalent of sorts in Ancient Greek: *andródēs*, “manly” or “like a man” (ἀνδρώδης). We have a double meaning: “like a man” in the sense of replicating traditionally masculine values, but also in the literal meaning—like a man (that is, a human) and yet not. The Otherness inside us is reflected outwards, and transformed in that reflection.

If the hybrid is, as the figure of the Jew suggests, the Other that was a part of us before we became ourselves, alienated from us as we emerged, then I would argue Data is the 1980s’ conception of that product. Spock is the 1960s’ conception of that alien: with the focus on civil rights and race, inter-species is used as a gloss for inter-racial. But the 1980s, with the emergence of digital technology, the first home computers, and a renewed interest in science fiction, envisions its hybrid alien as non-biological. If the hybrid, relying on the figure of the Jew, represents not only the Other but another Other, the Other who is not like us but not unlike us, then Data presents an opportunity to explore that hybridity outside the terms of biology and genetic inheritance, moving us into the realm of culture and performative identity.

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Many of the Data-centric plot arcs and episodes in TNG revolve around Data’s quest for humanity. These arcs/episodes usually distill grand metaphysical inquiries down into compartmentalized, more manageable—that is, enactable—questions. For example, instead of asking us, “Does Data have a soul?” or “What is the nature of Data’s personhood?” the show will instead ask, “Can Data learn to be funny?” as in “The Outrageous Okona” (TNG: 2x04), or “Can Data learn to dance?” as in “Data’s Day” (TNG: 4x12). Humor is a highly complex and intuitive cultural phenomenon, requiring social acumen and subtle understanding; dancing too requires an implicit understanding of one’s partner, body language, and social norms—perfect ways to explore how an outsider like Data might learn about himself. In this way, as much as we the

humans learn about ourselves from Data the Other, Data learns about himself from us (the Other to him).

In many of these instances, Data does not quite succeed; for example, in “Data’s Day,” Data knows he will be attending a wedding and therefore required to dance, so he asks Dr. Beverly Crusher, the Chief Medical Officer and a former dancer, to teach him. But because he does not specify what type of dancing he wants to learn, she at first teaches him tap dancing—hardly appropriate for a wedding. Many of these little gaffes are played for good-natured laughs, but to those who would argue that the show thus ultimately fails Data—well, I would point out that plenty of real human people I know can’t dance or make a joke worth a damn, and they’re still people (as far as I know). What we must consider is that Data (and all of us, but especially Data) learns through participation. He does not simply watch someone else dancing, record the movements, and then perform them later; he learns through doing, thus co-forming the larger world he inhabits.

If the purpose of rhetorical criticism is to explore not just what a text means but what it does, and what we, its audience, do with it, then I would argue Data on the whole is such a popular character because he confronts the quest for self-exploration like no other character. Yet this journey is also entangled in concepts like assimilation and authenticity: complicated but almost unavoidable topics when discussing hybridity. For Data, these become even more complicated. There are no others like him, certainly no entire culture of androids for him to a part of. Practically speaking, how can one be “a culture of one” as Captain Jean-Luc Picard puts it in “Birthright, Part I” (TNG: 6x16)? Picard could be conflating culture and personhood because of the difficulties of participating in a culture to which one does not entirely, fully, or traditionally belong. Alternatively, we could also read this line as a comment on the fact that

within any culture, Data's existence is a unique subfacet of larger human or Federation culture, both in the way Data internalizes his experiences and outwardly creates new experiences.

It may be worthwhile to note that, in this line, Picard is referencing Data's newfound ability to dream, and his desire to determine the meaning of these dreams. Data has begun to research what certain symbols in his dream mean in different cultures, but is not satisfied with the answers he finds. Picard reminds him of the importance of determining his own meaning: "Perhaps the key to understanding your experience is to stop looking into other sources for a meaning. When we look at Michaelangelo's David or Symnay's Tomb, we don't ask, 'What does this mean to other people?'" Picard argues. "The real question is, what does it mean to us?" (TNG: "Birthright, Part I"). Yet, as Picard fails to point out, what symbols mean to us is in many ways a product of our culture, in addition to our own experiences and preferences. Hermeneutics is, in a sense, the confrontation of the personal with the cultural.

So what's an android to do? In this case, find a culture you like and join it. Data chooses to live according to the standards of human culture because he is made in their image. As we learn in TNG: "Birthright, Part I," Data can grow hair, and he has respiratory and circulatory functions that mimic a human's breathing and pulse. Data's very body belies his intimate and embodied connection to humanity. His father was human; he was raised by and around humans; he participates in institutions that reinforce normative (Eurocentric) human cultural values. In a sense, he was "born" into human culture by virtue of his father's humanity. Is he then so very different from Spock, born to a Vulcan father, who chooses to live as a Vulcan—his own sort of Vulcan? Essentially, Data forces us as an audience to confront the question of what it means to be human in cultural terms. Obviously, Data will never be biologically a member of the species

Homo sapiens. But can he participate in human culture as a member, and if so, can it be on his own terms?

It may be prudent, at this point, to make a small digression and discuss two models of socialization, which I think will help clarify my point. The first is that there exists the individual, who is joined by other individuals to create a group, which eventually gets big enough to constitute a “society.” Thus the individual creates the group. The second model of socialization is that there exists a society that shapes and ultimately helps produce the individual—their morals, their beliefs, their prejudices, the larger narratives that guide their lives and even particular cultural preferences like food, music, etc. Now these models are not, I would argue, mutually exclusive, and in fact the processes they describe often feed back upon each other. But Data disrupts this feedback loop; he is constituted by human societal norms, but rather than feeding back into them, he goes on to constitute his own norms, his own “society of one.” It is the process—the creation as a verb, rather than a noun—that best allows us to consider Data a hybrid. And thinking of Data in terms of a hybrid allows us to envision his character as one who retains what makes him a unique individual, and what makes him an android, while also engaging with human culture as a member.

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Performativity and authenticity are important to understanding Data; as the only one of his kind, Data has no “authentic” android experience to compare against his own. (At least, not a positive one—Lore hardly serves as a good example.) And as an android, he can never experience an “authentic” human emotion because he is not human. Yet, as later episodes and ST films demonstrate, he can feel. Some episodes even suggest he can experience emotions of a sort—his sort—before he gets the emotion chip installed. Throughout the course of the show,

Data's logical, theoretical grasp of human emotions becomes more subtle and finessed; he even learns to strategically employ human behaviors to better fit in with his crewmates. I argue this grasp represents a pre-understanding of emotions that allows him to ultimately integrate emotions in his life successfully, as he is portrayed as doing in the TNG films, which take place after the series. One could even argue that this pre-understanding allows him to internalize his experiences in the moment. In the epigraph above, for instance, Data uses certain expressions—"believe," "leap of faith"—of which the enactment a mere machine, no matter how sophisticated, would be incapable. Data desired to be a person. But I would argue such a complex desire indicates that he already was one—and indeed one capable of experiencing (even feeling) something beyond pure computational logic.

For example, in "The Offspring" (TNG: 3x16), Data begets (that is, builds) a daughter, an android named Lal. But she is not long for this world; her neural net quickly degrades, the damage brought on by her prematurely experiencing emotion. Before she dies, Data uploads her memories into his own consciousness. As Short points out, "Data's assertion that he cannot love [Lal] in return is refuted by the tenderness between them in their last moments together. Despite Data's protests, we know that to all intents and purposes he is human and capable of the emotion he denies, and yet he is reassuringly non-human also, for his grief never turns to bitterness or resentment" (220). Here, hybridity is represented as the ideal, a best of both worlds, as it were. Yet Short also problematizes that hybridity later on in her essay as "limited."

Harald Thorsrud makes a somewhat similar argument, comparing Data's relationship to emotions to that of Aristotle and his followers, the Peripatetics, who believed that emotions, properly controlled, contribute positively to our lived experiences. However, he distinguishes—erroneously, I believe—between Data's real emotional experiences with his emotion chip, and

the “simulated form[s] of friendship” and other relationships Data experiences without it (37).

Although the essay mostly concentrates on the philosophical comparisons between Data and the Peripatetics, Thorsrud seems to miss the complexity of Data’s pre-chip emotional experiences: I would argue that even if whatever Data experiences does not resemble “emotion” as we as humans understand it, it still constitutes a valid (emotional) experience for Data.

For example, in the episode “The Ensigns of Command” (TNG: 3x02), Data is visibly confused when Captain Picard has to unexpectedly leave his violin recital. His body language—a slowing and eventual stopping of the bow arm as he follows Picard’s exit with head, then lowering his eyes in consideration before glancing about the room as if searching for an explanation—display not only distraction but disappointment. This portrayal of a creative, dynamic person stands in sharp contrast as his characterization as “a walking calculator” by a Federation colonist a few scenes later. We get a sense that even as Data begins to gain a better external or logical understanding of emotion, he also begins to interpret that understanding in terms of his own internal experiences. Unfortunately, many discussions of Data’s emotions similarly reinforce normative understandings of emotion. To suggest that we all experience emotion in exactly the same way and for the same reasons, or that we all react exactly the same to the same stimulus, is, of course, absurd. By approaching Data’s lived experiences from a nonnormative perspective, we can see these experiences not as failures or shortcomings but as a new and different way of being. Emotion itself carries its own sort of hybridity: complex, even conflicting, feelings; different reactions to different circumstances. It is not a static experience, and as it comprises the core of Data’s story-arc of self-exploration, that integral fluidity is thus important to understanding Data on the whole. Thus Data presents a fruitful ground for questioning notions of authenticity in the context of hybridity.

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The enactment of one's identity is always a process in which one must mitigate the expectations of others with one's own desires (which may themselves be influenced one way or another by outside expectations). The idea of authenticity—that there is a true inner self, or one true way of enacting a particular identity—fails to adequately account for the complicated interaction of the inner and outer, the entanglement of self and alien and the processes of socialization. Furthermore, because authenticity and performativity (which may carry the inaccurate connotation of being fake) are positioned as at odds with one another, there is the sense that one can never authentically perform themselves. So, when Data performs (to play on a word) one of his numerous experiments in humanity, from trying to date, to getting a pet cat, to acting in Shakespeare productions, one might assume his performance is not stemming from some inner well of authentic self but rather from some outwardly-imposed notions of what being human looks like. In the worst sense, one might assume is only play-acting at being a “real boy.” But learning is a process of participation for Data, and so this external socialization is a necessary component of his ability to internalize human societal norms, replicate and experience them, and construct his own way of being.

And this interpretation—a superficial and limited one, I would argue—not only fails to account for the ways in which authenticity obscures, rather than enhances, understandings of subjectivity, it also fails to understand that authenticity itself is a normative structure that can prohibit the potential for hybridity, both on an individual and cultural or structural level. The model of the hybrid, the other Other, is replicated in each individual who enacts or embodies a form of hybridity. Thus hybridity cannot be “normed” in the same way authenticity can, because

it deconstructs hierarchies of “right” and “wrong” ways to inhabit and enact identities. That is, in this conception of hybridity, there is no inauthenticity.

For Data, though, the individual is also the cultural in a different way than it is for those of us immersed in a particular culture of cultures from birth, by virtue of both our circumstances and our heritage. As Data has no “birth” culture in the sense that you or I do, his hybridity is not the enactment of the structural through the personal, it is the creation of the structural through the personal. That is, Data continually crafts not only new and improved versions of himself, but, as the only android, his personal explorations of himself have larger implications. They reflect the hybridity of his unique manner of existence, one that constantly challenges his and our limitations. That is, the android as hybrid demonstrates the potential for the individual not only to feed back into the society from which they emerged as (another) Other, but also to forge new societies, new versions of the individual.

There is, in Data’s moments of exploration and experimentation, an implicit relationship between performativity—that which can be seen—and the metaphysical—that which cannot. Personhood, ultimately, cannot be demonstrated scientifically—we learned as much from “Measure of a Man,” wherein Data must sue Starfleet for his right to personhood. In the episode, Data’s own friend, Commander William T. Riker, is tasked with proving Data is not a person, is in fact the property of Starfleet, and can thus be dismantled for research purposes. Luckily for Data, and us, Data, with Picard as his lawyer, wins his suit by proving that consciousness—that is, personhood—is too imprecise and unknowable to prove or disprove. The soul resists objectification. So if we cannot measure personhood on the grand scale, we must look for it in the little things—such as the mementos Data keeps for no other reason than that he desires them, or his attempts at humor, or so on and so forth.

Thus, performativity is an external marker for the unknowable, internal personhood, one's identity. Oftentimes, performance is understood in opposition to authenticity; by choosing to perform humanity, is Data rejecting his "authentic" android self, or crafting it? So many poignant moments for Data revolve around his desire to have the "authentic" human experience, whatever that means. In a way, he reflects the same dualism B'Elanna struggles with: the belief that there is a valid way to be human, and all else beyond that is both inhuman and invalid. To paraphrase a line from a popular Disney movie, Data wants to be part of our world. But he already is: he holds a high military rank; he has friends, even romantic interests and lovers; he has a cat; he paints—he engages in life in much the same way as do we, with work and friends and pets and hobbies. Yet in his performance of human culture, he brings his own sensibility and perspective. We all do that, of course, but the difference with Data is that he brings the perspective of someone whose lived, embodied experiences are unique.

This performative identity has especially interesting implications in light of Judith Butler's assertion that "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of act" (519). That is, identity is not in the body but of and made by and making the body. That is, for Data, he is no more or less than he purports to be through his words and deeds: the personality he constructs for himself. Paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty, Butler writes that "the body is not an historical idea but a set of possibilities to be continually realized," thus rejecting the idea that a sense of subjectivity preexists the body it creates (or that creates it), and positing subjectivity as continually emergent (521). Becoming, then, is not only improvisational but responsive: it is adaptable, a key component of Data's hybridity.

After all, the world is not only exterior, and feelings or experiences are not merely internal. They are tangled up in one another, through our active participation and involvement in

our environment. Aristotle, in *On Rhetoric*, characterized emotions as a necessary part of engaging with society and understood them not just as internal states of being but as motivated and connected with one's environment: "The emotions are those things which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments...for example, in speaking of anger, what is their *state of mind* when people are angry and against *whom* are they usually angry, and for what sort of *reasons*" (2.1.8-9). That is certain conditions, internal and/or external, create a state of mind that then directs behavior and judgments towards others. Thus, emotions are also situations.

Data understand this. It is why when offered the chance to be made human—a biological, organic human—he refuses. In the episode, "Hide and Q" (TNG: 1x10) Riker has been temporarily granted godlike powers by Q, a strange and omnipotent being. Riker offers to give his friends that unattainable thing they've always dreamed of—for Data, being human. But when he offers, Data replies, "No. No, sir...I never wanted to compound one illusion with another. It might be real to Q, perhaps even you, sir. But it would not be so to me. Was it not one of the Captain's favorite authors who wrote, 'This above all, to thine own self be true'? Sorry, Commander, I must decline" (TNG: "Hide and Q").

Data chooses to be an android. To be suddenly transformed into a biological human would not only rob him of the ability to learn and grow as a person, it would fundamentally change who he is, which he recognizes. Data's way of being is doing—he chooses to explore the interaction of feelings, involvements, and purposes that drive our engagement with our environment. If he were made human, he might perhaps intrinsically understand emotions or social cues in the same way as most humans, but he would lose the hybridity of being an android. That is to say, Data would lose what makes him Data.

CONCLUSION

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“It is impossible to step twice into the same river...It scatters and regathers, comes together and dissolves, approaches and departs.”

– Heraclitus¹³

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I began this thesis by asking us to consider why the ST franchise has not only continued but flourished for over half a century. How has it stayed relevant to fans? How has it stayed relevant to the world around us? Part of its lasting appeal, I have argued, is its ability to use metaphor and allegory to explore the very real issues of the present day—and in particular, it uses non-human characters to help us hold up a mirror to ourselves and the complex world we inhabit. Hybrid characters like Spock, B’Elanna, and Data provide a different—and often more useful—framework for examining the hybridity, the Otherness in ourselves and the people in our lives.

A hybrid is another Other, a figure who inhabits a fluid, liminal space and who both embodies something of the Other and the self, and yet belongs to neither. Using the figure of the Jew as a basis for this hybridity, I posit the Jew as the original Other not only within but actually predating normative European culture, demonstrating how the hybrid is at once an integral part of the self (and the Other), continually re-emerging in opposition to the self (and the Other), and yet something else entirely. With Spock, I demonstrate the non-additive, entangled nature of hybridity, which transcends and transgresses percentage-based categorization. With B’Elanna, I

¹³ Quoted in Waterfield 41.

show how that entanglement is recursive and emergent, continually forming and reforming one's identity; the entangled nature of my framework for hybridity allows for a sense of unity that dualistic hybridity does not, fracturing the self rather than recreating it. And with Data, I establish how hybridity, by deconstructing the authenticity/assimilation binary, is necessarily open-ended.

The purpose of this thesis has not only been to explain what these characters signify; it has also been to explore why they matter. We often hear the phrase “representation matters;” that it's important for people, especially minorities and those from marginalized groups, to see positive representations of themselves in popular media. My own mother, who watched TOS growing up, has spoken to me about the importance of seeing a female character in a position of authority: Lieutenant Uhura, the communications officer onboard the *Enterprise*. In the 60s, when everyone wanted to be an astronaut, young women were told, “Girls can't be astronauts”—and then Uhura came along. In fact, Whoopi Goldberg has said that seeing Uhura, “a [B]lack lady on television [who] ain't no maid,” inspired her to pursue acting (“Goldberg, Whoopi”).

Spock was like that for me. I was a lonely Jewish kid growing up in a small town in the Midwest, but when I watched TOS and saw Spock, I saw someone like me. And because of Spock, I could imagine that in Roddenberry's gleaming utopia, there was a place for me, too. Autistic fans have expressed a connection with Data, who also perceives emotions and social interactions in a different way. B'Elanna allows mixed race fans to see a piece of themselves in this far-away future. Thus, my aim in writing about Spock and B'Elanna and Data is determine why and how they create meaningful experiences for fans by exploring their hybrid natures. ST has not always succeeded in its mission to represent infinite diversity in infinite combinations—a Vulcan credo. Sometimes, as Kwan, Bernardi, and others point out, it succumbs to essentialism,

normativity, and even accidental racism. These criticisms are both justified and necessary. But these criticisms are also products of the time they were written—most of them in the 90s, when identity politics was still new, and very different than it is today. Now, reflecting back on these criticisms, we can acknowledge their importance while also acknowledging that, thirty years later, we require different, more complex interpretations to suit our contemporary understandings of postmodernism, identity, and multiculturalism. Because unfortunately, these criticisms offer fellow fans and scholars little course of action outside of acknowledging that, yes, ST (like all art) is imperfect. After all, we are hardly likely to go on to produce the next ST show. (Although, one can certainly dream).

And this is, after all, the goal of rhetorical analysis: not (only) to explain what a text signifies, but to explain what we can, or should, or might do with those texts. Thus, I present my exploration of hybridity in ST, and the framework of hybridity that arises from it, as a rhetorical approach. I see this framework as an opportunity not only to explore what these characters mean, but to utilize that meaning as we move forward in our understanding of hybridity. Furthermore, this approach takes us beyond the dead end of merely acknowledging imperfection towards an understanding of how these characters' portrayal—however imperfect—helps us conceptualize a more complex framework for hybridity. This framework itself goes beyond these characters, even beyond ST, to the broader world we inhabit and engage with.

That is why, I argue, this thesis is not only useful but a necessary examination of hybrid characters in ST. As a fan, I wanted a satisfying answer as to why characters like Spock appealed so much to an audience—not as just an alien, but as a hybrid—despite some of ST's more questionable treatments of essentialism and race. And as rhetorician, I wanted an

understanding of identity and hybridity in ST that accounted not only for this popularity but also for complexity such models of hybridity are willing to offer us, if we are willing to look.

And as someone who, in some ways, feels the Other as the self, I wanted—perhaps I needed—a conception of hybridity that did justice to the richness and the beauty, as well as the pain, of such an existence. For me, this was always more than a theoretical exercise. Beyond these characters, beyond ST—a framework for hybridity that does not reduce its profundity to a matter of percentages is important if we are to understand the lived experiences of real people and the complexity of the postmodern world we inhabit. Hybridity is necessarily an ephemeral thing, yet also immutable in its recursivity. If the self emerges in opposition to that which it is not, then hybridity emerges (and emerges, and emerges) towards and away from the parts of itself: self, Other, both, neither. Ultimately it allows us to explore boundless potentialities for identity—maybe even that undiscovered country where no one has gone before.

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