

"To Boldly Go" versus "Last, Best Hope"

*The Future of Human Civilization as
Depicted in American Science Fiction*

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Summary

"To Boldly Go" versus "Last, Best Hope" examines a total of four American television series from the *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* franchises, and the portrayal of human civilization in the future. The thesis traces how *Star Trek* set out "to boldly go" and how *Babylon 5* was the "last, best hope" in depicting a coherent, futuristic vision for humanity. The initial chapter focuses on the background of the series and also the ways they differed from one another, while chapter 2 is devoted to the portrayal of government systems, society, guiding principles and social inequality. As the premise is established, chapters 3 and 4 go into detail on a range of issues pertaining to the lives of characters and overarching themes such as religion and personal faith, as well as masculinity versus femininity, sexuality and familial relationships.

To my mom and dad

I would like to thank everyone who made it possible for me to complete this daunting and momentous task.

A special thanks to my supervisor at the University of Oslo, Deborah Lynn Kitchen-Døderlein. Through your helpful advice and kind encouragement, I found the necessary confidence and motivation to see this through to the end.

Many thanks go to my family who always believed in me - and my friends who gave me comfort and encouragement when I might otherwise have succumbed to despair.

"Live long and prosper."

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

"To Boldly Go" and "Last, Best Hope" were the introductory catch phrases of *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* respectively, two cornerstone franchises that dominated American televised science fiction in the 1990s. Both sayings tantalized the expectations of the viewers with underlying promises of riveting tales from space filled with drama, comedy, tragedy, action, and war, not to mention the unfolding lives of the myriad of diverse characters that inhabit both universes. But these catch phrases also embody the spirit of the television series as they set out with ambitious visions of humanity in the future.

This thesis examines how *Star Trek* set out "To Boldly Go" into a positive and utopian future for mankind, and how *Babylon 5* presented itself as the "Last, Best Hope" with its portrayal of a future where humanity was still flawed. This thesis looks at both, comparing, and contrasting their attempt to be something more than lighthearted entertainment by emphasizing the focus on social and historic commentary. The relevance of this study is that these American television series portrayed ideas of humanity that the viewers can relate to, with concepts of society as it could or should be, and a moral story of what is right and wrong. Each chapter traces specific themes relating to humanity and society, but the study does not exclusively limit itself to one specific issue like government. Rather, it provides an understanding of the overall future that is being presented to the viewers. This is accomplished by a strong focus on the story arcs and plot elements that pertain directly to the concepts and issues of humanity and society. In relation to the plot elements, the thread that runs through the thesis is the comparison between *Star Trek's* utopian setting and *Babylon 5's* more dismal setting, and the impact these settings have on how the characters act. The characters that are given attention are not just human, but also alien, as the values and principles they adhere to are often reflections and parallels of contemporary concerns.

There is a distinct lack of literature that relates specifically to the topic of the thesis, in part due to the broad scope chosen. Scholars and academics have written about *Star Trek* ever since the launch of *Star Trek: The Original Series* of the 1960s. These fall outside the scope of the thesis as they often relate exclusively to the original series and its characters. This study focuses on the sequel television series that came twenty years later and took *Star Trek* to the "next generation," as well as the rival stand-alone series that presented an alternate portrayal of humanity in space, *Babylon 5*. And while *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Star Trek: Voyager* have been featured in academic writing, the focus has typically been limited to narrow topics or individual characters that do not fit the topic of this thesis. *Babylon 5*, on the other hand, has not been prominently featured in any academic writing save for a few notable exceptions.

Daniel Leonard Bernardi's book on *Star Trek* is likely the work that relates most closely to the topic of the thesis. A professor of cinema at the San Francisco State University, he is closely familiar with science fiction motion pictures and television series, and showcases it in the book *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future*, published in 1998. As indicative of the title of the book, the subject matter is not simply society as a whole, but also issues specifically relating to ethnicity and race in *Star Trek*. Much focus is on *Star Trek: The Original Series*, which is not the topic of this thesis. However, he does give attention on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the other spin-offs, indicating how the tone of these series shifted with the passage of time to some extent, reflecting unfolding social realities. The core of his argument is that *Star Trek* projects the idea of a futuristic society where "whiteness" is dominant and apparent in most of the characters, regardless of the actors' actual ethnicity. He continues this line of thought by making the claim that certain alien races are largely representative of non-white ethnicities, such as the Ferengi being a portrayal of Jews. That idea is not entirely in alignment with this thesis, which rather finds aliens as reflections of

specific cultures more so than specific ethnicities. His argument does, however, align when he makes the case that the stories being told on Star Trek are reflections of contemporary times and various social movements in recent times.¹

With regards to *Babylon 5*, this thesis builds on the work of the historians and authors Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. Both of them are well versed in history and closely familiar with the science fiction genre, having written numerous works on the topic individually. In their book *The Parliament of Dreams: Conferring on Babylon 5*, the two gathered a selection of academics texts that examine the television series, and also provided their own analysis of the *Babylon 5* universe. They emphasize how the series successfully chose a more overarching and expansive conflict as the stage on which the human struggle to advance was portrayed. The two authors make the case that science fiction as a genre, and *Babylon 5* specifically, is an historical reflection more than anything else. The case is also made of how the alien civilizations, with all their characteristic traits and habits, are reflections of historic and contemporary human civilizations and nations. They point to the series' continuous use of historical parallels in telling its story, and how the realism comes across with the lack of obvious answers and clear-cut resolutions to moral dilemmas. Finally, they argue that *Babylon 5*'s lack of static environment with its continuously progressive story arc made for an accurate portrayal of a future that was always in motion, and an unparalleled epic in its own right.² The thesis will expand on many of the issues and topics that are raised by the authors, but also fill in certain gaps such as masculinity versus femininity, which were - by the authors' admission - missing from their work.

¹ Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

² Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, ed., *The Parliament of Dreams: Conferring on Babylon 5* (Science Fiction Foundation, 1998).

Choosing the topic and comparability

Series and movies within the science fiction and fantasy genre can often come across as lighthearted and, perhaps, shallow entertainment that is produced largely for the sake of providing the viewers with an escape from every-day life. They tend to depict fantastical scenarios or conflicts in either the future, past, or alternate dimensions or realms, with limited impact due to their varying degrees or absence of social commentary. The *Star Wars* franchise (1977-1983) depicted a classic struggle of good against evil, the *Alien* franchise (1979-1997) was pure horror with man versus bloodthirsty extraterrestrials, while the cult classic *Blade Runner* (1982) was class conflict in a science fiction or film noir setting, to name a few.

Star Trek (1966-1969) was the brainchild of Gene Roddenberry, and his tale of humanity's exploration of space would outlive the original five year mission, as the 1970s saw the continuation of the franchise. First came *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1973-1974,) and then *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979,) which spawned several sequels depicting the original crew of the Enterprise up until *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country* in 1991. By that time, a new television series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, had launched and was well on its way, later taking over the mantle of continuing the motion picture series as well. The popularity and interest in the exploration of space paved the way for *Babylon 5*, a project featuring an entirely new and alternate portrayal of humanity in the future. Both franchises are in many ways platforms in which the creators and writers explore both historical and contemporary societal challenges and issues by putting them in an alternate context, albeit while simplifying them at the same time.

Three television series from the *Star Trek* franchise, spin-offs of the original *Star Trek*, were chosen for the study: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Star Trek Voyager*. The *Babylon 5* series was then selected as being the most appropriate for comparison. The reason for this is that the four series were all broadcast more or less concurrently, with the three *Star Trek* series airing with some overlap from 1987 to 2001, and *Babylon 5* from 1993 to 1998. Furthermore, unlike Gene Roddenberry's vision for *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5* creator Joseph Michael Straczynski did not seek to depict any sort of utopia, saying "I'm not trying to sell any one particular idea in that respect. I think that, at its base, science fiction is about hope. ... There has to be a goal to strive toward."³ While there were further spin-offs from both franchises, *Star Trek: Enterprise* (2001-2005) and *Babylon 5's Crusade* (1999,) these have been purposely omitted for several reasons. First, *Star Trek: Enterprise* has the status as a prequel to the original *Star Trek*, and therefore is not set in the relevant time period, and it also came out at a later date. *Crusade*, on the other hand, is a spin-off sequel of sorts to *Babylon 5*, but Joseph Michal Straczynski had limited control over its development and it also went unfinished after a mere 13 episodes.

The original conflict and rivalry between the developers of the different series heightens the interest for comparison. J. Michael Straczynski had originally pitched *Babylon 5* to Paramount who turned it down in the late 1980s, which led to Warner Brothers eventually taking over the project.⁴ Straczynski made it clear while corresponding with people online that he thought there were striking similarities between his creation and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (a product of Paramount.) He primarily brought up the similarities in the setting of a space station, locale visuals, and some aspects of the initial story and characters (both featured female second in commands, and there were also the characters Dukhat and Dukat

³ *Media in Transition*, 1999, <http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/science_fiction/transcripts/jms_jablokov_index.html> (1 November 2012).

⁴ *JMSNews*, 2008, <<http://www.jmsnews.com/msg.aspx?id=1-7864>> (6 July 2012).

that were relevant to the plot.) Most of his criticism was directed at Paramount, who he perceived as trying to "kill off" his series by influencing the creators of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* in to mimicking the initial distinctive aspects of the series, while also providing a bigger budget to "cream" *Babylon 5* in the ratings.⁵ Surely enough, fans of the series did notice this and a rivalry ensued between the fan bases, though Straczynski would later downplay some of his criticism. Interestingly, some famous actors from *Star Trek*, like Walter Koenig, went on to do roles on *Babylon 5*, lauding it for its fresh take on science fiction television. And finally the wife of the late *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, Majel Barrett, appeared on *Babylon 5* in a guest role, portraying the widow of the Centauri Emperor.⁶ This was an attempt to reach across the aisle and reconcile the fans of the two different franchises.⁷ Regardless of whether the accusations of co-opting are true or mere coincidence, the similar premises of the series make a comparison more interesting.

Overview of Sources

The primary sources for this thesis will be four different television series from the two franchises: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Star Trek Voyager* from the *Star Trek* franchise, and *Babylon 5* on its own. The motion picture *Star Trek: First Contact* and the television movie *Babylon 5: The Gathering* are also included among the primary sources as they offer essential references that relate to the settings of the television series. Since the made-for-television movies of the *Babylon 5* franchise are set within the internal timeframe of the series, and because they are more comparable to two-part episodes found in *Star Trek*, they will be referenced when necessary.

⁵ *JMSNews*, 2008, <<http://www.jmsnews.com/msg.aspx?id=1-13041>> (6 July 2012).

⁶ Barrett had acted in the original *Star Trek* series, and was also known for voicing the onboard computers on vessels in the *Star Trek* series. The choice to have her appear in the role of the widow of an Emperor was symbolic in its own right, paying tribute to Roddenberry.

⁷ "The First Lady of *Star Trek*," 1996, <<http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/misc/barrett-release>> (5 July 2012).

Taken together, the *Star Trek* series amount to a total of 526 episodes, and there is a fairly equal number for each one. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* consists of 178 episodes, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* has 176 episodes, and *Star Trek: Voyager* has 172 episodes. The first season of *Star Trek: Voyager* was cut short, hence the lower number of episodes. Each series consists of seven seasons, released in individual DVD box sets released from 2002 to 2006. *Babylon 5* consists of 110 episodes (not counting the television movies) divided across five individual seasons released in box sets similar to *Star Trek*, released from 2002 to 2005. The television movies were also released as a collection in a box set (which also includes the stand-alone pilot episode.) Typically each season box of *Star Trek* contains extra material in segments featuring interviews with creators and actors, background for stories, and design distributed across the individual discs, while *Babylon 5* has similar material but also commentary tracks on major episodes of the season. These special features will also be used as primary sources where applicable to the topic of the thesis.

Star Trek: The Next Generation

Star Trek: The Next Generation is an American science fiction series created by Gene Roddenberry that ran from 1987 to 1994, serving as a sequel of sorts, or spin-off, to the original *Star Trek* series on the 1960s. Across seven seasons covering the years 2364 through 2370, it depicts life onboard the starship USS Enterprise as it travels among the stars “to seek out new life and new civilizations.” Humans are shown to be living relatively peacefully alongside numerous likeminded alien species in the utopian United Federation of Planets. This interstellar coalition was founded by humans and various aliens, and is shown as a having a foundation in scientific advancement and peaceful exploration of the galaxy, with all members working for the betterment of mankind and the other member races. On the surface, Earth in *Star Trek* has become seemingly devoid of problematic social issues such as racism and religion, and cultural differences within humanity have become extinct, or at the very

least much less complicated. The United Federation of Planets often finds itself at odds with other galactic powers that project cultural traits and have characteristics that the humans view as archaic, while differences to the norm within Federation life are viewed negatively and as a threat to their progressive society. The series is largely episodic, meaning that it features few overarching storylines, and the characters are often faced with situations that challenge their moral beliefs or threaten the peaceful existence of the Federation.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine is an American science fiction series created by Rick Berman and Michael Piller (successors of Gene Roddenberry, and co-creators of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) that ran from 1993 to 1999. Covering the years 2369 through 2375, the series is primarily set onboard a space station called Deep Space Nine rather than on a starship. In the series, the United Federation of Planets takes over a space station near the backwater, newly liberated planet Bajor, following the expulsion of their occupiers, the Cardassian Empire. The pilot episode reveals that a previously undiscovered wormhole in the system allows instantaneous travel from the Alpha Quadrant to the unexplored Gamma Quadrant.⁸ The discovery thrusts the station into the limelight and becomes the stage for intricate drama when an aggressive superpower from the Gamma Quadrant, known as the Dominion, starts to wreak havoc across the Alpha Quadrant. The series was episodic, but certain themes are prevalent throughout, and the series develops more progressive continuity especially in the later seasons. Arguably darker than the other *Star Trek* series, *Deep Space Nine* explores issues that the others do not, ranging from religion, racism, political issues, to the hard choices made in war.

⁸ Quadrant is the *Star Trek* definition of a part of the galaxy, as it is divided into four quadrants: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta.

Star Trek: Voyager

Star Trek: Voyager is an American science fiction series created by Rick Berman, Michael Piller and Jeri Taylor that ran from 1995 to 2001. It was concurrent with five seasons of *Deep Space Nine*, and covers the years 2371 through 2378. The series revolves around the life of the characters onboard the USS Voyager. In the pilot episode, the ship is pulled across the galaxy by an alien entity to the distant edge of the Delta Quadrant after pursuing a ship belonging to the rebel faction known as the Maquis. Stranded, the Federation and Maquis crews join forces onboard Voyager and begin a journey home that will take them 70 years, facing countless perils along the way. While the story of how Voyager is to get home is the continuous premise of the series throughout, the series is largely episodic in the same way *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was, dealing with one situation at a time. Major issues and themes of the series is whether or not the crew should stick to their Federation principles when their home is so far away, or seek easy ways to get home at the expense of others.

Babylon 5

Babylon 5 is an American science fiction series created by Joseph Michael Straczynski (typically abbreviated JMS) that ran from 1993 to 1998. Unlike the various *Star Trek* spinoffs, the series' creators fully intended to make the series a serial saga, “a novel for television,” with story arcs from the first season gradually advancing and coming to a climax in the later seasons.⁹ The series storyline spans primarily five years, covering the years 2258 through 2262, though scenes and episodes also depict both past and future events, explaining and expanding upon the cause and effect of the characters' actions. Much like the various *Star Trek* spinoffs, the human characters are primarily serving in the armed forces, but Earth is not depicted as a peace-loving faction among space-faring species, and the Earth Alliance is no United Federation of Planets. The Earth Alliance is shown as more primitive than many of the

⁹ *JMSNews*, 2008, <<http://www.jmsnews.com/msg.aspx?id=1-7864>> (9 July 2012).

space-faring races on *Babylon 5*, often with severe technological disadvantages in comparison to other factions, and less polished and perfect than its *Star Trek* counterpart. As the series begins, we see humans humbled and recovering from a destructive war with that nearly caused their own extinction, following a history of militarism and expansionism directed at alien races since becoming capable of interstellar travel. The titular space station Babylon 5 was created as a diplomatic outpost where all the races of the galaxy can congregate to resolve their differences, and is described as the “last, best, hope for peace” and later the “last, best hope for victory.” Humanity is portrayed as somewhat subservient to superior alien species and dependent on their subtle and not-so-subtle guidance. In many ways humanity in *Babylon 5* is largely a continuation of present day society - albeit more technologically advanced - still utilizing societal frameworks that *Star Trek's* humanity views as obsolete, such as currency. The series also shows humans as not being entirely unified as a species, with nation states still existing on Earth and secessionist settlements on colonized planets like Mars. Xenophobia and discrimination are still prevalent and problematic societal issues, and religion has not been done away with despite scientific advancements. In the course of the series, the characters onboard the station find themselves at the center of major conflicts and wars, while also dealing with the rise of a new wave of autocratic leadership and militarism on Earth.

Organization of the Thesis

The individual internal chapters of this thesis will deal with specific aspects of these series that are relevant to the thesis question. A number of issues and themes that are recurrent in the series have been selected due to their comparability and will then be contrasted and analyzed.

Chapter 2 will cover the topic of "Humanity, Government, and Society," as it will give deeper insight into the general premise of the series. By highlighting the general state of humanity and society, the chapter will provide a greater overview and framework for comprehending the issues raised in the subsequent chapters. Specifically, Chapter 2 will raise the issue of humanity's advancement from present day to the timeframe that the two franchises are set in, covering the topic of technology and science which is a major theme in both. Furthermore, the depiction of the government systems as they are presented in both will be analyzed as these portrayals tie into the topic of society and how the characters live their lives, what sort of principles and freedoms they have, and what the social dynamics and norms of each universe are. The utopian Federation's handling of the Maquis rebellion in the various *Star Trek* series will be analyzed, and also compared to one of the plotlines of *Babylon 5* where the titular station's secession and support for the independence of various Earth Alliance colonies is portrayed. The depiction of society will also be covered with comparison and analysis of race issues and political movements that are featured in the different series. A notable example will be the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Far Beyond the Stars" where Benjamin Sisko (played by African-American actor Avery Brooks) experiences a vision of himself in the 1950s, struggling for civil rights. On *Babylon 5*, the discrimination of telepaths is a recurring theme throughout the series as they struggle to gain freedom, and essentially resort to violence and terrorism to make their voices heard.

Chapter 3 will cover "Religion and Beliefs in Futuristic Society" and their overall presentation on the various series. It will highlight the portrayal of religion in both franchises and accentuate the stark differences between the two, and put particular emphasis on individual characters that are presented as religious. While *Star Trek* skirts around many religious issues and tends to present the humans as largely atheistic, devoted to science rather than religious beliefs, some humans on the series are occasionally shown as having spiritual

beliefs, such as Commander Chakotay (Robert Beltran) who is a Native American. Meanwhile, *Babylon 5* portrays human religions in either their traditional or modernized forms, with some characters such as Commander Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian) and Doctor Stephen Franklin (Richard Biggs) being religious. While not an original idea, both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* take the religious aspect further by presenting some aliens as the gods and mythical beings that humans (and other aliens) believe in. Humanity's interactions with alien religious beliefs, and the relevance of alien religions will also be covered in this chapter to a large extent.

Finally, Chapter 4 will be devoted to "Masculinity vs Femininity, Sexuality, and Family" with a focus on the individual characters and what they represent more so than the overall plot of the series. There are many characters from both franchises that are both symbolic and innovative, such as Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), the female lead of *Star Trek: Voyager*, while others become mere stereotypes, particularly Commander William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Emphasis will be given to plot elements where the individual series dared (or in some cases didn't dare) take particular characters beyond the traditional framework and push the boundaries, such as Lieutenant Jadzia Dax (Terry Farrell) engaging in a same-sex kiss on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and the bisexuality of Commander Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian) on *Babylon 5*.

A recurring and prominent theme throughout the different chapters will be how the creators and writers of the series have utilized aliens and alien civilizations as rivals, counterparts, or parallels of present day humanity. In both *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* many aliens are portrayed as antagonists that often represent the opposite of what the human characters stand for, holding ideals and values that are representative of present day traits one might find prevalent among humans. In some cases, the alien civilizations are apparent

parallels of specific nations - defunct or otherwise - from Earth. An example of such a parallel would be the Centauri Republic on Babylon 5, which serves as a parallel to the old colonial empires of Europe. Often the characters of the series react to the actions and behaviors of aliens with a sort of moral high ground, having surpassed problems relating to issues such as social stigma. Specific examples related to this are given in the fourth chapter, particularly in the sections detailing humanity's interaction with aliens that have issues with gender identity and forbidden love.

Differences in Tone Between the Series

The introductory sequences and theme melodies of each of the television series demonstrate the contrast between *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*, especially in the instances where they include a narration, as they set the tone for the series premise. In the case of the *Star Trek* series, only *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* introduction offered any sort of narration. It begins as the planets of Earth's solar system are displayed on screen, accompanied by the theme melody. The voice of Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) then speaks a variation of the quote from the introduction of the original *Star Trek* (1966-1969) by the iconic Captain James Tiberius Kirk (William Shatner) before the names of the cast are shown between flashes of the USS Enterprise flying towards the screen.

"Space... the Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before."¹⁰

The opening sequence of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* embodies the common themes of all the series from the *Star Trek* franchise. The music, combined with the images of the massive spaceship flying amidst the planets, underlines the premise of humanity having

¹⁰ "Encounter at Farpoint," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

reached the stars and mastering technology on an entirely new level. Meanwhile the narration emphasizes the idea that humanity's purpose at this point is simply the quest for more knowledge and scientific understanding of the universe. Almost like a joyride through the stars, humanity has advanced to the point where Earth's flagship and its military forces are devoted in their entirety to exploration. The opening sequence, with the narration going unaltered in the series' entire seven year run, exemplifies some of the rigidness of *Star Trek*. Apart from the rare cliffhanger at the end of a season or two-part episodes, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* rarely featured anything resembling an overall story arc. Apart from minor plot elements like occasionally recurring characters, the series was episodic. As things came to a conclusion in one episode, the events were rarely referenced in the subsequent one, or any later episode for that matter. All through to the end, episodes, seasons, and the series as a whole had a happy ending where all obstacles were overcome, and the Enterprise was free to continue its exploration.

In contrast to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, neither *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* nor *Star Trek: Voyager* had any sort of narration in their introduction, in large part due to their difference in setting. As *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* was a fixed location on a space station, it did not conduct exploration, but rather different aliens and cultures came to there. The ship on *Star Trek: Voyager* did make time for scientific exploration, but the overall goal of the series was to make the trip home. With no narration, both series featured purely upbeat musical opening sequences with the title of the series and names of the cast overlaid on shifting external shots of the titular space station and vessel, respectively. The only differences across the series' seven year durations were changes in cast members, and also *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*'s slight alteration of the opening theme and addition of more computer-generated digital effects from season 4 and on. The two series clung to the episodic format that seemed to work for their predecessor, and the opening sequences do not seem to reflect the constant

perils faced by the crews. They remain optimistic and fixed, much like *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, giving little doubt that all will be well in the end.

Babylon 5 took a different approach than *Star Trek*, featuring a different opening sequence for each season of the series, reflecting the ever-changing mood of the story. For each year there was a different musical theme, different clips of events depicted in previous or upcoming episodes, and also a new narration. Furthermore each season has a distinct title, albeit not specifically named in the opening titles, no doubt due to the series presentation as a saga for television. The narrative of the opening sequences described the ongoing storyline of the series as it progressed, giving the viewer insight into the status of events and also giving the historical perspective that can serve as an introduction for new viewers. This was exemplified with the introduction of the first season, spoken by Jeffrey Sinclair (Michael O'Hare.)

"It was the dawn of the Third Age of Mankind, ten years after the Earth-Minbari War. The Babylon Project was a dream given form. Its goal: to prevent another war by creating a place where humans and aliens could work out their differences peacefully. It's a port of call – home away from home for diplomats, hustlers, entrepreneurs, and wanderers. Humans and aliens wrapped in two million, five-hundred thousand tons of spinning metal, all alone in the night. It can be a dangerous place, but it's our last best hope for peace. This is the story of the last of the Babylon stations. The year is 2258. The name of the place is Babylon 5." *Babylon 5*, Season 1, "Signs and Portents."¹¹

The first season's narration underlines some of the fundamental differences between *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek*. While *Star Trek* had the bold mission to go forward and explore, *Babylon 5* seems to underline the fragile peace and volatile nature of life in space, emphasizing that "it can be a dangerous place." Furthermore, the description of the station itself as simply tons "spinning metal" indicates that humanity is not so much the master of

¹¹ "Midnight on the Firing Line," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

technology, but more subservient and small. The lines spoken are a variation of the introductory monologue by Londo Mollari (Peter Jurasik) in the pilot episode, where he says "I was there at the dawn of the Third Age of Mankind," hinting that the station and its role would come to have great importance in the years to come.¹² Season 2 would go on to feature another variation of the introduction, by John Sheridan (Bruce Boxleitner) where the station is described as "a shining beacon in space" in "the year the Great War came upon us all."¹³ But with the third season, the tone of the introduction would shift, marking the turning point in the series.

"The Babylon Project was our last, best hope for peace. It failed. But, in the Year of the Shadow War, it became something greater: our last, best hope [dramatic pause] for victory. The year is 2260. The place: Babylon 5." Babylon 5, Season 3, "Point of No Return."¹⁴

This monologue, spoken by Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian,) showcases *Babylon 5's* ability to change along with the events of the series. The musical theme would be different from each year, pompous and epic for the first two, while more dramatic and fast paced for the third and fourth. As the series progressed, it would always up the ante with each season, with the political and societal issues becoming more complex. It never remained fixed in a set mission, but rather made it clear that the station was just the stage where events of momentous importance played out. This trend would continue into season four - titled "No Surrender, No Retreat" - which had an introductory sequence narrated by thirteen different characters with lines such as "it was ... the year of destruction," "... the year of rebirth," "... a new age," "... the year everything changed" spoken in sequence.¹⁵ The season was packed with drama and action as several of the major story arcs that had been developing since the

¹² "The Gathering," *Babylon 5*, Warner Brothers Entertainment (DVD, 2004).

¹³ "Points of Departure," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹⁴ "Matters of Honor," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹⁵ "The Hour of the Wolf," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

beginning of the first season finally came to a conclusion. Season 5, named "Wheel of Fire," took a step back as there was a lull in the greater political drama that had previously dominated the series. The tone of the narration shifted once again, seeming to reflect more on what had already taken place by featuring quotes from preceding seasons.¹⁶

The narrated introductions of *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* offer a useful contrast to one another, in that they highlight the stark differences between the two franchises on a fundamental level. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* gives us the impression of a confident humanity that has mastered science and technology, using it as a stepping stone for advancing exploration of the cosmos and peaceful interaction with other civilizations. The narration for the first three seasons *Babylon 5*, on the other hand, portrays the mixture of previous defeat combined with hope for the future, and also a kind of subservience to technology by describing the colossal space station as a minor speck in the vastness of space. Even so, the element of uncharted territory and uncertain future is present in both franchises. Furthermore the differences in choice of introduction, particularly when considering *Babylon 5*'s seasons 4 and 5, serve to emphasize the focus on the individual characters, their choices and personal tales, as integral parts of the whole story rather than being "along for the ride" as one sees in *Star Trek*.

The cast of characters also had an impact on the tone of the series. The different *Star Trek* series largely maintained the same cast for the entire duration, replacing only one or two characters in the run. Once again this reflects the static and safe environment of *Star Trek* where very little changes. *Babylon 5*, however, had a plan for each individual character and the role they had to play in the five year arc. As such, the main cast remained somewhat fluid over the years, with characters being replaced as their specific arc was played out to the end. Even some of the main characters would occasionally suffer a dramatic death, reflecting the

¹⁶ "No Compromises," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

progressive and ever-changing nature of *Babylon 5* and also adding welcome unexpected variety that was rarely found on *Star Trek*.

Chapter 2 - Humanity, Government, and Society

This chapter will explore several major themes in *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*, and how these series provide social commentary on a large scale. It begins with an introduction to the settings of the series and how humanity has grown and developed from present date to that point in time. It will provide an overview of the impact of technological advancements and conflicts in particular. Emphasis will be given to how these events provided societal reform and progress for humanity to varying degrees, so that one may understand the context of the commentary. Subsequently, as the premise of these futuristic societies has been accounted for, the chapter will go in to detail on a variety of interrelated issues that are presented in the series. These topics will range from societal structure and government, to racism and discrimination. In large part, the characters and their handling of the issues presented will be given the most emphasis. Where applicable, attention will be given to how aliens are presented in these series, and how their actions and identity serve as parallels to both history and contemporary society.

2.1 - The Advancement of Mankind

Past conflicts are utilized as a springboard for the advancements that mankind have made up until the timeframes of the *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* series. We can say World War II ushered in a new era for humanity with the conflict furthering technological advances, leading to a relatively increased harmony with the founding of the United Nations, and triggered the space race between the United States and Soviet Union. Similarly, both franchises reference (in their timeframe) more recent conflicts in their past as equally pivotal in history. The series have premises of a World War III in their past, the outcome of which shaped their present

state of things. Arguably this narrative was chosen because the horrors and outcome of World War II is still relatively fresh in the minds of the viewership as an ultimate conflict, and the very premise of another war on a similar or more expansive scale opens for the idea of societal changes of profound magnitude. However, the creators of *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* had different views of exactly what types of consequences a major war would have on humanity, and how it would reform human civilization.

Star Trek has presented the outcome of such a conflict as having a lasting and reformative impact on human society. Human civilization was fragmented and in ruins following the end of World War III which had lasted from 2026 to 2053. In 2063, ten years after the war, a scientist achieved a velocity faster than light speed with a space vessel he had constructed, and attracted the attention of the alien civilization known as the Vulcans who initiated "first contact" with humanity in.¹⁷ As if experiencing a profound epiphany, and with the guidance of the logic-driven Vulcan race, humanity was then quickly able to come together and recover from the onslaught of the war. Contact with aliens did away with the most prominent societal issues such as racism, abandoned organized religion, and joined the interstellar community. At the time of the three *Star Trek* series, the human race is presented as entirely unified, with few or none internal conflicts. The only threats to the harmony and tranquility of Earth on *Star Trek* come from scheming alien races.¹⁸ As such, the United Federation of Planets is shown as a perfect utopia where humanity use technological advances to peacefully explore the galaxy in a quest for greater knowledge.

On *Babylon 5*, humanity is not shown as an entirely peaceful race, nor is it portrayed as free of internal societal issues, regardless of relatively prominent achievements such as

¹⁷ "First contact" is a science fiction term utilized in both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* to describe the initial meetings between civilizations from two different worlds; in this example, the humans and the Vulcans. In *Star Trek*, the requirement for initiating first contact with another race is that they have achieved faster-than-light speed.

¹⁸ *Star Trek: First Contact*, prod. Rick Berman, 106 minutes, Paramount Pictures, 2000, DVD.

space travel. Rather, it is shown as an occasional aggressor that has moved beyond the confines of planet Earth and out into space. The series mentions a World War III that lasted from 2080 to 2084, which led to the founding of the Earth Alliance as a governing body for the planet. However, the Earth Alliance did not do away with internal strife or societal issues. Racism and discrimination of various sorts remain problems that humanity contends with, nation states still exist, and conflicts have persisted, as evident of by the mention the War of the Shining Star and the Canal War in the centuries that followed. After colonizing the solar system, first contact was made with the alien civilization known as the Centauri Republic in 2156, which gave humanity the means to achieve interstellar travel, but did not stem human aggression. The Earth Alliance later waged an opportunistic war in 2231 against the expansionist alien Dilgar Empire in order to establish a reputation, and gain influence in the galactic community.¹⁹ The Earth-Minbari War soon followed in 2245, when the Earth Alliance forces recklessly botched first contact with the mystical and vastly technologically superior Minbari Federation.²⁰ This led to a conflict that came close to exterminating humanity. One of the major story arcs of the series is unraveling the mystery of the unexplained surrender of the Minbari during the final battle of the war. The conflict led to the construction of the titular diplomatic space station, beckoning various alien civilizations to meet and solve disagreements peacefully.²¹ Still, the series continues to depict the Earth Alliance as far from perfect.

Babylon 5 frequently emphasizes the state of humanity and the standing of the Earth Alliance in galactic affairs as something far from perfect. The Earth Alliance ships are depicted as being large and clumsy in comparison to the other powers, also standing in

¹⁹ "Deathwalker," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

²⁰ During the first encounter between human and Minbari spaceships, the Minbari approached the human ships with gun ports open as a gesture of respect and strength. The humans interpreted this as indication of an impending attack and opened fire, severely crippling the Minbari flagship and killing their revered leader, Dukhat.

²¹ "The Gathering," *Babylon 5*, Warner Brothers Entertainment (DVD, 2004).

contrast to the sleek technical sophistication of *Star Trek's* Federation. The technological elements are not that far advanced, as ships rely on rotating components on the exterior of their ships to achieve internal gravity, and their weapon systems proved unable to target Minbari ships during the war. Regardless, Earth enjoys a great deal of respect due to their actions during the Dilgar Wars, even garnering admiration from some of the more prominent galactic powers like the Centauri Republic. Centauri Ambassador Londo Mollari (Peter Jurasik) elaborates on the relevance of Earth in the pilot episode of the series.

"Do you know why I am here? I'm here to grovel before your wonderful Earth Alliance, in hopes of attaching ourselves to your destiny, like... what are those fish called on your planet that attach themselves to sharks? ... Yes. You make very good sharks Mr. Garibaldi. We were pretty good sharks ourselves, once - but somehow, along the way, we forgot how to bite. There was a time, when this whole quadrant belonged to us! What are we now? Twelve worlds and a thousand monuments to past glories, living off memories, stories, selling trinkets. My god man, we've become a tourist attraction! See the great Centauri Republic, open 9 to 5, Earth time."²²

Mollari's statement is the first of many examples where *Babylon 5* uses historic motifs in its portrayal of humanity. Earth has had an aggressive stance in interstellar affairs up until the point of the series, and has enjoyed rapid recognition as one of the major (although less technologically advanced) powers. As such, Earth becomes a parallel to the United States as it was with the implementation of the Monroe Doctrine and its efforts during conflicts such as the Spanish-American War and World War I. The Centauri Republic - a former expansive power that has become a monument to itself - serves as an allusion to the old colonial empires, particularly the British Empire, in how it is attempting to ride on Earth's coattails in search of achieving prominence and greatness once again. Regardless of the hard-learned lesson of the Earth-Minbari War, humanity on *Babylon 5* is still flawed and still struggles to achieve the same sort of enlightenment and unity seen on *Star Trek*.

²² "The Gathering," *Babylon 5*, Warner Brothers Entertainment (DVD, 2004).

The concept of reaching that sort of *Star Trek*-esque utopia on *Babylon 5* is presented to the viewer as the "Third Age of Mankind." The term is first mentioned in the introductory title sequences of seasons 1 and 2, stating that it "was the dawn of the Third Age of Mankind" but it is not fully explained until season 4.²³ Halfway through season 4, the character of John Sheridan states that the banishment of the two ancient alien races known as Vorlons and Shadows races heralds the "Third Age." The major conflict of the series known as the "Shadow War" comes to a conclusion when humans (and other aliens) banish the Vorlons and Shadows to "beyond the rim."²⁴ It has been revealed through the course of the series that these two have controlled and interfered with the advancement of races such as humans over the course of the millennia. The concept of the "Third Age" is one where civilizations - especially humans - can progress naturally without interference, and stand on their own two feet to solve their own internal problems.²⁵ The season 4 finale, an episode titled "The Deconstruction of Falling Stars," shows segments from humanity's future in centuries, millennia and eventually a million years after the series' conclusion. In the different time periods portrayed in the episode, humans are still shown as struggling and experiencing severe setbacks in their progress over the years. The final segment of the episode shows a human finally being capable of assuming a form similar to the Vorlons, becoming a peaceful being of pure light and knowledge, thereby ascending to a higher plane of existence just before Earth's sun goes supernova and humans migrate to a new home.²⁶ Essentially, the viewer never sees anything akin to the societal perfection of *Star Trek*, but rather glimpses of a lengthy struggle to better mankind.

²³ "Points of Departure," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

²⁴ "Beyond the rim" is a term used frequently on *Babylon 5*, referring to the edge of the galaxy, but also being synonymous with a higher plane of existence similar to an afterlife where a species transcends the physical and rises to a higher level of existence.

²⁵ "Into the Fire," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

²⁶ "The Deconstruction of Falling Stars," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

The different kinds of struggle presented by *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* underline the contrast between the series. *Star Trek*, by and large, is about a perfected version of human society that is virtually devoid of internal strife. Humanity's underlying struggle and difficulty in the *Star Trek* series relates to preserving what they have achieved with a philosophy of altruism in the face of external threats. Past conflict provided humans with the means to travel through space and make contact with various aliens, providing a sort of "quick fix" for overcoming most prevalent problems that had previously plagued human civilization and society, such as poverty and war. The drama and commentary often comes in the form of exactly how humans tackle external threats that challenge their view or way of life. On the other hand, *Babylon 5* sets the stage for drama and social commentary by presenting a society that is advanced but by no means perfect or utopian. Past conflicts similarly provided the means to venture in the space, but there were no drastic shifts in attitudes and philosophy. Rather humans continued down an arguably destructive and self-centered path, utilizing advanced technology to engage in conflict on a broader scale than before. The struggle of humanity on *Babylon 5* is to eventually achieve enlightenment and a society devoid of societal issues through the slow progress of time, self-realization, and self-determination, rather than external guidance. *Star Trek's* presentation of the future is a more optimistic one, where utopia has already been achieved. The writers present a tranquil society, but it rarely demonstrates what it took to actually achieve this peaceful state. In a sense, the series fast forwards, giving us a presentation of what can be, not what must be done. In that sense, *Babylon 5* maintains a more grounded tone at its base, because it does depict more realistic form of drama with themes that viewers can find comparable to present day issues.

2.2 - Government Systems, Society, and Principles

All the series have a varied cast of characters at the center of the drama that brings the struggle to life for the viewer. It is through the characters that we see what life is like in this fictional universe and how they tackle the social issues portrayed. Regardless of the journey humanity has taken to reach the point it is at in the different series, both fictional universes employ a similar approach on how to present the characters and society around them. In all the series, the approach is basically that the main characters are considered to be the epitome of excellence within their government, shining examples of law-abiding and honorable individuals (with a few exceptions.) We see them regularly confronted with hard choices that challenge the morals and values of humanity, typically adhering to ingrained beliefs that are in line with the lofty standards of their society. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Babylon 5* both have regular or recurring characters that are civilians, such as bar owners, government representatives, diplomats and the like. Additionally there are also characters on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Voyager* who are civilians, though most of these are minor guest characters. However, all the series, due to their settings onboard ships or military installations, revolve chiefly around characters who are career military officers.

With the series largely centered of military life, an accurate measure or assessment of the government they represent can be difficult to obtain. One is forced to look at how the characters in the different series describe and view their governments, and to what sort of standards they hold their governments. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Babylon 5* are both centered on set locations, namely space stations, where the lead characters are not merely serving in the capacity of military commanding officers, but also in political roles to some extent. The commanding officer of Deep Space Nine also has the responsibility of serving as the Federation representative to the prospective member world Bajor, while the commanding officer of Babylon 5 is a military governor and the representative of the Earth Alliance in

interstellar diplomacy. These two series feature the biggest insight into the particular politics and government workings of both universes as the lead characters' dual roles onboard the titular installations sometimes comes in conflict, forcing them to make hard choices.

The viewer is largely given a glossed over image of how the human government functions within the universe of the series, as the characters adhere to ideals and service codes such as *Star Trek's* oft-referenced "Prime Directive" which serves as a moral compass for the characters when forced to make difficult or potentially compromising decisions. The Prime Directive is a philosophy of how humanity should conduct itself in the exploration of space, and sets limitations on their mandate as explorers.²⁷ The character Jean-Luc Picard describes it in one episode, underlining the esteem in which these principles are held: "The Prime Directive is not just a set of rules; it is a philosophy... and a very correct one."²⁸ The characters tend to view principles such as the Prime Directive in a manner that brings to mind the way the United States Constitution outlines civil liberties and serves as the foundation for American society and government. The moral obligations of Prime Directive is a central part of an episode where the Klingon Empire, a Federation ally, experiences difficulties during a leadership transition that leads to civil war. There is proof of the Romulan Empire's manipulation of the events, and Picard knows that a Romulan-Klingon Alliance will wipe out the Federation if the rebels succeed in ousting the Klingon leader. Still, humans do not budge on principles in favor of realpolitik, and Picard and the Federation refuse to intervene because it would violate the Prime Directive.²⁹

While these codes of conducts and philosophical guidelines are in place, the characters are sometimes confronted with hard choices when they find someone not acting in accordance with these principles. Essentially, the main characters are occasionally shown as better than

²⁷ "Caretaker," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

²⁸ "Symbiosis," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

²⁹ "Redemption I & II," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

the institutions they serve, unwilling to take shortcuts to achieve their objectives. This is exemplified numerous times in the course of *Star Trek: Voyager*, where the stranded crew undergoes the 70 year long journey across the galaxy, back to Earth. The crew is occasionally presented with a choice where they could break the Prime Directive to get home, but are unwilling to do so. The most prominent example is the two-part episode "Equinox" where the crew of Voyager encounters another Federation vessel, called the Equinox, stranded under similar circumstances. The Equinox has frequently violated the Prime Directive for the sake of their own survival, using an alien race as fuel in their engines in an effort to speed up their journey home. While the Equinox crew is shown to have done this in desperate circumstances, they are nevertheless portrayed as unlikeable and renegade-like, thereby not garnering any sympathy. Consequently, the Voyager peruses the Equinox, resulting in the destruction of the latter ship, and its surviving crew members are severely reprimanded by Voyager's commanding officer for their actions.³⁰ The core of the presentation is black and white where breach of the Prime Directive is wrong, and deviance must be punished.

In contrast, *Babylon 5* presents more complex predicaments where the code of service sometimes conflict with what is morally right. The situations arise when the main characters' fellow humans are willing to set aside the rules for the sake of political victories and gains. This is exemplified in the episode "The Fall of Night" where a surviving warship from the Narn Regime, which had recently capitulated to the Centauri Republic, arrives in Babylon 5's neutral space to make repairs with station commander John Sheridan's blessing. When the Centauri attack the Narn ship as well as the station, Sheridan returns fire to protect the station, resulting in the destruction of a Centauri warship. Consequently a representative from Earth, working to establish an alliance between the Earth Alliance and Centauri Republic, demands that Sheridan apologize to the Centauri government. Sheridan expresses disgust at the

³⁰ "Equinox I & II," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2005).

demand, feeling he was doing the morally right thing by adhering to the station's neutrality, stating "Apologize for doing my job, like hell."³¹ The human main characters continue to express irritation with their own government for turning a blind eye to Centauri aggression against neutral worlds, as well as for ignoring the Centauri Republic's violations of interstellar law.³²

What we see in the different series is that the characters adhere to lofty standards and principles, and antagonistic individuals are presented as morally ambiguous. Even their government and military institutions which the characters serve occasionally come into conflict with these ideals, much to the main characters' disgust. *Star Trek* tends to make the drama in the form of the main characters versus rogue elements in their midst, as the human government is portrayed as virtually flawless in its enlightened state. On the other hand, *Babylon 5* often has the characters in opposition to both antagonistic humans as well as corruption within their government. In both cases, the main characters tend to make the "right" choice, highlighting how they stick to certain founding principles that their government was founded on, even if other representatives of the same institutions do not adhere to them in the same way.

Both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* tackle moral issues pertaining to freedom and civil liberties in their own fashion, with the main characters making choices of importance when something or someone stands in opposition to the established principles. On *Babylon 5*, the Earth Alliance government experiences a coup staged by Vice President Clark which killed President Santiago at the end of the first season of the series. While the truth regarding Clark's machinations does not come to light until several seasons later, the main characters slowly become more disillusioned with Earth Alliance government. It gradually grows more

³¹ "The Fall of Night," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

³² Ibid.

autocratic and betrays its founding principles by quelling freedom of speech and internal opposition to the administration. Xenophobia is also exploited and encouraged by the new regime, leading to the creation of an anti-alien group known as the "Homeguard." The Clark Administration later founds the "Ministry of Truth" and the "Ministry of Peace," as well as the "Nightwatch" division (which absorbs the "Homeguard") which are shown as government institutions aimed at controlling the populace through propaganda and conducting under-the-table diplomacy with less-savory allies such as the Centauri Republic. In his frequent interactions online with the series' fan base, *Babylon 5* creator Joseph Michael Straczynski described the story elements when the episode first aired:

"It's easy -- safe and reassuring -- to dismiss Nightwatch and the whole political climate on Earth at this time as referring to Nazi germany...SS, Stormtroopers, informers...but if we know our history, it shows that this is not so isolated as we might think. If we say it was just the Nazis, then it's a non-repeatable phenomenon, we needn't worry about it again. But, of course, it does happen again...it did, and it will, to varying degrees."³³

Straczynski's comments on the story elements are true in that the issues being presented are not limited to being a reference to just the machinations of the Nazi regime. The concept of the informers, heightened propaganda efforts, and "us versus them" mentality can just as easily be seen as a parallel to other autocratic regimes in history such as the Soviet Union. Even McCarthyism in the United States during the 1950s fits into the same framework. As Straczynski says, it does happen again time and time again, "to varying degrees."³⁴ But the story arc contains so many blatantly obvious allusions to Nazi Germany, particularly in regards to the visual elements, that this particular reference is the one that is most identifiable to the viewer. Babylon 5's security personnel are gradually encouraged by

³³ Stephen Grimm, *The Lurker's Guide to Babylon 5*, 1998, <<http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/guide/053.html>> (10 September 2012).

³⁴ Ibid.

the government to enlist as Nightwatch volunteers, becoming something akin to Hitler's Gestapo and sporting a black armband with a yellow insignia, and are eventually coerced into becoming full members or risk losing their jobs. Nightwatch members are also forced to become snitches and whistleblowers, reporting activities that might be seen as in opposition to the Clark Administration, or as favoring aliens over humans.³⁵ Other visual clues, which can apply to both the Nazis and the Soviets or any number of historic governments, are the over-the-top propaganda posters plastered around Babylon 5 that are meant to instill loyalty. In the course of the story arc, the Earth Alliance begins to employ ruthless methods to keep rebellious colonies in line, such as blockades and brutal military assaults. This chain of events eventually forces the main characters of the series to declare Babylon 5 seceded Earth until Clark resigns, which is viewed as an open rebellion by the Earth Alliance government.³⁶

While *Star Trek* also portrays a significant arc with the Maquis rebellion against Earth's government, it was a much more cautious tale. The story has allusions to contemporary issues in our time, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it more obviously brings to mind historical issues such as the displacement of Native Americans. The Maquis are introduced on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as people living on Federation planets close to the Cardassian Empire's borders. Conflicts between the Cardassians and the Federation, as well as numerous wars and treaties, meant that these planets are meant to exchange hands to secure the peace. It starts carefully with one episode where Jean-Luc Picard is dispatched to arrange the relocation of Native American colonists on one of the affected worlds. While he is in a moral bind and does not want to forcefully remove the colonists, the episode seems to take the easy way out, as Picard does not have to make any difficult decision when the people on the planet choose to become Cardassian citizens.³⁷ The story of the planetary disputes

³⁵ "Point of No Return," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

³⁶ "Severed Dreams," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

³⁷ "Journey's End," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

extends into *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* where situation takes a turn for the worse. Some of the Federation citizens who live on these worlds take the name "Maquis," begin to resist the land transfers, and revolt against both the Federation and the Cardassians.³⁸

The arc spans several seasons of both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, but it ends up not having a real impact due to the shift in focus and the anticlimactic ending. The moral issues surrounding the land transfers are raised in several episodes at the onset of the story, but the conflict is gradually depicted as more black and white with the Federation as the good and the Maquis as the bad. The conflict was personified by Starfleet officers - normally portrayed as obedient and loyal - who defect to the rebels in opposition of the Federation. Maquis leader Michael Eddington (Kenneth Marshall) had been a recurring character on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* as a security officer up until his defection, and Captain Benjamin Sisko's (Avery Brooks) quest to hunt him down becomes the central element in the story.³⁹ Eddington is eventually found, but dies shortly thereafter in an attack by forces allied with the Cardassians, effectively ending the Maquis arc.⁴⁰ No further mention is made of the rebellion and the story comes to a forced ending, as it is later mentioned on *Star Trek: Voyager* that the Dominion (a galactic power at war with the Federation) wiped out all the Maquis.⁴¹

With the abrupt end of Maquis story arcs, *Star Trek* took the easy way out of a complex issue that was both morally conflicting and intriguing. It began bravely with the Federation essentially making concessions to a hostile power for the sake of peace, something that had not been seen in *Star Trek* before. The origins of the conflict also brought to mind the historic "peace for our time" speech by British Prime Minister Chamberlain (made on the eve

³⁸ "The Maquis I & II," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

³⁹ "For the Uniform," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁴⁰ "Blaze of Glory," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁴¹ "Hunters," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

of Nazi Germany's annexation of Sudetenland,) while also raising many moral questions about the Federation's dubious actions at the expense of its own citizens.⁴² The viewer is left to wonder how this will be satisfyingly resolved, and whether the Federation will step in to do the right thing. But no satisfying closure was provided by shifting focus to the personal issues between the Maquis and Federation leadership figures. The story would undoubtedly have been more compelling if the wrong had been properly rectified by those responsible, but it seems like all responsibility was swept under the carpet by having the Federation's fiercest adversary wipe out the entire problem in a casual reference.

2.3 - The Lower Tiers of Society or Lack Thereof

One of the contrasts between the two franchises and their presentation of futuristic society is the portrayal of the lower tiers of the social hierarchy and poverty. The Maquis story arc was one of the few instances where *Star Trek* depicted the lower social classes of society, as the series were more comfortable on safer ground where it depicted the Federation as having no dissidents or downtrodden citizens. Poverty is occasionally mentioned as having been eradicated when humanity reached enlightenment and did away with archaic economics. Jean-Luc Picard explains that "The economics of the future is somewhat different. You see, money doesn't exist in the 24th century. The acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. We work to better ourselves and the rest of humanity."⁴³ It should be noted that Earth does have some form of currency used for trade with other civilizations. There are also characters with occupations that one would consider commercial, such as Joseph Sisko who runs a restaurant on Earth and people employed in traditional businesses, though there is

⁴² Neville Chamberlain, "Peace in our Time," *World Civilizations*, February 1997, <<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/workbook/ralprs36.htm>> (28 August 2012).

⁴³ *Star Trek: First Contact*, prod. Rick Berman, 106 minutes, Paramount Pictures, 2000, DVD.

no elaboration on whether these people receive wages or if these locales are profit-driven or not.⁴⁴ Consequently, life in the Federation is depicted as happy, with references to it being a paradise, and everyone's needs seem to be provided for by the Federation, but there are a few exceptions. Apart from the Maquis worlds, a rare exception to the norm would be the depiction of Turkana IV, the home world of Starfleet officer Tasha Yar (Denise Crosby.) The planet was a member of the Federation, but seceded due to issues in the local government. Consequently the planet turned into a lawless war zone with various factions vying for power, and there are references to so called rape gangs violating local women.⁴⁵ With Turkana IV, Star Trek paints the picture that the Federation and its principles are instrumental to upholding the utopia, or otherwise society will plunge into savagery and anarchy.

Babylon 5 frequently portrayed poverty as a widespread and common in the Earth Alliance, and featured the downtrodden in the form of the "lurkers." In the series, the lurkers are depicted as predominantly human beings onboard the Babylon 5 space station who are down on their luck and homeless, residing in the more down-trodden and dangerous areas onboard the station known as "Down-below." The station's second in command, Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian,) describes the lurkers as unfortunates who came to Babylon 5 in search of a new and better life, finding no such luck, and consequently becoming stranded onboard with no means to return to the Earth Alliance's planets. A few episodes make the point that life among the lurkers can be a dangerous one, living in corridors and open areas where criminal elements gain a foothold by exploiting those who reside there.⁴⁶ One particular episode, "The Illusion of Truth," is made in the form of a documentary presented by biased journalists and reporters visiting the station. Functioning as a bullhorn for the increasingly autocratic Earth government, the news crew insists that such poverty does not

⁴⁴ "Homefront," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁴⁵ "The Naked Now," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

⁴⁶ "Grail," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

exist within the Earth Alliance, glossing over the fact that lurkers have been present ever since the station became operational, and blaming aliens for the misfortune of human lurkers residing onboard Babylon 5.⁴⁷ The Earth Alliance government wants to portray itself as something akin to *Star Trek's* Federation, but it is nowhere near it. This underlines the contrast between the series in terms of *Babylon 5's* struggle to achieve utopia, versus *Star Trek's* preservation of utopia.

The lack of utopia on *Babylon 5* is further underlined by the portrayal of Earth's colonies on distant worlds, which are shown to be far from perfect. Whereas *Star Trek's* Federation was shown to be vast and expansive while still maintaining social harmony and peace, the Earth Alliance colonies are depicted as downtrodden and rather unpleasant places. While Earth has managed to colonize far-flung worlds, as well as relatively close celestial bodies like Mars and the moons of Jupiter, the populations in these locales are at the lower end of human society's ladder. While living in air domes because Earth lacks the technical sophistication to provide better living standards, the populations are subjected to high taxes and living costs, while various food stuffs such as fresh produce and meat are considered to be a luxury. Efforts on the part of the colonists to achieve equal standing with the citizens of Earth serve as a parallel to the Thirteen Colonies and their message to the British Parliament stating "no taxation without representation."⁴⁸ As Earth refuses to grant the colonies full representation, riots and rebellions break out, which the Earth Alliance attempts to stop with blockades and military might. This triggers *Babylon 5's* secession from Earth in the third season of series and lasts until the end of the fourth season when President Clark's autocratic

⁴⁷ "The Illusion of Truth," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

⁴⁸ "No Taxation Without Representation," UK Parliament, unknown publishing, <<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/archives-highlights/archives-stamp-act/>> (15 August 2012).

regime is ousted. Consequently, the various colonies receive new status of equal standing to Earth, and Babylon 5 rejoins the Earth Alliance.⁴⁹

2.4 - Discrimination and Racism

"Intolerance in the 23rd century? Improbable! If man survives that long, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures." - *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry.⁵⁰

The issues of racism and discrimination are raised in all the series, though it is largely confronted and highlighted through the use of parallels. That is to say, the issue of racism between various human ethnic groups is not presented as an existing issue in either universe with two notable exceptions: the so called eugenics in *Star Trek* and telepaths in *Babylon 5*. All the series have a cast of characters with diverse ethnicity, including white, black, and Asian, as well as varied national background, though with no racial conflicts between them. Additionally, there is no discernible discrimination toward, for example, the handicapped character Geordi La Forge on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, despite his character being blind. Through technological advancements he can see by using a special visor, establishing him as a capable and useful member of the crew. However, the human characters are themselves sometimes portrayed with racist attitudes toward aliens on some level, or as being guilty of a great deal of ignorance, intolerance or insensitivity towards aliens and their customs. One example of the latter would be the character, Doctor Julian Bashir, on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, referring to the titular space station and the Bajoran star system as

⁴⁹ "Rising Star," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

⁵⁰ Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 34.

"wilderness," where he can practice "real frontier medicine," thereby offending a Bajoran.⁵¹

Mainly though, for the sake of highlighting racism, the human characters occasionally encounter alien civilizations where racism exists as an issue, and shows us how the futuristic humans deal with these problematic issues in an enlightened manner. This is one of many examples of where the writers take a prevalent contemporary issue and employ alien characters and civilizations as parallels for the sake of making a point.

In several instances the humans in the different series exhibit racist attitudes towards various aliens, either out of ignorance or hatred. One notable example of this is on *Star Trek* where one of the Federation's adversaries is the Cardassian Union, an autocratic and xenophobic civilization led by a reptilian alien race. With an historical war between the Federation and the Cardassian Empire, continuing border disputes, as well as finding themselves on opposing sides in the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* conflict known as the Dominion War, the Cardassians are portrayed in all series of the Star Trek franchise as a deceptive and untrustworthy race of beings. Human characters, occasionally and casually, employ racial slurs when speaking of the Cardassians, calling them "Cardies," and sometimes "spoon heads," referring to their physical characteristics.⁵²

The racism presented on *Babylon 5* is based on genuine hatred and is also presented in the form of humans mocking physical characteristics or engaging in violent acts. While the main characters are shown as more tolerant and understanding of the Minbari race, who came close to exterminating humanity in the Earth-Minbari War, those humans who have not had regular interactions with aliens are portrayed in a much less sympathetic light. For example the members of the "Homeguard" organization carry out deadly terrorist attacks on aliens, particularly the Minbari, in order to protect Earth's interests. The human characters will

⁵¹ "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁵² "Empok Nor," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

occasionally make use of racist slurs when speaking of the Minbari. The character of Susan Ivanova, when discussing a potentially dangerous strategy for defeating an enemy force, mentions the "Bonehead Maneuver" from the Earth-Minbari war, which is in reference to the Minbari, whose physical characteristics include a bald head and a protruding bone-line ridge around the back of their skulls.⁵³ References to and mockery of the Minbari and their head bone are frequent throughout *Babylon 5*, for example in one episode where several Minbari characters are held hostage by human veterans of the Earth-Minbari War, who proceed to sing a variation of the song "Dem Bones" in a mocking manner.⁵⁴

These examples emphasize that, regardless of the futuristic society presented, conflict and animosity between peoples goes hand in hand with a rejection of what is different at a base level. As one of the characters harboring animosity towards the Cardassians, Miles O'Brien, a character of both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, is a veteran of one of the wars between the Federation and the Cardassians. Confronted with his dislike by one Cardassian character in the episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* where the Cardassians were first introduced, he states "It's not you I hate, Cardassian. I hate what I became because of you." By that he is referring to the actions he had to take during the war, such as killing enemy combatants.⁵⁵ However, he is still shown spouting slurs in reference to Cardassians throughout *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, perhaps motivated by the onset of a new conflict with them. What we see in the different series is that most of the characters displaying these racist attitudes are soldiers and veterans of wars past. Having endured loss and grief at the hands of the alien enemies, they have a specific reasoning for their dislike.

⁵³ "Matters of Honor," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

⁵⁴ "Ceremonies of Light and Dark," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

⁵⁵ "The Wounded," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

These characters latch on to the differences between themselves and their enemies and exude their hatred by mocking or poking fun at physical appearance or mannerisms. While those characters on these series that exhibit such qualities are often portrayed as ignorant and uninformed, Miles O'Brien may be an exception to the rule. O'Brien is otherwise portrayed as a down-to-earth and mild-mannered man, and his behavior can be seen as similar, for example, to the historical usage of the terms "kraut" or "gook" by American soldiers. What his slurs and use of terms like "spoonheads" serves to underline is that the humans in these series are still prone to react to negatively to antagonists, regardless of society's advances, and that even the best of us can still display this reaction through basic racist behavior.

Both *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* raised the issue of discrimination towards certain kinds of humans in the portrayal of humans with special powers and abilities. Even the typically tolerant and exemplary main characters are shown to harbor distrust, fear, or even hate of certain groups of people in their midst. On *Star Trek*, this sort of discrimination was directed at Julian Bashir (Alexander Siddig) and others like him, as they were genetically modified to be superior to the average human being, a practice that was looked down upon by the Federation. Genetic modification was typically done to "fix" those who suffered from mental handicaps from birth. In most cases, the consequences of such tampering would lead to the individuals developing eccentric behavior and introvert personalities while becoming geniuses at the same time. As such, the so-called "eugenics" seems almost like a commentary on people suffering from autism and Aspergers syndrome, as those depicted are shown as brilliant but socially awkward individuals. Bashir explains that he was fortunate not to end up as a social outcast, and accomplished this by hiding his superior abilities, as he would otherwise have been banned from practicing medicine and serving in Starfleet.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ "Doctor Bashir, I Presume," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

Babylon 5 goes a somewhat different direction, presenting individuals with telepathic abilities as a sort of feared next step in human evolution, but the story has many of the same elements as the issue of the "eugenics." Telepaths are depicted as having special abilities ranging from the subtle ability to sense emotions, to being able to read thoughts, and also in some cases manipulate objects through telekinetic prowess. Fearing that telepaths may gain too much power through their abilities, their standing in human society is severely limited, and they are given few options in how to live their lives; they can take drugs that suppress their abilities but also lead to depression and in many cases suicide; they can voluntarily go to prison; or they can join the Psi Corps organization that moderates the activities of telepaths. The latter option is chosen by most, being forced to wear uniforms and marks that identify them as members of the organization, and they also live their lives in large part segregated from the rest of the human population.⁵⁷

As a result of the telepathic abilities that might invade the privacy of people, normal individuals on the series are often shown as skeptical or downright hostile towards telepaths. Consequently, telepaths come to regard themselves as the next step in evolution and also superior to normal human beings that are referred to as "mundanes." Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian) and Michael Garibaldi (Jerry Doyle) are portrayed as very hostile towards telepaths, breaking the norm of tolerance among the main cast of characters. However, since the Psi Corps is presented as an Orwellian and ominous organization, their concerns are implied as being justified. In the progression of the story, "rogue" telepaths on the run from the Psi Corps eventually come to Babylon 5 as they search for a new home. As is typical of *Babylon 5*, the situation is presented as problematic, with no black and white portrayal, and the rogue telepaths invoke sympathy and dislike at same time. The entire group is depicted as

⁵⁷ "The Corps is Mother, the Corps is Father," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

sort of hippie civil rights movement, with the telepaths wearing their hair long and their clothes lax, and they sit around singing songs promoting peace and love. However, when no government is willing to provide a planet for them to settle on, they turn to terrorism activities. By the end of the series, no resolution is put forth to the so called "telepath problem," and it is implied that the sort of social injustices faced by the telepaths will lead to more expansive terrorism and even war in the future.⁵⁸

In some instances the series also focus on social injustices of more recent times - such as racism, inequality, and segregation - which resonates well with the viewer. The most prominent example out of all the four series is the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Far Beyond the Stars" which depicts life in the United States during the 1950s and the struggle of an African American character. Ira Behr, executive producer of the series, reflected on the episode's tackling of social issues of that era, stating: "... it's one thing to deal with issues in a genteel way, but every now and then you just want to remind people."⁵⁹ The episode depicts the lead character Benjamin Sisko - portrayed by African-American actor Avery Brooks who also directed the episode - experiencing visions of himself as Benjamin Russell, a writer working for a pulp fiction magazine publishing science fiction stories in the 1950s. Most of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's* cast appears as other characters in the same setting, many of whom are without prosthetic makeup for the first time in the course of the series. Inspired by an image of a space station drawn by the magazine's artist, Russell concocts the story of "Deep Space Nine" with Benjamin Sisko as its black commanding officer, an idea that intimidates the publishers of the magazine and is laughed at by his fellow African Americans. Some scenes also depict Russell envisioning himself in the form of Sisko, sporting a Starfleet uniform. The focus of the episode is Russell's ultimately fruitless struggle to get the story

⁵⁸ "Phoenix Rising," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

⁵⁹ "Mission Inquiry: Far Beyond The Stars," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

published, and also depicts the character's daily life in New York among his African American friends and also his predominately white colleagues. While the episode also depicts McCarthyism and sexism, racism and discrimination is the prime focus, exemplified by Russell's harassment and violent beating at the hands of two white police officers.⁶⁰ Regarding the relevance of the episode, actor Armin Shimerman who usually portrays the character Quark, but plays Russell's co-worker Herbert Rossoff in this episode, stated:

"Star Trek at its best, deals with social issues, and though you could say, 'Well, that was prejudice in the fifties,' the truth of the matter is, here we are in the twenty-first century, and it's still there, and that's what we have to be reminded by, and that's what that episode does terrifically well."⁶¹

The quote by Shimerman's is made especially poignant by the episode's somewhat unique status in the *Star Trek* franchise as story that is both within and outside the continuity of the series in the traditional sense. Typically when Star Trek depicts historical times with the main characters in the middle of the events, travel to alternate universes or time travel is used as the vessel for placing them there and experiencing the unfolding of history. "Far Beyond the Stars," however, does not utilize this method in any sense, though Sisko is depicted as having visions related to being Russell, thereby making it a side story about human history, with the regular cast of actors playing different roles. The episode also implies on many levels that the entire *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* series is the work of Russell's imagination, further underlined by the episode "Shadows and Symbols" where the plotline cuts to scenes of Russell continuing to write his story to keep the events of the episode going, albeit as a vision experienced by Sisko.⁶² "Far Beyond the Stars" really pushed the boundaries of how *Star Trek* portrayed racism, even utilizing the "n-word" in dialogue when referencing

⁶⁰ "Far Beyond the Stars," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁶¹ "Mission Inquiry: Far Beyond The Stars," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁶² "Shadows and Symbols," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

African Americans. As such, the episode stands out one of the most prominent examples of *Star Trek* providing social commentary and highlighting the injustices in society.

2.5 - Chapter Conclusion

Building on the differences in tone presented in chapter 1, *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* showcased their differences with how they chose to portray humanity and society in the future. *Star Trek* showed an enlightened humanity that had risen above societal problems as a consequence of war and alien contact, achieving a perfect utopia. On the other hand, *Babylon 5* had a flawed humanity venturing into space with the same mindset intact, regardless of past conflicts, perpetuating a society that was fraught with discord. However, in neither instance does the viewer gain much insight into the overall structure of the government organizations, owing to the setting of the series that feature a military setting. A commonality between the series ultimately lies in how the characters themselves are being presented. In both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*, the characters are shown adhering to firm sets of law and morality, unwilling to budge on principle when faced with opposition. The series were also able to show the role of racism as still occurring in human society, though in less obvious forms and typically directed at aliens. Due to the utopian nature of the Federation, *Star Trek* somewhat unrealistically had a near-absence of suffering in human society, failing to see stories regarding the few instances of dissent through to the end, and falling short of providing any moral to the story. *Babylon 5* raised numerous predicaments with the secession of Earth's colonies and various societal issues like the struggle for equal rights, while also featuring obvious historic allusions and interweaving them across several years of story arcs.

And the role and prominence of story arcs is a key to understanding the differences between *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek*. As the creators of *Babylon 5* thought ahead with a five year plan, they were able to present choices and decisions, as well as the consequences of these

decisions, over a span of time that was not limited to just one or a few episodes. This makes for a more compelling and realistic form of storytelling. *Babylon 5's* strength lies in its ability to show the progress of humanity gradually while also focusing on the larger picture. With the premise being a human society that is not perfect, nor static, it can actually portray the struggle towards bettering humanity. As *Star Trek* was largely limited to the episodic format, the viewer is largely presented with one-time stories in one-time settings, featuring one-time guest characters interacting with the main cast. As human society is portrayed as relatively perfect, the episodes are largely limited to showing the characters preserving what they have. This makes the series seem shallow as there is not much room for growth. The next few chapters will show that episodic predicaments are suitable for some of the issues raised, but *Star Trek* definitely would have benefited from more coherent story lines with lasting implications when dealing with overarching themes of government and society.

Chapter 3 - Religion and Beliefs in Futuristic Society

"... religion is completely gone. Not a single human being on Earth believes in any of the nonsense that has plagued our civilization for thousands of years. This was an important part of Roddenberry's mythology." - Brannon Braga, writer on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, speaking at the International Atheist Conference.⁶³

When considering these four series that are so heavily infused with scientific elements that more often than not provide logical and technical solutions to virtually every conceivable problem, it can be hard to imagine that religion and spiritual beliefs have a place in the portrayals of these futuristic societies. One might think that spiritual guidance and religious scripture has yielded to "techno-babble."⁶⁴ However, over the course of all the series, religion, beliefs, and ethics were all elements interwoven into the plots and storylines in many interesting ways. What was ultimately different was the portrayal of religion in the two franchises. Whereas *Star Trek* largely utilized religion as something that was practically foreign to humans at that point in time and brought up in largely limited circumstances, *Babylon 5* made it one of the cornerstones of the series' plot and storyline to a large extent. This chapter will explore these different takes on religious elements and characters, and how they compare and contrast. It will also examine to what extent religion played a role in bringing authenticity to the portrayal of human society in the future, and in what manner it provided societal commentary of contemporary issues.

⁶³ "Every religion has a mythology," *International Atheist Conference in Reykjavik Iceland, 2006*, <<http://sidmennt.is/2006/08/16/every-religion-has-a-mythology/>> (20 Jul 2012).

⁶⁴ Humorous term used to describe *Star Trek* characters' ability to utilize and reconfigure equipment to overcome any obstacle.

3.1 - Religion in Society and Civilization

Whether religion will exist hundreds of years from now, in the timeframe that these series takes place, is of course pure speculation. *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* offer such starkly contrasting depictions of the subject that it becomes worth exploring, and to examine in what manner the creators chose to showcase religion as affecting behavior and the lives of the characters. In the case of *Star Trek*, there was no organized religion depicted in the series, and humanity is presumed to be largely atheistic, although humans have regular contact with religious aliens. The issues of religion and beliefs are rarely portrayed as something negative when it comes to individual faith, though misguided religious beliefs and dangerous religious doctrines are sometimes shown as complex problems with few solutions. While the different series occasionally attempt to unravel the mysteries of such beliefs by providing scientific explanations, it is nevertheless shown as something complex that has deep meaning to the characters, whether they are human or alien.

While there was limited mention of human religion on *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5* presents human religions very early in the series. In the season 1 episode "Parliament of Dreams," Earth is asked to showcase its dominant belief system to the alien ambassadors. Consequently, Commander Jeffrey Sinclair (Michael O'Hare) invites dozens of individuals to the station who he presents in turn to the ambassadors. The individuals in attendance represent Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Atheism and so forth.⁶⁵ Several episodes and subplots of the series show different aspects of religion and religious organizations. An order of monks, led by Brother Theo (Louis Turenne,) moves onboard the station and they show how service in their order is sometimes used to redeem and give new purpose to former convicts.⁶⁶ There is also a religious convention onboard the station where a monk, a minister,

⁶⁵ "Parliament of Dreams," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

⁶⁶ "Passing Through Gethsemane," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

an imam, and a rabbi are in attendance. A congregation of people from all faiths, including the main cast of characters, participates in a sermon side by side in a chapel onboard the station where they sing along to gospel music and dance. The sequence intercuts with scenes of a Centauri war criminal receiving a lynching by his victims as the gospel song goes "... you know the sinners gonna be runnin' ... you know they forgot about Jesus ... ," humorously hinting that he is receiving punishment for his sins.⁶⁷ These episodes showed that *Babylon 5* was not afraid to show a futuristic human society where religion has persisted in spite of scientific advances, and even included religious themes as part of the moral in the stories told.

Both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* tend to depict organized religion with much greater frequency and prominence than they do human religions, and it allows them to showcase the importance faith can have in society. What we see with these portrayals is that the beliefs are often parallels that seem to superficially mirror certain cultural traits that define a certain race, and also tie in strongly to the mentality of the people. The Centauri civilization on *Babylon 5* is often shown as a society that does everything to excess, with extravagance and a focus on satisfying ones pleasures and lusts. As a parallel to some of Earth's more ancient civilizations, such as the Roman Empire, the Centauri have a vast pantheon of gods and also tend to elevate their rules to godhood postmortem. However, despite conducting elaborate ceremonies in their gods' honor, the rituals are largely oriented around mortal indulgences such as drinking to excess, reflecting the Centauri's selfish nature. Some Centauri also admit that they do not truly believe in the gods, but adhere to traditions out of nostalgic reasons as they represent the "glory days" of their civilization.⁶⁸

The Ferengi society on *Star Trek* is similar to the Centauri in that their religion is presented somewhat superficially and serves largely as a humorous reflection of their society.

⁶⁷ "And The Rock Cried Out, No Hiding Place," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

⁶⁸ "Parliament of Dreams," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

How the Ferengi culture and religion are presented seems to function as a parallel to capitalism and consumerism where happiness is bought. They adhere to a religion entirely oriented around the accumulation of wealth, reflecting their greedy, money-driven mentality.⁶⁹ As a consequence of revolutionary societal reforms, many Ferengi eventually come to believe that it is no longer possible to buy their way in to the "Divine Treasury" (Ferengi Heaven.)⁷⁰ However, unlike the Centauri and their religious beliefs, the Ferengi take their religion very seriously. While these two examples of portrayals of organized religion were brief, the series went more in depth when depicting how religion could be a central element in a society of civilization, and how it could be ruthlessly exploited by those with ominous motives.

3.2 - Religion of Power, and the Power of Religion

Both *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* make the point that religion can be exploited by those with power to facilitate their control over a group or a people. They also demonstrate how religion can also be tailored and constructed with the specific purpose of exercising such control efficiently, essentially deceiving a populace. Both series can be seen as directing criticism towards the institutions of organized religion in this manner, but *Star Trek* presented humans as virtually immune to this sort of "nonsense."⁷¹ This contrast seems to relate back to the type of human society the creators of the series sought to present to the viewers. *Babylon 5* did not shy away from including human characters among those who might be susceptible to religious manipulation, in part because religion was still very much a part of the lives of humans. In the case of *Star Trek*, there was a complete absence of religion in human society,

⁶⁹ "Body Parts," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁷⁰ "Dogs of War," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁷¹ "Every religion has a mythology," *International Atheist Conference in Reykjavik Iceland*, 2006, <<http://sidmennt.is/2006/08/16/every-religion-has-a-mythology/>> (20 Jul 2012).

thanks to the scientific enlightenments experienced after first contact with aliens. Instead the *Star Trek* series brought up control through religion in story arcs relating to alien civilizations and the beliefs of aliens.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine featured an example of religion constructed for the sake of control with the alien race known as the Founders. They are an antagonist race of shape shifters from who are distrusting of all races confined to a single form. To counter oppression from the "solid" races, the Founders established the Dominion in the Gamma Quadrant of the galaxy and conquered all who stood in their way. As part of the establishment of their empire, they perfected genetic engineering and turned a race of rodents into their obedient humanoid servants known as the Vorta.⁷² They also bred a warrior race known as the Jem'Hadar to use as their military force against all who opposed the Dominion. In order to instill control among the Dominion populace, the Founders engineered many levels of control and a hierarchy to effectively subjugate their followers. The most efficient method of control exercised was indoctrinating the Vorta and Jem'Hadar with the belief that the Founders are gods, and the two races are seen adhering to this belief throughout the course of the series. The Vorta Weyoun and his atheist Cardassian ally Damar have the following exchange during a discussion on religion:

Weyoun: "Pah-wraiths, prophets. All this talk of gods strikes me as nothing more than superstitious nonsense."

Damar: [smugly] "You believe that the Founders are gods, don't you?"

Weyoun: "That's different."

Damar: [chuckles mockingly] "In what way?"

Weyoun: [seriously and threateningly] "The Founders are gods."⁷³

Damar: [reluctantly nods and yields, not wanting to test Weyoun's patience]

Weyoun personifies the Dominion and role of the beliefs in their society, particularly the hold the faith has on the Vorta and Jem'Hadar. The exchange between Weyoun and Damar

⁷² "Treachery, Faith and the Great River," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁷³ "Tears of the Prophets," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

effectively demonstrates the power of religion, and how a believer will not be easily deterred. Weyoun's faith in the Founders' divinity is firmly ingrained in his way of thinking to the point where he cannot see the hypocrisy of his own words as he criticizes the beliefs of others as superstition. In one particular instance he makes mention of his poor eyesight and it is pointed out that the Founders "made a mistake" when designing him, to which he exclaims "Gods don't make mistakes!"⁷⁴ Weyoun is typically portrayed as a diplomatic and jovial character, but his loyalty in the Founder means he disregards morals for the sake of faith as a conscious choice. His faith leads him to commit terrible acts in their name and at their command, such as ordering the execution of innocent individuals and also committing genocidal purges.⁷⁵ His story and eventual downfall, as he dies protecting a Founder, demonstrates the lengths a person is willing to go to for the sake of one's beliefs.

Star Trek criticizes organized religion and also demonstrates how it can be an effective means of control for those in power, particularly in diminishing personal freedoms for an individual to the point where they care for nothing but their faith. The element of belief among the Vorta and Jem'Hadar is meant to create a sharp contrast between the Dominion and human society. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* presents the Dominion as the polar opposite of the Federation in terms of principles upon which the society is built. The United Federation of Planets is shown as a collective of humans and many alien races that came together in peace and are devoted to peaceful exploration of the galaxy. In contrast, the Dominion is also made up of many different races, but devoted to brutal conquest and subjugation of others and opposed to individual freedom. When the Dominion is defeated, the human characters take no pleasure in their victory due to the amount of lives that were lost in the conflict, whereas the Founders and their servants are shown to have no such regard for life.⁷⁶ The members of the

⁷⁴ "Favor the Bold," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁷⁵ "Tacking in the Wind," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁷⁶ "What You Leave Behind," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

Federation are shown to have made a conscious choice in adhering to the Federation's principles and would lay down their lives to protect the freedoms they enjoy. In contrast, the Dominion utilizes indoctrination of religion to exercise its control over its people, and the populace goes to their deaths based on that faith.

Babylon 5 also depicted the exploitation of religion, and - similar to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* - showed how it was used as a means to controlling people in wars of ideology. The central story arc of the series is a war between two ancient alien civilizations known as the Vorlons and the Shadows. The two races used to dominate the galaxy millions of years ago but have since retreated into seclusion, emerging only every thousand years to confront one another. The reasons for their struggle are not known to the "younger races" such as the humans, Minbari, and the Centauri, but they are inadvertently drawn into the conflict as the series progresses.⁷⁷ As the main characters are introduced to the Vorlons and the Shadows, the conflict is presented as a classic tale of good versus evil, or light versus dark, with certain religious motifs. The Shadows are depicted as arachnid creatures that thrive on conflict and warfare, drawing people and civilizations to their banner with promises of power and glory, while the Vorlons are shown as peaceful and wise beings offering peaceful guidance and insight. The "younger races" eventually begin to fight on one another in what are essentially proxy wars of the Vorlon-Shadow conflict, fighting a battle of ideologies while not fully realizing that they are being manipulated by the two "older races." The Shadows profess to an ideology of "survival of the fittest," believing that the "younger races" will only gain enlightenment through carnage and bloodshed, while the Vorlons are convinced that order and enlightenment will come to humans and others alike through obedience, subservience and order.

⁷⁷ The Vorlons and Shadows are often referred to as the "older races" or "ancients" as they have been exploring space for such a long time. To contrast this, humans, Minbari, Centauri and others are referred to as "younger races" because they are relatively new when it comes to space travel, and do not have a comprehensive understanding of the universe.

As the story progresses the religious elements of the war become more apparent when the Vorlons are revealed to have used faith as a means of control. By genetically engineering many of the "younger races" to see the Vorlons as gods, they have manipulated humans and others in order to instill a certain level of natural obedience and subservience. The Vorlons have kept this secret by not revealing their true form, always staying inside a so-called "encounter suit" that hides their appearance. But in the episode "The Fall of Night," the Vorlon ambassador Kosh Naranek flies out of his suit to save John Sheridan from falling to his death. Kosh appears to all those who observe the event as something akin to an angel, with flowing white robes, massive flapping wings, and an aura of light around him. However, every person saw Kosh's facial features as being those of their race, thereby assuming that it is one of their deities. It is later revealed that the angelic appearance is not actually what the Vorlons look like, but that every "younger race" has been genetically programmed to perceive the Vorlons as one of their race for the sake of instilling trust and automatic obedience.⁷⁸ Sheridan confronts the Vorlon saying "I know what you think you are, what you want us to believe," to which Kosh responds angrily and chides Sheridan saying "Impudent! ... Disobedient!"⁷⁹ When speaking of the Vorlons, *Babylon 5* creator Straczynski commented "It has not been stated anywhere that the Vorlons created the angel element; they could easily just have come in and tried to exploit it."⁸⁰ This means that it is not clear if Vorlons were the architects behind the basis of many of Earth's religions, or whether they merely exploited the existing religious beliefs to win the confidence of humans. However, it is clear that the Vorlons saw religion as an effective way to manipulate the "younger races" to use them as pawns in their wars.

⁷⁸ "The Fall of Night," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

⁷⁹ "Interludes and Examinations," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

⁸⁰ Stephen Grimm, *The Lurker's Guide to Babylon 5*, 1998, <<http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/guide/044.html>> (10 September 2012).

By "defrocking" the Vorlons, *Babylon 5* becomes comparable *Star Trek*, which had the tendency to provide a natural and scientific explanation for what might otherwise be perceived as supernatural and divine. The stories of the Vorlons of *Babylon 5* and the Founders of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* share many similarities in how they depict religious beliefs as being the result of genetic tampering and indoctrination. The series show how these religions are effectively constructs, and a method of control employed by those with power. However, *Babylon 5* seemed to tread more lightly when it came to religion and the story of the Vorlons was the only instance of the creators trying to explain the basis of belief to any great extent. The series does not portray the Vorlon indoctrination as something that cannot be overcome; as the "younger races" do eventually cast off the shackles that the Vorlon and Shadow philosophies have placed on them, and humans go on to achieve enlightenment on their own. *Babylon 5* presented beliefs as something that would persist in society, but it also opened up to the possibility that people could move beyond it by their own accord. *Star Trek*, on the other hand, seems to go the other way. The series paints a very black and white picture in the story arc, with noble, atheistic humans overcoming the threat of fanatical, religious aliens. There was never any indication that the religious basis of the Dominion could be shaken or defeated, despite the nature of the beliefs being explained and elaborated on. The Founders' disciples are portrayed as quite fanatical to the very end, and no indication is given as to whether the foundation of the Dominion's hierarchy will eventually dissipate.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine showed humans as unique with their atheistic and scientific approach to life, but not all beliefs were depicted as negatively as those of the Dominion. The Bajoran people are a major part of the story of the series as the station Deep Space Nine is meant as a Federation outpost as the planet Bajor prepares to join the Federation after decades of Cardassian occupation. Bajoran society is shown as adherently religious, devoted to worshipping the Prophets who inhabit the "Celestial Temple." The

Celestial Temple, however, is revealed to the characters to be a wormhole that connects the Alpha and Gamma Quadrants of the galaxy, and the Prophets are beings who reside inside the wormhole, appearing to Sisko in the form of cryptic visions.⁸¹ Owing to their atheistic nature, the human characters tend to refer to the Prophets as the "wormhole aliens" while the Bajorans continue their worship and also hail Sisko as the "Emissary to the Prophets" due to his interactions with the "gods." In the course of the series, Sisko is shown as balancing his duties as a Starfleet officer with the obligations of being the Emissary, gradually putting more and more trust in the insights offered by the Prophets. In that respect, Sisko becomes gradually more religious in a sense as he puts his fate in their hands, trusting in the predicted, albeit cryptically explained outcome of events.

The spirituality of the Bajorans and the religion's role in the story arc is presented much more favorably than those of the Dominion, but series still maintains the formula of portraying religion as being about control. In the case of the Bajoran belief, the Prophets are not all that different from the Founders, or the Vorlons of *Babylon 5*, but they are not presented as malicious and selfish. Sisko eventually embraces the revered role of the emissary, though he still maintains a largely logical and atheistic approach to the nature Prophets.⁸² In one instance he chides the Prophets for their lack of actions and indifference in the past, stating "You sent the Bajorans orbs and emissaries. You even encouraged them to create an entire religion around you! ... You want to be gods, then be gods. Look, I need a miracle here. Bajor needs a miracle." Consequently, the Prophets accuse Sisko of trying to control what they call "the Game," meaning the course of events, by calling on their "divine" intervention.⁸³ It is explained that the beings in the wormhole exist outside linear time and have no concept of past, present or future, perceiving everything as it is, was, and will be at

⁸¹ "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁸² "Call to Arms," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁸³ "Sacrifice of Angels," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

the same time. It is also emphasized that the Prophets have the ability to impact how things come to pass, and they do so at Sisko's urging, stopping a Dominion invasion fleet. The episode "Images in the Sand" reveals that the body of Sisko's mother was temporarily inhabited by one of the Prophets at the time of his conception in order to give birth to the Emissary.⁸⁴ In the final episode of the series, Sisko fulfills the role of the Emissary by defeating the Prophets' ancient enemies known as the Pah-wraiths, sacrificing his own life in the process.⁸⁵ Consequently he is lifted up into the Celestial Temple to live among the Prophets.⁸⁶ Once again, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* presents an alien religion as a major theme in its story, but at its core there is a logical explanation for the viewer, nothing is entirely supernatural, and the series is overall loyal to Roddenberry's vision in that respect.

The *Babylon 5* story line of the Minbari religious icon Valen - like *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and the Prophets - also explains the origins and importance of spiritual beliefs, and depicts it quite favorably. Commander Jeffrey Sinclair (Michael O'Hare,) has a major religious role that does not become apparent until the series story arc has significantly progressed. Sinclair was the commanding officer of the station during the first season of the series before being replaced as a regular by John Sheridan (Bruce Boxleitner) in the subsequent seasons.⁸⁷ On *Babylon 5*, Sinclair is an Earth-Minbari War veteran who survived the climactic Battle of the Line where the Minbari inexplicably surrendered despite being on the verge of victory. With a gap in his memory from the battle, Sinclair struggles to comprehend why he survived and also why the Minbari requested that he would be the commander of the station following the signing of the peace accords. It is revealed in flashbacks that Sinclair was captured during the Battle of the Line and was put before a

⁸⁴ "Images in the Sand," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁸⁵ Sisko falls in to a pit of fire alongside his arch nemesis, Dukat, apparently killing them both. But the ending is purposely vague as to whether or not he will be allowed to return to a mortal form.

⁸⁶ "What You Leave Behind," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

⁸⁷ Sinclair makes appearances in several episodes later in the series that are of relevance to his story arc.

device known as a triluminary, which lit up in his presence, much to the Minbari leaders' surprise.⁸⁸ It indicated to them that humans and Minbari were connected through the merging of souls.

As the series progresses, the extremely religious Minbari often reference and quote the revered prophet-like figure of Valen, a "Minbari not born of Minbari," who united the Minbari during their great war against the mysterious Shadows a thousand years earlier. The Minbari character of DeLenn, a descendant of Valen and the species' ambassador to Babylon 5, uses the triluminary which, when combined with a Chrysalis device, transforms her into a half-human/half-Minbari, as prophesized by Valen. The Minbari believe that the souls of their deceased are reborn in to the next generation, but that Minbari souls are now being reborn as humans since fewer Minbari are being born with each generation, intertwining the two races. In the season 3 two-part episode "War Without End" Sinclair travels a thousand years back through time with the Babylon 4 station which was presumed destroyed, but was actually stuck in a gap in space time. He uses the Chrysalis and triluminary to transform himself into a Minbari, appearing before members of the Minbari race while accompanied by two Vorlons who take the form of Minbari angels. Sinclair subsequently takes the name Valen, and unites the Minbari castes against the Shadows. As it turns out, Valen's oft-quoted "prophecies" were actually Sinclair's knowledge of history prior to his time travel, and he was also DeLenn's ancestor. Sinclair ponders the issue before his transformation, saying "My whole life has been leading to this." As a result of Sinclair actually being Valen and living out his days in the past and having children, human DNA is present in most Minbari at the time of the series, bringing the story and his destiny full circle.⁸⁹ Valen as a religious figure does not subside after this though, eventually becoming ingrained in not only the Minbari culture and religion, but also

⁸⁸ "And the Sky Full of Stars," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

⁸⁹ "War Without End I & II," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

in that of the humans. As an example, in a segment of the episode "The Deconstruction of Falling Stars," set several hundred years after the normal time scope of the series, a human monk on Earth exclaims "... for Valen's sake!"⁹⁰

The religious origins of Valen are explained and shown to have an explanation that is not so much supernatural, but rather within the realm of what is scientifically possible in the universe of the series. What the writers of *Babylon 5* accomplish with this story is that it provides a logical background for religious beliefs that can make the viewer understand why the characters (and races) believe what they believe. Sinclair/Valen, like Sisko of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, is a religious icon to those around him, but the viewer understands that there is actually nothing divine about him. It makes it apparent that what might be perceived as something profound and supernatural often enough has a natural explanation when viewed objectively without bias. The viewer of the series can then draw parallels to religions in our time and consider to what extent religious experiences and stories might have been distorted by a lack of reasonable explanation at the time they originated. It is plausible to argue that the writers not only want to tell a compelling story, but also encourage critical thinking and not simply accepting something at face value. That is not to say that they want to say that all belief in a religion is somehow an orchestrated deception as it is in the case of the Valen, the Founders, and Vorlons, but rather that every person should look at the facts objectively and take into account the shroud of history as well. Valen appeared, led the Minbari to victory, and then faded into obscurity, giving rise to a great deal of mythology around him that was exaggerated over the years. Still, those with knowledge of who Valen truly was still continued to consider him as someone divine. The series thereby acknowledge that as time passes, we rewrite and reconsider history to fit our ideas of what it should be, and also choose whether or not to reconsider our beliefs when they are questioned.

⁹⁰ "The Deconstruction of Falling Stars," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

3.3 - The Role of Personal Faith and Religious Characters

When looking at the vast array of characters presented to the viewers in these series, there is one commonality between them; namely that those presented as religious are by and large alien characters rather than humans. The usage of aliens proves successful as it can direct criticism or offer comment on religious beliefs without necessarily offending viewers in the process. The series rarely depict any institution of organized religion, but rather the impact of belief in the daily lives of the spiritual characters. But there are still some of the main casts of characters that exhibited religious beliefs or had a religious role in one way or another that are worth exploring and analyzing. Of the human characters, the belief systems to which they profess are varied and sometimes include entirely fictional spiritual beliefs, but some are more familiar.

Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian,) on *Babylon 5* is the most noteworthy religious human from the series because she is presented as a Russian Jew. While other human religions and religious characters are mentioned and included in story arcs in the series, Ivanova is the only one out of the main cast of characters that is showcased as adhering to a present-day religion. In the episodes pertaining to Ivanova's beliefs, there is no mysticism or supernatural element presented. Rather, they are purely human stories about her father's impending and subsequent death, and how Ivanova copes with the loss and struggle to forgive him for past mistakes in the time afterwards. Advised by a visiting family friend who is a rabbi, she finally decides to sit Shiva, a traditional Jewish ritual of mourning.⁹¹ For Ivanova, observance of the Shiva ritual provides closure for herself with the help of friends and other believers. The religious aspect of the entire story remains rooted in cultural heritage and identity to a large extent, but also showcases religion as something that the characters can take

⁹¹ "TKO," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

comfort in. The religion is not questioned, analyzed, or turned inside-out, but simply presents how belief can matter in a person's life in a positive way.

In the same manner as Ivanova on *Babylon 5*, belief is on some rare occasions presented on *Star Trek* as part of a cultural heritage and identity. This portrayal of religious practices among humans is presented on *Star Trek* largely for the sake of providing depth to certain characters that were otherwise stale. Commander Chakotay on *Star Trek: Voyager*, portrayed by Robert Beltran, is the most prominent human character out of the three selected *Star Trek* series who was shown as religious. While he is not shown to profess to any sort of monotheistic religion, Chakotay utters the words "My God!" at one point, and it is one of the rare instances of someone from the atheistic Federation doing so.⁹² The actor himself is Mexican-American, the character of Chakotay was a Native American, sporting a distinct facial tattoo on his forehead over his left eye as part of his cultural heritage. Throughout the course of the series, we see the character in possession of culturally and religiously significant items such as talismans. He also practices his people's religious rituals, such as "vision quests," when looking for guidance from his deceased ancestors or seeking clarity when faced with a difficult situation.⁹³ Furthermore, in some instances he advises fellow characters onboard the *Voyager* on how to undertake such rituals when they are distraught and in need of answers.⁹⁴ What separates Chakotay's beliefs from those portrayed in other parts of *Star Trek* is that there is no scientific or logical explanation for the nature of what the character experiences when practicing these rituals. That is to say, they are portrayed as entirely genuine and supernatural, consistently providing the character with insight and clarity to do

⁹² "Scorpion," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

⁹³ "Initiations," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

⁹⁴ "Mortal Coil," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

the right thing as a result of his rituals and religious practices.⁹⁵ Like with Ivanova, religion was shown as something Chakotay could take comfort in, and was never analyzed and scrutinized in the same manner of other belief systems presented on *Star Trek*.

With the character Stephen Franklin (Richard Biggs,) *Babylon 5* exemplifies how religion and faith might evolve in the future as a consequence of society's advancements. Franklin identifies himself as a "Foundationist," explaining that the religion of Foundationism came about following Earth's first contact with the Centauri Republic and other alien civilizations. He elaborates on his beliefs, saying that it revolves around getting back to the roots of all of Earth's religions - hence the name - without necessarily belonging to a larger organized group or attending any sort of church. The core of the belief is that excessive interpretation of doctrine and dogma has distanced man from God.⁹⁶ Like Ivanova, the beliefs give Franklin personal comfort and he utilizes them to bring himself clarity. After becoming addicted to "stims" (stimulant narcotics) to be able to perform in his high pressure job, he eventually buckles and takes a leave of absence. Franklin goes on a "walkabout," where he attempts to "find himself" so that he can confront his problems. His walkabout spans several episodes where he moves about Babylon 5, and ultimately ends up being the victim of a brutal stabbing. As he lies dying, he sees a vision of himself and discusses his problems with the apparition. Eventually he realizes that he wants to live and manages to drag himself to safety and receives medical treatment, making a full recovery.⁹⁷ Franklin's discussion with the apparition is not necessarily meant to be something supernatural like Chakotay's spiritual rituals, but it demonstrates the power of faith and how it can improve a person and bring positivity in to their life.

⁹⁵ "Basics," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

⁹⁶ "In the Shadow of Z'ha'dum," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

⁹⁷ "Shadow Dancing," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

Star Trek also explores the negative sides of faith and religion, and how it can affect an individual on a personal level, with the alien character Winn Adami (Louise Fletcher.)⁹⁸ While not part of the regular cast of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, she does make numerous appearances, serves as an antagonist, and is an essential part of the central religious storylines of the series. It is typical that *Star Trek* once again uses an alien character to showcase how individuals with power within organized religion can succumb to corruption. As the Kai of Bajor, a Pope-like position, Winn often finds herself at odds with Sisko in his capacity as the Emissary, feeling that his status among the Bajoran people threatens her previously paramount influence.⁹⁹ She is shown to be disgruntled by the fact that she has never received visions from Bajor's gods, indicating that she does have personal faith, but her faith is never truly fulfilling to her. She largely wields the powers of her position in order to exert power over the political affairs of her planet, and often claims that the results of her machinations are the will of the Prophets. Eventually she turns her back on her faith, angered by the fact that she has never received visions, and becomes a disciple of the Pah-wraiths instead, which leads to her death.¹⁰⁰ Winn does not exercise control through religion in the same manner as the Founders of the Dominion. Instead she is portrayed more as someone who has been corrupted by the power organized religion has provided her, but eventually comes to think that her faith owes something to her, rather than vice versa. To her, her faith and the power it brings in its organized form, is a tool that she can use.

With the story arc of the character G'Kar on *Babylon 5*, the series manages to portray a balance both negative and positive sides of religion that stood in contrast to the one-dimensional Winn on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. G'Kar (Andreas Katsulas) is a high

⁹⁸ Bajoran characters on *Star Trek* have their surname first, given name last. Hence Kai Winn would the manner in which she is addressed, similar to Kira Neyris being addressed as Major Kira.

⁹⁹ "Strange Bedfellows," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ "What You Leave Behind," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

ranking member of the alien Narn Regime, serving as their ambassador to Babylon 5, and is early on portrayed as an aggressive and unpleasant individual. He is shown to be religious, often performing religious rituals and prayers, and his most prized possessions are handwritten holy books and texts.¹⁰¹ He harbors a great deal of hostility towards the Centauri Republic and their ambassador Londo Mollari (Peter Jurasik,) due to the Centauri's brutal occupation of the Narn home world in the past. Motivated by the promise of martyrdom, G'Kar sets out to assassinate the Centauri emperor to avenge past injustices, but ends up failing in his attempt.¹⁰² As the Centauri bombard his world and occupy it once again, G'Kar is both humbled and humiliated by Mollari, losing everything including his status and position. After turning to drugs and brutally assaulting Mollari, G'Kar experiences a religious vision and has a lengthy conversation with an apparition.

Apparition: [Standing in the dark] "We are a dying people, G'Kar. So are the Centauri. Obsessed with each other's deaths until death is all we can see and death is all we deserve.

G'Kar: [Confused] "The Centauri started it..."

Apparition: "And will you continue until there are no more Narns [sic] and no more Centauri. If both sides are dead, no one will care who deserves the blame. It no longer matters who started it, G'Kar. It only matters who is suffering. ... What is there left for Narn if all of creation falls around us? There is nothing. No hope, no dreams, no future, no life. Unless we turn from the cycle of death towards something greater." [The conversation continues until apparition disappears and is only heard] "You have the opportunity, here and now, to choose to become something greater, and nobler, and more difficult than you have been before. The universe does not offer such chances often, G'Kar."

G'Kar: "Why now? Why not earlier? All this time, where have you been?"

Apparition: "I have always been here." [G'Kar is bathed in light as the apparition turns into a glowing angel with Narn facial characteristics.]¹⁰³

The conversation between the apparition and G'Kar is a sort of divine intervention that breaks him away from the circle of hatred and violence, and he begins to focus on the positive aspects of his faith to accomplish constructive things in his life. Unbeknown to G'Kar, the

¹⁰¹ "The Long, Twilight Struggle," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

¹⁰² "The Coming of Shadows," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

¹⁰³ "Dust to Dust," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

apparition he saw was the Vorlon, Kosh Naranek, taking angelic form. But the vision and the subsequent events demonstrate the positive impact faith can have. As the story progresses, G'Kar is eventually captured by the Centauri and subjected to humiliation as a Centauri court jester, and is also extensively tortured, losing one of his eyes.¹⁰⁴ But through the power of his faith and the desire to win the freedom of his people through non-violent methods, G'Kar becomes something of a martyr to the Narn. Through an unlikely alliance with Mollari he succeeds in securing an end to the Centauri occupation of the Narn home world. As the series draws to an end, G'Kar's transformation has demonstrated the power of individual faith and the impact it can make. G'Kar's book of memoirs becomes a revered text among the Narn, and figurines are made in his likeness as he seeks to educate his people in how to break the cycle of violence.¹⁰⁵ Gradually he befriends his former adversary Londo Mollari, and he eventually explains "Mollari. Understand that I can never forgive your people for what they did to my world. My people can never forgive your people. But I can forgive you."¹⁰⁶

With the tale of G'Kar's struggle, the writers of *Babylon 5* tried and succeeded in making the series something more than a mere entertainment in a science fiction setting, and they go further than *Star Trek* ever did with a religious story arc. The story is one of aliens and alien civilizations at odds, but there are a great deal of universal patterns and symbolism that can be applied to present day humanity. The history of the Centauri and Narn wars with their mutual hatred of one another serves as a parallel to many conflicts on Earth, like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the history of western colonization and its negative consequences in various parts of the world. *Babylon 5* has a positive message and a moral of the story, making it clear that at some point the violence must come to an end, and someone must be the first to say stop regardless of who instigated the conflict. While the viewer knows

¹⁰⁴ "The Summoning," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ "Meditations on the Abyss," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ "The Fall of Centauri Prime," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

that the religious experience with the "angel" was partially manipulation by the Vorlon Kosh, we see that G'Kar takes it as a religious awakening and turns his faith into something positive. G'Kar is an example of someone who "turns the other cheek," he sacrifices his own well being to bring about peace, after fruitless attempts in the past to bring change through violence. That is not to say that *Babylon 5* presents religion and faith as necessarily being the only path to peace, but it does underline how faith can sometimes be used for good as it can empower those with a positive goal.

3.4 - Chapter Conclusion

The difference between the two franchises in regards to the portrayal of religion lies in the fact that the creator of *Star Trek* largely shunned it or used it to direct criticism, whereas the creator of *Babylon 5* embraced it. The approach seems to stem from the mentality of their creators. Keeping that in mind, perhaps it is not so surprising that out of the four series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is the only one of the lot that does not have any characters with prominent religious beliefs showcased. Gene Roddenberry, the creator of *Star Trek* who was notoriously opposed to religion, was still alive and heavily involved in the creation and production of the series. And while religious elements were occasionally included in storylines and episodes of the different *Star Trek* series, it served largely as an occasional plot device and primarily involved religious aliens and their interactions with humanity, rather than religious humans. It is not until the series and episodes made after Roddenberry's passing we see some inclusion of religious human characters and a rare portrayals of their spiritual beliefs, although they still remain limited in scope. By and large, religion was depicted negatively with criticism directed at organized religion as a source of conflict and strife.

On the opposite end is *Babylon 5* creator Joseph Michael Straczynski who jokingly addressed the issue of his beliefs by stating: "I'm not a believer myself, I'm an atheist.

Therefore I am an equal opportunity offender."¹⁰⁷ Regardless of that quote, *Babylon 5* never really took an approach that sought to discredit and criticize faith as a whole. Straczynski seemed to differ strongly from Roddenberry when approaching their portrayals of the future, as *Babylon 5* maintained that religion would persist in spite of scientific advancement, and will still exist in the distant future.¹⁰⁸ The series was not afraid to use religious motifs and historic parallels in the storylines, and while scientific explanations were used to unravel the origins of certain beliefs, a great deal of the mysticism surrounding faith was maintained. Essentially, faith was treated in a respectful manner. The character G'Kar at one point states "I am both terrified and reassured to know that there are still wonders in the universe, that we have not yet explained everything."¹⁰⁹ The quote seems to summarize the approach the series sought to take when it comes to faith. It is clear that Straczynski did not shy away from presenting a balanced view of religion as something that can have both a positive and negative impact on society, in contrast to the black and white portrayals by Roddenberry and his successors.

¹⁰⁷ "J. Michael Straczynski on themes of religion in science fiction," *MITvideo*, <<http://video.mit.edu/watch/j-michael-straczynski-on-themes-of-religion-in-science-fiction-4341/>> (3 September 2012).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ "Mind War," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

Chapter 4 - Masculinity vs. Femininity, Sexuality, and Family

"In the past, women were often considered weak and inferior. But that hasn't been true for a long time." - Dr. Beverly Crusher, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

This chapter will focus on how the *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* series depicted gender roles in their respective settings, to what extent families and family life was portrayed, as well as sexuality and sexual norms. While the preceding chapters discussed different aspects of how life in these advanced societies were depicted, it is equally relevant to look at how the characters are portrayed on the basis of their gender. In that regard, the chapter will explore the portrayal of female characters and what characteristic masculine and feminine traits they exhibited. This chapter will prominently use examples of many female characters that are also aliens, as in most instances these are largely indistinguishable from the human characters in terms of how they live their lives, as they largely interact with humans. The chapter will also explore what restrictions - if any - the creators of the series have placed on how the characters intimately interact and bond with one another. Certain emphasis will be given to characters or individual episodes from the series where the writers dared to push the boundaries, one example would be depiction of homosexual relationships. Additionally, focus will be given to other noteworthy instances where episodes or the actions and lives of characters provided social commentary and served as parallels to our society today. In the case of the latter, as was the case in previous chapters, to what extent aliens were utilized for the sake of parallels will also be given due attention.

4.1 - The Relevance of Gender in Futuristic Society & Female Authority

It can be hard to assess exactly how the gender roles have developed, and to what extent equality between the sexes progressed, up until the timeframe of the different series. That is because the majority of the characters, as varied as they may be, primarily serve in a military branch of some type and the setting is typically either a military vessel or installation. Therefore we are presented with individuals who serve in organizations where it is the person's merit and ability that is the reason for the position they hold, and gender plays no part in the matter. From the way the settings are portrayed and how the series progress and play out, there are no instances where a human character's ability and skill is questioned or challenged on the basis of their gender. We therefore assume that, at least in terms of what is presented to the viewer, the futuristic human societies portrayed on *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* enjoy equality between the sexes and that there is fair and equal treatment on that basis. However, regardless of the apparent equality, all the series have a greater ratio of male over female characters. In that sense, the society depicted does at times appear somewhat patriarchal in nature as relevant female characters are often few and far between.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is the series with the smallest number of female characters, and their importance on the show was minimal, being largely restricted to typical feminine roles. Stereotypical roles for women in this series were prevalent, and the female characters were reduced to the background of the Enterprise's daily life. The series only featured two or three women in the main cast of characters at any given time, though there were some female characters appearing in central, recurring guest roles.¹¹⁰ One of the female characters from the main cast is Lieutenant Natasha Yar (played by Denise Crosby.) Yar has

¹¹⁰ Whoopi Goldberg played the character Guinan in 29 episodes as a special guest star, and Michelle Forbes played the character Ensign Ro Laren as a guest star. Although Forbes was only in 8 episodes, those episodes typically centered on her, and she was considered to be an important member of the crew in the last three seasons.

the position of the ship's tactical and security officer in the first season of series, establishing her in a more masculine role, but she is killed in the episode "Skin of Evil," paving the way for Lieutenant Worf (Michael Dorn) to take her position.¹¹¹ That left only the more feminine Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) and Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) as the female regulars on the show. Crusher serves as the doctor onboard the Enterprise, while Troi is the ship's counselor. With the absence of the character Yar, the female leads on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* seemed to be primarily serving in positions that are, to a large extent, synonymous with caring and nurturing amongst a male-dominated crew. That is not to say that the characters were somehow meaningless or without a role to play, but their positions do come across as somewhat limited in the scope of the show.

The character Deanna Troi on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is a prominent example of a female character displaying feminine traits and characteristics, and is portrayed largely as a nurturing figure. She did not behave in the manner of the officers onboard the Enterprise, and wore more casual and feminine garments than the other characters, and also acting as a friend and confidant of the other characters. Troi's role as the ship's counselor was aided by the fact that she was a half-human/half-Betazoid, meaning she was partially telepathic. While she is a senior officer and sits on the bridge of the Enterprise next to the captain and the executive officer, her role is primarily to provide insight into the emotions and potential deceptions of aliens encountered. Furthermore, she often provides guidance and emotional insight for conflicted crew members throughout the course of the series. Several episodes center primarily on Troi, but they are almost exclusively in her capacity as the ship's counselor, somehow pertaining to her telepathic ability, or encounters with love interests. Only in a few particular instances, such as the episode "Disaster," does she exercise a command authority. In that particular episode, the other senior officers have been cut off from

¹¹¹ "Skin of Evil," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

the bridge, leaving a reluctant Troi in charge by virtue of her rank, and facing opposition from junior officers with more tactical training. Incidentally, Troi's main opponent in that episode is the female guest character Ensign Ro Laren, who is skeptical of Troi's ability to take command.¹¹² The episode is, however, somewhat of a turning point for Troi as she later refers to those events two years later in "Thine Own Self," as she undertakes a supervised test to become a qualified bridge officer with the rank of commander.¹¹³ While she does pass and get promoted, the viewer never gets to see Troi in any command capacity as the episode took place close to the end of the series.

The character of Beverly Crusher is not as heavily featured in the series in comparison to her male counterparts, though she does display some degree of authority in spite of her femininity. In her capacity as Chief Medical Officer, she is largely limited to the sickbay, and it often falls to her to personally supervise the treatment of injured characters or solve some medical mystery that serves as the main plot of a particular episode. However, Crusher was also qualified for leadership, exuded more confidence, and displayed command ability. Furthermore, unlike Troi, Crusher was a certified bridge officer.¹¹⁴ It should be noted that Crusher is absent in the second season of the series, as the character is serving as head of Starfleet Medical, and her position onboard the ship is occasionally filled by Katherine Pulaski (Diana Muldaur, credited as "special appearance by.")¹¹⁵ Crusher also serves two other relevant purposes on the series: She is the mother of the character young Wesley Crusher (Wil Wheaton) who resides and serves on the ship, and she is a close friend of Captain Jean-Luc Picard. In terms of Picard, she is also an occasional romantic interest for him, and the series finale "All Good Things..." reveals that the two later go on to get married.

¹¹² "Disaster," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹¹³ "Thine Own Self," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ "The Child," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

The episode, partially set in the future after the show, shows that the character has the capacity for growth and also displays her abilities as an officer. It depicts Crusher as divorced from Picard and finally as having her own command as the captain of a hospital ship.¹¹⁶

As *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was drawing to an end in the first half of the 1990s, a more equal balance between male and female characters in the series occurred. The female characters on screen were presented as significant women in positions of importance and authority, displaying more masculine traits, and they began to be featured more prominently. The roles and responsibilities of female characters in the subsequent series appeared less superficial than those previously seen. *Babylon 5* featured numerous female characters among the lead cast, serving in various capacities that included roles of authority and power. Also, *Star Trek* writers went a different way with *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, both of which had female main characters in more varied positions than the preceding *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. That is not to say there were an equal number of male and female main characters on any of the shows, as men still outnumbered the women, but it was a step forward. Not only were the female characters in these three series typically vested with more authority, but they also featured more heavily in the overall story arcs and the plotlines of individual episodes, including action sequences, and were generally given more to do on screen. Overall this contributed to giving the impression that these futuristic societies were more gender neutral and not as male-dominated as the environment onboard the Enterprise from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, but the women in the series would often exhibit masculine characteristics.

Babylon 5 had a mixed cast of characters, male and female, where gender neutrality prevailed. The series had the opportunity to portray an entirely fresh take on the future in the

¹¹⁶ "All Good Things..." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

spirit the creator envisioned, as he was not restricted by continuity in the same way the producers and writers of various *Star Trek* spin-offs were. The female military officers featured on *Babylon 5*, particularly the space station's two executive officers, were given more prominent roles than their *Star Trek* counterparts. First there was the headstrong and somewhat brash Lieutenant Commander Laurel Takashima (Tamlyn Tomita) in the pilot feature "The Gathering."¹¹⁷ Takashima was later replaced by the similar character Lieutenant Commander Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian) in the first proper episode of the first season, who continued in the same capacity until the end of the fourth season when Claudia Christian left the series. Ivanova's role as the executive officer of the station was not merely related to day-to-day administrative tasks, but also diplomatic duties, tactical and defensive operations, and she was depicted as an accomplished starfighter pilot.¹¹⁸ Ivanova is portrayed on the series not only as a capable leader, but also as someone with a presence of authority, and as someone who inspires fear among the spoiled alien ambassadors.¹¹⁹ As the story progresses, she commands fleets of ships into battle, and eventually gets her own command of a cruiser. At the end of the series, she is depicted twenty years later as having reached the rank of General in the Earthforce military.¹²⁰ As Ivanova departs, she is replaced by the outspoken Captain Elizabeth Lochley (Tracy Scoggins.) Lochley becomes the commanding officer of the station (though is not the main character of the series,) and she displays many of the same traits as Ivanova, being an experienced combat officer and a person of integrity and principle.¹²¹ What these characters accomplished was to challenge existing stereotypes and portray confident women in positions of authority and responsibility that was not limited to "nurturing" or feminine roles.

¹¹⁷ "The Gathering," *Babylon 5*, Warner Brothers Entertainment (DVD, 2004).

¹¹⁸ "Believers," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

¹¹⁹ "Points of Departure," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹²⁰ "Sleeping in the Light," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

¹²¹ "Learning Curve," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2005).

Babylon 5 benefitted from its strong female leads, but the characters occasionally had a tendency to appear even more authoritative and masculine than their male counterparts from the different series. The executive officers on the *Star Trek* series, such as Commander William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) and Commander Chakotay (Robert Beltran,) were presented as masculine individuals, but not overly authoritative when interacting with subordinate crew members. That is perhaps owed to the fact that these were male characters with nothing to prove in terms of gender roles, but even so, that does not explain why a female character should need to strive to assert authority in an apparently gender neutral society. It is entirely possible that the creators of the series felt that in order for these female characters to adequately come across as individuals of authority, they needed to exhibit certain masculine traits, by being portrayed as ruthless in dealing with subordinates and antagonists; not so much for the sake of convincing the other characters on the show, but rather for the sake of convincing the viewers to take them seriously. Regardless, *Babylon 5* did humanize characters such as Lochley and Ivanova not only by giving the viewers insight into their past, but also by exploring their flaws and also their intimate relationships. As such, the series was successful in balancing the portrayals of the military persona with the character behind the uniform, giving them depth and personality.

The female characters on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, who in many ways were similar to those found on *Babylon 5*, are portrayed with a certain balance between femininity and masculinity. We see characters that are occasionally authoritative and a tendency to bestow upon the characters certain masculine traits in their personality to give them more weight in a male-dominated cast. The space station has a female executive officer called Major Kira Nerys (Nana Visitor,) who is of Bajoran descent (human-like alien.) Certain masculine aspects of the character are exposed by underlining that she was a capable resistance fighter/freedom fighter when the oppressive and brutal Cardassian Empire occupied her

homeworld of Bajor (which Deep Space Nine orbits,) and she serves in the Bajoran militia.¹²² There is also the complex character Lieutenant Commander Jadzia Dax, who serves as a science officer onboard the station. Dax is a Trill (human-like alien) which means she hosts a worm-like symbiotic entity in her stomach, making her personality a mixture of all the previous hosts. Not only depicted as flirty and smart, she also has certain typically masculine sides due to the previous male hosts of her symbiont, making her fascinated by the culture of the brutish Klingon race, and also a capable fighter.¹²³ However, as with *Babylon 5*, the other sides of these characters are exposed through exploration of their relationships with other characters in an effort to "soften" them.

The formula of stern female leads was dropped in the most recent of the selected series, *Star Trek: Voyager*, which finally depicted a female commanding officer with the character Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew.) The character exhibits both masculine and feminine traits in the course of the show, but it remains a delicate balance where she stays somewhere in the middle. This could partially be attributed to the nature of the show, with the starship Voyager being stranded on the other side of the galaxy and facing a 70 year long journey back to Earth. The crew of the ship is depicted as gradually becoming a close-knit community consisting of approximately 152 individuals.¹²⁴ In her capacity as the commanding officer, Janeway assumes the role of something akin to a mother-like figure for the crew. This nurturing role does not detract from Janeway's capabilities as a commanding officer. In contrast to the male counterparts in the other series, Janeway was handling a much smaller crew under entirely different circumstances on *Star Trek: Voyager* that necessitated a closer familiarity between her officers. Janeway's role as a "mother" to the crew does not really appear that different from Picard, who occasionally acted in a father-like capacity on

¹²² "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹²³ "Blood Oath," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹²⁴ "The 37's," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

the Enterprise by taking the younger crew members under his wing.¹²⁵ The mother-like role can also be attributed to Janeway's guilt over having stranded the vessel in the other side of the galaxy, and her desire to bring her crew home.¹²⁶ The character is still shown as enforcing the chain of command to preserve order onboard the ship, and is not afraid to reprimand insubordinate officers who push the rules too far.¹²⁷ Therefore it can be argued that Janeway was perhaps the female authority figure that, out of the series, was portrayed as the most "human." The viewer is able to experience the different sides of her, and her traits of femininity and masculinity do not become excessive as with, for example, Ivanova. Perhaps what separates Janeway from most other female characters, and even her male commanding officer counterparts in the other series, is a distinct lack of active romantic involvement with other characters.¹²⁸ At the start of the series, it is explained that Janeway is engaged, and four years later she learns that her fiancé assumed her dead when Voyager vanished and found someone else.¹²⁹ There is certain affection bordering on romantic interest between her and her second command, Chakotay. However, he later states "...There are some barriers we never cross," implying that they maintain professionalism for the sake of the chain of command.¹³⁰

4.2 - Sexuality & Relationships

Regardless of the barriers that Janeway and Chakotay never cross, most characters in these series have no issues entering into intimate relationships. We see many of the individuals in both long-term and casual relationships of an affectionate or sexual nature. The

¹²⁵ "Lower Decks," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹²⁶ "Scorpion II," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹²⁷ "Thirty Days," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹²⁸ Certain episodes of *Star Trek: Voyager* did feature her romantically involved with someone, but those were largely the result of alien meddling suppressing her real personality, or interactions with holographic men in a fictional environment.

¹²⁹ "Hunters," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹³⁰ "Shattered," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

Chakotay actually explains this to Janeway herself when he encounters her in the past during a time travel episode, and she inquires about the nature of their relationship in the future.

male characters are often "alpha males" exuding masculine traits, having no difficulty attracting members of the opposite sex thanks to their strong personalities and muscular bodies. In order to accentuate the masculinity of male characters in the *Star Trek* series, the actors would wear padded costumes that gave the impression of more muscular bodies than the actors actually possessed.¹³¹ One example of an alpha male would be William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, who has a recurring relationship with Deanna Troi. But a significant number of episodes such as "Angel One," "Up the Long Ladder," and "Silicon Avatar" to name a few, are devoted to his encounters with women. Even Jean-Luc Picard, despite his age, is shown romancing women in several episodes of the series.¹³² These types of chance encounters with ensuing romances are not as frequent on *Babylon 5*, but characters like Stephen Franklin are shown as having casual sex on occasion.¹³³ Ultimately, the depiction of romance in all the series primarily consists of brief trysts in stand-alone episodes with seductive and appealing guest characters.

It is clear that most of the characters are sexually liberated, regardless of gender, and sex is in no way taboo in these futuristic societies. Men as well as women are seen engaging in these activities with little apparent restriction, and we do not see them hindered by any social norms or fear of social stigma. Furthermore, the depiction of romance and sexuality is never lewd, nor is it referred to in any obscene manner, except perhaps for a distraught Susan Ivanova employing vulgar slang and stating "At least I should have just boffed him once."¹³⁴ Innuendo and thinly veiled references are sometimes employed, as in the case of the Ferengi practice of "oo-mox" which involves stroking the aliens' enlarged ears, from which they apparently get sexual pleasure. The Ferengi character Rom (Max Grodénchik) mentions in

¹³¹ Wil Wheaton, *Wil Wheaton's Geek in Review: WILLIAM FUCKING SHATNER, Part I*, 2007, <<http://suicidegirls.com/news/geek/20562/>> (6 August 2012).

¹³² "Captain's Holiday," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹³³ "Walkabout," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹³⁴ "Rising Star," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

one episode that he has been enjoying too much oo-mox by himself, implying that the act is something akin to masturbation.¹³⁵ Creators of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* also speculated that Jadzia Dax could have been unfaithful towards her fiancé after her bachelorette party as the character expressed particular interest in a scantily clad male dancer.¹³⁶ Similarly, the alien character Londo Mollari (Peter Jurasik) on *Babylon 5* is unfaithful toward his wives when he engages in a relationship with a female slave.¹³⁷ Ultimately, casual sexuality and occasional promiscuity is depicted as a natural part of life in these series. The series do not dictate what the viewer should think or feel about these interactions, and offer no particular moral as to what is right and wrong.

Interracial relationships and marriage is largely depicted as unproblematic and natural across all the four series also. The most notable example might be Miles O'Brien (Colm Meany) of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. He is a white man married to Keiko Ishikawa O'Brien (Rosalind Chao,) a woman of Japanese heritage, with whom he has two children.¹³⁸ It should be mentioned, however, that relationships between different ethnicities of humans are rarely depicted in either the *Star Trek* the *Babylon 5* franchises. For example, Benjamin Sisko's romantic interests across the course of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* are exclusively black.¹³⁹ We see the black character Geordi LaForge (LeVar Burton) on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* express his interest in a white female character, Leah Brahms (Susan Gibney,) but he is ultimately rejected by her in the episode because she is already married.^{140 141} In the case of LaForge's infatuation with Brahms, it is rather peculiar

¹³⁵ "Bar Association," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹³⁶ "24th Century Wedding," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹³⁷ "Born to the Purple," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

¹³⁸ "Disaster," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹³⁹ "Second Sight," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003). "Family Business," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ "Galaxy's Child," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁴¹ In series finale "All Good Things...", which depicts a possible version of the future after the conclusion, LaForge has married Brahms.

that the writers chose not to depict the two becoming a couple or at least sharing an intimate moment of some sort, given that the groundwork had been laid in a previous episode.¹⁴² It is entirely possible that the writers did not feel comfortable crossing that particular barrier at that point in time.

Interracial relationships on both *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* are primarily depicted in the form of parallels by portraying humans and aliens engaged in intimacy. The practice of intimate relationships between humans and aliens, or relations between different species of aliens, is fairly commonplace in all the four series. The writers would occasionally depict this as problematic, drawing parallels to contemporary stigma towards interracial sexual relations. The characters Jadzia Dax and Worf on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* gradually develop a relationship in the course of the series and are eventually to be married. Consequently, Dax faces opposition from a Klingon matriarch who expresses disapproval of the impending union due to Dax not being Klingon like Worf.¹⁴³ Similarly, the human character John Sheridan (Bruce Boxleitner) and the Minbari character Delenn (Mira Furlan) face opposition to their relationship and marriage on *Babylon 5*. The issue is referred to in several episodes, and in particular Delenn must eventually prove to her fellow Minbari, through religious rituals, that choosing Sheridan as her "mate" does not spoil the purity of their race.¹⁴⁴

4.3 - Homosexuality and Sexual Identity

The issue of homosexuality and sexual identity was also raised in the different series and intertwined with the topic of gender roles. However, the *Star Trek* episodes relating to this topic ultimately remained somewhat cautious as they made use of a parallels and situations with aliens, rather than casually depicting two members of the same gender

¹⁴² "Booby Trap," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁴³ "You Are Cordially Invited," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁴⁴ "Atonement," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

engaged in relationships. The first of the two Star Trek episodes covering the topic was "Outcast," an episode in *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* fifth season (1992.) The crew of the Enterprise visits the planet J'naii and interacts with the local populace who are depicted as a gender-neutral and androgynous species of humanoid aliens. Commander William Riker (Jonathan Frakes) works with the J'naii scientist Soren (Melinda Culea) in the course of the episode, and the two develop a mutual attraction. Soren explains to Riker, saying "The idea of gender. It is offensive to our people."¹⁴⁵ She elaborates further that her people have no concept of gender and sexuality, as her species has evolved beyond such things. However, she admits there are those who are considered "deviants" because of a preference to identify as either male or female.

"Occasionally, among my people, there are a few who are born different, who are throwbacks from the era when we all had gender. Some have strong inclinations to maleness, and some have urges to be female. I am one of the latter. ... On our world, these feelings are forbidden. Those who are discovered are shamed and ridiculed, and only by undergoing psychotectic therapy and having all elements of gender eliminated, can they be accepted into society again. Those of us who have these urges live secret and guarded lives. We seek each other out, always hiding, always terrified of being discovered."¹⁴⁶

Soren's explanation regarding the social stigma and possible consequences of deviance from the norm comes across as apt social commentary. It relates strongly to the difficulties faced by not only homosexuals, but also transgendered people, in terms of having to keep their preferences and identity secret, or otherwise face exclusion or "treatment."¹⁴⁷ As the episode progresses, the J'naii find out about Riker and Soren's relationship, arresting Soren

¹⁴⁵ "Outcast," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas C. Haldeman, *Gay Rights, Patient Rights: The Implications of Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapy*, <<http://www.drdoughaldeman.com/doc/GayRightsPatientRights.pdf>> (1 October 2012).

and putting her on trial for "perversion." Soren's superiors insist that on their world everyone wants to be "normal," whereupon Riker argues that "She is!" Soren then makes a statement in defiance of her people's dogma, saying "What right do you have to punish us? What right do you have to change us? What makes you think you can dictate how people love each other?" In spite of this speech, which could just as well have been directed at anyone who expresses prejudice towards homosexuality, Soren is still sentenced. She is treated and consequently loses her attraction to Riker and all inclination towards female identity, much to his dismay and disappointment.¹⁴⁸ While the episode has a strong message of tolerance towards sexual identity, the parallel setting with aliens does somewhat diminish the sentiment. Furthermore, all the members of the J'naii were portrayed by female actresses with feminine features in spite of the alien prosthetic makeup. This makes the impact of Riker and Soren's intimacy, and the social commentary of the episode, less potent and poignant than it potentially could have been if Soren had been portrayed by a male actor.

Star Trek raised the topic of sexual identity and homosexuality again, this time more bravely, with the episode "Rejoined" in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's* fourth season (1995.) The episode focuses on Lieutenant Commander Jadzia Dax (Terry Farrell) and the predicament she faces when Lenara Kahn (Susanna Thompson) visits the station.¹⁴⁹ Jadzia Dax and Lenara Kahn are both Trills carrying symbionts, and the previous hosts of the creatures were married over a century earlier. Trill hosts absorb the memories, feelings and experiences of previous hosts through the symbionts, triggering complex situations where a host can experience feelings that are not entirely their own. Jadzia feels the love that her

¹⁴⁸ "Outcast," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁴⁹ "Rejoined," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

symbiont's previous host felt for Kahn's previous host, creating a relatively unique scenario.¹⁵⁰ In the original relationship, the hosts of the Dax and Kahn symbionts were male and female respectively, but consequently at the time of the "Rejoined" episode, both hosts are female. It is explained in that it is forbidden by Trill conventions and laws for the new hosts to reinitiate relationships of the previous hosts, calling the act of doing so "reassociation." The consequences of breaking these laws would be exclusion from Trill society and banishment from their homeworld. In the course of the episode, Jadzia Dax and Lenara Kahn try to maintain a professional working relationship while memories of the old marriage begin to resurface, specifically their love for one another and the grief the previous Kahn host endured when Torias Dax was killed. Eventually they engage in a forbidden kiss and face disapproval from their fellow Trill while struggling with the choice of whether to ignore their feelings or face becoming outcasts in their society. In the end Kahn is unable to accept the potential consequences, and chooses to discontinue the relationship, returning to their home world and leaving Dax behind.¹⁵¹

"Rejoined" shared some of the same shortcomings of "Outcast" in terms of how the issue was raised and presented to the viewer. Rather than present the story in the episode as being about two individuals of the same gender in love, the issue was convoluted by underlining that the two female characters are attracted to one another largely as a consequence of the previous relationship of their symbionts' hosts which were male and female in a heterosexual relationship. The fact that Dax and Kahn are both female is not raised as an issue at all in the episode, and friends of Dax are seen as supportive of her choices and desire to be with Kahn. The opposition from the Trill characters stems from the

¹⁵⁰ To clarify: Torias Dax was married to Nilani Kahn. Kahn was widowed as Torias was killed. The Dax symbiont was briefly passed to Joran Dax, then on to Curzon Dax for many years until he died, upon which time Jadzia became the new host. Almost 100 years passed from the time of Torias' death and the events of "Rejoined."

¹⁵¹ "Rejoined," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

social taboo related to the act of "reassociation," and not the fact that they are both female. In that sense, at least on the apparent surface, the human society portrayed in *Star Trek* at this point is accepting of homosexuality, or does not recognize any particular distinction between homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

"To the audience, you're playing out this metaphor of a taboo that you're not supposed to be involved with somebody. The audience looks at these two women that are in love together, but the show will never ever comment on it. ... The idea of homosexual love is going to stare the audience in the face no matter what they do, but we never have to mention it on the show." - Robert D. Moore, writer on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.¹⁵²

This statement by Moore, from the special features of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* season 4 which devoted a segment to the themes and significance of "Rejoined," rings true that it was about a taboo rather than sexuality, with underlying themes for the benefit of the viewers. The special features provide commentary by those who were involved with the creation of the episode. In the interview, the creators and actors give the impression that *Star Trek* preferred to deal with sensitive issues in a veiled and metaphorical manner, rather than presenting them plainly without question for the viewers. The story of "Rejoined" is intricate, but the complexity of the relationship presented, and how it was written, becomes a safety buffer where the episode avoided confronting the issue of sexual orientation and associated stigma directly. When speaking further about the episode, the writers and producers said the episode was ultimately about love and the consequences of one's choices. However, the episode was the first instance of a same-sex kiss on *Star Trek*, which Avery Brooks maintained they did not intend to sensationalize, but underlines that it would obviously be a point of interest for the viewers. Actress Terry Farrell stated that the story was handled in "a

¹⁵² "Charting New Territory," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

very Gene Roddenberry-esque way" and that it appropriately "paralleled what was going on in the world today." The writer Robert D. Moore went on to say it "really was an allegory for our society. That's ultimately what *Trek* does best."¹⁵³

Babylon 5 presented homosexuality in a more candid manner that was not metaphorical or an allegory, by portraying an intimate relationship between two women. From the start of the series, the characters Commander Susan Ivanova (Claudia Christian) and Talia Winters (Andrea Thompson) have a problematic working relationship, largely because of Ivanova's hatred of Winters' profession. Winters is a telepath from Earth's Psi Corps assigned to Babylon 5, and Ivanova has a deep distrust of the organization and telepaths in general since her mother was a latent telepath who committed suicide as a result of Psi Corps drugs.¹⁵⁴ Both women are established early on as having had heterosexual relationships with men, as evident of episodes such as "Mind War" and "The War Prayer" where former male romantic interests visit the space station.¹⁵⁵ However, the intricate relationship between Ivanova and Winters progresses in the course of the first two seasons of the series, developing into a close friendship as Winters gradually becomes more disillusioned by the methods and tactics of the Psi Corps. While there are no explicit displays of affection such as an on-screen kiss between the two, they are depicted as sharing a bed. Later, Winters is revealed to have had a second personality embedded into her by the Psi Corps that is designed to answer their call and betray the Babylon 5 staff. This personality takes over and Winters is removed, and never seen again in the course of the series.¹⁵⁶ Ivanova is saddened by the loss of Winters and,

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ On Babylon 5, Earth controls its population of telepaths by either having them to join the Psi Corps or forcing them to regularly take drug that suppress telepathic abilities. The latter option, chosen by Ivanova's mother, often makes the individual depressed and suicidal.

¹⁵⁵ "Mind War," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002). "The War Prayer," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

¹⁵⁶ "Divided Loyalties," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

during a Minbari religious ceremony where one tells a secret, confesses her feelings.

Speaking to the alien character Delenn (Mira Furlan,) Ivanova says "I think I loved Talia."¹⁵⁷

It is hard to discern exactly what the view on homosexuality is in the society presented by *Babylon 5*. Unlike the *Star Trek* episodes "Outcast" and "Rejoined," the story of Ivanova and Winters spans several years, and there is no apparently "moral of the story" or specific resolution at the end. Furthermore, the episodes that depict the interactions between the two characters do not solely focus on their relationship. It is very apparent that the characters are at least open to the idea of homosexuality, or perhaps identify as bisexual, though it is never stated outright. It is never shown how the other characters feel about same-sex relationships simply because they are unaware of Ivanova and Winters being involved with one another. The only exception would be Ivanova's confession to Delenn, who simply reacts with a saddened smile, expressing sympathy towards Ivanova's loss.¹⁵⁸ The relationship between Ivanova and Winters is never problematized in the same manner as *Star Trek's* Dax and Kahn or Riker and Soren, so whether there are taboos or stigma related to homosexuality in *Babylon 5's* human society remains uncertain. In that sense, the *Babylon 5* story arc fails to serve as a parallel to our society in the way that the *Star Trek* episodes did. It does not offer the same social commentary, but rather presents the relationship as a story of mutual love and affection. The writers of *Babylon 5* obviously felt that portraying this homosexual relationship on screen was unproblematic and acceptable, but the viewer gains no particular insight as to how the couple's fellow characters or the society they live in would react to their love.

¹⁵⁷ "Ceremonies of Light and Dark," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

4.4 - Familial Relationships in the Future

"I'm not a family man, Riker. And yet, Starfleet has given me a ship with children aboard." - Captain Jean-Luc Picard, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, "Encounter at Farpoint."¹⁵⁹

Familial relations and aspects of family life are also explored in the different series, but the topic is not as prominently featured as one might expect of a portrayal of futuristic society. This can be explained by the nature of the series and the military settings, with most of the main characters being career officers in some capacity, and as such the viewer gains very little insight into family life in a town on Earth. The key difference between the series is that *Babylon 5* had a distinct absence of families onboard the station, whereas the *Star Trek* series intermittently featured families onboard the locations. Already in the pilot episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* it becomes clear that the Enterprise, and Starfleet as a whole, has a policy of allowing the families of crew members to live onboard.¹⁶⁰ The premise of a ship having spouses and children onboard seems somewhat absurd and the idea behind it is questionable, but it does add a very human touch to the series that resonates with the viewer, and it does fit into the context of a utopian society. Furthermore, one might understand why these fictional crews of officers would appreciate having their families close as the characters live their lives onboard the stations and ships. Many episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* show that the Enterprise - despite being a vessel for peaceful exploration of the galaxy - often finds itself in dangerous situations that threaten the lives of everyone onboard. One episode, "Contagion," depicts a sister ship of the Enterprise destroyed as a result of alien meddling, killing everyone onboard.¹⁶¹ In some cases children themselves are shown as being

¹⁵⁹ "Encounter at Farpoint," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ "Contagion," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

in direct danger as well when the Enterprise is boarded by enemies.¹⁶² The potential risk for families onboard these vessels is further exemplified by the pilot episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, where Benjamin Sisko (Avery Brooks) loses his wife when the ship he serves on is involved in a battle and destroyed, leaving him a widower and single father.¹⁶³

Despite the apparent risks involved, having families onboard allowed *Star Trek* to depict aspects of parenthood, and thereby explored different kinds of femininity and masculinity. Many of the families presented on a regular basis in *Star Trek* are those where single parents raise a child on their own. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* featured several such familial relationships, and maintained the same formula employed with all its main characters, keeping a clear divide between the masculine and the feminine. In the traditional feminine role, the widowed Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) is raising her son onboard the Enterprise as her husband had been killed in the line of duty. Certain episodes occasionally tackle the difficulties associated with raising a child on one's own and show Crusher as a nurturing and compassionate mother. Beverly Crusher often seeks the advice of the male characters, such as Jean-Luc Picard, who often acts as a masculine father figure in Wesley Crusher's (Wil Wheaton) life.¹⁶⁴ This was particularly evident in "The First Duty" where Wesley is investigated at Starfleet Academy due to neglect leading to an accident, as the episode features more interactions between Picard and Wesley than it does between the boy and his mother.¹⁶⁵ Beverly Crusher is depicted as trying to do her best by herself, but the son, Wesley Crusher was a stand-alone character who was always depicted as a gifted child on the series. He had his own role onboard the ship during the first four seasons, going as far as being an "acting Ensign," operating the ship's helm on the bridge. The character is always

¹⁶² "Rascals," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁶³ "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁶⁴ "Evolution," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁶⁵ "The First Duty," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

comfortable and accepted in this environment dominated by masculine males, being treated as a peer regardless of age, and even stays onboard the ship during season 2 when the mother is entirely absent from the series.

In contrast to the warm family relationship between the Crushers, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* later introduces the plotline of the Klingon character Worf (Michael Dorn) raising a son, Alexander, after the boy's mother dies.¹⁶⁶ Worf is arguably one of the archetypes of male masculinity of the series with his brutish Klingon warrior heritage and cultural values. The story of Worf and Alexander eventually spanned from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. It depicts Worf as a somewhat reluctant parent, but also as an old-fashioned father figure who tries to bestow his traditional values upon his child and being met with resistance. What is interesting about this particular story arc is that it shows Alexander eventually trying to live up to his father's expectations and often falling short. The boy finally gains Worf's approval after enlisting in the Klingon military and fighting in a war.¹⁶⁷ The series do not offer much commentary on how Worf as a father cannot seem to fully embrace his son's choices until they are in alignment with Worf's own views and values. While it is always apparent that Worf cares for his child, he finds the duties of parenthood difficult, seeking and finding comfort in the advice and guidance of the nurturing and feminine Deanna Troi.¹⁶⁸ It is also interesting how Worf seems to abandon his son after *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and virtually no mention of him is made until Alexander's appearance in the later seasons of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. The series do not portray it as problematic that Worf apparently walked out on his son because they did not see eye to eye. Rather, it emphasizes Worf's approval when Alexander finally follows in his footsteps, and

¹⁶⁶ "Reunion," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

¹⁶⁷ "Penumbra," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁶⁸ "Parallels," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2002).

how it brings them closer together.¹⁶⁹ The story of Worf and Alexander could have been deeper and more meaningful if the boy had been shown doing something entirely different, and Worf actually coming to terms with it and respecting his son. In that sense the episodes can be said to offer a certain social commentary on familial relations with regards to strict parents, particularly masculine fathers, and how children will often go to great lengths to fulfill expectations and follow in the footsteps of their elders.

The shift in gender roles in regards to masculinity and femininity on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* compared to its predecessor was also apparent in how the series depicted parenthood and familial relations. It offered a contrast to Crushers nurturing femininity and Worf's rigid masculinity in its portrayal of the more balanced family bond between widower Benjamin Sisko (Avery Brooks) and his son Jake Sisko (Cirroc Lofton.) The relationship is a recurring element in the course of the series' story, with the character Jake appearing in nearly half of the episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Since Jake is not one of the typical military officers, it is the most in-depth, non-romantic relationship depicted in any of the *Star Trek* series. The entire relationship brought more realism to the concept of families onboard the military installations. Benjamin Sisko expresses genuine concern and exhibits honest and believable traits typical of a caring father, stating to Jean-Luc Picard "I have a son that I'm raising alone, captain. This is not the ideal environment."¹⁷⁰ The family moves to Deep Space Nine, which is located in a conflict zone, when Jake is 14, as his father is assigned as the commanding officer of the station. Unlike Wesley Crusher of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Jake is not depicted as any sort of wonder child, but rather as a normal boy who attends a school on the station, and also experiences some loneliness due to the absence of

¹⁶⁹ "You Are Cordially Invited," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁷⁰ "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

other children onboard, underlining Sisko's point about the station not being "the ideal environment."

While Benjamin Sisko was portrayed as a strong masculine character and a military leader, the writers do not shy away from having him displaying nurturing (and what might be regarded as traditionally feminine) traits in his interactions with his son, making it one of *Star Trek's* most realistic and convincing familial relations. Numerous episodes focus on the nature and depth of their relationship, such as their shared adventures, and their shared interest in activities such as baseball.¹⁷¹ The two both have a passion for food and are often shown enjoying casual home cooked meals in the quarters they share onboard the station.¹⁷² The father and son would frequently hug, underlining their strong bond. When Benjamin meets Kasidy Yates (Penny Johnson,) a woman he later marries, it is thanks to Jake who is eager to see his father in a serious relationship once again.¹⁷³ Benjamin also supports and approves of Jake not following in his footsteps, as Jake chooses to focus on his affinity for writing and eventually becomes a journalist. With all these factors and traits, Benjamin Sisko balances masculine and feminine character traits, underlining how he is comfortable in the role as a parent, and rarely ever seeks the advice of other characters on how to raise his son. The two characters seem to fulfill each other and it brings a human depth to the show's leading character that was lacking on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Amidst all the examples of single parent families, *Star Trek* did also portray regular familial relationships with success. *Star Trek: Voyager* dealt with the topic of the main characters getting intimate with one another as the ship was so far from home, facing a lengthy journey. One of the series' prominent relationships was between Tom Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill) and B'Ellana Torres (Roxann Dawson,) two characters that shared many of

¹⁷¹ "Take Me Out to the Holosuite," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁷² "Rapture," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁷³ "Family Business," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

the same traits. Paris was a typical masculine male, portrayed as something of an alpha-male bachelor with a certain edge due to his criminal record.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, Torres was a half-human/half-Klingon who exhibited certain masculine traits by having a tendency towards violence as a result of her Klingon heritage. Additionally, she is shown as having an interest in things that might be more associated with masculinity, having skills in mechanical and engineering fields.¹⁷⁵ The two get married onboard the ship in the course of the series and eventually come to expect a child. As such, the two are a rare example of individuals who develop out of the original and pre-defined character roles, abandoning the life of casual relationships described earlier in the chapter. They gradually gain more depth as they are balanced to exhibit more nurturing traits as a result of their impending roles as parents, accepting that having a child will mean a new phase of more responsibility and maturity in their lives.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the child is born in the finale of the series, which means the viewer never gets to actually see how the two actually function as parents.¹⁷⁷

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine featured one of the most traditional and longest lasting families out of any of the series, with the marriage between Miles O'Brien (Colm Meany) and his wife Keiko (Rosalind Chao.) The couple married in season 4 of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* where Miles O'Brien was a recurring character. Eventually, O'Brien became part of the main cast of characters on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and the Keiko character continued to make regular appearances in that series as well. The O'Briens were presented as the most normal and well-functioning family out of those shown on the different *Star Trek* series. Together they have two children in the course of the two series, and raise them onboard the Enterprise and subsequently Deep Space Nine.¹⁷⁸ O'Brien provided a contrast to

¹⁷⁴ "Caretaker," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹⁷⁵ "Parallax," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹⁷⁶ "Lineage," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹⁷⁷ "Endgame," *Star Trek: Voyager*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2004).

¹⁷⁸ "Emissary," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

the other men in the series who are seen ascending the rank ladder and also engaging in brief relationships with random episodic characters. He was the "everyman" of all the *Star Trek* series, not so much driven by ambition of rank and career advancement, but still a skilled individual. He was never portrayed with the same type of masculinity as men such as William Riker, but rather as something of an "average Joe" who was passionate about family life.¹⁷⁹ The couple share the responsibilities associated with parenting, as Keiko's profession as a botanist would mean spending time on far-flung planets while Miles would take care of the children. It was even acknowledged that these military installations were occasionally so dangerous that evacuation of civilians was necessary, unlike *Star Trek: The Next Generation* where families were always along for the ride. During the wars and conflicts that threatened the, Miles would send his family to safety on Earth to avoid having them in harm's way.¹⁸⁰ Those nuances in the portrayal of the family meant that the viewer got to see what amounts to normal family life in this utopian society.

The contrast between *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* in terms of presenting the issue of familial relations lies in the difference in tone between the series. *Babylon 5*, while occasionally dealing with the romantic relationships and interactions of the characters, was a series about a diplomatic outpost that was at risk of attack, and also involved in wars. The writers presented a more realistic setting by downplaying the concept of having children onboard, at least not instating it as the policy of the space station, and even including in the introductory narration that "it can be a dangerous place."¹⁸¹ The series stays true to its own nature, and does not place spouses and children in the unlikely situation of finding themselves on a space station that is on the frontlines of war. On *Babylon 5* it works much as it does in real life, with soldiers going off to fight and families stay at home. The Earthforce of *Babylon*

¹⁷⁹ "In Purgatory's Shadow," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁸⁰ "Call to Arms," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Paramount Pictures (DVD, 2003).

¹⁸¹ "Soul Hunter," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2002).

5 was not, like *Star Trek's* Starfleet, oriented around peaceful exploration of the galaxy, but rather at defense and military operations. That does not mean that Babylon 5 was entirely devoid of children, as travelers would come to the station and occasionally live on it with their families, but these were largely episodic guest characters of minor importance. Consequently, it is not easy to tell how familial relations work in the *Babylon 5* universe, but we get glimpses of it when parents of the regular characters come to visit. From those glimpses, we discern that the view it offers is not different from *Star Trek*. Stephen Franklin (Richard Biggs), the station's doctor, has a strained relationship with his father who is a general in Earthforce, a situation similar to that of Worf and Alexander where the conflict lies in choice of career.¹⁸² On the other hand, lead character John Sheridan is shown as having a warm relationship with his career diplomat father, a relationship that seems comparable to that of the Siskos of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.¹⁸³ Ultimately, the lack of frequent familial interaction detracts from some of the series' potential in depicting an aspect of this futuristic human society, and does not provide any significant content that can be compared to the families of *Star Trek*.

4.5 - Chapter Conclusion

In terms of the issues discussed in this chapter, *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* did not particularly differ from one another, save for the early seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, which was more conservative in terms of gender roles and the depiction of characters. The subsequent series balanced the majority of male characters by presenting the viewers with strong female characters that exhibited masculine traits. Accepting the military settings and the values of the characters as a reflection of the societies they live in, it can be concluded that they enjoyed an apparent equality between the genders, normal familial

¹⁸² "GROPOS," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2003).

¹⁸³ "Rising Star," *Babylon 5*, Time Warner Home Video Ltd. (DVD, 2004).

relations, and de-stigmatized interracial relationships and sexuality. The series did, however, take different approaches in regards to how they chose to present the issue of homosexuality and sexual identity. *Babylon 5* depicted homosexuality between humans in a straight-forward manner without any particular social commentary, and did not give any clear insight into how the characters' society would react. In contrast, *Star Trek* portrayed humans as apparently tolerant of the issue, but made use of aliens as parallels to put focus on the struggle for equality faced by those choosing to confront stigma and taboo related to sexual identity. While the utopian setting of *Star Trek* and the more dismal setting of *Babylon 5* have provided a great deal of contrast in preceding chapters, the topics raised in this chapter are much more in sync as both franchises take a progressive and liberal approach to the issues.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

This thesis wanted to examine how *Star Trek* set out "To Boldly Go" into a positive and utopian future for mankind, and how *Babylon 5* presented itself as the "Last, Best Hope" with its portrayal of a future where humanity was still flawed, yet hopeful. In pursuit of that goal, 636 episodes amounting to approximately 464 hours of television have been analyzed. The relevance of each individual episode has been considered to select the most prominent examples that proved how the series put forth their diverging visions of humanity. In retrospect, it is naturally clear that there are certainly other issues that could have been included, as well as other examples that could have been brought up to underline a point in the different sections, but that would have lengthened the entire thesis needlessly.

Star Trek was on a path "To Boldly Go," and it did so by faithfully adhering to a coherent vision of utopia that leaves a lasting impact. The characters are the heart and soul of the story, and the primary focus is on how events impact them, not how they impact events. As such, the series provide social commentary through the experiences of the characters. It does not show the struggle of flawed individuals trying to be an ideal, but rather how ideal humans maintain their principles, providing a role model and an example. This was most prominently achieved in its depiction of issues pertaining to racism and discrimination, individual faith, and most prominently the portrayal of gender roles and sexuality in human society. With those issues, *Star Trek* was at its best, managing to project present day issues in to a futuristic setting and giving the viewer an experience that could be related to. Regardless of the fantasy setting and the use of alien parallels, the issues being presented are still relevant. The series stayed true to their nature by preaching of tolerance and respect, and there is an optimistic vision of how the future can be. In the end, *Star Trek* truly did boldly go where no man has gone before.

In contrast, *Babylon 5* was the "Last, Best Hope" when it came to putting forth its own vision of the future that was filled with hope, while also reflecting on the past. While not portraying a utopia, it did not convey dystopia either, nor was it some sort of anti-*Star Trek*. It was a stand-alone series that tried to tackle many issues on a much larger scale. In doing so it benefitted greatly from the five year plan the creators had laid out, bringing a fulfilling coherence to the series as a whole. At the same time, this ongoing storyline may have made it hard for the series to resonate with casual viewers who did not have the opportunity to watch it on a regular basis when it originally aired. The story arcs were numerous and far-reaching, spanning from the initial pilot to the final episode, chronicling not just the lives of the characters, but also the history of humanity. Through the use of personal stories and parallels, the series provided not just social commentary, but really underlined the dangers of repeating history with its frequent allusions to events past and present. The strength of the series was in the depiction of the governmental politics and social movements, the overreaching role of religion in society, and also the impact of events on society and the people within it. The central theme was the lack of stability as time passes, and how small things could have lasting consequences. *Babylon 5* ultimately adhered to the idea that utopia and social tranquility was something that was far beyond the grasp of humanity in the time period portrayed in the series, but what truly mattered was the struggle to try and reach that goal, going one step at a time.

The issues and themes presented in the chapters form a distinct link in showing how the *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* series portrayed the different aspects of life in the future. The tone of the series was accounted for, emphasizing the implications and differences between presenting a static and sterile environment as was the case with *Star Trek*, versus the more daunting and uncertain environment in *Babylon 5*. It was then established how war and consequent technological advances are seen as propelling humanity into the new age that we

see portrayed in these series. The historical backdrop is important as it formed a fundamental contrast between *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*, and established how the societal realities portrayed in the series came about. *Star Trek* clung to the vision where the new age would be a peaceful one with the exploration of space while humanity enjoyed the perks and privileges of living in a utopian society. *Babylon 5* on the other hand, remained adamant that venturing into space ultimately would not change humanity's tendency towards conflict. Consequently the humanity seen on *Babylon 5* was one fraught with discord, but the series still conveyed a message of hope and the possibilities of change. The viewer accepts these settings that serve as the basis for the series, because they are simply the stage upon which the drama is being played out, sometimes with alien characters in place of the humans.

The *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* series tended to differ in how they chose to portray the moral choices and predicaments faced by the characters. With *Babylon 5* was often it difficult to discern what choice a character should make in a given situation. A moral quandary might take several episodes or even seasons to be adequately resolved, if it had any clear cut conclusion at all. In contrast, *Star Trek* here benefitted from its tendency to resolve situations quickly and with limited debate. By painting a black and white picture of virtually every choice, the *Star Trek* episodes always benefitted from having a resounding moral to the story that the viewer could find satisfying.

Star Trek, due to the episodic nature of the series, typically fell short when it came to depicting any sort of long-lasting story arcs with significant consequences for the characters involved. The series were left depicting isolated happenings that often proved to have no further impact when it came to the story of the series, and the society portrayed was largely static. But this did provide the opportunity for *Star Trek* to depict clear cut social commentary and raise issues that might have seemed irrelevant if they had been included in a more elaborate story with dominant themes stealing the attention. The series were about depicting

the nuances of life in the United Federation of Planets at a personal and detailed level through the lives of the characters. We see the characters as exemplary individuals who live by guiding principles that are morally right, and the series thrust these people into situations where their integrity might be compromised.

Babylon 5 was a mature and complex portrayal of life in space, but tended to focus too much on the big picture with its complex political themes and tales of war. While there are certainly many portrayals of personal stories, the individual character development sometimes left something to be desired, as the focus was limited primarily to certain characters. The characters were often shown to be able to truly impact the course of events and had a significant role, and their stories are told, but too often there was not an adequate depiction of social commentary that would resonate with the viewer in a lasting manner. The constant drive of the story lines gave the viewer little room to breathe and explore the characters on the same level as *Star Trek*. Even so, the series stands on its own two feet as a daring attempt to take science fiction in an entirely new direction, which is admirable considering its status as somewhat of an underdog at the time of its conception and launch. When it came to portraying in depth social commentary on a personal level, *Babylon 5* was not so much the "last, best hope," but for science fiction television as a genre it certainly was.

The end of these series did not mean the end of the franchises as a whole, but *Babylon 5* was less successful than *Star Trek* at continuing its vision of humanity's future. The series *Crusade* launched in 1999 and was intended as a direct sequel to *Babylon 5* with a new five year story arc. But the series suffered from interference by network executives that limited Joseph Michael Straczynski's influence over the project, and ended after only 13 episodes.¹⁸⁴ For a while, fan hopes were renewed in 2007 with the planned the straight-to-DVD anthology called *Babylon 5: The Lost Tales* that was to be set ten years after the series with each

¹⁸⁴ Stephen Grimm, *The Lurker's Guide to Babylon 5*, 1998, <<http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/guide/501.html#JS>> (25 November 2012).

installment devoted to the classic characters. However, only two episodes were released and clearly reflected the low budget Straczynski had to work with. And so, the project was cancelled, marking the last installment of the franchise to date.

Star Trek, on the other hand, carried on with the motion picture *Star Trek: Nemesis* in 2002 that finally brought the "next generation" crew to the final step of its journey. At the same time, the entire franchise took a nostalgic route back to its roots, with launching the prequel series *Star Trek: Enterprise* in 2001 that lasted four seasons before its cancellation in 2005. From there it went on with the successful motion picture *Star Trek* in 2009 that rebooted the timeline and went back to the characters from *Star Trek: The Original Series*, such as James Tiberius Kirk, with new actors and a modern look. A sequel called *Star Trek: Into Darkness* is slated for release in 2013, proving the lasting appeal of the *Star Trek* franchise as it continues "to boldly go" into the future.

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