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Time Hugo  
Finalist!

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Victor Grech  
**Crime and Punishment in *Star Trek*:  
Genocide and War Crimes**

**Introduction**

The term *genocide* was coined by Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959) from the Greek *genos* (family, tribe, or race) and Latin *-cide* (killing). Lemkin was a Pole of Jewish descent and he used this term to describe the 1915 massacres of Armenians and Assyrians. Genocide may be defined as “the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group” (Funk 1).

War crimes constitute violations of the rules of engagement that are considered applicable during armed conflict. Since such actions are carried out by individuals or instigated on the order of individuals, individual criminal responsibility may be applied. Some examples summarized from the Nuremberg International Military Tribunals after the Second World War include the “murder, the ill-treatment or deportation of civilian residents of an occupied territory to slave labor camps ... the murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war ... the wanton destruction of cities, towns and villages, and any devastation not justified by military or civilian necessity” (Solis 301–03).

Chalk and Jonassohn have noted that perceived differences between peoples may lead to one group considering another “as less than fully human: pagans, savages, or even animals” (28), thereby sanctioning and even legitimizing genocide and war crimes. These situations are often depicted in *Star Trek*. I will review these two topics and identify common elements, including the Manichean sense of the struggle of good against evil and the almost inevitable punishment of perpetrators of such atrocities. Moreover, the shows’ stories may provide insights into the potential workings of the minds of war criminals.

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## *Special Atrocity Exhibition Issue*

Victor Grech: Crimes against humanity in *Star Trek*  
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~~Paul Voermans~~

## ~~Technique of Awful: When Extremity Takes Us Past the Real~~

~~The subject of a holocaust—and the one we call The Holocaust—can I use it in fiction or does it use me? Will you object to my appropriation and should I care? In any case, when compelled to speak of such darkness, language copes, shifts, concentrates.~~

~~If it isn’t true that to “write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”<sup>†</sup> nor that it makes it “impossible to write,” I am~~

~~† Adorno’s aphorism should be read in context. “It is dragged into the abyss by its object. The materialistic transparency of culture has not made it more honest, only more vulgar. By relinquishing its own particularity, culture has also relinquished the salt of truth, which once consisted in its opposition to other particularities. To call it to account before a responsibility which it denies is only to confirm cultural pomposity. Neutralized and ready-made, traditional culture has become worthless today. Through an irrevocable~~

~~Continued on page 4~~

## Crime and Punishment in *Star Trek*

*continued from page 1*

### Narratives of Mass Villainy

One of the earliest and clearest depictions of such crimes in the *Trek* franchise is given in the *Original Series* episode “The Conscience of the King.” The “former Governor Kodos of Tarsus Four, also known as Kodos the Executioner” is found working as part of an itinerant acting troupe, the “Karidian Company of Players.” Twenty years prior to the events shown in the episode, an exotic fungus contaminated the food supply, threatening mass starvation. Faced with famine, Kodos declared martial law and divided the population into two groups, deciding who would survive and who would die based on his own theory of eugenics. When relief ships finally arrived, over four thousand people had been summarily executed. Of Kodos, only a “[b]urned body [was] found when Earth forces arrived. No positive identification. Case closed.” The parallel to the discovery of Adolf Hitler’s body at the end of the Second World War.

A Starfleet officer who survived the slaughter as a child identifies Karidian as Kodos: “That voice. He’s back. That man on the stage. I’m certain of it. That’s Kodos the Executioner.” The *Enterprise* is called in, as Kirk was a similar survivor. Kirk confronts Karidian/Kodos and forces him to read the original speech (for the purposes of computer voice identification) that Kodos had broadcast during the fateful event, twenty years prior, and toward the end of the reading, Karidian/Kodos lifts his eyes from the script and continues the speech from memory, as if this speech had been indelibly burned into his memory:

The revolution is successful, but survival depends on drastic measures. Your continued existence represents a threat to the well-being of society. Your lives means slow death to the more valued members of the colony. Therefore I have no alternative but to sentence you to death. Your execution is so ordered. Signed, Kodos, governor of Tarsus Four.

Karidian/Kodos partially defends his actions as inevitably utilitarian: “Kodos made a decision of life and death. Some had to die that others might live. You’re a man of decision, Captain. You ought to understand that.” He remonstrates that he killed four thousand people “in order to save four thousand others. And if the supply ships hadn’t come earlier than expected, this Kodos of yours might have gone down in history as a great hero.”

Kirk retorts “but he didn’t. And history has made its judgment.” Karidian/Kodos shrugs away his role: “Blood thins. The body fails. One is finally grateful for a failing memory. I no longer treasure life, not even my own. I am tired! And the past is a blank.” He partially redeems himself when his daughter shoots at Kirk, and he cries out and steps in front of Kirk and is killed instead.

In the *Voyager* episode “Jetrel,” another dramatic confrontation is depicted between two nonhumans when a Haarkonian, “Doctor Ma’bor Jetrel ... a man who has made it

his life’s work to develop a weapon to destroy as many Talaxians as possible” arrives on *Voyager* to test Neelix, a Talaxian, for “metremia,” a delayed effect of the weapon on the surviving Talaxians. Neelix rails:

He’s a mass murderer! ... The night of the Cascade, a bright flash cut across the sky. It was so blinding that people threw themselves to the ground. Then everything stopped, like a moment out of time. Then we all looked up to see where the flash had come from, but the sky seemed oddly empty.... In the blink of an eye [the populated moon] Rinax was enveloped by a deadly cloud, and those lovely days were turned into one endless frigid night. More than three hundred thousand were killed.... The day after the Cascade was deployed, Talax surrendered unconditionally to the Haarkonian Order.

This echoes the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which were followed by the equally unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire, ending the Second World War.

Neelix clarifies that he returned to Rinax to look for survivors. In the midst of the ruins, he finds

bodies moving, whimpering, coming toward him. They’re monsters, their flesh horribly charred, the color of shale. One of them comes toward him, mangled arms outstretched, and he can’t help it, he turns away frightened. But then the thing speaks and he knows by the sound of her voice that she’s not a monster at all, but a child. A little girl.

Jetrel explains that exposure to metreon isotopes in Talaxians who went to Rinax may result in metremia, a fatal blood disease that may lay dormant for years. Neelix confronts Jetrel and asks

do you feel guilty about what you did? ... Was it necessary to vaporize more than a quarter of a million people and to leave thousands of others to be eaten away by Metreon poisoning?

Jetrel, however, clarifies that he is searching for a cure for metremia:

Guilty? I do not regret it. I did what had to be done.... we never thought there would be any radiation poisoning.... Yes, I developed the weapon, but it was the government and the military leaders who decided to use it, not I.... I must live with my conscience, as you must live with yours. How many did you kill during the war? ... I do believe I can help you. If not you, then others of your race. Isn’t that more important than punishing me?

Neelix slowly softens but challenges Jetrel:

If I’d been in charge of the Cascade I’d have ... chosen

a military target, simply deployed it on an uninhabited planet.... You should have tried to stop them! Why didn't you speak out? People would have listened to you.

#### Jetrel counters

The military strategists did not think a demonstration would work. They wanted to show the power of the Cascade in all its horror.... If I had not discovered the Cascade, it would have been someone else, don't you see? ... Something so enormous as science will not stop for something as small as man.... It is not possible to be a scientist unless you believe that all the knowledge of the universe and all the power that it bestows is of intrinsic value to everyone, and one must share that knowledge and allow it to be applied, and then be willing to live with the consequences.... When I saw that blinding light, brighter than a thousand suns. I knew at that moment exactly what I had become.

Once again, this echoes the descriptions of atomic bomb deployment and testing, and his words echo those of Robert Oppenheimer, the nuclear physicist who, upon witnessing Trinity, the first atomic bomb test in New Mexico on July 16, 1945, famously quoted the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." (They are spoken there by Krishna, who, in his destructive form, is "brighter than a thousand suns.")

Jetrel further rejoins,

You are not the only one to lose family during the war, ... Nothing as clean as death. When I returned home after the Cascade to my wife, my lovely wife ... could not bear to look at me.... She thought I had become a monster, and shortly after that she took my three children and I have not seen them since.

There is no way I can ever apologize to you.... That's why I have not tried.

Jetrel further informs Neelix that he himself has "advanced metremia. I will be dead in a matter of days." Jetrel persuades *Voyager's* captain, Janeway, to allow him to beam aboard a sample of the metreon cloud, ostensibly to aid him in his efforts to find a cure for metremia.

However, Neelix realizes that he is "engaging in some kind of bizarre experiment," and Jetrel explains he wanted to bring back "the victims of Rinax." To bring to life and thereby "restore people who were vaporized by the Metreon cascade," since

[t]he electrostatic properties of the cloud are such that the disassembled biomatter has been held in a state of animated suspension. I discovered years ago that reintegration is possible ... What I've been working on for the past fifteen years is a way to rebuilt that atomic structure ... regenerative fusion.

The *Voyager* crew are skeptical, since "Doctor Jetrel is proposing the reconstruction and reanimation of a remarkable

complex set of biosystems from billions of subatomic particles ... It all sounds very implausible." But Jetrel pleads that this attempted act of reparation is necessary. "I wanted the world to know I'm not a monster. My theories can be used to heal, as well as to destroy. But they refused me, called me a Talaxian sympathizer, and exiled me."

Janeway relents, and an attempt is made but this fails since "[t]he degree of fragmentation is simply too great." On his deathbed, Jetrel asks Neelix: "I suppose you think this is a fitting punishment for me." But Neelix muses "[m]aybe the Cascade was a punishment for all of us, for our hatred, our brutality.... I want to tell you that I forgive you." And Jetrel dies.

In *Deep Space Nine* (and other series), the Cardassian occupation of Bajor is a notorious event, and it was so violent that it was likened to a rape (Vejar, "The Darkness and the Light"). Indeed, rape was alleged to have been regularly employed along with many other atrocities:

All those Bajoran bodies starved, brutalized. Do you know what Cardassian policy was? ... First came the humiliation, mothers raped in front of their children, husbands beaten till their wives couldn't recognize them, old people buried alive because they couldn't work anymore" (Nelson, "Duet").

Cardassians also used Bajoran females as "comfort women" (West, "Wrongs Darker Than Death or Night").

The occupation resulted in the strip-mining of Bajor, such that the once-fertile farmland was poisoned by Cardassian experiments, and the toxic soil had to be physically cleansed with "soil reclamators" (West, "Shakaar").

Family and friends of anyone in the Bajoran resistance were automatically considered a suspect in any criminal cases, and conversely, anyone suspected of a crime was held for questioning along with family and friends. A hearing would consist of a "special tribunal," a drumhead consisting of Cardassian military leaders. In most hearings, the evidence produced was circumstantial, which was immaterial to Cardassian tribunals just as long as someone was punished (Burton, "Things Past").

The ultimate intention was the "full scale colonization" of Bajor by Cardassia, and after forty years of occupation, Cardassian authorities "wanted the situation resolved and they didn't care how it was done" (Auberjonois, "Waltz"). Thus, over its fifty year span, the occupation resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of Bajorans (Kretchmer, "Covenant").

This allowed the series' creators to shed some insight into the workings of the mind of the Cardassian in charge of Bajor, Dukat, a man who would be branded a "war criminal" (Auberjonois, "Waltz"). Dukat survived at least four assassination attempts by the Bajoran resistance movement and almost plaintively complains with complete lack of insight:

I've wanted to increase rations in the Bajoran sector for some time now, but the resistance makes it almost impossible to show any sort of kindness to your people.... The Bajorans are, well, they're like my chil-

dren, I suppose. And like any father, I want only what's best for them.... Bad manners are the fault of the parent, not the child. My weakness is I'm too generous, too forgiving. My heart is too big. (Burton, "Things Past")

Dukat became prefect 40 years into the occupation. Convinced that a gentler hand would lead to a more civilized occupation, he instituted a series of reforms. In conversation with Deep Space 9's commander Benjamin Sisko, he explains:

At the end of one month of my administration, the death rate had dropped by twenty percent. Now how did the Bajorans react to all this? On my one month anniversary they blew up an orbital dry-dock, killing over two hundred Cardassian soldiers and workers....

So I had to order a response. But even then it was a carefully tempered one. I ordered two hundred suspected members of the Resistance rounded up and executed. Two hundred lives for two hundred lives. That's justice, not malevolence. Justice.... And what did I get for my troubles? An assassination attempt on my own space station! ... On and on it went, year after blood-soaked year. Time and again I would reach out with the open hand of friendship, and time and again they would slap it away.

Sisko, barely able to believe Dukat's self-justification, replies: "You're not responsible for what happened during the occupation, the Bajorans are.... So, why do you think they didn't appreciate this rare opportunity you were offering them?" Dukat rants on with blind arrogance:

Because they were blind, ignorant fools. If only they had cooperated with us, we could have turned their world into a paradise. From the moment we arrived on Bajor, it was clear that we were the superior race.... It would've been so much easier on everyone if the Bajorans had simply accepted their role. But no, day after day they clustered in their temples and prayed for deliverance, and night after night they planted bombs outside of our homes. Pride. Stubborn, unyielding pride....

I hated everything about them! Their superstitions and their cries for sympathy, their treachery and their lies, their smug superiority and their stiff-necked obstinacy, their earrings and their broken wrinkled noses.... I should have killed every last one of them. I should have turned their planet into a graveyard the likes of which the galaxy had never seen! I should have killed them all.

To which Sisko responds, "And that is why you're not an evil man."

The occupation is shown inducing existential angst in Cardassians who were not directly involved in the crimes and atrocities that occurred during this era. In the earlier Deep Space 9 episode "Duet," a Cardassian file clerk had himself surgically altered in order to impersonate the deceased commander of a prison camp (a certain Marritza) so as to be punished for not protesting the events of the occupation.

When his ruse is discovered, he explains

I covered my ears every night. I couldn't bear to hear those horrible screams. You have no idea what it's like to be a coward, to see these horrors and do nothing. Marritza's dead. He deserves to be dead.... don't you see? I have to be punished. We all have to be punished....

Cardassia will only survive if it stands in front of Bajor and admits the truth. My trial will force Cardassia to acknowledge its guilt. And we're guilty, all of us. My death is necessary.

### Narratives of Medical Torture

Bajorans also became subjects of medical experiments. In the *Voyager* episode "Nothing Human," we learn of one such perpetrator, "Crell Moset, Chief Exobiology specialist Cardassia Prime certified to perform all surgical procedures." When re-created as a hologram in order to help *Voyager's* doctor with an unusual case, he confesses that he "didn't have the resources to try traditional methods, so [he] experimented with procedures that, that never would have occurred to [him] under ordinary circumstances." However, a crewman recognizes him and accuses him:

Moset performed experiments on living people. Thousands of Bajorans were killed in his so-called hospital.... He operated on my grandfather. Exposed his internal organs to nadiion radiation. It took six days for him to die.... He blinded people so he could study how they adapted. Exposed them to polytrinic acid just to see how long it would take for their skin to heal.

[His] program should be destroyed. Every trace of that man's research should be deleted from the database.... As long as we're willing to benefit from his research we're no better than he is.

It is also revealed that Moset cured an epidemic of a particular virus by "infecting hundreds of people so that he could experiment with different treatments."

Because the Cardassians concealed their wartime atrocities, Moset was integrated into society; he went on to become Chairman of Exobiology at the University of Culat. *Voyager's* doctor and Moset argue and counterargue and the Doctor confronts Moset with his misdeeds:

You are the holographic representation of Crell Moset. Your programme, despite all its brilliance, is based on his work. He infected patients, exposed them to polytrinic acid, mutilated their living bodies, and now we're reaping the benefits of those experiments.... This is the twenty-fourth century, Crell. Your kind of barbarism ended a long time ago or, at least, it should have!

Once again, there are clear parallels with Nazi atrocities performed on Jews and other perceived inferior races (and with more systematic atrocities conducted by Japanese forces



against the conquered peoples of Asia at the same time) and a clear parallel is drawn with Josef Mengele, a German SS officer and physician at Auschwitz concentration camp during the Second World War. To these various censures, Moset replies:

I'm only a hologram and I have no memory of those events. They're not part of my programming.... You're a physician. You know there's always a price to pay for the advancement of medical science.... What matters is that we can use it to help patients today.

The crew are initially undecided as to whether to use Moset; as First Officer Chakotay says, "We'd be setting a terrible precedent..." Ultimately, Captain Janeway overrides the argument, deciding that "the only issue I'm concerned about is the well-being of that crew member lying in Sickbay." After the crewman is treated, the Doctor faces Moset for one last time:

It is my judgment that the Medical Consultant Programme and all the algorithms contained therein shall be deleted from the database. In light of recent evidence I cannot in good conscience utilize research that was derived from such inhuman practices.

## Massacres

In war, misunderstandings unfortunately almost inevitably occur. The Setlik III massacre was a significant event in the Federation-Cardassian War. The Cardassian Union believed that the Federation colony on this planet was a staging ground for an attack on Cardassian space but the colony was composed of civilians only. A Cardassian attack force massacred over a hundred civilians before the colony was relieved by a Federation task force. It was later acknowledged by the Cardassians that this had been "a terrible mistake" (Chalmers, "The Wounded").

## Genocide

The Cardassian Union also wiped out all Maquis resistance colonies in the Federation-Cardassian demilitarized zone, killing all resistance fighters encountered (Livingston, "Hunters"). Cardassia is eventually defeated by a Federation-Klingon-Romulan coalition, and Dukat is killed while attempting a final ploy to defeat this alliance. In all of these ways, the Cardassian occupation echoes the Nazi occupation of Europe in search for *Lebensraum*, along with depictions of "genocide through ways that specifically resonated with

### Judith Collins **This Traveler**



for Brian Aldiss

You placed in my hand  
a prehistory of mind.

(Yours?

Possibly.

Mine?

Undoubtedly.)

You called it a gift,  
your gentle hold  
as you relinquished it  
betraying your fear  
of awakening its angels.

You had etched  
just beneath its skin  
"Long life—lots of love"  
and you kissed me

(I am sure  
you wish the same  
for all the girls.)

But—  
from your high perch  
above the ruins of Monemvasia,  
does your eye grow tired,

looking over our shoulders?


Do you contemplate  
each single entrance,  
each love fading as it ascends,  
its golden sandals losing luster  
in dark tunnels, wearing thin  
along the rocky, zig-zag path  
toward the grassland above?

Would you warn us  
of dark, doughty enemies,  
invaders from the sea?

(Would we hear, above  
the echoes of the ruins?)

Our sweet young ghosts  
we leave at water's edge.  
Let them strengthen their limbs  
in rock-strewn sand.

(The climb awaits.)

They cannot imagine as yet  
how much more brilliant blue  
the sea from each sad height. 

American Jewish stereotypes of the Holocaust” (Pilkington 12).

The Federation is also shown to be responsible for crimes that involve entire races. In the *Next Generation* movie *Insurrection*, an attempt at the forced relocation of the Ba’ku people (who number only six hundred) by the Federation itself is foiled by Picard who argues with the admiral in charge of the operation that

[w]e are betraying the principles upon which the Federation was founded. It’s an attack upon its very soul.... And it will destroy the Ba’ku ... just as cultures have been destroyed in every other forced relocation throughout history.... How many people does it take, Admiral, before it becomes wrong? A thousand? Fifty thousand? A million?

The mutual genocide of two races is witnessed in the *Original Series* episode “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” (Taylor). Mutual hatred is the result of two humanoid races having faces bisected through the midline by a line that divides the face into black and white halves. The difference is that one race is “black on the right side” while the other is “white on the right side.” When located, their home planet shows

several large cities, uninhabited. Extensive traffic systems, barren of traffic. Lower animals and vegetation encroaching on the cities.... There is no evidence of natural disaster, yet there are vast numbers of unburied corpses in all cities.... All dead, Captain. They have annihilated each other totally.

This episode is one of the few wherein genocide actually succeeds. Yet another is depicted in the *Next Generation* episode “The Survivors” (Landau). An immortal energy being with vast powers improbably falls in love with a human female on an extrasolar planet (occupied by the “Rishon”). They marry, and when the planet is attacked by an aggressive species, the “Husnock, a species of hideous intelligence who knew only aggression and destruction,” he admits that he “could have destroyed them with a mere thought, but ... did not do so” since his species’ strict pacifism forbade him from joining the defense. But when his wife was killed he

went insane. My hatred exploded, and in an instant of grief I destroyed the Husnock.... You don’t understand the scope of my crime. I didn’t kill just one Husnock, or a hundred, or a thousand. I killed them all. All Husnock everywhere.... fifty billion ... the destruction of an entire species.

The *Enterprise* crew are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crime, and Picard himself almost bemusedly admits, “We’re not qualified to be your judges. We have no law to fit your crime. You’re free to return to the planet and to make Rishon live again.”

Strangely, in the *Enterprise* episode “Dear Doctor,” the crew allow a sentient species to proceed to extinction when they realize that a planetary plague is a genetic disease, and that a second sentient species on the same planet will fail to develop if the first species fails to die out. By deliberate inaction, allowing a species to die out is arguably also a form of genocide.

An interesting twist on genocide is a species’ erasure from space-time, with changes in the timeline that prevent the very creation of an entire species and civilization. This is witnessed when the *Voyager* crew encounter a ship that can effect radical changes to the time line (Kroker, “Year of Hell”).

Genocide may also be attempted through biological warfare. In the late *Deep Space 9* episode “When It Rains,” a secret Starfleet program, “Section 31,” engineers a virus to kill the Changeling race of shapeshifters. The Federation chief operative in charge dies when the plot is uncovered and terminated. “This response suggests the moral underpinning *DS9* attempts to bring to the subject of genocide” (Pilkington 74). In the series finale, “What You Leave Behind,” the Cardassians embrace the Changelings and their Dominion, but when they revolt, the Changeling on Cardassia orders “the Cardassians exterminated.... All of them.” The resulting planetary bombardment kills eight hundred million Cardassians, leaving a large portion of the cities in ruins. The Changelings are eventually defeated and their chief operative “agreed to stand trial and accept responsibility for what she’s done.” In these ways, the Federation’s—and Starfleet’s—“moral fundament is reaffirmed in the series finale” (Pilkington 74).

## Memory

Implanted memories are sometimes used to keep alive the memories of such large-scale crimes. For example, the *Voyager* engineer, Torres, has a series of nightmares and eventually discovers that these had been deliberately implanted by one member of a group of aliens who were being transported on the ship. She accuses and exposes them, and then transfers these memories to another member of the group.

My dreams. They are real memories ... there was a group of people they called Regressives. They just wanted to lead a different kind of life. But they don’t exist anymore, do they? You exterminated them.... She showed me everything. (Bole, “Remember”)

Memory implantation on an even larger scale occurs on *Voyager*, leading to vivid hallucinations and dreams in many of the crew, who discover

a synaptic transmitter ... designed to send neurogenic pulses throughout this system.... So anyone passing through would experience the Nakan massacre, like we did.... It’s a memorial.... we were witnesses to a massacre.... They wanted others to know what it was like in the hopes that nothing like it would happen again. (Kroeker, “Memorial”)

## Planetary Destruction

*Trek* has also depicted attempts to destroy entire inhabited planets. In the film *Generations*, Dr. Soran attempts to destroy the star at the Veridian system, an act that would have resulted in two hundred thirty million deaths. Similarly, in the *Deep Space 9* episode “By Inferno’s Light,” a Dominion agent attempts to set off a large explosion in the Bajoran sun that would have precipitated a supernova, destroying the Bajoran solar system along with the *Deep Space 9* station.

More shockingly, in the *Next Generation* movie *Nemesis*, Shinzon, a clone of Captain Picard, determines to destroy Earth. “He’s planning its annihilation.” Picard is aghast and fruitlessly remonstrates with his own clone:

The man who is Shinzon of Remus and Jean-Luc Picard could never exterminate the population of an entire planet! He is better than that! ... And what will he do with that life? Waste it in a blaze of hatred?

Shinzon retorts

He’s what his life has made him! ... I’ll show you my true nature. Our nature. And as Earth dies, remember that I will always, forever, be Shinzon of Remus! And my voice shall echo through time long after yours has faded to a dim memory.

The above attempts are foiled by Starfleet and all three perpetrators die.

In the movie *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, the plot centers around a “Genesis device” which provides the ability to make any planet, whether inhabited or barren, “capable of sustaining whatever lifeforms we see fit to deposit on it.” The Klingons see this as a weapon of “great power ... to control ... dominate ... the secret of ultimate power!” The Klingons who attempt this also die.

However, attempts at planetary destruction are occasionally shown to be successful, as evidenced by the Romulan destruction of Vulcan in the 2009 *Star Trek* film reboot, an act that resulted the death of “most of its six billion inhabitants”; “no more than ten thousand ... survived,” making Vulcans an endangered species. Since Romulans are an offshoot of the Vulcan race (Grossman, “The Forge”), this constitutes not only an attempt at genocide, but also fratricide. The attempt to destroy Earth in the same way is foiled by Starfleet and the perpetrators are destroyed.

## Assimilation

Even Captain Picard, “the bearer of Starfleet’s conscience and an exemplar of moral autonomy” (Decker and Eberl 141) is sorely tempted to infect the Borg, “our most lethal enemy,” with a computer virus. This opportunity occurs in the *Next Generation* episode “I, Borg,” when a single drone is captured. This “would infect the entire Collective. We could disable their neural network at a stroke ... a disease ... a terminal one.... A systems failure will destroy them,” However,

he relents as he realizes that he is facing the prospect of “annihilating an entire race” and instead, lets the drone rejoin the Borg collective with memories intact since

in that short time before they purge his memory, the sense of individuality which he has gained here might be transmitted throughout the entire Borg Collective. Every one of the Borg being given the opportunity to experience the feeling of singularity. Perhaps that’s the most pernicious programme of all. The knowledge of self being spread throughout the Collective, in that brief moment, might alter them forever.

The Borg were also successfully attacked with a biological virus by a humanoid species known as the Brunali in the *Voyager* episode “Child’s Play.” The Brunali had an advanced technological society which was destroyed by the Borg. The survivors turned agrarian with significant knowledge of genetic engineering that was used not only to produce high-yield, genetically modified plants, but also a child (Icheb) who “was genetically engineered to produce the pathogen, from birth,” a specific anti-Borg virus. He was then sent to be captured by the Borg, thereby depopulating an entire Borg vessel, a “cube disabled by a deadly pathogen. It suffered extensive damage.” Of the 5,000 crew, only five juvenile and inefficiently functioning Borg survived. In this way, the child is “is a weapon.”

The senior officers are tempted to use the virus themselves against the Borg: “If we can revive the pathogen and reintroduce it, we could neutralize the drones.” The Doctor is horrified, and exclaims “you’re not thinking of using it as

### Donald M. Hassler Old Man Musing after Nova TV, August 2017

Our little sun embraces secret  
Knowledge, is big beyond belief,  
And hottest plasma transmutes the mystery.

Victorian fathers postulated  
A new celestial element “coronium”  
That crowned the outer atmosphere.

But spectral lines reveal just iron now,  
Instead, transformed and stripped  
Of particles by nanoflares.

So this may be that ancient alchemy  
At the core, that golden moment,  
When we can recognize, like Oedipus blind,  
And rising generations clearly see defined.

a biological weapon ... Neutralize? You mean murder, don't you? Captain, they're children."

The virus is ultimately not deployed. The child is rescued and rehabilitated by the *Voyager* crew and he is told that "[i]n the future you may choose to fight the Borg, but you'll do it in your own way. You're an individual and you have the right to determine your own destiny" (Vejar, "Child's Play").

Later on in the series, the Borg Queen recaptures a human female, known as "Seven" who had been rescued from the Borg collective by the *Voyager* crew ("Scorpion, Part II"). The Queen informs Seven that she is

going to help us assimilate humanity.... I want you to programme the nanoprobes.... Our previous attempts to assimilate them were all direct assaults. They failed, so we've created a more surreptitious strategy.... detonate a biogenic charge in Earth's atmosphere.... It would infect all life forms with nanoprobe viruses. Assimilation would be gradual. By the time they realized what was happening, half their population would be drones.

The Borg are a relentless and merciless horde, devoid of will except for their leader, the Borg Queen, who evidences no compunction when she orders the destruction of two large Borg vessels in order to kill a handful of drones who are potentially beyond her control, resulting in the loss of over seventy-five thousand drones (Kroeker, "Unimatrix Zero"). The Borg are ultimately dealt a deadly blow by the *Voyager* crew when their queen is infected by Captain Janeway with a "neurolytic pathogen" (Kroeker, "Endgame").

### Consequences Unforeseen and Otherwise

Genocide may also be unintentional, and humanity finds itself the unwitting perpetrator. In the *Voyager* episode "Friendship One," we learn of a human unmanned probe replete with information including the utilization of anti-matter as a power source: "[w]e offer this information freely with the hope that one day we will stand on your soil and extend our hands in friendship." When the probe is discovered and utilized by a distant race, their planet is devastated by an accident. The *Voyager* crew are accused: "You send us new technology, encourage us to use it, and then you wait for us to obliterate ourselves.... it's easier than invading us." Fortunately, the *Voyager* crew discover a way to return the planet to its original condition.

A very few individuals in the canon sit on the fence, playing the role of munitions suppliers, and a think-tank representative explains to Seven of Nine that

there is no shortage of conflict.... Many of our clients are at war. To be frank, we will assist in the neutralization of fleets, starbases, even planets, but we will not participate in the decimation of an entire species, nor will we design weapons of mass destruction. (O'Hara, "Think Tank")

## Discussion

The commonalities revealed here include, in all cases, the triumph of good over evil, with the perpetrators or attempted perpetrators of genocide and war crimes ultimately defeated and punished. The episodes effectively highlight the illogic, futility, and inhumanity of genocide and other crimes against groups of sentient beings, who stand in as metaphors for human differences.

The perpetrators of the crimes may be divided into two types: those who engage in persistent and sometimes megalomaniacal justification of these crimes, or more rarely, those who repent.

Our narratives have also wrestled with the concept that "Inter arma enim silent leges" ("in times of war, the law falls silent"). This maxim is attributed to Cicero and constitutes the name of a *Deep Space 9* episode (Livingston), which describes the actions of the aforementioned Federation covert operation, which if successful, would have ultimately resulted in the genocide of the enemy shape-shifters. But in the end, in all cases, the law is extended backwards into the conflict and the mere existence of war is not held as justification for great crimes.

The stories shows how ordinary individuals may metamorphose into monsters, blithely exposing their Jungian shadow while committing atrocities. This possibility has been famously confirmed by several psychological studies such as the landmark studies by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo.

Milgram studied the human willingness to obey orders, even if this meant the deliberate infliction of pain.

I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist. Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' [participants'] strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects' [participants'] ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation. (62)

Zimbardo was the creator of the Stanford Prison Experiment wherein college students were randomly divided into "guards" and "inmates" in a mock prison environment. The study had to be abandoned within a week, as ordinary students were transformed into brutal and sadistic guards along with emotionally broken prisoners.

Recent historiography has brought forward the harrowing and sometimes boastful transcripts of German prisoners of war, which belie the popular and comfortable myth that Wehrmacht soldiers were unaware of the atrocities being committed by the Nazi state and expose the willingness with which they participated in said atrocities. Moreover, the transcripts prove that "practically all German soldiers knew or suspected that Jews were being



murdered *en masse*” (Neitzel and Welzer 101).

This phenomenon was elucidated by Michel Foucault, who maintained that institutions establish and perpetuate their jurisdictions of power over their constituents, particularly over prisons and military bodies. Institutions wield power through hierarchical structures wherein members become docile through mental and physical discipline and training. Truly, “[g]iven the right conditions, or the wrong conditions, our commonalities as citizens of the universe go a long way in determining the propensity for what we’ll do” (Decker and Eberl 152–53). Thus, while “[w]e have no Picards today” (Decker and Eberl 160), even Picard’s clone has been seen to have made “moral compromises.... Each compromise of moral integrity ... enables the replacement of the noble with the ignoble” (ibid).

This essay has also shown that even small and clandestine subgroups within both the Federation and Starfleet may stoop to genocide and war crimes. And this, in turn, harks back to animal and human experimentation as noted by the Cardassian doctor Moset, when he reminds *Voyager’s* doctor that old medical knowledge on Earth was obtained in this way, noting that it is easy to draw, or by inference, to blur the line between higher and lower species of animals. However, such behavior is clearly exceptional and abhorrent to the vast majority of Federation citizens, and is always aborted when discovered.

The Cardassian episodes particularly echo all of the worst atrocities that humanity has ever inflicted upon itself.

This story arc is clearly an allegory for crimes past, if “we simply substitute the words ‘Cardassians’ and ‘Bajorans’ for ‘Germans’ and ‘Jews’” (Decker and Eberl 166), the ultimate meaning becomes amply clear.

Ironically, in *Deep Space 9*, the final call

for genocide is against the very species that perpetrated a genocide of their own and thus made the entire series possible. And, through the intervention of the intrepid heroes of *DS9*, the Cardassians are saved, but at the cost of 800 million faceless lives. (Pilkington 75)

Since the *Trek* stories depicted here are, as always, showcases of human behavior, they reproach individuals or groups of individuals who willfully ignore historical lessons that highlight reprehensible past abuses, and contrast these with the utopian Federation and Starfleet worldviews, where such actions are almost unthinkable. It is almost as if the “future history” that constitutes *Trek* attempts to emphasize past lessons that humanity should learn from history, cautionary tales lest history repeat itself, and man recommits horrendous atrocities, with Robert Burns’s admonitions of “man’s inhumanity to man” ignored. ▲

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Karen Heuler reads at KGB, 19 July 2017. Photograph by Ellen Datlow.

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