



Remixing of individuals results in doomed new persons in *Star Trek*

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Abstract: The science fiction genre is unique in that it allows almost magical remixes, including that of two separate physical individuals, such that the controlling mind becomes a single and seamless character. This occurs in three episodes within the Star Trek franchise. It will be shown that the circumstances leading to this event are validated in a pseudo-scientific way. The new, merged personality is shown to be increasingly reluctant to relinquish existence in order to allow the two previous personalities to re-exist. However, Star Trek's respect for the sanctity of the individual's boundaries forces this separation, reifying the old status quo even at the expense of a new entity that is greater than the sum of the original parts.

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The Franchise, now in its 50s

Star Trek is a fictional possible future history that outlines the ways in which humanity might advance and develop up to the 24th century. The series and movies comprise an internally coherent metanarrative that encompasses a total of 735 hours of viewing time, and thereby provides a vast and fertile ground for the analysis of various areas of critical study. The franchise is also 50 years old this year.

The science fiction genre permits novel remixes, such as that of human with alien. One of the most famous such characters is Spock, a human-alien hybrid, a figure so ubiquitous in popular culture so as to also be familiar to individuals who are not Trek fans or even science fiction readers.

This essay will go beyond this intersection and will focus on a prospect that is, as yet, only possible in science fiction: the fusion of two separate physical individuals such that the controlling mind becomes a single and seamless character, a physical and mental remix in one novel and particular individual. This event occurs in three episodes within the franchise, and the possibilities depicted and the outcomes arrived at will be discussed.

Episodes depicting mixes

“Is There in Truth No Beauty?” (*Star Trek*, USA 1968)

An alien, non-humanoid telepathic species are said to be excellent interstellar navigators. “The Medusans have developed interstellar navigation to a fine art.” This may be because “the Medusan sensory system is radically different from ours.” However, communication with these individuals can only be achieved by using “a mind-link with the Medusans” who appear to have no organs of speech.

While carrying a Medusan passenger, “Ambassador Kollos,” the Enterprise sustains an accident and is lost in space and unable to return home. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) explains that

there is someone else aboard who might be able to help us navigate. . . . Perhaps for the purpose of this emergency I might become Kollos. . . . A fusion. A mind-link to create a double entity. Each of us would enjoy the knowledge and sensory capabilities of both. We will function as one being. . . . If the link is successful there will be a tendency to lose separate identity. A necessary risk.

The link is in fact, successful and the new mind, a composite of Spock and Kollos housed in Spock’s body, wonders at the world around him:

This is delightful. I know you. All of you. James Kirk, Captain and friend for many years. And Leonard McCoy, also of long acquaintance. And Uhura, whose name means freedom. She walks in beauty, like the night. . . . Ah, Miranda. There you are. O brave new world, that has such creatures in it. . . . My world is next for us. Captain Kirk, I speak for all of us you call Medusans. I am sorry for the trouble I’ve brought to your ship.

In so doing, Spock-Kollos accesses Spock’s memories and erudition to quote Lord George Byron’s poem “She walks in Beauty” and William Shakespeare’s Miranda from “The Tempest” to refer to Miranda (Diana Muldaur), a human passenger on the Enterprise.

Spock-Kollos effortlessly plots a course, returning the ship “so close to the point where we entered the void, the difference isn’t worth mentioning.” He also poignantly remarks on the human condition:

How compact your bodies are. And what a variety of senses you have. This thing you call language though, most remarkable. You depend on it for so very much. But is any one of you really its master? But most of all, the aloneness. You are so alone. You live out your lives in this shell of flesh. Self-contained, separate. How lonely you are. How terribly lonely.

Despite these observations, when reminded that he “must dissolve the link,” he disappointedly remarks “So soon? . . . You’re a wise Captain,” and willingly disengages into two separate minds once again.

“Facets” (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, USA 1995)

The alien Trill are humanoid with an important difference. Some voluntarily host a small creature, an extremely long-lived, sentient, vermiform life form known as a “symbiont,” implanted within their bodies. This “joining” results in an amalgam of two minds that share the symbiont’s memories and skills, which are derived from previous lives, since on the host’s death, the symbiont is extracted and implanted in a new host. The canon never alludes to the lifetime of a symbiont, but this exceeds that of several humans, serially.

The Trill have a unique ceremony, the “zhian’tara,” the “Trill Rite of Closure . . . a ritual where joined Trills get a chance to actually meet their previous hosts.” This is said to be “one of the most powerful experiences of [a Trill’s] life.” Jadzia the Trill protagonist (Terry Farrell) who wishes to undergo the rite and who carries the symbiont called “Dax” explains to her friends that

the memories of one of my previous hosts will be temporarily removed from the symbiont and imprinted onto you. You essentially become one of my hosts for the duration of the ritual. . . . The memories are transferred telepathically. . . . You’ll remain conscious of everything that’s going on around you, and at any time you can reassert yourself and regain control of your body. . . . It’s best to you relax and let the host’s memories emerge. The point is to give . . . the chance to interact with . . . previous hosts.

One of her friends, Odo a shapeshifter (René Auberjonois) houses Curzon, the previous host of Jadzia’s symbiont Dax, a larger-than-life character who had done great feats on behalf of the United Federation of Planets, a person who is described as “manipulative, selfish and arrogant. Most people let him get away with it because he was so charming.”

Odo’s shapeshifting abilities allow him to physically become Curzon, and because of the unique physiology of the shapeshifter, Curzon does not take over Odo but mentally merges with him. “It’s as if Odo and Curzon have been joined. It’s proving to be quite interesting experience for both of us.”

Odo-Curzon uncharacteristically indulges in drink and humour, since both are usually eschewed by the stern and sombre Odo. Odo-Curzon informs Jadzia:

I’ve decided to stay where I am, in this body. And I’m not just speaking as Curzon. This is Odo’s decision as well. We like what we’ve become and neither of us wants to go back to the way things were. . . . I’m sorry. I realise this is difficult for you, but you’ll get over it. Trust me, it’s better this way.

Their stunned friends are informed that “there’s no way to remove Curzon’s memories from Odo without his cooperation. He has to give them up willingly” in order for the memories and personality to return to the Dax symbiont and hence become accessible once more to Jadzia.

Jadzia confronts him. “I want my memories back. . . . You’re both living out a life you never could have had otherwise. But it’s my life you’re living. Those should be my memories. . . . You’re a part of me and I want you back. That way, Jadzia and Curzon can be together the way they should be, through Dax.”

Odo-Curzon gives in and the dual personality is split back into the original components.

“Tuvix” (*Star Trek: Voyager*, USA 1996)

A dramatic accident occurs when two alien humanoid crewmen attempt to return to their ship (*The Voyager*) using the matter transporter. The crewmen are Tuvok, a Vulcan (Tim Russ) and Neelix, Talaxian (Ethan Phillips). In terms of character, they are opposites. Tuvok is the ship’s security officer and a typical Vulcan, stoic with suppressed emotions. Neelix is a jovial extrovert whose multiple roles include ship’s ambassador, morale officer and chef.

The malfunction is noted by the transport operator who observes only one pattern and that this is a merged pattern, a mixture of the two. The transportation results in a creature that is half Vulcan and half Talaxian, wearing a mish-mash of the two’s original clothing. This new being (Tom Wright) identifies himself as “I am Lieutenant Tuvok. And I am Neelix.”

The ship’s doctor (Robert Picardo) discovers that

all biological matter was merged on a molecular level. Proteins, enzymes, DNA sequences. The man you see before you is literally a fusion of two men. But he's surprisingly healthy considering the circumstances. All vital signs are stable. . . . I'm also picking up traces of a third genetic pattern. It appears to be plant-based.

Tuvok and Neelix had gathered plants resembling orchids and the doctor observes "they're part of your genetic structure now. But they don't appear to be affecting your biochemistry."

The being decides to call himself "Tuvix" and notes that "I do have the memories of both men, but I seem to have a single consciousness." Tuvix feels well and indeed, "exhilarated," and "he possesses Tuvok's knowledge and expertise. He also possesses Tuvok's irritating sense of intellectual superiority and Neelix's annoying ebullience."

Further investigation reveals that "there's never been an accident like this recorded in the entire history of transporter technology." An explanation is eventually found in that the orchid's "lysosomal enzymes" (used to break down intra- or extra-cellular materials) "interacted with their DNA while they were in the matter stream, it might have caused their patterns to merge."

Further work on Tuvix's condition is discouraging. The doctor confesses "I won't lie to you. I'm not optimistic. It could take months, even years, to find a solution. And we must face the possibility that this condition is simply untreatable. I feel as though I've lost two patients. I'm sorry."

Captain Janeway's (Kate Mulgrew) log notes that after

two weeks . . . while it's still not entirely clear that he's with us permanently, he's certainly been doing his best to settle in. The crew seems to be growing accustomed to his presence, and he's proving to be a very able tactical officer who isn't afraid to express his opinions. . . . He's forging relationships with many of the officers . . . I've found him to be an able advisor who skilfully uses humour to make his points. And although I feel a bit guilty saying it, his cooking is better than Neelix's.

A potential solution is eventually found. The doctor discovers "a radioisotope that could selectively attach itself to specific DNA sequences . . . that attaches itself to the DNA of one of the merged species, but not the other. . . . Then we simply beam out the selected DNA and segregate the two merged species." Simulations are successful and the doctor assures the subject that "there's nothing to worry about. We've accounted for every variable," to which Tuvix replies "except one. I don't want to die."

Captain Janeway finds herself riven with a moral dilemma.

If we'd had the ability to separate Tuvok and Neelix the moment Tuvix came aboard, I wouldn't have hesitated. . . . But now, in the past few weeks, he's begun to make a life for himself on this ship. He's taken on responsibilities, made friends. . . . So at what point, did he become an individual and not a transporter accident?

Janeway calls for Tuvix and an interesting conversation ensues.

Tuvix: I feel as though I have been dragged in front of the . . . Inquisition. . . .

Janeway: I thought it was important to get your perspective before making a decision.

Tuvix: Are you suggesting that this is your decision to make?

Janeway: I am the Captain of this ship.

Tuvix: . . . Isn't it my decision?

Janeway: Aren't there two other lives to consider here? What about Tuvok and Neelix? Two voices that we can't hear right now. As Captain, I must be their voice, and I believe they would want to live.

Tuvix: But they are living in a way, inside me.

Janeway: It's not the same and I think you'd agree with me. They have families, friends, people who love them and miss them and want them back, just as I do.

Tuvix: But restoring their lives means sacrificing mine. Captain, what you're considering is an execution. An execution, like they used to do to murderers centuries ago. And I've committed no crime at all.

Janeway: Aren't you arguing for an execution too? Of Tuvok and Neelix.

Tuvix: I'm here, alive. Unfortunate as it may be, they're gone.

Janeway: And I have an opportunity to bring them back.

Tuvix: Don't you think that I care about Tuvok and Neelix? Of course I do. Without them, I wouldn't exist. In a way, I think of them as my parents. I feel like I know them intimately.

Janeway: Then you know Tuvok was a man who would gladly give his life to save another. And I believe the same was true of Neelix.

Tuvix: You're right, Captain. That is the Starfleet way. And I know there'll be some people who, who'll call me a coward because I didn't sacrifice myself willingly. Believe me, I've thought of that. But I have the will to live of two men. Look at me, Captain. When I'm happy, I laugh. When I'm sad, I cry. When I stub my toe, I yell out in pain. I'm flesh and blood, and I have the right to live.

Janeway decides to go ahead with the procedure but Tuvix has to be physically restrained and forced to proceed to sickbay. He makes an impassioned appeal to the bridge crew before being dragged off:

Commander, are you going to stand by and do nothing while she commits murder? Mister Ayala. Yes, Lieutenant Paris. You. Doesn't anyone see that this is wrong? . . . Each of you is going to have to live with this, and I'm sorry for that, for you are all good, good people. My colleagues, my friends, I forgive you.

Even the doctor, who has come to know Tuvix over the previous two weeks, balks at the procedure. "I'm sorry, Captain, but I cannot perform the surgical separation. I am a physician, and a physician must do no harm. I will not take Mister Tuvix's life against his will." Janeway then resolutely carries out the procedure herself, successfully.

Discussion

The fusion of two individuals into one has both biological and mythological antecedents, and these episodes accede mostly to the latter. For example, in biology, *Polycephaly* is a medical condition resulting in more than one head. Bicephaly and dicephaly both refer to two heads, and it may be presumed that two separate brains mixed within one body would potentially conflict if they had different desires (McGirr et al.). Mythology however is replete with two-headed or two faced beings. A variant of *polycephaly* is *diprosopus*, a creature born with two faces on a single head. Perhaps the best known example in Greek mythology is Janus, the god of beginnings, endings and transitions. This dual attribute in myth implies the ability to have different thoughts simultaneously, an attribute not dissimilar to that depicted in the above mentioned episodes.

The subordination of myth to science fiction has been noted at least as far back as the 1930s, when Olaf Stapledon noted in his introduction to *Last and First Men* (1930) that his novel was "an essay in myth creation." This is not to say that science fiction intends to place "an equal sign between modern myth creation and science fiction" (Chernyshova 354), but rather to point out that science fiction is both a surrogate for myth as well as a modern and postmodern replacement. Thus, the *Star Trek*,

universe in which Captains Kirk, Picard, Janeway, Sisko, and Archer are still one with Jason, Odysseus, Sinbad, Columbus, Cook, Ahab, Armstrong, and every other sea- or spacefarer, real or fictional, that has ever left (or will ever leave) the comfort and safety of home port in search of what's lurking "out there" and waiting to be discovered (Pilkington 54).

Darko Suvin defined science fiction as “the literature of cognitive estrangement”, with narratives in which there is embedded “a strange newness, a novum” (372). The genre thus “elaborates, deepens, and psychologizes already existing “mythological” themes and situations, the already classical themes of alien visitations, extraterrestrial civilizations and their relations, or near-light speed space travel” (Chernyshova 355), and makes these almost plausible by invoking the seeming magic of science. In the above mentioned *Star Trek* episodes, apart from the peripheral science fictional tropes that are implicit (such as the existence of aliens and faster-than-light travel), the novum is the outcome of the amalgamation of two minds within one body.

More cogently, psychoanalysis has historically recognized the notion that the mind is an amalgam of different parts. For example, Sigmund Freud divided the self into the conscious and the unconscious mind. The latter was further divided into id (instincts and drive) and superego (conscience). The unconscious mind is not usually accessible to the conscious mind and includes socially unacceptable components.

Carl Jung further developed this notion, dividing the unconscious into a personal and a collective unconscious comprised of archetypes shared by the entire race. Archetypes are universal templates that embrace common classes of memories and interpretations and may be used to interpret behaviours. Jung delineated five major archetypes within the individual such as the Self (the control centre), the Shadow (which contains objects with which the ego does not consciously or readily identify), the Anima (the feminine image in a man’s psyche) or the Animus (the masculine image in a woman’s psyche) and the Persona (the mask which the individual presents to the world).

This concept is alluded to in the *Star Trek* canon when Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) muses that “inside us are many voices, each with its own desires, its own style, its own view of the world” (“The Chase”, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, USA 1993). The episodes I have mentioned above go one step further, hypothesizing the potential outcomes of the complete fusion of two minds.

However, the *Star Trek* franchise, like most of the genre, continues to be bound by the dictates of John W. Campbell (1910-1971), the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* (later renamed *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*) from 1937 until his death. Campbell “wanted hard, logical science, presented in the context of real, believable characters. He . . . urged [writers] to dream clearly . . . to examine the world that was and to extrapolate what it might be” (Latham vii). Thus, in each of these episodes, the event that merges two minds is variously explained – and thereby lightly glossed over – as a mind-meld between two exotic aliens who each possess an equally exotic telepathic ability, an alien rite that also involves telepathy and goes awry due to the unexpected effect that it has on a shapeshifter, and an accident involving a transporter and exotic alien plants (Grech, “The Trick”).

However, a number of scientific errors are clearly evident and not explained, such as the loss of mass when Tuvok and Neelix are merged into Tuvix (“Tuvix”). Such inaccuracies are usually ignored or glossed over with technobabble, a strategy that the cooperative fan understands and accepts in the interests of the creation of an exciting episode with novel concepts.

These episodes also force the viewer to face notions that are relevant to everyday life. For example, Spock (at the time the original *Star Trek* was aired) was a unique being, a Vulcan-human hybrid with feet in both worlds, eternally struggling to suppress his emotional human half in order to project himself as stoically and authentically Vulcan. The plight of lonely individuals is highlighted by the Spock-Kollos union, who laments “the aloneness. You are so alone. . . . Self-contained, separate. How lonely you are. How terribly lonely.”

More interestingly, the three episodes analyzed here reflect a trend towards increasing reluctance for the merged individual to allow himself to be split into the two original components. Specifically, the 1968 episode (“Is There in Truth No Beauty?”) shows Spock-Kollos disengaging with just a trace of wistfulness. The 1995 episode (“Facets”) has an Odo-Curzon amalgam who is

reluctant to separate: “I’ve decided to stay where I am, in this body. And I’m not just speaking as Curzon. This is Odo’s decision as well. We like what we’ve become and neither of us wants to go back to the way things were.” Persuasion leading to separation is merely vocal, equivalent to a moderate altercation in intensity. The 1996 episode (“Tuvix”) is even more dramatic, with Tuvix emotionally and physically attempting to halt the separation procedure, denouncing it as an “execution” of a man who has “committed no crime at all,” concluding “I have the right to live.”

The sanctity of the personage and the fear of the obliteration of one’s distinctiveness are recurrent themes in the *Star Trek* franchise, fraught with a dread that is most notably evoked by the Borg “who constitute a relentless inhuman tide that threatens to violently overwhelm every species by assimilating all individual beings into the Borg collective, stifling their *élan vital* and incorporating them as part of a hive mind” (Grech, “Pinocchio” 13). In the remix-fusion scenario, the Federation – symbolized by the respective captains or Starfleet crews – strives to reacquire the previous two individuals who had been temporarily obliterated in order for a new individual to be created, since failure to do so would be tantamount to failure “to respect the individuality that is so highly prized in the Federation world” (Conslavo 142), a central tenet and keystone of Federation morals.

In conclusion, the *Star Trek* canon has firmly placed itself on the side of the individual, emphasizing the boundaries and sanctity of the mind even at the cost a novel, merged being who may be superior to the sum of the original parts. Furthermore, “the modern mythological picture of the world has already taken shape, and will probably remain so in the future” (Chernyshova 355), so in lieu of ancient myths, science fiction creates “new ‘unknowns’ . . . outer space and far-away planets . . . populated . . . with monsters and ogres that could well be the close relatives of the trolls and ogres of folklore fame. In that sense . . . sf is modern folklore” (Schelde 4), reimagining myths in the now all-too-familiar environment of high-tech science, a familiar and hence palatable and acceptable milieu for the modern reader/viewer.

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