Equivalence and Equality:

Representations of Gender and Sexuality in *Star Trek: Voyager* Fan Fiction

Science fiction has long been accepted as the site of a great deal of subversive, challenging fiction. The 'unreality' of science fiction – whether by its setting in the future of humanity, or in another galaxy or universe entirely – fosters the exploration of taboo topics, even as it masks the subversiveness of the exploration.[1] The convergence of science fiction with media fandom and the Internet has opened up this area of exploration and subversion to a greatly increased audience and authorship, an audience and authorship that is predominantly female. In two areas linked with technology and science and therefore seen traditionally as male domains, fan writing and fan fiction has created a women's (cyber)space. Within this space, writers are challenging the representations of gender and sexuality that operate within television shows such as *Star Trek: Voyager*, and are rewriting these representations to suit themselves.

Issues of textual loyalty influence the extent to which the primary text can successfully be re-worked, especially when representations of gender and sexuality are concerned. These representations are inextricably bound up with the characterisations 'approved' by the program's Creators. These representations are not unchangeable, however the fan fiction considered for this paper indicates that there is a continuum of sexuality along which stories proceed. Those stories which portray characters as having the same sexuality as that ordained by the Creators – for example, the heterosexual Janeway/Chakotay stories – find it hardest to break from the gender representations of the Creators, a form of representation I have called 'gender equivalence.' Along this continuum, it becomes easier for the author to break away from equivalence and move towards portraying relationships as occurring

[1] See eg Maureen Barr, *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987) p xi; Donald Palumbo, 'Sexuality and the Allure of the Fantastic' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo (ed), (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986) p 3-24; James Reimer, 'Homosexuality in Science Fiction and Fantasy' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986) p 145-183.

between equals, rather than between two people who make up a heteronormative 'whole.'

This paper considers the production of fan writing, the influence of the Internet on concerns of textual loyalty, and the extent to which fan fiction production accepts or subverts ideas of gender portrayed in the original texts. Seven stories are considered – stories that focus on straight, lesbian, gay and bisexual pairings, and one (involving 'body-swapping') that could only happen in science fiction.

Creating 'Additional Knowledges': Why Fans Write Fiction

Fan fiction — written by television fans using the characters of a specific primary text — is written because of the need to know more about a television program than the program's creators are willing or able to explore. This may mean expanding upon a plot, delving into a character's background, or exploring the sexual tension between two characters that remains unresolved in the primary text. In searching out and creating this information, the fan fiction writer involves herself – fan fiction writers are predominantly women – in the program, participating in the creation of knowledge pertaining to the primary text.

The theoretical background to the writing of fan fiction is traced through Michel de Certeau's theories of popular reading to Henry Jenkins and 'participatory culture'. De Certeau opens up the concept of 'reading' to give equal time to 'popular response, … personal speculations and nonauthorized meanings.'[2] While de Certeau considers the 'reading' of written texts, Jenkins looks at media fandom and the appropriation, by fans, of elements of favoured primary texts. In doing so, he identifies fan fiction as the product of two paradoxes. Firstly, fan writing relies on the writer being simultaneously fascinated and unfulfilled by the primary text.[3] 'Popular reading' (as described by de Certeau), or 'textual poaching' (as it is termed by Jenkins) validates of the viewer's own reading of the text, and while this reading is often oppositional to that of the Creators,[4] opposition is not universal. Jenkins

[2] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p 26.
[3] Ibid, p 23.
[4] Within fan fiction communities, those responsible for the production of the primary text are referred to usually as The Creators, or as The Powers That Be. These sarcastic titles are indicative of the

emphasises that a media fan choses a particular primary text because of its apparent affinity with the fan's 'pre-existing social commitments and cultural interests',[5] and as a result, there is also a pre-existing affinity between the Creators and the fan. Secondly, fan fiction relies on the equal recognition of the text as 'reality' and as 'construction.'[6] As 'real', the characters have histories to be explored, while as 'constructs', the negative aspects of a character can be altered or 'fixed' by the fan writer. Reality allows the writer to care about the characters: 'construction' allows the fan to become the fan writer.

Sue Hazlett characterises fan fiction as the act of filling the gaps left by thoughtless or careless Creators.[7] The phrase, however, implies that fan fiction is only ever written because of some defect in the production processes – weak writing, unwillingness to explore issues of sexuality, inconsistent characterisation and so on. What Jenkins appreciates is that the fan writer must care enough about the characters, and the primary text in general, to want to know more, and to be willing to go about creating that knowledge herself.

Rather than 'filling in the gaps,' then, fan fiction is the creation of additional knowledges. The plural here is deliberate, as writers may purposely contradict themselves in order to explore different possible realities for the characters, and because writers will inevitably contradict each other. The use of this term overcomes the two major problems of previous conceptions of fan writing – unnecessary negativity, and the assumption of inherent fan loyalty.

Textual Loyalty and the Influence of Cyberspaces

While Jenkins points out the use of fan fiction to re-shape the 'canon' of a 'poached' text, and the divergence that can emerge between the views of the creators and the views of the fans, he seems to rely on fans to ultimately remain loyal to the text as portrayed by the creators. A similar text-based loyalty is discussed by Camille Bacon-Smith in her work on fan writing, where she comments that

ambivalence of the relationship between the community and those who produce the text that is the binding force of the community.

[5] Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, p 34.

[6] Ibid, p 66.

> the alternative universe story – one which claims no connection to the series canon – is a staple … but diverging as it does so markedly from the canon, it carriers with it greater risks for the author.[8]

Bacon-Smith is greatly concerned with the risks taken by fan fiction authors, and has since been criticised for this approach.[9] Her arguments regarding the risks in breaking with established canon, however, may be quite valid, if outdated due to a change in primary text, distribution methods, and social attitudes. Bacon-Smith sees the writing of gay romances and erotica, focusing on the *Star Trek* (Original Series) characters of Kirk and Spock, as a high risk for authors, particularly in the late 1970s. 'Zines – the cheaply produced, widely distributed magazines that were the form of publication for fan fiction prior to the Internet – were either dedicated to same-sex fan fiction, in which case they had lower distribution, or else refused to publish Kirk/Spock stories.[10] 'Loyalty' to the primary text, then, may have limited the possibility of an author gaining an audience for her work.

In contrast, among *Star Trek: Voyager* writers loyalty to the primary text is often a minor consideration, especially among writers disillusioned with the primary text and needing to re-vision it in a form more palatable to themselves.[11] The advent of the Internet has considerably widened the fan fiction audience, and with it the likelihood that an audience will emerge for any particular type of fan fiction – no matter how much it pushes the boundaries of 'textual loyalty.' While readers will demand a certain consistency with the characters as portrayed on the broadcast episodes, this does not tend to limit writers to any great extent. As Bacon-Smith notes, 'Zines were prohibitive in cost and accessibility for anyone outside North America,[12] whereas the greatest obstacle an Australian fan now faces is the delay in seeing new episodes. For anyone with Internet access, fan fiction is easily available.

---

[7] Sue Hazlett, *Filling in the Gaps: Fans and Fan Fiction on the Internet*. <http://writersu.s5.com/phil/ffnet.html> at 2 April, 2002.
[8] Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992) p 215-16.
[9] Henry Jenkins, '"At Other Times, Like Females": Gender and *Star Trek* Fan Fiction' in John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching* Dr Who *and* Star Trek. (London: Routledge, 1995) p 203.
[10] Bacon-Smith, p 222-224.
[11] While I currently write only for the *Star Trek* fandom, my experience of Internet-based fan fiction communities includes *Law & Order*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and, tangentially, *The Pretender*. Comments on the theory and practice of fan writing are drawn from experiences across these fandoms.
[12] Bacon-Smith, p 212.

Greater availability leads to both a greater readership for stories, and to more authors. The more authors, the more storylines and the more contradictions of the primary text, and the greater likelihood that a story that contradicts canon will be accepted and read. Additionally, unlike 'Zines, whose editors have the option of rejecting stories, anyone can post a story to a newsgroup, or create a website to host fan fiction. The 'gatekeeper' function of editors has largely disappeared.[13]

Despite the ability of anyone to post fan fiction, distinct communities and networks (in the non-technological sense of the word) have emerged. The authors discussed in this paper belong to and utilise a variety of forms of 'virtual community' in relation to their writing, including mailing lists, newsgroups, message boards and chatrooms. These forms of community allow for feedback and assistance with stories, discussion of the primary text generally, as well as topics entirely unrelated to media fandom. These virtual communities are, for the most part, women's spaces.

Just as Jenkins has argued that fan fiction itself is based on the dual paradoxes of fascination/non-fulfilment and reality/construction, the progression of fan fiction from 'Zines to the Internet is itself something of a paradox. Studies of male and female involvement in cyberspace and Internet technologies have revealed that men usually dominate, whether simply in numbers, or by taking over the discussion within cyberspace encounters.[14] In the area of fan fiction, however, this trend appears to be reversed, and it is women who dominate, both numerically and in terms of direct participation. The convergence here is between two male-dominated subcultures – science fiction fandom and Internet use – and one, media fandom, that is female dominated.[15] From this comes the paradox of Internet science fiction fan writing – a subculture dominated by women as both audience and authors.

---

[13] The exception is 'e-Zines', such as the *Law & Order* e-Zine, *apocrypha*, which has an editorial policy and only publishes (on their website) stories considered by the editors to be of sufficient merit and quality. Stories accepted by *apocrypha*'s editors benefit from the reputation of the e-Zine for quality fan fiction. See *apocrypha*, <http://members.aol.com/apocrypha8/>.

[14] See eg Susan Clerc, 'Estrogen Brigades and "Big Tits" Threads: Media Fandom On-line and Off' in *The Cybercultures Reader*, David Bell and Barbara M Kennedy (eds) (London: Routledge, 2000) p 216-229; Susan Herring, Deborah Johnson and Tamra DiBenedetto, 'Participation in Electronic Discourse in a Feminist Field' in *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Jennifer Coates (ed) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) p 197-210.

[15] On science fiction fandom, see William Bainbridge, *Dimensions of Science Fiction*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), especially chapter seven. On media fandom, see Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 48 ff.

The Poached Text - Star Trek: Voyager

In the case of *Star Trek: Voyager*, simply writing about relationships between main characters is breaking away from the vision of the Creators. The heterosexual pairing considered here was originally highlighted by the creators, but was never entirely endorsed. The two same-sex pairings are not without basis in the primary text – tenuous though that basis might be – but the acknowledgment of same-sex relationships was not undertaken by the Creators, unless the pairing could be explained away by alien possession or multiple lifetimes.[16] In all the fanfiction I am considering, then, writers take the characters far further than the Creators, or the studio executives, would ever be willing for the broadcast episodes of *Star Trek: Voyager* to go.

Voyager is the fourth series of the *Star Trek* franchise. The crew of Federation Starship Voyager is trapped 75,000 light years (or seventy-five years travel time at top speed) from Earth, due to Captain Kathryn Janeway's adherence to Starfleet protocols. In the same part of space, and equally stranded by Janeway's actions, is the crew of a Maquis ship – a rebel group not unlike their World War II namesakes – whom Janeway was sent to arrest and bring to trial, with the help of the ex-Starfleet, ex-Maquis parolee, Tom Paris. The Maquis ship, captained by Chakotay, is destroyed in order to save both crews, and the two crews must join together in order to return home.[17]

As Captain of Voyager, Kathryn Janeway is generally portrayed in the broadcast episodes as a determined, talented leader. She embodies the enlightenment

[16] The *Star Trek* franchise has produced two episodes in which same-sex relationships have, briefly, been contemplated; *Star Trek: The Next Generation* 'The Host' (wr. Michel Horvat, dir. Marvin Rush) original (US) airdate 13 May 1991 and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* 'Rejoined' (wr. Ronald D Moore and Rene Echevarria, dir. Avery Brooks) original (US) airdate 30 October 1995. However, an enduring irritation is that Gene Roddenbury's rumoured commitment to include an ongoing homosexual character in *Star Trek* has not been honoured: see Henry Jenkins, '"Out of the Closet and into the Universe": Queers and *Star Trek*' in Henry Jenkins and John Tulloch, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching* Dr Who *and* Star Trek. (London: Routledge, 1995) p 238.

[17] This plot overview and the following character profiles contain details gleaned from episodes of *Star Trek: Voyager*, two novels considered 'semi-canonical' by both the creators and the fans (Jeri Taylor, *Mosaic* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996) and Jeri Taylor, *Pathways* (New York: Pocket Books, 1998)), and the character profiles contained on the Official Star Trek Website <http://www.startrek.com>.

'rationality' displayed by most *Star Trek* captains,[18] yet in later seasons, the creators emphasised a 'dark side' to Janeway's character.[19] Commander Chakotay, whose Native American background is portrayed as the basis for his intense spirituality, became Voyager's first officer upon the merging of the crews. As a young man he rebelled against his father and his culture and insisted on entering Starfleet, but later left on a matter of principle and joined the Maquis.[20]

The Borg character, [21] Seven of Nine, was introduced at the beginning of the fourth season. Having been 'disconnected' from the hive-mind of the Borg Collective, to which she had been assimilated as a six year old, much of later-season *Voyager* deals with Seven's attempts to reintegrate as an individual human being under the guidance of Janeway.[22]

Having previously betrayed both Starfleet and the Maquis, Lieutenant Tom Paris was initially the major rebel and troublemaker on board. In later seasons, Paris settles down to become a generally likeable, generally responsible member of the crew. A recurring theme of the series is Paris' conflict with his father, and in the final episode, his wife, the ex-Maquis, half-Klingon Chief Engineer B'Elanna Torres gives birth to a daughter, Miral, just as Tom is finally able to reconcile with his own father.[23]

As indicated above, one of the most popular forms of fan fiction is 'relationship' fiction. This is especially the case with a fan text such as *Star Trek: Voyager*, which for much of its run refused to countenance discussion of romantic relationships between regular characters. While Bacon-Smith identifies relationship

[18] See Michelle Barrett and Duncan Barrett, *Star Trek: The Human Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
[19] 'Character Profile: Kathryn Janeway, Captain' <http://www.startrek.com/library/individ.asp?ID=112397> at 18 May 2002.
[20] 'Character Profile: Chakotay', <http://www.startrek.com/library/individ.asp?ID=112391> at 18 May 2002.
[21] The Borg - a cybernetic, part organic, part artificial life-form – were the arch-villains of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*; 'Xenology Profile: Borg' <http://www.startrek.com/library/xeno.asp?ID=70558> at 18 May 2002.
[22] 'Character Profile: Seven of Nine' <http://www.startrek.com/library/individ.asp?ID=112406> at 18 May 2002.
[23] 'Character Profile: Tom Paris, Lieutenant' <http://www.startrek.com/library/individ.asp?ID=112412> at 18 May 2002; *Star Trek: Voyager* 'Endgame' (wr. Rick Berman, Brannon Braga, Ken Biller and Robert Doherty, dir. Allan Kroeker) original (US) airdate 23 May 2001.

or ‘‘shipper fiction’ by its focus on character friendships,[24] the term has come to specifically indicate a heterosexual romantic relationship. Stories featuring homosexual romantic relationships are known as ‘slash’ fiction – originally because of the slash placed between the initials of the protagonists, such as K/S (Kirk/Spock) fiction. While the use of the punctuation mark is equally used to denote a heterosexual relationship, such as J/C (Janeway/Chakotay), the term ‘slash’ is still used to indicate to the potential reader that the story involves a same sex pairing.

The writing of ‘’shipper’ and ‘slash’ stories almost inevitably requires divergence from series canon, as it envisages a relationship between characters that does not exist in the primary text. While creators of some fan texts are well known for their willingness to listen to their fans – Joss Whedon, creator and executive producer of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* being the exemplar – the creators of *Star Trek*, especially since the death of Gene Roddenbury in 1991, are notorious for their general disdain of the fan community. (The final episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*, in which the only romantic pairing without a fan base – Chakotay/Seven – was the one chosen to be developed, is merely the most recent example of this.) As a result of this disdain, fan writers feel entitled to re-write and re-vision the text, and particularly the relationships within that text, as they believe it ‘should’ have been.

Relationships of Equivalence or Equality?

Henry Jenkins argues that ‘fan writers … accept uncritically many ways of thinking about gender that originate within the commercial narratives.’[25] In writing this he was referring primarily to the original series of *Star Trek* – a series that has gone down in history for its lack of female characters, other than as scantily-clad window-dressing. It could be argued that in the fourth *Star Trek* incarnation – *Star Trek: Voyager* – this criticism would no longer be valid. The ‘commercial narrative’ featured the first female Starship captain in the leading role of a *Star Trek* series (Kate Mulgrew as ‘Kathryn Janeway’), a far more unisex dress code, and was being produced in the equality-conscious 1990s, rather than the mid-‘second-wave’ late 1960s. However, the broadcast episodes of *Star Trek*: *Voyager* received their share of

[24] Bacon-Smith, p 53.

criticism, particularly from female fans in relation to the later season episodes where Janeway's tendency to depression, guilt and obsession was suddenly 'revealed,' after years of emphasis on her scientific rationality. The dissatisfaction on the part of fans led to fan fiction re-workings of her characterisation.

The construction of the Janeway and Chakotay characters in the broadcast episodes seems to assume that there must be some form of heterosexual 'whole' between a pair of characters. Where Janeway takes on traditionally masculine traits – her position at the head of the shipboard hierarchy, her single-minded dedication to her career, for example – Chakotay has traits that are traditionally feminine; he supports Janeway, ensuring that she rests and eats sufficiently, and he is the peace-loving, spiritual character, a warrior only in defence of himself or his people.

This apparent reliance on gender equivalence could be read in two ways; either that, by being willing to characterise Chakotay in a more traditionally feminine way, the Creators are attempting to reject the traditional stereotypes, or conversely, that their need to ensure a balance between masculine and feminine between the two characters demonstrates an adherence to heteronormative concepts of gender equivalence. Given the essentialism behind this idea of equivalence, it is more likely that the construction of Janeway and Chakotay is indicative of the Creators' heteronormative mindset. This mindset is, to a great extent, accepted by fan writers in their portrayal of the characters and the Janeway/Chakotay relationship. Where it deviates from the presentation of equivalence is in its portrayal of characters as sexual beings, rather than the more asexual characterisations apparent in the broadcast episodes. This is particularly true of Janeway.[26]

At the other end of the spectrum lies 'equality' of relationships, rather than equivalence. Patricia Lamb and Diana Veith's discussion of the original form of 'slash' – the Kirk/Spock story – concludes that women wrote (and continue to write) K/S stories because of the writer's own longing for equality within intimate

[25] Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, p 219.

[26] In the seven seasons (182 broadcast episodes) of *Star Trek: Voyager*, less than ten episodes dealt with Janeway as a sexual being. Of these, in only four was Janeway's sexuality employed for its own sake (rather than, for example, as a diversion against an enemy), and in two of these, the character is suffering from amnesia, and was not acting as 'Captain' at the time. In the other two, her sexuality is expressed in relation to a holodeck character, a hi-tech version of today's cybersex.

relationships.[27] Because of the inherent inequality between men and women, they argued, the only way either Kirk or Spock could be in a relationship of equals was to enter a relationship with each other. In their work, Lamb and Veith do argue that the Kirk and Spock relationship is one of equivalence – identifying 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics in each character, and complementary or equivalent 'balancing' characteristics in the other.[28] In many *Voyager* 'slash' stories, however, equivalence has fully shifted to a notion of equality. In Janeway/Seven fiction, for example, the intelligence and mental strength of the Borg character Seven of Nine is the perfect equal of Janeway, in contrast to Chakotay, supportive to the point of being Janeway's 'lap dog' (a common criticism of *Voyager* fans, including those committed to the J/C fandom). Chakotay/Paris stories also display this emphasis on 'equality' rather than gender equivalence.

Between equivalence and equality lay stories best described as 'Queer Fiction' – those in which the fluidity of sexuality posited by queer theory is acknowledged. I place this between 'shipper and slash fiction because of the effect on the representations of gender. In these stories, canon pairings – Paris/Torres, and to a lesser extent Janeway/Chakotay – are still operative. This limits the extent to which writers appear to challenge the characterisations and representation of gender. However, the fluidity of sexuality allows a degree of flexibility of representation – a flexibility harder to find in the heterosexual relationship fiction.

Relationship Fiction

Both Vanhunks, in her story *Fire Dance*, and DA Kent, in *Slim Chance*, demonstrate the operation of notions of 'equivalence' in fan fiction. In both, Chakotay's supportive role towards the more burdened Janeway is a key aspect of the characterisation – in *Fire Dance*, Janeway muses that; 'He should hate [Janeway],

[27] Patricia Lamb and Diane Veith, 'Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and *Star Trek* Zines' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo (ed), (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986) 240-41.
[28] Ibid, p 243

dammit! … But he was Chakotay, warrior man extraordinaire, peaceful to the bone, at her side like he promised.'[29]

In *Fire Dance*, Janeway must come to terms with her actions during the season five-six cliffhanger episode, 'Equinox';[30] actions which included nearly allowing a crewmember to be killed, and relieving Chakotay of duty after his protests over that incident. Despite the fact that Chakotay himself is one of the reasons for her guilt, near-depression and obsession, he is the only one able to bring her out of her destructive frame of mind, given his previously established role as her supporter and closest friend. The sexual tension between the two characters is mostly sublimated in this story, however it emerges at points, mostly as a counter to Janeway's refusal to let go of her understanding of leadership. When Janeway's 'leader' characteristics are at their height, Vanhunks balances this with a mention of Janeway's sexuality, and Chakotay's attraction to her; and indication that her leadership has not made her asexual in his eyes. Chakotay comments that:

> He could spend hours just watching her unwind. Then she became all woman, all allure, the faint lines of strain that seemed to be perpetually engraved on her face, gone, like mist. There was always a lightness about her then, as if she didn't think about the burdens she carried. She was serene and, he wanted to think, happy. But mostly he wanted to think that she was at peace.[31]

By the end of *Fire Dance*, Janeway has found some measure of peace, mostly through the guidance of Chakotay. Her peace, however, is not limited to her career or her personal life - rather there is peace in both, though neither is fully resolved. The passage above betrays some lingering gender equivalence, however, in its implication that that Janeway's sexuality is only apparent when she is not in her role as leader of Voyager.

DA Kent's *Slim Chance* attempts a more direct challenge of the Creators' concept of equivalence through the juxtaposition of career and pregnancy. It is impossible for the pregnancy to disappear while Janeway is in her leadership position,

---

[29] Vanhunks, *Fire Dance*, part four, <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Crater/6253/fire.htm> at 29 March 2002.
[30] *Star Trek: Voyager*, 'Equinox, part 2' (wr. Rick Berman, Brannon Braga and Joe Menosky, dir. David Livingstone) original (US) airdate 22 September 1999.
[31] Vanhunks, *Fire Dance*, part seven.

and the character must therefore cope with both at once. At times, however, she wishes she did not have to:

> This was usually her most comfortable place to be. The Captain's chair in her Ready Room. It didn't feel so comfortable today. Today, she wished she could just be a woman, in love with a man whose child she was carrying.[32]

Quite apart from the acknowledgment of sexuality that comes with a pregnancy (although in *Slim Chance*, the possibilities afforded by science fiction mean that such an acknowledgment is misplaced) Kent also calls attention to Janeway as sexual and sensual, by commenting on her place in her (male) crew's fantasy lives. Paris' consideration of Janeway comes close to breaking away from the gender equivalence so prevalent in J/C writing; after commenting on the strength of passion he sees in her, he concludes that

> Not every man would wait for a woman as many years as Chakotay was obviously willing to wait for Kathryn Janeway. Tom grinned again. Not many men would be able to handle a woman like Kathryn Janeway once they'd won her over. But if anyone could do it, Chakotay could.[33]

Here the relationship is characterised as strength meeting strength, determination facing equal determination. Chakotay's patience is figured not as weak, but as strong: Janeway's passion for duty is a positive attribute that translates into romantic passion. The seeds of the 'relationship of equals', rather than of dominant and subordinate, are obvious in this presentation of Janeway and Chakotay, if not fully developed.

Fluid Sexuality – Flexible Representations

Interestingly, Lamb and Veith, on whose work my concept of 'equality' is based, argue strenuously that K/S is not 'homosexual literature' – their criteria being that the stories are not about gay men.[34] This in itself is an indication of the openness of fan fiction to the ideas of queer theory – the fact that stories of homosexual romance are written about characters figured by the primary text as heterosexual, indicating the willingness of fan writers to accept a certain fluidity of sexuality.

---

[32] DA Kent, *Slim Chance*, <http://home.snafu.de/sylvia.kloessing/debra/slimchance2.html> at 29 March, 2002.
[33] Ibid.

'Queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms [sex, gender and desire] which stabilise heterosexuality,'[35] and it embraces a far wider range of sexualities and sexual practices than the more defined terms of 'heterosexual', 'straight', 'homosexual', 'lesbian' or 'gay.' Here I have used the terminology of queer to look at stories that go beyond simply refocussing the sexual preference of a character, and instead show characters as involved in either sexual acts, or relationships, that are simultaneously heterosexual and homosexual.

In *Killing Time* by YCD, Chakotay and Tom Paris engage in homosexual intercourse as the culmination of a game of 'truth or dare.'[36] To that point, the game has involved a number of admissions from each party about sexual practice and attraction (although not of attraction to each other.) The story has garnered criticism from within the C/P fandom for not being 'truly' about a gay pairing,[37] echoing the position of Lamb and Veith on K/S fiction. At the same time, however, the fluidity of sexuality accepted within this story is indicative of a 'queerness' that is acknowledged by the author of *Killing Time*. YCD comments that she

> was tired of the rigidity of sexual roles being explored in a lot of fan fiction at that time and … believed both [Chakotay and Paris] were probably more sexually adventurous than we were allowed to see onscreen on a network television show.[38]

Monkee's story *New Sensations* is probably more challenging of the rigidity noted by YCD than YCD's own story. In *New Sensations*, the focus pairing is Janeway and Chakotay, but during most of the story Janeway is trapped within Tom Paris's body.[39] The sexual encounter, when it occurs, is therefore mentally heterosexual but physically homosexual. Monkee tests the boundaries of the

---

[34] Lamb and Veith, p 252-3.
[35] Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1996) p 3.
[36] YCD, *Killing Time*, <http://www.trekiverse.org/startrek/startrek/adult/voy/KillingTime.txt> at 2 April, 2002.
[37] The resultant criticism was mentioned by YCD in a private e-mail communication dated 8 April 2002, and in an e-mail interview/questionnaire completed in the course of research for this essay (received 17 May 2002). Similar (and unsolicited) criticism was also made in a private e-mail communication to me from another C/P writer, Cassatt, dated 29 May 2002. (Copies of all e-mails are on file with author.)
[38] YCD, e-mail interview/questionnaire received 17 May 2002, copy on file with author.
[39] The body swap between Janeway and Paris occurred during the *Star Trek: Voyager* broadcast episode 'Vis a Vis' (wr. Robert Doherty, dir. Jesus Salvador Trevino) original (US) airdate 8 April 1998.

representation of gender through this dual encounter, but even more so through the acceptability of it to the participants. In the course of the story, Chakotay comments that 'for some reason, it didn't seem the least bit odd to him that he was ready to kiss the hell out of Tom Paris's lips.' [40] And in a passage that blends questions of sexual preference with issues surrounding the portrayal of roles within the sexual act, Monkee writes – from Chakotay's point of view;

> This was…indescribable. When he'd imagined kissing Kathryn, he'd imagined having to be careful not to hold her too tightly when he pulled her towards him. He'd imagined having to bend down to meet her lips. He'd even imagined that he would be the one pressing her against the wall, although that was presumptuous. Now he was the one with his back to the bulkhead, restrained by a body that was marginally taller than his, and nearly as broad. He knew that Kathryn was in there – he could clearly sense her – but it was Paris' body, and he couldn't deny how aroused he was becoming by it. As was she. He could feel her erection rubbing roughly against his, through the material of their uniforms.

Despite *New Sensations* being, in essence, about a heterosexual relationship, the equivalence in the standard representation of Janeway and Chakotay is strongly challenged. Janeway is physically the more powerful of the pair, albeit aided by the male body she temporarily possesses. Monkee never permits the reader to forget, however, that Janeway in her own body is equally capable of being the initiator.

The questioning of sexual preference and sexual roles continues to the end of the story. In the final scene, Janeway (now in her own body) and Chakotay consider the possibility of a threesome with Paris. They dismiss the idea, but Paris picks up on the signals and is discomfited by what he (correctly) imagines his commanding officers are thinking. The juxtaposition of the final two lines of the story is intriguing: Paris concludes that 'sometimes, a guy just needed to work on his car', replacing the femininity of Janeway's possession of his body with hyper-masculinity. This is followed by the phrase 'The end. Or is it?', indicating the possibility of continuing the story. Monkee has 'had several requests to continue [the story, but] never felt any desire to do so.'[41] Even without a continuation being written, the possibility of 'additional knowledges', in this case centering around whether Janeway, Chakotay

[40] Monkee, *New Sensations*, <http://members.tripod.com/jetcmonkee/new_sensations.htm> at 2 April, 2002.
[41] Monkee, email interview/questionnaire received 28 May 2002 (copy on file with author).

and Paris ever acted on the impulses of the conclusion of *New Sensations*, is left open to readers who can create their own additional knowledges to this new 'primary text.'

'Slash' Fiction and the 'Relationship of Equals'

Isharan, by Michelle Marquand, deals with the same 'leadership versus woman-in-love' dilemma that Vanhunks and DA Kent discuss in relation to the Janeway/Chakotay pairing. The story traces the development of a romantic relationship between Janeway and Seven, after Janeway has initially rejected Seven on the grounds that a relationship with a member of her crew would be unethical. The rejection is triggered by Seven's announcement that Janeway is the only person on board *Voyager* with whom Seven is romantically compatible. Seven also declares her love for Janeway, and Janeway is

> simultaneously flooded with desire, joy, regret, and pain. Her head fairly swam with the impact of those words, only to dissolve into cold, hard reality. Captains do not date their subordinates.[42]

Although Seven is unaware of the effects of her declaration, the knowledge that she is loved causes Janeway to act unusually. She cries – something she 'hadn't done in years' – she nearly collapses at a diplomatic function, and, most tellingly, she resigns her commission and plans to leave Voyager in the hope of being able to form a relationship with Seven outside the constraints of her captaincy. In fact, the determined, traditionally 'masculine' Janeway acts like the heroine of a gothic novel, to the extent of sacrificing herself for the sake of a possible romance.

It should be noted that this is not a typical characterisation of Janeway from this author. In a long and intricate J/7 series, Marquand constructs an impressively complex characterisation of Janeway – fearless for herself, yet always concerned for those around her; a woman who captains a Starship, raises two children, mediates battles between her wife (Seven) and a close friend, and generally approaches the utopia of 'having it all.'

The reason for Janeway's sudden breakdown in *Isharan* is not so much that she is paralysed by her love for Seven, but by the realisation that the woman who is

[42] Michelle Marquand, *Isharan*, <http://members.tripod.com/~Paradox761/Isharan.htm> at 29 March, 2002.

her equal – her only equal within their community – is about to marry a different woman, and will therefore become unavailable to Janeway. Without Seven, Janeway is incomplete.

It could be argued that this 'incompleteness' goes back to the idea of gender complementarity, and that it is therefore just as heteronormative as the assumptions that structure the friendship and possible romance between Janeway and Chakotay in the primary text. However, what completes Janeway in *Isharan* is not a supportive, docile 'feminised' male, but a woman who is Janeway's equal in intellect and determination. As a couple, neither woman becomes the subordinate. While Seven sets out the terms on which she will agree to the couple's remaining on *Voyager*, Janeway regains her command and her equilibrium, signified by the glares she directs at Chakotay – the 'Janeway death glare' being a staple of Janeway-focussed fan fiction and a signifier of her command abilities.

Of the pieces discussed in this paper, Boadicea's *Watching* is the most conscious of its own challenge to the gender assumptions of the primary text. Boadicea comments that she was upset by the increasing infantilising of Seven by the Creators, especially in the episode 'Someone To Watch Over Me,'[43] and the fact that 'it was only in this episode, with the kind of dim, pubescent Seven, that the writers chose to recognise the possible erotic interpretation of the pairing.'[44] *Watching* was written in response to this episode, and comments directly on the heteronormativity within it. Seven observes that

> [t]he Doctor wanted me to date, suggesting I find a man to ask out. Perhaps he's missing a few subroutines, but even so, he could have discovered homoeroticism for himself. I wonder if he's censored, and if so, if it was his creator or Starfleet.[45]

The question of where the Doctor's censorship originated translates easily to the question of whether censorship within the broadcast episodes originates with the

[43] *Star Trek: Voyager*, 'Someone to Watch Over Me' (wr. Brannon Braga, Michael Taylor and Ken Biller, dir. Robert Duncan McNeill) original (US) airdate 28 April 1999.
[44] Boadicea, e-mail interview/questionnaire received 29 May 2002, copy on file with author. The scene in which Boadicea sees the Creators as recognising the potential pairing of Janeway and Seven was removed from the episode in the US, although it was broadcast in Canada and Australia; Jim Wright, *Jim Reviews: 'Someone to Watch Over Me'*, <http://www.treknews.net/deltablues/watchoverme.htm> at 1 June 2002.
[45] Boadicea, *Watching*, <http://appelsini.tripod.com/B11.html> at 29 March, 2002.

Creators or with network executives. In both cases, the censorship is figured as foolish and ignorant.

As with Marquand's *Isharan*, *Watching* portrays Seven and Janeway as the only possible option the other has as a partner. When Seven outlines her criteria for a date, she lists 'job performance, interest in astronomy, quantum mechanics, music. There is only one person on this ship with a stated interest in all these things.'[46] In contrast to the romantic resolution of *Isharan*, however, *Watching* concludes without resolution, rather with the inner conflict of both Janeway and Seven regarding their affections for the other. Janeway's conflict centres on the infantalisation of Seven – a factor which mitigates against equality between them.

> Most disturbing is the complaint that I am trying to mold [sic] her, that I want to remake her, shape her in my image, break her. I don't understand this. She is not the person I hoped she'd be, no, but it is not because I wanted her as a replica of myself. I wanted a friend. Not a child.

Seven's childishness – forced on her by the Creators in the primary text, and by Seven's own fear of rejection by Janeway in *Watching* – prevents Janeway from considering a relationship with Seven, although she wishes to. Equality within intimacy is the ideal, and neither Seven nor Janeway are willing to settle for second best.

While writers such as Lamb and Veith, Bacon-Smith and Jenkins propose that women wrote K/S due to the lack of strong female characters available to them in the broadcast episodes,[47] the emergence of Janeway and Seven in *Star Trek: Voyager* has not precluded women from continuing to write stories featuring male pairings. Siubhan, author of the Chakotay/Paris story *When You Were Mine*, writes C/P because 'it's so much more deliciously transgressive to have two men being tender together than two women [because men] aren't supposed to be tender.'[48]

As with the J/7 fiction, stories tend to have a great emphasis on the equality of the relationship. In *When You Were Mine*, Siubhan draws on the parallels in the two men's life histories to indicate their equality and suitability for each other.[49] Of

[46] Ibid.
[47] Henry Jenkins, 'Gender and *Star Trek* Fan Fiction'.
[48] Siubhan, e-mail interview/questionnaire received 16 May 2002 (copy on file with author.)
[49] Siubhan, *When You Were Mine* <http://www.siubhan.com/stories/mine.txt> at 2 April 2002.

Voyager's crew of 147,[50] Paris and Chakotay are among the few who have experienced life both in Starfleet and in the Maquis. Each has a difficult relationship with his father, and each began, at least, as an outcast of sorts among the joint Starfleet/Maquis crew. Siubhan builds on their similarity by describing the functional equality of their relationship, a relationship firmly established at the opening of the story. In their life together on a farm, Paris cooks breakfast and Chakotay cooks dinner; Paris weeds while Chakotay plows the fields; Paris feeds the cat and Chakotay feeds the oxen. The two are shown to be entirely devoted to one another. Then they discover that their relationship has been fabricated by aliens who kidnapped them from the ship, and they are forced to reassess their partnership. In this reassessment, Siubhan deals with the two pairings that are closest to the primary text. Each 'canon' love interest – Torres for Paris and Janeway for Chakotay – assures the new couple that Chakotay and Paris are simply 'perfect' for each other: romantic equals, just like Janeway and Seven, and Kirk and Spock.

Conclusion

Additional knowledges can, like *Fire Dance*, *Watching* and *New Sensations*, be created from the need to know more about events of a particular episode, or, like *Slim Chance*, *Isharan*, *When You Were Mine*, and *Killing Time* explore character reactions to new plots. Through these explorations, authors are able to move away from the heteronormative 'equivalence' model of representing gender, to a model based on equality in sexual relationships. Bound up with heteronormativity as it is, the equivalence model is more prevalent in fiction featuring heterosexual romantic pairings, however the model is able to be challenged even then. Aided by the increased audience and support delivered by the Internet, fan fiction authors are able to test the limits of textual loyalty, and to be, on occasion, even a little 'deliciously transgressive'.

[50] The 'standard' crew complement of *Voyager* is fan-determined through extrapolation from episodes and application of a fan in-joke – the constant use in episodes of the number 47.

Bibliography

AC. *In Defense of Slash*. <http://writersu.s5.com/phil/slash.html> at 2 April, 2002

Allen, Virginia and Terri Paul, 'Science and Fiction: Ways of Theorizing About Women' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo (ed). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986

Bacon-Smith, Camille. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992

Bainbridge, William. *Dimensions of Science Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986

Barr, Marleen S. *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Bick, Ilsa J. 'Boys in Space: *Star Trek*, Latency and the Neverending Story.' *Cinema Journal* v 35, n 2 (1996) pp 43-60

Boadicea. *Watching*. <http://appelsini.tripod.com/B11.html> at 29 March, 2002

Clerc, Susan. 'Estrogen Brigades and "Big Tits" Threads: Media fandom on-line and off' in *The Cybercultures Reader*, David Bell and Barbara M Kennedy (eds). London: Routledge, 2000

Hale, Laura. *Kathryn Janeway: Mamma, Mistress, Fearless Leader or Face in the Crowd? Let the Fan Decide…* <http://writersu.s5.com/phil/janeway.html> at 2 April, 2002

Harcourt, Wendy (ed). *Women@Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace*. London: Zed Books, 1999

Hazlett, Sue. *Filling in the Gaps: Fans and Fan Fiction on the Internet*. <http://writersu.s5.com/phil/ffnet.html> at 2 April, 2002.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory*. Carlton South: Melbourne UP, 1996.

Jenkins, Henry. *The Poachers and the Storm Troopers: Cultural Convergence in the Digital Age*. Paper presented at the University of Michigan; Spring 1998 <http://commons.somewhere.com/rre/1998/The.Poachers.and.the.Sto.html> at 2 April, 2002

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992

Joyrich, Lynne. 'Feminist Enterprise? *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the Occupation of Feminity.' *Cinema Journal*, v 35, n 2 (1996) pp 61-84

Kent, DA. *Slim Chance*. <http://home.snafu.de/sylvia.kloessing/debra/slimchance2.html> at 29 March, 2002

Lamb, Patricia and Diana Veith, 'Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and *Star Trek* Zines' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo (ed). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986

Marquand, Michelle. *Isharan*. <http://members.tripod.com/~Paradox761/Isharan.htm> at 29 March, 2002

Monkee. *New Sensations*. <http://members.tripod.com/jetcmonkee/new_sensations.htm> at 2 April, 2002

— —. Official Star Trek Website. <http://www.startrek.com> at 18 May 2002

Palumbo, Donald. 'Sexuality and the Allure of the Fantastic' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo (ed). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986

Radway, Janice. 'The Readers and their Romances', in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, Robyn R Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (eds). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1991

Reimer, James. 'Homosexuality in Science Fiction and Fantasy' in *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, Donald Palumbo, (ed).. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986

Siubhan. *When You Were Mine*. <http://www.siubhan.com/stories/mine.txt> at 2 April 2002

Smith, Marc A and Peter Kollock (eds). *Communities in Cyberspace*. London: Routledge, 1999

Star, Susan Leigh (ed). *The Cultures of Computing*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995

Taylor, Jeri. *Mosaic*. New York: Pocket Books, 1996

Taylor, Jeri. *Pathways*. New York: Pocket Books, 1998

Tulloch, John and Henry Jenkins. *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching* Dr Who *and* Star Trek. London: Routledge, 1995

Vanhunks. *Fire Dance*. <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Crater/6253/fire.htm> at 29 March, 2002

Wakefield, Sarah R. '"Your Sister in St. Scully": An Electronic Community of Female Fans of *The X Files*' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* v 29, n 3 (2001) pp 130-7

Wakeford, Nina. 'Cyberqueer' in *The Cybercultures Reader*, David Bell and Barbara M Kennedy (eds). London: Routledge, 2000

Wright, Jim. *Jim Reviews: 'Someone to Watch Over Me'*, <http://www.treknews.net/deltablues/watchoverme.htm> at 1 June 2002.

YCD (Your Cruise Director). *Killing Time*. http://www.trekiverse.org/startrek/startrek/adult/voy/KillingTime.txt at 2 April, 2002