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Star Trek Voyager – PC or non PC?

– an odyssey through the universe of political correctness or a return to the land of racial prejudice?

Since *Voyager* has been praised as the most politically correct series ever produced, we have been tempted to question this statement. Not surprisingly we have found that this fame for political correctness was reached by connecting all non politically correct ideology to alien races only. In this article we have analysed the way this is being achieved in the case of one particular alien race. We have also discussed the implications of racist ideology in such a widely spread and highly praised series.



1. Introduction

Voyager is a recent spin-off of the well-known *Star Trek* series, released in 1995, and has been praised as the most politically correct (hereafter PC) of all *Star Trek* series and films. To test this claim, we thought it useful to analyze its **discourse**, broadly understood to include all **communicative acts, utterances, gestures, images, decor**, and so on. Discourse analysis can in turn assist us in exploring its underlying ideology, as proposed by Turner.

“If our narratives do work to resolve social contradictions symbolically, what they must deal with are those existing political divisions or inequities between groups, classes, or gender which have been constructed as natural or inevi-

table within our societies. Films, then, both as systems of representation and as narrative structures, are rich sites for ideological analysis.” (Turner: 1992, p. 132)

Even before *Voyager*, *Star Trek* was known as a series governed by humanist ideals: “[...] we can celebrate the kind of television programming which will help ensure that future generations will not have to carry the memories of persecution, trial, and subjugation within them all their lives. We can celebrate television that is so inherently humanist.” (Roddenberry: 1995, p. 10)

Voyager topped this by having all American minorities represented on the bridge in some incarnation or other and by casting the first female captain ever. However, the depiction of alien races

in the series requires closer scrutiny concerning whether and how far *Voyager* conforms to or deviates from the former *Star Trek* ideology. Whilst viewing *Voyager*, we have discovered this depiction to conceal non-PC ideas, some less well and some more so. These are most striking in the presentation of the **Kazon**, an **alien race** encountered by *Voyager* on their way home from the other side of the galaxy, in contrast to the **Native Americans** from our own planet. The Kazon are the only alien race depicted in detail and are therefore prominently featured. The Federation Starship *Voyager* has been taken to the other side of the galaxy, the Delta Quadrant, by an alien entity called the Caretaker. This has also happened to a Maqui ship. The Maqui are a group of rebels who fight both the Federation and the Cardassians, because they disagree with the border decided on in a peace treaty between the two. In the Delta Quadrant the two ships are forced by circumstances to join forces and become one crew. From then on, the bridge crew of *Voyager* comprises the following officers: Captain Cathryn Janeway, Federation, female, Caucasian; Commander Chakotay, Maqui, male, Native American (the actor is Hispanic); Lieutenant Tuvok, Federation, male, Vulcan (actor African American); Lieutenant B’Elanna Torres, Maqui, female, half Human/half Klingon (actor Hispanic); Lieutenant Tom Paris,

Maqui, male, Caucasian; Ensign Harry Kim, Federation, male, Asian-American. An important role in the depiction of the Kazon is played by Neelix, a Talaxian, who is at home in the Delta Quadrant and therefore considered an expert on the cultures of the area. The Kazon encountered by Voyager belong to three different sects: the Nistrim, the Relora, and the Oglra, and the leaders of all Kazon factions are called Majes. One member of the Voyager crew, a Maqui woman called Seska, defects to



Foto: Byron C. Cohan aus „Star Trek Voyager“, No. 10, Feb. 1997

the Kazon Nistrim in the course of the series and henceforth plays an important role in their fight with Voyager.

2. Methods of Analysis

In order to get a detailed and accurate picture of the portrayal of both the Kazon and the Native Americans, we transcribed all discourse produced by and/or referring to the Kazon and to Native Americans. Of the 40 episodes of the first two seasons, the Kazons appear in seven episodes and the Native Americans in five. Whereas the Kazon feature prominently in all the episodes, only one episode is dedicated entirely to the Native Americans; in the other four

they appear in the side story. Although the series features one Native American main character in all episodes we have chosen only the episodes in which this character and/or others refer to Native American issues and disregarded all episodes in which his ethnicity is not stressed.

After a detailed analysis of the transcripts we identified and classified the characteristics attributed to each group. We divided the characteristics of the **Kazon** into three main categories that seemed suitable for the data: **primitive – inferior, savage, and criminal**. The **Native American** characteristics constitute one main category: **primitive – superior**.

In the course of the analysis we found that what is explicitly said about the Kazon does not justify the extremely negative impression the viewer is likely to receive. The characteristics themselves are hardly ever explicitly named but still they are vividly present.

We therefore found it necessary to distinguish **four methods of portrayal**, namely, **Language, Action, “Facts”, and Visual Means**.

Portrayal through **Language** is any direct or indirect characterization by the use of words. An example of how the Kazon are characterized by their own words:¹

Maje Culluh (addressing other Kazon Majes):

today is the day kazon children will remember for generations / today is the day we put aside our differences and join forces to defeat voyager // today is the day that marks the end of the supremacy of the relora (hateful) and the oglra because after today / we will have the federation technology and the other sects / will run / when they see us (*Manœuvres*)

Action is composed of all characterization achieved by showing a protagonist's actions and behavior. For example the Kazon repeatedly fail to answer hails, or end transmissions in the middle of utterances, or even open fire without reason.

The category of **“Facts”** comprises all statements about a character made by someone who, due to the story line, appears to hold expert authority for the viewer. This is actually a sub-category of Language; however, we decided to treat it separately because it comprises most explicit statements about the groups in question, and what is being said carries more weight for the viewer, due to the implied expertise of the speaker. One of these “experts” is Neelix who repeatedly makes statements about the Kazon, for example:

don't worry captain / you can count on me to keep those nefarious kazon at bay (*Initiations*)

Visual Means includes characterization through body language, gestures, mimic, appearance, images of a character's environment, tools, weapons, etc. By the nature of film, this category often exerts the most influence upon the viewer. Unfortunately, it is also the category most difficult to describe with precision. The producers of *Voyager* employ this method to create a contrast between the Kazon and the Native Americans. While the Native Americans are shown in peaceful and idyllic nature settings with abundant vegetation, the Kazon's environment is barren, desert, and unfriendly.

3. The Kazon

From a close analysis of the presentation of the Kazon in *Voyager* we were able to determine just how they are pressed into the role of general scapegoat of the series. The categories named above shall serve as a guide through the diverse methods used to characterize the Kazon.

3.1. Primitive/Inferior

The viewer's first impression of the Kazon is determined by their looks. They are dressed like **guerrilla warriors**, their hair is **wild** and their faces are **threatening**. Not once in the course of the series is a Kazon seen to smile, and their body language as well as

their tone are always extremely **aggressive** and **arrogant**. In contrast, all the positive alien races are white, which lends a racist connotation to the dark complexion.

finds out that:

kazon sects control this part of the quadrant / some have food / some have ore / some have water / they all trade and they all kill each other for it (*The Caretaker II*)



Under Taylor's guiding hand, Chakotay has shown that he's not all mysticism and medicine pouches – he can be tough as nails too.

When the first Kazon planet is shown, the viewer is impelled to agree with the reaction of Tom Paris, a Voyager crew member:

why would anyone want to live like this! (*The Caretaker II*)

The planet is a virtual desert, blazing hot and completely barren; the Kazon live in a ruin without any "modern comforts". In other episodes, we are shown them using caves as prisons (*Alliances*), and booby-trapping desert moons as training sites (*Initiations*).

From their living conditions it follows that the Kazon are deprived. Similar indicators include their desire for water and their first attempt to steal a piece of technology from Voyager: a food replicator.

The Kazon ships are an environment as unpleasant as their planets. They are dark, strictly functional, and do not contain any of the embellishments known from the bright, slick Federation ships. The only decorations found on a Kazon ship are skulls and other trophies captured from their dead enemies (*Initiations*).

From Neelix, Voyager's expert on the Delta Quadrant, the viewer

The negative connotation of the words "sect" and "faction" used to describe the political organization of the Kazon marks their society as inferior. Also, their organization is described as unstable:

Chakotay: how many kazon sects are there?

Karr: changes every day / yesterday there were eighteen (*Initiations*)

This instability is further intensified by the fact that Kazon sects are "blood enemies" (*Initiations*) and constantly fight each other:

Neelix: it's certainly unusual for rival kazon sects to congregate peacefully

Janeway: is it possible the nistrim have formed an alliance with other sects?

Neelix: I've never known the kazon to do anything like that before (*Maneuvers*)

Furthermore, Kazon life is governed by **political killings** inside the sects as well as between sects. In the episode *Initiations*, Karr, a young Kazon warrior, solves his conflict with the Maje (leader) of his sect by killing him and handing the power over to the next in command. Similarly, in *Maneuvers*, Maje Culluh following Seska's ad-

vice transports two rival Majes of another sect into space and thereby kills them because they did not want to join the Nistrim in their fight against Voyager.

Although the Kazon do not have an army in the traditional sense, their **society** is presented as **militaristic** simply because every Kazon male appearing in the series is a warrior; and the viewer never sees the Kazon in a domestic environment. Moreover, the language used by the Kazon is filled with word referring to **death** and **killing**. A quantitative analysis² of such words in the episode *Initiations* found significant lexical choices in Kazon discourse: "executioner" (2 times), "die"/"death" (12), "kill" (16), "enemy" (4), "destroy" (3), "warrior"/"fighter" (2), "battle" (9), "war" (2), "fight" (2). In the discourse of the non-Kazon Commander Chakotay, we found "destroy" (1), "not killing" (3), "kill" (7), "die" (1), "death" (1), "battle" (2). It is important to mention that he uses "kill" exclusively to refer to someone who wants to kill him or wants him to kill someone else. Moreover, he is the only one in the episode who uses words that arouse positive connotations such as: "welcome" (2), "saving life" (4), "son" (2), and "gentle" (2).

The Kazon **values** presented in the series are **incompatible** with the **peaceful** and **humanist ideals** of our modern society. While respect and honor are the most important values for them as shown by the following quote:

Karr: ... you [refers to C] come into space / showing off your / uniforms and display the markings of your / federation / with no respect / as if you own this part of space / but it belongs to us [...] (*Initiations*)

These **values** are based only on **battle skills** and **power struggles**. In the episode *Initiations* the viewer is given an extensive description of Kazon honor codes. We learn that the Kazon prefer to die rather than survive a lost battle. This is explained by Karr after he was saved from his explo-

ding ship by Chakotay:

Karr: kill me

C: //

Karr: please! //

C: why are you so eager for me to kill you?

Karr: // (sigh) because there are worse things than being killed by an enemy (*Initiations*)

and

Karr (to Halis): hugh // (sigh) // it was this fool / this / federation / who doesn't even have the courage to kill his enemies ... (*Initiations*)

There it is an honor to be killed by an enemy:

Karr: ... and this bracelet belonged to the man who killed my brother / my brother / jalle kannel / who earned his ogla name by dying bravely in battle ... (*Initiations*)

This quote also shows that young Kazon earn their name and thereby their identity only through battle, either by killing their enemy or by dying bravely. Accordingly the more enemies one kills the greater the honor he deserves.

Karr (to C): (laughs) // you see this / this is debris from a frigate / the man you're demanding to see destroyed it / killing more than a hundred in a single shot / before that his name was only rah / now he's called jalle razik ... (*Initiations*)

Since being a warrior is the noblest quality for a Kazon, the education of their boys is aimed at developing battle skills from an early age. This leads to a total absence of modern childhood culture: children go through dangerous trainings with live ammunition, they are ready to kill, are not allowed to be children, have to watch killings (even of their friends) in order to learn and have to pay with their lives for their mistakes. Consequently the Kazon grow up without the notion that life is valuable. This is demonstrated by the fact that they do not hesitate to kill when it serves their interests, that they practice suicide bombings and use live ammunition for training purposes:

Neelix: live ammunition is a

very effective teaching tool for the kazon (*Initiations*)

The fact that they also have no "human rights" concept and therefore use torture on prisoners is only an extension of what has been shown until now. In *Initiations* Karr tells Chakotay:

I must protect my territory / territory is power (*Initiations*)

This clearly defines their society as **imperialistic**. The importance of owning land/space is stressed on several occasions. In the same episode Haliz tells Chakotay:

unfortunately our territorial claims change every day / maps do not serve us well ... (*Initiations*)

while Karr stresses that:

no one who violates ogla space leaves (*Initiations*)

Another way to hint at Kazon imperialism is the frequent use of the word "**control**" to define their territorial claims. In this context, the word "control" has the connotation of an imposed rule. However, not even their imperialism is presented as the trait of an advanced culture, since they use phrases like "displaying their markings in our space" which is clearly taken out of the animal world.

As a logical consequence of their values, the Kazon are also **revengeful**. They used to be enslaved by the Trabe until they drove the Trabe away in a rebellion. However, according to the Trabe leader Maves this was not enough, the Kazon have continuously attacked the Trabe whenever they tried to settle on a new homeworld:

Chakotay (to Maves): it happened over thirty years ago / and the kazon are still trying to punish you

Maves: remarkable isn't it // most of the trabe who've persecuted the kazon are either dead or old men by now / most of us were children when the uprising occurred / and our children are innocent / but the kazon's desire for revenge / is as strong as ever (*Alliances*)

Maves (to Janeway): you don't

know the kazon there's no dealing with them / violence is all they understand [...] the kazon will be determined to seek revenge (*Alliances*)

In themselves these values would not necessarily have to be judged as primitive and inferior; however, the juxtaposition with Voyager and their noble values is a very powerful and effective means of showing the Kazon in a extremely negative light without having to do so explicitly. Since this juxtaposition occurs every time Voyager and the Kazon meet, sometimes through the simple showing of their respective ships, we have chosen one example to illustrate this effect.

Karr: you won't stop me from earning my name / federation

Chakotay: not federation / Chakotay (shouts) / that's my name

Karr: did you have to earn it?

Chakotay: / no / not exactly

Karr: then your name means nothing

Chakotay: / my name was a gift from my tribe / I cherish it / everyday of my life // just as I cherish / the federation uniform.. [...]

Chakotay: your name / my uniform / not much difference / we both have to earn them

Karr: / what did you have to do to earn your uniform

Chakotay: study // years of study / learning / about science / and ships / and navigation

Karr: (condescending) I suppose they don't expect you to prove your battle skills

Chakotay: no / they've prepared us to defend ourselves in battle / they've prepared us very well / and we had to pass many difficult tests before we were given the right to wear the uniform

Karr: you're saying that my name and your uniform mean the same thing / I but you're wrong

Chakotay: why // what's so different about us / aside from the fact that I keep saving your life and you keep threatening to kill me

Karr: I must protect my territory / territory is power

Chakotay: let me tell you some-

thing / I've no interest in your territory or anybody else's // my people taught me a man doesn't own land / he doesn't own anything but the courage and the loyalty in his heart / that's where my power comes from [...] (*Initiations*).

Here, the militaristic values of the Kazon clash with humanistic values of the Federation. For Karr nothing can be earned without battle, while Chakotay emphasizes the importance of learning in his society; for him battle skills are only useful as a defense. In this case this is not just a juxtaposition between the Kazon and the Federation but also one between the Kazon, as a primitive people, and Chakotay as a representative of the Native Americans, a people formerly wrongly regarded as primitive. Now the Native American is presented as noble in conformity with political correctness, while the Kazon, being part of a fictional race, is depicted as primitive and savage. The Kazon derives his power from ownership of territory, the Native American, however, derives his from spiritual values like "courage" and "loyalty".

Karr repeatedly tries to kill Chakotay, but the latter refrains from revenge and instead saves Karr's life on more than one occasion. Unlike Chakotay's name, which is a gift from his tribe, Karr's name has to be earned in battle by killing or being killed. Therefore Karr calls Chakotay "Federation" in order to show that Chakotay does not deserve his name.

Rituals play an important role in the Kazon's society. As discussed earlier, they earn their name in battle; the punishment for failure is public humiliation and execution; they adorn their ships with trophies captured from their dead enemies; and they worship Kazon fighters who died in battle. They even have a drink called "enemies' blood".

Being a ritualistic society, the Kazon's life is deeply affected by the encounter with a technologically superior culture like the Federation. At the beginning of *Initiations*, Karr is sent out to earn

his name by killing Chakotay. By Karr's standards he did everything right, he attacked Chakotay, fought bravely and was ready to die when his ship exploded, however the Federation's superior technology, namely the transporter, enabled Chakotay to save Karr's life. This has put Karr in the position of a coward when he was not. His society did not provide rules for being saved in the last minute by a transporter since they had never encountered one before. Consequently Karr would have to become an outcast in his own society and die without a name. Through Chakotay's influence Karr learns that there are second chances in battle after all and turns against his own leader and kills him in the end.

Throughout the series the Kazon society is portrayed as extremely **patriarchal** and **chauvinistic**. The relationships between the Kazon are characterized by strong and exclusively **male bonding**. The viewer is never shown a Kazon woman and therefore his impression is based only on the ways Kazon males talk about women, which compels him to use his own values as a reference and evaluate the Kazon negatively. The offending way in which the Kazon speak about and to women does not correspond to the politically correct ideas of our society:

Maje Culluh: I could not let the negotiations be dictated by a woman (*Alliances*)

Maje Culluh: a woman / and a trabe / how can we listen to them? (*Alliances*)

Maje Culluh: I am the leader of this sect / you are only a woman (*Maneuvers*)

Maje Culluh (to J after hitting her): you'll be given no more respect than any kazon woman / now that your ship and technology are mine / I will tell you when you may speak (*Basics I*)

The viewer's already negative opinion of the Kazon is intensified by the way the Kazon explicitly disapprove of the Federation's ways of treating women:

Maje Culluh: what is it with the

women from your quadrant / you know she [Seska] contradicts me in front of the senior o'skar / my own woman / disputing her maje in front of others / this is your fault / you let your women get out of control (*Basics I*).

Contrary to the explicit depiction of the Kazon's violence, chauvinism, and revengefulness Voyager's superiority is presented in a more subtle manner, a point which reinforces the negative image of the other. The first aspect of this issue is the Kazon's inferior technology. In the encounters between Voyager and the Kazon the viewer is presented with two contradicting messages. On the one hand, the Kazon pose a threat to Voyager, on the other hand, the reason why the Kazon repeatedly attack Voyager is their wish to steal Voyager's superior technology. Clearly, this dual representation is intended to keep up suspense and at the same time to provide the scriptwriters with a rich story source. Still, the superiority of Voyager's technology is emphasized far more than the Kazon's potential to harm Voyager. As a consequence the viewer again gets the clear impression that the Kazon are inferior.

The gap between the two cultures is highlighted by Kazon's child-like admiration for Voyager's technology. When explaining to another Kazon leader why they should try to take over Voyager, Maje Culluh says:

there is a ship filled with new technology / devices that can make food / water even weapons appear out of thin air // a computer system that uses neural tissue that can react twice as fast as ours (*Maneuvers*)

The Voyager crew refers to these devices as replicators, transporters, and neuro gelpacks. Furthermore, the Kazon refer to Voyager technology as "amazing" (*Initiations*), "superior" (*State of Flux*), "unique" (*State of Flux*), and "powerful" (*The Caretaker II*) while their terms for their own technology have an outdated ring to them: "towing emitter", "hangar" (*Ma-*

neuers) etc. These terms seem old fashioned to somebody who has watched *Star Trek*, and draw a vivid contrast with the corresponding Federation terminology. After all, the terms used by the Kazon belong to the past from the point of view of the 24th century.

The inferiority of the Kazon technology is illustrated also by their incompetence in dealing with Voyager's technology. When they tried to integrate some stolen technology into their systems they only managed to get themselves killed:

B'Elanna: of all the things to die for // (shakes her head) it's a food replicator / or at least it was trying to be

Janeway: (sigh) we may take replicators for granted / but imagine what it would mean to a culture that doesn't have this technology

B'Elanna: somebody aboard voyager gave them what they needed / I guess / they just didn't know what to do with it (*State of Flux*)

An additional implication of this example is the superficially understanding and yet condescending way in which B'Elanna refers to the Kazon's willingness to die for a food replicator. The Kazon come closer to being worthy enemies only when Seska, a Voyager crew member, defects to them and helps them in their fight against Voyager. In *Maneuvers*, Neelix, the resident Kazon expert, points out:

I've never seen the kazon do anything like this before

Tuvok: until now / the kazon have never had an adviser with cardassian, maqui and starfleet technical experience (*Maneuvers*)

It is implied throughout the series that the Kazon are too primitive to figure out by themselves how Federation technology works. Ironically, Seska is a woman and manipulates Maje Culluh while he is convinced that he is using her, and that a woman cannot manipulate a Kazon man.

The second aspect of Voyager's superiority is concerned with the **contrast** between the **moral**

values of the two societies. This contrast is most strikingly illustrated when in *State of Flux* Voyager saves the life of a Kazon who was injured in the attempt to use technology stolen from Voyager, but Maje Culluh kills him in order to silence him. So, the crew of Voyager is willing to save the life of a thief and enemy because their intrinsic respect for life forbids them to do otherwise. By contrast, the Kazon decide to kill their own sect member for tactical reasons. The viewer is compelled to draw the conclusion that the Kazon's respect for life is negligible, since we are not given the faintest motive for the Kazon's deed. In the *Star Trek* tradition, this may be a first: even the fiercest alien enemy is given at least enough of a motive to make it difficult for the viewer to pass an easy judgment.

Apart from acts, there are also a number of direct verbal references to the Kazon's inferior moral values. They are said not to be **trustworthy**:

Janeway: nothing we've been through with the kazon would lead me to believe they are trustworthy / I can't imagine making a deal with them (*Alliances*)

From Voyager's point of view they are outlaws:

Janeway: Oh / how can I consider it I can't just walk away from the precepts starfleet has laid out for us / you don't deal with outlaws [...] (*Alliances*)

In this quote Janeway refers to a possible alliance between Voyager and the Kazon. She initially rejects such an alliance on the basis of the Kazon's incompatible moral values. When she does attempt the alliance after all, she makes clear what it means to her:

Janeway: you can't have it both ways commander / if you wanna get in the mud with the kazon you can't start complaining that you might get dirty (*Alliances*)

During the negotiations, she stresses that Voyager and the Kazon are not equal partners:

Janeway: we'd like to make sure the nistrim will also be an honorable ally / that you'll adhere to

the conditions we establish (*Alliances*)

Of course, it is taken for granted that Voyager will honor their part of the alliance. Upon the failure of the alliance, Janeway voices her true opinion:

Janeway: culluh / I've found the idea of an alliance with you distasteful (*Alliances*)

On the other hand, when she meets the Trabe (white, elegant, and sophisticated), she is more than willing to form an alliance with them since:

Janeway: I've found the goals of the trabe to be compatible with our own / I represent an organization which is devoted to peaceful coexistence among people the trabe want nothing more than that (*Alliances*)

Suddenly, the fact that the Trabe had kept the Kazon in slavery for centuries becomes irrelevant and Janeway refrains from moral judgement. The last quote on this issue sums up Voyager's, and by identification the viewer's, opinion about the Kazon:

Janeway (to Maje Culluh): you know / I'm really easy to get along with most of the time / but I don't like bullies and I don't like threats / and I don't like you culluh (stands up) you can try and stop us from getting to the truth but I promise you / if you do / I will respond with all the 'unique' technologies at my command / (janeway out) (*State of Flux*)

3.2. Savage

In the Delta Quadrant, the Kazon have a **reputation for violence** which is spread by local "experts", and the writers of the series ensure that every appearance of the Kazon confirms and justifies this reputation. In *Alliances*, Maves, a leader of the Trabe, describes the Kazon:

[...] I was told they were violent and dangerous / and had to be kept isolated so they wouldn't get loose / and kill us / which is exactly / what they did [...] (*Alliances*)

you don't know the kazon there's no dealing with them / violence is all they understand (*Allian-*

ces)

Neelix warns Voyager that:

the kazon nistrim is one of the most violent sects in the entire kazon collective (*State of Flux*)

As discussed above, the fact that the Kazon constantly kill each other as well as others is inherent to their society and values. Since they enjoy violence, it can be safely said that they are also **cruel**. The use of torture is widely spread among the Kazon. We can deduce how cruel they are from the horrible sight of those who underwent Kazon torture. Furthermore, the words “**execution**” and “**to execute**” are constant companions of Kazon appearances.

To complete their savage image they are also depicted as belligerent. They repeatedly open fire and start fights although they are not threatened or in danger. They never opt for a peaceful solution even if it is offered to them:

Chakotay (to the Kazon vessel through the com. system): [...] why have you fired on me?

Karr (on screen): you are on kazon ogla space federation

Chakotay: I wasn't aware of that / I have no hostile intentions / power down your weapons and I'll leave

Karr: no one who violates ogla space leaves

Chakotay: look son / my starship is only a few light years away

Karr: I am not your son federation / I'm your executioner (*Initiations*)

Janeway: Jaban, can't we discuss this like two civilized ~

Jaban: (ends transmission)

Tuvok: they're powering up their weapons

Janeway: I guess we can't [battle starts] (*The Caretaker II*)

As a direct consequence of the above mentioned traits the Kazon pose a threat to both Voyager and all other races in the quadrant. The following examples illustrate how the fierce attacks against Voyager affect the ship as well as the crew:

Chakotay: captain / this was the 4th attack in two weeks / we've lost three crewmen to the kazon a

dozen more have sustained serious injuries / this ship has taken so much damage we'll be lucky to get warp drive back on line again / and we can count on the fact that the kazon will be back // (turns to leave the room) I don't think we can afford to keep doing business as usual (*Alliances*)

Hogan: now that the kazon have stepped up their attacks a lot of people think we'll not make it out of here alive [...] (*Alliances*)

The Kazon's use of war terminology in reference to Voyager demonstrates their threatening attitudes:

Culluh: [...] today is the day we put aside our differences and join forces to defeat voyager [...] (*Alliances*).

Other terms which appear frequently are: “take voyager”, “beat them”, “waging war”, “enemy”, and “seize voyager”. The Voyager crew is well aware of this threat and consequently uses terms like “armada” and “raiders” to refer to Kazon ships. The viewer's impression of the Kazon threat towards Voyager is reinforced by explicit statements like:

Janeway: the only thing the kazon agree on now is that we are their common enemy (*Alliances*)

Janeway: my gut / tells me we simply don't have any friends among the kazon (*Alliances*)

Janeway's impression is endorsed by Haliz's warning to Chakotay:

your uniform may yet decorate our wall (*Initiations*)

Voyager's worst fears are seemingly fulfilled when at the end of the series' second season the Kazon conquer the ship, take everybody prisoner, and banish them to a barren and unfriendly planet.

While the Kazon threat to Voyager is presented visually, the threat to other races of the quadrant is only testified by “experts”. The following examples illustrate the Kazon's attitude towards the Trabe:

Neelix: why are they holding you?

Maves: they seem to be detaining anyone who isn't kazon // se-

veral of our group have been taken for questioning but / so far none of them've come back [...]

Neelix: the kazon won't be satisfied until you've all been annihilated (*Alliances*)

Maves: [...] the kazon have refused to allow us to find a new home world / every time we try to settle somewhere / they attack and drive us away (*Alliances*)

Through Neelix the viewer learns the Talaxian opinion on the Kazon:

a talaxian convoy would never let the kazon know where they are that would be like committing suicide (*Investigations*)

In the pilot of the series the Caretaker explains to Janeway why he is so intent on destroying his technology before he dies:

the self / destruct program has been damaged / now this installation will not / be destroyed / but it must be / the kazon must not be allowed to gain control of it / they will / annihilate the okampa (*The Caretaker II*)

This portrayal of the Kazon as a threat to everybody, including themselves, is a perfect illustration of the ridiculous way in which Voyager's writers exaggerate the negative aspects of a single group. The danger lies with the racist message conveyed to the viewer by such gross simplifications.

3.3. Criminal

To add insult to injury the Kazon are attributed some other characteristics through which the viewer feels impelled to regard them as criminals.

The Kazon constantly attempt to steal technology, which is appealing to them, from Voyager and other races of the quadrant:

Chakotay (to Neelix on screen): what are you doing on a kazon ship?

Neelix: they're trabe vessels actually / everything the kazon have / they stole from the trabe (*Alliances*)

Tuvok: the kazon have beamed away captain and they've taken one of our transporter modules with them [...] (*Manoeuvres*)

Janeway (to Maje Culluh on screen): I remind you culluh / that transporter module you just stole is specifically designed for our ship / you'll never be able to integrate it in your systems (*Maneuvers*)

They have no scruples to steal even technology that is vital to the race they are stealing it from, witness their intentions to steal the Okampa's water. Even the vocabulary used by the Kazon in this context is reminiscent of the underworld:

we can divide the spoils (*Maneuvers*)

One of their methods to achieve their criminal goals is by **deceit**. They constantly try to deceive those they consider enemies (everybody who owns something the Kazon want and do not just hand it over) and to set traps for them. In *Initiations* the Kazon pretend to help Voyager find a missing crew member, but actually they only try to trap them. In *Basics I*, they use a suicide bomber who poses as a refugee in order to make Voyager vulnerable to their attacks. Moreover, in the same episode, they use Seska's newborn baby as a bait to lure Voyager into a certain part of their territory and thereby gain a tactical advantage.

The deceitfulness of the Kazon is endorsed by the presentation of the way in which they deal with each other. The fact that they are depicted as suspicious even of each other leaves no doubt for the viewer as to their untrustworthiness. We have already remarked that Kazon sects are blood enemies and have not been known to congregate peacefully. When they do try to strike an alliance in order to defeat their common enemy, they constantly lie to each other, and each suspects the other of lying:

Sorrat: [...] culluh / but what makes you think voyager won't use this technology to defeat us?

Culluh: because I have voyager's command codes

Sorrat: I have heard what you did to the relora maje and his com-

panion / veery impressive but before I make an enemy of these federations I want proof that you have their command codes (*Maneuvers*)

Culluh clearly does not have the command codes and the viewer is aware of that. Later, when Voyager attacks to free one of their crew members who is held captive by Culluh, Culluh explains his failure to take control of Voyager with another lie:

it's taking longer that I thought to interface with their systems / you must order your ships to provide cover (*Maneuvers*)

After a violent exchange of insults, Sorrat finally understands that his suspicions were justified:

I don't think you ever had those command codes / I think you're a liar (*Maneuvers*)

4. The Native Americans

We have chosen the presentation of the Native Americans as a contrast to the presentation of the Kazon because of its obvious conformity with PC ideology. While the

4.1. Primitive/Superior

Their appearance suggests complete **gentleness** and **peacefulness**: their faces, their clothes (both in cut and color), and their refusal to bear weapons. Their gestures are ritualistic too, but unlike the Kazon's, they are slow, gentle, friendly, and trust-inspiring, and so is their body language. All this is reinforced by the soothing celestial music that accompanies all the appearances on screen. The Sky Spirits, who are presented as their ancestors, have their faces made up in white. In the episode *Tatoo*, a Native American myth is proven correct. A Native American tribe called "Rubber Tree People" have always believed that:

Chakotay: sky spirits from above / created the first / rubber people in their own image / and led the way to a sacred land where the rubber people would live for eternity (*Tatoo*)

In this episode Voyager encounters this people who confirm the myth:

Sky Spirit: forty-five thousand



Kazon are the general scapegoat of the series, the **Native Americans** are the **personification of virtue**. As mentioned in section 2. *Methods of Analysis*, the analysis of the Native American characteristics will focus on this contrast.

years ago on our first visit to your world we met a small group of nomadic hunters they had no spoken language no culture except the use of fire and stone weapons but they did have a respect for the land and for other living creatures that impressed us deeply / we decided to give them an inheritance /

a genetic bonding so they might thrive and protect your world / on subsequent visits we found that our genetic gift brought about a spirit of curiosity and adventure that impelled them to migrate from the cold climate to a new unpeopled land it took them almost a thousand generations to cross your planet / hundreds of thousands of them flourished in that new land their civilization had a profound influence on others of your species but then / new people came / with weapons and disease // the inheritors who survived scattered many sought refuge in other societies twelve generations ago when we returned we found no sign of their existence (*Tatoo*)

In this quote the Native Americans are presented as “**the chosen people**” whose superiority is ensured biologically by the genetic gift they received from the Sky Spirits.

On the one hand, they consciously avoid using modern technology but on the other hand, through this they are better equipped to deal with situations in which this technology cannot be used. For example, when the Voyager crew inadvertently lands on the gravesite of an unknown culture and, for ethical reasons, they decide not to use their technology for investigation, Chakotay is the only one who is able to draw conclusions just from a visual assessment.

To a large extent, Native American values are presented as the exact opposite of Kazon values and as the embodiment of the humanist ideals of our modern society – to be precise, they are a touch above the developments of our century. While the Kazon derive respect and honor from killing and violence, Native Americans derive them from the “**courage and loyalty**” (*Initiations*) in their hearts. As opposed to the Kazon, Native Americans do not believe in owning land as a source of power, and have a deep respect for nature which they express, among other things, with a ritualized bles-

sing to the land when they use its resources. For example:

Chakotay’s father: it’s said the sky spirits honored the land above all else // maybe it’s because this land / yields so many different kinds of life / maybe / they’ve wanted us to become friends with everything in nature / including the bugs (*Tatoo*)

As a consequence, they respect and love life in all its forms. When Chakotay talks about animal guides, which offer spiritual guidance, he stresses that all animals are equally valuable as guides regardless of their shape, size, and gender. In the following example, ironically, it is Captain Janeway who assumes that the animal guide of a man must be male:

Janeway: but he guides you well

Chakotay: actually it’s female / but yes / she usually guides me very well (*The Cloud*)

Another illustration is the fact that the spirit of Chakotay’s father believes that every child is a cause for celebration, no matter what the circumstances of its birth are (*Basics I*).

The Native Americans’ respect for and **open-mindedness about other cultures** is emphasized throughout the series. Chakotay is the only one who insists on turning all scientific equipment off when they realize they are on the gravesite of an unknown culture. He stresses the importance of respecting every culture’s beliefs no matter what they are. If, as is the case here, one does not know anything about the culture, every potentially desecrating action should be refrained from. The most interesting aspect about this instance is not so much that he has this idea, but that his argument wins over *Star Trek*’s proverbial scientific curiosity, which proves the writers aim toward political correctness. An additional aspect of their openmindedness is illustrated by their attitude towards learning:

Chakotay’s father: [...] I know that / you’ve always been curious

about other societies and that is why I’ve allowed you to read about them / because I believe that ignorance is our greatest enemy [...] (*Tatoo*)

The Native American’s **nobility** is probably the most striking contrast to the values of the Kazon. Although their respective histories are presented as similar, their reaction is different. While the Kazon became revengeful and still chase the Trabe after thirty years, the Native Americans have just become more forgiving and humane:

Chakotay: how do you take a child into your heart who is forced upon you / by a mother’s deception?

The spirit of Chakotay’s father: // he knows nothing of deception // he is innocent // centuries ago when the women of our tribe / were raped by white conquerors / many gave birth to their children / and we did not reject them / they were accepted by the tribe / one was a direct ancestor of ours / chakotay / his name / was saji aktul / he became a great leader of our people here is a man who is given life without his mother’s consent / are you so different from her? / is your child so different from saji aktul?

Chakotay: // no

The spirit of Chakotay’s father (nods and smiles): hm / he is your son chakotay / and he is a child of our people (*Basics I*)

To make the Kazon children’s first impression of a human a good one, Chakotay tells them:

You won’t see any hate in my eyes / I’m a gentle man / from a gentle people / who wish you no harm (*Initiations*)

To make the contrast perfect the children’s reaction is to reach for the gun the moment they are asked to kill him. This gentleness is also emphasized by the choice of words when Native Americans speak about their traditions and when they perform rituals:

Chakotay: and concentrate on the stone / akutschimoja we are far from the sacred places of our grandfathers / we are far from the

bones of our people / and perhaps there is one powerful being / who'll embrace this woman and give her the answers she seeks / allow your eyes to close / breath to feel the light in your belly / and let it expand / until the light is everywhere / prepare yourself to leave this room and this ship / and return to a place where you were the most content and peaceful / you have ever been [...] (*The Cloud*)

Here we find an abundance of positively marked words and expressions like: “**embrace**”, “**allow your eyes to close**”, “**light**”, “**content**”, “**peaceful**”. The effect is enhanced by the gentle persuasive tone Chakotay uses and by Janeway's vision, while searching for her animal guide, which includes the sound of ocean waves and seagulls.

The Native American society is also portrayed as ritualistic, but unlike the Kazon their rituals can be fully integrated in the science based world of the Federation and their rituals are directed towards the search for guidance and spiritual well-being. The fact that Chakotay performs rituals for guidance on a number of occasions is presented as part of his normal life as a crew member. Rituals do not disturb his life among a scientifically advanced culture and neither does the technology around him affect his spiritual life – more so, since other crew members show a genuine interest in these rituals and even share them. The Captain's curiosity about these rituals and her willingness to participate adds a lot of weight to their integration in the ship's everyday life as well as to their legitimacy as useful rituals:

Kim: turning in for the night / captain?

Janeway: actually I'm gonna talk to an animal / and then turn in / something commander Chakotay taught me / it's supposed to be quite therapeutic / you may wanna ask him about it (*The Cloud*)

These rituals are not presented as primitive beliefs, but as scientifically proved methods of medicine and psychology:

Chakotay: // we talk to animals / it's a native american tradition

Janeway: animals?!

Chakotay: our own counselors / we're taught that an animal guide accompanies us through life / basically it's what karl jung invented when he came up with this active imagination technique in nineteen thirty-two / but we've been doing pretty much the same thing for centuries (*The Cloud*)

The scientific legitimation is reinforced by the inclusion of their healing rituals in the Starfleet medical reference data bank. In *Cathexis*, when Voyager's technology fails to provide solutions for their problem, Chakotay's spirit saves the ship with the help of a traditional medicine wheel.

5. The Racist Implications of the Kazon and Native American Presentation

According to Wetherell and Potter, racist discourse not only explicitly mentions the inferiority of a certain group, but “*has the effect of categorizing, allocating, and discriminating between certain groups*” and also “*justifies, sustains, and legitimates those practices which maintain the power and dominance*” of the group in power. (Potter and Wetherell: 1987, p. 70) As we have shown above, the **discourse on and by the Kazon is hardly ever explicitly racist but becomes implicitly racist through the combination of the exclusively negative depiction of the Kazon as criminals and savages with their characterization as primitive.**

The primitive aspect of the Kazon culture is perceived negatively by the viewer in the context of the other negative characteristics given to the Kazon. This is best demonstrated by the fact that while the Native Americans are to a large extent also presented as primitive, in their case the viewer perceives this as positive because of their many other qualities. To make matters worse, throughout the series both cultures, Kazon and

Native American, are evaluated according to the values and technical standards of the Federation, the culture with which the viewer identifies most. Thereby the viewer feels that he himself belongs to the superior culture. The Federation arbitrarily chooses to see the Kazon as primitive and thereby inferior and the Native Americans as primitive and thereby superior. The viewer is left with no choice but to comply with these moral judgments.

In light of the current debate on political correctness in the USA, we can only conclude that this choice is strongly related to the fact that Native Americans represent a recognized respected Other, and have a pressure group in Hollywood, while the Kazon being a fictive culture do not. The striking difference between the exclusively positive characteristics of Native Americans and the exclusively negative characteristics of the Kazon enhances the racist undertones in the presentation of the latter. In the entire series only the Native Americans enjoy the privilege of speaking their own language (the language of the one tribe presented in the series) even though their appearances are both rarer and shorter than the Kazon's, who are only given the opportunity to use one word in the “Kazon language”.

As in most racist literature in human history, in Voyager it is the more powerful culture that decides what counts as a civilization as well as who is civilized and who is not, with the implication that those who are not need to be reformed for their own good, and if they resist, they are treated accordingly. The Kazon are repeatedly presented as non-reformable. For example, when Voyager meets the Trabe, the former enslavers of the Kazon, they prefer to strike an alliance with them assuming that such an evolved culture as the Trabe must have changed. The Kazon, however, are not even granted the benefit of the doubt. The treatment of the Kazon by the Trabe is presented as follows:

Maves: they lived in restricted areas that children weren't allowed to go near // I didn't know they lived in poverty / in filth // I didn't know they were persecuted by the trabe police // I was told they were violent and dangerous / and had to be kept isolated so they wouldn't get loose / and kill us which is exactly / what they did / but we brought it on ourselves / the trabe treated them like animals / fenced them in encouraged them to fight among themselves so they wouldn't turn on us (*Alliances*)

In contrast, the viewer is told that:

Neelix: before the uprising the trabe were known as a highly evolved species / they produced scholars and artists who were widely admired and their technology was among the finest in the quadrant (*Alliances*)

It is on the basis of the latter description that Voyager's captain decides that:

I've found the goals of the trabe to be compatible with our own / I represent an organization which is devoted to peaceful coexistence among people the trabe want nothing more than that (*Alliances*)

Given the information the captain has on the Trabe one is forced to wonder how she reached the conclusion that an alliance with the Trabe is preferable to one with the Kazon. This only becomes clear if the underlying assumption is that only primitive criminals cannot be reformed.

Of course, a TV series, in order to be successful, needs negative characters who pose a threat to the positive ones in order to create suspense. However, the other *Star Trek* series have successfully demonstrated that the negative presentation of a villain need not be racist. All other villains in the history of *Star Trek* either appear only once or are sooner or later endowed with some positive qualities in their own system of values which is thereby validated. Therefore, these villain cultures have earned the respect of the viewer, which is shown by the fact that they are included in the range of

Star Trek products. To the viewer they too are heroes. The Kazon on the other hand, are completely absent from the wide number of *Voyager* products, which is a clear indication that viewer identification has not taken place and is not intended.

It is said that *Star Trek* is based on the idea that: "To be different is not necessarily to be ugly; to have a different idea is not necessarily to be wrong. The worst thing that could happen is for everyone to look and think and act alike. For if we cannot learn to appreciate the small variations between our own kind here on earth, then God help us when we get out into space and meet the variations that are almost certainly out there." (Roddenberry: 1995, p. 10)

Obviously, the presentation of the Kazon does not fit into this picture. Unfortunately, the viewer will not simply reach the conclusion that such a perfect world is not possible, but that some cultures do not fit in it and can therefore be presented and treated accordingly.

6. The Social Relevance

"The laws of *Star Trek* are totally fictional but are held by the fans with such reverence that they have to be followed as if they were Newton's, says Bennan. You have to treat them very carefully, because there are people who for 25 years have considered them sacred." (Zoglin: 1994, p. 83)

Considering the racist implications we have found in *Voyager*, this can be quite a frightening thought. Of course, every series has its devoted fans and some take things more seriously than others. However, *Star Trek* has been described as "[...] the most enduring and all-embracing pop-culture phenomenon of our time." (Zoglin: 1994, p. 80). There have been four separate series and eight movies based on the *Star Trek* idea and these have run for a total of 30 years, have been viewed in 75 countries with a weekly audience of more than 20 million.

Paramount TV research have found that *Star Trek* audience "includes more high-income college-educated viewers (as well as more men) than the average TV show." (Zoglin: 1994, p. 81). Moreover, Trekkies do not just revere their heroes from afar but hold conventions at the rate of more than 200 a year. "The clientele [at these conventions] is more likely to be middle aged couples with Kids in tow than computer geeks sporting Vulcan ears." (Zoglin: 1994, p. 81) Many fans regard *Star Trek* as an educational tool. Elaine Koste, an attendant at one of the conventions, is quoted to have said:

"I use *Star Trek* as a tool to educate my daughter [...]. It's good for her to see the characters deal with other races and teach good values." (Zoglin: 1994, p. 82).

As our analysis shows this is not the only thing her daughter would learn from *Voyager*.

The unique position of *Star Trek* is also mirrored by the fact that its fans integrate *Star Trek* ideology in their political convictions. The fan who was selected as a jury member in the Whitewater trial and went there wearing a *Star Trek* uniform, is not simply a lunatic but somebody who wanted to make a "[...] public statement about what *Star Trek's* philosophy might offer to America." (Jenkins: 1996, p. 24).

Having all this in view, the presentation of racist ideology to the viewer alongside humanist principles is bound to have an effect, especially because fans will not immediately notice the change. **The viewer is so entrapped in the seemingly politically correct atmosphere of *Voyager* that he/she cannot consciously realize the underlying racism.** An additional difficulty in recognizing the implications of the Kazon representation is presented by the way the individual aspects are spread evenly over several episodes and by the non-explicit characterization. However, the general idea will almost certainly

remain with the viewer as a deep-lying message.

Notes:

- 1) The transcription without using any capital letters. / indicates a short pause; // indicates a long pause; [...] indicates an omission in the quote. Stage directions and interpretations of tone, pitch, etc. are in brackets (). Words stressed by the characters are in bold type.
- 2) cf. Wodak: 1996.

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