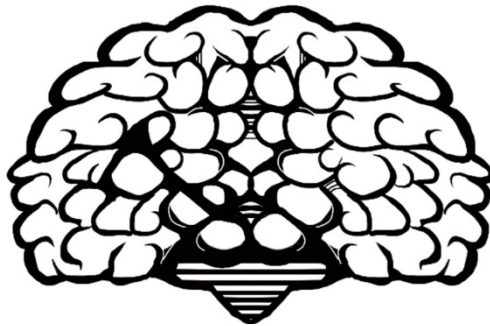


The Gold Archive #3
SPOCK'S BRAIN



By Nick Joy

THE GOLD ARCHIVE

SPOCK'S BRAIN

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OVERVIEW

Episode Title: *Spock's Brain*

Writer: Lee Cronin (aka Gene L Coon)

Director: Marc Daniels

Original US Transmission Date: 20 September 1968

First UK airdate: 13 October 1971

Stardate: 5431.4

Running Time: 50m

Regular Cast: William Shatner (Kirk), Leonard Nimoy (Spock), DeForest Kelley (McCoy), George Takei (Sulu), James Doohan (Scott), Nichelle Nichols (Uhura), Walter Koenig (Chekov), Majel Barrett (Nurse Chapel)

Guest Cast: James Daris (Creature), Marj Dusay (Kara), Sheila Leighton (Luma)

Uncredited Cast: William Blackburn (Hadley), Fred Carson (creature 2), Frank da Vinci (Brent), Roger Holloway (Roger Lemli), Pete Kellett (creature 3), Jeannie Malone (Yeoman), Eddie Paskey (Leslie), Frieda Rentie (Sciences crew woman 2)

Antagonist: The Eymorg

Responses:

'The story is completely bereft of the intelligence, plausibility and disciplined imagination that had characterized the series in its premiere season two years previous. It's as hollow and nonsensical as any given episode of **Lost In Space**.'

[Dennis Russell Bailey, [Trekmovie.com](#), 14 June 2007]

'The problem isn't the story. The problem is almost everything else. The tone is far too silly for the series, and the actors are phoning in their performances.'

[Patrick J Mullen, [Medium.com](#), 3 September 2020]

SYNOPSIS

A mysterious woman beams onto bridge of the Enterprise and stuns the entire crew, before examining each of them in turn. When they awaken, **Dr. McCoy** finds **Commander Spock** in sick bay with his brain surgically removed. Without his brain, Spock's body can be kept alive for no more than twenty-four hours.

In pursuit of the brain, the Enterprise follows the alien ship's ion trail to the Sigma Draconis system, and a frozen ice world. An all male group of natives attack the landing party but are repulsed, and a captured attacker warns **Captain Kirk** about the Others, 'the givers of pain and delight'.

McCoy beams down with Spock's body, which is able to walk independently only due to an electronic control device. The landing party travel underground in a lift, and encounter a woman named **Luma**, who seems to have the mentality of a child. Just before they are captured by the underground dwellers - the Others, a female dominated society who seem far more technically advanced than those on the surface - they hear Spock's voice via communicator.

Kara, the leader of the underground people is the woman who appeared on the Enterprise bridge and, presumably, took Spock's brain (though she claims not even to know what a brain is when questioned by Kirk). Eventually, she suggests they must mean **the Controller**, on whom the underground civilisation is dependent.

In spite of pain bands placed round their waists by the women, the landing party escapes and Spock's voice guides them to the control room where his brain is housed. Kara admits that the skills needed to remove a brain are not ones she has normally, but that they come from the **Teacher**, a machine accessed by a large headset, a remnant from a previous period in the planet's history, and that the knowledge provided lasts only three hours.

McCoy uses the Teacher to restore Spock's brain, even though to do so puts his own life at risk, but as time passes his new knowledge begins to fade, endangering Spock's life in turn. Fortunately, Spock himself is able to help after McCoy re-connects his speech centre.

Without their Controller, which will not run without Spock's brain, Kara fears for the future of her society. Kirk assures her that men and women can learn to survive together on the surface.

CHAPTER 2: NUMBER ONE AND THE YEOMAN

It Started so Well

It would be 25 years after **TOS** had finished its first run before a **Star Trek** series boasted a female main cast first officer (Major Kira Nerys in **Deep Space Nine**) and a further two before Captain Kathryn Janeway became the first main cast female captain, on **Voyager**¹. When watching the poor depiction of women in *Spock's Brain*, we can at least take comfort with hindsight in knowing that things would eventually change for the better.

It would be easy to dismiss the portrayal of the Eymorgs by arguing that this was a common portrayal of women in the 1960s. And while it's true that there was considerable casual sexism at that time, when looking at the origins of **TOS**, we see that it started with strong foundations for women – one in particular – but that changes were introduced subsequent to the early pitches and pilot episode, weakening the desired depiction of sexual equality. If Number One had remained as the show's second-in-command, maybe we'd have seen a different interaction between the captain and his female subordinates. And if the crew members had been treated with more equality, maybe the visiting alien races, including the Eymorgs, would have been portrayed and managed differently.

Number One: 'Almost mysteriously female'

TOS pilot episode *The Cage* (1965, but not broadcast in its original form until 1988) opens with Number One at the helm of the *Enterprise*. Played by Majel Barrett (though credited on-screen with her birth name M Leigh Hudec) the lieutenant commander takes commands from Captain Pike as they pick up a distress signal. Contemporary documents reveal how the show's female lead character was first pitched to the network. In the *Series Format*, under the summary of 'Other Cast Regulars, Number One is described as a 'glacierlike, efficient, female who serves as ship's Executive Officer.'² The fact that she doesn't have an actual name yet is of no great concern, as maybe it will be a running joke or thread in the subsequent stories.³ The word 'glacierlike' is presumably a variant (or misspelling) of 'glacial', which if describing a woman typically means they are very beautiful and elegant, but do not show their feelings.⁴

Her character biography in the pitch document **Star Trek is...** gives us far more detail:

'Number One; this officer is female. Almost mysteriously female, in fact – slim and dark in a Nile Valley way, age uncertain, one of those women who will always look the same between years twenty and fifty. An extraordinarily efficient officer, Number One enjoys playing it expressionless, cool – is probably Robert April's [the original name for the *Enterprise* captain] superior in detailed knowledge of the multiple equipment systems, departments, and crew members aboard the vessel. When Captain April leaves the craft, Number One moves up to Acting Commander.'⁵

Already there are significant strengths attributed to her; she's efficient, she's cool (more akin to calm than glacial), is probably superior to the captain in her understanding of the ship, and is the acting commander while he's away. Surely a description of a first officer that **DS9**'s Kira would approve of, though the character's indeterminate age, and being 'slim and dark' seem less relevant here, the revision of her biography in a later

¹ An unnamed non-main cast female captain appeared in *The Voyage Home* (1986) and Captain Phillipa Louvois in **TNG**'s *The Measure of a Man* (1989).

² Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p24. Although this book is credited to both, all quotations in this Archive are attributed to Whitfield unless otherwise indicated.

³ When Spock tells her that her name is Una in **Short Treks**' Q&A (2019) she corrects him: 'That isn't a question, Ensign. My name is Number One.'

⁴ Collins English Dictionary.

⁵ First Draft, dated 11 March 1964.

draft of the document added 'space' so that she's now an 'efficient space officer' and substituted 'crew members' with 'personnel'.⁶

On balance, it still feels like a firm foundation on which to base a commanding character, even if the following description is included in the script: '...almost glacierlike in her imperturbability and precision. From time to time we'll wonder just how much female exists under the icy façade.'⁷ The new, more positive connotation given to glacierlike now seems to imply that it's not a typical feminine quality, and that we might see some of that warmth as she thaws out across the series.

On-screen, Number One does indeed play it cool, calmly accepting Pike's directive that that she remains on the ship ('I have to leave the most experienced officer covering us,') though she looks crestfallen when Pike says: 'I just can't get used to having a woman on the bridge. No offence, Lieutenant. You're different of course.' Different, as in lacking in feminine qualities, or because he doesn't think of her sexually? It's not clear.

In *The Cage*, Number One demonstrates her knowledge and command by leading the engineering crew to blast through the Talosian lift doors and suggesting that they try transporting inside the rock formation. She also shows her humanity in her willingness to self-sacrifice when setting the 'laser' to overload – 'It's wrong to create a whole wave of humans to live as slaves.' She also displays her emotions by looking offended when Vina makes a jibe about her potential as a mate: 'You're no better choice. They'd have better luck crossing him with a computer.' And she looks flustered and embarrassed when the Keeper says 'The female you call Number One has the superior mind and would produce highly intelligent children. Although she seems to lack emotion, this is largely a pretence. She has often had fantasies involving you.' This is certainly a less glacial person than we were given to expect.

After they watched the pilot, network executives requested a number of changes, as Roddenberry explained.

'NBC recommended eliminating the character of Number One ... Audience tests of this character, after viewing the pilot, ranged from resentment to disbelief. ... Although **Star Trek** was a show about the 23rd Century, it was being viewed by a 20th Century audience – who resented the idea of a tough, strong-willed woman ("too domineering") as second-in-command.'⁸

This version of events is disputed by Producer Herb Solow, who reported that NBC's feedback was 'We support the concept of a woman in a strong, leading role, but we have serious doubts as to Majel Barrett's ability to "carry" the show as its co-star.'⁹ He concluded '...the NBC execs, for both financial and moral reasons, had always favoured a strong woman as the series star. They just didn't want Majel...'¹⁰

Whether NBC didn't like this strong woman or the married Roddenberry couldn't face recasting his then-girlfriend (later wife), TOS lead William Shatner contextualised the character in 1993. 'It's incredible to think that in 1964, Gene Roddenberry was sending one [a woman] into space in a position of utmost authority. Even today, a female character of Number One's intelligence, competence and power would meet with uneasy stares at any pitch meeting.'¹¹

Yeoman Colt: 'very female, disturbingly so'

Number One didn't make it to the second pilot, let alone the series, many of her glacial qualities seemingly given to Mr Spock to calm him down after his shouty performances in *The Cage* and *Where No Man Has Gone Before*

⁶ Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p29.

⁷ Revised script, dated 20 November 1964, p3.

⁸ Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p128.

⁹ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p60.

¹⁰ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p157.

¹¹ Shatner, William with Chris Kreshki, *Star Trek Memories*, p23.

(1966). A different female character continued in the show, though she was more closely aligned to the sexist depiction of women that would lead to sexualised and 'available' characters like Kara and Luma in *Spock's Brain*.

In the **TOS Series Format**, a summary of 'Other Cast Regulars' features '...and uncomfortably lovely J M Colt, the Captain's Yeoman.'¹² Such sexist language immediately conjures up questions as to why someone might be uncomfortable in her presence. Played by Laurel Goodwin, her character name is not spoken onscreen or shown on the episode credits, and is derived purely from script or background sources.

Her more detailed character biography in the *Star Trek* pitch¹³ describes:

'The Captain's Yeoman. Except for problems in naval parlance, Colt would be called a yeowoman; blonde and with a shape even a uniform cannot hide. She serves as Captain April's secretary, reporter, bookkeeper and undoubtedly wishes she could also serve him in more personal departments. She is not dumb; she is very female, disturbingly so.'

This is not a female character defined by her power or abilities, instead throwing up a number of troubling questions: why would she have to hide her body (shapely – because she is a woman?) under her uniform, why are her fantasies being second-guessed, and why is her femininity disturbing? The misogyny here displays a genuine fear/hatred of female-kind. Clarifying that she is not dumb is also telling. Might we have assumed otherwise because she is blonde, or because she is so very feminine?

In the revised version of the document¹⁴, there are changes that both strengthen and weaken her character. She's no longer blonde and operates with efficiency (as if that needed to be spelt out), but instead of just having a shape that her uniform cannot hide, she has: 'a strip-queen figure,' thus sealing her fate as primarily a fantasy figure. Producer Herb Solow confirmed as much. 'Gene's version of the ship's yeoman role came straight out of old Hollywood movies: cute and shapely, and cute and bubbly, and cute and not too bright.'¹⁵

In the episode script¹⁶ she's described as: 'About twenty, she's pert and shapely, but carries herself with trained precision.'

William Shatner considered why Colt was written this way: 'It would be interesting to know if ... she was merely tossed into the mix in an astute attempt to appeal to the prurient interest of the cigar-chomping, upper middle-age network suits who generally read these proposals.'¹⁷

Colt's sexuality would be incorporated in the plot, the Keeper telling Pike that 'The other new arrival has considered you unreachable but now is realizing this has changed. The factors in her favour are youth and strength, plus unusually strong female drives.' Colt shifts uncomfortably on hearing this, but at the episode's conclusion still asks the captain, 'I was wondering... just curious, understand... who would have been Eve?', her vanity demanding to know whether it was she or Number One who would have been Pike's chosen mate.

Yeoman Smith: 'A capable secretary and efficient dispenser of instant coffee'

Colt not make it to the second pilot either, although the character of a yeoman carried over. A different yeoman, Smith, was included in *Where No Man Has Gone Before*, played by model Andrea Dromm. Herb Solow explained 'Laurel Goodwin as Yeoman Colt fit Gene's vision for the first pilot, but she was swept away by the NBC broom.'¹⁸

¹² Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p24.

¹³ First Draft, 11 March 1964.

¹⁴ Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p30.

¹⁵ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p75.

¹⁶ Revised version, 20 November 1964, p10.

¹⁷ Shatner, *Star Trek Memories*, p24.

¹⁸ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p75.

The cover of the *NBC Advance Information Guide on 1966-67 Programming* brochure features a screaming Yeoman Smith hanging on to Kirk's arm. Her character synopsis clarifies that she's: '...easily the most popular member of Kirk's staff. A capable secretary and efficient dispenser of instant coffee, she also provides a welcome change of scenery for eyes that have spent long hours scanning the vast reaches of space.' Her role on the show is here galvanised – a combination of the sexist stereotype of a 'popular' and distracting woman with the stereotypical domestic skills of a kitchen maid, valet and general Girl Friday.

In the episode itself, she does little more than politely correct Kirk when he incorrectly addresses her as Jones, stand closely behind him on the Bridge with a worried look on her face, or hold navigator Gary Mitchell's hand when she's frightened. She has none of the agency of Number One, not serving any role other than as a domestic, or the damsel in distress to be saved by the men. 'Actually, it was a non-part,' Solow later remarked, adding that director James Goldstone overheard Roddenberry say, 'I'm hiring her [Andrea Domm] because I want to score with her.'¹⁹ So small is the role that the character plays in the episode, she's not even in the revised first draft script²⁰, only in the revised final draft²¹, described similarly to J M Colt as: 'female, pert, early twenties.'

The episode's guest female lead, Sally Kellerman as Doctor Elizabeth Dehner, benefits from being given a professional role – Doctor of Psychiatry – but when responding to an inappropriate remark by Gary Mitchell, is bizarrely labelled by him as 'walking freezer unit,' a revision following NBC's objection to the word 'frigid'²² and its negative sexual connotations. Here she's closer to the 'glacierlike' Number One than the 'popular' yeoman.

Yeoman Rand: 'treated co-equal with males of the same rank'

While both Yeomen Colt and Smith failed to make it to series, the role would survive again, recast as a new recruit, Janice Rand, played for eight episodes by Grace Lee Whitney. Her character is described in the *Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide*²³:

'Whether Yeoman Rand or a new character provided by the writer, this female Yeoman serves Kirk as his combination Executive Secretary-Valet-Military Aide. As such, she is always capable, a highly professional career girl.'

A factual summary, the sexist qualities of Colt's and Smith's descriptions are encouragingly absent. It continues:

'As with all female crewmen aboard, during duty hours she is treated co-equal with males of the same rank, and the same level of efficient performance is expected. The Yeoman often carries a small over-the-shoulder case, a tricorder, about the size of a small handbag, which is also an electronic recorder-camera-sensor combination, immediately available to the Captain should he be away from his Command Console.'

This second paragraph is more disappointing, the implication being that outside of duty hours she is **not** treated as an equal. And why the need to clarify that while she's being treated as an equal, she's expected to be as equally efficient as her male peers? It seems to be addressing the sexist notion that females aren't as efficient as males, unless they're held accountable.

In her autobiography, Whitney recalled how the part was sold to her. 'Gene Roddenberry's original vision of the show's chemistry was built around a nucleus of four characters – Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and Rand.'²⁴ She continued 'The Kirk-Rand relationship asks the question, "How can you put an attractive female crewmember aboard ship

¹⁹ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p75.

²⁰ Dated 27 May 1965.

²¹ Dated 8 July 1965.

²² Cushman, *These are the Voyages: TOS Season Three*, p82.

²³ Third Revision, 17 April 1967.

²⁴ Whitney, Grace Lee, *The Longest Trek: My Tour of the Galaxy*, p10.

with an attractive male crewmember and not expect nature to take its course?""²⁵ and that: 'It was a sexy part, with lots of possibilities.'²⁶

Kirk expressed his frustration at being looked after by Rand in sexist terms.

KIRK

When I get my hands on the Headquarters genius that assigned me a female yeoman...

MCCOY

What's the matter Jim, don't you trust yourself?²⁷

KIRK

I've already got a female to worry about. Her name's the *Enterprise*.²⁸

Rand features prominently as the object of Charlie's affections in *Charlie X* (1966), is subjected to a sexual assault in *The Enemy Within* (1966) and drawn to the protection of Kirk in *The Naked Time* (1966), *Balance of Terror* (1966) and *Miri* (1966). While not of the seniority of Number One, she was ostensibly the show's initial female lead, gaining more screen time than Uhura, and then Whitney's agent informed her that she would be leaving the show. 'Apparently, they think that Captain Kirk needs to be free to have these affairs with other women on all these different planets,' she explained, adding, 'so, for me to be dropped from the show was a major shake-up – a sudden disruption of the chemical balance of the show.'²⁹ It's disappointing if the reason for her departure was indeed to give Kirk more opportunities for romance, as Roddenberry was trying to develop the character, 'trying to work out additional duties for the Captain's Yeoman, fill out her role a bit, plus give her some landing party duties where we need her on a planet'.³⁰ Whitney believed that the unnamed executive who she alleges sexually assaulted her at the studio had a say in the decision: 'I have always believed that The Executive had me removed from *Star Trek* because he didn't want to be reminded of what he did to me that night.'³¹

There would always be limitations to her role as Kirk's valet-secretary. There was a built-in, uneven distribution of power, with Kirk, as her superior, having the upper hand. Writers never fully developed the role, as witness lines like 'I'm upset, so upset. Back on the ship, I used to try to get you to look at my legs. Captain, look at my legs.'³² In this case, like the other members of the landing party, Rand has been infected by a disease and her legs are blotchy. As written, dialogue played up her female vanity, affording Kirk the opportunity to hug her and reassert his dominance. Summarising her role on the ship, Whitney said 'I tell everybody I was a space geisha!'

Rand's departure allowed a revolving door of female love interests for Kirk. Writer Karin Blair has argued that 'in almost every episode we have a different female guest star, which usually guarantees that the character she portrays is alien and disposable. Most often she dies, disappears, or remains at the service of a father figure.' Blair continued that most of these women are a projection of Kirk's anima – 'the internalised image of ideal femininity he carries inside him ... conceived as embodiments of male fantasies, they cannot encounter men on

²⁵ Whitney, *The Longest Trek*, p75.

²⁶ Whitney, *The Longest Trek*, p72.

²⁷ In subsequent episode **TOS: The Enemy Within** (1966), Kirk is shown that he cannot in fact be trusted with Rand.

²⁸ **TOS: The Corbomite Maneuver** (1966).

²⁹ Whitney, *The Longest Trek*, p9.

³⁰ Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p169.

³¹ Whitney, *The Longest Trek*, p15.

³² **TOS: Miri** (1966).

the axis of sex on an equal and potentially maturing basis.³³

Lieutenant Uhura: ‘a desirable and attractive young lady’

After Rand left the *Enterprise*, she was succeeded by a series of 10 yeomen, brought in to serve the story as required. Two female characters were present from the beginning of the series, however, and would last all three seasons – Lieutenant Uhura³⁴ and Nurse Christine Chapel. The communications officer would go on to appear in 66 episodes of **TOS**. Her character description in the *Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide*³⁵ states that she is:

‘played by attractive young actress Nichelle Nichols. Uhura was born in the United States of Africa. Quick and intelligent, she is a highly efficient officer and expert in all ships systems relating to communications. Uhura is also a warm, highly female female off duty. She is something of a favourite in the Recreation Room during off duty hours, too, because she sings – old ballads as well as the newer space ballads – and she can do an impersonation at the drop of a communicator.’

Apart from the unnecessary qualification that Nicholls is attractive, this is a solid portrait of her character, initially focusing on her efficiency and the range of her professional skills. Regrettably, we need to be told that she is a highly ‘female female off-duty,’ which begs the question why she cannot be a ‘female female’ while **on** duty, and what those qualities are. Significantly, Nicholls played Uhura as a strong woman.

‘When you’re out in space, in a dangerous situation where the ship might be blown up at any time, you’re not going to have some female that says, ‘Ooooh Captain, save me, save me!’ she explained to David Gerrold in 1975. ‘All those female things, delicate how-are-we-going-to-do-it-without-you-Captain things... She knows that whole panel and all of a sudden she’s supposed to become little lady milquetoast? Ridiculous!’³⁶

While she displays strength and skill at her station, she was still being described as: ‘a desirable and attractive young lady, and a highly able starship officer, considered by Captain Kirk fully as capable as any lieutenant abroad.’³⁷ Regrettably, her looks and desirability define her ahead of her abilities, and the point is made that she’s as capable as any other lieutenant on the vessel – should it be inferred that the comparison is with males?

Nurse Christine Chapel: ‘desperately in love with Mr Spock...’

Of the qualities that define Christine Chapel, played by Majel Barrett in 25 episodes of **TOS** and *The Motion Picture* (1979)³⁸, strength is not one the most obvious. Producer Robert Justman would go as far as to say: ‘Nurse Chapel was a wimpy, badly written, and ill-conceived character, all she did was stand around and pine for Mister Spock, much the same as Yeoman Rand did for Captain Kirk.’³⁹ In the **Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide**,⁴⁰ she’s described as:

‘Dr McCoy’s Head Nurse, a skilled Surgical Assistant, as near to a professional confidant as the irascible “Bones” McCoy is likely to have. That relationship never transgresses onto the personal and an unspoken bond is the fact that she, too, is in a Starfleet Service because of a tragic romance. Although she herself holds several university degrees in Research Medicine, she has found a measure of contentment in this

³³ Blair, Karin, *Meaning in Star Trek*, pp126, 129, 140.

³⁴ Her first name Nyota is only mentioned on screen for the first time in *Star Trek* (2009), although created for the tie-in stories to *The Wrath of Khan* in 1982.

³⁵ Third Revision, 17 April 1967.

³⁶ Gerrold, David, *The World of Star Trek*, p115.

³⁷ Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p252.

³⁸ She cameos in a non-speaking role in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986).

³⁹ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, p225.

⁴⁰ Third Revision, 17 April 1967.

life as a Starfleet Nurse and wanderer.’⁴¹

The confirmation that her relationship with McCoy never oversteps into ‘personal’ is a curious one, presupposing that if a man and woman work closely together then this is likely to happen. The real ‘tragedy’ here is that Chapel, a highly qualified woman, has had to take a perceived step back from what she might have achieved and settled for the compromise of being a nurse. Under different circumstances, she might have been the ship’s chief medical officer, the original Beverley Crusher, and it isn’t until *The Motion Picture* (1979) that her qualification and title of Doctor are confirmed.

The back story alluded to in her biography is confirmed in *What Are Little Girls Made of?* (1966), with on-screen confirmation that, following the disappearance of her fiancé Dr Kirby five years prior, she had given up a career in bio-research to sign on aboard the *Enterprise*. Having been traced to planet Exo III, Kirby is discovered to have transplanted his personality into an android before killing himself. Chapel understandably opts to remain on the *Enterprise*.

We’re also told that ‘like many women aboard, Christine is desperately in love with Mr Spock...’⁴² While under the influence of the virus from Psi 2000 in *The Naked Time*, she expresses these feelings towards him: ‘...I’m in love with you, Mr Spock. You, the human Mr Spock, the Vulcan Mr Spock... I love you. I don’t know why, but I love you. I do love you just as you are. Oh, I love you.’ In spite of this declaration, this remains an unrequited love, occasionally referenced in the series.

Curiously, the **TOS** executives were in a state of denial about how women were being used in their show, as evidenced when they challenged would-be writers or directors⁴³ to identify why a sample description of a storyline ‘tease’ would be out of place in a future episode. A bolt of photon energy plasma hits the ship and ‘Kirk puts his arms about his lively Yeoman, comforting and embracing her as they wait for what seems like certain death.’ And why was that scenario incorrect? ‘Because it’s unbelievable. The Captain would not hug a pretty Yeoman on the bridge of his vessel.’ Except that’s exactly what he did with Yeoman Rand in *Balance of Terror*, which is conveniently forgotten here.

The description of the various yeomen did not suggest equality on the ship – certainly none of the male characters have biographies that focus on their physical appearance or sexual availability. Roddenberry recalls his struggle with the network to create that equality:

‘in those days we had the *Enterprise* 50 percent men, 50 percent women.’ The network visited the set and raised a concern about the gender split. He said, “Because, don’t you see, it will make it look like there’s a lot of fooling around going on up there.” We had a huge argument, he went away, came back a week later and said... “You can have 30% women.” I thought “...30% healthy young women should be able to handle the ship...”⁴⁴

A compromise in numbers, but also a perpetuation of a sexist attitude that the 30% of women can ‘handle’ the 70% men.

The show was missing a strong female who could have stood alongside her contemporaries in other network shows. Of the yeomen, the **TOS** producers would lament that

‘...they were the antithesis of the actresses starring in the other dramatic television series of that era: Barbara Bain (**Mission: Impossible**), Amanda Blake (**Gunsmoke**), Barbara Anderson (**Ironsides**), Stephanie

⁴¹ Third Revision, 17 April 1967.

⁴² Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p254.

⁴³ *Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide*, Third Revision, 17 April 1967, excerpted in Whitfield and Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, pp324-326.

⁴⁴ *Inside Star Trek*, ‘The *Enterprise* Runs Aground’, Side B, Track 1.

Powers (**The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.**), and of course Barbara Stanwyck (**The Big Valley**), all playing characters of substantial independence and distinction.⁴⁵

Number One could have filled that role, but this wasn't to be.

Second-wave feminism and professional roles

A new wave of feminism was emerging in mid-60s America, riding the wave of Betty Friedan's best-seller *The Feminine Mystique*. She argued that: 'A woman today has been made to feel freakish and alone and guilty if, simply, she wants to be more than her husband's wife.'⁴⁶ This was the myth of the feminine mystique; that the woman was content to stay at home, being fully dependent on her husband.

In 1964, she expanded on the *Feminine Mystique*, as it applied to television:

'it defines women solely in sexual terms, as man's wife, mother, love object, dishwasher, and general server of physical needs, and never in human terms, as a person herself. It glorifies woman's only purpose as the fulfilment of her 'femininity' – through sexual passivity, loving service of husband and children, and dependence on man for all decisions in the world outside of her home.'⁴⁷

Career women were frowned upon, and they struggled to find the same job opportunities as males, certainly not at the same salaries. Instead, they were encouraged to fit the homemaker mould/stereotype. In 1964, MGM executive producer Norman Felton explained why women were infrequent leads or weren't portrayed as holding careers. 'For a woman to make decisions, to triumph over anything, would be most unpleasant, dominant, masculine. After all, most women are housewives... [and] would react against a woman who succeeded at anything.'⁴⁸

But this was now 1968, and women watching **TOS** at the time of original transmission could possibly have been inspired by seeing female characters in professional roles such as doctor, attorney, historian or psychiatrist. Equally, they probably rolled their eyes at the sexualised alien races like the simple, matriarchal Eymorgs, or the coffee-dispensing and file-carrying yeomen. When challenged in a letter by Margaret M. Bailey from New Jersey in 1975 as to whether he thought that **TOS** was male chauvinistic by the standards of the mid-70s, Gene Roddenberry agreed:

'Yes, by today's standards, indeed it was. We didn't use women as strongly as we might have. We did have women lieutenants, women attorneys. We often fell into the trap of making the captain's secretary-valet – the yeoman – a woman. I think if we did begin today, we would start off more advanced than we were able to at the time.'⁴⁹

But before we overly praise the show for at least having some professional women, remember that their depiction was typically of flawed people who were dissatisfied with their work, or quickly dropped the desire to be a career woman and instead fell into the arms of a charmer or flatterer. Look how easily Archaeology and Anthropology Officer Lieutenant Palamas is wooed by Apollo and abandons her professional role, wanting to become a goddess in *Who Mourns for Adonais?* (1967) or Lieutenant Marla McGivers, ship's historian, falls under the charm of Khan in *Space Seed* (1967). And if a new yeoman featured in an episode, she would typically abandon her post or professionalism – Yeoman Burrows fantasising about becoming a princess in *Shore Leave* (1966) and Yeoman Ross being enchanted by Trelane in *The Squire of Gothos* (1967), for instance.

⁴⁵ Justman and Solow, *Inside Star Trek*, p226.

⁴⁶ Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, p76.

⁴⁷ Friedan, Betty, 'Television and the Female Mystique,' in *TV Guide: The First 25 Years*, p93.

⁴⁸ Friedan, 'Television and the Female Mystique,' p96.

⁴⁹ Sackett, Susan, *Letters to Star Trek*, pp64-66.

Those women who were taking comfort from the optimism of a future where they could achieve their career goals, were watching their dreams being eroded through the depiction of frail women, who, as written, turned their backs on hard-fought career achievements and stepped back into society-approved stereotypes. Admittedly, it was still a step up from much contemporary TV fare where, as Gail Collins noted: 'you'd have thought that married women who worked were limited to a handful of elementary school teachers and the unlucky wives of sharecroppers and drunkards.'⁵⁰

The final episode of **TOS** was *Turnabout Intruder* (1969) featuring Doctor Janice Lester, whose hatred of her own womanhood leads to the loss of her career. Perhaps even more depressing, though, is the exchange between Kirk and McCoy in *Who Mourns for Adonais?* where the doctor discusses Mr Scott's blossoming relationship with Lt Caroline Palamas.

'I'm not sure she thinks he's the right man [for her]... On the other hand, she's a woman. All woman. One day she'll find the right man and off she'll go, out of the service.'

If any comment in **TOS** encapsulates the show at its most sexist, this might be it. Not only is Marla a woman, she is 'all woman',

But luckily, there's an escape, in the form of marriage, which means that she would leave the service, presumably to stay at home and happily bring up children. Gail Collins said that marriage on TV 'created the impression that once married, a woman literally never left her house. Even if the viewers knew that this really wasn't true, many did accept the message that when matrimony began, working outside the home ended.'⁵¹

TOS might have been set in the 2260s, but it was very much grounded in the 1960s. Gene Roddenberry confirmed as much:

'Also, we can't ignore the fact that I was playing to a 1964-1966 audience, with a large group that would enjoy seeing women in a setting not too different from what was the norm **then** and would be pulled close to the show by seeing those things... Would I change that? I think not a great deal, although we talked about having more women around and giving them better assignments.'⁵²

Another, more sinister, and less well-known, inequality for women in **TOS** was the proposed use of birth control. In the real-world, the first oral contraceptive pill became available in the United States in 1960, though it took cases like 1965's *Griswold v. Connecticut*⁵³ for the Supreme Court to rule that married couples have a Constitutional right to privacy that included the right to use birth control. However, millions of unmarried women in certain states were still denied the pill at that time. Surely, a science fiction show set two centuries in the future would offer up a world where women had total control of their lives, careers, and their bodies? Sadly not.

As explained in *The Making of Star Trek*, though never featured on screen, 'Birth control would be mandatory for unmarried females...'. Just let that settle in for a moment. 'A woman found to be pregnant would be given her choice of a medical discharge or rotation to a shore base for the remainder of her pregnancy.' The rationale is that 'science recognises that the known, as well as the unknown, difficulties of pregnancy and birth in space makes the practice of birth control in some form completely necessary.'⁵⁴

So, while the viewer is expected to believe that technology exists where a person can be beamed between two locations, bodies can be split into two, or even a Vulcan's brain can be removed on board ship without damaging

⁵⁰ Collins, Gail, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*, p16.

⁵¹ Collins, *When Everything Changed*, p15.

⁵² Sackett, *Letters to Star Trek*, pp64-66.

⁵³ *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965).

⁵⁴ Whitfield & Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek*, p207.

it, pregnancy and birth were just a stretch too far for 23rd century science.