

## **High-Tech Feudalism:**

# **Warrior Culture and Science Fiction TV**

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"*Richard III* with aliens" is how Cornell (102) describes "Sins of the Father," an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (hereafter *TNG*) in which the Klingon warrior Worf, son of Mogh, seeks to restore his family's honour by exposing and challenging those responsible for falsely accusing his dead father of treason to the Klingon Empire. Worf is only partly successful in his quest, and he remains a perpetually marginal figure whose identity is divided by his Klingon heritage, his childhood as a Klingon orphan raised by humans, and his current status as the only Klingon in Starfleet, the military arm of the Federation of Planets, an alliance of Earth and other worlds whose relationship with the Klingon Empire is marked by tension, suspicion and, at times, open hostility. As a result of these divisions and struggles, Worf's family is eventually stripped of its wealth and rank on the Klingon home-world, and Worf's brother Kurn seeks a ritual death as the only way to absolve his own and his family's disgrace.

Historical and cross-cultural motifs are common in *TNG*, and resonate throughout the secondary texts that have sprung up around the television series—comics, reference books, novelisations of the TV episodes, fan conventions, and numerous Internet sites where devotees debate the minutiae of an imaginary future. What these motifs point to is the intertextual nature of popular culture, the ways in which mass-mediated images are constructed through the recombination of elements that are already embedded in the cultural repertoire—traits, stereotypes, narrative themes—and already resonate with some degree of familiarity and recognition. Representation is the process of selecting these elements, displacing them from their existing contexts, simplifying and condensing them to fit new contexts where they are reconnected in ways that produce new meanings and pleasures, new identities and identifications. The source of these elements is limitless, and the process of selecting

and recombining them is often indifferent to the original contexts in which they are found. Popular media culture poaches from high culture as well as from itself; it can be as promiscuous in its use of established fields of knowledge—science, history, art—as it is in its appropriation of the experiences and understandings of everyday life. All media images, whether they are fictional or 'real,' are in this sense discursive composites, an effect of the displacement, condensation and inventiveness of representation.

Each medium of popular culture has its own regime of representation, the codes and conventions that regulate its operations and stem from the interaction between technology, economics and the conditions of consumption, the relationship with audiences. In this latter respect particularly, television is a weak medium; as Ellis has shown, attracting and retaining viewers is constantly problematic, and not simply because of the proliferation of competing channels. Television is normally watched in the home, where it has to compete not only with other forms of activity but also with the disruptions and distractions that are typical of household activity. Commercial television is constantly subject to its own internal disruptions, the advertising breaks to which viewers can now respond instantly by channel-flipping with the remote control. Television is also disadvantaged by the quality and size of its visual image, which is normally smaller than life-size. To offset these limitations, television relies heavily on constant flow, seriality, the recurrent use of standardised, unchanging characters, settings and narrative themes, and the use of fragmented, close-up photography. The facial close-up is the single most common image on television, and this is one of the reasons why television drama tends to be centred on characters—their personalities, idiosyncrasies, emotions and interpersonal relations.

These techniques are used to construct lines of familiarity, recognition and identification that audiences can easily take up or let go, but there is also an unintended effect to this, particularly in the case of the *Star Trek* series which has become something of a cult. The fan phenomenon and secondary texts associated with the programs point to the way that simplified, stereotypical characters allow space for viewers to enter imaginatively into the narrative and begin to construct their own, more elaborate meanings around fictional characters. They are able to do this because the characters, plots and settings are intertextually fertile in their connotations. Fans are able to draw out these connotations, make them more explicit, and extend the process of intertextualisation by connecting them to other elements in their own stock of popular cultural knowledge and imagination. Any clear-cut distinction between production and consumption, encoding and decoding, breaks down in the spiral of

intertextuality as medium and audiences appropriate references and images from one another.

In the case of the original *Star Trek* series of the 1960's, the intertextual references drew heavily from the immediate historical context of Cold War mythology and discourse. Klingons and other hostile species confronted by humans and their allies bore a strong resemblance to the stereotype of the communist aggressor, and, at the same time, as some critical observers have pointed out, the supposedly benign motives behind the human quest for space exploration were redolent of U.S. justification for its involvement in Vietnam (Goulding). In *TNG*, the location of the alien other has shifted, and one of the main points of intertextual reference is that of a more distant historical past. The image of the Klingon has been revised, and the Cold War aggressor has been replaced by a figure that is more complex, a futuristic, technological version of the medieval warrior who lives by violence and lives for honour. As such, the Klingon has become a more ambivalent point of interest, on the one hand a figure of danger and even repugnance, on the other a figure of fascination with something lost, a point of imaginary nostalgia.

### ***Living by Violence***

When they first appeared in the original *Star Trek* series in 1967, the Klingons were portrayed in a one-dimensional way. They were the antithesis of humans in their aggressiveness, their lack of ethical principles, and their deviousness. This was their primary narrative function, to act as the other, the pretext that enabled the human protagonists to fulfil their role as agents of moral value, to restore order, and to reaffirm that good triumphs over evil. As distinctly secondary characters, Klingons seemed to act aggressively out of some inherently savage nature; their psychology and culture were unimportant beyond a uniform desire to conquer others, to enslave and exploit them, to relish coercion and cruelty for their own sake. Like typical embodiments of narrative evil, they were either indifferent to the suffering of others, or found pleasure in it. Yet while their characterisation differentiated them clearly from the series' protagonists, their physical appearance remained less distinct. It was in *TNG*, where Klingons—Worf in particular—became more central to the setting and narrative of the series and where their characterisation became more complex, that they took on a much more clearly differentiated physical image.

In the passage of future history from the original *Star Trek* to *TNG*, the Klingons have evolved physically, but in a retrograde way. In *TNG* they wear their aggressiveness

in a more openly physical way in the form of body image: their appearance is more animalistic, with pronounced teeth, long unkempt hair, beards and protruding, bony foreheads that resemble a kind of internal skeletal armour. The uniforms they wear are militaristic, but in an obviously archaic way—short leather jackets with metal adornments, leggings, and high-fitting, heavy boots—and they resemble light armour. They carry hi-tech "disruptors," a kind of futuristic pistol, but also a three-pronged dagger, the "d't tagh," for use in hand-to-hand combat; for duels and tournaments the preferred weapon is a double-handed, scythe-like sword known as the "bat'telh" (See Okuda for Klingon names and terms). Even their biology is militarised, for they have back-up internal organs—but no tear ducts.

The Klingons' warrior culture is openly masculine. Female Klingons have only played a transitory role in the *TNG* series, but when they do appear they assume the same aggressiveness and cunning as the males; there is little difference between the two. This masculine culture is split between the renunciation of comfort and indulgence in sensuous pleasure. Comfort is eschewed as a mark of softness and weakness, a denial of the positive and formative effects of physical hardship and suffering—the Klingon *rite de passage* consists in the endurance of extreme physical pain inflicted by other warriors. The disdain for comfort extends to the Klingon habitat and its props; the spaces they inhabit, on their home-world and on battleships, are austere in the extreme—dark and gloomy, with stark, dimly-lit interiors containing minimal, functional furnishings such as hard shelves to sleep on. The personalised, decorative touches that characterise human space are completely absent. The obverse face of this asceticism is an indulgence in pleasure, though one that is ritualised and regulated around aggression. Klingons celebrate victory in battle or over a personal opponent with bouts of excessive drinking, and the singing of songs and telling of stories which recount past feats of bravery and triumph. Meals resemble small feasts in which food is eaten by hand, often raw or even alive.

The physical attributes of Klingon aggression correspond to the psychology and demeanour of a warrior personality, though this too is internally divided. Central to this duality is the way that they come into contact with others. Most obviously, Klingons are belligerent—quick-tempered, easily offended, rude, churlish and brusque—and they find pleasure and value in this. They are distrustful, and, by the same token, often devious and duplicitous in their dealings, especially with non-Klingons, who are generally treated as lesser beings and regarded as soft, weak and unworthy of respect. At war they are brutal and merciless with their enemies, a reflection, in part, of their belief that death in battle is the height of glory; to be

crippled, captured or rendered unable to fight is considered a useless and demeaning existence. At the same time, in their relationships with one another, Klingons value camaraderie and loyalty, necessary virtues for those who live by and for fighting. Respect and standing in the eyes of others is crucial to their sense of worth and self-esteem, and the grounds for this are bravery and fidelity in struggle. The two sides of this duality, however, fit together precariously. The ideals of loyalty and camaraderie are often compromised by a taste for power and violence, and the Klingons are constantly beset by treachery and division. Ironically it is Worf, the perpetual outsider, who yearns for and agonises over the realisation of Klingon ideals more than anyone else. Excluded from his own people, he strives to become the solitary embodiment of the Klingons' warrior virtues.

The aggressiveness and guile of the Klingons, coded in terms of their appearance, demeanour and personality, is always set off against the motives and conduct of the human protagonists and their allies, and this difference has become more pronounced between the two series. In the original *Star Trek* the protagonist, Captain James T. Kirk, often engaged in hand-to-hand fights with alien opponents whereas this is rarely the case for his counterpart, Captain Jean-Luc Picard, in *TNG*. Picard personifies an ethic of caution, prudence and pacifism—force is only ever used as a last resort and this is a lesson that Worf never seems fully able to learn or to set against his own Klingon instincts. The mission of the *Enterprise*, the space ship that serves as the principal setting for *TNG*, is one of exploration and discovery, not conquest and exploitation.

The overtones are moralistic and evolutionist. The Klingons serve as a device both to highlight how advanced a fictitious humankind has become by the twenty-fourth century, and, as an imaginary figure redolent of an anachronistic culture, how far real humankind has come by the twentieth. The figure of the Klingon is an imaginary composite that bears the traces of different intertextual references—Worf's brother's attempt to erase disgrace through ritual suicide, for example, is a clear gesture to the image of the samurai. For Western viewers, however, the most prominent of these traces is that of the medieval warrior, a figure that has passed from history into popular culture in different forms and guises, and has been filtered and reconstructed through different fields of knowledge and regimes of representation. In historical scholarship the identity and status of the warrior and the contours of warrior culture have been a contested terrain, though it is generally recognised that the pursuit of physical pleasure and a turbulent life of violence and adventure were common among medieval youths, unmarried males of both knightly and noble status. In his study of the origins and

development of knighthood Duby, for example, identifies youths as the "spearhead of feudal aggression," as "(d)edicated to violence" with "their emotions at a pitch of warlike frenzy" (115). These attributes stemmed partly from a general vocation for war among those of higher social rank, and partly from the intersection of economic and demographic factors that fostered a life of errantry and adventure as the means to pursue the kind of wealth and status that would ensure a suitable marriage and a more sedentary way of life.

In Duby's remarks one can also glimpse the way in which emotions and behaviour, psychology and a social ethic, are fused together, and it is this which can be said to give the role of the warrior its own culture. It is a more or less integrated and socially contextualised way of life, rather than simply an aberration or deviation from the norm. Recognising this, however, entails a shift of perspective and representational regime from the historical to the sociological, and it is here that the most important—albeit controversial—attempt to describe the warrior and his culture can be found in the work of Norbert Elias (1978, 1982). First elaborated in the 1930's, Elias' view of the medieval warrior was strongly influenced by the historical writings of late nineteenth and early twentieth century medievalists and the methodological debates of German sociology, particularly Max Weber's response to historical materialism. For Weber, sociology's attempts to discern patterns and generalities had to address the fundamentally particularistic and contingent nature of history. Weber's answer to this was the method of the ideal type, a deliberately one-sided conceptualisation of a socio-historical phenomenon in a way that accentuated certain selected dimensions or attributes to their logical extreme. The result was a concept that did not represent any real, concrete object in an accurate sense, but one which, by virtue of its being an ideal, could act as a benchmark against which real concrete objects could be assessed by comparison.

From the viewpoint of the historian, Elias' characterisation of the medieval warrior can be criticised for its generality, lack of attention to detail and variation, and selective, one-sided emphases. Viewed as an ideal type, however, it can be seen as an attempt to isolate and accentuate certain features that were theoretically central to Elias' broader interest in the contrast and transition between feudalism and modern society. As an ideal type it can also be seen as an intertext between the historian's regime of representation and that of popular culture, part of the process in which historical realities are transformed into the ingredients of a fictional hybrid, a stereotype. What the sociological ideal type shares with the popular cultural stereotype is a concern with typification—the abstraction and conceptualisation of similarities and patterns from a

body of particular, contingent details. In this respect, Elias' representation of the medieval warrior can be seen to occupy an intermediary space between the socially restricted realm of historical texts whose value lies in their specificity, and the more generalised, and commercialised, realm of popular culture whose currency is one of types. Like the fictitious Klingon, Elias' medieval warrior serves as a point of evolutionary reference, one constructed in terms of understanding the modern through a re-imagination of the past. Intertextuality functions as the ground on which discursive strategy is refocused with shifts in the regime of representation; it is the use value of meaning (familiarity and recognition), rather than its truth value in the strict sense (empirical accuracy and veracity) that serves as the means to self-understanding. In the passage from history to popular culture via sociology, the medieval warrior, like his Klingon counterpart, becomes a modern construct, a way to imagine other times retrospectively.

For Elias, the warrior's violent way of life was a manifestation of the nexus between power and personality. Through the "civilising process," the transition from feudalism to modernity, power relations have become increasingly pacified and regulated, and the individual personality more subject to self-restraint and rational calculation. Anticipating the later work of Michel Foucault, Elias saw the civilising process in terms of the way that social power is increasingly internalised within the psychological drive system of the individual. The development of self-restraint occurs on both the physical and affective levels of the body and its deployment in social space. Physically, the development of self-restraint begins to submit the biological functions of the body—sleeping, cleaning, eating, elimination of wastes, contact with other bodies—to greater regulation and sequestration. The body's physical functions become reconfigured in terms of a complex system of prohibitions and inhibitions that render the public display of these activities a source of personal shame and embarrassment. What had, until the late Middle Ages, been activities largely untouched by normative controls, gradually became sites for the socialisation of self-restraint and self-monitoring.

On the affective level, the development of self-restraint resulted in the gradual curtailment of the overt, social display of emotions to and about others. The "extreme excitability of the Medieval soul" that Huizinga spoke of was embedded in a personality structure that functioned in a more immediate and, from a modern vantage point, impulsive and irrational fashion (20). For the warrior class in particular, aggressiveness, hostility and belligerence towards enemies, rivals and competitors were sanctioned and encouraged. This aggressiveness was, however, part of a broader personality structure that lacked both the refinement and self-consciousness associated

with civility, and the differentiation of feelings, moods and reactions that accompanies the gradual pacification of social life. Brusqueness and indifference to the sensitivities of others were normal dispositions. The warrior, says Elias, did "not *need* to banish coarseness and vulgarity" of habits and manners from his life, for the class divisions in the social hierarchy, extreme as they were in terms of wealth, power and social distance, did not extend to the practice of everyday forms of sociality and outlook (1982: 263, emphasis added).

The fusion of aggressiveness with other affective states resulted in forms of pleasure and gratification that seem to the modern observer repugnant and perverse. In particular, violence itself was experienced as pleasurable, a source of affirmation and validation. In war, the pleasure of violence came from the sense of pursuing a just cause and from wreaking vengeance on one's enemies, from the feelings of personal closeness, solidarity and comradeship that shared hardship fosters, and from the material rewards of plunder, pillage and rapine. But more generally, in a society in which power functioned through superior force, the pleasure of committing or observing violence was closely tied to the reproduction of moral order. Moreover, the pleasure of violence—in war, tournaments, punishment and social relations in general—points to the personalisation of life in warrior culture, to the absence of the kind of social distance that enables the segregation of individuals from their social positions and roles. Like the emotions that animate and colour them, person, role and conduct were intimately fused together by the power of open force. Aggressiveness was not only fused with other affective states, it was also lived and experienced in an immediate, unconditional way. The warrior was marked with impatience, in the double sense of one who acts impulsively and one who refuses and resists passivity, who refuses to subdue himself. The immediacy of feeling, and its outward expression, meant that the warrior typically oscillated between affective extremes, shifting mood and demeanour suddenly, violently and without any sense of self-contradiction. Elias sums up this affective flux in the following way:

[A] moment ago they were joking, now they mock each other, one word leads to another, and suddenly from the midst of laughter they find themselves in the fiercest feud. Much of what appears contradictory to us—the intensity of their piety, the violence of their fear of hell, their guilt feelings, their penitence, the immense outbursts of joy and gaiety, the sudden flaring and the uncontrollable force of their hatred and belligerence—all these, like the rapid changes of mood, are in reality symptoms of the same social and personality structure (1978: 200).

## ***Living for Honour***

The primary evidence Elias relied upon for support of his characterisation of the medieval warrior was the literary culture—troubadour poetry, *chansons de geste*, the Arthurian myth—that celebrated and idealised the turbulent exploits of the knightly and noble youths who also comprised its principal audience. What this culture also reveals, however, is an aspect of warrior aggression that played little if any role in Elias' account, namely chivalry and its relationship to the supposed civilising effects of religion during the Middle Ages. Chivalry functioned as both an ethic, a code of conduct instructing the knight in the ways to live a virtuous life, and also an ideology, a kind of necessary illusion that blunted the harshness and brutality of the world. For Huizinga (1954), for example, chivalry served as something of an antidote to harsh reality by offering a kind of legitimacy or consolation, although he was ultimately pessimistic about chivalry's ability to moderate the experience of a violent way of life. The long list of chivalric virtues—errantry, valour, courage, prowess, hardiness and self-discipline, independence of spirit, largesse, loyalty, gallantry and respect for womankind—constantly rubbed up against "the vehement passion possessing princes and peoples alike," and the "violence of sentiment...doubled by pride and the consciousness of power" (20).

Chivalry arose from a situation of political rivalry and power imbalance, and represented an attempt to generalise particular social interests to a broader constituency. It was one aspect of the gradual Christianising of the knighthood as the Church, through the doctrines of the Peace and Truce of God, sought to protect itself against aggression, and extend its control over the sources of violent behaviour in the name of justice for the poor and the vulnerable (Gies). Like other normative systems, however, chivalry was internally ambiguous and contradictory. The distinction between the virtuous and the transgressive was unstable, blurring the line between errantry and renegade adventure and banditry, prowess and arrogance, independence of spirit and material self-interest, plunder as the just reward for loyal service and as the prime motive for assaulting others, largesse and conspicuous extravagance and prodigality, and discipline as indifference to one's own hardship and indifference to the suffering of others. Outside the idealised accounts of the ecclesiastics and romantics, the literature is replete with examples of the transgression of these boundaries (Keen).

These internal ambiguities derive in large measure from the political context, the form in which power functioned. Coercion as the mainstay of power gives rise to what

Bataille and, following him, Foucault refer to as sovereignty. Sovereign power acts openly by making its exercise as visible and forceful as possible. It seeks to impose its will by generating hierarchical relations of superiority and inferiority, strong and weak. It works by laying waste and rendering servile whatever it confronts and conquers. In such a regime, power itself is vulnerable to challenge and so the imperative to use force and use it visibly is relentless. As a result, an ethic that appeals to moderation constantly risks becoming little more than an ideological justification for a kind of normalised excess.

The contradictions of these ethical principles reveal themselves most fully with respect to the central organising principle of honour. Honour is problematic precisely because it lends itself to contradictory interpretations and responses. For all that honour could foster moderation and gentility, it could also provoke aggression and the shedding of blood as the ritual means to its satisfaction: "When blood flows," Huizinga wrote of the duel, "honour is vindicated and restored" (1955: 95). For the medieval warrior, honour existed first as his reputation and renown in the eyes of others, particularly his peers. This created a kind of symbolic dependency that made honour vulnerable to challenge by the actions of others, and thereby made the defence of honour a persistent concern, a need to be constantly satisfied in an environment of competition, rivalry and resentment. Much of the extreme nature of the warrior's world, the immediacy and oscillation of moods, the feuding and quarrelling, was the result of the imperative of honour. Fighting and other forms of expending oneself and one's wealth were the means to reaffirm honour publicly, and distinguish oneself from one's rivals. Honour was about relations of social distance within the same class.

As the Klingons have been recoded in a more visually aggressive way in their evolution from the original series to *TNG*, so their violence has been given a more elaborate normative context. No longer simply the product of an inherently savage, devious and power-hungry nature, Klingon aggression has become the ambivalent manifestation of an honour code. Again, this code constitutes both a practical ethic and an ideology. As the former, the honour code entails a set of rules that inform and regulate everyday conduct and interactions with others: when to take offence and whom to regard as a worthy opponent, when to indulge in pleasure and when to submit to hardship. As an ideology, the honour code incorporates a system of more abstract beliefs whose function is to legitimate the formally rigid, hierarchical structure of a militaristic society—loyalty, obedience, bravery, the value of a glorious death. Like honour for the medieval warrior, however, honour for the Klingons is a risky business; it has to be won and defended against the challenges of others whose own motives

may be less than honourable, but whose power is nonetheless effective. It is a problematic site where emotions, actions, and norms constantly come into a contested relationship with one another. At the heart of this are the same fundamental contradictions: honour regulates violence at the same time that it demands it; honour can entail self-sacrifice at the same time as it incites self-interest; and honour calls for the exercise of a kind of discipline and indifference while it insists on the centrality and intensity of feeling and passion—honour means that emotions such as fear must be suppressed and overcome, while those such as anger and pride must be fully vented. Throughout the *TNG* series and its spin-off, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, the story of Worf is the story of his striving, as a solitary, liminal figure, to resolve the contradictions of honour within himself and in his relations with others.

Worf's obsession with honour is principally concerned with the relationship between honour and divided loyalty. This recurs in two overlapping contexts. The first of these concerns Worf's role as the sole Klingon in a world of humans and their allies, in which violence is treated as a means of last resort, and in which hierarchy and authority are legitimated and complied with on the basis of rational consensus rather than blind obedience or fear. Here Worf is confronted with decisions and actions—retreating in the face of hostile opponents, relying on negotiation and compromise, passing up the chance to retaliate—that seem cowardly, weak or naive and unworthy of respect. These affronts to his sense of honour test his loyalty to the world of humans, yet, despite his inability to live like humans and accept their liberal, tolerant ethic, he never makes a final break.

The second context is that of Worf's relations with other Klingons, in which his sense of honour is tested by the deviousness of his own kind and by the way he is forced to refuse his right to justice in order to reconcile loyalty to family and to the Klingon Empire as a whole. Although Worf successfully identifies and confronts those responsible for falsely branding his father a traitor and disgracing his family's name, he must remain silent in the interests of the greater good. Treachery, greed and power force him to forego what he most desires, the recognition and respect of other warriors and their acceptance of him as a peer. To protect his brother, prevent open dissent and strife, and preserve the fragile unity of the Empire, Worf must agree to formal exclusion from his own kind. He undergoes "discommendation," in which he is stripped of his identity, rank and rights, and becomes a non-person. This is a fate worse than death since it removes the very basis of the honour code, reputation and validation in the eyes of other Klingons: he becomes at best an object of contempt. Deprived of this external point of reference, Worf remains a solitary figure whose code of honour, in

the formal but not substantive sense, is increasingly humanised—and modernised—as a body of abstract values which operate self-reflexively, from within.

### ***Social Formation and the Warrior's Personality***

The complexities and contradictions of honour suggest that the disposition of the warrior to an aggressive, mercurial and ostentatious temperament represents something more than simply a normative absence or lack—of restraint, detachment or moderation—that allows some natural, subjective essence to manifest itself in pure, uninhibited fashion. Whether in the fantasy worlds of science fiction or the historical and anthropological reconstructions of other real cultures, the conceit of modern thought has been to see the Other as a natural being, unencumbered by the ambivalence and constraints of civilisation, at once an object of a romantic, nostalgic longing, and a self-satisfied fear and loathing. Yet the absence of inhibition points rather to the workings of a different kind of normative imperative that calls forth a personality structure tuned to the implications of sovereign power. The lack of inhibition is functional in such a context; it contains a rationality that makes sense in relation to the personalisation of social relations and the role of force in generating and maintaining social distinction and distance. Psychological realism and the principled violence of honour converge. When coercion functions as a central mechanism for accumulating material and symbolic rewards, aggression towards others is more than simply a lack of self-restraint, it is something of a social and psychological necessity. It is not simply that one kills; it is that, under the proper circumstances, one should feel good about so doing.

From this point on, however, the worlds of these two warriors diverge. Despite the shortcomings, the contribution that Elias made to our understanding of the Middle Ages was to move beyond the purely historical to the sociological, and theorise the relationships between the warrior's personality and culture, the system of power and the wider social formation in which they were embedded. What is fundamentally important here is the relatively low level of social differentiation and interdependence that characterised feudal society, and how, under conditions of demographic pressure and technological limitation, this affected the competition for and allocation of scarce resources such as land. For Elias, the process of feudalisation resulted from the interaction of surplus population and scarcity of land, which gave rise to belligerent expansionism and conquest as the mechanisms of social resolution and organisation. Competition for land was one instance of the larger competition for power whose final

logic was a tendency towards centralisation and monopolisation. These conflicts eventually consolidated and enlarged the overall number of power centres. As power was consolidated and centralised, so the autonomy of local knights and barons waned, the warrior hierarchy became more stabilised in a system of uneven dependencies, and the administration of power, together with the conduct of everyday social life, became increasingly pacified. The opportunity for successfully using violence, as well as the legitimacy of so doing, declined. Violence gradually receded as a mechanism for normal social intercourse, and became both a sign and a means of social crisis.

At the same time, the centralisation and pacification of power and the differentiation of social functions, of people and their roles, also fostered the growth of self-restraint and the emergence of a different personality structure organised around affect control, self-detachment, instrumental rationality, and a calculative self-reflexivity as both socially necessary and ethical. Differentiation increased social interdependence and extended the chain of social actions and their ramifications beyond the immediate social context, the here-and-now. This change set up pressures for the development of a more dispassionate, synoptic orientation to self and others, to present and future. The implications of any course of action could carry to more impersonal, anonymous regions of the social world. In a world in which social relations are differentiated and interdependent, and in which legitimate power functions in a pacified way, the warrior's personality becomes highly problematic.

This web of connections between social formation, power and personality exposes the imaginary world of the *Star Trek* warrior as doubly fictive. Not only is it a made-up world in the conventional sense, but its premise is the improbable supposition of a kind of high-tech feudalism in which advanced technology could sustain the social and political structures that enable the personality and culture of the Klingon warrior to prevail. Although the Klingons supposedly acquired their advanced technology in the manner of the classic adventurer, through pillage and plunder, it would nonetheless take a highly differentiated social structure—a complex, technical, scientific and administrative division of labour—to operate, maintain and reproduce it. Yet such a social structure would entail all the elements of a 'modern' system of power, and self-restrained and self-detached subjectivity.

The absence of the social dimension of technology from the imaginary world of the Klingon warrior points also to the absence of production generally. This is an absence that marks the imaginary world of popular culture broadly, across a diverse array of fictional forms (see, *inter alia*, Dorfman and Mattelart). With the exception

of the Ferengi—a futuristic caricature of the avaricious merchant capitalist of the primitive stage of capital accumulation—economic activity and relations are largely missing from the *Star Trek* series. When they do arise (usually in connection with the Ferengi), they take on the character of pure mercantilism: trade in raw materials or precious, unique objects mediated by the exchange of strips and bars of "latinum." Among the Klingons, however, it is the mode of destruction—training in martial arts and disposition, weaponry (ancient and high-tech), cunning tactics, and the use of overwhelming force—that defines the way of life. The production of these means of destruction, however, remains largely mysterious. The means of production, as such, only appear as the embodiment of the status of the family house, the patrimony that is tied through honour to the patronym. When Worf refuses to aid and abet the Klingon leader Gowron in his scheme to destabilise the Federation, his family's land and ships are confiscated, and Worf's brother Kurn can only erase the dishonour by dying a ritual death at his brother's hand.

The absence of production parallels another contradiction in the image of the Klingon. Although Klingon women (at least those who are pure Klingon) rarely appear in the series, when they do they are shown to be barely distinguishable from the men. They share the same aggressive, impatient and mercurial temperament as their male counterparts. This masculinisation of women again contradicts the tendency for warrior cultures to be associated with strong and clear gender divisions. The worlds of men and women are separated and circumscribed, and the latter subordinated to the former. Paradoxically, it is among *Star Trek's* proto-modern Ferengi that gender divisions and the subordination of women are greatest. Yet it is precisely the shift to modern forms of social organisation—the predominance of the market economy, the centralisation and bureaucratisation of power, the pacification of social relations and the rationalisation of social action—that begins to move gender relations away from a condition of extreme separation and inequality: "As happens whenever men are forced to renounce physical violence," writes Elias about the waning of the Middle Ages, "the social importance of women increased" (1982: 81).

A quick browse through Internet discussion groups devoted to *Star Trek* suggests that there is a widespread fascination with the Klingons among fans of the series, and that this revolves around two poles. The first is an ongoing dialogue about their warrior prowess, how they compare as fighters, individually and collectively, with other fictitiously belligerent species like the Cardassians or the Jem'Hadar. This speaks to a fascination with, and by implication a nostalgia for, a world in which self-restraint in dealings with others is weakened, a world in which people act as they feel rather than

as they feel they should. The second, however, is with the Klingon code of honour and the system of rules that legitimate a life of ritualised aggression. This speaks to a fascination with and nostalgia for a world in which people act according to an external ethic that guides conduct in a seemingly uniform and clear fashion. The two converge in the form of an ethic of conduct that sanctions and even demands the primacy of those emotions that, quite literally, embody power and the subordination of enemies and rivals in an unambiguous way.

As Max Weber recognised in his analysis of the Protestant ethic and the rationalistic spirit of modern capitalism, individualism has been increasingly plagued by the uncertainty and loneliness of a world in which ethical standards are internalised in the way they function. The individual is freed in everyday life from accountability to a rigid external code, and condemned at the same time to the fate of personal anxiety. Perhaps modern fascination with both the Middle Ages and the imaginary future worlds of science fiction points to one way in which this paradox can, however temporarily, be set at a manageable distance. Then again, as Worf's solitude reminds us, this paradox is never far away.

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