Anthropocenes
HUMAN, INHUMAN, POSTHUMAN

Shaw, D. B. (2025). Enchanted Objects: *Star Trek* and the New Technological Sublime. *Anthropocenes – Human, Inhuman, Posthuman*, 6(1): 3. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16997/ahip.1755

RESEARCH

Enchanted Objects: *Star Trek* and the New Technological Sublime

Debra Benita Shaw

The *Star Trek* franchise, inaugurated in 1965 and still going strong, has been the paradigm for the spread of interest in science fiction, and its popularity across multiple platforms. over the past century. Adapted analogues of the future technologies imagined by the series have been among the most successful products of contemporary consumer capitalism. This paper interrogates the relationship between consumer desires and imagined futures through an investigation of *Star Trek's* promotion of a reified version of Earth's history. What can it tell us about the relationship between advanced technical objects and the belief that we can get there from here?

Keywords: Star Trek; Artificial Intelligence; capitalism; science fiction; space migration; colonialism; hyperobjects; technological sublime

Many of the tech entrepreneurs responsible for contemporary innovations are inspired by science fiction (sf) and fantasy and often base their planning on sf narratives that, as Appio *et al* point out 'reflect or propagate hegemonic worldviews' (2025: 7). Aside from an almost fanatical appropriation of J R R Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy 'in its more conservative (hierarchical, white, masculinist, almost fascist) interpretations' (1954/2022) they take from sf in general 'dreams of immortality, hope for an AI singularity (the "rapture of the nerds"), and space colonization' (Hables Gray 2025: 29). It may be the case that Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos really believe they are inaugurating a new dawn for humankind by pioneering a project of extraterrestrial colonialism (McCormick 2021, Scharmen 2021: 190–191, Yap & Kim 2023). It is certainly the case that the *Star Trek* franchise, inaugurated in 1965 and still going strong, contributed to preparing the ground for their ambitions by perpetuating the myth of prosperity through continual expansion of both territory and technoscience (Hassler-Forest 2016). If sf is, indeed, what L Ron Hubbard called 'the herald of possibility … the plea that someone should work on the future' (1982, Introduction) then the political lens through which that future is imagined and how it affects the trajectory of technological change becomes highly pertinent. However, what interests me here is not so much the spaceships, 'strange new worlds' and exotic species that populate the *Star Trek* universe but the artefacts of *Trek* technology that have functioned as prototypes for the desirable objects that structure the technologically mediated lives of people in the twenty-first century. This paper will interrogate the way in which these objects mobilise desires associated with the kind of expansionist ideology that *Star Trek* implicitly promotes.

What follows is not intended to be a critical analysis of *Star Trek* as popular entertainment or a comprehensive overview of *Trek* technologies and their cultural resonance. The focus of this paper is the way in which analogues of these technologies in contemporary culture are lent meaning by the way they are normalised by *Star Trek* narratives. Given that, according to *Wikipedia*, *Star Trek* currently spans twelve series, fourteen movies and a myriad of novels, games, magazines and comics with global distribution,[1] I will limit my discussion to only those films or episodes that, for me, stand out as examples of the way these narratives are derived from particular orientations towards futurity. As sf critic Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr has pointed out, '[t]he only restriction sf writers have historically set for themselves is that the powers in conflict must test technology as a basis for sovereignty' (2003: 241). As he makes clear, it is no surprise that sf emerged as a genre in imperialist countries where 'technological development was not only a precondition for [their] physical expansion… but an immanent driving force' (2003: 233). It is therefore pertinent to review the meaning of *Trek* technologies in the context of the accelerationist and neo-colonialist aspirations of contemporary Western 'technology capitalism' (O'Shea 2021: 87).

As I will demonstrate, part of the appeal of *Star Trek* is the way it presents a vision of the future as an extension of a specific cultural understanding of the present. We can get there from here, it is suggested, because human ethics are necessarily progressive and egalitarian. This, in concert with a benevolent paternalism in which the denizens of

Reader in Cultural Theory, University of East London, UK
d.shaw@uel.ac.uk

the future guarantee the 'safety' of the past provides for a fictional space that takes for granted the ascendancy of liberal humanism and the consequent playing out of a pre-determined destiny. Despite the many conflicts faced by the various *Star Trek* crews, resolution is assured because a transcendent humanity (even in alien guise) is seen to triumph. In this sense, despite the fact that successive series have broken new ground in challenging morphological and representational orthodoxies and anthropocentric ethics, the post-capitalist utopia that it proposes is what Rhodes, Quayle and Indish call a 'safe lens' (2022: 84) which offers the assurance that ethical and moral problems, violence, poverty and inequality are either in the past or elsewhere in the universe. Although successive series often perform a critique of extra-diegetic global politics, the utopian framework of the United Federation of Planets (UFP) offers the assurance that a thriving post-apocalyptic future is a sustainable fantasy. Furthermore, as Rhodes *et al* point out, the deep irony of *Star Trek* is that while it endeavours to present a post-scarcity economy in which the problems of capitalist excess have been resolved 'the show itself is part of its own broader systems of capitalism' (2022: 88). Most obviously, these are the markets in which it is a brand leader: film, TV and streaming services and spin-offs like fan conventions and collectables. However, these 'broader systems' also include the synergies through which the products of technoscience become intelligible, tangible and marketable.

As Georgina Voss explains it, new technologies emerge out of complex systems in which engineering and design are enmeshed with 'social and political forces that shape what … things are and will be'. 'The ideas we attach to things', she continues, 'become things in the world' and these ideas are transmitted through 'metaphors and stories … produced in a crucible of time, place and culture' that become 'highly influential in the design, regulation and reception of … technologies and infrastructures. They shape how we expect the world to work' (2024: 11). Voss cites as an example the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), a yearly event in Las Vegas that showcases new technologies in a way that functions to mandate how the world will work in the future. As she says, the predictive phrase '"in the future" … is rife at CES. It smooths the gap between the cracked asphalt on the roads outside the convention centre and the promise of new sensor-embedded freeways that autonomous cars can navigate' (2024: 21–22). As part of the system of technology capitalism *Star Trek* performs a similar function. It smooths the gap between the existing system of excessive consumption that is resulting in increasing global instability and threatening the natural systems through which life is sustained and the promise of a world beyond scarcity provided by reclamation and replication technologies and faster-than-light travel. Furthermore, it previews devices of individual empowerment that promise a future of frictionless communication, non-lethal self-defence and fully immersive wish-fulfilling entertainment technologies.

Small wonder then that real life consumer technology, at least in its surface design, often mirrors the gadgets that *Star Trek* pioneered. The flip phone, to give the most obvious example, is remarkably similar to the communicator ('Beam me up, Scotty') introduced in *Star Trek The Original Series* (*TOS*); and *Wired* (Chokkattu 2024) recently reported that tech start-up Humane Inc. has launched an 'AI pin' similar to the brooch style device familiar to viewers of *Star Trek The Next Generation* (*TNG*) and beyond. A device very like a tablet computer premiered in *TOS* as did a prototype of the bluetooth earbud (as worn by Lt Uhuru) and the medical tricorder first seen in *TOS*[2] has its analogue in the Apple watch and similar medical monitoring devices. 3D printing is an, as yet, much slower version of *TNG*'s 'replicator' and Mark Zuckerberg's much lauded (but underwhelming) 'metaverse' (Monaghan 2025) looks very much like an attempt to provide the kind of experience promised by *TNG* and *Voyager*'s 'holodeck' or *Deep Space Nine's* (*DS9*) holosuite. The episode in which *Voyager*'s Captain Janeway falls in love with a holodeck character[3] and *TNG's* 'Booby Trap' where chief engineer Geordi La Forge has a romantic encounter with a hologram of the ship's designer[4] now read like premonitions of metaverse dating apps like Nevermet and Flirtual while Zoom and other virtual meeting spaces, doorbell cams and dash cams emulate the functions of the *USS Enterprise*'s 'viewscreen'. And, of course, the computer, like Siri and Alexa, has a voice.

These devices are what Artificial Reality designer David Rose calls 'enchanted objects' (2014). The aim of this paper is to question how these objects function to smooth the gap between the embattled subject of twenty-first century apocalyptic culture and the perfected humanity of *Star Trek*'s utopian imaginary. It will interrogate the role of enchanted objects in the larger system that provides for the investment of considerable resources in an imagined future of extra-terrestrial migration in which they become emblematic of a progressive trajectory established in selective versions of US history and rehearsed in *Star Trek* storyworlds. If these objects are indeed, enchanted, then it is necessary to ask what that enchantment entails.

(a) Enchanted Objects

Enchantment, for Rose, occurs when objects with which we are already familiar are enhanced by increased functionality or interactivity. Probably the best example is the smart watch: a simple information and regulation technology that has gone from telling us the time of day to telling us the state of our health (or our stocks and shares) and from regulating the working day to regulating our food intake and levels of activity as well as functioning as a communicator and mood monitor. There is a story to be told about the watch as a technology of labour regulation and its changing function in the history of capitalism (Snyder 2013). But the focus here is on the relationship that Rose notes between enchanted objects and popular mythology or, to paraphrase him more accurately, between myth as an expression of what he believes to be fundamental human desires and the impetus to innovation.

Accordingly, Rose identifies six desires as represented in popular mythology: omniscience (Wonder Woman's lasso), telepathy (*Star Trek*'s Vulcan mind meld among

others), safekeeping (*Star Trek*'s phaser), immortality (Snow White's mirror), teleportation (flying carpets and, of course, *Star Trek*'s transporter) and expression (Ma Liang's paintbrush and the Lyre of Orpheus). For each desire, Rose gives examples of the highly marketable consumer objects that promise their eventual satisfaction. 'The fantastic technologies we have invented over the centuries', he writes, 'the ones of ancient tales and science fiction, enable us to do things that human beings earnestly want to do but cannot do without a little (or a lot) of help from technology. … They are tools that make us incredible, supercapable versions of ourselves' (Rose 2014: 64).

Rose is not writing a critical history of technology; his book is aimed at his fellow designers and entrepreneurs interested in bringing successful products to market. However, what is instructive here is the way that the history of technology capitalism is presented as emerging out of something established as fundamentally human through an appeal to the parallels between ancient and contemporary popular mythologies. For Rose, successful design requires a close reading of popular literature, film and TV, attuned to how it manifests desire in the form of enchanted objects, and Silicon Valley, at least, seems to have taken him seriously. But what I want to suggest here is that the desires that Rose suggests are mobilised by these objects are neither universal nor fundamental.

The drive to omniscience, in particular, is an aspect of modern Western subjectivity, given birth in Renaissance humanism and nurtured by the epistemology of science. This is what Martin Heidegger has famously referred to as '[t]he fundamental event of the modern age … the conquest of the world as picture … the creature of man's producing which represents and sets before'. 'In such producing', he continues, 'man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is' (1977: 85). This is what Donna J Haraway calls 'the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere' (1991: 189) and what Michel de Certeau characterises as 'this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more' (1988: 91). Telepathy, similarly, is the dream of perfect communication: a language without ambiguity; what Haraway calls 'the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism' (1991: 176).

These are the myths that animate Rose's enchantment, and they are powerful, not because they express something fundamental to an entity called 'human' but because they construct what human *means* in the context of the dominance of Western technoscience in the continuing development of technology capitalism. In *Star Trek*, the Vulcan greeting 'live long and prosper' stands as an allegory for an ethical imperative based in what Alex Thomas calls 'transcendent conformity' (2024); the assumption that transcendence of the human 'condition' through technoscientific advancement is fundamental to our ontology. As Thomas suggests, contemporary transhumanist thinking, that advocates for a concerted drive towards supercapacity, despite its expression through a variety of often competing discourses, is fundamentally a return to the basic principles of the Enlightenment, emphasising an accelerated teleology of transcendence through the application of the scientific method to human enhancement. 'At the heart of [this] belief system', he writes, 'is the idea that only technology offers solutions to the inherent problems of humanity' (2024: 4). What this entails, as Thomas suggests, is 'a fetishization of human reason' and 'an anthropocentric egotism' (2024: 7 & 8) that recalls late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas such as those of Winwood Reade, for whom the British empire heralded a glorious future that he imagined, nearly a century before *Star Trek*, would include space colonisation (Thomas 2024: 10).

As Marcus Schulzke writes, '[f]or a television program about the future, *Star Trek* is surprisingly concerned with the past' (2013: 212) but this concern is less surprising when considered as a device to substantiate the social structures and ethical concerns of an imagined future through the histories that have served to justify the politics of the extra-diagetic present. It is this that provides for the 'safe lens' that smooths the gap between the hangover at the end of the humanist party and the transition to full supercapacity promised by *Star Trek*'s universal playground. What is important here is that supercapacity is offered as a logical outcome of a specific historical trajectory that establishes the tenets of Enlightenment humanism as fully realised in a future extrapolated from the economic and political projects of the American century (Zunz 1998); the century in which *Star Trek* was first conceived and found its audience.

Diegetic references to history before the time of *Star Trek* thus serve to establish a foundation for the ethics of the *Trek* universe based in the logic of capitalist-imperialist hegemony. As Michael Lewis points out, *TOS* in particular simplifies historical cause and effect so that American history emerges as either driven by the actions of significant individuals or caused by specific and identifiable single events (2013). In *TNG* this is taken further by the introduction of the holodeck that frequently functions as a portal into the past; as if the crews had collectively decided that the only entertainment necessary for their journey was a selection of Earth-based immersive historical dramas. To give just three well known examples: in 'Fair Haven' (*Voyager*) Captain Janeway falls in love with a hologram in a simulation of a nineteenth-century Irish village, 'The Big Goodbye' (*TNG*)[5] sets the action in 1940s San Francisco and the frontier myth (more of which below) is often evoked, most notably in 'A Fistful of Datas' (*TNG*)[6]. For Schultze, the holodeck functions as 'edutainment' (2013: 224) for the crew, but I would suggest that it serves a similar function for the audience. You don't need to be a critical historian to recognise that *Star Trek* histories are 'caricatures' (Schultze 2013: 212) often drawn from novels, but the suspension of disbelief necessary to enjoy the forays into the past requires also acceptance of a historical trajectory in which the future that *Star Trek* promises is pre-ordained.

(b) Future Past

What *Star Trek* offers us then is what Marc Auge calls 'something in the past that authorise[s] a projection into the future' (2012: 79) where the 'something', as Jutta

Weldes points out, is a selective reading of history in which the liberal humanist principles of individualism and self-determination support 'the prevalent American view of the US as a benign force in world politics' (1998: 126). Despite the fact that crew members are carefully written to represent a peaceful accommodation to difference across racial and species divides, *Star Trek* culture nevertheless emerges as paternalistic and structured according to hierarchical principles that naturalise a linear concept of progress driven by heroic individuals. The military chain of command which, as Booker points out (2008: 197), produces the 'red shirts' whose uniforms mark them as both low in rank and expendable (they nearly always die in *Star Trek*'s many fire fights with enemy aliens) stands as cipher for the implicit ranking of the 'new life and new civilizations' that Starfleet is on a mission to 'seek out' (and, if necessary it seems, destroy). *Star Trek*, then, reproduces the discourse of US foreign policy; a discourse that perpetuates the hegemony of US imperialism and racial dominance.

As Michael Omi and Howard Winant point out 'the "conquest of America" was not simply an epochal historical event … It was also the advent of a consolidated social structure of exploitation, appropriation, domination. …

> The conquest, therefore, was the first – and given the dramatic nature of the case, perhaps the greatest – racial formation project. Its significance was by no means limited to the Western Hemisphere, for it began the work of constituting Europe as the metropole, the center, of a group of empires … It represented this new imperial structure as a struggle between civilization and barbarism, and implicated in this representation all the great philosophies, literary traditions, and social theories of the modern age' (Omi & Winant 1994: 193)

Holodeck episodes in *TNG* and *Voyager* that reference Shakespeare,[7] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes,[8] Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon,*[9] the Brontes[10] as well as the Old West draw on the hegemonic force of literary history to naturalise the UFP's policing of the universe in the service of maintaining the division between civilization and barbarism where civilization is marked by the triumph of liberal humanist ethics. Furthermore, the apparently achieved utopia of the UFP depends on taking for granted that capitalism is the only viable social and economic system to deliver it (Hassler-Forest 2016). This is made explicit in *TNG* where a race called the Ferengi, as Fiona M. Davidson points out, represent the worst excesses of nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism but are indulged by the Federation as misguided but non-threatening and unintentionally comic. 'This elision of threat', writes Davidson, 'subtextually suggests that the victory of Western capitalism is so complete by the twenty-fourth century that its remnants are only found in comical, rapacious societies that subjugate women and eschew spiritual and intellectual pursuits in favour of economic gain…

> The writers are affirming a post-capitalist world, but doing so in such a way that the contemporary dominance of capitalism is re-affirmed. The future becomes post-capitalist, not through the victory of some alternate economic system but because its own success renders a monetary economy obsolete' (Davidson 2017: 14).

Similarly, Season 2 of *Star Trek: Picard* (2020–2023) while appearing to critique the relationship between capitalism and the climate crisis ends by offering fulfilment of the expansionist dream as the 'solution'. A somewhat convoluted time-travel narrative has Captain Picard and his crew travel back to the twenty-first century to prevent a dystopian future in which Earth is a fascist dictatorship. In the final episode, Picard meets an ancestor who he must persuade to travel to Io (one of Jupiter's moons) where she will discover a lifeform that, conveniently, will reverse the effects of climate change and clear the way for our evolution into the peaceful post-capitalist utopia of *TNG.*

Time travel, in fact, is often employed in the *Trek* universe to instruct us in how to manipulate our destiny. In the movie *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986), the distress call of humpback whales in 1986 threatens the Federation in the diegetic present (the twenty-third century). The mission of the Enterprise is to boldly go back to 1986 to, literally 'Save the Whales'. This was the slogan of the campaign that inaugurated Greenpeace in 1975 when they played part of a hit album of whale songs to sailors aboard the Valniy Vostok and began the process that culminated in the International Whaling Commission's decision to ban commercial whaling – a decision that was implemented, also, in 1986 (Grimshaw 2020). This was accomplished, it hardly needs pointing out, without any help from our time travelling future selves, but the conceit that more advanced beings from our own future are happy to intervene if our actions threaten their continued prosperity stands as a cipher for the assurance that whatever is thrust between us and the extrapolated future is nothing that cannot be rationalised in terms of techno-determinism. So long as technology continues to develop according to a predictable pattern (and *Star Trek* offers us the assurance that it will certainly do so) then the future remains safe for the continued expansion of humanity into the cosmos. Elon Musk's insistence that bio-engineering human life for survival on Mars is the only solution to our impending extinction due to Earth's increasingly hostile climate (Grind 2024) thus makes perfect sense understood in terms of the kind of techno-futurity that *Star Trek* promotes.

The climate crisis is what Timothy Morton calls a 'hyperobject'; an effect with non-local causes (both temporal and spatial), a very real 'thing' without a tangible reality and something measurable that, equally, defies measurement and that entails a very deep irony.

> There we were, trolling along in the age of industry, capitalism, and technology, and all of a sudden we received information from aliens, information

> that even the most hardheaded could not ignore, because the form in which the information was delivered was precisely the instrumental and mathematical formulas of modernity itself' (Morton 2013: 20).

The form of knowledge, in other words, that informed the myth of progress as the fate and destiny of humankind is the same that has identified the conditions for our extinction. Furthermore, the sublime objects of modernity, products of that same epistemology, and awful and wonderful in equal measure, can no longer be relied on to deliver on their promise of peace and prosperity. 'The ship of modernity', writes Morton, 'is equipped with powerful lasers and nuclear weapons. But these very devices set off chain reactions that generate yet more hyperobjects that thrust themselves between us and the extrapolated, predicted future' (2013: 21). This, then, is also the plot of *Star Trek* where the deleterious effects of anthropocentric modernity are acknowledged but with the important added deception that, as Morton and Dominic Boyer write elsewhere 'we are the ones who may have gotten ourselves into the Anthropocene but we're also the saviors, the only ones who are going to get us out of this situation' (Morton & Boyer 2021: 19) even if, I would add, we have to invent time travel or something similar to sort out the mistakes of the past.

Star Trek as a ubiquitous media presence rehearses these ideas continually, offering assurance through the fact that it has already introduced us to enchanted objects that have migrated from the screen to our everyday lives. This paper argues that these objects herald a new technological sublime. Rather than inspiring awe as an effect of sheer size or technical ingenuity, they are instead experienced as harbingers of the transhuman future – a future in which the limits of possibility are as fluid as *Star Trek* suggests. If we can *already* manipulate analogues of these objects as part of our everyday encounters with the products of technology capitalism, then we are *already* cast in the role of saviours. They are confirmation of the techno-determinist teleology that, *Star Trek* assures us, will safely deliver us beyond the Anthropocene.

(c) The Final Frontier

The technological sublime was first identified by David E. Nye as a peculiarly American cultural phenomenon in thrall to the power of expansive technologies that appear to be, as Arthur C Clarke famously suggested 'indistinguishable from magic'. These are technologies whose effects cannot be read from their appearance, 'black boxed' artefacts whose very opacity subtends their attraction, like self-driving cars and other computerised 'smart' machines, as well as awe-inspiring achievements of technoscience and engineering like nuclear energy, gravity-defying suspension bridges and, of course, spaceships. As Nye points out, these are indistinguishable in the American mind from democracy or, at least, are seen as 'active forces working for democracy' (1994: 33). Sublime technological objects, for Nye, represent a confirmation of manifest destiny, both an indication of the triumph of US socio-political hegemony and the condition for its continued expansion in both a global and universal sense.

However, as Nye has argued, the problem with the technological sublime is that awe-inspiring machinery eventually becomes mundane (1994: 199–200). Something bigger and bolder must be introduced to maintain the interest of the public and re-establish national pride in technological achievement. The commanding sublime object of the early twentieth century in the US was nuclear power but the horrors of Hiroshima and the accident at Three Mile Island, as well as the secrecy that surrounded its development and its catastrophic environmental effects inspired suspicion rather than celebration. The space program, on the other hand, represented 'a fundamentally different kind of enterprise from the building of nuclear weapons …

> Here remain possibilities for surpassing the achievements of the present hour. Here the individual can be lifted out of quotidian experience in a fundamental rupture of the usual sensory impressions, to be overwhelmed by a technological spectacle. Here millions crowd together seeking an experience that can powerfully represent national greatness' (Nye 1994: 254).

So, much as the sf of the 1930s, 'proclaimed that energy would soon be too cheap to meter, and that Americans would use their unlimited supply of power to control the climate, increase productivity, travel cheaply and create a social utopia' (Nye 1994: 234) so *Star Trek*, and other fictions of extraterrestrial colonialism, promote what Nye calls '[t]he final avatar of the technological sublime … a literal escape from the threatened life-world' (Nye 1994: 256). Hence Donald Trump, when he reclaimed the US presidency in 2024 in the name of MAGA ('Make America Great Again'), predicted that 'we will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars' (2025), implicitly evoking the final avatar in the context of a speech that lauded the historical expansion of the US but made no reference to the climate crisis.

It can further be suggested that, as the threat from the crisis becomes increasingly evident, so the spin-off consumer durables of the *Star Trek* universe stand as proxies for the 'literal escape', with the added assurance that the expertise that produced them is the same that will ensure a frictionless transition to extraterrestrial humanity. To return to Rose's assertion that enchanted objects are those that upgrade existing technologies towards a full realisation of their mythical promise, I will briefly examine how one of these objects, *Star Trek*'s ubiquitous phaser, functions to smooth the gap between the closing of the frontier and 'NewSpace' (Martin 2015) colonialism before turning to new iterations of the technological sublime that, it will be argued, draw their glamour from a similar association with life-world escape.

(d) The New Technological Sublime

The phaser is probably one of the more difficult *Trek* technologies to engineer for earthbound consumers. Originally conceived as a form of laser (Lasbury 2017: 12), the potential for its eventual realisation as a viable weapon has been much discussed.[11] However, a close analogue is the taser, invented by the aerospace scientist Jack Cover in the 1960s and inspired by a Young Adult science fiction story of the early twentieth century in which the hero, Tom Swift, invents an 'Electric Rifle'. The 'taser' with which we are now familiar is an acronym for 'Tom A. Swift's Electric Rifle' and works by administering an electric shock that 'according to the Taser company, "temporarily overrides the command and control systems of the body to impair muscular control"' (Rose 2014: 101). It is designed, then, to have effects similar to those of a phaser on stun but a report by Amnesty International in 2018 concluded that Taser use by UK police had already resulted in 18 deaths and in the US, an investigation led by the Associated Press found that '538 people were killed by Tasers or stun guns in the 10-year period between 2012 and 2021' (Breen 2024).

Rose proposes that the phaser fulfils a universal human desire for 'safekeeping' (a category in which he also includes surveillance devices) and I would have to agree, although perhaps not in the sense that he intends. In the way that it is employed, the phaser is a potentially non-lethal version of the gun, symbol of what Scott Melzer calls 'frontier masculinity [an] ideology promoted by the NRA [National Rifle Association] … rooted in a US gun culture historically confined to white men' (2009: 28). As Melzer describes it, frontier masculinity as an idea only emerged *after* the closing of the frontier and alongside the emergence of industrialisation. The myth of the frontier was, in fact, created as an adjunct to the equally pervasive ideology of 'separate spheres' that held that women 'were incapable of performing adequately in the public sphere', a terrain that replaced the frontier as the proving ground for masculinity, 'linking manhood with economic success'. Although, as Melzer points out, 'it took a great deal more than firearms to "'settle" the West' (2009: 31), frontier masculinity relies on the association of manhood with both the right to bear arms and the ability to use them.

This version of the American male has no basis in historical fact but was a tradition begun in the pulp fiction magazines and novels of the early twentieth century and 'has continued from television and movie Westerns to science fiction and detective stories' (Melzer 2009: 33). 'The American frontier has been closed for generations', he continues, 'yet its influence persists' (Melzer 2009: 251). That this influence is continued through contemporary sf is hardly surprising and *Star Trek*'s phaser can be seen as a cipher for contemporary frontier masculinity, where what it keeps safe is an idea of gender conformity that, despite the presence of biologically female lifeforms as soldiers and security officers,[12] maintains a patriarchal structure in the military chain of command. As Kristeva *et al* noted in the early 1980s, state institutions responding to feminist demands, did so by 'fabricating a few "chiefs" among them' (Kristeva et al 1981: 27) rather than admitting women as part of a process of structural and ideological change. Hence, female characters in *Star Trek* armed and with a licence to stun remain as anomalies so long as the series continue to reflect the sociocultural structures of the American century.

Thus, frontier masculinity, itself an invention of popular fiction and perpetuated through successive iterations of heroic individualism in both print- and screen-based sf, finds expression through objects of deadly force that evoke the technological sublime at the same time as they reinvent it for a new century. As Melzer points out '[g]un makers, pulp magazines, and dime novels were important contributors to the romanticizing of the gunfighter myth, and the producers of these goods benefitted from its widespread acceptance' (2021: 33); a benefit, I would suggest, that has continued to reap dividends in the global spread of franchised media that has normalised the myth and perpetuated its appeal beyond its original demographic.

The relationship between popular media and popular consumption has, of course, been thoroughly analysed. It is now over twenty years since Fredric Jameson identified the importance of consumption in the cultural logic of late capitalism. '[T]he products sold on the market', he now famously wrote, 'become the very content of the media image, so that, as it were, the same referent seems to maintain in both domains' (1991: 275). Although he makes no direct reference to the technological sublime, it is certainly implied in his gesture towards what he calls 'another type of consumption; consumption of the very process of consumption itself' that, for him, characterises the computer and information technology driven third stage of capitalism. 'It is necessary to speak', he writes, 'of a kind of technological bonus of pleasure afforded by the new machinery and, as it were, symbolically reenacted and ritually devoured at each session of official media consumption' (Jameson 1991: 276). This pleasure, I would suggest, is associated with what I have called elsewhere 'the aesthetics of retrieval' (Shaw 2020), which describes our encounter with the interface that stands for and evokes the algorithmic sublime, a cultural phenomenon that, as Morgan G. Ames has pointed out, is a response to the complexity and 'black boxed' nature of the algorithms that control our access to data, 'evoking in us feelings of a *technological sublime* in all its awe-inspiring, rationality-subsuming glory'. Interestingly, he continues 'the ways that algorithms ignite the contemporary cultural imagination—much like those attached to cybernetic visions in decades past—makes them seem still in the realm of science fiction, harbingers of a revolutionary future of which we are forever on the cusp' (Ames 2018:2, emphasis in original).

Dominik Vrabič Dežman (2024) refers to the way that algorithms and their output are represented on the internet as 'the deep-blue sublime'. As he points out, image searches on the term 'Artificial Intelligence' more often than not result in several pages of 'futuristic sci-fi

images' rendered in shades of blue. Subjecting a selection of these images to close reading, Alberto Romele concludes that 'a general aura of transcendence is attributed to AI' (Romele 2022: 7); the images 'indicate more scientific progress than they should, certainly more than actually exists' (see also Milmo 2025) and 'do not so much refer to the "things themselves" as they do to expectations and imaginaries' (Romele 2022: 9) These, I would argue, are the same 'expectations and imaginaries' that animate desires for the acousmatic computers, electronic weapons, communications devices and virtual spaces that *Star Trek* has promoted for now nearly sixty years. The dark blue of AI imagery connects it with the supposed colour of deep space and thus, again, with planetary escape through which it is indexically linked to the kinds of futures that *Star Trek* depicts.

But the point I want to make here is that the 'things themselves' are also the very material products of the information age that rely on environmentally destructive resource extraction (Global Witness 2023) and on the labour of data workers who work long hours for little pay to ensure that AI delivers on its promises. According to James Muldoon, Mark Graham and Callum Cant, writing in 2024, 'there are no exact numbers of how many workers participate globally in the industry, but the figure is in the millions and, if trends continue at their current rate, their number will expand dramatically' (2024: 5). They continue,

> 'Many tech companies … do what they can to hide the reality of how their products are actually made. They present a vision of shining, sleek, autonomous machines – computers searching through large quantities of data, teaching themselves as they go – rather than the reality of the poorly paid and gruelling human labour that both trains them and is managed by them'. (Muldoon, Graham & Cant 2024: 5–6)

In reality, then, what lurks behind (or beyond) the interface is not only the kind of vast complexity that evokes the algorithmic sublime but an escalating and planet-spanning abuse of material and human resources in the name of capital and without which the algorithms would not be able to operate.

There are resonances here with the employment of women in nineteenth-century textile mills in the US where they lived in dormitories and were expected to work twelve-hour days, beginning at five am. Many suffered from respiratory diseases due to the cotton fibres in the air and the noise of the machinery was deafening. However, even Charles Dickens who, like all visitors to these early factories, was awed by the 'combination of complexity and order on a massive scale' (Nye 1994: 113) failed to register the suffering of the workforce (112). AI's aura of transcendence, similarly, draws on the power of technoscience to extract order from complexity to mask the material conditions of its production in favour of a promise of utopia to come. The presence of self-aware androids (Data in *TNG*) and 'photonic' lifeforms that practice medicine (The Doctor in *Voyager*) in the *Star Trek* future imaginary now take on new meaning as their backstory is written in the colonialist exploitations of our current time.

Similarly, as Liz W. Faber (2020) has pointed out, it is no accident that the computer's voice in *Star Trek* is female, nor is it surprising. The *USS Enterprise* (*TOS* and *TNG*) is part of a space fleet with a naval hierarchy and chain of command and so, like sea-going vessels, spaceships are gendered female. The computer, understood to be the voice of the ship, is thus also female. What is particularly interesting about the *Enterprise* computer is that it is played by the actor Majel Barrett who also plays a nurse (Nurse Chapel in *TOS*) and a highly sexualised maternal figure in *TNG* (Lwaxana Troi). So, as Faber points out, the computer, through its association with Barrett's other characters, metaphorically embodies two competing female archetypes (2020: 73), both of which are evoked in the service of heterosexual male desire and thus establish what Faber calls the 'acousmatic computer' as, itself, a gendered archetype. 'We are often told', writes O'Shea 'that traditional sexual roles and moralistic judgements of the choices we make in our personal lives are passé in the twenty-first century, but digital technology seems to have developed with these trends baked in' (2021: 107). This, I would argue, is hardly surprising given that the subject of advanced capitalism may be variably gendered but is nevertheless still defined in terms of liberal humanism. Or, rather, it is interpellated as such by the hailing mechanisms of the systems of economic and social reproduction, reinforced by a form of futurity haunted by cultural nostalgia.

The longevity of *Star Trek* and the fact that we now live daily with devices that it premiered in the mid twentieth century might suggest that we now live in the world that it predicted. If this is the case, it is a world where the colonial logic of the *Enterprise*'s mission remains unquestioned alongside its insistence that, as Morton and Boyer put it 'the Enlightenment subject is the cozy warm one' (2021: 49). Unsurprisingly, then, the enchanted objects that it promotes are welcomed as harbingers of the cozy future that it promises. At the same time, the exploitative nature of technology capitalism is neutralised and normalised by the way that these objects refer to the technological sublime and its promise that what they represent is a particular idea of progress made manifest. With this in mind, I want to end by proposing a strategy for how we might re-think our relationship to enchanted objects that takes into account how they position us ontologically.

(e) Beyond Resilience

In the late 1980s, Donna Haraway presciently suggested that the cyborg was the self that 'feminists must code' (1991: 163). However, Haraway was concerned with much more than describing an ontological shift whereby certain processes of living organisms and their machine counterparts were merging. Her 'informatics of domination' (1991: 161) included also processes of the

state and financial markets as providing a structural nexus from which the cyborg emerged as a 'post-gender' political entity. It is worth noting that here she called Foucault's biopolitics 'a flaccid premonition of cyborg politics' (1991:150). More recently, Thomas Lemke has suggested that Foucault's later work 'not only draws attention to the production of individual and collective bodies but also proposes a more comprehensive concept of biopolitics that takes into account the entanglements of human and nonhuman entities' (2021: 136). As Lemke demonstrates, at this point, Foucault is concerned to take account of new practices of governance that recognise the late twentieth century as a milieu in which complexity as an idea is understood as equally applicable to the operation of market forces, the developing ecological crisis, social structures and the global reach of new technologies. Successive shocks to global systems like 9/11 and the financial crash of 2008, as well as the ongoing climate crisis have since proved correct the thesis that complex systems are characterised by unpredictability and therefore that risk management should replace predictive modelling in strategic planning.

This was demonstrated in an influential paper by Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper published in 2011, in which they introduced the idea of 'resilience' as a characteristic driver of contemporary global governance that influences policy across the spectrum. As Lemke explains it, resilience has now become 'the normative yardstick to measure individual and organisational fitness to adapt to traumatic experiences and turbulent ecologies' (2021: 73). This is evident in, for instance, the way that resilience as a term denoting positive adaptation to changing conditions is now part of the vocabulary of the ecological and social sciences as well as in lifestyle and 'wellness' advice blogs. In a paper published in 2016, Carl Folke noted that the number of scientific publications on resilience had, in the past 15 years, increased from 250 to well over 6000 while, in her 2020 book *Feminism and the Politics of Resilience*, Angela McRobbie identified 'the *p-i-r* [perfect-imperfect-resilient] … a cultural-therapeutic formation' through which popular post-neoliberal feminism reinforces 'the pro-family stance of the work-life balance', helping women to 'step back from hard-edged leadership-feminism' while developing strategies to resist conforming to images of feminine perfection (2020: 56, emphasis in original). According to Folke, resilience is about 'persisting with change on the current path of development (stability domain or basin of attraction) adapting, improving, and innovating on that path' (2016). Similarly, as Sarah Bracke notes, resilience is an instruction to 'bounce back … To your original shape if you can. … Resilience, one could say, is a form of reproduction – reproducing a neoliberal political economy and the subjects it requires. But what if all the talk of resilience hinders us from seeing that there is no "previous state" to go to?' (2016: 11 & 12).

More salient to the current enquiry is the question of how we conceive of the 'previous state' in the first place. I have been arguing here that we need to take seriously popular cultural representations of the future that offer us enchanted objects imbued with the promise of realising ourselves as supercapable beings, well equipped to rise to the challenges of a future that may be uncertain but in which 'the cozy one' is triumphant. Who 'we' are in this scenario is made explicit, most notably, in *Star Trek*, which re-enacts a historical trajectory drawn from a selective reading of Euro-American history informed by popular myth and literary fiction shown to inevitably lead to the realisation of a post-capitalist utopia. Versions of these enchanted objects, from flip phones to tasers and, more recently, AI voiced by acousmatic computers have made their way into our lives accompanied by a ready-made narrative that functions to position them in advance as necessary and comforting gateways to the promised new world and/or universe. Further, I would propose that the new technological sublime is a transhuman sublime in which enchanted objects stand for precisely the return to Bracke's 'previous state' or Folke's 'stability domain' but with bodily enhancements that both prove the value of resilience and augur the emergence of the universe as a new frontier. Important here is that, unlike Nye's original American technological sublime, the new technological sublime does not require the festivals, world's fairs, tours and expositions that made, for instance, the construction of the Hoover Dam in 1931 a site of tourist pilgrimage (Nye 1994: 138). Enchanted objects are intimate with the apparatus of everyday life and transmit their power constantly as part of their primary function. Mobile phones, for instance, may have become mundane as objects in their own right but what they provide access to are constant spectacles of the sublime that are not limited to, but include, the kinds of achieved utopias in which the cozy one has *already* proved resilient enough to claim the future. This is evident in the way that *p-i-r* is sold on social media, alongside streaming video that replays episodes of *Star Trek* on the same platforms that offer us enchanted objects for sale.

I agree with Lemke that contemporary new materialist accounts of objects and bodies do not do enough to challenge the foundational ontologies that brought the modern human into being in the first place. I have long thought that Foucault, as Lemke suggests, laid the groundwork for a critical posthumanism in his insistence that not only should the technological and the social be thought of as inseparable but in his rejection of the 'idea of a genuine subject not (yet) affected by technology' (2021: 106) and his belief that '"things" can operate as political and moral actors since they allow for certain practices rather than others' (2021: 110). Working with Foucault's notion of a 'government of things' (Lemke 2021: 14), Lemke suggests that this provides for an analytical frame that 'displaces the preoccupation with the guidance of human individuals and collectives in order to shift attention to the technological infrastructures and vital milieus informing governmental practices' (2021: 191).

This frame, then, is what I have employed here but with an added emphasis on attending to the production of the contemporary milieu through the imbrication of mediated histories, new utopias and what I have called (following Rose) enchanted objects. Morton and Boyer's designation of the Enlightenment subject as 'the cozy

one' is persuasive because it succinctly describes the subject position that these dispositives work to maintain in the service of capital and in denial of hyperobjects that destabilise the ontological ground on which it attempts to stand. The *Star Trek* universe is one of many popular science fictions that transmit coziness along with a celebration of the technological sublime but I have chosen it here for its longevity, ubiquity and substantial contribution to the new technological sublime through the enchanted objects that it has primed the market to desire.

These objects, in their association with the new technological sublime, serve the doctrine of resilience by being tangible harbingers of the kinds of futures promised by *Star Trek*, with its assurance that we can get there from here. But we need to acknowledge that we cannot just bounce back to an imagined history to rediscover something that is inherently human, nor can we adjust the past to ensure our delivery into an imagined future. We still need to seek out and imagine new worlds and new civilizations but as a strategy for defamiliarizing and thus interrogating the world that we already inhabit rather than in a drive to colonize the stars.

Notes

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek.

[2] The medical tricorder first appeared in 'The Man Trap' (1966. Dir. Marc Daniels).

[3] 'Fair Haven' (2000. Dir. Allan Kroeker).

[4] 'Booby Trap' (1989. Dir. Gabrielle Beaumont). See also 'Galaxy's Child' (1991. Dir. Winrich Kolbe).

[5] 'The Big Goodbye' (1990. Dir. Joseph L Scanlan).

[6] 'A Fistful of Datas' (1995. Dir. Patrick Stewart).

[7] 'The Defector' (1990. Dir. Robert Scheerer) [*Henry V*] and 'Emergence' (1994. Dir. Cliff Bole) [*Hamlet*].

[8] 'Elementary Dear Data' (1991. Dir. Rob Bowman), 'Ship in a Bottle' (1995. Dir. Alexander Singer).

[9] 'The Big Goodbye' (1990. Dir. Joseph L Scanlan).

[10] 'Cathexis' (1996. Dir. Kim Friedman).

[11] The Science of Star Trek's Phasers. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0unFPbKrks.

[12] Natasha 'Tasha' Yar was *Star Trek*'s first female security officer, introduced in the pilot episode of *TNG*, 'Encounter at Farpoint' (1987. Dir. Corey Allen). The first human woman with a military rank was Captain Janeway in the *Voyager* series. However, in 'The Enterprise Incident' (1968. Dir. John Meredyth Lucas), the crew meet a female Romulan commander.

Acknowledgements

Effusive thanks, as ever, to Professor Stephen Maddison, fellow *Star Trek* enthusiast, friend and mentor. May he live long and prosper. I would also like to thank Professor Julia Davidson OBE, Dr Alexander Thomas and Professor Md Atiqur Rahman Ahad, fellow participants in a 2024 LinkedIn Live seminar that sparked the original idea for this paper.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

Ames, M. G. (2018). Deconstructing the algorithmic sublime. *Big Data & Society, 5*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718779194

Amnesty International. (2018). UK: Public should 'resist drum-beat of calls for all police to carry a Taser'. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-public-should-resist-drum-beat-calls-all-police-carry-taser

Appio, F., Michaud, T., Vint, S., & **Yaszek, L.** (2025). Science fiction and the quest for innovation. *Technovation, 141*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2025.103172

Auge, M. (2012). *The Future*. London & New York: Verso.

Booker, M. K. (2008). The Politics of Star Trek. In J. P. Telotte (Ed.). *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader*. The University Press of Kentucky, pp. 195–208.

Bracke, S. (2016). Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience. In J. Butler, Z. Gambetti, and L. Sabsay (Eds.), *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Duke University Press, pp. 52–75. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373490-004

Breen, S. (2024). Tasers can kill. When they don't, they can still do lasting damage. *MindSiteNews*. June 27 2024. Available at: https://mindsitenews.org/2024/06/27/tasers-can-kill-when-they-dont-they-can-still-do-lasting-damage/

de Certeau, M. (1988). *The Practice of Everyday Life (trans. Steven Rendell)*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

Chokkattu, J. (2024). Review: Humane AI pin. *Wired*, April 11 2024. Available at: https://www.wired.com/review/humane-ai-pin/

Csicsery-Ronay Jr., I. (2003). Science Fiction and Empire. *Science Fiction Studies, 30*(2), 231–245. https://doi.org/10.4000/resf.11430

Davidson, F. M. (2017). Owning the Future: Manifest Destiny and the Vision of American Hegemony in Star Trek. *The Geographical Bulletin, 58*(1,2). Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/thegeographicalbulletin/vol58/iss1/2

Faber, L. W. (2020). *The Computer's Voice: From Star Trek to Siri*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press. https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv1bzfnsv

Folke, C. (2016). Resilience (Republished). *Ecology and Society, 21*(4). https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09088-210444

Global Witness. (2023). *A rush for lithium in Africa risks fuelling corruption and failing citizens*. November 14 2023. Available at: https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/natural-resource-governance/lithium-rush-africa/

Grimshaw, S. (2020). Calls from the deep: do we need to Save the Whales all over again? *The Guardian*. December 31 2020. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/31/calls-from-the-deep-do-we-need-to-save-the-whales-all-over-again?CMP=share_btn_url

Grind, K. (2024). Elon Musk's Plan to Put a Million Earthlings on Mars in 20 Years. *New York Times*.

July 11 2024. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/11/technology/elon-musk-spacex-mars.html

Hables Gray, C. (2025). *AI, Sacred Violence & War: the Case of Gaza*. Springer Nature Link. Available at: https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-81501-0.

Haraway, D. J. (1991). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In *Simians, Cyborgs & Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.

Hassler-Forest, D. (2016). *Science Fiction, Fantasy and Politics: Transmedia World-Building Beyond Capitalism*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Heidegger, M. (1977). The Age of the World Picture. In A. I. Tauber (ed.). *Science and the Quest for Reality*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: Macmillan Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25249-7_3

Hubbard, L. R. (1982). *Battlefield Earth*. Hollywood: Galaxy Press.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822378419

Kristeva, J., Jardine, A., & **Blake, H.** (1981). Women's Time. *Signs*, *7*(1), 13–35. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14428-0_49

Lasbury, M. E. (2017). *The Realization of Star Trek Technologies: The Science, Not Fiction, Behind Brain Implants, Plasma Shields, Quantum Computing, and More.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40914-6

Lemke, T. (2021). *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms*. New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479808816.001.0001

Lewis, M. (2013). You're Doing It Wrong: Cause and Effect in Star Trek's Histories. In N. M. Reagin (ed.), *Star Trek and History*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Martin, G. (2015). *NewSpace: The Emerging Commercial Space Industry*. NASA Ames Research Center.

McCormick, T. (2021). The billionaire space race reflects a colonial mindset that fails to imagine a different world. *The Conversation*. August 15 2021. Available at: https://theconversation.com/the-billionaire-space-race-reflects-a-colonial-mindset-that-fails-to-imagine-a-different-world-165235

McRobbie, A. (2020). *Feminism and the Politics of Resilience: Essays on Gender, Media and the End of Welfare*. Cambridge & Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Melzer, S. (2009). *Gun Crusaders: The NRA's Culture War*. New York & London: New York University Press.

Milmo, D. (2025). Advanced AI suffers 'complete accuracy collapse' in face of complex problems, study finds. *Guardian*, June 9 2025. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/09/apple-artificial-intelligence-ai-study-collapse?CMP=share_btn_url

Monaghan, B. (2025). What actually happened to Mark Zuckerberg's $47 billion Metaverse? *Independent*, April 29 2025. Available at: https://www.indy100.com/news/mark-zuckerberg-metaverse-what-happened

Morton, T. (2013). *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Morton, T., & **Boyer, D.** (2021). *Hyposubjects On Becoming Human*. London: Open University Press. Available at: https://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Morton_Boyer_2021-hyposubjects.pdf

Muldoon, J., Graham, M., & **Cant, C.** (2024). *Feeding the Machine: the Hidden Human Labour Powering AI*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Nimoy, L. (dir.) (1986). *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. Paramount Pictures.

Nye, D. E. (1994). *American Technological Sublime*. MIT Press.

Omi, M., & **Winant, H.** (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. London & New York: Routledge.

O'Shea, L. (2021). *Future Histories: What Ada Lovelace, Tom Paine, and the Paris Commune can teach us about digital technology*. London & New York: Verso.

Rhodes, M. A, Quayle, C., & **Indish, N.** (2022). "Post-Industrial Barbarians": Star Trek, the Other, and the Apocalypse. *Literary Geographies, 8*(1). pp. 78–98.

Romele, A. (2022). Images of Artificial Intelligence: a Blind Spot in AI Ethics. *Philosophy & Technology, 35*(4). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-022-00498-3

Rose, D. (2014). *Enchanted Objects: Innovation, Design, and The Future of Technology*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi: Scribner.

Scharmen, F. (2021). *Space Forces: A Critical History of Life in Outer Space*. London & New York: Verso.

Schulzke, M. (2013). History on the Holodeck. In N.R. Reagan (ed.) *Star Trek and History*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Shaw, D. B. (2020). The Aesthetics of Retrieval: Beautiful Data, Glitch Art and Popular Culture. *Anthropocenes – Human, Inhuman, Posthuman*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.16997/ahip.15

Snyder, B. H. (2013). From Vigilance to Busyness: A Neo-Weberian Approach to Clock Time. *Sociological Theory*, *31*(3). Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43186649; https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275113502482

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (1993–1999). Paramount Television.

Star Trek: Picard (2020–2023). CBS Television Studios, Roddenberry Entertainment, Secret Hideout.

Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987–1994). Paramount Television.

Star Trek: The Original Series (1966–1969). Paramount Television, Desilu Productions, Norway Corporation.

Star Trek: Voyager (1995–2001). Paramount Television. United Paramount Network (UPN).

Thomas, A. (2024). *The Politics and Ethics of Transhumanism: Techno-human Evolution and Advanced Capitalism*. Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529239669

Tolkien, J. R. R. (2022). *The Lord of the Rings*. TV tie-in. London: HarperCollins.

Trump, D. J. (2025). Inaugural address. *White House*, January 20, 2025. Available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/

Voss, G. (2024). *Systems Ultra: Making Sense of Technology in a Complex World.* London & New York: Verso.

Vrabič, D. D. (2024). Promising the Future, Encoding the Past: AI Hype and Public Media Imagery. *AI and Ethics, 4*(3), 743–756. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-024-00474-x

Walker, J., & **Cooper, M.** (2011). Genealogies of Resilience: From Systems Ecology to the Political Economy of Crisis Adaptation. *Security Dialogue, 42*(2), 143–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611399616

Weldes, J. (1998). Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action, and Popular Culture. *Millenium*, *28*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298990280011201

Yap, X.-S., & **Kim, R. E.** (2023). Towards earth-space governance in a multi-planetary era. *Earth System Governance*, *16*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2023.100173

Zunz, L. (1998). *Why the American Century?* The University of Chicago Press.

How to cite this article: Shaw, D. B. (2025). Enchanted Objects: *Star Trek* and the New Technological Sublime. *Anthropocenes – Human, Inhuman, Posthuman*, 6(1): 3. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16997/ahip.1755

Submitted: 09 December 2024 **Accepted:** 08 July 2025 **Published:** 04 August 2025

Anthropocenes – Human, Inhuman, Posthuman is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by University of Westminster Press.