

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (1982)

by

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SYNOPSIS

It has been 15 years since the captain of the Enterprise, Captain (now Admiral) James Tiberius Kirk, marooned the genetically engineered renegade Noonien Singh Khan on the planet Ceti/Alpha V with seventy of his followers. In this way, Kirk offered Kahn an opportunity to make a new life for himself and his fellow rebels. Unfortunately, a natural disaster caused the once lush planet to become habitable at a level just barely above survival. Irrationally blaming Kirk for the disaster, Khan swears vengeance. On the other hand, Kirk has forgotten about the pioneers and never checked back on them.

A scientific research mission from the starship Reliant mistakenly lands on Ceti/Alpha V and is captured by Khan. Under torture, Captain Terrell and Commander Chekov reveal their purpose – to find a place to test the Genesis Device. This machine can transform a lifeless planet into perfect garden, thus solving interplanetary hunger forever. Unfortunately, Genesis' use also destroys any existing life forms. It must therefore be applied only to totally lifeless worlds – a search for such a planet was Terrell's mission. Khan takes over the Reliant and puts mind-controlling creatures into Chekov and Terrell. Using them as his pawns, he lures the Enterprise to the space station orbiting the Regula planetoid. Genesis was developed there by Dr. Carol Marcus, Kirk's former lover and the mother of his illegitimate son, David. Arriving at Regula before Kirk, Khan attempts to steal Genesis are unsuccessful.

As Kirk approaches the station, Khan attacks and seriously damages the Enterprise. By a ruse, Kirk counterattacks. Both ships are crippled, and Khan withdraws. Searching the Regula station, Kirk finds only Chekov and Terrell left behind by Khan. Claiming to be no longer under Khan's control, they join the search party. Beaming from the station into the interior of the Regula planetoid, they find the Genesis machine as well as Dr. Carol Marcus and her son, David. Terrell, it is revealed, is still under Khan's influence and has orders to kill Kirk. Instead, he kills himself. Chekov is released from Khan's control. In the confusion, Khan steals the Genesis device by means of a matter transport beam.

Kirk is shown the Genesis cave – a paradise produced almost instantly by Dr. Marcus' machine. With the Enterprise minimally repaired, Kirk and his party continue the battle with Khan. Retreating to a nearby nebula, a blind battle ensues where Khan's ship is almost destroyed. In a last desperate act of vengeance, Khan starts the Genesis machine. Unable to escape because of its damaged warp engines, the Enterprise seems doomed. Spock repairs the warp engines, but at the cost of his own life. The Enterprise escapes just as Reliant explodes. Kirk is reunited with his son and Dr. Marcus. The film closes with Spock's burial – launched from the Enterprise into a new world created by the Genesis Effect, now beautiful and teeming with life.

PREFACE

In this essay I hope to show that *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* is more than a simple adventure story. Just below the battle between Kirk and Kahn, exists another, more exciting story, just as beneath the surface of a seemingly calm sea (if one can call such an exciting adventure story “calm”) there teems unimaginable life and conflict. In this hidden world we will meet symbolic manifestations of ancient archetypal characters such as the Old Testament God, the Mother Goddess, the feminine aspect of the male psyche, and many others.

This film is outstanding in its tight integration of the surface science fiction adventure story and the sub-surface, psychological adventure. Each actor plays essentially two roles: the character to whom we refer to by name, Khan, Kirk, Spock, etc., and another role, a symbolic one. These symbolic elements and their interplay turn out to be a narrative of major interest to anyone concerned with personal psychological growth. In no way is *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* a perfect film. However, I want to look at and analyze the good and interesting aspects of the film while ignoring the blunders (like why does a starship need headlights in space, why does the outer hull of the Enterprise look like it s made up of a thousand patches, etc.).

In what follows I hope to point out not only the sub-surface possibilities of each surface character, but also how they interact with each other, and, most important, how this sub-surface conflict affects the characters at the surface level. This last is perhaps the most important “teaching” aspect of this film,

since in everyday life this happens to us all: We are influenced by forces we are not aware of, forces that dwell beneath the surface of our conscious minds.

I am constantly amazed at the cogent detail to which these symbols are worked out in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. My thesis is quite simple: at the psychological level, this film is a positive lesson in the healing a wounded and damaged male psyche.

INTRODUCTION

Watching *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* is like visiting old friends. In truth, we have known these people for more than 30 years. There is no need for this film to go through the customary procedure of establishing personalities; indeed, at times it cleverly works against what we already know and expect. (*Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* does this even more.) But, as so often happens with real life acquaintances, things have changed since our last visit.

The central character, and thus the focus of this second of an apparently on-going series of Star Trek films, is different than in the previous film and most of the TV episodes. This film is *not* about Spock! While not always the center of attention, Spock has always been the most interesting character. Here, finally, is a story that is really about Captain James Tiberius Kirk.

To fully appreciate this change, we must look for a moment at Spock's position within the Star Trek canon. Let's admit it: it was mainly for Spock that we turned on the TV in the '60s when *Star Trek* broke all the rules of conventional TV by doing something unheard of at the time . . . giving us something to think about. And it has been mostly for Spock that we have tuned in (at all hours of the day or night) to the syndicated reruns all these years – perhaps to savor memories of the Sixties, perhaps because most TV programming still gives us very little to think about.

The pointy-eared, unsmiling half-Human, half-Vulcan, who claims to be ruled by logic, always fighting his human emotions while claiming immunity from them, serves as a convenient – “fascinating” – springboard off which to bounce our own human foibles, or to show the emotional balance necessary to counter pure logic. He captivates us in his “otherness.” He has sex appeal in his untouchability. He is masculine without being macho, without even being “male.” Always the true and dedicated friend, it is through Spock we measure ourselves. In his role as resident alien, he still captures our imaginations far more than the supposedly central character of these melodramas.

But now in *The Wrath of Khan* all this Spockishness is pressed into the background. Here, finally, after 20 years, is a film about James T. Kirk, the captain of the Enterprise. And, surprisingly, we find that he is just as interesting. In the past he has been too much an adolescent space cowboy, heedlessly rushing off into unfathomable dangers primarily to rescue the helpless and the oppressed, very often female and buxom. But now it turns out that he, too, has a personality – and he has problems.

THE THREE METAPHOR SYSTEMS

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan is, like all good science fiction films, much more than an adventure story. Like most of the TV episodes, several levels of meaning can be excavated from the rich soil just beneath the surface of the adventure story. However, in this film these subsurface layers are so carefully crafted and so richly embroidered as to form complete constellations that function almost independently from the surface plot. (By bringing attention to these alternate meanings, I do not mean to detract from the main plot – a worthy, exciting, and enjoyable adventure story.)

Far more serious than simply good guys versus bad, these deeper meanings deal with the psychological problems encountered by all men who take the concept of internal maturation seriously. Delving into these meanings will reveal much about *our* inner selves – the ultimate subject of all good science fiction stories.

The film's psychological ideas are developed through three major metaphorical systems: first are ascents and descents, second are several vision defects both in the characters and in technology, and third is religious history. The first of these is the idea that physical ascent and descent can be used to represent movement within the structure of the mind. An external descent, for instance, can represent inner travel from areas of conscious awareness into the “lower” or “deeper” vastness of the unconscious.

In films, the specific means of ascent and descent has varied with time. The staircase has long been used symbolically in films, from the German Expressionist

films of Robert Wiene like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1919], Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* [1926], and F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* [1922], *Last Laugh* [1924], and *Faust* [1926] to slightly more modern films like Charles Crichton's *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951). Many of Alfred Hitchcock's films, including his masterpieces *Psycho* [1960] and *Vertigo* [1958], rely heavily on this metaphor.ⁱ Consider, for example, the significance of the staircase Norman Bates treads in *Psycho* and how Hitchcock changes its appearance with lighting, camera movement, lenses, and angle of view to clearly reflect Norman's psychological state at that moment. In more technologically oriented films, the psychologically burdened staircase has often been translated into an elevator as in George Lucas' *THX-1138* [1971], Stanley Kubrick's *2001* [1968], James Cameron's *Aliens* [1986], Michael Anderson's *Logan's Run*, [1976] and Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* [1982]) or, as in *Star Trek*, ascents and descents not only occur in an elevator but also in a matter transport beam.

Even outside film, the ascent/descent metaphor has an exceptionally long history. From Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:10 to the soul's ascent to God as described in the 16th century by St. John of the Cross to T. S. Eliot's use of the figure in *Burnt Norton* and *The Cocktail Party* to Orpheus' classic descent into Hades. The psychologist C. G. Jungⁱⁱ believes "that we carry the whole living past in the lower stories of the skyscraper of rational consciousness. Without the lower stories our mind is suspended in midair." This last figure is especially apt of the star ship Enterprise and its captain who constantly descend – from midair – to various planets for adventures that ultimately form the foundations of their consciousness. Further, Robert Donington,ⁱⁱⁱ in his interpretation of Richard Wagner's mythologically based opera cycle "The Ring of the Nibelungen," says "the underworld is a primary archetypical symbol of the unconscious." It is possible to

multiply these examples almost infinitely. The point is that *The Wrath of Khan* is in no way unusual or out of step with a long tradition of myth symbolism in its use of this metaphor: it conforms quite well to a multitude of precedents in myths, stories, poems, and, most importantly for our analysis, in other films.

The psychological action of *The Wrath of Khan* centers around four physical descents in elevators and matter transport beams, each further developing the psychological meaning of the film. Below, I will consider each of these in detail. But first, let me outline the other metaphoric systems used in this film.

The second major metaphor used in *The Wrath of Khan* has two simultaneously contradictory meanings: A defect in vision is either symbolic of a defect in psychological functioning, or of vision turning in on itself, to inspect the psyche more carefully. The first is the old Greek idea of “stigma” in which external flaws are the reflection of flaws, moral or psychological, inside of the body. Thus, an external blindness reflects an internal one. The second interpretation derives from a more esoteric tradition. Those who are preoccupied with internal affairs, it is believed, rarely function well in the outside world, especially those pursuing internal affairs at the brink of an infinite void: religious mystics, yogis, Zen masters, holy fools, Sufi masters, and so on.

How can a single symbol have such contradictory interpretations: external blindness on one hand and internal super-sight on the other? It is typical of powerful symbols that they often contain elements of their own opposite. Symbols rarely have but a single meaning. By carefully checking the context in which the symbol appears, we can usually decide which interpretation is appropriate. This is

especially true in *The Wrath of Khan* where the vision metaphor is used in many different guises.

As with the ascent/descent metaphor, the psychological meaning of impaired vision is not unique to this film. Classical myths are an ophthalmologist's delight – full of eye problems. Oedipus, for an extreme example, tore out his eyes once he recognized his unwitting crimes. The blind Oedipus consequently became a wise seer, wandering the world freely, dependent solely on his superior internal vision. Another example is the disguised Wotan in Wagner's opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, of whom Robert Donington^{iv} says that, "the Wanderer's hat is broad-brimmed enough to fall down over one eye – a clue in itself to his identity, since . . . he plucked out this external eye as a willing price of inner wisdom, at the well of knowledge." A third and final example is the Biblical foolish and vain Samson who, only after his physical power and his sight were forcibly taken from him did, he begin to show insight.

Both ideas – impaired vision as representing psychological handicap and indicating enhanced insight – are used in *The Wrath of Khan*.

Of the symbol systems used in this film, the third, *religion and its history*, is the most diffuse. It is like a mist that gently moistens everything but wets nothing, adding no apparent weight of its own yet making its presence nonetheless felt. Not only are there references to Judeo-Christian ideas but there are also connections to pagan, pre-Christian and pre-Judaic beliefs representing older, more archaic parts of the psyche. Characters used in this way are annoying mutability, identified first with one religious idea, they suddenly become enmeshed in another. Kirk, for instance, may appear in one scene as the vengeful Old Testament God of Genesis causing death and creating light from darkness. Yet a moment later he appears to be

the God of the New Testament, forgiving and resurrecting people from the clutches of death and disease. While this ambivalence may not be unusual in myths, in this film it occasionally borders on chaos. Despite the apparent lack of consistency with which religious references are worked out, without them the film would lose much of its intensity and meaning.

THE PERSONAE DRAMATIS

Now that I have outlined the three major metaphoric systems used in this film, let me turn to those on whom these metaphors will be worked – the characters. We have four major characters – two male and two female. Nice symmetry. As I shall show, they form mirror images of each other. In a sense, then, the characters are reduced to an archetypal minimum – a man and a woman.

Of the four characters the first is, of course, Admiral Kirk. He functions at three distinct levels: 1) He fights an old, external enemy – Khan. 2) He faces what is popularly known as a male mid-life crisis. His own aging and the corresponding psychological problems are beginning to bother him. He is reviewing past mistakes, believing himself to be useless, cutting himself off from his own feelings and from the feelings of others, and so on. And 3) Kirk, at a still deeper level, has embarked on a symbolic quest to disempower those parts of his psyche that are the currently nonfunctional remnants of his past experiences. Having become burdensome, they must be replaced with aspects that are more useful to him now and in the future stages of his life.

The second major male character is Khan. While he and Kirk shared a single adventure 15 years ago, their relationship is much deeper. Kirk refers to Khan as “friend” and Khan, too, refers to Kirk as, “My old friend.” Sarcasm aside, there seems to be a psychic link between them. We must realize the Khan is a necessary component in the formula for Kirk’s cure. Without him, Kirk would go blindly on with his existence – suffering, depressed, and pointless.

Jung^v describes the necessity of the “enemy” in many myths and fairy tales as a psychic linking of the hero with the enemy and observes that, “On the surface a furious conflict rages between them, but down below the one goes about the other’s business.” In many ways Khan reflects Kirk’s negative side; Khan is the mirror through which Kirk must pass darkly. This is because Khan and Kirk suffer from the same psychic disease, yet, as I will describe, Kirk is redeemable while Khan is doomed. At this point Khan is what Kirk will become if he abandons hope. The writers have made this link by the similarity in their names, both starting the letter K.

A characteristic this film shares with all good drama is that the hero is not all-good nor the villain all-bad. Khan, while clearly a psychotic villain, is also a sympathetic character. We can understand his response to the death of his new bride. We can understand his anger at being marooned. We can respect his intellect and his literacy. (Can you think of another film in which the villain quotes copiously and appropriately from *Moby Dick* and *Paradise Lost*?) Kirk, on the other hand, has his demonstrable bad points. He has abandoned his son (much in the same way as he abandoned Khan). At the beginning of the film, he is totally humorless, petty, spiteful, and mean. For viewers who cannot easily identify with a hero who is all good nor can take seriously a villain who is all bad, moral ambiguity of this type enriches the psychological meaning of a film. It also makes for good story telling.

The female characters: Since the central character of *The Wrath of Khan* is Kirk, the female characters must function in two parallel ways within the film. First is the character in the action/adventure story. Second is the symbolic role. Thus, the female characters often reflect psychological aspects of the male’s personality, in

this case Kirk's. (In some cases, the male characters perform the same function as the female characters, but rarely to such a degree as the females.) To further complicate matters the women occasionally function as symbolic aspects of each other. We will try to keep all this straight as we analyze each of the female leads in the film.

Lieutenant Saavik, the young Vulcan/Romulan cadet, is the perfect example of two filmic roles rolled into one character – Saavik the symbol and Saavik the person. This may at first be confusing, but I believe that this complexity adds considerable pleasure to the film. In Saavik/person we see a young woman at the beginning of her career. Because of her racial background, Vulcan/Romulan, she has certain characteristics that serve her well and at the same time hinder her. As the film progresses, we will see her trying to sort these out. For instance, she will have to learn the limits of logic and rules; she will have to take the risk of intuition and emotional response – something that does not come naturally to her.

At the same time, counterpoised to Lieutenant Saavik the person, we have Saavik the symbol. She represents the psychological/archetypal feminine power contained within Kirk's psyche. We see this power in its youthful, early, unformed, and immature stages. As the film progresses, her power grows. At the beginning she is quite powerless and, in fact, unwilling to make any concerted effort to help Kirk. By the end of the film, her symbolic power has grown so that she can help heal his illness. But aid is all we can expect here, for healing we must look elsewhere.

In contrast to young Lieutenant Saavik is Dr. Marcus, the second major female character. Unlike Saavik, she represents the fully matured and powerful feminine force with its capacity to create and heal. The negative side of the feminine force is

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clearly demonstrated in Dr. Marcus: she uselessly sacrifices many lives to jealously prevent her invention from falling into the wrong hands (which it does anyway). She treats the Genesis device as a mother protecting her children at all cost – much to the detriment of herself and all those around her. This is a clear demonstration of the simultaneous positive and negative aspects of the ancient Mother archetype.

Both Lieutenant Saavik and Dr. Marcus are multifaceted in a way that is quite unusual in literature and film (especially a film of the early '80s). They are a combination of the feminine and the intellectual. Saavik is partly Vulcan – like Spock, she is ruled to a great degree by her logic.^{vi} However, as a symbol she is in conflict between the traditional feminine intuition and the (traditional) masculine logic – both of which are irrevocably instilled in her; after all, she is just as surely a female as she is a Vulcan. While Saavik has not yet found the balance between these two aspects of her personality, Dr. Marcus has. Marcus has clearly come to terms with both sides of her life: intelligence, leadership, scientific ability and healing, nurturing, and intuition . . . and ruthlessness.

We can see that with a little luck and a lot of hard work, Dr. Marcus is what Lieutenant Saavik may one day become. Khan, on the other hand, is what Kirk will become if he continues the downward and bitter path outlined at the beginning of the film.

We can now detect a schema in the psychic organization of these characters: They are all aspects of a single entity – Kirk – these aspects differ only in amount, balance, and degree of integration. As one might expect, with four characters of this complexity, both on the surface and symbolically, the story that develops is equally complex.

The simple diagram below is a schematic summary of the symbolic psychological relations between the four major characters. If the course of action set out in the first half of the film continues in the direction indication, this will be the result: Saavik, the feminine, will mature into a Dr. Marcus figure. Certainly, this would be a positive development. On the other hand, Kirk, if he continues his present path, will become like Khan. Therefore, the central problem of the film at the psychological level is, how Kirk can conquer his internal Khan? The delight of the film is that at the level of the adventure, Kirk is also involved in conquering Khan!

Time Reference	Feminine	Masculine
Future	Marcus	Khan
Present	Saavik	Kirk

I would now like to apply the ideas I have presented above to see what messages can be unearthed from *The Wrath of Khan*. First, let us look at the opening sequence where all the elements of the psychological conflict are introduced in very abbreviated form only to be developed more fully later in the body of the film. In fact, when read as symbols with deep psychological meaning, the whole film is encapsulated and revealed in its first few seconds!

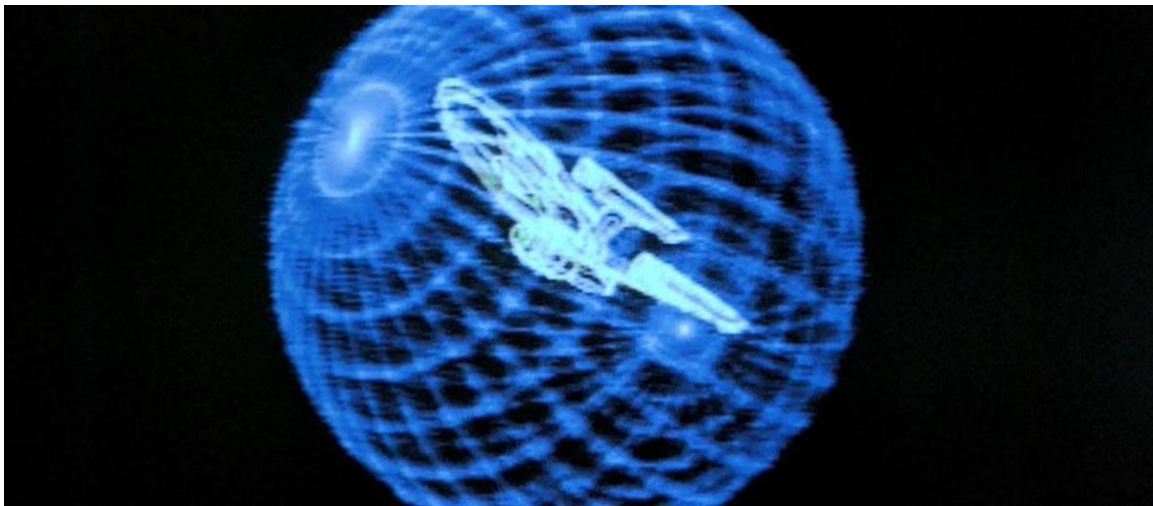
Next I will show how Kirk's psychological progress is mapped through each of four descents: 1) to Ceti/Alpha V/VI, 2) by elevator from the bridge of the Enterprise to Kirk's private quarters, 3) by transporter from the Enterprise first to the Regula Station and then into the Regula planetoid, and 4) the descent used as a battle tactic during the final confrontation with Khan. Finally, I will analyze the ending sequence to see how the film concludes its psychological adventure as well as the adventure story itself.

THE OPENING SEQUENCE

In the opening sequence of this film, I am amazed how an avalanche of densely symbolic meanings are packed into what seems to be only a few moments of screen time.

And, looked at symbolically, these few moments reveal the core of the film's psychological problem – a daring move for any film, to reveal itself so early.

I view what follows as a tree with branches: the symbolic content of the film is the tree's trunk that we can follow more-or-less linearly. The branches are amplifications and explorations of the symbols shooting off from the trunk of the tree. The problem I find with this type of analysis, however, is that it may become annoying to the reader. I will have to bring us back repeatedly and abruptly from the branches to the trunk. I beg patience and hope that these meanders will prove illuminating enough to be worthwhile.



As the film opens with see a glowing outline of the Enterprise, tumbling against a black background. Thus, the first image we see is, appropriately, the Enterprise –

the starship that has always been associated with these adventurous voyages. Here, however, the Enterprise is shown in outline only, transparent and tumbling in space. All is not well on board – there is no solidity, no balance, no direction.

The tumbling of the sphere and the outline Enterprise is a very clever echo of the image under the preceding titles and credits of the film. The star field under the credits is slowly rotating, tumbling if you will.

Since Kirk has always been identified as the captain of the Enterprise, responsible for the ship's movements and stability, we can tentatively project these qualities – transparency and tumbling – onto Kirk. (Much as a driver of our present-day automobile identifies and projects his personality on his car, so Kirk's personality is linked with the Enterprise.) Quite soon we will learn that our assumptions are correct. Using a highly symbolic and visual language, the first few frames of the film introduce the problems that will be dealt with in more detail as the film progresses.

This Enterprise, tumbling and transparent, is surrounded by an equally tumbling and transparent sphere. The Starship is seemingly captured by grid of glowing lines of latitude and longitude. The movement of the ship and the sphere is coordinated, as if their fates might be linked.

The sphere is a powerful symbol with many meanings. It can be a symbol of wholeness, unity, or completion. Or it may refer to the essence of the person, the core of the personality – something Carl Jung called the “Self.” Thus, the tumbling sphere is a further comment on Kirk, whose “self” and wholeness are, at the beginning of the film, both out of kilter and tumbling, transparent, without

substance. Thus Kirk is both the Enterprise and the sphere that surrounds it – as would be expected of a commander of any vessel (Ahab and the Pequod, Jason and the Argo, or, in the film adaptation, Captain Hendrick and the Flying Dutchman [*Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* – 1951], are a good examples). In this way, the Enterprise becomes Kirk's ego and the sphere surrounding it, his Self.

The sphere also implies the idea of the feminine that is, as I have already pointed out, another constant referent in this film. A strong relation between the sphere and the feminine occurs in the rites and rituals of many cultures – Eastern and Western – throughout our history. For instance, during the coronation of a king or a queen, the feminine orb (or globe) is invariably held in the left or feminine hand while the masculine, phallic scepter is held in the right or masculine hand. (A perfect filmic example is the opening sequence of Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* [1944]. The same arrangement holds true of other masculine/feminine symbols such as the torch and book of the Statue of Liberty. The meaning of this widespread symbolism is clear: to be a just ruler, one must make balanced use of both masculine and feminine skills. Thus, the tumbling sphere, in addition to the Self surrounding the ego, can also be interpreted as symbolic of Kirk's out-of-kilter feminine aspects.



As we watch, the tumbling of the sphere/Enterprise slows and finally comes to a halt. The camera draws back from the image and we realize we have been watching a video display on-board another, apparently more solid Enterprise. The idea of an Enterprise within another Enterprise has now been introduced and will soon be multiplied like a stacking Russian doll.

The symbolic possibilities are clear – an invitation to look beneath apparently stable surfaces and to find more volatile aspects within. A common simile (often used as a plot device in detective or horror films) refers to peeling the layers of an onion to find more obscure but more informative layers within. Here, however, the process is reversed – we are starting at the inside of the onion and worm-like are working our way out. The major difference between the two methods – one looking in for discovery and the other looking outward – is the difference between the introvert and the extrovert. Here again it is suggested that Kirk will now abandon his extroverted, outward-looking attitude for one of greater introspection.

As the tumbling stops, the camera pulls back further, and we find Spock has been watching the display with us. Throughout the film, Spock does just this: He watches. And so do we. It is under the watchful eye of logic that the tumbling and transparent personality of Admiral Kirk will slowly stabilize and solidify. Yet Spock will do little to bring this about, for all this action does not take place in his domain, rather it belongs to a force far more powerful than reason or logic.

In addition to this visual information, we are simultaneously given verbal information by the reading of the Starlog, according to which, we are under way to Gamma Hydra. This bodes ill at two levels, one dealing with classic mythology and the other with the Star Trek canon.

The Hydra^{vii} is a nasty, multi-headed mythical Greek monster considered impossible to kill: whenever one head is lopped off, two grow in its place. It was finally Hercules who killed the Hydra as one of his famous labors. With the help of a friend, he cauterized the wounds so the severed heads would not grow back. From the corpse's bile he made a poison with which he would vanquish many of his future enemies. Ironically, this same poison later caused his own death. Are these predictions? By facing his enemies, will Kirk gather the means to conquer others? Will the means by which Kirk slays his enemies (both external in the form of Khan and internal as his psychological problems), threaten his own death?

There is a previous mention of Gamma Hydra in the TV episode called *The Deadly Years*, first broadcast in 1967. Kirk and other crewmembers had to face the ravages of accelerated and premature aging. This reference, in the context of this film's exploration of his mid-life crisis, is obvious.

Let us return once again to the film's opening sequence: It is Lieutenant Saavik, we soon realize, who is reading the Starlog. Her recitation ends with the statement that "All systems are normal." As I have already mentioned, Saavik, in addition to being a young woman over-committed to logic, is also a symbol of the growing power of (what will be Kirk's) internal feminine. As a feminine psychological force at the beginning of the film, she is very immature and powerless. Her own connection to her intuition is unformed; she is unable to grasp the true situation and believes "all is normal." Spock (and we) however know better: we have seen the Enterprise tumbling helplessly on the video display.

After the reading of the Starlog, the crew is suddenly faced with insoluble problems – like those that Kirk will soon face. The crew must, at considerable risk, rescue the Kobiyashi Maru, a fuel carrier whose "systems are quickly failing." The irony of an endangered ship, full of fuel but unable to move, must be noted.

If we are willing to see this symbolically, it raises many questions. First, is the Kobiyashi Maru symbolic of Kirk? We later learn that Kirk never did face the Kobiyashi Maru problem directly, so we know the two are intimately related. Does this mean that Kirk's source of energy is fast fading, his systems failing, and that he must also be rescued from a territory of emotional stasis (an emotional neutral zone) that he has never directly faced? Does he, like the fuel carrier, carry with him vast amounts of energy that he does not know how to tap? What has happened to Kirk that he gotten so out of touch with his psychic fuel?



Forbidden Planet [1956] – 5:45

The Kobiyashi Maru, we learn, hails from Altair VI. This, on the surface, is a delightful in-group joke for fans of science fiction films. We say to ourselves, “Ah ha, Altair VI is the planet in Fred McLoed Wilcox’s classic film, *Forbidden Planet* [1956]” However, the makers of *The Wrath of Khan* have pulled a fast one on us: it was Altair IV – not Altair VI – that was site of the battle with Morbius’ famous Id Monster. We have been suckered into making a mistake that crew of the Reliant will repeat later in the film: we have been subtly introduced the idea of mistaking one planet for another. This becomes quite important as the key of the first psychological descent a little later in the film. ^{viii}

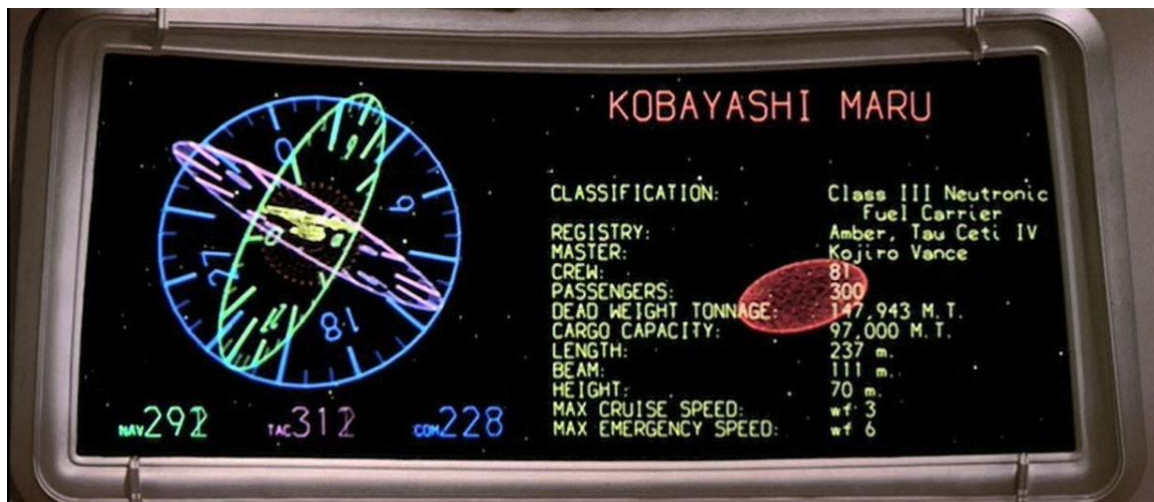
In addition, the title of *Forbidden Planet* in many ways predicts the action that will take place in *Wrath of Khan*: Kirk will have to tread into psychological areas that he has, up till now, forbidden himself to encroach. This place, as I shall show, exists at two levels. It is literally a planetoid where Kirk will have to go, but it is simultaneously an area of Kirk’s unconscious.



Forbidden Planet [1956] 1:16:53

This, too, echoes *Forbidden Planet*'s major contribution to the science fiction film genre – the inventive concept of the enemy being a “monster from the Id,” an internal threat materialized externally, rather than one of external origin. Wherever we look, we find indications that the true action of *Wrath of Khan* is concerned with psychological states.

To rescue the Kobyashi Maru, the crew must risk violating previous treaties, cross into the “Neutral Zone,” and bear the brunt of a possible Klingon attack. Again, this presages what will be involved in Kirk's rescue of his own source of energy, his emotional self. He will have to cross into and risk disturbing the safe – now “neutral” – zones of comfortable emotional habit. Once entered, this will become the dangerous and unstable territory of emotional growth. The point is furthered in the text: Saavik says, “Project a parabolic course into the Neutral Zone.” Entry is not straight on, but on a curve. Eventually, Kirk will have to face, straight on, the psychological contents of his psychic “neutral zone.”



Kirk will also have to face the consequences of his past, the treaties he has made with himself and with others . . . and violated. His own internal enemies will attack him, attempting to drive him back into the blissful, though impotent ignorance of his own psychic neutral zone. (I am again reminded of the treaties Wotan made in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and the concomitant trading of his eye for knowledge of the future. The relation of these treaties and the non-functional eye is brought out near the end of the film with the breaking of one lens of Kirk's glasses.)

The relation between Kirk's psyche and the neutral zone is further emphasized by the representation of the "Neutral Zone" on the video display – a sphere similar to the one that caged the Enterprise only moments before. Thus, Kirk is triply trapped in the bounds of three dangerous spheres: the Self, the feminine, and now in the sphere of his own neutral (perhaps this should be read "neutered") zone.

During this film, Kirk's lost emotional sensitivity is slowly regained. The key to this regeneration – the means by which balance is regained – is represented in the film by various aspects of the feminine. As described previously, this driving force is symbolized by two women: Saavik and Marcus. In a weak and primitive form,

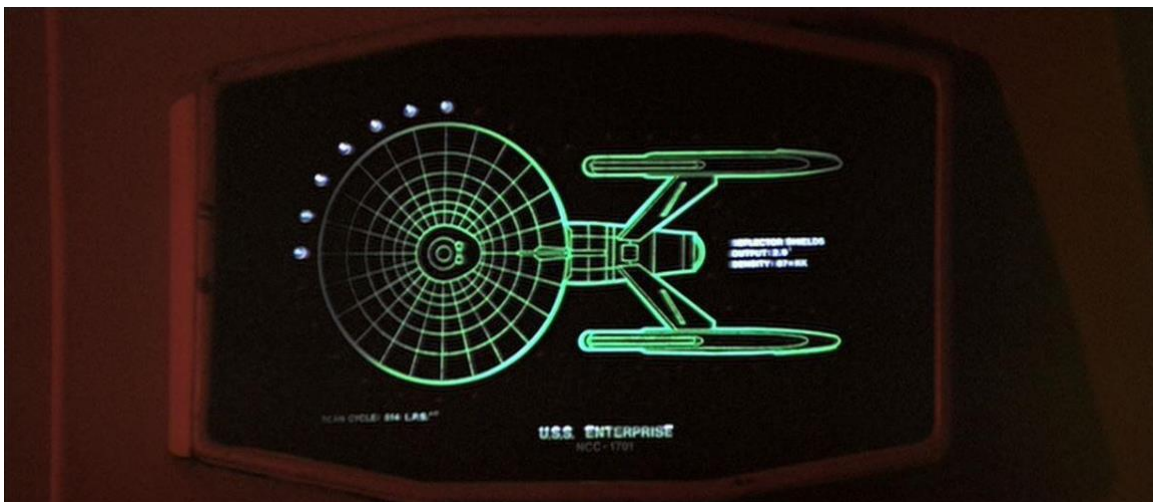
the feminine cannot solve any of Kirk's problems. When we first see Lieutenant Saavik in the Captain's chair the world around her collapses into chaos and death. We must assume that the feminine aspect is powerless – while Saavik can sit in Kirk's chair, she cannot yet occupy it. The feminine itself must evolve into a more powerful form. (The next time we see Saavik she is piloting the Enterprise out of space dock. She is beginning to gather about her the rudiments of power and Kirk is obviously nervous. The masculine is threatened by the power of the feminine and, at this point in the film, has no need for feminine power because the need for changes has not yet manifested itself. McCoy, the internal emotional half of Kirk, is there to offer solace.)



Before moving on, let me switch from Saavik the symbol to Saavik the person. This beginning of her evolutionary growth as a person is a benchmark from which she increases her own feminine power. Being partially Vulcan, she has a doubly difficult task because she is (in the traditional sense) both feminine (being female) and masculine (being ruled by logic). She needs new masculine input to balance the feminine and yet needs more feminine input to balance the masculine.

It is fascinating to see what Saavik learns from whom. This delicate balancing act of masculine and feminine integration leads to her growth toward being a whole person. For instance, she begins the film by sticking to “the book.” Later, by inventing non-existent regulations to emotionally (perhaps motheringly) accompany Kirk to the planetoid. Here she has told a lie and one that balances the “masculine” (rules) and “feminine” (fibbing for emotional reasons?). By the end of the film she has learned how to cry (i.e., has become normal).

Elements like Saavik’s evolution occur throughout the *The Wrath of Khan*. Both Saavik and Kirk begin to integrate feelings and begin to recognize the value of allowing emotions into their personalities – Saavik for the first time, Kirk reclaiming his past, lost sensitivity. We see that the psychological evolution of these two people is intertwined like the double helix of a DNA molecule – parallel yet in mirror image. For Saavik growth arises from tapping into her newly blossoming feminine powers and by integrating aspects of her primarily masculine surroundings while for Kirk the evolution of the masculine is impossible without the action and growth of the internal feminine.



Again, let us return to the opening sequence of the film. During the Klingon attack, Saavik orders the shields raised. The idea of defensive shields has meaning in both military and psychological terms. Failing shields indicates that once the psychological adventure is undertaken, once one becomes committed to the quest, there is little defense against an attack from the newly roused unconscious. Perhaps this is what is meant by not venturing into one's "neutral zone." At this point Saavik admits that, "We're in over our heads." Indeed, she is. As the symbol of the feminine she is not yet powerful enough to defend the psyche from attack – her shields collapse. She learns that her weapons have no power.

Next, during the Klingon attack, we are horrified by the death of Spock, McCoy, Uhura, Sulu, and the rest. Confusion is added to our horror as into this carnage strides Kirk!

With his entrance, this almost Hamlet-like, death-laden play-within-a-play is revealed to be a training exercise. The idea of Death has now been introduced into the film, but only in the form of an "exercise," a preparation. Actually, the opening sequence of the film mentions death several times, but the filmmakers have arranged it so we pay little attention. Subconsciously, perhaps, this becomes a mounting accumulation that both anticipates and prepares us for the shock of a most tragic and significant death that concludes the film.



Stepping onto the bridge, Kirk's first words declare the central difficulty that will occupy him for the remainder of the film. "Klingons don't take prisoners," he announces to the audience, but he directs the comment to Saavik to whom he's essentially saying, "You're dead." Death in this case is equivalent to classical repression, that is, the act of forcing something into the unconscious where the ego is out of touch with it. As I have proposed before, Saavik symbolizes the feminine aspect of Kirk's personality. Kirk here clearly declares that aspects of his own feminine are "dead," i.e., repressed. While declaring his own feminine aspect dead and thereby wishing it out of his personality (which is clearly impossible), he dangerously ignores one of the great powers within the psyche that can heal him or will wreak havoc on him until he acknowledges it. Thus, there is also a positive aspect to Kirk's declaration of death. It is only out of death that new life can come. Where there is repression, there is also hope of regeneration. This regeneration of life from an apparently tragic death occurs many times and at many levels in this film.

Kirk, a dark silhouetted figure, strikingly back-lit, emitting rays of light, enters the bridge, a body-strewn charnel house. Kirk's next command in the darkness and chaos of the ruined control room is, "Lights." And, of course, there is light. With another word, he brings the dead crew back to life. He converts the chaos on the screen and the confusion in our minds into orderliness. In this brief sequence of events, religious associations are unavoidable. This is the first overt use of *religious symbolism* in the film. These events, together with the centrality of the "Genesis" machine later in the film, indicate that we must keep a sharp eye out for other theological references. Kirk's emotional regeneration, as I will show, is a voyage through the history of religion taking places not only in familiar Judeo-Christian terms, but also in very ancient ideas that considerably predate our current religious systems.

The religious/symbolic aspects of Kirk are rather complex. This complexity is characteristic of all deeply powerful mythological symbols. They function at multiple levels, often slipping back and forth between several meanings during the telling of the tale (or a film). For instance, by declaring death, by bringing order to chaos, by commanding light, and by resurrecting those apparently dead, Kirk reenacts many aspects of the Old Testament God.

I am here using the popular concept that the Old Testament God being one of vengeance and retribution – not a really a very nice person – while the New Testament God is one of love and forgiveness. This view of the Old Testament, while popular, is not exclusively correct. This vengeful God concept is that of only one of the several authors contributing to the Bible, yet it is this concept among many others that has taken root in the popular imagination.^{ix}

The film goes further – there is a deeper relation between what we have seen in the first few scenes of the film to the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. The God of Genesis was a lonely God; that is why he created his playthings – Adam and Eve. This same male God was, by His own admission, a jealous and paranoid God – He kept his toys in ignorance, forbidding them to eat from the tree of knowledge. He blatantly lied to them claiming that knowledge was poisonous. It was only through the intervention of the snake and the transgression of God’s edicts that Adam and Eve took the first steps on the road toward conscious human-hood. In *The Wrath of Khan*, we also have two characters who must struggle to attain consciousness, one male and one female – Kirk and Saavik. Rather than knowledge, they must (in one case) learn and (in the other case) relearn their humanity. ^x

As I mentioned above, Saavik learns when to abandon logic, when not to go “by the book,” and how to care and feel. She learns to be sensitive to a degree greater than logic alone would dictate. If we compare her character at the beginning and the end of *The Wrath of Khan*, we see that her positive changes are a miniature of the changes through which Kirk must go. And Kirk, to save himself, must eat of the same death-dealing tree of human emotion – the details of which arise shortly in the film.

We have seen Kirk play the role of the Old Testament vengeful God. But while he is playing God the creator, at the same time he plays the role of Adam – the created. Perhaps this indicates two states of mind: Kirk believes himself autonomous, yet he knows he is dependent on forces beyond himself. These multiple facets of symbolic functions indicate both the complexity of the religious symbolism in this film and that several points of view are needed to come to terms with the deepest symbolic core of the personality.



Now Saavik asks to speak “freely” to Kirk, an incident that is repeated several times during the film. The feminine wants to communicate. At this point she is unsuccessful because she lacks power and he is not yet ready for what she has to say. Unless the speaker has extraordinary power, communication takes willingness on the part of the hearer. A more mature feminine figure will soon enter that will not need to ask permission to speak to Kirk – and she will let him have it with both barrels.

HOME AND RETIREMENT

After the Kobiyashi Maru disaster, Kirk meets Spock in the hallway and, tongue-in-cheek, tells him that he thought Spock was dead. While at this point this may be funny, it is also ironically prophetic. Further, he tells Spock that, “Galloping around the cosmos is a game for the young.” Here we are presented with the film’s second major theme – *aging*. We soon learn it’s Kirk’s birthday – that once-a-year cusp when our minds seemingly of their own volition turn to assessing, often unhappily,

the irreversible processes of our physical and mental aging. Our personal age looms large in our consciousness. Kirk is feeling old. While Spock goes back to the Enterprise, Kirk goes home to rest.

Most men, including Kirk, occupied their younger years with the mastery of the outer, exoteric world – this was the primary focus of the TV series. Now, 15 years past, the tide has changed. The waters of life now begin to pour inward, directed toward an inner conquest and development. This is the stage of life in which we find Kirk – at a cusp, beset by conflicts – where the internal and external are inextricably intertwined. If we judge Kirk’s age by William Shatner’s, he is 54 years old at the time of the filming. It seems somehow appropriate that Kirk face these problems at this point in his life.¹ At this point in the film, Kirk denies this natural and necessary process. He tries to hang on to his now-fading youth. He fears his own maturity. As Ogden Nash put it so succinctly, “The problem with a kitten is that; it will become a cat.” To survive into the second half of life, this is the directive we all must come to terms with. And Kirk is no exception. The birthday gifts Kirk receives from his friends introduce the third set of symbolic concerns in this film – the externalization of an inner conflict between the emotional and the intellectual. Spock gives Kirk a copy of Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*. Kirk reads the first line as if it, too, portends what is to befall him in the course of the film, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

¹ Speaking of age, Ricardo Montalban looks amazingly good for his 62 years!

Kirk carries this tome under his arm during the whole Kobiyashi Maru exercise. The idea of “the best of times, . . . the worst of times” applies quite well to what takes place on the bridge of the Enterprise simulation and symbolically it makes perfect sense. Kirk’s penchant for antiques, including the paper book, shows his desire for “the good old days” when he was a psychically healthier human being. Much of the film is devoted to his struggle to regain these values.

Daring a breach of context, let me point out that this sentiment can also be applied to aging. Age is the best of times: knowledge has been gained, relations have been made, experience and expertise gathered. It is also the worst of times: physical decay, mental disintegration, and approaching death. This is what Kirk must recognize so that he may heal himself.



While receiving his birthday gift from Spock, Kirk stands next to a gigantic modern armillary sphere. This image harkens back to the opening sequence where we say

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the outline of the Enterprise tumbling within a wire-work sphere. Not only is this sphere bigger than Kirk – indicating the size of his problems – it also indicates the overall size of the problem – the size of the universe – a problem that everyone everywhere will eventually have to encounter.

While the externalization of inner conflicts is one of the basic fascinations of science fiction films, this film goes further than most: it carries on the tradition of the *Star Trek* TV series by externalizing the concept of the bicameral mind.² At first this bicameral mind business may seem no more than a bit of psychobiological ephemera. However, I believe, whether it is right or wrong, it is one of the major foundations of the success and the brilliance of the TV series. This theory proposes that the human brain is, in essence, two separate brains: The right lobe views reality primarily intuitively, spatially, non-linearly, and associatively while the left lobe analyzes reality primarily through rational, sequential, and iterative thought.^{xi} These functions can be best described as a set of polar opposites: verbal/nonverbal, linear/non-linear, perhaps even intellectual/emotional. Much of Kirk's conflict comes from trying to reestablish a lost balance between the two functions. The film establishes these concepts at many levels – the book Kirk receives from Spock, for instance.

2 See, The Origin of Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind, Julian Jaynes, 1976. While Jaynes' theories have been "debunked" by several authors and no longer hold the sway that they did on publication, they are still quite useful in film analysis.

When questioned about the meaning of the quote from Dickens, Spock denies any symbolic value. He says, “None that I’m conscious of.” The specific words could not be better chosen to portray the actual state of affairs; indeed, the symbolic meanings typically do not exist in the conscious mind. Undeniably, however, it has considerable unconscious meaning. The linear brain-half has great difficulty dealing with symbolism, taking everything at face value, literally. It is left to the other brain-half to deal with symbols and sub-texts required for interpretation, association, and understanding. Of sub-texts, Spock is incapable. In Spock’s denial of deeper meaning his role as the external symbol for Kirk’s linear function is clearly defined.

A book is, as any linguist or semiotician will attest, no more than a linear series of words assembled into a unique and logical order to produce, in most cases, (literary affect aside) an unambiguous meaning. Reading is an activity for the *verbal mind* (though the content of the book may be for the other brain-half). Spock has brought a gift that involves primarily the linear brain-half. This has always been Spock’s function as science officer on the Enterprise – to give a logical, linear analysis of a situation.³ As this film progresses, we find that Spock is a living, externalized

3 The limits of Spock's logic are clearly demonstrated in the TV episode *The Galileo Seven*. Here, Spock is in charge of a marooned crew and goes through all the logical options to accomplish rescue, but to no avail. Only after abandoning logic, a la Kirk, is the problem solved.

symbol for Kirk's own linear, logical brain function. Later, we will consider again the concept of the bicameral mind when we look at Spock's death.

If Spock is the manifestation of Kirk's linear brain-half, is there a parallel external representation for his non-linear brain-half? A few moments later in the film, like clockwork, the other materialized brain-half appears – McCoy. Note that McCoy brings Kirk the gift of booze – an anathema to linearity and logic. This is something, rather, for the emotions, for the senses, for the non-verbal brain-half. Like Spock's logic, McCoy's emotionalism has always been a necessary component of Kirk's successful analysis of the situations in which he found himself.



Indeed, *both* Spock and McCoy are the externalized realizations of Kirk's own paired brain functions, the logical and the emotional, the right-hand and the left-hand. In a brilliant stroke of symbolism, the film ties the physical, external fates of each of these supporting characters directly into the internal conflicts taking place within Kirk's psyche.

This simultaneous, mirror-like internal/external conflict forms a major portion of the subtextual drama of the film.

When McCoy gives Kirk a sample, Kirk's response is a tongue-in-cheek guess that it is a Klingon aphrodisiac. While it is a bit of comic relief, this comment also introduces a rather serious and recurring subtext in the film. Let me point out that Kirk has been perhaps the horniest man ever portrayed on TV. He has seduced and bedded female humans, humanoids, robots, and occasionally non-humanoid aliens masquerading as humans (always buxom). He has, indeed, roamed the galaxies, going where no man has gone before. One dares not think of his pan-galactic progeny strewn amongst the stars. Kirk's off-hand comment about the aphrodisiacs emphasizes still further his past role as the number-one space horn. And now, in this film, his randyness has come home to roost – and to haunt him.

In a wonderful verbal/visual pun, the moment when Kirk drinks the Klingon ale, we hear the sound of a foghorn. Combined with Shatner's sense of timing and facial expressions, this scene is quite funny. However, as with much "comic relief" in well-made films, it has additional meanings. The foghorn is easily identified with a sign of danger for those lost in a fog, which, in Kirk's case, is a mental fog of his own making (to say nothing of the reputed mental fog-inducing properties of the Klingon ale).

Leaving for the moment the concept of the bicameral brain, we can see there is still more in Dr. McCoy's visit. In addition to the liquor, he also brings eyeglasses. Kirk is farsighted – he cannot get close enough to see things accurately or clearly. This is true equally in the physical, external world as well as in Kirk's emotional world. He is so tragically divorced from his own emotions and feelings in this scene that his

doctor must instruct him to say, “Thank you.” Here we see another aspect of Kirk’s personality being explored, that is, his emotional sterility and its impending consequences.



This image is repeated over and over in science fiction films. In *It Came From Outer Space* [1953] the hero is a writer who dabbles in astronomy. He can see the stars clearly but cannot see those around him and his unformed relations with them – aptly and graphically represented by his half-completed house.

We now come to the dark heart of this film: what has caused Kirk’s emotional fogging and estrangement? Appropriately it is McCoy, the doctor, the healer, who gives Kirk the prescription. After the Kobiyashi Maru exercise, we saw McCoy’s reactions to Kirk’s curmudgeonly comments. Here McCoy tells Kirk that he has abandoned the command of the Enterprise in preference to a desk job. A “rise” from Captain to Admiral has turned out to be an actual lowering . . . of life force. It is Kirk’s own beliefs about aging that have led to this – as he himself says, it is no longer appropriate to go bounding about the galaxy. This problem, then,

irrevocably binds together the themes that recur throughout this film: death, aging, and emotional sterility.

His desk job and his erroneous assessment of the process of aging (that is, that the old have nothing to contribute) form the foundation to Kirk's estrangement from his emotions.¹⁸ In his days as commander of the Enterprise, Kirk had a job that balanced the intellectual and the emotional. Kirk made difficult decisions by weighing the advice of his two senior officers, Spock and McCoy, and we have seen these two symbolize the intellectual and emotional functions within Kirk's own human organism. By weighing and balancing them, Kirk not only made correct and wise decisions externally, but also kept in touch with these selfsame internal functions. He thereby achieved, through an appropriate external activity, an internal balance and maintained his psychic health. According to McCoy, his "desk job" only requires intellectual, logical decisions. Kirk no longer ventures into outer space – a wonderful symbol for the unconscious – into adventures that lead to psychic growth. In his role as Admiral, he has lost touch with his emotional self and has become an out-of-balance, miserable, oldering man.

Let me stop a moment here to take stock of what we have found in the film's introductory sequence. We have seen that *Wrath of Khan* through the character of Kirk (and his dark mirror-image, Khan) deals with these major issues: the conflict between the natural process and the social perceptions of aging and death, the role of love in a man's life, the slow eroding of emotional feelings toward oneself and others, and the resulting unbalanced deference to cold intellect. Kirk has prematurely become a hard, bitter old man.

Kirk's battle only appears to be against his old enemy, Khan; actually, he battles against his own internal self, struggling to regain a sense of life and an internal balance – and this is the conflict that is central to the film. These themes are wrapped in a subtle coating of psychological and religious symbolism – both modern and ancient. These introductory scenes, as we shall soon see, become a template from which is cast almost all the action that follows. In the course of the film, Kirk faces each of his problems, overcomes them to a greater or lesser degree and becomes, by the end of the film, a more whole person. By this I mean whole as opposed to the way we see him now, incomplete, piecemeal, and without purpose. I would now like to show how these themes are developed in the four descents that become the major psychological battlegrounds in the film.

THE DESCENT TO CETI/ALPHA IV

If we look at this film as a classical drama, then the first act of *The Wrath of Khan* is finished: the characters and themes have been introduced, the major issues have been identified, and the symbolic structures have been established. It is now time for the second act to begin: the drama itself must now take place. The heart of the film begins with the first of four descents – a voyage of disaster that, through a series of miscalculations and errors, sets the drama into motion.

Errors of judgment or miscalculations are often encountered in mythic journeys. After all, it is hard to see a major tactical blunder like admitting the Trojan horse into a besieged fortress as a paradigm of good judgment. Since this is a science fiction film, we can expect the filmic equivalent – malfunctioning equipment. However, as we saw in the opening scene, that “equipment” is often a projection of some aspect of one of the character's psyche.

That a seemingly trivial mistake sets into motion an adventure of vast consequences should not surprise us. While at first seeming to be disastrous in origin, these adventures inevitably lead to encounters with the unconscious. In describing the shipwreck at the beginning of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Noel Cobb says, "How often we deny them [disasters] any higher meaning, swearing and cursing our fate or giving way to panic or despair. Yet, if we could but hear that still, small voice in the center of the storm, we might perhaps discover that our disasters were potential gateways into higher, and deeper, levels of meaning in our lives." ^{xii}

They encounter three disasters: Captain Terrell and Commander Chekov descend to what they believe is Ceti/Alpha VI, a planet that their instruments indicate is almost lifeless even though Terrell comments that "this scanner could be out of adjustment." Two errors that would, rationally, be impossible in a scientific vessel of the 23rd century. Ceti/Alpha VI turns out to be Ceti/Alpha V. Landing on the wrong planet is a buffoon's error more characteristic of the bumbling *Dr. Who* whose time-and-spaceship functions only by benefit of chewing gum and marbles. And the planet is certainly not lifeless. How the Reliant's instruments could mistake 30 people for "pre-animate matter" is not explained. We can only assume gross instrument failure. An alternate explanation is that the term "pre-animate matter" is a symbolic reference to Khan's mental and emotional state at that moment.

When Chekov and Terrell contact Dr. Marcus and offer to "transplant" whatever life form is on the planet, we see for the first time the power of the mature feminine. When they tell her it "might be a particle of pre-animate matter," Dr.

Marcus freely uses her intuition when she says, “and it may not!” And, of course, her intuition is right.

The third error is when Reliant’s instruments indicate fair weather. Landing, Terrell and Chekov are faced with an almost blinding sandstorm – another metaphoric use of impaired vision.



This first descent is a journey into what was assumed a safe, unoccupied place. Unexpectedly, it turns out to be Khan’s planet – or, in terms of the model I have outlined above, Khan’s unconscious. As represented by Ceti/Alpha V, his unconscious is a place of no growth; no vegetation; no water; and apparently a single, vicious, monstrous life form (surely there must be an ecosystem to support it, unless, of course, we are not to take it literally). A place where intellectually superior people are reduced to playing checkers. A place where five books serve as a library. Ceti/Alpha V is where Khan’s wife, or his own feminine aspect, died. It is a place where people’s minds are invaded by worms that cause death by madness.

The conditions on Ceti/Alpha V describe well Khan's sterile and self-limiting singlemindedness.



From the state of his planet/psyche, we can quickly see how Khan functions symbolically within the film, but there is much more we can learn of him through his physical appearance. His apparel serves as a complex combination of symbols and references to other films.⁴ His ever-present right glove refers to (and Khan

⁴ The name of Khan's original Earth spaceship, the Botany Bay, by the way, refers to a 1953 film of the same name starring Alan Ladd and James Mason. It concerns the fate of an unjustly convicted man suffering aboard a convict ship bound for Australia under the wheel of a cruel captain. Perhaps Khan is

takes on aspects from) two other science-fiction-film madmen: Rotwang, Fritz Lang's magician/scientist in *Metropolis* [1927] and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* [1964].



Around his neck Khan wears a Navaho squash-blossom necklace with a circular pendant containing the stylized rocket ship the Federation uses as its logo. However, the circle surrounding the rocket is broken. According to Navaho magic to destroy something one hates, one draws a picture of it, surrounds it with a circle, then breaks the circle!

not as guilty of 20th century Earth crimes as the *Space Seed* episode would have us believe.



We also learn that Khan is a highly literate man – the antiques, i.e., paper, books on his shelf indicate that: *Moby Dick*, *Paradise Lost*, *King Lear*, the *Bible*. There is no question that he has read and reread these books. Since there are two copies of *Paradise Lost*, this must be especially important to Kahn. In contrast, we sense that Admiral Kirk is reading *A Tale of Two Cities* for the first time especially since he did not know the book's famous first line. Khan seems to take the messages of these books almost literally – he quotes liberally from Melville and Milton. Rather than seeing literature as metaphor, he attempts to live out these books (his death, for instance, is that of an abandoned Lear dying with his beloved next of kin at his side). These are symptoms of a loss of contact with his emotional function – he can no longer live a life of his own, he can only reenact that prescribed to him. The power for “self-creation” has left him.



As you can see, Khan turns out to be a rather interesting character. (Speaking of age, Ricardo Montalban looks amazingly good for his 62 years!) We can learn still more about him by comparing him to Kirk. For enemies, they are surprisingly similar: from the similarity of their names to their mutual enchantment with power and leadership (and, perhaps surprisingly, they are both dedicated to the physical and emotional wellbeing of their respective crews). But their leadership styles are radically different– Kirk by balancing, considering, and often doubting himself. Khan, on the other hand, leads by a self-declared divine right, something that Kirk only in his nastier moments has bordered on. The consequences – beneficial and tragic – of the differences in leadership style are shown very clearly in the film.

What Chekov reacts to so violently is apparently a seat belt buckle with S.S. Botany Bay inscribed on it. *Botany Bay* is Kahn's original ship in the television episode *Space Seed*. It also refers to a 1953 film of the same name starring Alan Ladd and James Mason (directed by Lewis Allen). The film concerns the fate of an unjustly convicted man suffering aboard a convict ship bound for Australia under the wheel of a cruel captain in 1787. If we take this film as part of the plot's

origins, perhaps Khan is not as guilty of 20th century Earth crimes as the *Space Seed* episode would have us believe.



Kahn's psychological sterility is reflected in the physical world. The mixed gender colony of at least fourteen people, of the original colony of seventy, has been living on Ceti/Alpha for fifteen years and there are no children.

But the most important link between Khan and Kirk is their mutual loss of contact with their own internal feminine aspects, symbolized by a parallel external loss. Kirk abandoned Dr. Marcus; Khan's wife died. The reaction of each man to his loss is completely different. Khan turns outward with ruthless revenge, while Kirk painfully attempts an interior reconstruction of his life. With very little effort Kirk could become as embittered as Khan. In one sense, Khan is a dark, evil, and shadowy aspect of Kirk. Khan represents what Kirk may become unless he mends his ways.

At a symbolic level death is never final, it is merely an opportunity for regeneration. Kirk will accomplish this while Khan will not. And while it is true that Khan's feminine aspect cannot "die," he has repressed it so deeply that he is completely out of touch with it. It cannot be recovered.

Another similarity between Kirk and Khan is how they relate to their respective sons. Joachim, as I interpret the film, is Khan's son. In I Kings 22:26, Joachim is mentioned as the son of the king of Amon – most significantly named Ahab. Since Khan is clearly fixated on the character of Ahab from Melville's *Moby Dick* – eternally hunting his enemy, the great white Kirk/whale – I conclude he would, seemingly appropriately, name his son Joachim. In any case, while the relation between Kirk and his son begins at a very low point and proceeds upward to a state of health and harmony, the parallel relation between Khan and his son begins in apparent harmony, progresses in a downward spiral to end in disaster. Rather than reacting to situations honestly and directly, Khan inflexibly attempts to relive those situations which he read about in his treasured library. Unfortunately for Joachim, his relation is modeled after King Lear – with the same tragic results. In this way, he, like Kirk, overemphasizes the intellectual. It is to Kirk's advantage that he is far more flexible and does not look for ready-made solutions to his problems.

Kirk, by contrast, simply ignores what he does not want to face. Khan complains that Kirk never checked back to see how the travelers he marooned on Ceti/Alpha were doing. This is strikingly like Kirk's treatment of his son – he never checked back on him either. Kirk seems to repress events that he unconsciously feels may threaten his precariously constructed emotional stability. Events or people he

cannot face in the moment are merely “forgotten.” Now, both classically repressed figures – Khan and his own son – have come back to haunt him.

If Kirk, as we saw in the opening sequence, symbolizes an Old Testament God, who is Khan? *The Wrath of Khan* is based on the TV episode called *Space Seed* in which Khan tries to take control of Kirk’s ship for his own purposes. Kirk gains the upper hand but does not kill Khan. He casts him down to live on a hellish planet.

In Judeo/Christian mythology, God was faced with a similar rebellion – Satan challenged his power and tried to take over in a celestial coup d’etat. Satan was defeated and, along with his adherents, was cast out of Heaven. All this is described in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* – one of the books prominently displayed on Khan’s spartan bookshelf. Since Satan saw the possibility of supplanting God as the master and mover of the universe, both God and Satan must have been cut from the same cloth, just as are Kirk and Khan the captains of their respective vessels.

Experience has shown that it is the devil’s provocations and temptations that often play a significant part in one’s psychological growth. After all, we must give credit to Satan for bringing Adam and Eve to full human consciousness. (One of my measures of a “good” film is one in which the villain possesses the unique characteristics that can cause the hero to solve his psychological problems.) But here we are dealing with a different sort of devil, the devil within. This is the one Jung calls the “shadow,” whose very existence is difficult to admit, far more difficult to face, and still more difficult to integrate and harness. This devil within can become a great power for growth (as Kirk learns), but the experience is fraught with great dangers (as Khan learns.)

So, what began as an innocent descent onto a presumably dead planet has turned out, on analysis, to be the key that unlocks the film as a psychic adventure story. As we all come to know sooner or later, the unconscious is not a safe and comfortable place. In real life as in myths and dreams, apparent accidents that seem to bode nothing but evil eventually result in a final victory of greater good. And so here, too, this first descent portends nothing but evil. Robert Donington describes this situation in the following way, “Surprising or not, it is a very well-established fact that changes in the deeper levels of our own personality feel like terrifying violence at the time of experiencing them. There is no limit to the power with which the autonomous psyche may assail us from within. If it did not do so, we should never develop, and life would lose its real point and meaning. Yet our experience of this power in its formidable aspect is a terrifying experience, as we can often see explicitly in our dreams and elsewhere.”^{xiii}

A good example of this “elsewhere” is this *The Wrath of Khan*. We have yet to follow the consequences of this disruption through several further descents into the unconscious. They will all be harrowing, but, thankfully, with ultimate rewards of healing.

THE SECOND DESCENT – FROM THE BRIDGE TO THE CAPTAIN’S QUARTERS

Let us now turn to the entrance of the character that I find most fascinating: Dr. Marcus – Kirk’s former lover and mother of his son. She has a name of considerable significance: Marcus = Mark Us. And she certainly left her mark on Kirk. He apparently loved her deeply but found himself in the circumstances where

he had to choose between settling down to a “normal” family life and continuing with Starfleet. Perhaps he feared a “normal life” because it would unbalance him away from the path of the hero: emotionally isolated. He may have feared anything concerning feeling, irrationality. Perhaps by fearing the loss of the intellectual in deference to the emotional, he overcompensated and lost that all-important connection with his own feelings.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Dr. Marcus, in addition to being a brilliant scientist, is symbolic of the powerful and profoundly transforming feminine principle. She deeply affects Kirk three times in the course of the story. The first, of course, happened off-screen many years ago – their love affair and child. The second, which I am about to describe in detail, is during an elevator ride when Kirk exhibits a powerful reaction on hearing her name for the first time after so many years. The third is his physical encounter with her and her works in the Genesis cave. Each time her effect is most complex because, unlike most of the other characters, she affects him simultaneously as a woman in the physical world and as a symbol in the world of the psyche. As this incident in the elevator, the second descent in the film, is particularly telling, let me describe it in some detail.

If we give Kirk’s first descent a simple surface reading, we see him merely riding the turbo-lift from the bridge of the Enterprise down to his private quarters.

However, we have already seen that most of the elements in this film are loaded with symbolic meaning, and this is no exception. In fact, on a symbolic level this is one of the most telling scenes in the film – it demonstrates Kirk’s willingness to move downward, admittedly in a very limited scale at this early point in the film, away from an area of command and control toward an area where healing can take place. It is movement from the area of the collective, where he must present his public image to those around him, to the personal where he can face his own inner

male demons. In addition, it signifies Kirk's important ability to step away from the area of conscious control, into the depths of his unconscious and allow things he does not fully understand take their course. It shows his positive view of the world – that given a chance, things will turn out right no matter how painful the necessary route to that destination. Ultimately it may be this belief that distinguishes him from Khan, marking him for health while dooming Khan to death.

If this were a simple elevator ride, I would admit that the above is an unjustified over-reading of the meaning of an every-day occurrence. However, it is the filmmaking itself, that is, the way the camera and the editing are handled, that confirm these interpretative possibilities. In fact, I feel this scene is an excellent example of film editing used to generate symbolic meanings. Had it been edited differently or had the camera been placed differently, the sequence would have required a different reading, or the meanings would simply have disappeared.



To better understand this downward journey, let us look at it step by step. First, Kirk tries to enter the turbo-lift alone but Saavik slips through the closing doors to

join him. Now changed out of her tight and stiff uniform, she wears a soft white blouse, her hair down. These changes reflect an increasing external femininity, but also signify a glimmer of internal growth away from the tightly uniformed male world around her toward a more balanced masculine/feminine inner life. (Only Spock, when he is meditating, is seen out of uniform.)

As before in the trainer, Lieutenant Saavik asks to “speak freely,” but finds it very difficult. Her inability to speak is a sign of her own lack of external power and at the same time symbolic of Kirk’s own weak internal feminine function. (Recall that one of her aspects is the symbolic feminine in formation.) The psychic connection between Kirk and Saavik is clearly shown by Kirk’s intuitive knowledge of her concerns – he even speaks for her. (She is curious about how Kirk cheated death in the Kobiyashi Maru test.) He thinks he knows what his internal feminine wants – a bit of hubris, this. He can still manipulate her (the external Saavik and his own internal feminine) at this point. Later he will have to learn to give up this ego-control and let the feminine speak with her own voice. And what she will then have to say to him will not be very pleasant.

Saavik has literally “let her hair down.” I interpret this to mean that she has gone as far as she can at this point in her own development toward asking about Kirk’s problems and their possible solution. It is interesting that McCoy, the externalized emotional function, comments on the change in hair style, which Kirk claims not to notice.

This whole conversation between Saavik and Kirk is filmed to look very two dimensional. Even the close-ups are planar, seemingly done with a longer than normal focal-length lens. This optical effect does not change when the elevator

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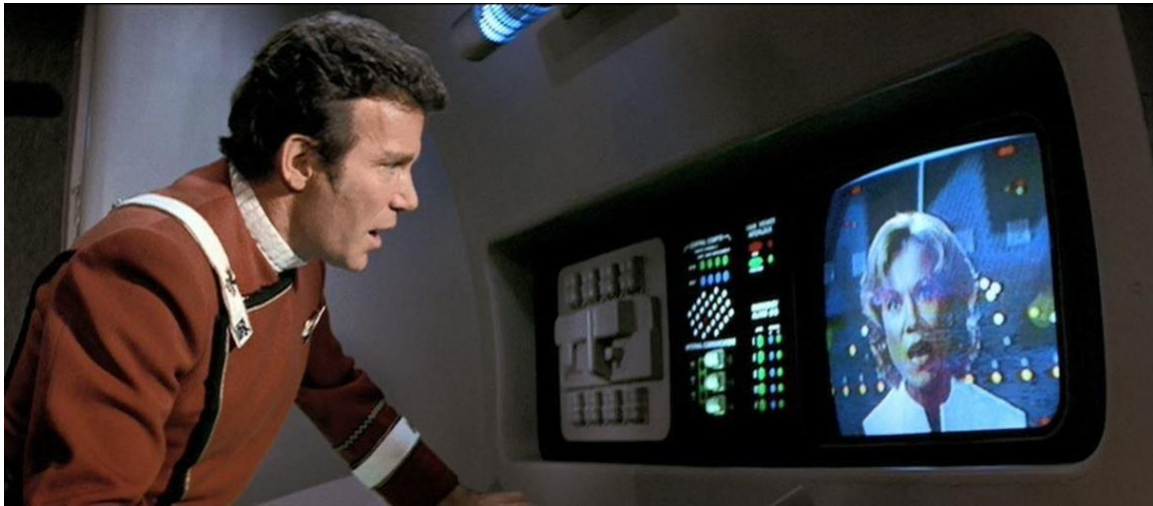
stops, Saavik leaves and McCoy, the symbol of the emotional, enters. McCoy comments on Saavik's hair, *he* noticed her symbolic increase in femininity. Kirk denies noticing, clearly avoiding admitting (to himself, of course) any possible interaction with the feminine. The camera continues to record the conversation in flatness.



So far, the conversation between Kirk and Saavik has been photographed flat. That is, the characters are seen either full face or in profile. However, this changes radically at the first mention of Dr. Marcus' name. We see our first three-quarter view of Kirk, a strikingly three-dimensional picture that seems to almost pop off the screen. Used with sensitivity, camera technique and editing can contribute greatly to the symbolic depth of a film, as this scene shows so well.

Neither Saavik nor McCoy, in their symbolic functions, could bring Kirk out of his emotional flatness. We now realize that it will be Dr. Marcus' influence that will, so to speak, "round out" Kirk's deficient and two-dimensional psyche. Note that even after Kirk has been injected with this metaphoric three-dimensionality, McCoy continues to be photographed in flatness. This pivotal scene indicates two important aspects of this film: First, since his initial encounter with multi-dimensionality takes place during his first descent, we can assume that the location of Kirk's cure will take place in the depths – both physical and psychological – and, second, the role of feminine influence on Kirk now passes from the growing, learning, and developing Saavik to the fully mature, experienced, and powerful Marcus.

It should come as no surprise that once Kirk descends to his destination – his private quarters – his communication with Dr. Marcus (the powerful feminine) is blurred and full of static. "I can't hear you," Kirk keeps repeating. Not only is this another unexpected flaw in future technology much like the Reliant's misreading of the planet below, this is a graphic reflection of Kirk's own connection to the feminine within. In addition to defeating Khan, it is Kirk's quest in this film to come into direct contact and clear communication with all that Dr. Marcus symbolizes – the healing power of the feminine element within the male soul.



We then return to Khan, now wearing a Starfleet jacket slung over his shoulder – he seems to be half regaining his power as a ship’s captain. When his son questions the need for the quest to kill Kirk, Khan replies, “I’ll chase him ‘round the moons of Nibia and ‘round the Antares maelstrom and ‘round perdition’s flames before I give him up.” It is the Khan’s credit that, having read *Moby Dick*, he can remember a line from the 36th chapter and adapt it to his own needs on the spur of the moment. The original is, “I’ll chase him ‘round Good Hope, and ‘round the Horn, and ‘round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition’s flames before I give him up!” And, like Captain Ahab, Captain Khan will destroy his ship and himself in pursuit of his goal. Another similarity here is that in *Moby Dick*, this is the first time Ahab admits his lust to kill the whale and Khan likewise admits for the first time to his crew their new goal.



In the quotation department, Captain Picard does not do quite so well in *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996). Upon realizing that his hatred of the Borg has overwhelmed all else in his life, he semi-quotes from *Moby Dick*, “And he piled upon the whale’s white hump the sum of all the rage and hate felt by his whole race. If his chest had been a cannon, he would have shot his heart upon it.” The original, from the 41st chapter is, “He piled upon the whale’s white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart’s shell upon it.” While the quotation is apt to the situation, aside from removing the religious/Biblical reference and changing mortar to cannon, presumably because the audience may not know exactly what a mortar is, there seems to be little purpose for the changes within the context of the story.

As the Reliant slowly approaches the Enterprise in mock friendship, Khan quotes “an old Klingon proverb,” “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” While its origins are uncertain, it may have originated with the French diplomat Talleyrand (1754-1838), “*La vengeance est un met que l’un doit manger froid.*” And to complete the circle of quotations, in Quentin Tarantino’s *Kill Bill: Volume 1* [2003], it is cited as an old Klingon proverb.

"Revenge is a dish best served cold."

Kill Bill: Volume 1 [2003] – 00:45

Kahn, feigning friendship, attacks the Enterprise. Harkening back to the very first images we saw in the film, we see the schematic Enterprise tumbling in space.



THE THIRD DESCENT – HEALING IN THE DEPTHS

We have just described the first, on-screen encounter with Dr. Marcus' feminine power – the mere mention of her name upsets Kirk and shocks him into three dimensionality. The second descent completed the connections between the four major elemental forces: Saavik, Kirk, Khan (Kirk's evil mirror), and Marcus (Kirk's possibility of recovering his devalued feminine). However, these are mere foretastes, a prelude to an even more powerful manifestation of these characters that takes place during the third and pivotal descent. Here Kirk undertakes a very complex journey: a face-to-face encounter between Kirk and Marcus that occurs in a place that is a very powerful symbol of the unconscious – in the very bowels of

the Genesis planetoid itself. In many ways his journey is reminiscent of an alchemical dictum codified by Basil Valentine, “Visita Interiora Terrae Redtificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem” (‘Visit the interior of the Earth, and by purification thou wilt find the secret Stone’).^{xiv} This, then, is where Kirk’s ultimate cure will take place, in the deepest descent, in the very deepest reaches of his unconscious.

The descent takes place in two distinct stages, each of which have bearing on Kirk’s cure. First, he leaves the wounded Enterprise to investigate the apparently deserted Regula research station floating mid-way between the Enterprise and the planetoid; from there he continues the journey downward into the heart of the planetoid itself. Here he finally seeks the necessary earthness (his last contact with solidity was in his home in San Francisco) that will counterbalance the airy intellect of space travel. Let’s look in detail at what happens at each step.

As a prelude to his decision to visit the Regula station, Kirk asks Spock for information. Spock replies that the sensors and scanners are inoperative. Given what has gone before, it should be no surprise that the intellect, represented by Spock, can provide little or no knowledge about the content of the unconscious. No matter how much we try to use our rational powers – our sensors and scanners – we can learn very little of our own internal darkness. Thinking about it does not help. It is only by a daring plunge directly into that darkness, risking a direct experience, that knowledge can be obtained. And this is exactly what Kirk, to his great credit, does. And this is still another example of the multiple failures of their technology.

This instrument breakdown echoes a similar prelude to the film’s first descent from the Reliant to Ceti/Alpha. But now there is an important difference. Whereas

Terrell and Chekov had not realized that their “instruments” had failed them, the Kirk/Spock Ego/Intellect complex is aware that the intellectual function is insufficient where the internal life of the soul is concerned and cannot be relied upon too much. This awareness prepares Kirk in a way that Terrell and Chekov lacked. They trusted solely to the intellect; Kirk readies for the challenge ahead by knowing he cannot rely on intellect alone.

It is no coincidence that Kirk’s companions on his trip to the Regula space-station are the same as the occupants of the previous elevator descent. There he experienced them one-at-a-time: first Saavik (the immature feminine) and then McCoy (the emotional). Individually, they were ineffective to influence him. Unfortunately, now, even combined, they cannot cure Kirk of his current over-attachment to his internal intellectual function.

It is also interesting to note who is *not* accompanying Kirk into this descent into the unconscious: Spock or Scotty, the usual companions on previous adventures. Kirk abandons Spock and Scotty, leaving these symbols of the intellect and masculinity above in the ship where they belong – to repair the damage caused by Khan (symbolic, in this case, of overwrought intellect and masculinity). Kirk’s journey downward is a search for his own emotional and feminine sensitivity, leaving the others behind commits him to this search.



Perhaps I have overly stressed Saavik's symbolic nature. We must be aware that Saavik is also an interesting character in her own right. Her increasing personal emotional capacity is indicated by the fib she tells to be able to join the party. She does not ask outright to join the boarding party since this, I presume, would reveal her growing emotional (and thus irrational) bond to her fellow crew members. Her lie is clumsy and immediately transparent to all – and slightly embarrassing to her. This is to be expected since she is, at this point, just trying out her own newly maturing emotional values. As quaint and clumsy it may be, it is still an important and positive step. This is an important and unexpected emotional response on her part. In many fairy tales and myths, it is common for the male or female hero to ignore the prohibitions set down by the society, face the fear of breaking laws, and follow personal intuition. Knowing when to lie is a skill that cannot be derived from the intellect alone, it must arise from a combination of emotion and intuition. This is what Saavik is beginning to feel. Saavik's liminal state is emphasized in the film. To make this point, while searching the Regula station, Saavik emerges from behind a door labeled, "synthostasis." This neologism is a compound the "stasis," this is non-movement, with "synthesis," something new forming.



Once in the Regula station, Saavik reports “indeterminate life signs.” Technology, constantly equated with the intellect, once again fails. It is left to Kirk to reveal that life does exist there. On a symbolic level we can see that this makes sense. The growing Saavik, now an intermediate and a confused blend of emotion/intellect, masculine/feminine, is only partially in touch with the goings-on in the unconscious. Thus, to her, life in the unconscious is “indeterminate.”



That a rat should be aboard a scientific research station in space has always struck me as very bizarre. However, the rat, I believe, serves two functions: dramatic and symbolic. It holds McCoy's attention so he can back into the hanging corpses – Khan's grotesque handiwork. We share McCoy's shock and repulsion. Again, Khan is shown as the ultimate destination of Kirk's downward spiral if his path is unaltered. Since we have seen signs to indicate an impending cure, dramatically it is appropriate to remind us of alternate possibilities at this point. In addition, the rat has long been used in Western art as a symbol of the devil or Satan.^{xv} Immediately after seeing the rat, we see the evil work done by Khan. This reinforces the previous associations made between Khan and Satan.



It is not only in corpses that Khan left his touch of evil in the Regula station. His imprint also remains on Chekov and Terrell, biologically raped/seduced into cooperating with his evil intent. His method of delivering traitors into Kirk's midst – locked into a container – cannot but resemble the Trojan horse – another fine reflection on Khan's classical education. This was elegantly presaged by Dr. McCoy's words^{xvi} on bringing Kirk his birthday present, "Beware Romulans bearing gifts."



Kirk finds Chekov and Terrell and releases them, naively allowing them to join the search for Dr. Marcus. We know they are still tainted, for during the first words that Terrell speaks to Kirk, behind Terrell is the word, “Caution.” Yet Kirk accepts them. At this point we find Kirk about to descend further into the symbolic unconscious with an ever-expanding circle of companions, now accompanied by the symbolic representations of the immature but growing feminine, the emotional, and agents of his own evil “other.”

Khan, in his rage, searched the station and questioned the people, but could not find the Genesis machine. Nor did he descend far enough within the station to find the transporter. Kirk, using a growing combination of logic and intuition, easily finds the coordinates to beam down further. Khan cannot be healed; he cannot find the coordinates into the healing darkness and depths of the unconscious. This is his death sentence. By his own admission he has a superior intellect – and by implication a weakened emotional function. He has totally and hopelessly lost the moderating influence of the feminine – constantly raised to blind anger, he is out of

touch with all feelings other than revenge. In this aspect he is purely male and in sharp contrast to Kirk who is now beginning to balance his male and female sides. Khan is oblivious to the warmer feelings of those around him. His fate is sealed. He lacks the correct complement of symbolic companions to supply him with the needed balance. His current companions, spewing hollow adulation, feed only his already over-inflated ego. He has no Dr. Marcus to change him from a two-dimensionality to a full, three-dimensional life. As we shall see this is, indeed, what defeats him the final battle with Kirk – his two-dimensionality.

So, Kirk and his companions descend from the Regula station down into the physically deepest location in the film – actually deep inside the Regula planetoid. From what we have seen before, this physical depth corresponds to psychological depth. Here, in the ultimate depths of his unconscious, Kirk's circle of curative symbols finally becomes complete. King Arthur has been joined by all the symbolic knights of the Round Table; the Grail is at hand.



Kirk meets his son, a future that could have been, in an appropriately Oedipal fight.^{xvii} It is through his son's presence that Kirk finally realizes his past errors. Then Kirk is reunited with Dr. Marcus, his long-lost lover and the symbol of the powerful and healing feminine. But before the feminine can begin her cure, Kirk must first face evil directly, observe its effect and understand the means of its expiation. Only then will he be ready for his own regeneration. They will have to face death together before a full emotional bond can be cemented between them. Kirk and his son survive death threatened ironically by the explosion of the Genesis machine, (the bringer of new life), not by heroic efforts, but by a simple, stoic stance. What saves lives here is the final death of Kirk's symbolic intellect, Mr. Spock. Only after this do Kirk's emotions blossom toward his son.

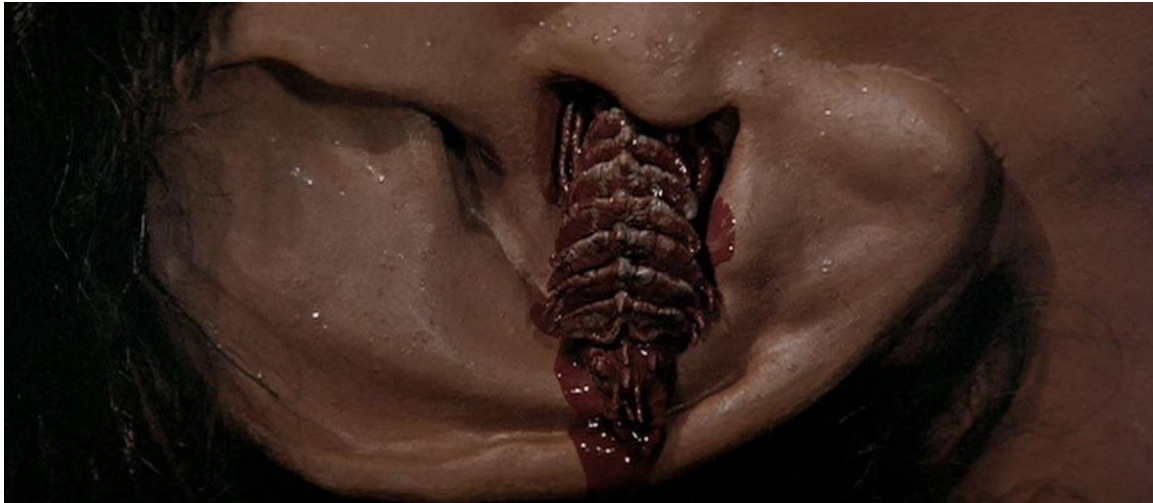
Chekov and Terrell reveal themselves as Khan's spies. Summoning his humanity to fight the marionette he has become, Terrell tears electronic wires from his wrists attempting to free himself. This freedom is at least partially regained, for rather than kill Kirk, turns the phaser on himself.

Immediately after Terrell's sacrificial suicide, Khan's worm is inexplicably expelled from Chekov's brain. This representation of Khan's evil power and control, this, according to Kahn, Ceti/Alpha V's single life form, is appropriately killed by Kirk, his phaser reducing it to dust. There seems to be no logical connection between the two events – Terrell's suicide and Chekov's release – yet the film implies one event is a consequence of the other. By discovering the connection, we get an important insight into the symbolic progress of the film.



There is indeed a connection between Terrell's self-sacrifice ^{xviii} and Chekov's self recovery, but it is a deeply hidden, religiously oriented one. The two unwilling traitors (or sinners in the Biblical sense), Terrell and Chekov, play the role of redeemer and redeemed in a way that moves the basis of the symbolism used in the film from primarily Old Testament to the New (a shift that seems to have begun with the reuniting of god-Kirk and his son). We get a hint of this religiosity from the door behind Terrell, bearing, as it does, a large and unmistakable cross contained within an almost Omega-shaped design. ^{xix} Once pointed out, this symbolism becomes rather heavy handed, but while watching this particularly poignant scene in the film, most viewers won't direct much attention to a background when so much is happening in the foreground. Thus, these symbols seem to act on the viewer's unconscious and give the story certain "feelings" and "hunches" rather than explanations. Nonetheless, it brings to bear the traditional Christian interpretation of self-sacrifice as being cleansing to self and others. Just as Jesus' sacrifice cleansed sins from all, ^{xx} so Terrell's sacrifice expunges not only himself, but Chekov too. Chekov is cleansed of his temporary sojourn with the Satan-Khan; the thrall is broken. The evil creature can no longer abide the newly

cleansed Chekov just as, in Biblical days, demons fled from the bodies of those touched by Jesus' cleansing hand.



Should we make anything of the fact that Terrell is Black? In almost any other film I would immediately undertake a search for social and political meanings, but within what I feel is a well-known context and history of the Star Trek canon, I feel there is little significance here. But the very fact that there is no significance to Terrell's racial background is itself significant (aside from the implications that the Jesus figure in this film is black). Star Trek has, from its inception, been probably the most racially integrated show on TV. The Enterprise's crew itself is more like a visit to the United Nations than a TV program – especially one from the 1960's. To the best of my knowledge, the first scripted interracial kiss on television was aired on the Star Trek episode *Plato's Stepchildren* (November 22, 1968) where Kirk kisses Uhura full and long on the lips. It is most important – in fact, highly laudable – that we can see a Black man like Terrell err, struggle, morally judge himself, come to a decision, act on it decisively and bravely, and significantly affect all around him *without* his race becoming a part of the process. It is perhaps one of the

high points of Star Trek's humanism⁵ that we can say of Terrell quite simply, "He was a man ... a good man." I think we should make no more of Terrell being Black than Uhura.

But back to the story. Unable to kill Kirk by remote control, Khan steals the Genesis machine. What does Khan want with it? He says he wants to hurt Kirk, but how will stealing a piece of laboratory equipment hurt Kirk? Marcus can always build another one. As a weapon it can only be used once and anyway the armaments on board Khan's ship are far more effective. No, the hurt Khan wants to inflict upon Kirk is not physical but one couched in the symbolism already established in the film. The key is in what Khan's compatriots so clearly point out to him: he can now travel and settle anywhere he wants. But these already existing places are not sufficient to his aspirations. In parallel to Satan's final challenge to God's singular power, Khan must personally perpetrate a biblical Genesis by using the technological Genesis machine to create a planet in his own image. This is the hurt to be caused to god-Kirk.

⁵ For me, personally, this humanism is sorely lacking in the Star Trek films following *Wrath of Khan*. In *Khan*, the ethical motto so oft repeated is that, "The good of the many outweighs the good of the few ... or the one" clearly shows a humanistically positive moral stance. In the third film, *The Search for Spock* (1984), this has been corrupted to, "The good of the one outweighs the good of the many." A line that, in my mind, would fit well in the mouth of a Benito Mussolini and his ilk. I'm afraid that here the Star Trek liberalism of the 1960's has been modernized to fit better the yuppie ideology of the Reagan era.

An alternative explanation for Khan's desire to acquire the Genesis device is that its use may be curative. In a symbolic way Khan makes a desperate attempt to engage his feminine function, that of creation, with which he is totally out of touch. Perhaps he wants to imitate the birth process through the Genesis machine. This would be a parallel move to Kirk's symbolic rebirth that is about to take place in the Genesis cave. However, Khan goes about it all wrong. He uses his all too male aspect – theft, threat, plotting, revenge, and so on – to attempt to only imitate the feminine, not to really engage it.

Terrell's self-sacrifice has multiple reverberations. Not only does it instantly cure Chekov, but it also sets into motion Kirk's regeneration. Terrell, knowing Kirk by reputation only, has made a blatantly emotional decision – one to resist evil, to fight with his last effort the scheming of the superior intellect. Terrell demonstrates to Kirk the power available to him by abandoning the intellectual and following his heart. Unconsciously following his example, Kirk gives his previously dominant intellect a back seat and his healing can now begin. But it is only after Kirk fully accepts his past ill-chosen course (Marcus, his son, Khan, etc.) that the casting out of demons can begin in earnest.

As with many great events, initial portents at first seem trivial. Here the first signs of regeneration are most mundane: Kirk says he is hungry. This is a small but very significant movement away from the dominance of the intellect. He has taken the first step to get in touch with *his* needs (as opposed to the needs of his ship, his crew, Starfleet, etc.) and, in this case, it is the needs of his own body. He eats and nourishes himself; a significant, if still symbolic, first step in his curative experience. Perhaps his hunger is symbolic of his psychological hunger for

connection with his own internal state. He is about to eat from the tree of knowledge, in this case the knowledge of the healing power of the feminine.

Alone, Terrell's Christian healing self-sacrifice is not enough. Unlike Chekov's cure, which took place instantly and seemingly inexplicably, we must follow Kirk's healing transformation step by agonizing step. Kirk must suffer more; he must experience more of his unconscious. The evil that inhabits his soul must first be recognized, named, enumerated, admitted, and owned. While Chekov's cure was based primarily in Christian ideology, Kirk must travel even further back into deeper, pre-Christian territories of the psyche for his cure.

Dr. Marcus' influence is now demonstrated for the third time in this film – at the lowest ebb in Kirk's feelings. If Kirk's living quarters on board the Enterprise symbolized the area of his unconscious where he buried his relationship with Dr. Marcus – the person and the symbol – how much deeper he has now plumbed in this cave? Robert Donington^{xxi} quite aptly points out that, "To return to the Earth-Mother carries mythologically and symbolically the meaning of going down into the unconscious as into a womb from which to be reborn. Going down into the unconscious nevertheless feels to the ego like annihilation."^{xxii} Here Kirk admits that he feels old, an embittered enemy is trying to defeat him, and he suspects his own son would be delighted to help. He has had to recognize the price he paid for his command of the Enterprise and his leadership position in Starfleet, his allegiance to his crew, his ship, and the Federation. He is feeling old and tired. In his fear of embracing the emotional, Kirk has over-committed himself to the intellectual. He, like many men in our own day, has not found balance. Even though it is currently voiced more often by women, it is a difficult decision for many men too – home or career. His choice, he now realizes, has cost him dearly.

Kirk's regeneration from the brink of annihilation comes about through a reaffirmation of both life and emotion. It takes place in two steps symbolized by two meetings – his son and Dr. Marcus. He meets his son for the first time – under predictably Oedipal conditions – and yet it changes him. He literally freezes in his tracks in the shock of recognition. He recognizes his son as his equal and realizes he loves him but cannot yet express this love and respect. At this point, the crippled nature of their relationship is demonstrated by the foundation upon which Kirk bases his respect for his son: on the traditional male ritual of physical combat.⁶ Kirk is not yet ready to accept his son in an emotional way.⁷ This will happen later, only after an even more painful symbolic death and rebirth a newly rebalanced intellectual function.

6 The American tradition of the need of men to beat each other to a bloody pulp before becoming friends is represented in many films. One of the most popular and blatant examples this type of relation is portrayed between Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy in *48 Hours* (1982) .

7 They will have to face death together before a full emotional bond can be cemented between them. Kirk and his son survive death threatened ironically by the explosion of the Genesis machine, (the bringer of new life), not by heroic efforts, but by a simple, stoic stance. What saves lives here is the final death of Kirk's symbolic intellect, Mr. Spock. Only after this do Kirk's emotions blossom toward his son.

At this low point in the Genesis cave, Kirk's regeneration begins to take place powered by two forces – masculine and feminine. It is only through balance that balance can be regained. We have seen the influence of his son as the masculine force. Now let us look at the equally necessary feminine force. The film has led us to believe that it would be through contact with the immature but growing feminine power symbolized by Saavik that this would take place. After all she is almost always at his side on the Enterprise and tags along to the planetoid. But a far greater force must be summoned than the nascent feminine Saavik represents. Kirk's regeneration can only be fueled by fully developed and powerful feminine energy of Dr. Marcus.

His healing begins, at this emotional nadir, when Dr. Marcus asks Kirk one of the most important questions of his life – she asks about his feelings. So deceptively simple, so easy, so obvious, yet so perfectly timed, so penetrating, so significant, and so healing. It is this power of the feminine to plumb the emotions at the right place and at the right time that ultimately cures Kirk. As soon as he expresses his fears and embraces his misery, his doubts, and his failures, he is on the road upward to reestablishing a new internal balance. At every cataclysmic cusp, no matter how fraught with danger and no matter how much we (men) want to call upon our masculine defenses for fight or flight, if we truly are to survive, we must call upon, and trust, the internal feminine.

An interesting aside is to compare Kirk's adventure in the Genesis cave to "cave episodes" in other films. Kirk meets with and joins the feminine to his benefit, success, and cure. Others have not been so fortunate. For instance, the encounter by Dr. Miles Bennell in a similar locale in Don Seigel's *Invasion of the Body*

Snatchers [1956], ends in disaster. In the earlier film, emphasizing the hopelessness

and moribund nature of the era, Miles loses Becky and never connects with her either at the physical or at the symbolic/psychological level. Another cave incident in a fine psychologically symbolic science fiction film of the same era, Jack Arnold's *It Came From Outer Space* [1953] has a clearly positive encounter with the feminine in a cave.

Once Kirk has accepted (and voiced) his failures and misery, he is literally taken by the hand and regenerated. This is clearly expressed in the structure of the film by another bit of brilliant editing.

As soon as Dr. Marcus touches Kirk's hand, we immediately cut to the Reliant. We hear the announcement that impulse power has been restored. This is a physical truth on board the Reliant; it is also a psychological truth about Kirk. He is on the road to recovery; his power is returning. For a starship, impulse power provides mobility, but it is not the main source of power. In a person, "impulse power," perhaps "impulsive power," associated with the one aspect of the symbolic feminine, functions in much the same way. Dr. Marcus shows Kirk the effect of "her creation," the Genesis machine, in the huge cave – a new Eden buried like a shining jewel in the depths of the symbolic unconscious of the planetoid. When Kirk sees the Genesis cave, he is dumb struck, awed. To push the previous simile still further, after his encounter with the gigantic cave, his "main engines" have been restored.



Kirk has gone through a classic rebirth process used by innumerable cultures from prehistoric times to the present. Cultures that have initiations rites to progress a person from one stage of life to the next seem to use the same or at least very similar symbolic devices. Our familiar fairy tale, *Little Red Riding Hood*, for instance, describes this procedure (consumption, apparent destruction and death, and rebirth with newfound power). The initiate is treated as if he or she had died and is enveloped or enclosed in the symbolic universal mother – this often involves a tree or burial in “Mother Earth.” In Kirk’s case he is buried, and according to Khan abandoned, deep within the planetoid and there meets with a powerful feminine figure. The initiate then leaves the enclosure reborn and regenerated. Again, we see the same with Kirk – he emerges from this burial into a new paradise. He has experienced a symbolic death and rebirth.

Kirk’s psychological healing, rebirth and consequent recovery within a cave is an ancient motif. Exits from caves have long been metaphors for birth. One need only think of Siegfried, the hero in Wagner’s eponymic opera, entering the cave a young and innocent man and leaving having killed a dragon (a symbol for the devouring

aspect of the mythical mother), tasted the dragon's blood, and now able to understand the language of the animals.

To look at it in another way, aside from the symbolic rebirth described above, Kirk has experienced an almost physical rebirth. If we follow his progress inside the Genesis planetoid, we are unavoidably struck by the symbolism of his movements there. He arrives by the transporter beam, unformed, consisting of simple molecules or electrical impulses. There, sperm-like, he meets his female counterpart with whom he immediately joins. Kirk, the masculine, and Marcus, the feminine, like metaphoric gametes, combine to create a new, healthy being. They pass down a narrow tube into a huge, fecund cave. There they spend a predetermined amount of time while Kirk nourishes himself physically and, by dealing with the Kobiyashi Maru test honestly for the first time, he nourishes himself psychologically. Now they once again make contact with the outside world and enter it, Kirk seems reborn as if a new man; once on board the Enterprise he exhibits a new energy and relish.⁸ We can see in him all these previously disparate elements now “intermingling in a subtle dance of secret symmetry.”^{xxiii} As Marcus promised, Kirk feels like when the world was young.

⁸ Alternately we can see the new Kirk born out of the narrow cave passage into the "outside" of the cavernous Genesis garden – birth into Genesis – life is ready to begin anew.

But there is also a healing and rebirth take place in a sphere greater than the personal. We have seen Kirk function as the vengeful, Old Testament God, one that was a wounded, lonely, paranoid, and jealous. This aspect of Kirk's personality (or perhaps symbolism would be a better word) is now also subject to transformation. Upon seeing the miraculously fecund cave for the first time, he incredulously asks Dr. Marcus, "You did this all in a day?" We can almost hear the unspoken remainder of the sentence, ". . . but it took me six." After all, what would one expect from an Old Testament God who has just discovered that the ancient Mother Goddess has beaten him to the punch in the paradise business? In character, Dr. Marcus' retort is "Can I cook, or can I?"

Once in this new paradise, Kirk is overwhelmed. He is revived by a recognition, probably unconscious, that reflects his own internal state. Gone is the embittered estrangement that separated his internal masculine and feminine. If a cold machine (almost any machine can be equated with pure intellect) guided by the hands of the feminine can bring forth life from the inert, then how much greater the possibilities for a human, no matter how cold and isolated. He follows Marcus' example: From his machine/intellect self he creates a more whole human being. He comes to life. He is hungry, he eats the fruits of the garden, this time from the tree of emotional knowledge. Indeed, if we look carefully, while in the Genesis cave, we see Kirk munching on a biblically appropriate apple!

He faces, for the first time, his evasion of dealing with death on the Kobiyashi Maru test. Rather than reprogramming the game, he acknowledges ancient, archetypal "rules" by which all must play. He allows these rules to play upon and guide him into a healthier place, one that was impossible to achieve by his ego's initiative alone. He accepts the power of the feminine and, in that moment of

recognition, is regenerated by its energy. Once recognized, he integrates his suddenly empowered internal feminine and begins to recognize his emotions. Only as a whole, balanced person can he stand up to Khan. Only after the restoration of the internal can the external be adequately dealt with. The tide of the battle now turns against Khan.

Who, then, is Dr. Marcus, this most terrible and powerful symbol of the feminine? Who could be so powerful to salve the wounds of the Old Testament God himself? She is a lover, a mother, a scientist, an ecologist, a mystic, a social reformer, and, as we have seen, both a magician and a symbol of the unconscious feminine. She is probably the most powerful woman ever portrayed in film that has not been costumed in tights (a la Superwoman, Wonder Woman, or the Bionic Woman). As the inventor of the Genesis effect, we must recognize her as the creatrix of the creation. At one point in the film Kirk addresses her, “My God, Carol ...” We need only leave out the comma to detect her true nature. She can be none other than the ancient goddess who predates the patristic god of the Old Testament: Among her many names are Isis and Sophia. Esther Harding⁹ describes Isis as, “the ancient wisdom. This means the wisdom of things as they are and as they always have been, the innate, inherent capacity to follow the nature of things both in their present form and in their inevitable development in relation to each other. It is the

9 M. Esther Harding. Women's' Mysteries – Ancient and Modern. NY: Harper & Row, 1976. p. 184.

wisdom of instinct. To the philosophers of Hellenistic times she was The Wisdom, The Sophia.” Robert Donington ^{xxiv} says of her that she “may keep the father young and human, tempering his logic with intuition and his authority with waywardness and mercy. It is her absence which may cause [the] living spirit to dry up into sterile convention and tradition, to harden into reactionary or at best stationary repressiveness.” How well all this describes Kirk. Dr. Marcus, as Sophia and Isis, is The Mother Goddess who does – as is so well illustrated in this film – the ultimate physical, emotional, spiritual, and alchemical “cooking.”

As a footnote to “the cure in the cave,” I want to look at the phrase “by the book.” On the surface, it indicates an apocryphal communication between Spock and Kirk meant to deceive Khan. Upon their return to the Enterprise, “by the book” is associated with Saavik. Saavik is left alone, told to “continue quoting rules and regulations.” The feminine has entered the world of the intellect elsewhere. It is Kirk who throws away the book – he lets go of previous rules and strictures. This, of course, is the result of his cure.¹⁰ Further results of his cure are quick to arise – his now successful battle with Khan.

However, the seeds of the *not* going by the book have been within Kirk for a long time. He confesses that as a young cadet, he reprogrammed the Kobiyashi Maru test

10 Another aspect of this “bending” of the rules is a political one. It is fully expected that a left-of-center film like this would scoff at the stiff and mindless enforcement of the rules. It is interesting that this episode clearly demonstrates, at a political, external level, the exact opposite of what happens at the psychological level.

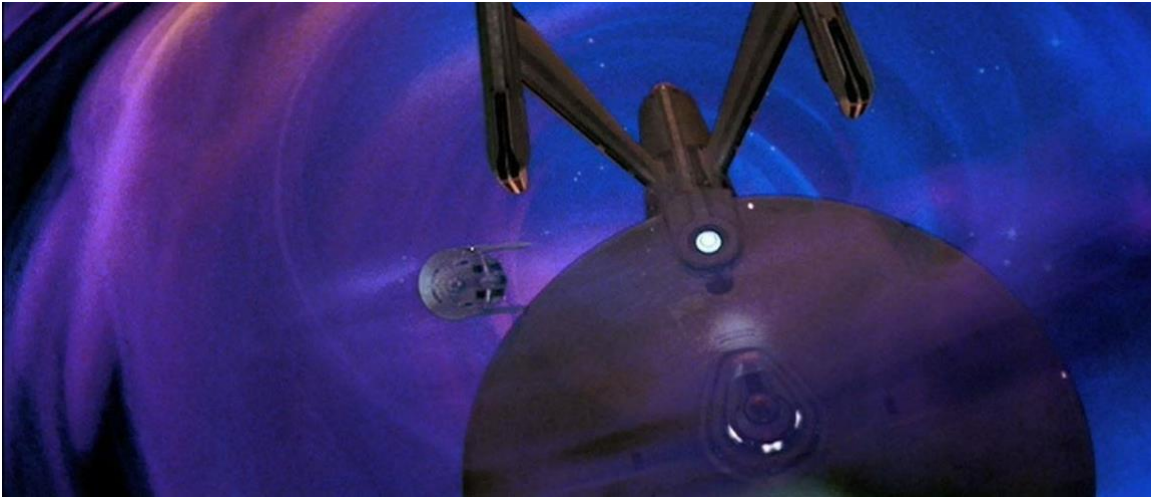
in order to succeed. At this admission, David, his son, to sum it up says, “He cheated.” Most mythological heroes have “cheated.” Apparently, in the journey from cadet to admiral, Kirk has slowly lost this ability. However, after the resurrector experience in the Genesis cave, he is ready to “cheat” again. He calls Spock to check on the ongoing repairs to the Enterprise where language was coded: “hours instead of days, minutes instead of hours . . .” This also reflects the speed of the healing taking place; we can see it constantly accelerating.

As a second footnote to the cave incident, I want to point out the simultaneous cure of Kirk and the repair of the Enterprise. In the introduction to the film (the disastrous training session) a correspondence between the Enterprise and Kirk was established – recall the tumbling outline of the ship seemingly trapped in a tumbling sphere. We now find that as soon as Kirk’s power has been restored, so the wounded Enterprise has been repaired.

THE FOURTH DESCENT – INTO THE HEAT (HEART) OF BATTLE

We have so far accounted for three of the “descents” in *The Wrath of Khan*. The first to Khan’s planet. While fraught with errors, this descent brought forth from the depths of the unconscious long buried forces that, while apparently evil, set into motion the healing process. The second descent in the elevator brought together, though still at a great physical distance, Kirk and the ultimate source of his healing. It clearly indicated that Dr. Marcus would be the source of Kirk’s transformation from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional being. The third descent into the heart of the Genesis planetoid brought together all the forces and symbols

necessary to affect that healing. There is yet another descent in this film that has great significance – the final battle with Khan within the Mutaran nebula.



We have seen that Khan, unlike Kirk, cannot descend into the unconscious and therefore cannot be healed into full life, into three-dimensionality. Now, during the final battle, Spock comments on the limited, two-dimensionality of Khan's thinking. Kirk, having learned his lessons well, causes the Enterprise itself to descend, dipping down and gathering in the power of a collective unconscious, rising and finally conquering his foe.

The cured Kirk can descend fearlessly into the depths of the unconscious, harnessing its power and bringing to light the proper, balanced answers to his problems. He no longer relies on external vision, he can fight Khan "blind," depending, like Oedipus, solely on the power of "in-sight." Khan cannot "descend," cannot obtain or harness the healing feminine power. It is ultimately the power generated from Kirk's internal balance between masculine and feminine, between intellect and emotion, that defeats Khan. Where one succeeds, the other is doomed.

During this final battle we see another of the parallels that abound in this film. Khan loses his son while Kirk regains his. Khan's son dies because of Khan's over-commitment to the "superior" intellect. Perhaps "superior" here means both increased or improved *and* raised above. Khan has put his intellect in a superior position, and this has proven his undoing. His feelings have been reduced to the "inferior" position. Kirk, on the other hand, has achieved a balance whereby his intellect is neither superior nor inferior, it cooperates. In this way, Kirk is reunited with both the mother and the son.

At his point in the analysis of this film, I feel I must confess that I have intentionally chosen not to look in detail at an ascent and an additional descent. The ascent is when Kirk first comes aboard the Enterprise on an inspection tour. After reviewing the cadets, he takes a lift upward while postponing the inspection tour. Since he ignores what is necessary, I feel he is ascending into a blindness of his own choosing. On his way up, he mouths the word "later" to Dr. McCoy. The need to "take care of things" has no voice yet. He ascends into his ego, blind and voiceless, but this is a temporary state as external forces will shortly have their way with Admiral Kirk.



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The fifth descent is a little more difficult to gloss over. After the battle between Kirk and Khan that we have just looked at, Spock leaves his seat on the bridge of the Enterprise and descends to the engine room to make repairs to the engines. These repairs save the lives of the crew but at the cost of his own life. The outward manifestation of Kirk's intellectual brain-half has descended into the unconscious where the power of the psyche resides, appropriately symbolized by the engine room. Here it makes repairs and dies – a point that I will deal with shortly. Kirk follows Spock's descent. There he finally encounters face-to-face not only his inevitable physical death, but also his own dying and isolated intellect. He survives only because he has been prepared for this tragedy by his healing encounter with the powerful feminine forces represented by Dr. Marcus. At the physical level, at the level of the text, Kirk is now emotionally prepared to mourn the loss of his best friend. At the symbolic level, however, something very different takes place. To understand this, we must take a closer look at Spock's death.



RESOLUTION – SPOCK’S BICAMERAL DEATH

Kirk has, through contact with the healing forces of the feminine, regenerated his emotional functions. But what are we to make of Kirk’s symbolic intellectual function, Spock, remaining on the ship? We must now look at Spock’s fate, as a person and as a symbol.

After the battle with Khan, Spock dies. His death is shatteringly painful, and despite that, an eventual rebirth is clearly implied in the film, “we have first to experience that dark night of the soul in which no glimmering of light suggests that there may yet be another dawn.”¹¹ Because of the strength of this reaction, it is easy to overlook the idea that Spock’s death has great meaning within the symbology that has been carefully established throughout this film.

First, if we have been paying attention to the film’s various subtexts, the appearance of death should not take us by surprise. Death’s presence was predicted quite early in the film – Spock “dies” in the opening sequence of the film. On first seeing the newly resurrected Spock, Kirk comments, “I thought you were dead?” Death is again predicted with Kirk first steps on board the Enterprise through the torpedo tube bay (itself an instrument of death). He comments to Spock in a strange

¹¹ Donnington, op. cit., p. 256.

linguistic juxtaposition that they've "been through death and life together" (as if one must precede the other). It is ironic that later this same torpedo bay is the site of Spock's funeral rites. And we must note that Spock's last words to Doctor McCoy, "Remember," echo Hamlet's father's ghost's last words to his son, "Remember me."

Spock's death must be seen as a chess-like movement of well-established symbols. Consider the constant use of the concept of the bicameral mind – the interplay between emotion and logic, between right and left-brain halves and its relation to the metaphor of vision. *The Wrath of Khan* is rife with symbols of vision and its lack. We saw this in the unexpectedly blinding conditions experienced by Chekov and Terrell on arrival at Ceti/Alpha. The weather conditions on Ceti/Alpha never changed – like Khan's psyche.



But here I want to point out another example where progress in achieving balance is developed through the dynamic evolution of these images. Earlier in the film, Admiral Kirk visits Captain Spock to announce, quite clumsily, that he is taking

command of the Enterprise. We see the relation between Spock and Kirk clearly demonstrated in the graphics of the film. Spock is meditating, Kirk enters the room and is reflected in an infinitely deep mirror above Spock's head. Later as Kirk moves closer to Spock, the camera makes a series of clearly calculated moves to make the mirror, still with Kirk's reflection in it, looks like a halo or nimbus over Spock's head. At this early point in the film, this shows us quite bluntly where Kirk's "head is at" – on top of Spock's own commitment to pure intellect. His is a too great trust in and a too great inflation of the intellectual function. Let us compare this to a later, similar scene, during Spock's death, where the reflections indicate an integration, rather than an inflation of the intellectual function.

In the engine room, Kirk and the dying Spock speak for the last time. Here we have a symbolic summary of the action that has taken place during the body of the film. The engine room is, of course, the source of power. Through Spock's self-sacrifice the source of power has been repaired and the ship secured from Khan's threat. This is true at the physical level on the Enterprise and on the symbolic level of Kirk's psyche.



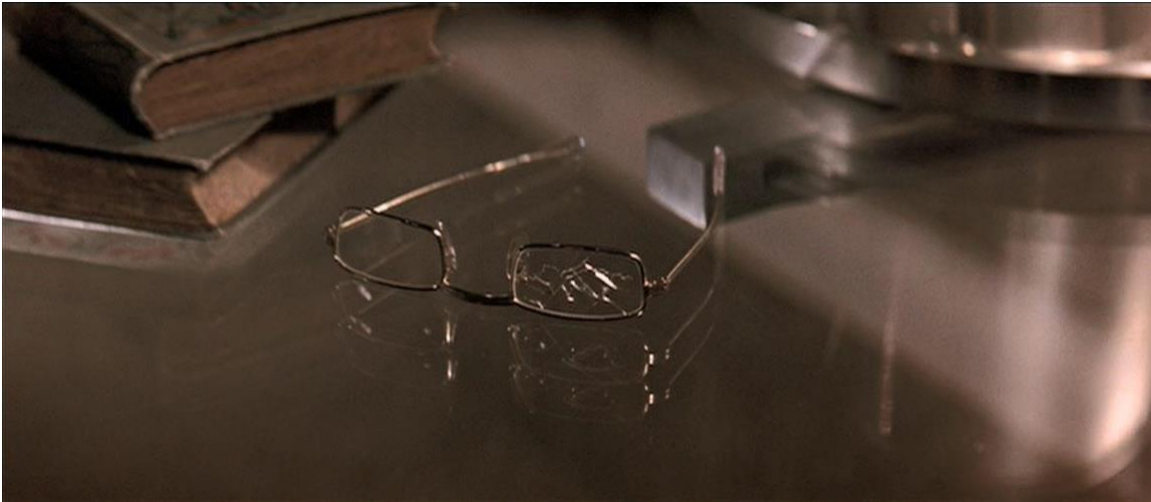
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As they speak, we see Kirk's and Spock's images subtly blend – the reflection of one superimposed on the face of the other. At one point, Kirk's hands appear over Spock's head in a position reminiscent of a blessing or benediction. The relationship between them, visually symbolized in this way, is now one of healthy integration. This combining of the intellectual function, Spock, into Kirk is in stark contrast to the separated reflections we saw at their earlier meeting in Spock's quarters, at the very beginning of Kirk's healing journey.

After Spock's death we are again reminded of his symbolic function. Scotty plays "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes. The words, "Once I was blind, but now I can see," describes Kirk's condition quite well. But the "seeing" here is not to be taken literally, it has little to do with his use of eyeglasses. For Kirk "sight" occurs through the death of Spock, and the parallel "death" of his symbolic intellect. In the final statement of the film he equates feeling with youth: the restoration of balance between intellect and emotion lead to rejuvenation.

It is ironic that the restoration of the emotional comes through the greatest possible emotional trauma – the defeat of his own intellect symbolized by the death of his best friend

– Mr. Spock. The symbolism in this film is so carefully crafted that after Spock's death, one lens of Kirk's glasses is broken – in the bicameral brain model, it is the one corresponding to the intellectual brain-half!



The symbol of the eyeglasses is deliciously ironic. Only by destroying the means of vision can vision be regained. Only through death is there the possibility of rebirth and life. Kirk's emotional faculties are regenerated only at the sacrifice of his overbearing intellectual function. Kirk's sense of life, his youthfulness, is regenerated only through the death of his own fears of contact with other human (and non-human) beings. All these "deaths" are, of course, symbolic, opportunities for regeneration and rebirth.

If we are to pursue the symbolism of the bicameral mind to its logical conclusion, we are left with a very difficult and disturbing question at the end of the film. Can one live any better with a dead intellect than with an overinflated one? The answer is, of course not. How, then, can we account for Spock's death? Like much of this film, the answer comes from a complex play of symbols.

Spock is not dead; he is just enjoying a well-deserved rest in a newly made Garden of Eden. The previously over-burdened intellect, after its battle, must now rest, come down from the pedestal where it was unwillingly placed, recover, and formulate for itself some newer, healthier, more balanced role. Just as Admiral

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Kirk's downward journey into the Genesis-filled cave was curative, so now equally curative is Mr. Spock's parallel visit to the same place now fully formed. The Mother Goddess' transformation of the planetoid has been completed – Spock, the symbolic intellect, now rests in balance in a new, feminine generated paradise.

Spock lives, of course. Given all the Biblical references – Old Testament and New Testament - that have gone before, the film implies this quite clearly. In our last glimpse of

Spock's coffin (after being shot into a very symbolic sunrise) on the Genesis planet where everything is all growth and regeneration, we see written on the side of the photon torpedo ^{xxv} capsule "Mark VI." If we turn to the Gospel of Mark ^{xxvi} and read Chapter 6, we find that "He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him . . . And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray. And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land."



CONCLUSIONS

As most people must, Kirk experienced a troubled and tortuous transition from one phase of life to another. Like the ebb and flow of a tide, the energy of life can either pour inward toward introspection or outward into the world of beings and things. While these are by no means mutually exclusive, it is most common for the outward pouring to assume greater importance in the earlier portions of life and the inward movement in the later part of life. Kirk has ignored the inward aspect far too long. It has caught up with him. To his credit, he faced it, suffered, and arrived at a new balance. He may have to go through all this again if the correct balance has not been struck or cannot be kept. But this film clearly shows us a positive transition from an outward-oriented person to a healthier balance between the outward and the inward.

Another change that has taken place in Kirk is in relation to his flexibility. At the beginning of the film he seemed to have become quite brittle in his role as an Admiral, piloting a desk. His refusal to playfully jest with the doctor when asked about McCoy's acting abilities clearly illustrate this. With age comes the need to relax the willfulness of the ego. If the ego is successful in its attempt at domination, the overall personality itself will surely suffer. *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* presents a positive outcome of an inner struggle: Kirk becomes more flexible, not less, not only with the outer world with Dr. Marcus, his son, but also within his own inner world. He has gained a more mature stance toward the requirements of his psyche; he has come into touch with his own personal inner reality. What more could we ask of a film, to see a man go where he has not dared go before?

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Spoto, Donald. *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976, p. 8.

- ii Jung, C. G., "Psychology and Religion," in *The Complete Works*, Vol 11, Princeton Univ. Press, NY, 1969, p. 35.
- iii Donnington, Robert. *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*. 3rd ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1974, p. 91.
- iv Donnington, op. cit. p. 181.
- v Jung, C. G., "Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious." In the *Complete Works*, Vol 9, Pt. 1, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969. para. 434.
- vi The limits of Spock's logic are clearly demonstrated in the TV episode *The Galileo Seven*. Here, Spock is in charge of a marooned crew and goes through all the logical options to accomplish rescue, but to no avail. Only after abandoning logic, a la Kirk, is the problem solved.
- vii Trip, Edward. The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology. NY: New American Library, 1970, p. 309.
- viii Being dyslexic, it took me a long time to distinguish between the written Roman numerals IV and VI. I cannot but wonder if the writers, working on paper, were faced with the same problem or planned the whole joke/symbolism.

- ix For further information, see Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible*, NY: Harper & Row, 1987, pp. 238-41.
- x Realizing that Saavik is of Vulcan/Romulan heritage, I use the term “humanity” generically and without irony.
- xi See, *The Origin of Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind*, Julian Jaynes, 1976. While Jaynes’ theories have been “debunked” by several authors and no longer hold the sway that they did on publication, they are still quite useful in film analysis.
- xii Cobb, Noel. *Prospero's Island: The Secret Alchemy at the Heart of the Tempest*. London: Coventure Press, 1984. p. 34.
- xiii Donington, op. cit., p. 101
- xiv As quoted in Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 162.
- xv Cirlot, J. E. *Dictionary of Symbols*. 2nd ed. NY: Philosophical Library, 1971, p. 272.

xvi This oblique reference to the Trojan War has considerable symbolic value that supports our interpretation of the basic meaning of this movie. The Trojan War was about the regaining of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. This is a symbolic struggle to reintegrate the positive and healing aspect of the internal feminine. Kirk, like the Greek heroes of that war, is attempting to heal himself by regain contact with the feminine aspect of his inner self.

xvii The American tradition of the need of men to beat each other to a bloody pulp before becoming friends is represented in many films. One of the most popular and blatant examples this type of relation is portrayed between Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy in Walter Hill's *48 Hours* (1982).

xviii Terrell's decision is quite unlike Spock's later decision to sacrifice "the good of the one for the good of the many." The contrast between the two methods of arriving at the same end are most striking – one emotional and one logical. Personally, I find this humanism is sorely lacking in the Star Trek films following *The Wrath of Khan*. In *Khan*. The ethical motto so oft repeated is that, "The good of the many outweighs the good of the few ... or the one" clearly shows a humanistic, positive moral stance. In the third film, *The Search for Spock* (1984), this has been corrupted to, "The good of the one outweighs the good of the many." A line that, in my mind, would fit well in the mouth of a Benito Mussolini and his ilk. I am afraid that here the Star Trek liberalism of the 1960's has been modernized to fit better the yuppie ideology of the Reagan era.

xix “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” Rev 1:8, (American Standard Version).

xx “And by His scourging we are healed,” as the suffering Messiah was described in Isaiah 54:5 – American Standard Version.

xxi Donington, op. cit., p. 261.

xxii Harding, M. Esther. *Women's' Mysteries – Ancient and Modern*. NY: Harper & Row, 1976. p. 184.

xxiii Cobb, op. cit., p. 15.

xxiv Donington, op. cit., p. 219.

xxv Mark 6: 45-47 (ASV)