

# From Earth Mother to Sexy Lamp: The Unfortunate Reboot of *Star Trek*'s Carol Marcus

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The character Carol Marcus has appeared onscreen in the *Star Trek* canon twice: *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982), the second *Star Trek* film made, and *Star Trek: Into Darkness* (2013), the second film in *Star Trek*'s rebooted universe. She is a drastically different character in each. In *Wrath of Khan*, Marcus is a middle-aged scientist, working with her son on a device to create life on dead planets. She is an old flame of the protagonist, James T. Kirk, and in this film, Kirk and Marcus are essentially peers: they have lived two very different, equally fulfilling lives and now have been brought back together to protect Marcus' research. *Into Darkness* reboots a lot of elements from *Wrath of Khan*, including Carol Marcus. In *Into Darkness*, Carol Marcus is a young weapons tech and the daughter of a warmongering admiral, the main villain. Marcus also becomes a tentative love interest for Kirk, and the film puts more emphasis on her sex appeal than her character. In this paper, I utilize feminist criticism to argue that Carol Marcus was misused and ignored in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*. Because of the difference in the character's age and the overall style of the film, Carol Marcus was demoted from maternal scientist to the villain's sexy daughter. This change indicates the different ways women are portrayed based on age, concerning trends in modern blockbuster filmmaking, and it also reminds us that feminist progress is not made in a straight line.

**D**r. Carol Marcus was first introduced to the *Star Trek* canon, and to the world, in 1982, with the release of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, the second *Star Trek* film ever made, following the cult popularity of the original *Star Trek* series. In *Wrath of Khan*, Carol Marcus is a scientist, working on large-scale terraforming, and she has been raising her son, now grown, as a single mother after leaving James T. Kirk. Dr. Marcus was not seen again on screen until 2013, with the release of *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, the second film in J.J. Abrams' new, rebooted *Star Trek* film franchise. The reboot intends to reinvent the original *Star Trek* series in an alternate timeline (essentially an alternate universe), using many of the same characters, including James T. Kirk, Spock, etc. *Into Darkness* draws heavily from *Wrath of Khan*, and in the process attempted to reboot Carol Marcus as a young weapons specialist. The two characters are vastly different, and present two very different images of femininity on film over three decades apart.

The general narrative of *Wrath of Khan* centers around James T. Kirk and Khan Noonien Singh, an antagonist from an episode of the original *Star Trek* television series. Khan was a ruthless, superhuman dictator, created through eugenics in Earth's Third World War. In the episode, he and his crew (also super-humans) were found floating in an old space ship, cryogenically frozen. When awoken, they attempted to overtake Kirk's ship, the Starship Enterprise, but the plot was foiled and they were left to their own

devices on a remote, uninhabited planet (Daniels). In the film, Khan is rediscovered on this planet, which, through horrific natural events, has become a barren, lifeless planet, on which only Khan and the remains of his crew survive. He is found because Starfleet is searching for an entirely lifeless planet on which to drop Dr. Marcus' ultimate terraforming device, the Genesis Device, which can, as Dr. Marcus explains in an archive film about the project, "create life from lifelessness" (Meyer), but also destroys any life it encounters, so must be detonated somewhere entirely lifeless. When Khan is discovered, he sets out to get revenge on Kirk, who he blames for leaving him on the planet (not unfair), and therefore for all the following suffering. Kirk, in the meantime, is suffering a midlife crisis, facing questions of life and death, all while facing an old adversary and reconnecting with his ex-lover, Carol Marcus, and meeting his son, David, whom he never knew. So, through the combined narrative of revenge and personal crisis, Carol Marcus serves both as the catalyst for Khan's revenge quest, but also as support for Kirk as he reflects on his life and grapples with the inevitability of death.

The story of *Into Darkness* hinges similarly around Khan and a quest for revenge, however, in this case the Enterprise does not find Khan, and so his search for vengeance is turned towards someone else: Starfleet Admiral Alexander Marcus. Admiral Marcus found Khan and his crew, and has been using the crew to force Khan to do his bidding as he

seeks to start a war with the Klingon Empire. Admiral Marcus also attempts to trick Kirk into instigating this war, and so the plot hinges on foiling Admiral Marcus' plans as well as preventing the still-nefarious Khan from continuing his power hungry and violent ways (in spite of the alliance of necessity that the Enterprise crew must make with him). In this film, Carol Marcus is most relevant as the daughter of Admiral Marcus. Carol appears in the narrative for the most part to provide exposition about her father's questionable activities, including a unique form of torpedoes that actually contain Khan's frozen crew. She also attempts, at one point, to protect the Enterprise from destruction by her father's secret warship, though this is ultimately futile. She is also presumably intended to be a love interest for Kirk, considering the relationship between the original Kirk and Dr. Marcus, but this is not really emphasized in the film.

The two have many obvious differences, and one of the more striking differences is between the scientific work each character does. This distinction not only illustrates the discrepancy between each version's relevance to the plot, it also serves to emphasize how the original Carol Marcus is a maternal figure, whereas the rebooted Marcus is a daughter first and foremost. When Dr. Carol Marcus was created for *Wrath of Khan*, she appeared as the creator of Project Genesis, a scientific initiative to "create life from lifelessness." The product of this research, The Genesis Device, should be able to terraform a whole planet, but it needed to be tested, and to test it, it needs to be deployed on a lifeless planet. If it is deployed on a planet with any life forms at all, that life will be killed. This juxtaposition of life and death, exemplified in Dr. Marcus' research, reflects a central motif of the film: the conflicts of life, death and aging (Roth 160, 163). This potential for destruction is also, morally, not something Starfleet can allow, and it is shown that this is very obviously something Dr. Marcus would not be comfortable with. Throughout the film, she and her son David, who works with her on Project Genesis, repeatedly emphasize that the device must be used for creation, not destruction, though the implications and consequences of this immense power remain in play for at least two more films after *Wrath of Khan*. In her research, Carol Marcus' maternal character is blatantly obvious: she works hand in hand with her son, and her work is to create life. Her accomplishments echo those of the most respected mothers in mythologies, from the Greek Gaia's powers of creation.

Carol Marcus takes on even more godly connotations when she is considered as having the power to resurrect. Considering that it is through her power, the power of the Genesis Device, that Spock is raised from the dead, Carol Marcus may even be a rough stand in for the Christian God if one considers Spock as a Christ figure. At the end of *Wrath of Khan*, Spock sacrifices himself for the greater good of the crew of the Starship Enterprise, and is laid to rest on the newly formed Genesis Planet, a new, life-sustaining planet, created after the Genesis Device was detonated in a nebula (Roth 163; Meyer). In *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (1984), Spock is revived through the unstable powers of the Genesis Planet and is able to rejoin the cast going forward, making his last on-screen appearance in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, before the death of the original actor, Leonard Nimoy, in 2015. The original Dr. Carol Marcus holds god-like power, emphasized by her work being called "Genesis," in reference to the biblical creation story. For any other faults in her representation or character, this impressive life-giving ability cannot be ignored; Project Genesis and the Genesis Device are not only invaluable to the tensions and developments of the plot, both as a device that everyone wants and as the method of Spock's resurrection, but that juxtaposition of life and death is also integral to the themes and larger ideas of the film (Roth 163).

In *Into Darkness*, however, these powers are ignored. The rebooted Carol Marcus retains none of the original Dr. Marcus' ties to creation or resurrection. This is probably not unrelated to the fact that Carol Marcus is no longer a mother, being so much younger and meeting Kirk for the first time. Marcus is instead a daughter, but she is not only that, she is also a weapons specialist. This goes directly against the creation-over-destruction mentality of the original Dr. Marcus; whose central goal was to create new life and new resources. Though it is never explicitly stated how the dual nature of the Genesis Device (both creating and destroying life) came to be, given its creators' attitudes about it being used as a weapon, one can assume the device's destructive powers were an unfortunate consequence, not a design feature. *Wrath of Khan*'s Carol Marcus shows no indication of ever having been a weapons specialist, but the plot of *Into Darkness* mandates she have that job, or else she is in no position to discover or foil her nefarious father's plot. This shift from terraforming to weapons technology is therefore also indicative of the shift from mother to daughter: the original Carol Marcus creates the Project Genesis

with her son, David, whereas the rebooted Marcus is weapons tech so that she can foil her father's plans.

The reboot of Carol Marcus undermines her original life-giving purpose even farther by giving the power of resurrection not to Carol Marcus, but to Khan, the notorious villain. *Into Darkness* mimics the element of death from *Wrath of Khan*, though it trades the roles: this time Kirk dies to save his crew, leaving Spock to deal with the aftermath. With no Project Genesis to speak of in *Into Darkness*, Kirk is revived, instead, through Khan's superhuman blood, which is shown to have life-saving properties in multiple other scenes in the film. Between giving Marcus a focus in weapons technology and removing her life-giving work, *Into Darkness* strips Carol Marcus of a large part of her original character motive and strength, as well as some of her overall plot relevance.

This removal of many of the original Carol Marcus' strengths from the reboot is perhaps indicative of an issue Deborah Tudor identifies with the characterization of women in the rebooted *Star Trek* (particularly *Star Trek* [2009]). As Tudor puts it, the film makes "the female roles seem more significant than they are" (Tudor 131). Essentially, women in this new *Star Trek* are given the trappings of competence, but are not given any real structural import, spending most of the film in the background with nothing to do (Tudor 132). In Carol Marcus' case, this sort of façade of competence is evident in that she is presented as a capable, perhaps even driven woman, with her own career outside the usual feminine fields, who stands up against her father because she believes what he is doing is wrong. None of these things reek of misogynistic stereotypes about women. However, the way she is presented in the narrative and onscreen frequently devalues her. The choice to show Marcus in her underwear in one scene is an obvious example of blatant sexualization and objectification, as she could just as easily have changed off-screen.

Then, in her next sequence, which is also the only scene where she is actually shown using her weapons tech knowledge, innuendos are thrown around with reckless abandon, reducing her to a sex object, instead of the valuable weapons specialist, which is, supposedly, the reason this chain of events (that involves both showing her underwear and heavy flirting) even happened. The sequence in question involves Dr. Leonard McCoy accompanying Marcus onto a deserted planet to investigate and diffuse a new torpedo. The torpedo could very easily cause massive destruction,

or not, if the tip the crew got from Khan is correct, in which case it should reveal some great secret (which it does: the torpedoes contain Khan's cryogenically frozen crew, whom Admiral Marcus has been using to essentially blackmail Khan). McCoy is there as the ship's surgeon, for his steady hands, his reportedly "magic" hands, and after commenting to Kirk, "You know, when I dreamt about being stuck on a deserted planet with a gorgeous woman, there was no torpedo!" This implies, of course, that in other circumstances this could be an opportunity to get her into bed. This is quickly followed, in spite of Kirk's reminders that he is not there to flirt (a comment which really only serves, for the audience, to remove any doubt that McCoy is definitely flirting, and emphasize Marcus' sex appeal) by McCoy telling Marcus that he is more than happy to "work some magic on [her] missile." This questionable use of levity in a potentially deadly situation reduces Marcus to her sexuality when her technical skill should be most on display. This fact, as well, is perhaps emphasized by Marcus herself, who remains dead serious throughout the whole endeavor, generally ignoring McCoy's quips.

Marcus' lack of narrative relevance is blatantly on display in the climax of the film. During an altercation with Khan on Admiral Marcus' warship, Khan breaks Carol's leg and murders her father, and for the entire climax of the film, Carol Marcus is essentially incapacitated and has only two more speaking lines before the film closes. Therefore, in spite of her general appearance of independence and competence, she has very minimal impact on the overall events of the film.

Though, admittedly, the original Dr. Marcus does not do much of import in the climax of *Wrath of Khan*, she is somewhat more present. In the reboot, Marcus is stuck in sickbay, appearing sporadically, and has only one more line before the film is over. For the majority of the climactic battle in *Khan*, Carol Marcus is also absent, however, she is present for the emotional closure of the film, supporting Kirk through the loss of Spock. She attends Spock's funeral, and at the end of the film, as Kirk is on the bridge, lamenting the loss of Spock, she is right there beside him, commenting on his observations. Carol Marcus and Dr. McCoy are the two trusted friends with Kirk as he acknowledges how much good Spock has done. Though the original Dr. Marcus may also be somewhat absent in the climax of *Khan*, she is still more present than *Darkness's* Carol Marcus, and, overall, Dr. Marcus is more involved in the plot of *Khan*

than Marcus is in *Darkness*, especially considering her scientific work, which is invaluable to the plot of *Khan*, and which the rebooted Marcus sorely lacks.

To consider the place of women in the original work both films draw from, it is helpful to look at “Sex and *Star Trek*,” a 1983 article by Karin Blair. Written just before the release of *Wrath of Khan*, the article analyzes the role of women in the original *Star Trek* series, as well as the first film, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Blair looks at the status and presentation of *Star Trek*’s continually rotating cast of female guest stars, here one episode and gone the next. This analysis is invaluable for its look at the groundwork both *Khan* and *Darkness* are building from: the original *Star Trek* series, and so each Carol Marcus can be easily and valuably compared to this original formula of female representation. The pattern Blair notices is reasonably simple: in any episode that heavily features a woman she will be objectified (almost exclusively as a sexualized love interest of some kind), her narrative and character arc will focus on her relationship to a man (often a father figure), and the resolution of the episode will inevitably result in her disappearance, either through death or being left behind (292). If simplified, this pattern can be broken down into three criteria for the quintessential woman in *Star Trek*: she is a sex object; she has a conflict with her father; she is disposable. Every female character to appear on the original *Star Trek* series ticks at least two of these boxes, usually all three, if the idea of her conflict centering around a father figure is broadened to include a personal narrative centered around a man. This trend of disposable women, though occasionally lending women some agency within the single episode’s narrative, continually presents their relevance as being inherently tied to a man, and frequently presents them as romantic or sex objects.

This pattern had not yet been broken in any real capacity when Blair wrote her article. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* included a disposable, objectified female character (indeed, the woman became an object, essentially a robot, and left with her lover, a young Starfleet captain, as the climax of the film). At the time of *Wrath of Khan*’s release, the original Dr. Carol Marcus was the closest *Star Trek* had come to breaking that pattern. Though not entirely free of the pattern, Dr. Carol Marcus was a far cry from any of the aliens in bikinis that helped drive the plot of a single *Star Trek* episode. She is, admittedly, disposable. She disappeared after the film ended, though

her son and her scientific work feature heavily in the next film. Whether or not she could be considered to adhere to either of the other criteria (conflict driven by her relationship to men/a man or objectification), however, is up for debate. At the very least, she presents a less-demeaning variant of each; at best, she avoids both trends in all meaningful ways.

Dr. Marcus was not as traditionally objectified; though she was at least conventionally attractive, as most everyone in film is, she was a middle-aged woman, dressed more practically than attractively. Her narrative function was also directly opposed to the sexy, or at least very attractive, women that the Enterprise found across the galaxy: she is not meant to be an appealing love interest for Kirk, she is meant to be a former love interest who went off and lived her own life. She is, essentially, a positive outcome for the objectified woman of the week after Kirk and the Enterprise leave her, never to be mentioned again.

Carol Marcus also avoids the common trend of women in conflict with father figures. She is too old to be beholden to a father, and, indeed, is a mother first and foremost. She has no conflict with a father, her son has some conflict with her, instead. However, her relationship to her son points to the broader version of that criteria: is her narrative dependent on men? This question could likely form a paper unto itself, but to consider it briefly: her relevance to the general narrative of the film, the revenge plot, is that she has created a powerful device, whose existence allowed Khan to get back into space and pursue revenge. In terms of the emotional narrative of the film, Kirk’s mid-life crisis, Carol functions as a ghost of the past, of a life Kirk could have had (maybe), that drives him to further introspection. From a creative standpoint, Kirk and Khan are the pre-existing characters whom Carol Marcus was created to (narratively) serve. However, if one is to consider the narrative alone, Carol Marcus may not be important to the story without the men, but the men also do not have their story without her, and her research, a large part of her narrative importance, is not, within the story, at all depended on either man. It is a complex equation, but I still find Carol Marcus to be an overall more liberated female character, if still imperfect. She does not fit Blair’s formula as neatly as every other woman before her.

The Carol Marcus of *Into Darkness*, on the other hand, meets all three of Blair’s criteria: she is a sex object, arguably in the interest of being a love interest for Kirk; her central personal conflict is directly tied

to her father; and she, too, is disposable. She is absolutely the woman of the week that the original *Star Trek* episodes were so fond of, and that *Wrath of Khan* implies the original Carol Marcus might have been. This distinct difference between how each character fits the narratives not only highlights the disappointing portrayal of the character, but also the drastic differences between the two versions of Carol Marcus.

It may be helpful, too, to consider the two versions of Carol Marcus in terms of Laura Mulvey's idea of the male gaze, especially looking at if and how the two Marcuses are sexualized or objectified. In her article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey posits that, "Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order" (233), which is to say, film makes the dominant, objectifying, male perspective pleasing to an audience. This has happened, she argues, because film is made from the perspective of the male filmmaker, and since the male filmmaker objectifies women, then, the audience, too, is put in a position to objectify women, because they have been put in the position of the filmmaker. Thus, film necessitates the experience of the male filmmaker's perspective, and, through that perspective, inherently objectifies women, generally in a way the viewer is meant to enjoy. This perspective is what she calls "the male gaze" (236). Both *Wrath of Khan* and *Into Darkness* were written and directed by men, so both versions of Carol Marcus should, logically, adhere to the male gaze, and though both do to some extent, I find the reboot far, far more blatant in its presentation and normalization of the male gaze. In *Wrath of Khan* the male gaze does not stand out, though it is present. Dr. Marcus is frequently minimized in wide shots, with male characters taking up a larger part of the frame (often in the foreground from her, or placed somewhat above her), but in close up shots, especially in conversation, she is as much presented as the central focus as Kirk or anyone else. She is presented attractively, or femininely, taking relaxed, vaguely submissive poses, but she is not sexualized. Her costumes, all practical and suited to a mother, and always including pants, are sometimes flattering, but never revealing, and she certainly avoids the worst of filmmaker objectification. In *Into Darkness*, the camera treats Marcus similarly: she is frequently in the background, or overshadowed in frame by male characters, but she rarely gets the opportunities the original Dr. Marcus does for close ups. Frequently she is shown in close up when in distress, including when she is at-

tempting to disarm a torpedo, but also when her father is murdered in front of her. Most of the time Marcus is in the background, and her costuming and mannerisms lean heavily towards supermodel. Her hips swing as she walks, her expressions are most often minimal, so as to retain a visually appealing face, and all of her costumes are distinctly form-fitting. In fact, for most of the film she is wearing the original women's Starfleet uniform, designed in the 60s: a miniskirt-length dress. The overall image of Carol Marcus emphasizes the idea that she is, supposedly, very competent, but that her primary benefit to the film is to appear attractive.

It is perhaps important to note, considering the male gaze's impact on Marcus, that the two films are made by entirely different creative teams, with very different motivations. For *Wrath of Khan*, the goal was to give *Star Trek* another shot at a feature film after the critical failure of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Carter), and because of this failure, they were working on a comparatively small budget (Carter). Therefore, the crew behind *Khan* were, first and foremost, trying to make a good movie for cheap, and were likely focused on the demographic of *Star Trek* fans, especially, as those could be more reliable customers (Carter). For *Into Darkness*, however, it came on the heels of the very successful *Star Trek* (2009), created by a lot of the same creative team, who are more focused on drawing in a new audience to *Star Trek* (Hadas 54, 58-59). Indeed, the director, J.J. Abrams, openly admitted that he had not been a fan of the show before taking on the project (Abrams 2009), and the aim of the creative team behind the reboot has consistently been to bring a wider, more popular audience to *Star Trek* by making it "a whole new franchise" (Hadas 57). Indeed, they created a whole new Carol Marcus. Overall, the reboot has been working with a big budget to make massively profitable films, and therefore reaching out to an audience otherwise unfamiliar (or at least less familiar) with *Star Trek*, searching for mass appeal (Hadas 57-59). I suspect it would not be a stretch to assume that they had the greater movie-going public in mind with use of Carol Marcus in her underwear, especially considering that the visual not only appears in the first international trailer for the film, but is the video thumbnail for that trailer (Movieclips Trailers), which can still be found on the front page of google results for "Star Trek Into Darkness." For *Wrath of Khan* the male gaze may be inherent in their filmmaking, but for *Into Darkness*, the male gaze is a selling point.

It could potentially be argued, however, that Mar-

cus' sexuality is not necessarily demeaning. Marlo Edwards points out in his article "The Blonde with the Guns" that "action cinema can be seen [...] as an 'equal opportunity offender'" in terms of sexualization, because all characters in action movies, men or women, are objectified, or function as "spectacle" while often being the active party at the same time (44). Similarly, Alice Eve, the woman who portrayed Carol Marcus in *Into Darkness*, has argued (when asked about the shot of her/Marcus in her underwear) that Kirk is equally sexualized in the reboot films, having multiple sex scenes and being depicted in his underwear at times (Rhea). These comments both imply that men (in this case Kirk) suffer similar objectification, and the first argues that sexuality and objectification need not totally undermine the potential for a character to be active. This element of being an active player in the narrative is central to how sexuality might not undermine the presentation of a character.

Kirk is not objectified in the same way as Marcus because his sexuality has no structural or cultural bearing on his position as active hero and protagonist. He can be shirtless or have a sex scene without any particular impact on his position in relation to other characters. When he is sexualized it is assumed he is the dominant party, and therefore he remains a dominant, heroic character. For Marcus, however, her being sexualized makes her a potential possession or commodity to the men around her. Though it may be possible for a female character to utilize her sexuality to her advantage, Carol Marcus is not making a conscious effort with her sexuality, it is thrust upon her by coincidence. She is not posing in her underwear for any personal purpose; she is there because Kirk ignored her request not to watch her change. Her sexuality does not give her agency. There is also still the audience and Mulvey's male gaze to be considered; if the camera and the narrative are not treating her as a person, the audience has no motivation to, either.

This prioritizing of sexuality over character is crystalized in the idea of "the sexy lamp test." The test was invented by Kelly Sue McConnick, a comic book writer, who is frequently quoted as having said in an interview, "If you can take out a female character and replace her with a sexy lamp, YOU'RE A FUCKING HACK" (Multiple, emphasis from source). So, the test essentially asks if a female character actually does anything, or if she is essentially set dressing, or a sex object; the truest proof that a woman has been objectified is if you can replace her with a literal object. I find

the reboot's Carol Marcus to be dangerously close to a sexy lamp. If she was removed from the film some scenes would be shorter, some conversations would not exist, but the only scene that would really be structurally compromised would be the (innuendo-laced) bomb diffusing scene, but if the writers wanted to give another central character a convenient knowledge of torpedoes that could be quickly resolved. Though she is one of the main characters to show suspicion of her father, the admiral, her suspicion serves more to provide exposition than as any catalyst for the other characters to act on these suspicions. Indeed, Khan is the one who motivates Kirk to investigate the torpedoes, not Marcus. She is, at best, a "sexy lamp with a Post-It stuck on," a proposed variant of the sexy lamp for female characters that at least have to be around to share some vital piece of information, though are otherwise irrelevant (Multiple). She does not have enough character or import that most of her character traits could not have been given to another, preexisting character. Similarly, her lack of character and relevance is only highlighted by the fact that there is no reason for her to be Carol Marcus. This is a massive failure, given that she is supposed to be a reinterpretation of the original Carol Marcus. There is no part of her (minimal) character or relevance that dictate she should be Carol Marcus. She may as well be named Susan Smith, and so long as they changed the admiral's last name to match, no one would know she ever could have been Carol Marcus (indeed, she could still be called Marcus and it might not be noticeable). The only real similarities between the two characters is that they are blonde women who work for Starfleet in (very different) science divisions. Otherwise, the middle-American earth mother and the inexplicably British (she does not share her accent with her father) daughter are essentially unrelated.

The demotion of Carol Marcus from earth mother to sexy lamp is disheartening. Not only does it illustrate a concerning shift in the use of women in *Star Trek* (or at least in J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek* films), but also a disturbing difference between the narrative positions given to mothers and daughters (and, perhaps, by extension, older and younger women, respectively). *Star Trek* has always spoken of going forward into the future, "where no one has gone before," as the closing scenes of both *Khan* and *Darkness* remind us, and maybe *Wrath of Khan* was trying to do that, hoping for a future where life could be brought to whole planets, and helping an audience, through

Kirk, contemplate the past and look forward to the future, even if it involves death and aging. However, *Star Trek: Into Darkness* turned against the old motto. For all their insistence that they wanted to make a new, revitalized *Star Trek*, they have reverted back to the old tropes of the late 60s, transforming *Star Trek*'s first really independent woman back into the reductive tropes so commonly found in the original show. This new rebooted universe is not looking forward, it is looking back, especially when it comes to women, and what good is a reboot that recreates the unfortunate elements of the original, instead of using it as a springboard to create something better? What good is a future that looks too much like the past?♦

#### Endnotes

1. James T. Kirk is the central character of the original *Star Trek* series.
2. This third world war is, of course, an entirely fictional event that supposedly took place in the 1990s. Though created in the late 1960s, *Star Trek* takes place in the 23rd century.
3. Starfleet is Earth's space exploration organization in *Star Trek* ("Starfleet"). Starfleet bears some resemblances to the American military, including the office rank system. However, Starfleet's priorities are often stated as valuing exploration and discovery over military-style conflict.
4. The Klingons are an alien race who often serve as antagonists in the original *Star Trek* series and films, as well as anything that takes place around or before those events in the *Star Trek* universe.
5. Admiral Marcus is a character exclusive to the reboot universe, and therefore has no bearing on the original Dr. Carol Marcus.
6. The one notable exception is Lt. Uhura, who is never disposed of, appearing in the majority of the episodes and never being written off the show. She is, however, frequently objectified, and though she has no father figure, her appearance in the narrative outside of her function as communications officer is always contingent on male involvement (often an alien man becoming attracted to her, as seen in the season one episode "The Squire of Gothos").

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