

Women at Warp Episode 175: Mirror Universe Crystal Ball

[Women at Warp theme]

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Roddenberry *Star Trek* Podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity infinite combinations. My name is Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Sue.

Sue: Hello.

Jarrah: And Kennedy.

Kennedy: Evening.

Jarrah: [laughs] And before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do.

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Another way you can support our show is by going to our TeePublic store. We have new designs based on things, like, our telling people to put it on TV, you, cowards, [Sue laughs] and some *Lower Decks* inspired things. Grace has designed some shirts. There is podcast logos and stuff from our Infinite Diversity and Infinite Combinations Podcasting festival. So, head over to teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp.

So, this episode is brought to you by TextExpander. More about them later.

Our topic for today is a patron request speaking of patrons having a say in our programming. I really like this one. This is from Donna. Thank you, Donna. And this request is for us to speculate on the differences of the Mirror and the Prime universes that we don't really see in the show. So, for instance, Donna writes, "We know about Mirror being a little more sexually free and expressive, as well as more cutthroat. Do we have anything on education practices, family units, etc.? Also, I know some people understand the history of the Mirror Universe, but I'm not as familiar and would like to know more."

So, I will start by saying that if you want to hear us talk about Mirror Universe on screen stuff, we did an episode a while back now, so we'll probably, I'm sure, verge into the onscreen stuff as well in this episode, but called Ripped and Machiavellian. So, you can take a listen back to that episode. We've also talked about this episode in some other contexts, most recently in the Kink episode, and in some of our episodes on queerness in *Trek* and sex in *Star Trek* because of the whole, why are there bi-people in the Mirror Universe but not in the Prime Universe kind of discussion. A little bit of a shame.

Sue: Well, until recently, we now have Seven and we now have Mariner-

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: -is what I mean by recently. Like, the last three months recently.

Jarrah: Yes.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Okay. So, we were just talking actually before we started recording about the history of the Mirror Universe. It's going to be a little bit of a challenge to be too exact, because there is some contradictory information in Beta canon, for sure. What is in Prime canon has been retconned a bit, and so I think it's possible to take it a couple different ways. But we're going to do the best we can on that, and I think that overall, there is still some interesting principles we can draw onto to speculate on what does society look like outside of the struggle for power at Georgiou's court or the harem of Intendant Kira.

Sue: Yeah. So, since this request started out as one to understand the history of the Mirror Universe, maybe we can give a super brief timeline, at least of what we see or are told on screen, yeah?

Kennedy: Even that gets a little hairy, because some things were retconned and they make sense in the retconning. So, for instance, I'm a big fan of watching six episodes in series that have sequence, but aren't necessarily aired in time. So, for example, the unification story. If we can go back and watch *Unification I*, *Unification II*, and then *Unification III* on *Disco*, in that order, and it would still tell that particular story.

And to do so in the Mirror Universe, you get to do some jumping around if you take everything at face value, obviously, we know NX and Archer and them take place chronologically before those old scientists, [chuckles] *TOS* and obviously so does *Discovery*. But *The Tholian Web*, where Kirk gets lost in that void of space and the Defiant is lost, we don't know what happens to it.

In *Enterprise*, they established that the Defiant went back in time 100 years, and apparently crossed the threshold. Pierced the veil, if you will, between our universe and our Mirror Universe, or the one with the Terrans come into power. So, you could start watching it from *The Tholian Web* and then watch-- Chronologically, it would be *The Tholian Web*, then *In a Mirror, Darkly*, parts one and two, then all the *Disco* Terran storylines, then *Mirror, Mirror* and it goes back from there on out, which is cool from a collection standpoint.

It's neat to be able to be like, I get to jump around and follow the story, even though it doesn't follow a concept of linear time. But as we mentioned, it makes it difficult to determine an origin point. It makes it difficult to determine whether or not it's a piece of our universe that just developed, or whether it's its own separate thing or any of that. But I enjoy watching it that way. I like doing it chronologically. I don't know about you, good folks.

Sue: Right, But I'm talking, when I say timeline, I mean super high-level timeline. We've got the *Terran Empire* and the time of *Enterprise*. We've got the *Terran Empire* and the time of *The Original Series*. And then, when Kirk leaves Spock at the end of *Mirror, Mirror*, Spock works his way to become the head of the Terran Empire, and implements the reforms he gets from Kirk or the ideas for the reforms he gets from Kirk, which leaves the Terran Empire essentially soft, so that they're unprepared to fight against the Klingon Cardassians alliance, which causes the empire to fall, so that Terrans and Vulcans become subjugated by the time we get to *DS9*.

Jarrah: That is an extremely succinct timeline. Thank you.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah. That's really, I would say, the most exact we can get based on what's on screen. There are definitely more facts that are thrown out.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Like, Archer talks about the Terran Empire existed centuries before 2155, I think, which would mean that if it's a separate thing, it's either a totally separate from our Prime Universe but linked in some way, both as a moral antithesis, although it's definitely not an exact opposite and having all the same people or it's already branched. So, the day that we are in today, in September of 2021, we're not potentially in the universe that is going to become the Terran Empire.

Sue: Right. So, the little Easter egg that is in the part two of *In Mirror, Darkly*, or I guess it's both parts. It's in the opening to *Enterprise*, they show the moon landing, which for the prime universe is 1969, and you've got your astronaut in a different spacesuit, one that we've seen used in the mid-22nd century planting a Terran flag on the moon. We can assume from that that if it is diverged, it's diverged by 1969. But also, perhaps, in the Mirror Universe, because that's EV suit that we see on screen, maybe that moon landing happened much later because that world would be focused on the wars happening on the surface.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's interesting, and I totally forgot that. One fun fact is that the continents in the Terran Empire symbol change over time depending on the series. So, the symbol in *Enterprise* shows all of the Earth's continents, but later shows only the continents of the Western hemisphere which I feel is astute for a fascist regime. Although, I guess technically it should just be North America and Europe. But then, the *Disco* version literally mirrors the continents and also has an inverted delta behind the globe. So, I don't know if on Disco Earth or like the Mirror Earth in the *Disco*-verse, the continents are literally mirrored.

I feel like we hit the major points. I guess some other key points in the timeline that we do see on screen is we see Cochrane shoot the Vulcan Emissary. That's obviously a clear point that influenced the development of that universe compared to our own, and how we ended up having Terran's in charge and Vulcans being subjugated, which we see in *Enterprise*, and then we have the whole resistance that we see in *Deep Space Nine* with the Terran resistance trying to take back Terok Nor from the Alliance.

Kennedy: Well, that resistance-- I thought you meant the resistance that was formed in the *Discovery* era against the Terrans.

Sue: Oh right. That one, too.

Jarrah: Yes.

Kennedy: Yeah. Because that was when the Vulcans, Klingons, and the Andorians, and the Tellarites all were like, "Screw this. [chuckles] These human animals are mean." [laughs]

Sue: The Vulcans though are part of the Terran Empire.

Jarrah: Yeah, but they're subjugated.

Sue: Okay. Yeah, so, Sarek is a defector-

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: -situation. Jarrah, you brought up the Zefram Cochrane First Contact incident. I think what is so unique about that scene, is that it's something that we see in *Star Trek*, a moment that we see on screen in both the Prime and the Mirror universes. Whether these universes diverge or are just closely parallel with so many similarities, that shows us how one action can lead to a bigger divergence.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Right? Because there are multiple ways that First Contact could have gone, but there are two main ways which are well and not so great. [laughs] And *Star Trek* shows us the incidents and what happens from either one of those two main options.

Kennedy: One thing I think is important to keep in mind is-- Geez, I don't know the name of theory, per se, but there's a theory regarding parallel universes where the same parts essentially can exist in different situations, but it is in fact the same parts. There's theory that all of our decisions can splinter off a million different universes in infinite different directions because of the causality and stuff.

So, is this separate universe of ours or was it First Contact that started the Terrans? My theory is that it was its own thing, and it's just involving parts that are comparable, if not the very same, biologically speaking, to parts in this universe as we know it. It's just inclined to do things in an opposite way.

Sue: I think what supports that theory is what we have learned in *Discovery* about the Mirror Universe. Because we find out about the light sensitivity and we find out about the differences at the quantum level which is why Georgiou has such issues in the future. Spoilers. [laughs] Because Carl tells us that these two universes are similar, but they're moving farther apart from each other as time progresses.

Kennedy: Yeah, it's almost a binary star system loses cohesion. And instead of the stars having a mutual gravitational pull to keep them orbiting each other and all of their satellites orbiting them as a unit as opposed to individually, it's like that gravimetric pole being severed. And one of those stars spitting off into oblivion and taking its satellite with it.

I imagine that department things would fall apart cosmically, but we see that as far as how Georgiou starts to adjust to being not only removed from her own universe, but thrown so far into time as well. You all know me. As much as I have a disdain for Emperor Georgiou, them explaining her quantum troubles in that way was really deeply satisfying for me in that astrophysics, quantum physics, nerd part of my soul.

Sue: Can I tell you how much I love that you used a science metaphor to explain a storytelling situation?

[laughter]

Kennedy: What do you mean? I mean, its tracks. [laughs]

Sue: It's usually the other way around. [laughs]

Kennedy: The theory of parallel universes is just that, right? There's no proof or anything. All quantum scientists can agree upon, is that it exists and doesn't until we can prove it, kind of thing. So, until we know for sure that there is, in fact, not just one parallel universe but probably several that have components of ourselves and images of ourselves and reflections of ourselves and across all these platforms that some of them might be a polar opposite,

some of them might be slightly different, some of them might be precisely the same. We're just green, you know? Not to go out of universe, but DC had a great animated movie adaptation of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Almond gets into a tangent talking about how on this Earth we never developed, because there was never a multi-celled organism that developed strongly enough for us to climb out of the soup. In this universe, the Gorn take over, whatever. Like, he laid down all of these different examples of the true meaning of what an alternate parallel existence is.

So, for Georgiou to bring it back [chuckles] to have not only existed in a different universe, a different frame of relativity for her to not only pierce the veil of space, but also to pierce the veil of time as well. I'm just really glad that she started to degrade on a quantum level and not something corny like, I don't know, her getting [sighs] some other surface level physical ailment to relay that.

Jarrah: Like, turning into Troi and Men of the People with the skunk hair and rapid aging thing?

Kennedy: Yeah. You know what I mean? If she had suddenly gotten-- The whole terraphylla thing was growing, and her heart grew 10 sizes that day. So, we do see that she has character development, and that Terrans are capable of not being complete jerkwads their entire lives. But to see it happen to the point where she looked like she was actually glitching is like, "Hell yeah, let's go," that tells me that whoever did that has done their homework when it comes to quantum existences.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's super interesting.

Kennedy: Go back in my nerd bag now.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yo, I love it. I did just want to say that-- So, we do have gaps, because there was no on-screen Mirror Universe stuff for *TNG* or for *Voyager*. Apparently, Michael Piller and Rick Berman did-- There was some discussion about doing a Mirror Universe *TNG* episode, but they were just afraid of messing it up and not getting-- They didn't get what is the angle on *TNG* in the Mirror Universe? So, if we want to find out what happened in *TNG* or *Voyager*, the only thing we have to go on is our own imaginations or Beta canon. But even in Beta canon, there's a couple of dramatically different takes on the *TNG*.

One, which is awesome, is Diane Duane's *Dark Mirror*, but it was written pre-*DS9*. So, it assumes the Terran universe is roughly still going pretty strong, but maybe slightly reformed. But then, there's the IDW comics, which are newer. They both have totally different takes on where the universe is at and even what the characters are doing. Notably, I really like, *In Dark Mirror*, Troi is the head of security and she's the one doing all the torturing and interrogating, but being super manipulative about it because of her empathic abilities.

Kennedy: Nope. Nope.

Jarrah: Versus in the comics, where she's the Captain's Woman. And I'm just like, "Nope, nope, nope about that." [laughs]

Kennedy: "I don't like any parts of that."

[audience laughter]

Kennedy: "I don't want no parts of a sadistic, torturous Betazoid." No, thank you. Especially if she's half Terran. "Nope, return to sender."

Jarrah: [chuckles]

Sue: I've never fully understood that take with Troi, because they're saying she can be this extra great inquisitor, because she is an empath when there are actual Betazoids around, perhaps.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: [laughs] Whatever.

Jarrah: Well, I don't know.

Kennedy: Maybe there's no psychology practices on Betazed, right?

Jarrah: There's also a dolphin ensig, so yeah. I love this book. [laughs]

Sue: There are also two more books. I think it's two called *Dark Passions*, which are written after the *DS9* episodes.

Jarrah: And are super queer.

Sue: Super queer.

Jarrah: But queer coded. Or, maybe not only coded.

Sue: I think it's not only coded, but it's mostly coded. Anyway.

Jarrah: [laughs]

Sue: It's been quite a while since I read them. They're about two feet from me, though.

Kennedy: Nice.

Jarrah: But in those books, we learn that the Bajorans and Trill had separate empires until earth conquered them.

Kennedy: Oh gosh, we are such jerks. [laughs]

Sue: Essentially, the point is that every time we head into the Mirror Universe in the *TNG* era, there is a different story around it. [chuckles] There's a different timeline happening. [laughs]

Kennedy: It always assumed that *Yesterday's Enterprise* was akin to-- I know it didn't officially take place in the Mirror Universe, but I was always like, "This is playing with time and space." I like it, but I can never really sink my teeth into it because Tasha, and I get so sad.

Sue: If there's one, there's many, right?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: If there are many different parallel universes close to ours, there are also many different parallel universes close to the Mirror Universe.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: Right? So, maybe each time that we follow the *TNG* crew into the Mirror Universe, it's really a Mirror Universe, and they're all real. Just like *Yesterday's Enterprise*, maybe that's another Mirror Universe. We don't know.

Kennedy: Right. It makes sense. It's been a minute since I've seen *Yesterday's Enterprise*. So, now, I'm going to probably go out pop that in after this, [laughs] because now I'm curious.

Sue: But if we're talking about the structures outside of what we see on screen, that's a lot of speculation for us to do.

Jarrah and Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Because in the 1960s, this was never devised as anything to last more than one episode to teach us a moral story about how fascism is bad.

Kennedy: Little did we know. [Sue laughs] Some people are into that stuff.

Jarrah: Well, one of the things that I wanted to talk about a bit was family and social structure. It strikes me as that a lot of the speculation we can do will be based on how does fascism work in our actual world, and then extrapolating that into a *Star Trek* universe and saying like, "If this was more fascist, what would it look like?" And like, way more cutthroat, like a much less compassionate society than we see in the 24th century *Star Trek* or even earlier *Star Trek*.

But one of the things that is interesting to me, is that in our world, fascist societies tend to actually have more restrictive gender and sexuality roles, and less tolerance for sexualities outside a norm. Because often what goes with fascism is racial purity and family structure purity. And so, it is interesting to me that in the more recent iterations of the Mirror Universe in *Star Trek*, we see actually more opportunities for women to gain power, not just through being the captain's woman, like in *Mirror, Mirror*.

To me, that is more of a classic fascist society that there are really limited options for women to get ahead. Same within a *In a Mirror Darkly*. So, it's interesting to me that *Star Trek* has-- I think as they've had more diverse characters in the Prime Universe, they're trying to figure out how these characters fit into a Mirror Universe. But somehow this Mirror Universe has managed to be both fascist and diverse. [chuckles]

Sue: Well, even in *Mirror, Mirror*, we see Uhura using her sexuality to gain power.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Which is, as you mentioned, would be based on what we see in our world, atypical, let's say, [laughs] for a fascist regime, because there likely wouldn't have been women around at all.

Kennedy: True. But we're also framing fascism from a very heteronormative Christian centered perspective. When Jarrah was talking about racial purity, and family structures, and stuff, that's all coming through the lens of somebody who presumes that the only way to be

is a European cis het person, preferably male in Prime Earth. And even that seems a bit big headed, isn't it? Who do we have? We know we're prime on this planet, right? That's what we are accustomed to thinking of as fascism.

Jarrah: In the best universe?

Kennedy: [laughs] I think in the Terran universe specifically, the fascism correlates to anything that isn't human. I think *Disco* did a really good job. I know I keep going back to that, but they did a really good job of making that clear that, yeah, they were conniving and manipulative amongst themselves and each other. No matter how much disdain they might have had for another human being, for whatever reason, they could all agree that there was more disdain for people who weren't human. So, their one sidedness became less about inner interspecies issues and more as opposed to extra species issues.

Jarrah: Yeah, that makes sense. I think where I'm or what I'm looking at or coming from a bit on this is when-- So, the Mirror Universe idea was created by Jerome Bixby. I believe actually was originally created was going to be-- It was part of the original concept for *The City on the Edge of Forever*. But then, Roddenberry brought in the idea of the Terrans as essentially a fascist military power.

My sense is that where the influences he was drawing from in *Mirror, Mirror*, so obviously things have changed a lot since then, but probably he was looking at and you can see things like we see they're versions of Nazi salutes in the Terran Empire.

Kennedy: Yeah. And the boots.

Jarrah: Yeah, the boots. Like, there's a lot of stuff to do with Nazism and also Asian military World War II powers, because we have the collars near Spock's outfit and stuff like that. And so, there's been critiques about Orientalism in this representation and casting Asians as evil by this visual association of these cultural symbols with the evil twin. So, I think I just found it interesting that we have, I think, this different way of looking at a universe by the time we get to *Disco* than we did in the much more heavily World War II influenced era.

Kennedy: True.

Jarrah: But we only really see Ben and Jennifer, I think as a married couple. The Siskos, although. Yes, they're split up couple. So, how do kids survive to adulthood? This also ties to education, like, how do you become the scientist, Jennifer Sisko?

Kennedy: Yeah, it's a good point. I don't even know if kids really have a high survival rate. When you think about the atrocities that our human beings are capable of, I can only imagine what those jerkwads will be doing to kids, you know? So, it just makes me wonder how many kids actually are ruthless enough to survive adulthood.

Sue: I was always under the impression, that if a kid showed a special aptitude, like somebody in the military or the government would be given notice, and then maybe that kid would be pulled out and given special attention. That's what I assumed for Jennifer Sisko. That's what I assumed.

Now, I'm thinking about parallels with the Emerald Chain, because that's what I assume about Aurelio in the Emerald Chain, so that maybe every kid goes to military school with the assumption that they will join this regime, and anybody who has an aptitude for science or medicine or weaponry or whatever is sent to special training.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's interesting. The other way that it could work, is that you survive as a child by being useful. We know that this is a very stratified society. So, if your family is rich enough that they want some kids to carry on their legacy-- We know like there is people want to pass down their family names and have their people succeed them in their positions, and we see that in the way that the empire works. Although, usually people just end up getting stabbed before their successors can take over.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: So, that would be one way, is if your family has enough resources to devote to your education and training on the understanding that you will protect them as they age and potentially take over for them, carry on their legacy-- Perhaps kids that don't have that usefulness to-- Well, aren't belonging to wealthier, more powerful families are able to either just make it through laboring, and maybe getting noticed and getting given some special attention. But I think what you're saying makes a lot of sense, Sue. Who pays for school in a society that doesn't-- How does the economics of this work if the society is-- [crosstalk]

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, it would just be military school.

Sue: Thinking about it more now, I think if I try and expand that idea out, there's certainly an element of privilege that's going to come into it.

Kennedy: I was going to say, because I don't see all those kids. I just see a whole lot of orphans and stuff.

Sue: It's the kids, I think, who are on Earth, presumably with the people living on Earth being the rich or the important or the highly status people in the society in the Terran Empire, that those are the kids who would end up going to this military school. Because we also hear from Georgiou that she picked Michael out of a trash heap, right?

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: So, the farther you get away from the center of the Empire, the worse things are going to get.

Kennedy: Right. It also lends to your theories, both of your theories, about being born into an affluent family. The Burnhams were scientists. They were highly ranked in our universe. They weren't Starfleet, but they were still people of interest. So, who's to say that in the Terran universe, Michael's parents were killed and she was left to fend for herself. And without having somebody like Sarek and Amanda to look after her, left her accessible to a monster like Georgiou. I said it. Monster.

Jarrah: [chuckles] Clearly, there would be some interest in funding science education and some things like that. They also need to somehow have a food supply. I don't think we really see a lot of replicating happen in *The Original Series*, *Discovery* era of Mirror Universe times, but maybe I'm just forgetting. Maybe they discover a replicator. But either way, there is going to be basic resources they need, and they'll need people to mine and farm and build ships. So, there has to be an economy and an education system around that.

Kennedy: That's true. Oh, I can only imagine, because human beings are pretty terrible as it is. There's obviously some gems, like you good folks. But you know what I mean? Generally, we're capable of some pretty horrendous things. So, when I think about education and family structure and economy in the Terran universe, I feel so bad for people that don't even exist.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Thinking about family structure and marriage and stuff though, too, I guess a counter to my point earlier about, like maybe potentially having more rigid family structures. Another western historical example that I'm sure Roddenberry was aware of and probably partly influenced by would have been the Roman Empire. And in ancient Rome, divorce was very easy to procure and not at all uncommon. There were still social norms, but there was a lot more hedonism as part of the culture of the ruling class.

So, I think that you can see some of those influences, and that might mean that you might get married and you might want to have kids to protect your legacy, but you definitely don't actually trust that this plan is going to for sure work out, because people are just going to stab you in the back.

Sue: Well, there's also the possibility of, I can't think of a better phrase than doing these things for show, like marrying-

Jarrah: Oh yeah. Pageants.

Sue: -who you're supposed to marry, having the kids-- Yes. Pageantry. But then, going and having whatever relationships you want on the side, and it's just what's done, you know?

Jarrah: Yeah. One of my favorite things in Beta canon is and I haven't actually read-- It's like part of the Mirror Universe number one novel is the Age of the Empress story, which I found out where Mirror Hoshi marries Mirror Shran. [Sue laughs] And then, Mirror Shran betrays her to aid the rebels and take over the Empire. Apparently, it's pretty great. It is on my list now. And then, there's a whole thing where I think T'Pol saves the deposed Empress and they end up making some kind of alliance. At any rate, I'm very into thinking about Mirror Shran.

Sue: As we're talking about the education system, I just keep thinking that they have to pump enough kids through it to get more officers into the fleet, because based on what we see on screen, tens of people are dying every day, [Jarrah chuckles] are being murdered every day, I should say, that wouldn't otherwise be dying.

Kennedy: I wonder if some of the lower wage-- If there even is a wage. The harder labor jobs are regulated to people who aren't Terran. Maybe that's for the Tellerites and for the Denobians to deal with.

Sue: Yeah. I was wondering as we're going through and talking about empires and economies and who's doing this labor is the Terran Empire enslaving people.

Kennedy: Yes.

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Kennedy: And eating some of their slaves, apparently.

Sue: Yeah. They certainly are, but in Georgiou's time. We see it on screen.

Jarrah: Well, we also see in the-- And so, it's not the Terran Empire, but in the Klingon Cardassian alliance, you see they have basically the Terok Nor system where they have people laboring for them the same way the Cardassians had the Bajorans labor for them.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: But I think there also does have to be a pay system though. I think there are some people that are getting paid, because I don't get the impression it is as much a post-scarcity society as the Federation.

Kennedy: No.

Jarrah: And so, there has to be a degree to which people are either allocated resources in exchange for labor, allocated money to purchase resources in exchange for labor. Because otherwise, there wouldn't be kids on trash heaps like--

No, I don't know, I think that there either has to be a currency based economic system or a resource based economic system that if you do this job, you get this house and you get this allocation of food.

Sue: Well, speaking of getting paid, I think it's time for a word from TextExpander.

Jarrah: Oh, good call.

Sue: [laughs] All right. You've heard us say it before. We want you to get it right every time with TextExpander.

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Jarrah: Imagine, if they had TextExpander when they were writing the Mirror Universe canon and they had just been able to be like, "What time are we in now?" And then, all of the people could have used it, and just kept everything consistent, [Sue laughs] and then this show would be so much easier.

Sue: Just type Mirror Timeline and get it expanded right in your document.

[laughter]

Sue: TextExpander is available on Mac, Windows, Chrome, iPhone, iPad. Show listeners get 20% off their first year. Visit textexpander.com/podcast to learn more about TextExpander. And if you decide to sign up, make sure you choose Women at Warp from the drop down, so they know we sent you.

Jarrah: So, another thing speculating about the Mirror Universe that I was interested in is arts and culture as something we don't really see on screen. *In Dark Mirror*, in the Diane

Duane novel, Picard discovers the ending of Merchant of Venice is drastically different in that Shylock is awarded and accepts the pound of flesh. He also discovers differences in mythology with the events of the Iliad having changed, and he also finds that Surak of Vulcan didn't exist in the Mirror Universe. But this got me thinking, I was going like, "What does 21st century pop culture look like in the Mirror Universe?"

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: So, we know about Shakespeare, we know about mythology, but is all TV in the Mirror Universe just basically shows antihero centric shows like *Game of Thrones*?

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: Or, is that too close to home? And so, they need escapist things that are all just light and fluffy sitcoms.

Kennedy: I feel like it's probably all propaganda.

Jarrah: [chuckles] Yeah, that actually could be.

Kennedy: I feel like it's all propaganda, but not in a completely voluntary capacity where if you choose to turn on your television, you're going to be subjected to it. It's probably piped in through speakers in people's houses. Especially if we're talking about a resource-based economy or people are exchanging services for goods or clothing or whatever, I feel like, "Hey, you work for the state, you have this state funded house, now you listen to this state approved message over and over and over, just Terra Firma all day. Long live the Empire." Long live Emperor Philippa Augustus [unintelligible 00:40:20] Philippa Georgiou, whatever the hell her name was. You know what I mean?

Sue: It sounds very *Hunger Games*.

Kennedy: Yeah, the pageantry that we saw Interphylla episodes, where it was supposed to be [audio cut] recounting the glorious battle and unification of the empire by Philippa Augustus and all this stuff. It was wirework, and rope work, and obviously a great deal of time needed to be put into this to develop the skill in order to perform for the emperor, no less.

So, there's an industry for art, but I think it's all propaganda. I don't see anybody rising up and creating a beautiful piece of art or a song or a poem or a speech out of a need to rebel the way that some of our great art has come forth in our society. Some of the best things to exist come from a place of oppression, come from a place of subjugation, objectification, if nothing else. I feel like any great art that ought to exist in the Terran Empire is quickly squashed.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's all just state commissioned operas and dances and plays about the history of the ruling family. Interesting.

Kennedy: History goes to the victors. I doubt that anyone in the Terran Empire is going to allow any type of room for dissent, even if it's artistic and creative.

Sue: Well, that can be some of the most dangerous.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: I do just wonder, though, if there is-- So, there's obviously Mirror Shakespeare that was writing [Sue laughs] interesting plays about vindictiveness that were, I guess, comedies, [laughs] so then I'm like, "Okay, but is there a Mirror Ryan Reynolds?"

Sue: [chuckles]

Kennedy: There isn't. I'll answer that definitively. No, there is not a Mirror Ryan Reynolds, because Mirror Kennedy has killed him.

[laughter]

Kennedy: I have done the Empire a service and prevented Van Wilder from being a thing. You're welcome.

Jarrah: [laughs] Also, on the other hand, being in the Mirror Universe, you wouldn't have to deal with the disappointment that we have in our universe about figuring out that half of your favorite celebrities are secretly awful people. [laughs]

Sue: There's no secret about it.

Kennedy: It's probably the opposite. [Jarrah laughs] Like, someone finds out a celebrity, did something altruistic, and everyone's scandalized. They're dragged out into the street and stoned within an inch of their lives. "Did you just feed that stray animal?" No, absolutely not. Unacceptable. [chuckles]

Sue: We're assuming that people in *Mirror 2021* have leisure time to watch entertainment. I'm talking average people, right?

Jarrah: Yeah. I think that they have to have some, because that said, they could just all be dying super young. [chuckles]

Sue: Or, working or barely resting when they're not working. I think what we see at least in media of these kinds of societies, [chuckles] is that entertainment and leisure is for the upper crust.

Jarrah: The rich. Yup.

Sue: For the privileged.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure.

Sue: For the high status.

Jarrah: Yeah. If we're talking about like a propaganda system, you'll have a cheap mass display or mass delivery system radio or broadcast TV, but you wouldn't have the selection of shows even if they put in better production values to get people to buy the propaganda more. It wouldn't be, like, "Stream whatever you feel like on Netflix. Just sit and zone out while you watch *The Real Housewives* of the Terran Empire."

Sue: Right. I'm thinking back to 1984 and *The Hunger Games*. I think even in the film adaptation, I don't remember if it's in the novels, that they talk about the people in District 13 working all the time, and nobody has time to watch television, or whatever they call the equivalent of it. But they're required to watch *The Hunger Games*, because it is propaganda.

Kennedy: Right. There is probably three channels in the Terran universe. There's the news, there's children's "programming," more like indoctrination, and then there's the "fluff," which is like, "Hey, look at what your labor has provided for the emperor. Look out the lifestyles of the rich and terrible, [Sue laughs] where you get to see all the cool things that your involuntary labor has produced for the state, but you don't have access to it kind of thing. Like, some weird scientology way that, "Look, by your hard labor, you can contribute to the expansion of the empire, and how opulent it is, and people want to be--" You know what I mean? Like, "Oh God."

Sue: I don't know where I'm getting this idea. Maybe just from other media. [laughs] But in the same way that there might be, an exceptional person academically gets pulled out and gets special privileges, maybe exceptional people artistically get the same sort of thing and maybe get a little extra leeway. At least in my Shakespeare classes, I remember being told that some of these histories were commissioned and some of the jokes at the expense of the royal family went over the royal family's heads, because they were blue collar jokes essentially, is that present or in such an extreme case as the Terran universe, would they not even attempt it.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think there might be a kid on a garbage pile somewhere in the Terran Empire that is part of a community that someone has a guitar, and this kid is going around to the wealthy people's doors and trying to survive by begging and busking and gets recognized and elevated, or you could also have like kids that have some like musical talent who are kids from a wealthier family and are given that education by the virtue of being part of that wealthier family and then able to succeed in that way.

But certainly, we have seen in other societies that have rolled out a lot of propaganda related art that there have been music schools and people are encouraged to go to these operas and dance performances and things like that. In order to keep a population subjugated, there still has to be some idea that keeps them motivated to get up and go to the mine the next day, or get up and serve in the army the next day. We see in the time of Terran Empire, there's definitely the idea that one day you're going to be in the right place at the right time and you can seize power. But for the people that are way farther from the center of power, what is the idea there that is keeping people from just being utterly defeated.

Sue: What I really want to know is, does promotion by murder work everywhere?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Probably.

Sue: Is that just on a starship? [Jarrah laughs]

Kennedy: Probably.

Jarrah: I do think that probably in some other fields and stuff that it wouldn't be able to happen that fast, because you need to build up your alliances over time. If you murder someone, then you're just going to get murdered right away, unless you've managed to make some trades and bargains with people to keep you safe for a little while.

Kennedy: Yeah. It's probably much quicker on a starship, because starships function on structure, so you don't really have time to call in favors if you're hundreds of kilometers away from where you need to be flying a star speed, light speed. Faster than light speed. You don't have time to phone it in calling a favor, "Hey, Unc, is it okay if I merc this dude you owe money to, because he's acting up on my ship?" You know what I mean? Probably have to shank him first and apologize later.

Jarrah: We also know that they have fashion design [chuckles] in the Mirror Universe as a form of art, but it could just be the slaves that they found a Kelpien who's really good at making awesome clothes for Georgiou.

Sue: Yeah. I mean, artisans who were removed from their homes.

Jarrah: Yup. They just annex a new planet that has really strong arts and culture, and just basically make the people work to their talents. Who knows?

Kennedy: Hey, you're really good at goldsmithing? Create an entire fleet's worth of chest plate armor, but make them all different but also uniform.

Jarrah: Make me a badass crown.

Sue: Do we know anything about the Ferengi beyond the individual Ferengi? We know the Ferenginar as a culture in the Mirror Universe.

Kennedy: Maybe it's run by women and they know how to mind their own business. That's why we don't hear from that.

[laughter]

Jarrah: I don't think so. Because we see Zack and stuff go over, I don't remember if there's dialogue about like, "Oh, the Ferengis in our universe are X or Y."

Sue: It's just because we keep talking about the economics of this and pay and housing. It seems like that sort of thing, or managing that sort of thing even would be right up the alley of the Ferengi that we are familiar with. But what turns happened in the Mirror Universe on Ferenginar.

Kennedy: Maybe Ferenginar is an altruistic matriarchal society focuses more on arts and culture and-

Sue: Social programs.

Kennedy: -social programs and cultivating society on a swamp planet. Maybe that's why they're busy. [chuckles] Their planet's a swamp, and they have to figure out how to not sink into the muck. So, maybe they don't deal with anybody at all, plus we found out that Ferengi essentially bought space capable technology. So, it's not like they developed it organically like we did or anyone else.

Sue: Oh yeah, that's a fair point.

Kennedy: So, maybe they never got around to it, because they were too busy trying to make sure all their structures didn't sink into the mire, and destroying gender roles. [laughs]

Jarrah: In the Mirror Universe is all *Star Trek*, just *Star Wars*.

Sue: [laughs]

Kennedy: Oh my gosh.

Jarrah: [laughs] I say this as a *Star Wars* fan.

Kennedy: Oh my Gosh.

Sue: Don't add us is basically what that sentence was.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah. Are there any final thoughts? I feel like we've dug into some of the ideas we would love to hear from listeners about how you think things work in a Mirror Universe in the Mirror Universe society. Are there technologies that they need that we don't see on screen? Like, we see the Agonizer booth and the multidimensional transporter and the Tantalus field. What other kinds of technology might they need to preserve the structure? How does the culture work? Do they have time for entertainment? How do families work? Let us know what your thoughts are. Are there any final thoughts from us on Mirror Universe times?

Kennedy: Yeah, I don't understand people's fascination with it. [Jarrah laughs] If this is supposed to be an example-- I get it right from a time and space kind of deal. Like, obviously, I got into it earlier. But as far as people wanting to see it so much-- The Mirror Universe is not a good thing. Those are not good people. It's not something to aspire to. It's not something to try and emulate in any way. It's literally meant to be an example of, "Hey, this is how things could end up if we don't get our act together." So, I don't understand why people are like, "Yes, I love the Mirror Universe, because all it does is frighten me." Like, humanity frightens me enough as it is. Don't understand why they got to be worse.

The only thing I can really get behind in terms of the Mirror Universe is the costuming. Like, "Come on, let's go." But also, Taran Archer is on my list [chuckles] [Sue laughs] of fictional problematic boyfriends, because [Jarrah laughs] he is so fine and all I want to do is make excuses for him. And that's not good. [Sue laughs] It's just all the way toxic. [laughs]

Jarrah: That's amazing.

Sue: I'm thinking along the same lines. I think Mirror Universe episodes in a vacuum, if we can even say that, are fun as a viewer, because you get to see your favorite actors acting in a different way, you can tell that they're having fun with it. Like, playing evil is fun. When you're acting, that's undeniable. But the episodes themselves, when you start to analyze them, they're meant to be warnings.

I think sometimes when we talk about the fun of the Mirror Universe, we forget that the whole point of these is that we could be anyway, just one bad decision from going down a really dark path. And that's something that we can keep in mind or should keep in mind really all the time.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. I think that what was interesting researching for this episode is just realizing that *Star Trek* has spent quite a large amount of time now in a universe that really was not more than a basic concept to start. And despite spending quite a lot of time there, they haven't really gone that far beyond the basic concepts of how this universe works.

Maybe that's fine, because maybe the purpose is it's the warning and I think it's about-- Like you were saying, it's supposed to be fun for the viewers and fun for the actors and the writers, I'm sure. But it was just really interesting to me that I was like, "Huh? Yeah, we spent quite a few hours in this universe, and there's still a lot of the basics that we don't know."

I don't even think that Beta canon illuminates all of that either, because we're just really into focusing on our exact crews in their mirror form. That said, kind of fun imagining, what the scaffolding would be holding this whole thing together.

Kennedy: It's terrifying, because [Sue laughs] you always hope that any type of depiction of odious things that could be would be enough for us to be like, "Oh, it'll never get that way, because we're not that far gone. Things aren't that bad." But the past two seasons of reality have been terrible,-

[laughter]

Kennedy: -because we hear it all the time. You're watching an episode of Black Mirror, like, I don't want to know-- The way things are right now, the state of things, as far as how we're treating ourselves, each other, and our natural homegrown environment, I don't want to see us in the Terraverse. I can't even imagine the worst parts of us. Or, maybe we're the Terran Universe. Who really knows?

Sue: Right. Maybe I should revise my statement to say that we're one decision away from an even darker path. The Mirror episodes, I think, are a reminder to reevaluate these things all the time. For whatever flack people gave *Discovery* for spending so much time in the Mirror Universe, I think it was, in my opinion, one of the best explorations of it so far, because we really got to see our *Discovery* crew, especially Tilly in particular, evaluating how they could be the person in the Mirror Universe. Like, what parts of that person and what parts of our Prime Universe person are the same that are in both of them.

Jarrah: And also, I think just the way that-- We've definitely talked about whether or not we can consider Georgiou redeemed. She's still ultimately someone who's committed genocide and is still okay with genocide in some ways. But it does show a bit of hope in terms of actually being able to reach people that you think might be really far gone, that there's still some way that you can connect with people and appeal to their better natures.

Kennedy: You might be able to appeal to Georgiou's better nature, but she'll probably figure out some way to use it against you. I don't trust her.

Jarrah: Yeah. [chuckles]

Sue: You can appeal, but that appeal might be denied. [laughs]

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: Yeah. Anyway, that's about all the time we have for today. Sue, where can people find you on the internet?

Sue: You can find me over on Twitter, [@spaltor](#). That's S-P-A-L-T-O-R.

Jarrah: And Kennedy?

Kennedy: You can find me both on Instagram and Twitter, [@thatmikeychick](#), that's M-I-K-E-Y-C-H-I-C-K. But don't act up in my comments, because I will drag you publicly before blocking you.

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah and you can find me, [@jarrahpenguin](#), that's J-A-R-R-A-H Penguin on Twitter. And to learn more about our show or to contact us, visit [womenatwarp.com](#) or find us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, [@womenatwarp](#). You can also email us at [crew@womenatwarp.com](#). And for more Roddenberry podcasts, visit [podcast.rodnenberry.com](#). Thanks so much for listening.

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