

Women at Warp Episode 195: Shakespeare in Trek

introduction music

Andi: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Andi, and thanks for tuning in! With me today is crew member Jarrah!

Jarrah: What ho fair lady!

Andi: And, uh, our special guest, Brooke!

Brooke: Greetings humans.

Andi: Perfect. Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as \$1 per month and get awesome rewards. From thanks on social media, up to silly watch along commentaries. Visit <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> Looking for podcast merch, check out our Tee Public store. There are so many designs with new ones being added all the time and on so much more than just t-shirts find it at <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp> . Great. So, Brooke, would you like to give us a, a, tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and your history of Star Trek?

Brooke: Well, I would love to tell people about my history with Star Trek, but it starts decades ago. I was a geek as a teenager, my first date was going to see Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country. One of the times that I knew my dad loved me was when he brought home a stack of Star Trek novels and a signed personalized autograph photo from Gates McFadden. And I knew my dad loved me, because he did, he didn't understand Star Trek. And as far as what I've done recently, I, if you come to the Star Trek convention or the convention that's held in Vegas every year, I work at the cosplay repair booth there at Garak's and, um, help fix people's broken costumes, their broken dreams. And so you can, if you come to the, the convention there, you can always come by the repair booth. I will be there. I love to say hi to people there and have done, uh, several panels at that convention involving costuming, because by profession, I'm a costumer and I work in theater a lot. And then I've also done the panels there on

Shakespeare and Star Trek, which is, I think why I was invited to participate today and which is just happy for me.

Andi: Absolutely. And I have to say, I love the idea of cosplay repair because when you're at a con and you don't have access to all of your stuff at home that you use to make your costume and stuff, how nice is it that you can find a booth and go up and, and say, Hey, I need glue. You know, that's pretty amazing.

Brooke: Yeah, it's I love that is the reason I go to the convention because I've been there for, I don't know, 10 years, maybe longer now. And for me, being able to go and help people and actually provide that service really means a lot because it does people work, put so much heart into what they build and then if it breaks, it's just Ugh. And we get to fix it. And I, I love that.

Andi: That's. Well, you are absolutely correct. That one reason why we thought of you is because you have been on some panels on about Shakespeare, specifically with our crew member Grace. So we thought who better to have on as a guest than Brooke. And, uh, yeah. So our topic today is Shakespeare and Trek. And I gotta tell you all, when we were sitting down to like break down this episode, I started going, oh, wow. Oh, my, this is, this is a serious topic. There is a lot to go over. And so just to caveat as always trust me, we did not go out of our way to not talk about whatever special Star Trek / Shakespeare reference that you personally love, so can't get to everything, but we would love to hear from you all about anything that we missed, in our comments, tell us what piece of Star Trek that references Shakespeare really hit home for you and why you liked it. Cuz we always love to hear about that. So essentially we, when we started thinking about this topic, we started thinking about kind of broader themes that we could talk about that then we could kind of break down into specific examples. And one of the first things I thought of right off the bat is one, there's kind of two ways that I feel like Star Trek is influenced by Shakespeare.

And one of them is purely references, you know, quoting it. making the, the title of the episode, a, a, a Shakespeare quote, you know, all of those things are like direct references. But one thing that they also do that I think is interesting is they kind of show Shakespearean influence. So it's not so much that they're necessarily directly referencing Shakespeare, but we're seeing Shakespearean tropes and archetypes kind of play out within Star Trek. And I find that sort of thing fascinating. And when I started thinking about that, the first one that came to my mind is the kind of Shakespearean character trope of like the jester or the fool. And immediately I thought, well, Q is Puck. That's the first thing that came to my mind.

Brooke: Yeah, I think that's one of the first things that's gonna come to most people's minds is Q as well, kind of like Puck or Ariel, like the fairy type of, of fool.

I think it's really interesting to think of say the Ferengi as fools as well. Like, so in Shakespeare, the fool there's, there's the clowns, and then there's, there's these fools that are, can be clowns, they can be funny, but they can also be like the people that hold up the mirror and show, you know, speak truth to power kinds of stuff. And. be a foil for the main characters and help guide them. Sometimes it's humorous. And sometimes it's not. I think of like the fool in Lear so the Ferengis actually really kind of fit that role, especially like Quark in Deep Space 9, he's a clown character and so's Rom, he's a clown character, but the Ferengi point of view helps us to understand humanity a little bit better.

Jarrah: Yeah. Like it, it just as an example, the first thing that just occurred to me when you said that is the one where in, "In The Cards" [DS9 Season 5, Episode 25] where Nog is saying to Jake, kind of, you know, your human economic system seems to make no sense. And that, that, like you keep saying that you don't need money, but you certainly need to seem to need my money. So, like they can say those things and point out the things also about the inconsistencies in Star Trek as a series in a kind of meta way that like our heroes can't really do.

Brooke: Yeah.

Andi: And the thing that I've always liked about DS9, In general and the Ferengi and even the Cardassians with Garak too, is DS9 is one of the few series and one of the earliest series to actually unpack and take a look at the Federation itself and Starfleet itself. And kind of question whether it's this all encompassing good, that we're supposed to think it is because in TNG and TOS, it's very clear that the Federation is an ultimate good. Right. It's good then when they come and they are the moral arbiters right. Even if it's not explicitly stated, that's just kind of the, the inference of the show. It's underlying everything that they do. And then we get DS9 and we have characters, especially non-human characters and non Federation characters that come up and they're like, Oh, actually, have you thought about this? And I think you're absolutely right, Quark is a good example of that, Garak to me is also an example of that. I think of Quark and Garak's famous root beer scene. Like, that's the first thing the second you were like, and the Ferengi, I was like, oh my gosh, you're totally right, and that's what I feel like that Root Beer scene is.

Jarrah: I guess the thing that I think like Q and Trelane, they fulfill kind of that function in terms of commenting on humanity, but they also have more power than the characters they're dealing with. So, there's a bit of a way that they also maybe cross into the same, maybe like a different type of category of Shakespeare archetype, which are, you know, kind of more supernatural influences. And I'm thinking like the witches in Macbeth and, and, uh, we also, like when you look at that category also have like the Profits as filling a similar role to that. Where you have this, like you come in and you comment as well as I'm gonna say the witches in "Catspaw" [TOS, Season 2, Episode 1] who are clearly Macbeth influenced. Um, so you, you have some of these like kind of more, uh, supernatural trending towards omnipotent figures that can provide commentary and challenge the characters sometimes, to you know, potentially like, can you actually break from your destiny? And I feel like that's a theme that we see a lot with Q is that idea of like passing a test.

Andi: Well, I mean the very first time we see Q he is doing that. He is, he is asking he's testing humanity, and he's using Picard as the avatar of humanity and putting him to the test, so to speak. And making him kind of answer for humanity and whether or not they've grown and forcing him to defend humanity.

Brooke: Yeah. And I was also thinking along the lines, Q's character arc going into Picard season two and at the end of Picard, season two. So, I don't know if spoiler alert is necessary here. I wonder if Q goes from being like a Puck and mischievous kind of a character to being more like Prospero.

Jarrah: That makes sense to me. I think like a lot of the academic literature I read and even some of the, just nonacademic commentary draws a lot of parallels between different parts of Star Trek and the Tempest, because there are just generally, you know, a voyage with a, an ambiguous ending, the stranger in a strange land, like lots of same, uh, similar dynamics to that. So, yeah, I mean, and I certainly feel like Q in season two looks like he could be a Prospero.

Brooke: Science fiction in general helps us see ourselves by taking us just a few steps away from reality and then holding up a mirror. And I think Shakespeare does exactly that same thing. And I think that's why there's such a resonance between Star Trek and Shakespeare.

Andi: I think you're completely right. And like building on that, that kind of leads into something else I wanted to talk about when it comes to, just the sheer amount of Shakespeare and Star Trek. I started to think about how just in general, I feel like Shakespeare is one of those kinds of writers that writers like

and writers study. So, then you kind of see them use that as a template for a lot of stories that they wanna tell. And, I think that that's true of a lot of different writers in, in TV and like all media, but I think that's, it's not just that resonance you are speaking of, Brooke, because I do think that that's really relevant, but I think it's also just, if you're a quote unquote educated writer, you've probably studied Shakespeare and it makes sense to me that it would start to show up in your own writing. And, you know, if we're going all the way back TOS Elaan of Troyius [TOS Season 3, Episode 2] is essentially science fiction “Taming of the Shrew” right?

Jarrah: Yeah. It's uh, it's not great. Uh, it doesn't hold up super well, but yeah, it's um, I mean, certainly Elaan is a woman who needs taming. She's kind of like a spoiled brat, and that's how it's portrayed.

Brooke: Well, except when you see her first, not, not when she shows up on the transporter pad, but later on when she's explaining why she doesn't wanna get married. My sympathies are 100% with her!

Jarrah: Oh, totally. Yeah, exactly. And it's like, like in, if you that's partly why I don't think it works well today is because Kirk doesn't seem to really sympathize with her and, uh, you know, actually slaps her. Yeah. Like, of course she doesn't wanna be forced to get married, but the way that it's portrayed is that she's spoiled and that she is using her emotions, and literally her tears that literally manipulate men. So, I actually saw a blog article that also said, like, maybe there's also a bit of Antony and Cleopatra where she's a bit like Cleopatra, like wielding her powerful sexuality as well as just like she has kind of Cleopatra braids going on. But, yeah, that's a way where it's like, maybe you're borrowing some pieces of Shakespeare that I know some people have tried to reinterpret in a more modern feminist way, but they did not really go there with that.

Andi: Look, I'll just say that “10 Things I Hate About You” is the superior “Taming of the Shrew” adaptation.

Brooke: Agreed. There's a mythical, I don't know if it's mythical, but there were sequels to “Taming of the Shrew” that were performed. “The Tamer Tamed” that were kind of like this flip of getting Petruchio tamed. And I can't remember if they were popular or not, or, but it was a, it was kind of like the part two of “Taming of the Shrew”, and this was, you know, back in the day. And I see a little bit of that in Elaan of Troyius, where she uses her sexuality to tame Kirk. And I think that's kind of interesting, but also mostly that episode is one huge eye roll for me.

Andi: Well, I mean, you were talking about her entrance and the transporter, I, that always makes me laugh, the, like the slow pan and the leg. Bowdew music, it's like, oh, she is sexy.

Brooke: And the literal placements that were used for the costumes on her guards. It's hilarious.

Andi: I love TOS costuming. I love it. Like they, they really made a lot of things, very iconically. not necessarily good, but iconic. Um, one of the other archetypes, I think we see a lot and I, I mean, this is, this is another thing where we are talking about, yeah, this is in Star Trek, but this is across all media. That one that I see commonly is the star-crossed lovers trope. And the first one I thought of when I was thinking about this is Riker and Soren, and they're just kind of doomed lovers type thing. And then also this like Romeo and Juliet-esque of societies that don't agree with each other and can't come together. Um, it's not a one-on-one analogy, but that was what I thought of when I was thinking of like common plot lines that we see in, in Shakespeare.

Jarrah: Yeah. You know, back to Brooke's point about their, you know, so we have one of the functions or, or the reasons it's used is to hold a mirror to humanity. There's also the point Andi, that you said, the writers are just familiar with it. There's also the point that the audience is, um, assumed to be a largely white Western American, mostly audience. And maybe they're not familiar with like Coriolanus and they probably can't quote extensively from Titus Andronicus or Pericles Prince of Tyre, but they know the rough arc of Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet and Macbeth from high school, cuz we all had to do it in high school. Plus, it's just also reinforced everywhere around us, in our other pop culture. So you have in like Darmok [TNG Season 5, Episode 2], Troi uses as an analogy it's like saying Juliet on her balcony because like that is such a universal image that the audience knows that they'll understand what that means as a metaphor.

Brooke: Yeah. In fact, I think. Far more people are familiar with the outlines of Shakespeare, just like, just like you said, Jarrah, that we all have a general idea that Hamlet's supposed to be in black and he's sad. And...

Jarrah: And he has mommy issues.

Brooke: Yes. And he has mommy issues... Is that it, it can be a like you said, a shortcut to refer to other things, give us some context. I think sometimes, it's used just to sound smarter than it actually is. And I think that maybe is, is a lot of the time, but most of us don't know most of us can't quote Shakespeare. And

I have spent tons of time memorizing Shakespeare because I've performed it. And I still just don't quote it like that. You know, it's unless I'm actually actively in a play, nobody quotes Shakespeare. I think that like the end of *Ménage à Troi* [TNG Season 3, Episode 24] when Picard is quoting all of those sonnets and everything like that, it's hilarious. Who in real life actually memorizes poetry like that? But it gives us a context for understanding what's going on.

Andi: Well, and it's interesting that you bring up that sonnet performance because, it is my prime example for another thing I wanna talk about, which is one thing that I love about Shakespeare in general, is that his writing is so layered and nuanced that you can basically change the meaning through performance. And it's one reason why as plays they've stood up so well throughout time is because people are forever reimagining them and like playing with what did he actually mean here? Can we, you know, show it a different way? And I think that's such a good example of that, of performance changing the meaning because, the sonnet he's quoting is romantic, but he's turned it into like a farcical comedic performance. So, the meaning changes based on Patrick Stewart's excellent Shakespearean performance of it. And I really, I really love it. And that is definitely I think one of the moments that most people think of when they think of Shakespeare in Star Trek. And we got that when we reached out to our listeners and asked them, what is their favorite? Um, Emily on Facebook said Picard saving Lwaxana in *Ménage à Troi* by quoting Shakespeare is a great scene in an otherwise not so great episode. And I think that she's absolutely spot on there.

Jarrah: It's so fun.

Andi: I love it. It's so funny. It just really shows what you can do when you have like a Shakespearean trained actor, like having the time of his freaking life.

Brooke: I think another thing that people think of in, uh, that not just Trekkies, uh, they'll think of Star Trek VI, the, the Klingon quoting Shakespeare all of the time. And when they're having that dinner and they're like, you haven't experienced Shakespeare until you've heard him in the original Klingon.

Jarrah: Yeah, I totally wanted to come back to the Klingon piece, but I, I don't wanna forget just one, one thing coming out of that thought about, you know, not everyone just knows how to quote Shakespeare in their day to day or no, or generally quote Shakespeare. And I believe I have raised on the podcast before that, also not everyone knows how to quote Latin and sing Gilbert and Sullivan, but apparently they do in at least TNG era Federation.

Brooke: And Morse code.

Jarrah: Yes. Yeah. So, I mean, I just wanted to make the point that I did a bit of a deep dive down an academic internet rabbit hole of, uh, scholarly essays on Shakespeare and Star Trek and a common point that was raised, which was stated really well by Emily Higgerty is about how Shakespeare is used in like a way that basically reinforces the kind of classic Western cannon and particularly the kind of 19th century humanist thinkers that were kind of held up as like great individuals. And she says that, it's actually contrary in a way to like how Shakespeare was originally as like a populist form of entertainment, um, says that the Shakespeare of the next generation is not the Renaissance writer of crowd pleasing plays that have entertained for centuries. It is the archetypal genius of the cultural elite. His plays are not staged entertainments for the enjoyment of the Starship crew. They are private moral lessons to be pondered in the isolation of the holodeck. This is not the Shakespeare of ubiquitous inexpensive universally translated paperback popularity, Picard's Shakespeare is the transcendental author of the antique book in the museum quality glass case, which lacks only a do not touch sign to further protect Shakespeare as a static and rigid cultural commodity. So I enjoy that.

Andi: Yeah, I mean, I think it's funny that like Picard quotes Shakespeare so often, and he rarely quotes the naughty bits. Because Shakespeare is very crass and then he definitely does not lean into that side of Shakespeare.

Brooke: Well, and I, my opinion is that Star Trek is a secular humanist story.

And Shakespeare and other Renaissance and enlightenment authors are the version of the Bible for secular humanism. And so it kind of makes sense that secular humanists would refer a lot back to this common shared text. Yes, it comes from England. Yes, it comes from a white, well, we know he was white. I don't know if he was cis, you know, male, his or his sexuality. We don't know that either. But when you experience Shakespeare by performing or watching, one of the shows, you experience what it is like to be a human. Almost no matter where you come from, there are troops that take Shakespeare to Africa, to prisons all over the world to translate 'em into other languages. And, it still plays so well and it is still such a profound experience for at least the performers. I hope for the audiences as well. And so I think that. Emily Haggerty's point there, I think it's very well taken. I, I also think that there's, it's it's because it is a, a quote sacred text for secular humanists. And honestly, one of my pet peeves is when people are performing Shakespeare and they

forget that it is for the masses. It's funny. It's I, I, I am always trepidacious, is that a good word? I always have some nervousness going into a live performance of a tragedy because I am so worried that the actors are going to be tragic instead of just doing the play and finding all of the fun stuff and remembering that it's about entertainment.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I totally agree. And I think, I think that what she's saying is more just, we don't see that way that people are always contesting and transforming the source material. So, people find these universal themes in it, but different ways of coming at them. And in TNG especially, we seem to see when we see like things performed I mean, it's either just things are quoted, but generally it seems like you would imagine a like stereotypical presentation of that play.

Brooke: Yeah, oh, The Conscience of the King [TOS Season 1, Episode 12] from the original series.

Jarrah: Oh yeah. That's a good example.

Brooke: So, so stereotypically 60s presentation of a play. It it's disgusting to me, honestly.

Jarrah: Yeah, So, it kind of makes it seem like, so another, uh, scholar I read Katrina Boyd wrote like basically the TNG actually presents culture as less problematic than it has been in recent years. The overall impression is that high culture, one out over low and mass culture, the cannon is intact and cultural artifacts give a neutral, timeless, unproblematic representation of what it means to be human. So, we miss that kind of like debate and discussion and like re-imagining things as a project that involves a community.

Andi: I think the universality of Shakespeare is really apparent. I do think that it, it, it does like have an overall impact on just humanity. But, I do think that the repeated use of Shakespeare in especially TNG and TOS, kind of reinforces something that Star Trek is often guilty of, which is basically presenting a kind of narrow lens of you know, human culture, it's overwhelmingly white. It's overwhelmingly from Western civilization. It's overwhelmingly from men. And so I think that's interesting because when we're coming at it through science fiction lens, it's like, this is, it makes it seem whether they meant to do this or not, it makes it seem like this becomes the dominant human culture that survives and that. You know, is, is considered human and it's super focused on these handful of authors, handful of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Brooke: I think that has everything to do with the fact that it's in the public domain and the providers could use it not having to pay anybody for it.

Andi: I think that's, that's probably right too. Cuz think about how many times they have parties and yet they're listening to like classical music, from like the 1800s. It was actually really nice when I, I remember watching Discovery and they finally had actual music. And I was like, thank you. thank you, Discovery. Cause I personally love classical music, do not get me wrong. I, I truly do love it, but it just didn't. It just doesn't feel accurate.

Brooke: It's not as guttural as, as a good, um, hip hop beat.

Jarrah: But, uh, yeah, thanks for, uh, humoring, my random academic Star Trek Shakespeare deep dive thoughts. And I don't necessarily, I think there's some different takes and, uh, I'm still weighing up how I personally feel about it all, but I like that people are generally questioning like kind of deeper trends and things like that. But, do you mind, if I just skip back to the Romeo and Juliet discussion for a second?

Brooke: Oh, let's do it.

Jarrah: I wanted to raise Trip and T'Pol as an example of the star-crossed lovers trope. Um, and at one point Trip even says something like Romeo and Juliet would've had better luck than us, um, at a point where the relationship isn't doing well. And I think that that is a really good example of that because it's, it's not just like two people who can't really be together, but like their societies don't support them being together. So, she has all these Vulcan duties that make it harder for her to be with him, and then not so much for him in terms of like his family, but there's these human extremists that don't want to see interbreeding. So I like the fact that there's those dynamics in it as well as just their interpersonal dynamics.

Andi: Thank you. Jarrah. Did you wanna go back to talking about the Klingons? Because I do think that Klingons and Shakespeare is a really fun, cool kind of, I, I don't even know world building for Klingons that I truly enjoy. And I think the reason that I, I love it so much is I think there's just a really cool juxtaposition because it's like, yeah, Klingons rawrrr, they like blood wine and they like fighting and rah they're warriors, but they also love Shakespeare. And if we're talking about like, uh, folks that actually understand, like the populist versions of Shakespeare, it's the Klingons and that's I, I find it extremely charming, more Klingon Shakespearean scholars please.

Brooke: Their costumes are essentially versions of doublets. Like they dress like Elizabethans. I love it. A good fitting doublet just makes my heart skip a beat.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Brooke: Klingons and Shakespeare, they do seem to fit together at more than just the violence. I think one of the, the things about it though, is the Elizabethan culture was more violent than ours. And so I think it does match in with the Klingons idea of honor and what that means there's there is a resonance there. Which I am not a Klingon fan. Not, not, not until Discovery actually was I ever a Klingon fan. I just like, oh, they resonate with Shakespeare, that's cool.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm Well, and in discovery, their costumes are very Shakespearean in at first.

Brooke: Oh yeah.

Jarrah: Those, I mean, well, they look Elizabethan maybe is more accurate.

Brooke: Yeah. They they're, they're very Elizabethan in their aesthetics.

Andi: Well, I mean, if it, depending on which plays you read. Shakespeare can be incredibly violent. And it's also about passion and like really strong feeling. And one thing I like about the Klingons. They're not gonna censor themselves. They're gonna feel whatever feeling they have to the utmost. And I think that's probably why they like Shakespeare and I mean, Star Trek VI always comes up when we talk about Shakespeare and Star Trek, mainly because of Christopher Plummer and General Chang, just absolutely being a Shakespearean fanboy and delivering all these like ponderous Shakespearean lines as a Klingon with an eye patch stapled to his face. It can, it can't get better than that. That's that's the height of Shakespearean performance. I mean, they should every play from now on, they should have a character with an eyepatch stapled to their face while, while delivering, uh, To be, or not to be.

Brooke: Yes, while asking existential questions. Yes.

Jarrah: Yeah. Do, what do you think that the Klingons have a least popular. What would be the least popular? Shakespeare play for Klingons?

Andi: Midsummer Nights Dream.

Jarrah: I was thinking like Loves Labour's Lost at least there's like fighting in Midsummer Nights Dream.

Brooke: Well, and the, the Klingons are very, uh, passionate and romantic. They, they would, they would put something on it that I think would make it work for them.

Jarrah: I just feel like they'd need something in there that was, yeah, a bit more dramatic. Anyone that has like a duel is probably safe.

Andi: Well, I was starting to think that maybe the ones that are basically just farcical misunderstandings with everybody talking around each other and not saying what they mean.

Jarrah: Oh yeah. Like Comedy of Errors.

Andi: Yeah. That, that might be, that might be...

Jarrah: They would just be like these... They have no honor.

Andi: Say what you mean. How dare you pretend to be someone you are not!

Brooke: The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Andi: Perfect.

Jarrah: Why are these wives so merry?

Brooke: Except which chancellor was it that's that is like a very serious Falstaff? Oh I can't remember his name.

Jarrah: Was it the chancellor in Star Trek VI who's Gorkon?

Brooke: No, Uhuh. No.

Jarrah: Oh, the one before Gowron?

Brooke: Yeah, the one before Gowron. Oh, oh, what was his name? Cause I'm imagining him playing Falstaff and it's not going well.

[Transcriber note: K'mpec is the Klingon Chancellor before Gowron, the actor, Charles Cooper, also was in Star Trek V as General Korrd. K'mpec was last seen in "Reunion" TNG Season 4, Episode 7, which is the first time we meet Gowron]

Andi: We had, um, a couple of listeners comment on the Klingons and, and specifically Star Trek VI, and we got a recommendation from listener @FFN_BBQ, um, who recommends Christopher Plummer in the intro to the game Klingon Academy?

Jarrah: Yep. I watched it. It's pretty good!

Andi: And he says he was much more restrained than in Star Trek VI.

Brooke: Oh no, that's sad!

Jarrah: I mean, I love Star Trek VI and like he's chewing the scenery, it's great. I have the, uh, the Klingon Bird of Prey, like figure that you can press, and it plays Christopher Plummer saying Shakespeare lines from Star Trek VI. And like, many of them are totally out of context. Um, from the, the source material, they just sound good in the moment, but, um, it's delightful. I mean, I thought, I also thought the somewhat more restrained version was still very good.

Andi: Well, we'll put it in the show notes so people can enjoy and thanks to our Twitter follower for, for highlighting that for us we appreciate it.

Jarrah: Yeah. There's also just a lot of parallels in Star Trek VI with Hamlet, particularly. I mean, obviously the title of the movie, but Mark Houlahan, who is another person I read, wrote about like how the plot revolves around the death of a father who was also the head of state, those who are left behind, kind of find them in Hamlet's position where they have to grieve the departed and also figure out revenge. And that there is, um, kind of the same anxiety over the quality of existence and like what is coming next for everyone?

Andi: And he does quote Hamlet.

Jarrah: He does

Andi: He does indeed. Very ponderously. I enjoyed it.

Brooke: I find that scene really interesting when he starts off and he says to the undiscovered country, because within the context of this of the Hamlet talking, the undiscovered country is death. But then, and so then everybody, all the humans at the table turn and look at him like, what are you talking about? And he says the future. And I really find that fascinating because death is our future, but as we tend to try and not deal with our own mortality, we try to avoid it, but the Klingons, death is the next day. You know, today is a good day to die is a Klingon thing, you know, and I, I, so I find him that fascinating the way he starts off that speech. And it's such a Klingon it is such a Klingon thing for him to say, even though he's using these human words.

Jarrah: Yeah. And when Kirk comes back to it about, you know, your father called the future, the undiscovered country, and it says people can be very scared of change or be very afraid of change. Yeah, like for Klingons, you can imagine that death is less scary than change for sure. And maybe for some humans too, maybe the humans that were part of that plot were less afraid of dying than they were about like this future peace treaty with these people that have been their sworn enemies.

Andi: Have we ever heard of, I have to imagine they've happened, but has anyone ever heard of anybody translating Shakespearean plays into Klingon and then performing them?

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: Do tell, Jarrah, tell me more.

Jarrah: Well, I mean, you can get the translation of the Klingon Hamlet, like it was published, and then there's a hundred percent companies that put it on. Just like there's also a, um, Klingon company that does a production of a Christmas Carol in Klingon, I believe. Sorry. There's a St Paul theater company that staged a Star Trek "It's a wonderful Life" mashup performed in Klingon and they also had previously done the Klingon Christmas Carol. So that might be the company that I'm thinking of. And there may be more than one, but. Those were the ones that I was thinking of off the top of my head.

Andi: Nice. Well, I hope someday I get to go see Hamlet in the original Klingon.

Jarrah: Oh my gosh. Okay. I found another one. This is great. So there's the Washington Shakespeare company in DC did, uh, scenes from Hamlet, Julius Caesar, and Much Ado About Nothing in Klingon in 2010. And they also

performed the English version. So they did both. And then. The they're bringing, they brought back a new event that was called Avant Bard.

Brooke: Oh, right. I would definitely go and watch that.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: Absolutely.

Jarrah: And then they, uh, did, uh, basically a version of, The Wrath of Kahn in Klingon. So yeah. I'm very down with everyone doing more, more of that. And I think some people, I think you can see some of the performances or at least clips on YouTube.

Andi: Excellent. So one of the other, besides the Klingons, the other like big one, I think that we have to talk about is Data. And how often Data is either referencing Shakespeare or someone is quoting Shakespeare to him or he's performing it. And the whole thing is through the lens of Data learning how to become human, which is how he handles most art and why he does painting and plays the violin and such. And I think it kind of goes back to what we were talking about before about this idea of the universality of Shakespeare and the themes of Shakespeare and how Shakespeare is a way to explore humanity. And so is science fiction. And so is Data. So kind of go together like PB & J I'd say.

Brooke: Yeah, I think, I think Data can also operate as like one of those fools, those Shakespearean fools, who's this relative innocent who reflects humanity to us, but then also he himself is trying to get more and more human. And I love how Picard is trying to be like a mentor to him, with doing it through performance. And really there is such a difference performing Shakespeare than reading Shakespeare. I, nobody should read Shakespeare, except for the actors memorizing their lines. Everyone should experience Shakespeare on the stage. And then when you get the chance to perform it, you have to dig into those texts because it's almost a foreign language. And so you have to really research the words that you're saying, and the poetry helps, you know, the meaning and you, you dig into all of that and you, so you get these words deep into your soul. This is the thing that I feel sad about Data's efforts on the holodeck, is he's always doing them alone. And acting is so much more fun and so much more profound for me when you're doing it with someone on stage and you're looking into their eyes, and you say your line and then they say they talk back to you and they give you something different. And then you respond to that and it's this living pretending it it's, so it's such a different experience performing versus reading it. And, doing it with an audience there with you and you get to feel when they're

really listening to you and they're involved, you can tell by the way, people are breathing in the room, and you can tell that means I've performed in smaller spaces rather than very large spaces, but the audience interaction that happens. Shakespeare needs to be performed.

Jarrah: Yeah. No, you're totally right. And this, okay. So this reminds me, I came across a really fun Reddit question when I was doing this research. Does Data just do private holodeck performances for Picard, been bingeing TNG, and I'm noticing small recurring scenes and it ends up the question ends is Data just doing the scene for Picard? Is he rehearsing for a larger performance and wants Picard's feedback? And why does Picard keep interrupting him instead of letting him finish the scene? That's just rude.

Brooke: I agree 100% with all of that. I do think Data is preparing for a performance, cuz if I remember correctly, he does mention I'm going to be performing this, but again, it goes back to some comments that were made earlier about how it's just for this small group of people. And it seems to be this very intellectual sort of an exercise, as opposed to this emotional gut wrenching or absolutely hilarious production. Side note, one of the funniest shows I ever did was a version of Macers, I'm just superstitious enough, I don't like saying the full name of the play [Transcribers Note: The title of Macbeth is rarely spoken by actors or rarely in a theater at all. It is usually referred to as Brooke did here as Macers, {Mack-ers}, the Scottish Play, or just The Play. It is thought to be cursed, so it is never spoken.]. It was hilarious where we did it for kids and in half an hour and just the, the witches were sock puppets, and we still got the whole story out. The kids were introduced to this, this great idea. but it was hilarious. Performance is I performance is everything.

Andi: I, and I think you're completely right, Brooke, cuz it's not just about Shakespeare, it's also all poetry. Poetry is words. Yes. But it's also about the sound of the words and how the words kind of go together. That's why Shakespeare so often wrote an Iambic Pentameter it's about a beat, and it's about how the words sound against each other. That's why alliteration is a thing, you know, so you, you're definitely not getting the full experience of any kind of poetry, especially Shakespeare, if you're not speaking it aloud. And that's why your high school teacher humiliated you and made to try and read Shakespeare out loud in front of your entire class, because it just doesn't work otherwise.

Brooke: Well, and it's very funny because people will ask how do you memorize all of that stuff? And for me, memorizing Shakespeare word for word is a whole lot easier than memorizing modern text word for word, precisely because of the poetry.

Jarrah: Yep. But like, is Data doing a performance just of him doing monologues? Cuz he could at least be rehearsing with the rest of the cast. You have to imagine he's not like he's not insecure about it at this point.

Brooke: No, but he's missing something by not actually rehearsing with other people. And I can't even articulate exactly what it is that he's missing, but he is totally missing. No, I think I can we define and learn about who we are when we're in relationships with other people.

Jarrah: Yep. In the episode, The Defector [TNG Season 3, Episode 10] Data is performing from Henry V at the beginning of the episode, and he says basically that he has been studying great performances like Laurence Olivier in order to figure out how to do this right. And Picard says Data, "You're here to learn about the human condition, and there is no better way of doing that than by embracing Shakespeare, but you must discover it through your own performance, not by imitating others." Like if he wants to break away from imitating others, then doing his rehearsal with a group and seeing them work on their own performances, a group of amateurs, I think, is gonna be a better way to do that than just working with Picard

Brooke: 100% agree. You're right.

Andi: I like to think that cuz we have seen that Crusher directs plays on the Enterprise so I like to think that she is also directing him in Shakespeare and he's just trying to get better out on his own before he shows her his performance. And then she, as an excellent director, will start drawing him into the cast and, and showing him how to play off other actors. That's let's, let's just, let's just hope that that was happening off screen.

Brooke: I, 100% hope that too, cuz you always have to, as an actor, you always have to do your own homework on your own before you jump in with everybody else or else you're not playing fair with everybody else.

Andi: I also think it's interesting that another one of the probably most, apropos Shakespeare references in regards to Data is in The Measure of A Man [TNG Season 2, Episode 9], which is an episode entirely about whether or not Data is a person and discussing his personhood and humanity, and it's put on trial. They do specifically quote Shakespeare in that episode, and Maddox basically says to him, do you even understand what this means? Is it just words to you? I don't like that guy. there's plenty of people that if you, if you gave them Shakespeare, it would take them time to understand it. That doesn't make them not a person. And, also, I bet Data does understand, and he, he works hard. He works harder

than anybody else to try and find his personhood because he's not sure he has it. So, the journey is the most important part. And, uh, this Maddox guy doesn't understand any of that. And he sucks.

Brooke: Yeah, he totally does. He's but he's doing something that I think a lot of authors tend to do when they're writing Shakespeare and science fiction, they use Shakespeare as a test of humanity. but I 100% agree with you that anybody just reading the words, it might take them a long time to try and get to the meaning of it and so that doesn't mean that they're not human.

Jarrah: Yeah, totally. And I mean, I think Star Trek reinforces the idea that, you know, and we, we talked about like, there are these. themes that we consider kind of basic human themes in Shakespeare. And a lot of them also didn't he didn't invent these. Like he drew a lot of them from Greek and Roman mythology and from like historical events around us. So, they're also not things that just like one guy invented, but he picked up on these themes that were around and some way to, um, in some cases he told them way better than anyone else had ever done. So, I think that it, there is a bit of that, you know, kind of associating that there's almost like a bit of a Shakespeare test you have to pass before you're fully human. But that I think ultimately like Data to us passes it just in, in like trying to understand it, I think is maybe the more essential thing that Trek wants people to do.

Andi: I just don't like the idea of, like there's some static meaning that you understand, and then that's it. That's not what Shakespeare or any kind of art is about. Like think of stuff that you read as a kid, and then you read again, 30 years later, it changed. It changed because you changed, so like whenever you are interacting with art in any way, it's a partnership between you and the creator. You are bringing stuff to the table when you're interpreting what their words mean. So, uh, it's the idea that it's like, check this box, and this is what the meaning is, is just fully not accurate.

Brooke: Anyway, does, does Bruce Maddox even understand how he's failing his own test right now?

Andi: Exactly.

Jarrah: Oh my gosh. I will say that in, in our very second episode, Data puts his own spin on Shakespeare when he says, if you prick me, do I not leak?

Andi: Yeah. See. He, he passed the ultimate Shakespeare test in that he took Shakespeare and he played with it and he changed the meaning around and then he applied it to himself in a funny way.

Jarrah: Yeah. He went, there is a play that is about, well, it, one of the pieces of The Merchant of Venice is person who considers himself oppressed, and I would argue is

Brooke: Agreed. I think he is oppressed.

Jarrah: And, uh, Data, is like, hey, I'm kind of oppressed and maybe I'm drunk right now and that's what made, let me be able to say this, but he puts his own spin on it says I'm like this character who isn't treated the same as everyone else. And that people see as less than human and yeah, so agree. I think he passes the test in that very episode.

Andi: Before Maddox even came about Data had already passed his stupid Shakespeare test.

Jarrah: Yes. And that's in The Naked Now [TNG Season 1, Episode 3] for reference.

[Transcribers note: Although The Naked Now is officially the 3rd episode of the first season of TNG, since Encounter at Farpoint now usually broadcast with both parts 1 & 2 together, The Naked Now is referred to as the second episode of TNG.]

Andi: And the other thing is that, uh, that's kind of interesting is that we are talking about performance and we're talking about imitation Data drops his general speech patterns when he's performing. And specifically when he is performing it and he's playing Prospero in Emergence [TNG Season 7, Episode 23], like he does, he doesn't do his regular cadence and he changes it up to perform. And I find that really interesting.

Brooke: And that's also a testament to some of Brent Spiner's acting skills to be able to be playing a character, who's playing a character and then switch back to the base character. That's that takes a bit of skill and some planning. But I, I, I do agree that when you're given lines and blocking, and you're this you're told, this is what you have to do with those kinds of limitations. And then you have to memorize that and then you practice it. It gives you a chance to work out how to be in a different way than you are in your real life. In a safe way. And it's one of those reasons why I enjoy theater in general, as a way to do therapy, it's

cheaper than therapy to go and do a play. And you get to practice with those given circumstances. What to do. And so then just like with any skill, you can then apply it in your real life later on, as you've practiced and learned it.

Jarrah: I do wanna shout out. So, Andi, you had talked earlier about how certainly in earlier Star Trek, we don't necessarily see references to the, the naughty bits of Star Trek. Jen on Twitter says. I love Lower Decks, keeping the spirit of Shakespeare and Trek alive as only they could by giving an ep the bawdy title Where Pleasant Fountains Lie [LD Season 2, Episode 7] besides the glorious lewdness of the phrase, the poem, Venus and Adonis is definitely in the Lower Decks of Shakespearean works. and it is so great if, the like, full sentence from that poem is graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry, stray, lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.

Andi: Excellent. Excellent. 10 outta 10, no notes.

Jarrah: It's very Lower Decks and it also kind of pokes fun at the that whole, um, the thing that one of the scholars, uh, was pointing out about the use of, of Star Trek to signal high culture, to like kind of lend itself legitimacy, or as Brooke, you said like sometimes they're using it to make themselves sound smart and, uh, Yeah. Goes out like Trek and also work to signify more like low culture in quotes or like populist culture.

Andi: Yeah. And then one thing that I like about that too, is that it just goes to show that Shakespearean references and Star Trek aren't going anywhere. We're gonna see them continuing on in the new series. Um, and we still see more in Picard and just in general. The Shakespearean mythos is still going to be quite foundational to Star Trek, I think.

Brooke: Yeah. It's no, it was in Star Trek Beyond I, I cheered when they, we quoted Shakespeare in Star Trek Beyond.

Jarrah: Yeah. You know, I haven't really been watching Strange New Worlds for like direct references, but I feel like there also are just some themes that we also see in common there. I mean, in some ways actually. I mean, it's not a direct analogy to Macers, but the idea of like seeing your own future and having that effect. What you, what decisions you make to me is reminiscent of that.

Brooke: Absolutely. But Pike is, is doing the opposite of, of Macers

Jarrah: And trying to be better because he saw it

Brooke: Not, not give into the dark side of the force. Oh, wait. Wrong, wrong, wrong franchise.

Jarrah: We support franchise diversity.

Andi: Well, were there any other scenes or characters or tropes or themes that you won that we, um, wanna talk about a little bit more before we wrap, wrap up?

Brooke: I, I would say that if anybody listening has any ideas for the Shakespeare and Star Trek panel, uh, send them along because I hope we'll be able to continue doing that. We try to have fun at that panel rather than being all brainy about things. We try to play games and have fun.

Jarrah: Nice. I did wanna mention, uh, Craig on Facebook pointed out that in The Defector [TNG Season 3, Episode 10], that's where Data's using Henry V at the beginning, that it also ties in perfectly with the rest of the episode. And so sometimes they use the example from Shakespeare that they're quoting similar to using Hamlet in Undiscovered Country to like point out some of the themes that they're drawing on in the other story, or the main story of the episode.

Andi: It's like how in, um, high school, teen dramas, whatever they're studying in English class as a direct, uh, reference to whatever teenage problems they're having and is just somewhat, uh, perfect correlation. That's, that's exactly how I think of it.

Jarrah: Exactly. Um, I also wanted to mention in, uh, Catspaw, it's not just the witches that make it kind of Macbeth, like, um, but you also have Sylvia who is kind of a corrupting woman who is trying to lure Kirk into like her own designs, um, which is only one interpretation of Macbeth, but I would say one that was very prominent at the time that the episode was made.

Andi: All right. Well, I think that there's a lot more we could talk about when it comes to, uh, Shakespeare and Star Trek, but unfortunately, uh, we only have an hour. So, I think we have to wrap things up a little bit. So Jarrah, where can people find you if they wanna talk more about, uh, the play.

Jarrah: The play is the thing, isn't it? Um, you can find me at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin>. And I'm also at <https://trekkiefeminist.com/> where I am currently looking at the results of the Beckdel Wallace test for new Star Trek. So, I just, I posted, uh, Discovery and Picard and I have yet to finish Strange New Worlds, but it should be up soon.

Andi: Excellent. And Brooke, when people wanna send you ideas for the Shakespeare and Trek panel at Vegas, where should they send.

Brooke: You know, I'm not much on social media nowadays, so, uh, is it okay if I give my email address?

Andi: Sure. If you don't mind a bunch of weird randos from our show, emailing you about Shakespeare.

Brooke: I'm excited. It's tanaquill1558@yahoo.com.

Andi: Awesome. Thanks so much to learn more about our show, to contact us, visit <https://www.womenatwarp.com/>. Email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. Thanks so much for listening.

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