

Women at Warp Episode 256: Better the Ardra You Know

[Women at Warp theme]

Jarrah: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, a *Star Trek* podcast. Join us on our 10-year mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. With me today is crew member, Grace.

Grace: Hey, everybody.

Jarrah: And we also have a very special guest, Tupá.

Tupá: Hello, everybody. So cool to be here.

Grace: It's so cool to have you. Thanks for joining us.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. I will get you to introduce yourself in just a minute. But before we do that, we have our usual housekeeping. So, as we wind down Women at Warp over the next six weeks, I guess seven weeks.

Grace: Oh, my gosh.

Jarrah: We are still hoping you'll continue or consider supporting us on Patreon. We're using these funds to get our episodes transcribed and archived so that they can be found and used for school and all sorts of things.

Grace: Or just for future listeners who are interested.

Jarrah: And so, they're accessible. And we're also using it to have our ongoing hosting costs. So, if you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards. Like in March, we will be having our last patron watch-along and that will be *All Good Things*. So, visit patreon.com/womenatwarp, that's P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/womenatwarp.

Grace: Fair warning. I will definitely cry.

Jarrah: Yep. And also, if you join our Patreon, you can listen to the watch along that Andi, Sue, and I just did of the *Enterprise* finale-

Grace: Oh boy.

Jarrah: -which Andi and I had never seen before.

Grace: Oh, no. So, we got your dismay in real time then.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's real-time reaction.

Tupá: That looks great.

Grace: That sounds incredible.

Tupá: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, another way you can support our show and show off your fandom is by visiting our TeePublic store to get podcast merch. We have a whole bunch of cool T-shirt designs

and there's tote bags, notebooks, stickers, all that good stuff. Find it teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp.

All right, Tupá, tell us a little bit about yourself and your history with Star Trek.

Tupá: Okay, cool. I'm Tupá. I'm from Brazil and I'm a historian. So, my specialty is ancient history. And on ancient history, I studied evil and demons and demonology.

Jarrah: So cool.

Grace: Oh, my god, that is such a cool niche.

Tupá: [laughs] I think so too.

Grace: [laughs]

Tupá: And so, I think it's important to put that part because it's very cool and also because it explains a bit why I'm so interested in this particular episode.

Grace: No kidding.

Tupá: Yeah. But for the *Star Trek* part, it's kind of fun because I've been watching *Star Trek* since I was a kid on TV. So, I didn't learn English until I was in my 20s at the university. And also, I didn't have like pay TV at home, so I would only watch *Star Trek* that was on show on like open TV in Brazil and was the dubbed version of the classical series and that's it. So, for a long time, that was the only thing I knew about *Star Trek*. And I love it, I absolutely love it. I found it amazing. And Kirk was my favorite captain and so on. And at some point, I found out about the other shows, which I had no idea for a long time, and I started watching it. By that time, I already knew English so I could listen to it properly.

But the really, really funny part for me is that I didn't understand *Star Trek* as science fiction. So, yeah, I don't know why I associated science fiction with like *Alien* and *Predator* films, and I didn't like them. I found them very violent. And I was like, "Yeah, I don't like science fiction." And then at some point, one of my friends just pointed to me, he was like, "But you watched all *Star Trek* more than once and you really like it? You like science fiction." I was like, "No, no. I like *Star Trek*," [laughter] and same thing. And I was like, "Whoa." And then from there I just started watching a lot of other things and then I found out I actually love science fiction.

Grace: Just not the violent stuff where someone is being hunted in the wilderness.

Tupá: Exactly.

Jarrah: Yeah. Not so much body horror.

Tupá: No, no body horror for me. Not at all. But *Star Trek*, yeah, great.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Tupá: So, yeah, and it's quite interesting because I've been listening to your show. I think I listened to all the episodes already.

Grace: Oh, my goodness.

Jarrah: Wow, now I feel like we're in rarified company even more so.

Grace: That's a commitment.

Tupá: I really enjoy it. And my friends joke with me because I used to have like three or four *Star Trek* shows I used to listen to and they're like, "You're really into this." I'm like, "Yeah, I do. I am. It's nice."

Grace: That's awesome.

Tupá: But at the same time, I think the experience of liking *Star Trek* from Brazil is a bit different from like US and Canada because I didn't know, for instance, about the-- I mean, I knew there were conventions, but it's not a thing you go because far away, very expensive. And then, I listened to you guys, I was like, "Whoa. Conventions and the actors go. It sounds amazing. I want to go to one of those things."

And a lot of people who like *Star Trek*, because there isn't that many people around that like *Star Trek* and of course the books and the series and all the other. So, I watched a lot about the series and the TV series. I don't know much about the books and the other canon things because we don't get them here. Now we do, but they are kind of a new thing.

Jarra: Well, and I would imagine that it can be challenging to find them translated and stuff too. Like, I know they are translated into a lot of different languages, but I mean, there's just so much. None of us, I think, have read all the books.

Tupá: I think it's impossible.

Grace: Yeah. At this point, probably.

Jarra: And some of them, especially a lot of older ones, were very hit and miss.

Grace: That's such a generous way to refer to it.

Jarra: Yeah, there's some hits. There're some ones that are just either maybe don't hold up so well or came in the era before any sort of quality control.

Tupá: Oh, I see. Yes.

Jarra: [laughs] But that's very cool. It's great to have you on the show and we are very much looking forward to discussing with you, Ardra, and the episode, *Devil's Due*. Grace, could I potentially put you on the spot to give a quick overview of the premise of the episode?

Grace: The Enterprise goes to a planet that is being controlled by a woman who's all she wants to be, a walking study in demonology and says she is the devil. Not like just this planet's devil, but the devil across the board. And the crew of the Enterprise says "I'm not sure. I totally believe that. Let's get this figured out." And that's my quick overview right there.

Jarra: Totally.

Grace: With a little whole reference in there just for fun.

Jarra: She's also, I think, a bit of a leather mommy. [Grace laughs] Rewatching this episode, I just noticed how many times she was saying things that felt like straight out of female dominant fiction.

Grace: I was going to say this is a very *Star Trek, The Original Series* plot. So, she's got a very *Star Trek, The Original Series* horniness going for her. [laughs]

Jarrah: And it was originally a *TOS* plot by Gene Roddenberry. It was part of his first draft proposal for the original series. I mean, just the idea of you have this being that claims to be supernatural, these aliens believe that they're a God or a deity of some kind, and then the Enterprise crew comes and uses reason and science to prove otherwise is very *TOS*.

Grace: That's so *TOS* right there.

Jarrah: Yeah. And it was also developed into a script for *Star Trek Phase II*, which was never produced. Originally, the entity was a male called [unintelligible 00:09:24], and the Enterprise computer was the judge. And apparently, there were like 12 or more iterations of this script when it came to be a *TNG* script. And Michael Piller ended up polishing it and decided to make the character a woman "for fun." So, there's your background.

Tupá: For fun. I love that. For fun.

Grace: We'll throw some women in for fun. That is the *Star Trek* way.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well, one thing I noticed about this was that-- And I was trying to imagine if this was original series episode, if it would have been the same way, is that Picard, right off the bat, is like, "This is a con woman. There's no way that I have anything to learn here." And it's kind of like set off by at the very beginning of the episode, there's the scene where Data and Picard are rehearsing a Christmas carol on the holodeck and Data's being Scrooge. And there's this whole thing about what it means to perform and that you can't just copy other people. So, nice juxtaposition there.

Grace: Also, Brent Spiner just having a good time playing Scrooge there, by the looks of it.

Jarrah: Totally. Yeah.

Grace: He looks like he's having fun. Yeah. How many--? I'm just stopping for a minute and just being like, okay, if were to do a segmented Data study, wink. How many of these early *TNG* series opening, cold open scenes are just Data doing something by himself and then someone coming in going, "Wow, Data, you're doing a thing." And him being like, "Yes, I am." And them being like, "Sounds like there's a moral to pull from this."

Tupá: Sounds like that this is the plot of the episode, right?

Grace: Yeah. What a relevant hobby you have this week, Data.

Jarrah: So, I know we really want to focus on Ardra and how this connects to your research, Tupá. But I do just need to very quickly note. The random scientist that they have at the beginning, his outfit has-- His inside thighs are quilted. And it made me wonder what is his Federation science team doing that he needed extra padding?

Grace: That's the department of chafing clearly. [laughter] They do a little bit of equestrian work, so they need that extra padding.

Tupá: Yeah. Because we have to remember it's an agrarian society, so maybe he needs to ride horses over.

Jarrah: Yeah, maybe. It was actually very thought out.

Grace: Just for a very specific position that we're only skimming the surface of.

Jarrah: I'm also interested, Grace, to know what you thought of the leader, [unintelligible 00:12:22] sort of blue and gold leopard print cape, turtleneck.

Grace: I love a good cape and turtleneck combo. But many of the outfits in this episode, you kind of see where they're trying to go for it, but it looks just kind of so cheaply put. Apologies to the costume crew. I know you were doing your best, but it does not look like it's the most high-quality costume production. And it kind of shows that this is still early on in the show's run. They're trying to get their footing and probably working with kind of limited resources before blowing up and being a big deal. But I like your spirit, kid. That's what I can say about it.

Tupá: I really like sewing and costumes and stuff like that. So, this episode is particularly interesting with all the drapey things.

Grace: Oh, my gosh. It does really seem like the costume department was having a good time with this one also.

Tupá: Yeah. And also feels like they were like, "Okay, we need to make this different because it's an alien people, civilization."

Grace: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Tupá: So, let's just get some fabric and put cape things on everyone, why not? Because then we can use just turtlenecks and drapey things and looks alien, yay.

Grace: There's a commonality in *Star Trek* overall of just be like, "Well, we can just kind of drape it, see how it looks. We got this fabric, let's use a lot of it."

Tupá: And of course, they can reuse the fabric. From this perspective, it works.

Grace: Exactly.

Tupá: Mm-hmm.

Grace: Waste not, want not.

Tupá: And of course, in this episode, we have the great Picard pajamas. We need to talk about that.

Grace: Picardjamas.

Jarrah: The PJs, the JP PJs. Wait.

Grace: Oh, my God, you're right.

Tupá: PJs. The shirt that's not properly a shirt and have his chest exposed. It's so funny.

Jarrah: I have a thing like that's supposed to be worn over a swimsuit.

Grace: What is it with Picard and his casual wear and just not being able to swing a regular shirt?

Tupá: No.

Grace: I swear.

Jarrah: Also, you just like—So, based on the one that I have worn, that's like a romper for over a swimsuit-

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: -it gives you wedgies real bad. The short-short situation just, I generally recommend no.

Grace: There are so many short-short situations where you need to go into them with caution and sleepy time is not that time.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Tupá: Yeah, yeah.

Grace: That will interrupt your sleep.

Tupá: Because I understand Ardra not being comfortable with the clothing she's wearing in that scene because of course she's trying to seduce him, but why is he sleeping with that?

Grace: Because it's the fuuuuture. Oh, wait, they're carrying over this Scrooge thing. This is the ghost of poor pajama choices past.

Jarrah: I'm curious about how we interpret Ardra's objectives. So, she wants to basically take over this planet and enslave its inhabitants.

Grace: Not cool.

Tupá: No.

Jarrah: But she also wants to bone Picard big time.

Grace: Can't deny her that. Yeah.

Tupá: She gets there, and she was like, "Yeah, I'm just going to enslave these people and get all the resources." But then, she sees Picard and she's like, "Whoa, actually, I have the money and the guy."

Grace: You got to love how even early *Star Trek* was like, "Nah, nah. Our captain's a hottie boombody," right off the bat.

Tupá: Yeah. And I think because it's interesting how she-- I love the scene when she first meet them. And then, Picard interjects because the people from the planet are like, "Oh, Ardra, you are this whole thing and we need to serve you and please don't treat us badly." And then, he intervenes and she's like, "Okay, who are you?"

Grace: Who dis? Who dis? And you are?

Tupá: It was like, “Oh, no, I'm trying General Picard from the *Star Trek*-- from the Enterprise.” And then she's like, “Yeah, keep up the good work.” And I love that. [laughter] She's like, “Yeah, I don't care about it.”

Grace: Okay, byeee. Ardra got stuff to do.

Tupá: She has to control this place. And I think the other thing is, from the beginning, Picard doesn't believe there is a devil-like figure. And it's interesting, because for him, I feel that it's a lot to do with, “Oh, no, I'm a science person. And as a science person, I cannot believe in demons and devils and other things like that. So, if the devil is not real, so she cannot be the devil.”

Grace: He is his own Dana Scully in this situation.

Tupá: Yeah. But when he first learns about her, it's from the scientist who was in the planet because they beamed him up and he's explaining to him. And actually, he is the one who makes the connection. The people, the Ventaxians never say, “Oh, she's the devil.” The one who says that is the scientist. And then the connection he makes is like, “Oh, yeah, they are an agrarian society. So, they are very naïve and that's why they believe there is a devil.”

And I think that's a very interesting aspect of the plot because it's like, oh, okay, so what you're telling us as the audience is that agrarian societies are necessarily naïve and because they don't have technology, that's why it's easier to fool them, and that's why they will believe in religion, which is such a crazy thing for people to believe. And that was a point that always got to me. Like, the first time I was watching, was like, “Hmm, I don't like that.” And of course, as a historian, I hate how in the future all the other sciences have evolved, but anthropology and archaeology, nothing, they don't evolve in this. And it's like, “Oh, yeah. He's anthropologist who doesn't understand the role of religion in different cultures.” That makes no sense at all.

Grace: He's a really crap anthropologist, I guess.

Jarrah: Yeah, like he's just going, “Well, you wouldn't even believe it.” Like, “They think they've actually sold their souls to the devil.” Like, he has no respect for his research subjects, basically.

Grace: So, maybe anthropology has evolved and he's a super, super niche type of anthropologist that should in no way be working in this situation here.

Tupá: Yeah. Not working for the Federation.

Grace: No, no. He's for special anthropology of douchebaggery, something like that.

Tupá: Likely.

Grace: It's a very real study, I'm sure, but not one should be out and about with the Enterprise.

Tupá: And he's so dismissive of the population which, argh, it's really unnerving.

Grace: Yeah, it feels very in line with sort of the goal of anthropology, and how you're supposed to approach that.

Tupá: Yeah.

Grace: And also falls into that very easy stereotype of, "Oh, they're superstitious, therefore they are primitive." And it's like, well, every culture has its ingrained beliefs.

Tupá: Exactly.

Grace: That's a commonality.

Jarrah: They say basically they have some better technology, but they just aren't using it and that their society has been essentially idyllic.

Grace: They say that, but we don't really see it played out, do we? It's kind of like that kid saying, "Oh, no, we got a hoverboard. No, it's at my uncle's house right now. You can't play with it." [laughs]

Jarrah: But apparently, they've had no war, no famine. There's the whole thing where Picard is basically trying to prove it wasn't Ardra that made your planet good for the last century, it was you, you did it on your own. But they're too primitive to see it? And then, I will say at the-- I mean, I'm jumping ahead, but I'm sure we'll come back, but at the end when it's revealed, they take the news very well.

Grace: They're just like, "Oh, okay."

Jarrah: After being fully, fully convinced that this is Ardra, their deity, and they have negotiated a deal with her and are all going to-- They're basically semi happy to be enslaved. And then, it's like, "Oh, no, you've been conned." And they're all like, "Okay, thanks for letting us know."

Grace: All right, our religion's been upended? Okay.

Tupá: Yeah, who cares? There won't be a problem for society.

Grace: Nope. We'll just go back to business as usual without really-- Ah, nuts.

Tupá: Yeah, yeah. And I think that's one of the things that always got me from this episode. And the other thing was that the idea of the devil that they show, because there are many ways to represent the devil and there are many ways in which societies have thought about demons and devils and so on, and they choose to represent the devil in quite a funny way because Ardra is not taken seriously. I mean, by the Ventaxians, yeah, but not by Picard or the Enterprise. Yeah, she's kind of joking all the time. And the whole thing about she is trying to seduce him.

Grace: She's just a fun-loving, non-threatening demonic entity.

Tupá: Yeah. [laughter] And actually, when I was researching about this episode, I decided to look into when was it first aired and how it played into what episode was. And it's actually quite interesting because it first aired in the beginning of the 1990s. And it's just when the satanic panic thing is going down.

Grace: Of course. Yeah.

Tupá: And then if we look into all the devil and demon productions in English from since the beginning of film and series and so on, it's amazing how at the end of the 1980s, you have this huge spike in productions with theme and then they go down basically in 1993, which is when the episode comes up. And by the time, if we look into the films that are from the 1980s, from the beginning of the 1980s, the middle of the decade, you have more serious,

like threatening evil things. And by the beginning of the 1990s, it's getting more common to have films where the devil is something funny and something not to be taken seriously, because the satanic panic is subduing and the US as a society is moving past that. I mean, I wouldn't say it did properly, but let's--

Grace: To a degree.

Tupá: For that time, they were recognizing that the whole mass hysteria about kids being kidnapped in kindergarten and so on, this was already starting to disappear. So, it fits well with the time of having a devil that's not properly scary. It's more like a fun way to show how science is better than religion than an episode to make us scared or worried. Because I don't know how it was for you, because for me, it was-- The first time I watched it, I was-- Since the beginning, I was like, "Okay, she's likely a con woman." And because I believe Picard, I was like, "Okay, this is just a fun-- The fun of the episode is to find out how she gets the power and not to worry about if she has power."

Jarrah: I agree. I don't think there's ever any tension there. And I was trying to imagine whether it would have been different, like, is there a single character in *TNG* that you could have had her be trying to appeal to? I mean, it's kind of already been done with Q offering Riker powers and things like that early on. So, you can't really go with Riker. But I do feel like Riker is more subject to seduction than Picard.

Grace: Oh, yeah, [laughs] for sure. He would have had her woken up next to her and been like, "Hey. Hey, girl, how'd you get in here? Do you like my short-shorts?"

Jarrah: And I also-- I mean, I don't know that they could have made it scarier unless they had the characters react in kind of an un-Original series, un-*TNG* way where they weren't actually just so convinced from the very beginning that like well, there must be a good scientific reason for this.

Tupá: Yeah, I agree. I think that-- And I liked the episode, but I think the plot was always kind of light and funny and it wasn't possible to properly make into something else, but the other thing I always look into is that-- So why she's-- As you said, Jarrah, the original script, she was supposed to be a he and it was a male figure.

Grace: Does having her be a woman make her a less threatening figure you think in the intent?

Tupá: I'm not sure. I think that it makes easier to portray her as this seductress.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Tupá: Because if it was a male figure, it won't play well for the audience. I would love to see a male figure trying to seduce Picard.

Grace: I mean. Yes. Look at him. Yes. Why do you think they keep bringing Q back?

Jarrah: I was thinking if they were going to do that it would have probably been, okay, well, we're going to have a male devil, and we need him to seduce Troi or Crusher. And then, I could see it being kind of like *Sub Rosa* or like one of the many episodes where Troi has terrible taste in men.

Grace: Yeah. That could have gone downhill real quick.

Jarrah: They end up being super evil. So, it just would have been like a completely different vibe. But I think there's a couple different things here. One is that I know that watching it, I was like, "Okay, this is fun." Like, when she says things like, "I liked my men to be forceful, at least at the start," and stuff like that. I'm like, "Okay, this is fun." We've done a whole episode on Kink in Star Trek. I feel like this gets into that territory. But also, she is joking about sexual slavery, basically. Sorry to make this extremely dark, but I think if it was reversed, that would be very obvious and uncomfortable. And the fact that it's like, we know that this woman's no match for Picard really.

Grace: Your leather mommy vibe has no power over me.

Jarrah: Yeah, yeah. So, because he's so resistant to anything that she's putting down.

Grace: His old fogyness saves the day here. Wow.

Jarrah: Yeah. But I think it's also our society's tendency to feel like women are more vulnerable sexually and that men are not.

Tupá: Yeah, yeah, agree. And also, yeah, on this, thinking about if it was a male character, I don't think they would go there. And that's why I tried to find the original script really, really hard and I couldn't, which made me really unhappy when I was researching this. I could only find one of the final versions of the script. And I wanted the original one because I wanted to compare what changed because I wanted to see the idea of demon and devil and evil from the 1960s versus the one at the beginning of the 1990s show how society had changed this view. And I couldn't because I couldn't find the original script. And so, we only have this one to address.

Grace: Maybe it is so 1960s, they've scrubbed it from the internet. They don't want us to find it. That is a lost script maybe.

Tupá: I think I found reference to it. I think CBS took out of-- It's not online and it's not somewhere because of some judicial fight or whatever. So, I found information on it, but I couldn't find the script properly, which is annoying.

Jarrah: One thing I noticed about gender is that there's a couple times where Picard talks about her and keeps calling her "that woman." Like, "I refuse to abandon this planet to that woman," instead of just like "to Ardra" or "that person." And it does seem to kind of be like he's more annoyed by it being a woman almost. I don't know that's what Patrick Stewart's giving, but the line to me is almost like--

Grace: To that woman.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's kind of like, "Oh, there's this uppity woman wasting my time," kind of stuff.

Grace: This bitch right here.

Tupá: Yeah. I have so much other stuff to do.

Grace: Oh, my God, guys, I'm a captain. I don't have time for this.

Tupá: Womanly, no sense. I agree. Yeah, I think it plays a lot into this idea that she's just a silly woman that's doing tricks and we just have to find a way to find out what she's doing and prove that she's nothing and move on.

Jarrah: Yeah. He says, "I find you obvious and vulgar." So, he's also slut shaming her.

Tupá: Mm-hmm. And you can see she knows nothing about him when she transforms into Troi and you're like, no.

Grace: Oh, gross. [laughs]

Tupá: You're like, no, no.

Grace: No, no. You have misread the room, ma'am. [laughs]

Tupá: That's not the one.

Jarrah: The Victorian outfit is kind of funny though, that is like, "Okay, yeah."

Grace: This is what Picard's into, right? [laughs]

Tupá: Well, he said she was vulgar. But I like how they-- Because I see some different tropes of devil in the episode because the episode tries to show us in multiple forms how she is the devil. I think that to give an impression that maybe she is and maybe Picard is wrong, but I don't think it gets there.

Grace: It's trying to add some plausible deniability, just not very well.

Tupá: Yeah. Yeah. But they go for like-- Oh, first of all, the idea that, "Oh, no, they made a contract, and they sold their souls to the devil." And this is a very old trope with the devil and this idea that you can make contracts. And I like the idea that the devil is someone who really respects the law and contracts and that you make contracts with it and that's how you deal with it.

Grace: The devil is very judicious. Yeah.

Jarrah: Very judicious.

Tupá: It just respects the law a lot.

Grace: Oh, how else do you explain lawyers?

Tupá: Why not? Yeah, of course.

Grace: Oh, I kid. I kid. I kid, lawyers. I love you.

Tupá: I even have friends who are lawyers. [laughter] And the idea of the temptress, ugh, some words are terrible in English. But anyway, you don't see male devil and demon figures in pop culture who are tempting others often. Usually, the tempting, especially if has something to do with sexuality, is usually a female version of the devil.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Tupá: And when I look into other devils from the same period up to the end of the 1980s, most of the devils in pop culture would be this male, dressed in red, horns and more scary in the sense of force. And I found particularly interesting that when she turns herself into the devil, I mean the earth devil, she turns into a male and kind of showing that no, the devil needs to be a male. The devil from earth's perspective is a male and that's how we should see him. And then--

Jarrah: Interesting.

Tupá: And she's also the trickster, which is another reference to the devil. But on the trickster side, it's interesting because when I look into her, I don't see her being evil in any of the moments. Of course, she's going to-- I mean, this lady--

Grace: That's pretty inherently evil. Yeah.

Tupá: Yeah, that part is evil. But just fulfilling the contract is not evil.

Grace: Kind of like they cut and pasted this character into an evil situation but forgot to make her specifically evil, just her deed.

Tupá: Yeah. So, she's not evil for this. She's not evil necessarily for tempting Picard. And she's a trickster, but Picard is also a trickster because he's trying to outsmart her at the trial. And it kind of remind me about the-- And I'm going to quote the Bible. I'm sorry, that's my area of study, that's why I do that.

Jarrah: Oh, good.

Grace: You do what you got to do.

Tupá: The idea of the trickster appears a lot when you think about Jesus goes to the desert and then the devil goes there and try to trick him into renouncing God and so on. But he's so godly, he's so good that he won't fall for temptation, which is precisely the role that Picard is doing here. He won't fall for temptation. He's a trickster as well, but he's a good trickster. He's like the righteous trickster. The one who used trickery to save everyone and to show how moral he is and how good he is and how he cannot be tempted by a vulgar woman.

Jarrah: Yeah, he's JC, JP, and PJs.

Tupá: [laughs] Yeah, precisely. I would love to see a drawing of him with like a halo and PJs.

Jarrah: And slight digression, but just on the image of Satan or the devil, have you also watched the animated series episode, *The Magicks of Megas-Tu*, with that character, Lucien.

Grace: I mean similar to but legally distinct from Satan. Yeah.

Tupá: No, I didn't.

Jarrah: Okay. Recommend checking it out.

Grace: You have to.

Tupá: I will.

Jarrah: Because it's another like basically Gene Roddenberry era take on the devil. But in this case, he turns out to be very misunderstood.

Grace: He's just a little guy. Just a little guy. Beelzebub.

Jarrah: Yeah. Basically, it was like these aliens were strange and ended up being hunted as part of the Salem Witch Trials and so they had to leave Earth. And Kirk has to prove that

we've moved past witch trials. But the character, Lucien, who's basically Satan, he's got like the fawn legs and the horns and no shirt.

Grace: You will not believe you are seeing this in a children's Saturday morning cartoon from the 1970s. You genuinely will not. [laughs]

Tupá: So, I will watch it because it sounds amazing.

Grace: It is a wild ride.

Jarrah: But I like that point that you made about when he's changing-- Sorry, when Ardra is changing into the earth devil, that it's necessarily a man or male. I was-- Because I didn't even think of that because I also just kind of accepted, but like you mentioned, that's just kind of one-- Like, we have other interpretations of demons but not like the big Satan.

Grace: We don't need new demons. We've got demons at home.

[laughter]

Tupá: Yeah.

Jarrah: What do you think of Fek'lhr, the Klingon?

Tupá: I have so much on it.

Jarrah: Of Gre'thor.

Tupá: Yeah. That one really bothers me. Actually, the whole idea of having-- That's one of my main problems with this episode, is this idea that you can-- That every society has an evil figure and a good figure, which makes no sense.

Grace: Very polarizing.

Tupá: Yeah. And it makes no sense in earth. Like, not all societies in earth have an entity that represents evil and another one that represents good. This is a very Christian idea.

Grace: Yeah. That's another case of a bunch of white guys being like, "I understand all of earth as a white guy."

Tupá: Yes, precisely.

Grace: I'm an expert as a white man.

Tupá: Mm-hmm. I know everything. By the way, I try to find a reference to the other ones because She says, "I'm Mendora in the Berussian Cluster." And Mendora is only mentioned in this episode.

Grace: Yeah, there's lots of dead-end references in this one, unfortunately.

Tupá: Yeah. She goes also for Torak to the Drellians, which is also only time we see that. So, Fek'lhr is the only one we can actually examine. And he or she, it's not clear if the figure is a he or she. And I don't think it's a devil figure because when we look into the other moments, it's not evil. Fek'lhr is the one that guards the place where the disgraced Klingons are going to be punished. Okay.

Grace: And based on everything we know about the Klingons, there should be a lot more, “Ah, you were dishonorable,” punishment characters, I think.

Tupá: Yeah. And he's not-- Fek'Ihr, he's the guardian of the place where people go after that. He's not necessarily evil. He guards the place of death, which is actually not necessarily a characteristic of our devil. It's sometimes, but it's more like-- So you see, let me get back. When Ardra defines Fek'Ihr, she says, “I'm the guardian of Gre'thor, where the dishonored go and die,” not to die. And in the *Voyager* episode, B'Elanna travels to there and she did not see Fek'Ihr which is interesting.

Grace: B'Elanna's fun anachronistic religious journey. Yeah. [laughter]

Tupá: Exactly. But also on *TOS*, we have one episode when Kang says to Kirk that Klingons have no devil--

Jarrah: We have no devil.

Tupá: Yeah.

Grace: The best devil you can ask for is yourself.

Tupá: Yourself. The devil is in you.

Grace: It was inside of you all along.

Tupá: So, I think that associating Fek'Ihr with the devil is actually a very colonialist attitude to see like, “Oh, yeah, you see, this is the guy who takes care of the dead after they die. That's clearly the same thing as our devil.” And we're like, “No.”

Grace: Which is such a gross oversimplification that we see applied to a lot of non-Western cultures.

Tupá: Yeah, exactly.

Jarrah: I mean, he's really more like Karen or like a figure of guarding and transporting. Parent of the afterlife.

Grace: Yeah, he's got the angled bangs and everything. [laughs]

Tupá: Very scary.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think that's a really interesting point. I know in the *Voyager* episode, B'Elanna mentions that there is this kind of myth about Fek'Ihr torturing the souls of dishonored warriors, but it feels like that's almost like they added that on in *Voyager* to make it work better as a devil. But yeah, you're right, there's nothing else in here. I will say I do enjoy the gross makeup though.

Tupá: Oh, no, the makeup, I think it's the best outfit and makeup of the episode. And I was also thinking, I love Worf reaction to it, like, “You are not. No.” And I wish they would explore more of that because, I mean, there's so much more they could do with this episode, and having Worf more into it and participating would be one of the things. But then, we wouldn't have the tribunal, the other scenes, and I don't think they wanted that. But yeah, I think that was one of my main problems with this episode, is this idea that you can apply devil and demon to anything without considering the particularities of things.

And actually, it's quite interesting because humans have been doing that for a very long time, since antiquity. It was a problem already during other periods in history, there was scholars and people complaining about this, that we are just putting everything into one thing. So, like Plato, for instance, he sees demons as an intermediary between gods and humans. And it was already-- He also found weird when people just would associate demon with daimon, in this case with something evil. And I think it's fascinating how the episode shows very much, as often series do, but it shows very much who was writing and when it was written, or at least when it was adapted to be on TV.

So, the whole idea that the woman is going to be someone who-- If the woman who is a devil, she's necessarily trying to seduce others, because that's the role that women can play when they are devils. And then we can mix, match all things into one, because of course there will be-- Every culture has evil guy that we can portray, so she can be the evil guy for same. any culture because it doesn't matter, they are kind of all the same.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think that's really interesting. The other thing the Fek'Ihr thing made me think about is the devil that they're portraying doesn't seem that far off. They are normal culture.

Grace: Oh, yeah.

Jarrah: He's like slight, dripping, slimy stuff from his nose and fangs. But it made me think of that meme about how is Klingon kink just cuddling and how if they did have a devil analogy, it should be something that just makes them deeply uncomfortable.

Tupá: I completely agree with you. Because that devil sounds like someone the Klingons would enjoy spending time with.

Jarrah: Exactly. Like, isn't getting tortured for your dishonored fun kind of? Maybe not for your dishonor, but--

Tupá: I agree with you. I would say that the only part that's terrible about Klingon hell, I would say, is that they are dishonored because the other parts doesn't feel like they would think it's terrible.

Jarrah: But yeah, like you were saying, it's this idea that everyone's kind of mythology has to conform to like a Judeo-Christian norm, I guess a Christian norm in this case of the idea of heaven and hell. And everyone just has not just A demon that is like this, but one demon, and that's super interesting.

One thing I wanted to get your take on was so the whole thing about her seducing Picard, and she goes from at the beginning kind of being essentially, like, "I'm going to break down your resistance," to then saying, "I will give you whatever you want," even though at this point he has nothing to give her in return. And then, saying basically, "Well, I want the deal to be that you give yourself to me without resistance," which, A, is like kind of impossible. But also, I'm curious about why she wants him to give himself willingly. And if that's part of devil tropes or succubus tropes of the idea that it's not just about corrupting your body but also corrupting your heart and your mind.

Tupá: Yeah, I think, because he's portrayed as this righteous person, so her wanting him to be corrupt would be the ultimate thing. Like, oh, no, she actually manages to not only seduce him because seducing him, okay, fair enough, but getting him to actually taint himself. I think that's precisely part of the plot how they show him as this righteous character and the one who does things correctly. And she's playing on the trope of the devil who is trying to destroy the soul and the energy or whatever of the one who is righteous. And I think that's why she wants him so badly. I mean, she also saw him in his PJs, but yeah. [laughs]

Jarrah: That totally makes sense.

Tupá: Yeah, it all makes sense. But I feel that's more like she needs to corrupt him because he's the one who is resisting and because the other people on the planet, she's not interested on them, she just wants the money. Yeah.

Jarrah: Well, coming down to the end of our episode, you have recently written a paper about this, and I was wondering if you wanted to plug that and tell us anything else about the paper that you wanted to mention. Yay.

Tupá: Yeah, I'm a scholar and also-- Anyway, but scholars tend to be really excited with papers, but the thing this paper gave to me that I was really excited about was that I have my name on Memory Alpha. And that made me so happy. [laughs]

Jarrah: That is very cool.

Tupá: Of course, it's into the-- There is a page about the book. So, the paper was published in a book on theology and *Star Trek*. And so, but when I saw that, I was really, really happy. And so, the paper basically explores a bit more profoundly what we've been discussing and how this idea of devil and demons are portrayed in this episode and why. So, what are the different ways in which Ardra represents the devil and how Picard is this very Christ-like figure actually, it even has—So, there has this whole idea that his Christ who is beating the devil in a way with trickery, which is interesting, of course. And it's also interesting how the Ventaxians are very much not important for the episode.

Grace: Yeah.

Tupá: Because the other thing that I think is central in the episode, and I also mentioned that in my paper is how science is better than religion. And they put that very often in the episode and that's a main point to say like, oh, the Ventaxians, as I said before, they are just an agrarian, that's why they are easy to fool, and they don't use science and that's why they can believe in religion. And this is to ignore a very interesting thing that is science and religion can are often things that are together like they are aspects of culture and there are scientists who are religious.

But the episode makes this-- I think that was one of the things that really bothered me because Picard is so much into the side of, "No, I know she's fake because--" And I was like, you are not trying to understand the culture of the Ventaxians, you're not trying to understand religion, you're not trying to understand anything. But it's a common way to represent these things in TV and pop culture in general. And that's mainly-- I think that's the thing that really bothers me. It's that they don't respect religion and they, and I'm not really a religious person myself and I didn't say that, but I think in this debate it's important to mention I'm not religious. I just like from the internal logic of the series, I think the assumption that anthropology doesn't exist in *Star Trek*, it doesn't exist in the future and in the future, we cannot understand complex concepts from other cultures, this really breaks my hope in the future of *Star Trek*. I mean, of course not, that's too much.

But anyway, this idea, and you see that played over and over and over again in all *Star Trek*. I mean all *Star Trek* is too much, but most of the episodes when they talk about other cultures, they just ignore how other cultures work and how other cultures-- They are always just, "Oh, no, no. They are silly or they are dumb." It's a long tradition of ignoring how cultures work in the series and how *Star Trek* works within this idea of culture which at the end just shows to us that *Star Trek* was mostly made by white males who are from US.

Jarrah: I will say also, it is kind of similar to some of the kind of urban attitude about rural folks that we have today, even in the west, where the idea that, yeah, like, “Oh, folks in rural communities are more religious, superstitious, less educated.” And that ultimately doesn't really help our society if you don't take time on either side to kind of try to understand. And that's supposed to be what infinite diversity and infinite combinations is about, is like no one's saying you have to believe what they believe, but you need to be curious about it.

Tupá: Exactly. And I think it also leads to the idea that's very much ingrained, especially in urban areas of also indigenous people, like indigenous people are necessarily less knowledgeable, less smart or, “Oh, no, they believe in this.” And that's not true. That's simply not the way in which things work. And that's why I think I wanted to bring also this debate because I think this episode represents very much how the media represents agrarian societies and how it's-- And as you said, it's not good for all of us because then we see often people would consider, “Oh, no, but they are an indigenous population. What do they know?” And I mean, they know a lot. They might not know how to do a cell phone, but you don't know how to do a cell phone either. That's true. I love how people from urban areas-- I mean, I live in a city as well, but they are like, “Oh, no, but I understand technology.” I'm like, “You do? Really?” You know how to use it. You, you don't necessarily understand it which are different things.

Jarrah: And in *Next Generation*, they have replicators, so they don't even need to think about, “Well, this is where my food comes from.” But that doesn't-- I think what the attitude that we see in this episode is really, from the stance, like you were saying of the writers and creators, just kind of, it shows their biases and their standpoints in what was shown and what wasn't shown.

Tupá: Yeah. And I feel that we are-- I won't say moving past that because we are in very weird, terrible times.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Tupá: But at the same time, we're seeing, at least in academia, there is more research being done. We're incorporating knowledge that's not only the knowledge that's produced at the universities. And you have movements like the decolonial movement. I just saw some research being done in Australia, one they called the braided knowledge, which is to bring indigenous knowledge and knowledge from the university to together do some archeological research. So, there is some things, there are some people trying to change this. And one of the reasons I watch *Star Trek* is because it gives me hope and it makes me think, especially in times like what we are living now, I think like oh, maybe, maybe we have some chance.

So, seeing those things, I like to think that we can move past some of those problems. And because the whole idea that people who don't have technology are not smart or don't have logic, it also goes on to when we study history because people consider that, “Oh, no, in the Middle Ages, people were dumb.” And they're not, they were not. They just didn't have your technology. And as a historian, we get really upset when people say, “Oh, this is very Medieval.” And we are like, “No, it's not. People didn't do that in Medieval times. Stop it.” And so, I think it's all kind of correlated, this idea that technology is necessarily what makes you smart. And we can see clearly that even people who have a lot of money and a lot of technology are not necessarily smart people.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. That's very well said. So, I think that's about all the time we have for today. Tupá, do you want to plug anything else? We will share the link to the book that you're in in our show notes, but if you would like to share where people can find you on the Internet or anything else, now's the time.

Tupá: Okay. People can find me on social media in general, I guess. It's [@TupáGuerra](#), which is my surname. And it's basically my name for all social media. And I know for English it's not that easy, but let me make it more cool. Guerra means war, and I have a PhD, so I'm Dr. War, which is very cool. [laughs] So, I do a lot of communication on science and history and I tend to post things in Portuguese and English as much as I can. So, if people want to follow me around, I will be happy.

Jarrah: And I know we have some other listeners in Brazil and other folks who speak and read Portuguese, so I'm sure that will appeal. And for everyone else, you'll be able to see some cool content from Dr. War.

To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook or Instagram [@womenatwarp](#). And thanks so much for listening.

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