

Women at Warp 240: Evolution of Q

[Women at Warp theme]

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. And today with me, I have a special guest, Andrea.

Andrea: Hi there.

Jarrah: Who is maybe our most omnipotent guest.

Andrea: Aww. [laughs] Well, maybe the tallest. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yes, that is possible. So, before we get into our main topic, which is the evolution of Q, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do.

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All right, Andrea, you have previously been on our show on the episode, I believe it was colonialism and imperialism in *Star Trek*.

Andrea: Yes, that's right.

Jarrah: Awesome. But for new folks tuning in, tell us a little bit about yourself and your connection to *Star Trek*.

Andrea: Well, I've been a big fan of the Trek universe since I was a kid, actually. It was a time for me and my mom to bond during the original run of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and my grandfather was a big fan of the original series. And a real love for *Star Trek* developed out of that relationship and those relationships. And my mother and I continue to bond over the subsequent series. *Deep Space Nine*, not as much, but she was a huge fan of *Voyager* and the newer series as well. So, we talk a lot about those. And *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was so important to me as a young person, seeing different kinds of role models that we didn't see in the 80s. So, it's an important thing to me. But I'm a lifelong fan, just a passionate fan, not an expert.

Jarrah: Awesome. And do you have any early memories of Q as a character when you were first watching *Next Generation*?

Andrea: I do. [chuckles] The earliest memory I have of Q is when he shows up naked--[laughs]

Jarrah: Oh, yes.

Andrea: [laughs] --after he loses his powers because I was a single digit-age child and I'm like, "Oh, my goodness, naked man on television." [laughs] So, that's burned into me. And

some of the — Like, how he snaps his fingers and there's the flash of light when he disappears or make things reappear. Little kid me always thought that was very amusing.

Jarrah: Nice. Yeah. When I was a kid, we had a couple of episodes on VHS tape, and one of them was *Q Who* Which we'll talk a little bit about. So, not necessarily the best Q episode, but I think I got the comedic aspect probably more than I appreciated the larger philosophical aspects of Q.

Andrea: Yeah, I think it's the same for me. Our first encounter with Q is at the very first of the series. But I ended up having to go backwards watching the evolution of Q and also the series in a lot of reruns, because I don't remember watching it right from the jump. I came in a little bit part way.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, today we're going to talk about, when we say the Evolution Of Q, we're talking about the evolution of John De Lancie's Q as a character not necessarily the portrayal of the species, but need to just contextualize a bit that the character of Q as played by John De Lancie was a recreation of a character that Gene Roddenberry had invented for the original series called Trelane from *The Squire of Gothos* and you can definitely see a similar fondness for historical costumes. He's likes to have fun and treat people like puppets to entertain him. And in Beta canon, he is confirmed as a member of the Q Continuum.

So, in terms of background, immediately after Roddenberry invented the character of Q for *The Next Generation*, it was because *Encounter at Farpoint* needed something else to flesh it out. And folks from the staff said, "Hey, this is really similar to Trelane." David Gerrold quoted as saying, "We're all looking at each other saying, it's *Trelane* all over again. We all hated it. And very gently suggested to Jean it wasn't very good. Of course, this fell on deaf ears." He said, "Trust me, this is the way I'll do it. The fans will love it."

John De Lancie has also talked about the parallels with Trelane and feeling that basically, this has been a fruitful avenue, certainly. I mean, Q wouldn't have come back so many times if there hadn't been some positive fan reaction and also probably fun to write for. And De Lancie said that when he thinks about Q's character, he thinks about this quote made about Lord Byron, that he was, "Mad, bad and dangerous to know."

So, that's just some random background to start us off. And for the rest of the episode, we're going to talk mostly about how Q evolves based on the representations of what we see on the screen for the characters or of the character, not necessarily all of the nuance of how this was rolled out and to the degrees to which that was intentional. But we'll speculate a little on that. And we should probably just start with the beginning of *The Next Generation* and the first time we meet Q at *Encounter at Farpoint*.

Andrea: Yeah, *Encounter at Farpoint* was really special. And like I said, I didn't watch the first series opener from the jump, but I've gone back and watched it again many, many times. And the thing for me, as both a young viewer and now as an adult watching it, is that Q set a tone for *The Next Generation* that really expanded the universe and what kind of people and races *The Next Generation* cast were going to encounter. Like, we've never really seen an omnipotent character that was going to put humanity on trial. So, I found that it's campy and it's silly in places, but it also set this foundation for *Next Generation* being way bigger than the original series in scope and a lot more ambitious.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think that makes sense, because yeah, like Trelane in *The Squire of Gothos* basically turns out to be a misbehaving child of more mature, omnipotent parents. And there's a little bit of that with Q, and we can talk a bit about that, like his fraught relationship with the Continuum. But ultimately, in this role as the judge, and it seems like in several of his appearances, he's acting as an agent of the Continuum. And the degree to which his own

motivation is separate from the Continuum in *Encounter at Farpoint* is not very clear to me. You could just read it as he's very much carrying out the will of the Continuum.

Andrea: It's interesting because the simple fact of the Q Continuum and putting humanity on trial does two things. It really sets a foundation of imperialism throughout the whole show, and superiority and how humanity is constantly chasing this superiority and this evolution, and more power, more everything. And the Q Continuum clearly took interest in humanity because of all that. And we get to go on this ride throughout the rest of the series to learn what the impacts of that really are.

So, it's fun to watch it in retrospect after having all the information of all of Q's appearances and then looking at what all of that means, having that information. I thought this was really fun, getting ready for this episode.

Jarrah: I think I actually confused *Hide and Q*, and *Q Who*. I think *Hide and Q* is the one that we watched. I think we watched both, but I think when I said I had a VHS, I meant *Hide and Q*, [Andrea laughs] which is the one where Q tries to recruit Riker.

Andrea: Yes.

Jarrah: And this is where we get this sense, you're saying that there's this part of the reason the Continuum's really fascinated with humanity is that they're afraid of it. So, there's this sort of sense that all of this is about trying to find a strategy, because humans are on such an evolutionary fast track that they may surpass the Continuum, and that's a threat to them. And that definitely just disappears from the Q narrative later. But that's actually a big theme of the first few episodes, and it's retroactively applied to *Encounter at Farpoint*.

Andrea: Yeah. And I think that's interesting because you see -- When it comes to Q, and to an extent, the Q Continuum, it's very much like we're in an alien ant farm for them. And by potentially recruiting Riker into the Continuum, they would have firsthand data, basically on the decline or evolution towards an omnipotent state or insanity. So, I thought that was interesting. Because I feel like, at their heart, the Continuum, they look at things a bit dispassionately, like scientists, and they want more information, and they're curious, but they're curious in a completely selfish way. It's not a curiosity that advances the Continuum like humanity is portrayed in the Trek universe. So, the juxtaposition of those two interests is very compelling.

Jarrah: Mm. Yeah, that makes sense. By giving Riker these Q powers, they also are implying that they'll be able to gain and incorporate his insight about what it means to be human. And so, it's almost a Borg-y type thing. Like, we will assimilate you into our collective, and then you will be one of us, but that will make us more like you in the way that then we can evolve more quickly to keep ahead.

Andrea: Yeah. And we can prepare.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andrea: We can prepare for your coming. Also, because I'm recovering Catholic, I guess, [Jarrah laughs] some of the imagery of Q as being a temptation force, I find is very interesting. Because he's tempting Riker, it's very much like a, "I'm going to give you all of this knowledge and skills." So, it's very Garden of Eden esque. And I think that when you tie into those real basic storylines that go throughout human history, it really grabs the watcher, grabs the viewer rather. So, I really appreciated that kind of classic imagery that we get in that episode.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. And I like that point that you made about how the Continuum seems to be intervening selfishly, because really, in that episode, what makes Riker not able to be a Q is that basically to be human is to not have that power, to not be able to just take the easy way out because absolute power corrupts absolutely. And so, when he gains that power, he becomes more selfish. And while he wants to give things to people, he actually doesn't know what's best for them. He starts to become very arrogant. And you're commenting on the stance and things like that.

Andrea: Oh, God, yes. It's so lovely, really how they directed and shot the episode, because a lot of the arrogance is nonverbal. Like, the way Riker is standing, he has his arms crossed and he's standing up mega straight, and he's got the smug look on his face. His chin's tilted up a bit. So, it's really interesting how they got all of that across with so much economy.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And it raises the question, we'll maybe talk a bit later about some of the things Q does that are less selfish, but is that basically the best you can do? Because when you're omnipotent and you have access to all these powers, it's impossible to be not just or to be not totally selfish.

Andrea: Mm-hmm. It raises an interesting question because for me, when you compare them with, say, the travelers, who I'm not sure if we'd refer to them as totally omnipotent, but they're pretty powerful and they can move around through time rather and they are keeping an eye on the universe where the Q Continuum definitely have all of the power to do that, and they could not give a damn. [laughs]

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And when they do, it's very inconsistent.

Andrea: Yes, yes. It's very strange. And I would even posit that Q's less selfish acts are a result of his proximity to humanity. Nothing to do with the Q Continuum.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. This episode also raises another question, which is about Q's mind reading. [Andrea laughs] Because in this episode, he talks about that he got the uniform for a marshal in Napoleon's army from Picard's head, which then it's like, okay, so is he constantly reading everyone's mind, or is it just like he pings for something? Like, he pings for a costume? Yeah, I don't know if you have thoughts on that.

Andrea: Well, it's funny because when we were talking about this preparing for this episode, I was thinking, I was like, "Okay, so do you just turn omnipotence on and off, or do you have this universal wiki in your head at all times?" Because if one is omnipotent, doesn't that presuppose that he would know about Napoleonic France? I think it challenges us to think about what omnipotence means. And yeah, him being able to read people's minds, it was clearly a convenience of writing [laughs] because they turn it on and off and because they later explain it to be, "Oh, you're seeing things through this lens because that's how your brain is processing it," like they did in *Voyager*. We'll get to that naturally but I was just thinking about the change and reading minds and understanding people's closest desires, but not always tapping into that power.

So, does he have a moral fiber? Does he only use that judiciously or is it just totally a thing of convenience for him?

Jarrah: Yeah. I don't think he uses it judiciously or ethically. [Andrea laughs] Yeah, there's a whole ethical conversation to be had there. But my sense is that he and other Q are not necessarily omniscient in being all-seeing or all-knowledgeable. But they're individuals with wills and desires that use their all-powerfulness. So, they have instant access to all knowledge, but they don't necessarily have a value about understanding and retaining all that knowledge to be able to access it like a Data character would.

Andrea: Right, right, right. Yeah, no, it's interesting. It's interesting how he pulled out that marshal uniform and how upset Picard was about it.

Jarrah: Yeah. Oh, the other thing in this episode is we get to see Q's-- I don't know if it's implied, it's his true form, but this is before he pulls out the extremely cheap-looking Starfleet admiral uniform where he's basically like a glowing orb with cobra heads.

Andrea: Yeah, he's like a three-headed cobra. And it's hilarious that this was the extent of science fiction creativity in 1987, but that also really leans into the whole biblical imagery of the serpent in the garden. So, I really like that how they science fictionized it by making it like this flowing, glowing. I'm sure it was really important special effects at the time, but looking at it in 2024 is just-- It's hysterical.

Jarrah: Yeah, they definitely cut corners on the budget in other areas in this episode.

[laughter]

Andrea: They sure did. The admiral uniform was straight from Fabricville. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. But yeah, I like that point about the tempter figure. There's also I think folks have compared him to puck, Shakespeare's character. In *Q Who*, there's a conversation where he accuses Guinan of being an imp and bringing trouble wherever she goes. And Picard's like, "Actually, that's you." So, yeah, he has elements of the Satan temptation and those symbols, but he also has trickster god vibes, like Loki vibes, Puck vibes.

Andrea: Yeah. I think this is one of the reasons that I like Q so much, because in a lot of First Nation storytelling, the trickster has some kind of role where you are taught a lesson. And some of those lessons are benevolent. [laughs] Some of them are just purely for the amusement of the trickster. And I think that's one of the reasons Q resonates with me so much, is that he represents those tricksters that are here to teach us lessons. And *Q Who*, he's teaching the crew of the Enterprise a lesson about the Borg and that they've been resting on their laurels for a little too long and they cannot possibly fathom the danger that is in the outer stretches of the known universe.

So, while it's a deadly lesson that the crew of the Enterprise has to learn. It is still valuable information that serves them later. So, this is where we start seeing the tiniest bit of benevolence from Q.

Jarrah: Yeah. Another thing that we noticed in the first few Q episodes that doesn't necessarily show up in the same way later on is that he's real touchy and gets really sensitive about humankind. I mean, they keep using humanity as shorthand for non-omnipotent bipedal humanoids, so apologies for repeating that, but that's basically the frame they use in these episodes. And Picard's defense is about humanity being put on trial, just ignore the fact that there's a Klingon next to you and that [laughs] you have many other species on your ship. But yeah, he seems to just be really offended that people won't accept what he's offering them and won't just kowtow to him and be grateful to be his puppets.

Andrea: But I think that it's an important part, to use some episode parlance, the tapestry of Q. Because he has been complacent in his own way in the Q Continuum, they've gone for millennia without being interested in anything, really. So, any emotional intelligence or resilience to disagreement is completely gone by the time [laughs] he meets the crew of the Enterprise. So, yeah, he's very upset. He's spaghetti [laughs] whenever there's any disagreement with him, and I find it so funny. He's just the most emotional little white dude.

Jarrah: Yeah, [Andrea laughs] yeah. And that's a really good point. I think we definitely notice, in addition, the whole thing we were talking about, about being essentially an agent of the Continuum early on, which changes very quickly. But there's this moment where Jean-Luc asks why he needs costumes when he shows up in his third costume of the episode, and he says, "Have you no identity of your own?" And I think that's really interesting, because at this point, we don't know if all Qs are like this.

And one of the things that I think works quite well about Q is that there is a loose tie-in to almost every previous episode from the one before. So, you go from humanity impressed the Q in *Encounter at Farpoint*. So, he has to come back because now they're feeling threatened. Then the Continuum is mad that he failed in *Hide and Q*, so he has to come back in Q, who. And he's still a member of the Continuum, but doesn't have powers. Then, he comes back in *Deja Q*, and he's been-- Oh, sorry, he was kicked out of the Continuum, but did have powers? Yes. Yes, that is correct. Because then that's when he introduces them to the Borg.

Andrea: *Deja Q* is where he loses.

Jarrah: Loses his powers because they're mad about the previous episode.

Andrea: Yeah. So, in *Q Who* they're grumpy with him because he failed. But I don't think-- yeah, he's ejected. So, he's homeless, but he's still omnipotent. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. And then, it falls apart a little bit in that string of episodes. In the later *TNG* ones, there's not necessarily a direct connection, but he is still evolving somewhat in his relationship with Picard and with Starfleet. And then when *Voyager* comes out, they do the same thing where the Continuum's mad about death wish. So, they're in civil war for *The Q and the Grey* and then the baby from *The Q and the Grey* is the subject is now a teenager and is the reason for Q2.

Andrea: Yeah. I like all the Q storylines, but some of them are not really well stitched together. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. Some of them are just fun and silly and that's delightful, like *Qpid*.

Andrea: Yeah, yeah. And before getting to *Qpid*, so *Deja Q* is, like, we got the seeds of somewhat of a benevolence from Q and *Q Who*. So, showing them the Borg, telling them to be prepared. And then in *Deja Q*, when he's stripped of his powers and made mortal, we see him starting to hit those very basic milestones [laughs] of emotional developments. He experiences hunger and pain for the first time and tiredness. He falls asleep. And he is really coming at this as-- I won't say a humble learner, but a learner [laughs] where he's getting a crash course in humanity, but he still maintains-- I think he even makes a reference to this. He has an IQ of 2000 or something like that. Total humble brag, Q.

But seeing that he wants to protect the crew of the Enterprise from an attack by the Calamarain. You actually see him truly being selfish and I think that he was being selfless for its sake. I don't think he was trying to find some kind of devil's contract loophole to get back into the Continuum. I think he really did care and that's where you see the switch, I find, in Q.

Jarrah: Yeah, because *Q Who*, there's also this thing that I think we should chat about, which is the whole him being insulted that Picard doesn't think he needs him and that the Enterprise is like, "Well, no, we don't just have a job for you. We don't need you. We're doing fine." And 100% get not wanting to hire on someone like Q, maybe some of us have worked with someone like Q--

[laughter]

Andrea: Yeah.

Jarrah: Your insufferable mansplainer colleague. [laughs]

Andrea: Yep. We've all had one of those.

Jarrah: Yeah. I don't think this totally goes away, but he is kind of a toxic boyfriend.

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah.

Jarrah: And there's elements of this that show up later on too in *Voyager* and later *TNG*. But in that whole, like, "Oh, you think you don't need me? I'll show you and then let me throw you in the path of the Borg," and not send you back until Picard basically has to beg you. That's messed up.

Andrea: But it's interesting because he's becoming infected with the contagion of human emotion. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yes.

Andrea: So, the more that Picard rejects him, the more he wants the validation he wants to be needed. It's like he's developing his hierarchy of needs [laughs] the more and more that he spends around humans. So, yeah, it's a total toxic relationship for sure. But yeah, that's something that really struck me, is that he just wants to be seen and appreciated by Picard. [laughs]

Jarrah: [sings] I want you to want me.

[laughter]

Andrea: Exactly.

Jarrah: But yeah, and then, we will definitely get back into his relationship with Picard in general. But we do get Vash in the middle there. And actually, I mean, this is *Qpid*, maybe you could see as a precursor to *Picard* season 2, where he's like, "Okay, I actually like this guy and I respect him now." He's super stuffy, but the fact that he doesn't actually cave to me is actually attractive. And what I think this dude needs is to loosen up a little bit and have some fun. And so, I'm going to give him this gift, which is an adventure that he can win Vash.

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah, it's funny because it's such a ham-handed attempt to create the conditions for happiness in a way that the *Hotel Royale* episode was a ham-handed attempt to approximate humanity. [laughs] It always struck me as funny that he was creating the conditions for love to blossom, I guess. And it's just more alien ant farm nonsense. [laughs] It's kind of equal parts benevolence and selfishness. He wants to see how it goes because he's bored and he needs entertainment. And he has "programmed" this Robin Hood simulation to just operate on his own because of that boredom, that existential boredom that he has.

But the other half of him does want Picard to be happy because he just has this-- Well, according to Q, this really dull life where he just sits around and reads old books and--

Jarrah: --finds artifacts,

Andrea: [laughs] Takes a look at all of his archaeological tomes and--

Jarrah: --contemplates the meaning of humanity.

Andrea: And holds himself apart from people. So, I think that it's interesting to see Q as the student of humanity, seeing all of these patterns in human connection and how he wants that for Picard, even though Picard may not want it for himself.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. We've done a whole episode on *True Q*. So, we're not going to spend too much time on that. But it's also more Amanda Rogers centric than it is Q centric. But we do get that recurring theme about how you can't really be a human in a Starfleet world with these powers because it's basically cheating and people aren't actually going to appreciate it. And that feeling torn about not using your powers to help people when you have the ability to do so.

Andrea: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Jarrah: And then, we're into *Tapestry*.

Andrea: One of my favorites, one of my all-time favorite episodes of *TNG*, because I think it connects to something that is human in everybody. We all play the what if. We all look at parts of our life with regret, and this whole episode demonstrates in 45 minutes, like, why you need to take all of the untidy bits together. And I loved that as the overall thesis of it. But this is also where you see that real one-sided bromance [laughs] that Q has for Picard, where we're starting to get more into the queerness of Q and his relationship with Picard. And I think that there's certainly a platonic and fraternal love there, but I think he's in love with him at the same time.

And by giving him these opportunities, the opportunity to go back and rewrite your past, what mortal gets to do that, thinking it's going to make him happy? He's like, "Look, Picard, I gave you this thing to show you that I love you." It's very interesting. It's very interesting. And his trickster impish pest nature comes out so well in this episode. One of my favorite moments is when he shows up with the flowers and he says, "Is there a John Luck Pickard?"

[laughter]

Andrea: And when he shows up in bed with Picard, that's happened more than once, hasn't it? Where he's showed up in bed with Picard.

Jarrah: I mean, he definitely shows up naked on the bridge.

Andrea: Is that-- [laughs].

Jarrah: And he shows up in his chair in his ready room, and in bed with-- or in the bath with Janeway in *Q2*. [laughs] But yeah, I like the point that you made about the queerness because it also feels a little bit like the camp and the costumes do feel a bit, also queer signifiers, obviously not necessarily, but that plus, like you're saying this, the way that he reaches out to Picard and tries to heal his trauma is very much coming from a place of love. And I think that it's backed up even if you don't think that he's sexually attracted to him, because that's only one way of defining attraction and love.

In *Voyager*, they talk about how the Q are beyond sex. And so, there's no need for that to be part of this, even also not necessary for many humans. And so, saying, well, there's no queer attraction here because there's no sex or there's limited romance, that's also a valid way of having relationships.

Andrea: Yeah. And Q is pretty queer coded in a lot of places, which I love. You were talking about the camp. You were talking about the costumes. His general large personality and his flair-- and we have to remember that these episodes were filmed at a time in the 80s and early 90s as we get into *Tapestry*, when those flamboyance and largeness of personality was automatically queer coded. So, I think it's very intentional. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. And if you look at some of the characters, like Puck and Loki and stuff, and our imaginings of them today, there's very much that dynamic in addition to gender fluidity, which we don't see with Q unless an orb with snake heads has a gender.

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah. There's a phallic-ness there. And we'll talk about this more as we get into the *Voyager* episodes. But even I can't remember which episode in particular. It's probably *Deja Q*, but he is a little misogynist. [laughs]

Jarrah: Oh, yeah.

Andrea: As a character, how he treats Dr. Crusher and turns her into a dog because she's disagreeing.

Jarrah: That's in *True Q*.

Andrea: Yeah. That he's disagreeing with her. And so, it's funny because you have some signifiers of queerness that would have been signifiers in popular media at that time. And then, you have other things where he's really trying to butch himself up by being misogynist and very male forward.

Jarrah: Yeah, yeah, for sure. And in *The Q and the Grey*, he talks about how he's just been having fun, having women all over the galaxy falling all over him, and it feels like they're retroactively trying to say he's hetero.

Andrea: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: [laughs] And it's like-- I mean, I see Q as pan.

Andrea: Same, same. He's got mega pan vibes.

Jarrah: Yeah. He doesn't need to be gender fluid. It can also be significant that that's partly how our brain views this and that either we could say he identified with being male, and that's why he always presents as male. Also, possible to say that our human lens is viewing him as male because of the way he acts.

Andrea: Yeah. Or, just to add a little sexy flavor to this, he knows what humans see as powerful, and that's why he manifested as a man, because he would automatically be taken more seriously as antagonist if he was a man, and he was white.

Jarrah: Yeah, totally. And the whiteness thing is really interesting too, and it's something that Daniel Leonard Bernardi talks about in *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future*, about how in *Star Trek* omnipotent, godlike beings tend to be white. And it's not just John De Lancie Q, but all the Qs that we meet and see in the Continuum, including through *Voyager*, when we actually go to the Continuum. And it does really make you wonder especially in *Death Wish*, when they talk about how boring it is to be a Q. [laughs] Maybe that's just because y'all chose to be white forever.

Andrea: Yeah. And most of them were dudes, I think. Like, in the Continuum episode, there was a gal holding a magazine. I think she was holding the new-- And then, there's his jilted lover character.

Jarrah: Oh, yes.

Andrea: Yes.

Jarrah: Suzie Plakson.

Andrea: Thank you. Thank you. I can't believe I forgot that name. My *Star Trek* cred is falling through the cracks now—

Jarrah: It's okay. [laughs]

Andrea: But, yeah. So, it's definitely very male centric.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I like the idea that the problematic, which I think is the more likely interpretation is that, consciously or subconsciously, the creators of the show thought who looks powerful and thought white people and decided that all of the Q should just look like white humans. And the reason I think that's likely is because, as Bernardi points out, that happens with the sky gods that were the rubber tree people's guardians and other types of characters who are significantly more powerful than humans in *Star Trek*. The in-universe headcanon thing could be, again, just like we see a lot of them as dudes, humanity is seeing a lot of them as white because they represent systemic power. And that is the legacy of humanity that unfortunately still haven't dismantled racism in our hearts and minds.

Andrea: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And we see that all throughout Trek, [laughs] like whiteness and power, and the Continuum is absolutely no exception to that.

Getting back to *Tapestry*, what were some of your favorite moments in terms of how you see Q evolve? I already talked about the flower delivery, but also at the very top of the episode where he is in white robes, [laughs] and he's like, "Welcome to the afterlife Jean-Luc, you're dead." And Picard's like, "No, I can't believe you're God. The universe is not so badly designed." [laughs] I love that because he is not only playing with time and space, but intersecting with human religions as well.

Jarrah: Yeah. I generally just like his way of, I'm putting you through this experience and I'm whispering in your ear the whole time, but the part that I don't love about the episode is although [chuckles] now that we've had this conversation about how he sees Picard as not having a lot of fun, [Andrea laughs] it's like you could have had a life where you had even less fun. [Andrea laughs] We've talked about how not everyone can actually be a captain and being just a science ensign also valid. But yeah, I like that he's almost another character he reminds me he is the ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*.

Andrea: Yes, yes.

Jarrah: Let's go back through this thing.

Andrea: Yes. And then watching yourself. So, you almost have that third party view of things. The whispering in the ear is very *Ghost of Christmas Past*. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yes, yeah, exactly. Yeah. But then, his last *TNG* appearances is all good things, also very powerful. I will cry whenever I watch it.

Andrea: Yeah, same. It's an absolute banger. It's so good. It was well crafted and I love that they tied up the whole humanity is still on trial. The trial never ended and you need to look beyond what your worldview is. So, this is a great trickster lesson again, where, yeah, the stakes were mega high, particularly-- It was in the past. So, the *Farpoint* anomaly was the biggest, or was it the other way around? I can't remember.

Jarrah: I think it was-- Yeah, it hadn't-- It was going backwards. So, it basically, you couldn't even see it in the future timeline.

Andrea: That's right. That's right. But I loved it because it was like, we didn't know what was going to happen with the Trek universe at this point yet. So, it was imparting that final lesson of things are bigger than your experience. You need to think of time as not a linear thing, which I loved. I loved because that comes back. That comes back later in the canon. And I just really liked the tricksterness about this because he's teaching Picard a lesson here about so many things, about the impact of one person on galactic events, or what is it? Events of galactic import is how Picard talks about it in the *Picard* series, but showing the importance of one person and showing this insane application of a butterfly effect and having to look at problems in unconventional ways.

Jarrah: Yeah, I love that. And it shows that he's gone from a role of guarding against the advancement of humanity to actually saying, "Hey, if you're going to keep advancing, this is the next step for you. And that thing is you need to think less linearly and outside your own perspective," is, I think, a great lesson, and it's carried through very strongly through the Prophets in *Deep Space Nine*, but it comes back as well as for Q.

Andrea: Yeah. So, it's a great episode. I like how Q takes us through different time periods, and with every subsequent episode, we're seeing more and more of Q, his personality and also how he is evolving as an entity, well, the Continuum might call it devolving, by taking on those human traits that the Continuum clearly values. They clearly value enterprising young men.

Jarrah: Literally.

Andrea: Literally. They value that. And they acknowledge in the *Voyager* episodes that they lost that. I see that there's more of a give and take in all good things that I appreciate.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, we're not going to spend a lot of time on the one *Deep Space Nine* episode. I mostly just wanted to say that there was a discussion about why Q did not come back to *Deep Space Nine* after the one episode. And Ron Moore said, and this reinforces what we were saying, "The secret to Q was the Q and Picard relationship. Q was in love with Picard for some reason. That was the underpinning of the relationship, which was why, when he came to *Deep Space Nine*, he wasn't as effective a character."

Andrea: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah, there is that secret sauce of that relationship with him and Picard that absolutely was unmatched.

Jarrah: Yeah. And it really doesn't quite gel with Sisko. I think it's a fun enough episode, but I think that when they brought Q back for *Voyager*, they had to do some thinking about, "Okay, well, how do we make this relationship different than the one with Picard but still interesting?" And I think the way into it with *Death Wish* was really interesting. I mean, it was similar, where it's another thing where, "Now, I'm impressed by you, human, because you didn't behave in the way that I considered you might in this." And he's got the temptation thing going, too, where he's like, "If you rule on my side, I'll send you home."

Andrea: Yeah. I really appreciated the *Voyager* episode, *Death Wish*, because it did a couple of different things. It introduced us to different parts of the Continuum. We saw, I think it was — Was it *Deja Q* where we see another queue for a minute? But we don't really get a sense of what life is like for a Q. But also, the fact that while up until that point, we thought that Q was like the black sheep of the Continuum, but he wasn't. He was actually pretty moderate [laughs] compared to the Q in *Death Wish*, who really wanted to be a true disrupter, and he was such a dangerous force, they imprisoned him. So, I love this episode because it changed all of our assumptions about Q.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I like that point about Q being a moderate. And I think very early Q, he's fully in the establishment of the Continuum. Then, he goes to being a bit mavericky, but he's sycophantically, desperately trying to get back. And then, he's back in the Continuum establishment, but he's got a taste of independence, and he can't totally let that go. And then, he goes from that to being a full-on rebel.

Andrea: Mm-hmm. So, I think it's cool to see how Q, he grows and changes with the seasons, really. So, you have, like you said, establishment Q. Then, it's almost like the adolescence of Q, where he's acting out and like, "Okay, I'm going to be an adult again." And then now, he's in midlife, and he wants to rage against the machine. No, it's a wonderful episode, and I liked the court procedural part of it too, where you have a discussion on the right to die, which was a newer concept at the time of airing. It's a much more common discussion in American and Canadian society now. But it was pretty off the wall to talk about medical assistance in dying at the time.

Jarrah: As evidenced by the fact when they look for legal precedent, they can't find a single human culture that has ever made this a legal practice, which is odd, because there [laughs] certainly were even at the time. But in terms of Q in this episode, this does reinforce his misogyny. This is the one where he talks about, basically, "That's what you get for putting a woman in charge."

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah, that made my hackles stand up.

Jarrah: He also appears in Janeway's bed and talks about how he loves that she has that authority but preserves her femininity. And again, it's just like, he doesn't need to be straight, guys.

Andrea: Yeah, yeah. They're really trying to butch him up big time. They're trying to Archie Bunker-ify him. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, it's a thing. Actually, were they appearing in the bed in *The Q and The Grey*:

Andrea: *The Q and The Grey*, yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, yeah. *The Q and The Grey*, all kinds of problematic gender dynamics, but yeah.

Andrea: *The Q and The Grey*, it's interesting in terms of how we're using very imperialistic symbology and imagery in a literal civil war [laughs] and they're using the American Civil War as the template for the conflict that's happening within the Q Continuum and the chaos that was introduced by allowing a suicide of a Q.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. And this is, again, he's saying, basically, "This is what it looks like to you. We made it look like this so you could understand what was happening." And I fully believe Janeway's been into some civil war drama because she likes the fancy period dresses. But again, it's just like, do you just pick what the main person has in their head versus there's a

bunch of other folks on her crew that end up going down there and may not have that same background in history.

Andrea: Mm-hmm. And they also don't really unpack why the Q have weapons that are capable of harming and killing Qs. This is the first time we hear about that, the Qs can be hurt by some weaponry. We know that their omnipotence can be taken away, but when it comes to actual small arms, [laughs] that there is something that you can shoot a Q with.

Jarrah: Well, in this episode-- We already know that Q can be killed because the Q killed Amanda Roger's parents, but, yeah, this shows a next-level thing because, yeah, then the Voyager crew are given those weapons to help turn the tide of the conflict.

Andrea: Yeah, I feel like that was a little bit deus ex machina. They're like, "Yeah, you can use these weapons too. It's fine."

Jarrah: Yeah, we'll just never mention this again.

Andrea: Yeah, we have 45 minutes. We've got to tie this up. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, but this is also in this episode it shows how far he's come in terms of the security, because Janeway is repeatedly rejecting him, and he's just like, "Ooh, a challenge." But even then, he does not seem hurt. Whereas in early *TNG*, it's very like, he actually cannot fathom how someone would reject him. Yeah, we kind of talked about the Q being beyond sex. There was the whole thing about him being with Suzie Plakson Q for 4 billion years and, "I never said it was exclusive."

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah. So, not only is he pan coated, but also polyamorous.

Jarrah: Yeah. [Andrea laughs] Because we know he's in love with Picard. Ron Moore said so.

Andrea: Yeah, he's in love with Picard. I don't think he's in love with Janeway. He sees her as a vessel to what he's trying to accomplish with producing a Q offspring. But the notion of Q sex, I was pretty tickled by that. It was very funny.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. And that's a good point about how he views Janeway, because we do see this thing, which is common in the other episodes, where he's very much hiding his true motivation for doing something, and that, we saw it back in *Hide and Q*, where he's not being honest about why he wants Riker to be a Q. And then, here he's very not being honest about why he wants Janeway to mate with him. And yeah, it's just a gross way to try and pick someone up. Just don't.

Andrea: Yeah. Yeah, it's no bueno.

Jarrah: So, I just want touch on Q2 quickly before we go to *Picard*. So, Q2, man, not my favorite episode, but I watched the scenes with John de Lancie Q, and it is interesting because he is his son, who's played by John de Lancie's son in real life, is a real handful, and his mom has disowned him. And John de Lancie decides, "Okay, if you're going to be an upstanding citizen--" because apparently the new Continuum administration cares about, again, selflessness. And so, it goes back to the whole *Deja Q* thing, where he has to do a selfless act to get back in the Continuum. And what eventually gets him back in the Continuum, or to have his powers back, is that he goes and volunteers to take a sentence on behalf of someone else so that he can save the life of his friend, Icheb.

But there are some interesting moments in here in terms of just Q as a dad. So, I mean, it's funny. It's mostly played for comedy, that he does not know how to parent. And so, he goes from being completely laissez-faire to being very smothering to then Janeway says, like, "Well, he's never going to learn anything if you don't apply consequences." And he's like, cool, "I'll make you an amoeba." [Andrea laughs] And then, works with the Continuum to strip him of his powers and he gives him a week to shape up or else he'll be an amoeba forever.

Yeah, Q might be a worse dad than Worf.

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah, I think so. He's the bumbling dad stereotype for sure.

Jarrah: Yeah. And then at the end, the Continuum doesn't want to give Q2 his powers back. So, Q basically makes a deal with them where he has eternal custody. So, it is interesting just in the in-universe canon, why then in *Picard* season 2, he is alone. Not that I am saying at all they should have brought back the kid Q. I was so not a fan and fully agree, they were trying to do a lot in *Picard* season 2 already. But just if you're looking at the perspective of this character, what happened between Q2 and *Picard* season 2, that now you're dying and you have no one.

Andrea: Yeah, maybe we just got to retcon it and say that Q2 solved something with the continuum, was allowed to be on his own. There, we solved it. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. Or he went off and his mom reaccepted him and he was just doing other stuff. I don't know, maybe that's why, part of the reason why Q wanted to teach Picard about opening his heart to love, because he felt that he has lost his family.

Andrea: Yeah, I'm going to go with that. That's my canon for Q now. [laughs]

Jarrah: Nice. So, silver fox Q.

Andrea: Silver Fox Q in *Picard*. It was a delightful-- I can't remember if it was in the trailers, so I can't remember if it was a surprise or not, but I loved it. I loved every second of it, because that relationship between Q and Picard just cannot be replaced by anything. It was so good. And then learning that Q, one of the reasons he's doing all these things is because he's dying. [chuckles] And I love that the creators of *Star Trek* add in all of these new elements of Q-ness. They did it in *Death Wish*. They did it in *Q and the Grey*. The Continuum is able to have a civil war. What? And, wow, the Q can die. What? They always introduce something new.

So, I enjoyed knowing that about Q, but also the journey that he was taking Picard on to say, "Hey, you're kind of damaged, homie, and I want you to work through your trauma so you can be in a position to love and be loved, because I want that for you." I love the evolution of the relationship and how it's like, this is truly benevolent at that point. This is a real relationship now. It's not just like owner and pet or master and pet like it was through so many of the other episodes.

Jarrah: Yeah, I agree. I think that the thing that makes me think it is not an ideal relationship, it's a real relationship, first of all, there's a heck of a lot of collateral damage in this relationship.

Andrea: Yeah. Oopsie.

Jarrah: The 18 people that died when he introduced them to the Borg the first time. Elnor. All these folks. The stuff that his crew has to go through while he's sorting out his childhood trauma.

Andrea: Oh, and changing the history of humanity. No big. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, just a little-- Just a little thing.

Andrea: It's just little things. It's fine.

Jarrah: And again, giving someone a gift they never asked for, they don't want, you know best for the person. That said, I take that aside and also you can listen to our season 2 *Picard* recap episode or review episode if you want to hear my detailed hot takes on season 2 of *Picard*. But just like taking Q's intentions as pure and that moment at the end where Picard doesn't understand why Q did this, because in the past it's been, you needed to warn humanity or you needed to make sure humanity was X or Y. Maybe not with *Tapestry*, but he just doesn't understand and Q has that moment where he says, "You matter to me." And it's just like-- it's just so pure.

Andrea: It is pure. But then, he follows it up with, "Even gods have their favorites."

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andrea: [laughs] So, you get the Q-- The Q is still there. He's still fundamentally there. But the first time I watched the season finale for season 2, I was very broken up about the whole hug, the hug between Picard and Q because it was a recognition of, "Yes, this is a relationship. It's kind of messed up in places. [laughs] But I've spent 30 years looking at new possibilities in the universe with you and having fantastical experiences, not all of them good, but incredible experiences that wouldn't have been had elsewhere." And I just like that there is a recognition that they grew old together.

Jarrah: It's nice.

Andrea: It is nice. It is nice. And I thought that, yes, was it a little fan servicey? for sure.

Jarrah: Oh, but that's fine.

Andrea: It was a yummy meal.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah. And I'm trying to think of a joke about how men will literally go back in time and be forced into unearthing their childhood trauma in order to prevent a dystopian hellscape rather than going to therapy.

Andrea: [laughs] You'll have to add that in later. Oh, goodness.

[laughter]

Jarrah: I think that it's also just interesting, the note about-- Both Picard and Q have both grown as characters in this whole time, but they also retain their fundamental strengths and weaknesses. And it goes back to that point were talking about at the beginning about, how ethical of a person can you be with this power? And would it even be possible for Q if he spent millennia more trying to be more human and, for example, trying to actually find out from people what they need before he tries to give it to them, is that even possible even if he wanted to? and I don't think he really wants to because he still likes to be entertained.

Andrea: Yeah. And he still does think he knows best.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andrea: So, it's not totally reciprocal, but there is definitely a recognition and appreciation of the other that I really enjoyed. And then, the makers of *Picard* continue to throw us a curveball where we think Q's dead. And then in the post-credit moments at the end of the series finale of *Picard*, he pops up. [laughs] He pops up at the end and reminds Jack Crusher that, "Yeah, time's not linear, bro." So, it was set up that it could be continued. And I don't think it will be. It would have been nice to see where that story thread led. But just the season finale in season 2, it was yummy. It was yummy to have that happen.

Jarrah: I didn't need Q to come back. I felt like he had such a great arc through to the end of *Picard* season 2, and we talked about all the ways that he evolved, and it was very linked with Picard's arc with a little side of Janeway in there. So, for me, I didn't need to have, "Oh, actually, he's not dead," because it undercuts that, but it was such a nice death. But I am now thinking that maybe the reason, if it were to continue, that he had to come back from the grave was that he was just so annoyed that he spent this entire season getting Picard to open himself up to love, only to have him ditch the lady in the first two episodes of the next [Andrea laughs] season to go off on another adventure with his buddies.

Andrea: That's right. Going gallivanting around the universe.

Jarrah: And he is like, "Ugh, maybe the next generation will be better."

Andrea: [laughs] Yeah. Q, I think, without argument from the fan community, that he is a favorite and a super compelling character. It was super interesting to watch him grow and develop and just see all the tendrils that he had in storytelling in the *Star Trek* universe. So, he's going to be one of my favorites. And John de Lancie is a lovely human on top of that. So, it's just been great watching John de Lancie's Q over the last 30 years.

Jarrah: Yeah. All right, well, I feel like that's a great note to wrap up on, and that's about all the time we have. So, where can people find you on the internet?

Andrea: So, I can be found on Instagram [@katzehalifornia](#) on X or Twitter, however you want to call it [@katzehalifornia](#). And I am an occasional content creator on Twitch, so [twitch.tv/katzehalifornia](#).

Jarrah: Awesome. So, that is katzehalifornia.

Andrea: Wow. First try. Well done.

[laughter]

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah and you can find me at [trekkiefeminist.com](#) or I'm on Instagram [@jarrahpenguin](#). To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit Women at Warp, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram [@womenatwarp](#). Thanks so much for listening.

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