

= Projections (Star Trek : Voyager) =

" Projections " is the 19th (3rd in the second season) episode of the American science fiction television program Star Trek : Voyager . Originally slated for the first season , the episode originally aired on September 11 , 1995 , and tells the story of Voyager 's holographic doctor having an identity crisis on the holodeck regarding whether he or the world around him is the illusion .

Brannon Braga compared " Projections " to the work of René Descartes , and wrote the episode around the premise of cogito ergo sum , questioning whether the Doctor or the Voyager is the illusion . Beating out LeVar Burton (Geordi La Forge) for the guest appearance , Dwight Schultz as Reginald Barclay was praised by the cast and crew , especially for his on @-@ screen chemistry with co @-@ star Robert Picardo . The episode received decidedly mixed reviews , ranging from 50 ? 92 % approval with critics commenting on predictability and the underutilization of Schultz and Picardo .

= = Plot = =

Voyager 's Emergency Medical Holographic Program (EMH) , " the Doctor " (Robert Picardo) , is activated due to a red alert . Despite the computer 's (Majel Barrett) assertion that nobody is aboard , B 'Elanna Torres (Roxann Dawson) soon arrives in sickbay . She informs the Doctor that the ship was attacked by Kazon and that all except herself and Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) have abandoned ship . After treating her injuries , Torres transfers the Doctor 's program to the bridge using newly installed holographic emitters there . After treating the captain and then assisting Neelix (Ethan Phillips) to defeat a stray Kazon in the mess hall , the Doctor discovers he 's bleeding and feeling pain , neither of which are functions of his program . In sickbay , making inquiries with the computer , the Doctor is told that there are no holographic programs matching his own and that he is actually Lewis Zimmerman (Picardo) ? whom the Doctor recognizes as his programmer .

With the computer insisting that the crew of Voyager is only a collection of holographic programs , a new hologram appears in sickbay and claims that he 's Reginald Barclay (Dwight Schultz) , Doctor Zimmerman 's assistant at the Jupiter Station Holoprogramming Center . Barclay explains that the Doctor is really Lewis Zimmerman and that the Voyager is actually a simulation in which he 's been stuck and is suffering mental damage due to radiation poisoning . To end the program and rescue Zimmerman , Barclay suggests destroying the ship before he suffers irreparable brain damage . To convince the Doctor that he 's Zimmerman in a simulation , Barclay restarts the Voyager program and the Doctor finds himself reliving the events of " Caretaker " when he was first brought online .

Convinced of Barclay 's claims , the Doctor prepares to destroy the ship when Chakotay (Robert Beltran) arrives and gives an alternate story : he is the Voyager EMH , but his program is stuck in the malfunctioning holodeck . The crew is trying to extricate his program so he only needs to wait it out ; if he destroys the ship as Barclay suggests , it will prematurely end the program and the Doctor will be lost . Even though Barclay introduces Kes (Jennifer Lien) as Zimmerman 's wife , the Doctor finally opts to believe in his holographic existence . The simulation ends and the Doctor finds himself on the holodeck ; Chakotay 's story was true and the Doctor is safely returned to sickbay .

= = Writing = =

" Projections " is one of four first @-@ season episodes that was held over by UPN to get the jump on other networks in the 1995 ? 1996 television season .

Brannon Braga wrote the story from the initial idea of the Doctor having an identity crisis , " What if the doctor discovers that Voyager is a hologram and he is real ? " From there , Braga questioned the axiom " I think , therefore I am " and what it means to be " real " . Calling it a " creepy , philosophical quandary " , Braga related the story of " Projections " to the work of René Descartes , where " the [character is] plagued by an evil demon out to prove he doesn 't exist " ; in this instance , Braga made Barclay (Schultz) the demon . The episode was written to keep the viewer guessing

as to which reality was true ; Braga would later say that the fun of the episode wasn't in the story itself , but in the telling of the story , " in considering all the different twists and turns along the way . "

The final draft of the episode was submitted on March 30 , 1995 .

= = Casting = =

Casting for " Projections " was done by Junie Lowry @-@ Johnson and Ron Surma .

Writer Brannon Braga came up with the idea of having Dwight Schultz guest star as Lieutenant Barclay , later saying that he and Picardo worked so well together that " they should have a spin @-@ off series . " Episode director Jonathan Frakes would also laud the chemistry between the two actors . Schultz was pleased to be back on Star Trek , and was surprised to be considered for a Voyager guest appearance . On meeting Robert Picardo , he recalled they spent their time joking with each other on set , discussing mutual friends , and comparing notes on their theatre experiences . Picardo would call working with Schultz " like having party . "

Before deciding on Schultz , it was originally suggested that the guest star would be Star Trek : The Next Generation 's LeVar Burton as Geordi La Forge .

= = Reception = =

Writer Brannon Braga called " Projections " his favorite installment of Star Trek : Voyager in a 1996 interview with The Official Star Trek Voyager Magazine . Series co @-@ creator and executive producer Michael Piller called the episode " a wonderful show " and " a fascinating episode " , specifically praising Robert Picardo 's performance alongside fellow co @-@ creator and executive producer Jeri Taylor . Picardo himself would rate " Projections " as one of the two best Doctor @-@ heavy stories of the second season , second only to " Lifesigns " .

In an interview with the Star Trek Communicator magazine , Jeri Taylor would point to an ongoing Internet survey that ranked " Projections " as the third @-@ highest ranked episode of the second season . In his book Delta Quadrant : The unofficial guide to Voyager , though David McIntee would ding the episode on its ultimate predictability and the characterization of Barclay near the end of the episode , he found the interplay between Picardo and Schultz to be overwhelmingly in the episode 's favor ; he rated the episode 8 out of 10 . Cinefantastique 's Dale Kutzera was less impressed by the episode , saying it lost momentum in the middle and that it ill @-@ used " [Star Trek] ' s greatest inferiority @-@ complex and greatest egotist . " Kutzera gave the episode two out of four stars .