

Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos

Jan Lundeen, Jon Wagner

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Jan Lundeen, Jon Wagner : Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos:

33 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Now I finally understand what "post-modernism" means! By Rabbi Yonassan Gershom I decided to read this book mostly because of the title -- as a Trekker who is also Jewish, I

was interested to see what these authors had to say about "sacred time," because, as Abraham Joshua Heschel said, we Jews live more in sacred time than in sacred places. So, any book with "sacred time" in the title is bound to catch my eye. As it turned out, their definition of "sacred time" wasn't quite the same as the Jewish one, but I still enjoyed the book. It's an excellent analysis of Star Trek from an anthropology POV. Especially useful to me was the clear, concise explanation of what "traditional," "modernist," and "post-modernist" worldviews mean in terms of how various cultures view time and the future. I had heard TOS called "modernist" and DS9 called "post-modernist" before, but could never really get a grasp on what that meant, exactly. (What can I say? I'm in the over-50 generation and haven't always kept up on the latest buzzwords.) This book clearly explained all three POVs -- traditional, modern, and post-modern -- then put them into the context of various Trek episodes. Great job! I also enjoyed the brilliant insight that Trek has, in effect, moved primal mythology from sharing a common story about the past, to sharing a common story about the future. In centuries gone by, each culture assumed its origins story to be the "real" story, and that was a uniting factor for each group. But today, with so many cultures colliding in an ever-shrinking world, we cannot assume that we all share the same past heroes anymore. Instead, we look to the same future heroes on Star Trek for role models and inspiration. Whether or not Trek is the "real" future is beside the point here. It has become a mythology that people use on a global level (to greater or lesser degrees), regardless of the different creation stories that make up their individual cultures' past mythologies. I liked the fact that this book intelligently questioned some of the politically-correct criticisms of Trek that have come out in recent years. While not accepting everything on Trek at face value, this book does point out that some PC critics have bordered on the ridiculous. The authors here strike a very good balance between entering into the spirit of the Trek universe, and critically examining some of the basic assumptions that Trek makes about what the future "should be." I highly recommend "Deep Space and Sacred Time" to anyone seriously interested in the impact of Star Trek on our modern (or is that post-modern?) culture.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An excellent analysis

By Peter Clark Wagner and Lundeen have added an important book to the growing repository of "serious" literature concerning Star Trek. In a sense they take over where Harrison Taylor et al left off with "Enterprise Zones", and they are not slow to suggest within their own book criticisms of that earlier work. The chapter on religion was particularly enlightening, since for me it seemed to highlight the inconsistencies inherent in Star Trek's treatment of the subject. Less caustic than Taylor's volume, its apparent gentleness does not betoken an acceptance of all things Trek.

0 of 13 people found the following review helpful. The book was very interesting.

By A Customer This book was a great book because of how he include family life and the things about star trek. I would recomend this book to the star trek fans.

What could possibly account for the scope and longevity of the Star Trek phenomenon? With legions of impassioned fans and a life span of 30 years and counting, the Star Trek television and film corpus has made Gene Roddenberry's creation nothing less than an American mythology. *Deep Space and Sacred Time* examines for the first time in book-length form the many ways Star Trek has served as a mythic reference point for American society and suggests that an understanding of this might help us to see ourselves more clearly as a culture. Moreover, this thoughtful and thought-provoking work posits that Star Trek offers its audience a sense of hope and, in the setting of an orderly cosmos, the possibility for empowerment. Written to appeal to thoughtful Star Trek viewers, as well as teachers and scholars, *Deep Space and Sacred Time* examines Trek's humanist creed, with its faith in the human capacity for compassion, growth and self-guidance. Roddenberry's optimistic vision stressed the tolerance of diversity, the central role of friendship and loyalty, an opposition to prejudice, and the rejection of organized religion and divine authority. Employing the framework of contemporary social analysis, authors Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen reveal the evolving tension between Star Trek's liberalism and its subliminal messages of gender, race and class hegemony; yet they also take issue with the recent wave of critical scholarship that finds only homophobia, sexism, racism, and other oppressive forces dominating the Star Trek mythos. Citing hundreds of examples from the first eight Star Trek feature films and the four television series, the authors consider the ways in which Star Trek invites its audience to explore the nature of the self, the essence of humanity, the construction of gender, the possibility of utopia, and the role of narrative in shaping an intelligible cosmos.

From Publishers Weekly

Boldly going where no TV show has gone before, the original Star Trek series spawned a galaxy of lucrative franchises and legions of adoring fans?so many that Wagner and Lundeen (they're married; he's an anthropologist, she's a nursing teacher) contend that Star Trek has become part of 20th-century American mythology. Describing myths as "the narratives that structure [a culture's] worldview and give form and meaning to the disconnected data of everyday life," the authors compare 30-plus years of Trek story lines with three decades of American cultural concerns and find, to no surprise, that they inhabit parallel universes. Wagner and Lundeen excel at exploring how depictions of gender, race relations, religion, family life and political correctness have evolved throughout the varied Trek series. Certainly, women have come a long way: usually depicted as 23rd-century airheads and alien temptresses stuffed into "tin-foil bikinis" in the original series, a woman finally commands a starship in Star Trek: *Voyager*. The authors also plumb the progression of command decisions. Captain Kirk had a profound distaste

for utopian societies, usually disassembling the status quo, whereas the more restrained Captain Picard of Star Trek: The Next Generation was guided by a philosophy of noninterference with the cultures encountered. It is tempting to suggest that this is all much ado about, well, a TV show, but there is little doubt that Trek creator Gene Roddenberry struck a chord with his vision of a future in which the human race?after eradicating war, greed, materialism and poverty?journeyed into space not as conquerors but, as the authors term them, "humanist" explorers of the final frontier. All true Trekkers should find most of this book's journey, in the words of Mr. Spock, "fascinating." Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "[A] compelling analysis of those elements that account for the scope and longevity of the four television series and nine feature-length motion pictures."-h_Net s in the Humanities and Social Sciences"The authors make a pretty good case for their contention that Trek employed archetypes to connect to viewers while simultaneously ignoring many of the stereotypes the public would normally have expected."-Today's Books"Wagner and Lundeen excel at exploring how depictions of gender, race relations, religion, family life and political correctness have evolved throughout the varied Trek series....All true Trekkers should find most of this book's journey, in the words of Mr. Spock, 'fascinating.'" -Publishers Weekly..."[T]his work is whole and complete in its analysis. Star Trek comes across here as a fine Thanksgiving Day meal, full of many hearty food, all somehow fitting together in a very palatable and, of course, very American and mythopoetic way. As a reader you will not be faulted if, upon finishing, you are forced to loosen your belt a notch."-Extrapolation"A compelling analysis of those elements that account for the scope and longevity of the four television series and nine feature-length motion pictures."-h_Net s in the Humanities and Social Sciences..."This work is whole and complete in its analysis. Star Trek comes across here as a fine Thanksgiving Day meal, full of many hearty food, all somehow fitting together in a very palatable and, of course, very American and mythopoetic way. As a reader you will not be faulted if, upon finishing, you are forced to loosen your belt a notch."-Extrapolation?Must read. Exceptional.?-Hugo Award?[A] compelling analysis of those elements that account for the scope and longevity of the four television series and nine feature-length motion pictures.?-h_Net s in the Humanities and Social Sciences?The authors make a pretty good case for their contention that Trek employed archetypes to connect to viewers while simultaneously ignoring many of the stereotypes the public would normally have expected.?-Today's Books?Wagner and Lundeen excel at exploring how depictions of gender, race relations, religion, family life and political correctness have evolved throughout the varied Trek series....All true Trekkers should find most of this book's journey, in the words of Mr. Spock, 'fascinating.'?-Publishers Weekly?...[T]his work is whole and complete in its analysis. Star Trek comes across here as a fine Thanksgiving Day meal, full of many hearty food, all somehow fitting together in a very palatable and, of course, very American and mythopoetic way. As a reader you will not be faulted if, upon finishing, you are forced to loosen your belt a notch.?-Extrapolation?Wagner and Lundeen's thought-provoking volume takes a middle ground between a scholarly and a popular anthropological assessment, and is an impressive, especially valuable addition to this corpus....and a detailed but highly readable narrative adds immeasurably to our understanding of the [Trek] phenomenon. Their book surpasses the vast majority of superficial analyses and syntheses of the Star Trek phenomenon that have appeared during the past decade.?-H-Net s., "[T]his work is whole and complete in its analysis. Star Trek comes across here as a fine Thanksgiving Day meal, full of many hearty food, all somehow fitting together in a very palatable and, of course, very American and mythopoetic way. As a reader you will not be faulted if, upon finishing, you are forced to loosen your belt a notch."-Extrapolation"Wagner and Lundeen's thought-provoking volume takes a middle ground between a scholarly and a popular anthropological assessment, and is an impressive, especially valuable addition to this corpus....and a detailed but highly readable narrative adds immeasurably to our understanding of the [Trek] phenomenon. Their book surpasses the vast majority of superficial analyses and syntheses of the Star Trek phenomenon that have appeared during the past decade."-H-Net s"Wagner and Lundeen...LOVE the Star Trek stories, and document how those are [variations on] some of humankind's favorite narratives."-Greg Pfitzer Skidmore College"Wagner and Lundeen have written a lively and fascinating book that will appeal to 'Trekkies' as well as scholars of the 'Trek phenomenon.' With critical insight and appropriate good humor, the authors have charted the far-reaching effects of Star Trek on our culture and have explained why it continues to be such a resilient mythic device for helping us understand ourselves."-William G. Doty Auburn UniversityAbout the AuthorJON WAGNER is Professor of Anthropology, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. He has published books and articles on Islam, utopian societies, gender, and contemporary myth.JAN LUNDEEN teaches nursing in the Division of Allied Health at Carl Sandburg College. She has researched and written on the sociology of health care and gender in nursing education.