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Star Trek and History: Race-ing toward a White Future

Daniel Leonard Bernardi

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Star Trek is an enduring icon in American popular culture. For many viewers, the science fiction series represents the bold exploration of the unknown and the humanistic respect of the foreign and the alien. In fact, it is Star Trek's vision of a utopian future where humans no longer engage in racism, sexism, capitalism, among other "-isms" that many fans claim is the main reason for their loyalty. But is the visionary Trek future world truly colorblind?

Star Trek and History traces the shifting and reforming meaning of race articulated throughout the Star Trek television series, feature films, and fan community. Daniel Bernardi investigates and politicizes the presentation of race in Star Trek in the original series of the 1960s, the feature films and television spin-offs of the 1980s and 1990s, and the current fan community on the Internet. Through both critical and historical analysis, the book proposes a method of studying the framing of race in popular film and television that integrates sociology, critical theory, and cultural studies.

Bernardi examines the representational and narrative functions of race in Star Trek and explores how the meaning of race in the science fiction series has been facilitated or constrained by creative and network decision-making, by genre, by intertextuality, and by fans. He interprets how the changing social and political movements of the times have influenced the production and meaning of Trek texts and the ways in which the ongoing series negotiated and reflected these turbulent histories. Most significantly, Bernardi tells us why is it important for readers to better understand the articulation of race in this enduring icon of American popular culture.

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