



Conventions of War

Walter Jon Williams

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The universe has fallen into bloody chaos now that the dread empire of the tyrannical Shaa is no more -- at the mercy of the merciless insectoid Naxid, who now hunger for domination. But the far-flung human descendants of Terra have finally tasted liberty, and their warrior heroes will not submit. Separated by light-years, Lord Gareth Martinez and the mysterious guerrilla fighter Caroline Sula each pursue a different road to victory in tomorrow's ultimate battle -- for the new order will be far more terrible than the old ... unless one last, desperate stratagem can hold a shattered galaxy together.

Conventions of War Details

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From Reader Review Conventions of War for online ebook

David says

The plot gets a bit bogged down. We don't have fresh new worldbuilding to explore and so the pace lags a bit. The main characters are still interesting, but we lack a proper supporting cast.

Clyde says

This completes my re-read of the original Dread Empire's Fall trilogy. Good story about the disintegration (at least the beginning thereof) of an empire when the despotic power that holds it together disappears. One thing I like about this series is that Williams doesn't posit any magical advanced technology. With the possible exception of wormholes for interstellar travel, everything is an extension of known science and technology -- no FTL drive or communication, no inertial compensators, no newly discovered energy sources. That means, to get around in star systems in any reasonable time, ships (and the people in them) have to endure extended periods of high-G acceleration. That of course applies to space combat too. (Power for all this comes from antimatter, for which practical handling technology has been developed.) I look forward to more adventures of Lady Sula and Lord Martinez.

Loren says

Interesting choice of ending. Really liked the idea of the complacency of a millennial space empire, but found the other races under-developed and felt them worth exploring more - especially the Shaa

Chris says

I've been thinking a lot about what makes this series more successful than *Implied Spaces*, and eventually realized that you can tell the two heroes and one other character are smart, because nobody else in the whole 3 books ever has a bright or novel idea. I realize it's a stagnant society, but that seems extreme.

Jim says

This is a re-read for me. I read the *Dread Empire* trilogy years ago and remembered it as a rousin space opera. My memory was that it was an excellent epic with lots of space battles. Well, my memory was partially correct. There are some space battles, though nearly as many as I remembered, which are all brilliantly plotted and presented. There is also a substantial amount of politics, class warfare (particularly relevant with today's "1%" disputes), and interesting aliens, which I had forgotten nearly all about. I think Walter Jon Williams series is even more topical today than it was 10 years ago when he began it.

Other recent military sci fi, like Jack Campbell's *Lost Fleet* Conventions of War, so it is hard to know if there

was actually any influence. Williams has far fewer actual battles, with political and class maneuvering actually taking up more of the novels. This is what gives Williams opus more of a space opera feel than Campbell's straight ahead combat approach. Williams also invests much more effort into his key characters, imbuing them with real life problems and motivations. Both are excellent, however, so if you haven't picked up Campbell's work yet you may really like it.

Peter Walton-Jones says

While it will not stick in the memory as a major classic, I have enjoyed this series. *Conventions of War* concludes the sequence and provides a satisfying finale. The characters (Sula and Martinez in particular) are interesting and engaging. The themes of class and difference are important to the story but do not take it over.

The space travel narratives are interesting for the wormholes and the gravities experienced during accelerations. Williams fills in the time gaps here with a murder mystery that is not crucial to the whole story but provides a glimpse into the future universe where creativity and the spiritual have been diminished and are illegal or at best unwelcome in the worldview of the powerful.

The battle scenes are exciting and the detail is not at all tedious. Sula's leading of the armed rebellion on Zanshaa is exciting combat action story telling very well done. She is a very cool (and flawed...like the best heroines) chick!

This book was my favourite in the series.

Bill says

No real tension. I never felt like I got to understand the Shaa or Praxis enough. I knew our "heroes" would win battles and didn't really care one way or the other.

Brian says

It took me almost three years to finish this series, but i'm glad I did.

On the surface this book seems like a typical science fantasy/space opera epic. Humans have left earth and colonized space and joined an empire comprised of many other races. But when the empire falls apart, humanity goes to war with its millions strong armed forces. But this story isn't about a struggle vs good and evil, instead it focuses on the surreal lives of the people in command and the absurd social situations they are in as hundreds of thousands of lives are lost around them.

Also it's quite funny.

Steve says

I really liked *Conventions of War*. I liked the realistic characters, the dialogue, the pacing, the insurgency

storyline on Zanshaa, the battles between spaceships, and the ending. There isn't anything that I dislike about *Conventions of War*. Five Stars.

Rob says

Conventions of War is the third and final novel in Williams' *Dread Empire's Fall* series. Lady Caroline Sula leads the guerrilla war against the rebellious Naxids on the Empire's occupied capital world of Zanshaa, while Lord Gareth Martinez commands a battleship in the Fleet task force waging a war of attrition on the enemy's economic heartland a la Sherman's "March to the Sea."

I can't say much more about the plot without giving it away, but I can say the book wraps up the series with an ending that -- while not "happily ever after" -- was appropriate to the characters considering their previous actions.

Williams did all the things in *Conventions of War* that entertained me in the first two books -- military space opera without the technical jargon, conflicted characters I cared about, and "realistic" spaceships and space warfare. Don't get me wrong, I love laser battles and "warp drive" ships like any good sci-fi geek, but it was interesting to read about the challenges starship crews face with high-gravity accelerations and decelerations, along with the months it takes to simply go from one end of a single solar system to another.

If I had any criticism it would be the first two-thirds of the book felt like Williams was killing time before getting to the brutal fight for Zanshaa and the ultimate space battle with the Naxids. While Sula's guerrilla exploits against the Naxids were appropriate to the story (though a tad drawn out), the murder mystery Martinez had to solve seemed thrown in just to give him something to do until the final battle.

That said, I still enjoyed the book and the series overall. While not as entertaining as book two (*The Sundering*), it was a satisfying conclusion to one of the best space opera series I've ever read.

Targle says

Amazing

This is book three. Read the series in order.

Once you've finished book one there is no chance that you'll fail to get here and no words of mine would stop you reading it.

Nor should they, these books are truly fantastic.

Enjoy.

Gwen says

Long live the Praxis! I WANT MORE!!!

Carl Barlow says

A satisfying enough conclusion to the trilogy. Still flavoured with Patrick O'Brian (though not as beautifully written), still lacking any real feeling of grit (for all the guerrilla warfare, it remains somehow very sanitary and clean), still sporting aliens that may as well be humans in strange bodies, still pretty easy on its main protagonists (especially the man, and even though the female goes through a lot, nothing ever *really* phases her and she still comes out more-or-less on top), still littered with closely repeated words. And still very much the page-turner, with well-orchestrated battle scenes and good characterisation, that combine into a quick (for all its 677 pages), very enjoyable read.

Pie Pie says

The final book in the Praxis series. I call it the Praxis series because all three books wrestle with the idea of final knowledge. The Praxis teaches that everything important is known and that intelligent species can take comfort in that fact instead of believing in the unknown. This book deals with not only the spiritual side of this ideology but also the logical side of it. It explains the former without getting preachy and outright invalidates the latter.

Even though the book's ending isn't 100% happy ending it was satisfying and real.

This book in the series is the best one by far. It's like reading 4 books in one as four completely distinct narratives come to fruition throughout the pages. Not only that, but the emotions of the characters burst from the pages at every turn. There was nothing I wanted more than to just find out what happens next. Even for the two lampshaded "luckiest people in the universe" the road was harrowing and impassioned. While the first two books are excellent in their own right, this one by far surpasses them in both quality and quantity.

Larry Kenney says

Another great book in the series. It wasn't quite as enjoyable as the first two in the series, I thought, as the relationship between Martinez and Sula has changed quite a bit, but over all a very enjoyable read. I'm hoping for more in this series!
