



Juniper Time

Kate Wilhelm

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Juniper Time is a 1st-rate sf novel. Kate Wilhelm has done her usual excellent job of weaving an intricate plot & sympathetically portraying believable & complex characters in settings that are described with force & clarity. This '79 novel is set in the not-too-distant future, when a devastating drought in the American West & much of the rest of the world has caused economic & social collapse. The story alternates between the viewpoints of Cluny, a scientist dedicated to the construction & operation of a space station, & Jean, who was Cluny's childhood friend but has now gone her separate way & become a linguist, naturalist & photographer. Wilhelm's most powerful & engrossing writing, it seems to me, is in her descriptions of the natural world & of the vastly different ways that people relate to it. Jean's experiences on the Oregon coast are beautifully described, as is her life on the high desert of Oregon with the Wasco Indians. (Wilhelm & husband Damon Knight live in Bend) Jean gradually comes to understand the way of life of the Wasco people & her spiritual growth is described very effectively. Cluny & Jean are reunited when they become part of a project intended to discover if contact with an alien civilization has occurred. Their decision may determine whether a nuclear war between the USA & the USSR can be avoided. The climax of the novel is unexpected but believable. I recommend this book very highly.--Michael J. Keyes

Juniper Time Details

Date : Published April 3rd 1981 by Pocket Books (NY) (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9780671436841

Author : Kate Wilhelm

Format : Paperback 280 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Juniper Time for online ebook

Chadwick says

Such beautiful writing. SF is the genre perhaps best suited for asking, "Why are we such assholes," and this book asks that question elegantly.

Gary Barrentine says

Interesting mix of different people intertwined into a very good tale of the future.

Erik Graff says

Having read and been very impressed by Wilhelm's Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang, I purchased Juniper Time from the Science Fiction Book Club, read it quickly and was left with little impression. Of course it was written well like all of her stuff.

Thannasset says

This is early Wilhelm--fairly well written, a little clumsy on the mystery part of the setup, wonderful for mood and conveying concerns about communication, our use of planet earth, and a disturbingly plausible 'near-future'. What I learned from this book? Never to plan to settle in a state where most of the water comes from one or two rivers.

Juniper Lim says

I think that Kate Wilhelm has created a sci-fi story that appeals to the senses as much as it does the imagination. Although the book is about the future discovery of aliens, Kate Wilhelm keeps her perspective rooted in the ancient healing ways of the native americans as well as the mighty power of love. Many times I found myself meditating on my surroundings to realign with the facts it was so realistic. The main characters of Juniper Time were portrayed honestly if not a tad romance n ovelesque. I am making my own words here. Obviously, I haven't written a book report in a while. I was lucky to have happened upon this Hugo-award winning novel. Five stars.

Wealththeow says

Jean's father is a visionary, and he cajoles and convinces humanity to fund an international space station. But before the station is even finished, strange and tragic accidents start killing the astronauts and delaying the

project. Jean's father is the last to die--after that, the station is mothballed.

Years later, Jean's old childhood friend Arthur Cluny manages to get politicians to restart the station. He and his friends head up to space--only to find a mysterious message encased in gold waiting for them. Unsure whether the message is from aliens or some terrestrial conspiracy, Cluny tracks down Jean, hoping she can translate it. Jean was once a promising PhD candidate linguist, but when the army took over her project she fled. After a terrifying time in welfare housing, she escapes into the desert, where she finds old friends willing to help her. Among the Indians learning to live on the desert, she begins to find peace and stability for the first time. But then Cluny arrives, and their isolation is shattered.

(view spoiler)

Wilhelm crafts a world that is truly terrifying--and terrifyingly familiar. Her future isn't perfectly correct: the computers are gigantic and practically calculators, while the USSR is still a major threat. But other bits, like the widening class divide or the way supposedly objective research is often the result of guesswork and the desires of funders, ring true. And unlike a lot of 70s sf, women are not only main characters, but they have opinions and careers of their own. The Indians mostly avoid racist tropes, as well. I was wary of them teaching Jean their ~mystic ways~, but it's made clear in the text that there's been a lot of mixing with the rest of American culture and immigrants, and that they themselves are learning to live in the desert and see a more natural reality. They're not experts because of something in their blood.

All of this is a bit secondary to the really powerful part of *Juniper Time*, which is the way Wilhelm crafts the inner workings of her characters. She has an amazing ability to bring people's personalities to life.

(trigger warning: there are numerous off-hand mentions of sexual assault, a 2 page gang-rape scene, and detailed emotional aftermath of an assault)

Rogue Reader says

Ultimate earth-bound sensibility of sensitivity to the land and spirits. Beautifully written, set in eastern Oregon's high desert. Several tells along the way if you want to find them, but don't let it disrupt the flow of the narrative.

Helen says

Drought, faux aliens buy time to heal?

Rain says

Being generous, mainly because I have yet to read a Wilhelm novel I didn't like, and this was no exception. A highly enjoyable read of speculative sci-fi. The only detraction (or distraction?) was the "dated" nature of the plot devices, having been written during the Cold War era of the 1970s along with video cassettes into massive computers with mountains of rolled printouts.

However, the timeless theme of the vagaries of human nature is explored in Wilhelm's lyrical writing style with interesting complex characters and landscapes. Recommended for those who enjoy speculative sci-fi .

Roddy Williams says

‘The technological dream is over...

Man reached for the stars – and failed to keep the Earth in his grasp. With the Western United States devastated by drought, the survivors huddle in squalid concentration camps in the east.

And still the dream won't go away... In high orbit, an artefact is found that may be man's first contact with aliens. The only woman who can decode it has found her future in the past, in the remote Indian territories of the Pacific Northwest.

But in which direction does the planet's survival lie...’

Blurb from the 1981 Arrow paperback edition.

Wilhelm here gives us a bleak portrayal of a near-future America devastated by drought in which two childhood friends find themselves forcefully reunited due to their fathers' involvement in an aborted space-station project.

Jean Brighton has begun a career working on a project to develop computer programmes which aim to decode languages without a Rosetta Stone.

Arthur Cluny is fighting to have the Space Station project reopened in a political climate where most of the American population is being moved away from areas which are turning to desert.

Both Jean and Arthur are involved in relationships which end badly, Arthur's when he accidentally kills his wife whose death is recorded as an accident.

Later, out in space, Arthur's team discover an apparently alien artefact containing a written message. Arthur then has to persuade Jean, who has joined a tribe of Native Americans, to help him translate the message.

It's a beautifully written novel of an America facing disaster, and peopled with complex and very real characters.

In one sense this may be described as being only borderline science fiction, but that would be missing the point, since the very best SF is that which employs the devices of SF to examine the human condition and this novel achieves that end superlatively. It is very much character driven and is as much a novel about America itself as it is about the relationship between Jean and Arthur and how each of them had to suffer before discovering their real selves.

Although listed in Pringle's '100 Best SF Novels' this is a little-known gem which deserves a far wider audience.

Kirk Macleod says

Kate Wilhelm's 1979 novel *Juniper Time* continues the fascination in Science Fiction with Linguistics that kept cropping up in the 70s (see *The Ophiuchi Hotline*, *The Embedding*, *Looking Backward* from the year 2000, and, most famously *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*).

The story felt a lot like Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* (2014), as it takes place on an earth at the end of environmental disaster and focuses very strongly on issues of parent/child relationships. The novel covers about thirty years of time and focuses largely on Jean, a Linguistic scientist and Cluny, an astronaut, both children of world famous astronauts themselves.

Much of the novel focuses on issues of priorities; in a world where resources are quickly being depleted Cluny ends up in a consistent race to get resources for a space station orbiting the planet, while Jean attempts to advance linguistic theory without attracting the attention of big business or the military, both of which have the right to effectively conscript her into work for life.

As the world gets into worse and worse shape, New Towns (the inhabitants of which are called newtons in the book), are formed and it is in these that society quickly begins to crumble; Jean's residence in one quickly turns nightmarish and underlines how terrible things can get under the guise of playing fair.

As with her previous work *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1977), the book is a wonderful look at the big questions Science Fiction can attempt to answer as a genre, and the questions the book left me with will probably stay with me for quite some time.

Thannasset says

Read it and see--would love feedback on this one. Mostly forgotten book by a fine author, as far as I can tell.

Leif says

Another well written speculative fiction piece by Ms. Wilhelm. I have no huge complaints...it's just that this writer can be so slow in plot development that by the time you finish the book, you aren't as impressed as when you were reading it.

John says

1982 grade F+

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

Mostly very good, even if, purely as extrapolation a lot of plot elements haven't held up. A very canny and thoughtful derailment of a carefully built-up first contact motif set against a near future world where international conflict and ecological crisis prevail. Where the novel failed for me, right at the eleventh hour, was in the excessively expository manner in which the conflicts and resolutions of the last 20 pages are played out, all tell and no show. Wilhelm has points to make about human motivation, the dehumanising nature of obsession, our pathetic management of the environment, our addiction to one-upmanship and our counter-productive attachment to seeing things as binaries. She also creates at least one fascinating central character; but he is not sympathetic, and one sympathetic character; but she is too good to be true. The rest of

the characters are like stock figures in a passion play. Despite which there is some very beautiful writing that displays an admirable sense of place and grasp of metaphor. A wise book, but not enough of a novel. By way of contrast, see Ursula Le Guin's *The Lathe Of Heaven*, which exemplifies why John Clute describes Le Guin as a 'wise teller of tales'.

Peter says

This is an wonderful and unexpected future novel about culture and culture conflict. It illuminates social assumptions and explores the parallel between our relation to native americans and our potential relation with extra-terrestrials. The dominant theme is contrasting our Western culture of hard separation between ourselves and the universe around us with other approaches, using native american culture as an example.

I have seen Wilhelm referred to as a master of the psychlogical. But I have so often found that it is her anthropological insight into culture that is key to her sensitive and insightful exploration of literally different worlds.

Elaine says

slow starting, but very much worth it in the end. And very a propos to what is going on in the world now...

Pioden says

Kate Wilhelm is an excellent writer, who is possibly better known for her mystery/law books. I didn't find out about those until long after I had read her speculative/alternative history/sci fi-ish books. I still haven't read her mysteries, but intend to pick them up some day. In these, her voice speaks of the rawness, the gritty aspect of being human.

Kat says

Mixed feelings about this one. It's dated quite poorly - particularly with regards to gender issues - some of the male viewpoint chapters drip with disrespect for women and there's also some unnecessary sexual violence that has essentially no impact on the plot whatsoever. The writing is quite lyrical and I did find it compelling but it then doesn't deliver much of an ending.

Fantasy Literature says

Juniper Time, by Kate Wilhelm, was published in 1979, her first novel after her Hugo-Award winning book *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*. Once again, Wilhelm was interested in ecological collapse. This time, the disaster is a growing drought and the desertification of large parts of world, specifically the US, throwing the country into economic depression and political chaos. Against this backdrop, two people who share a

common past struggle to change the present, with surprising results.

Jean Brighton's father was a famous astronaut and the "face" of the first international space station, Alpha. Sadly, when Jean was still a child, cost-overruns and accidents — or perhaps sabotage — brought the project to a halt before it was completed. Arthur Cluny' ... Read More: <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>
