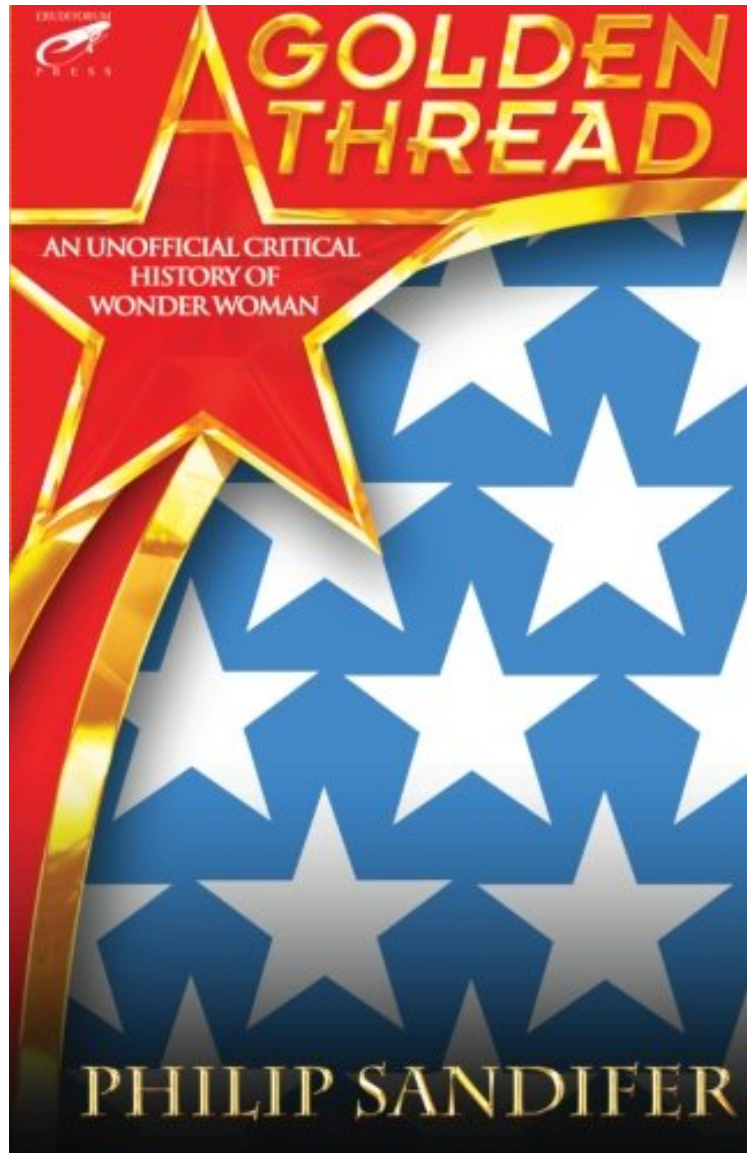


[Library ebook] A Golden Thread: An Unofficial Critical History of Wonder Woman

A Golden Thread: An Unofficial Critical History of Wonder Woman

Philip Sandifer

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#1644494 in Books 2013-10-29 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .63 x 5.50l, .71 #File Name: 1493566725278 pages | File size: 27.Mb

Philip Sandifer : A Golden Thread: An Unofficial Critical History of Wonder Woman before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Golden Thread: An Unofficial Critical History of Wonder Woman:

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent!!By Green TrilobiteI completely enjoyed what was billed

as "critical" take on my fav comics characters. The author gives a wonderful overview of WW covering all the ups and downs of her 70 year history! 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. The better of two Wonder Woman books By William Henley Books on comic-book history sometimes seem to appear in flurries. A while back there was a flurry of books on the Jewish heritage of many major comic-book writers and artists and how that heritage affected the comic characters. Now there is a flurry of books about the history of Wonder Woman, the most famous and "iconic" female superhero (even if, as this book notes, only for a short time in the 1940's did her actual popularity as a comics star rival that of Superman, Batman, and other male heroes). There's this book, and "Wonder Woman Unbound" by Tim Hanley, and at least one or two more that I haven't yet read. Between this and the Hanley book, I would say "Golden Thread" is the better summary of Wonder Woman's career, though each book has information that the other doesn't. In particular, this book gives a much more complete account of the Wonder Woman comics appearing from the late 1980's, when star comics artist George Perez "rebooted" Wonder Woman, through the present. Since I stopped buying and reading WW sometime during the Perez run, this information is of interest to me. Another thing I like about this book is that Sandifer shares my high regard for the late 1960s/early 70s period when Wonder Woman temporarily gave up her super-powers and her star-spangled bikini costume and operated as Diana Prince, a "plainclothes" adventuress and heroine. (Sandifer refers to this as the "I Ching period," after a supporting character, Diana's martial arts mentor.) Feminists of the time hated that approach to the character and pressured DC Comics into restoring the powers and costume, and Tim Hanley, author of the other book "WW Unbound" shares that disdain. But I first became a fan of the Wonder Woman character during that time, and still think, despite flaws, those were some of the best written and drawn comics appearing under the Wonder Woman title since the "Golden Age" of comics by WW's original creators, William Moulton Marston and H.G. Peter. And as I see it (though admittedly I'm neither female nor a card-carrying, wholly politically correct feminist) the "non-powered" WW comics actually reflected feminist ideals better than many of the comics that featured the super-powered WW. On the other hand, there is something about the original Golden Age WW that I think the Hanley book gets right and the Sandifer book misses. Sandifer emphasizes mainly the quirky psychological theories of William Moulton Marston about female superiority and the desirability of a society based on "loving domination" by strong females. But another aspect of the Golden Age WW was much more meaningful for feminism-- the idea that "any woman could be a Wonder Woman". The original WW got her "super-powers" more from "rigorous training" than from her magical heritage, and she taught other women to imitate her and become almost as formidable as she was. (In one story, some women WW has helped rescue from prison thank her for saving them, and she replies, "You saved yourselves. I only showed you that you could.") Unfortunately, this aspect of the character was largely lost after Marston's death, particularly under the reign of his successor, writer/editor Robert Kanigher, who not only exaggerated WW's powers beyond anything that could be explained by training or determination, but actually wrote stories in which other women who tried to emulate WW's abilities were held up to scorn and ridicule. 17 of 22 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Microhistory of a Comics Icon By Jed A Blue I have been heavily influenced by Dr. Sandifer's work; it would only be a slight overstatement to say that My Little Po-Mo is an outright ripoff of his TARDIS Eruditorium. So it should equally come as no surprise that I was quite excited by the prospect of a book by him at the intersection of two of my favorite topics, DC Comics and feminism. But A Golden Thread is not a feminist study of Wonder Woman per se; rather, much as TARDIS Eruditorium uses Doctor Who as a window through which to view British utopianism throughout its run, A Golden Thread uses Wonder Woman as a window onto the history of feminism in the U.S. This is not, however, Themyscira Eruditorium; rather than in-depth analyses of individual Wonder Woman issues or story arcs, it takes a high-level look at different eras of the comic, studying how these eras respond to the issues of previous eras in ways that reflect or reject the feminist currents of the time. Of particular note are the early chapters on Marston, the creator of Wonder Woman, which identify, and then explicitly avoid, the usual approach of identifying him as the sexually deviant inventor of the lie detector, as if that explains all that need be explained about Wonder Woman. Instead, the book explores his professional writings and other projects, building a case that Wonder Woman was simply the most successful of multiple attempts to express Marston's peculiar brand of utopian, gender-essentialist feminism and his vision of a matriarchal society defined by willing, loving submission rather than coercive, forceful domination. That this vision failed, while the comic based on it succeeded, is key to the book's premise regarding feminism, that social progress is a matter of making new mistakes. For example, the chapter on the I Ching era of Wonder Woman, in which she was depowered, becomes a chronicle of the mistakes of second-wave feminism in general and Gloria Steinem in particular. The book never quite reaches for the claim, but the suggestion that the I Ching era was foreshadowing the third wave is an easy one for the reader to fill in. Therein lies one of the major differences between this book and Dr. Sandifer's other work: restraint. It is a double-edged sword; on the one hand, there is nothing in this book remotely as gloriously outré as the Blakean take on The Three Doctors in the third volume of TARDIS Eruditorium, let alone the Qabbalistic Tarot Logopolis Choose Your Own Adventure in the upcoming fourth volume. On the other, it is more accessible by far than TARDIS Eruditorium or especially The Last War in Albion, his ongoing study of Alan Moore and Grant Morrison. Which is not to say that the usual Sandifer flavor is absent! His distaste for organized fandom shows up strongly here, as he blames the emergence of such (probably deservedly) for the post-World War II decline

of the comic. He also, as usual, does not shy away from mounting strong defenses of indefensible positions, in this case trying to argue that the animated Wonder Woman movie is inferior to the David Kelly-produced television pilot. His criticisms of the former are accurate and cutting; it is a far from perfect film but he defends the latter against a strawman, ignoring the strongest criticism of the pilot, that it depicts Wonder Woman as a remorseless and unhesitating killer. Nonetheless, the book stands as an excellent microhistory of Wonder Woman, accessible even to a reader who knows little of her comics (such as myself, I know her mostly through the DCAU, her appearances in crossovers, and the Gail Simone run), highly informative, and engaging. It is worth the price for the fresh take on Marston alone, but the rest of the book has much to offer as well.

For over seventy years Wonder Woman has been one of the most popular and recognized comic book characters in the world. Now, for the first time, *A Golden Thread* presents a detailed critical history of the character. From her origins as a World War II-era avatar of William Moulton Marston's vision of a feminist bondage utopia to the present day, this book looks closely at seven decades of Wonder Woman comics alongside her appearances in television and film. Through her many highs and many lows, this book traces the unlikely story of the world's most popular feminist character.