

25 issue--is that there has been a gap found in Andrew Wiles proof of Fermat's Last Theorem. A big deal was made when Wiles claimed he had a proof. Now it appears that one piece of that proof was more complex than Wiles thought and is still an open question. Wiles is trying to prove that last piece. There is a double irony

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here. All Wiles has really done is show that Fermat's Theorem might now be equivalent to a different open problem. All it takes is for someone else to solve that problem to prove Fermat and hence after Wiles work it may actually be someone else who actually proves Fermat's Theorem. The other part of the irony is that even if someone does prove the other problem, in the public's mind Wiles will still be the person who proved Fermat, since there was so much publicity. Nobody will ever get that much publicity for proving Fermat again. So you could go and actually be the person who proves the famous theorem, but the public will remember Wiles and not you. In any case Wiles is rushing in frantically to patch the gap in his proof just so he can honestly claim the publicity he has gotten.

Now I promised you that there was big news. The July 2 issue of S_c_i_e_n_c_e_N_e_w_s talks about two scientists at Berkeley who are trying to find how long it takes photons to tunnel through solids. Now normal intuition tells you that a photon should slow down when tunneling but what has been discovered is that a photon tunneling through a mirror actually goes at about 1.7 times the speed of a photon in air.

Hello? Did you catch that?

What I just said was that a photon tunneling through a mirror will travel at about 1.7 times the speed of light. You know that old speed limit that nothing can go faster than? No information can move faster than the speed of light, remember that? Well S_c_i_e_n_c_e_N_e_w_s is just matter-of-factly saying that a photon tunneling through a mirror goes 1.7 times that fast. And S_c_i_e_n_c_e_N_e_w_s put this on page 6 and calls it a "surprising result." There is a nice little explanation as to why this effect does not blow causality out of the water. If you see a photon as a wave packet there is some uncertainty as to where the photon is. But it sure sounds

like hyper-light speeds are now starting to creep into physics. I just wonder why more people are not hearing about this. I guess as news it pales beside the news of today's turn of events in the Simpson trial. Well, I guess that few of us wants to fool with math or can visualize photons, but, hey, we all know what O. J. Simpson looks like, right?

2. THE CHILD GARDEN by Geoff Ryman (Tor Orb, ISBN 0-312-89023-0, May 1994 (1989c), 388pp, US\$13.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Tor's Orb line is bringing back into print (in trade paperback) science fiction works that Tor's editors feel should get a wider audience in the United States than they have gotten so far. These

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may be books that had only a hardback release, or a paperback release that has long since gone out of print. For example, Ryman's C_h_i_l_d_G_a_r_d_e_n, was published in Great Britain in 1989 and in hardback in 1990 by St. Martin's in the United States, but never got a paperback release. Maybe publishers didn't think a book about Dante and Derrida would be a runaway best-seller.

The premise is certainly classic science fiction; in the future viruses and other biologicals have been developed for everything. They are used for teaching, they allow people to photosynthesize, they are used for social conditioning, and they have cured cancer. The last turns out to be a mixed blessing--the same process that caused cancer was also what allowed the body tissues to regenerate. The result is that there is no cancer but no one lives past the age of 35.

Into this world is born Milena. Milena is resistant to the viruses. In the "Child Garden," where she is raised, she has to learn the old-fashioned way, from books. She can't photosynthesize, so she has to get nutrition from food. She isn't socially conditioned, meaning that among other things she hasn't been "cured" of her lesbian orientation. And she has one other

difference--she can be creative. While everyone else is directed by their viruses, she is directed by her own nature. So she falls in love with a woman genetically engineered to resemble a polar bear (so she can work in the Antarctic) who has set all of Dante's D_i_v_i_n_e_C_o_m_e_d_y to music. (It is at this point, perhaps, that T_h_e_C_h_i_l_d_G_a_r_d_e_n leaves the realm of easily marketable science fiction.) Since the most popular artform of Milena's time is the perfect reproduction of historical artforms (L_o_v_e's_L_a_b_o_u_r_L_o_s_t produced identically to the first production and so on), trying to get a new opera of T_h_e_D_i_v_i_n_e_C_o_m_e_d_y produced is not the easiest trick in the world. One wonders, in fact, if Ryman isn't being a bit self-referential here. Think about it.

T_h_e_C_h_i_l_d_G_a_r_d_e_n is about bioengineering and art and love and a lot more. It's not for everyone, but I recommend it for anyone looking for a literate and thought-provoking novel.

3. SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE MASQUERADE MURDERS by Frank Thomas (Otto Penzler Books, ISBN 1-56287-056-4, 1994 (1986c), 250pp, US\$21) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

As a Sherlock Holmes author, Frank Thomas makes a good Tom Corbett. Well, to be fair, S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s_a_n_d_t_h_e_M_a_s_q_u_e_r_a_d_e_M_u_r_d_e_r_s is considerably better than some of Thomas's earlier attempts, which tended toward an anachronistic writing style of modern phrasing, and often ended in a truly awful pun. Some of this is till in

evidence: on page vi Thomas has Watson write that "many a hardened criminal literally threw in the sponge" if Holmes was called in. Since I doubt that the burglars went into Scotland Yard and heaved absorptive sea creatures at the inspectors, I can only conclude that neither Thomas nor the copy editor (if any) knows what the word "literally" means. (Thomas/Watson also refers to the author "H. Rider Haggart.")

My main problem, though, is more with the portrayal of Watson. Holmes still seems like Holmes, but Thomas still has enough of a

modern slant to his writing that Watson as a narrator sounds like a modern transplant rather than the Watson we know and love. (Watson's actions in regard to the fee are particularly unlikely for the honorable Dr. Watson.) And Thomas throws in anachronisms such as having the criminals overly concerned with fingerprints years before Scotland Yard started using them in detection. The mystery itself is not badly constructed, but there are too many red herrings and other mis-steps along the way for me to recommend this book. (Thomas's other three pastiches came out in paperback from Pinnacle, but I suspect Otto Penzler will not be doing a paperback release of this one. It's possible the 1986 was a paperback.)

4. 221B: STUDIES IN SHERLOCK HOLMES edited by Vincent Starrett (Otto Penzler Books, ISBN 1-883402-07-7, 1993 (1940c), 247pp, US\$7.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Otto Penzler is in the process of bringing back into print (usually in paperback) classics of Sherlockiana which have been unavailable for many years. This anthology, for example, was first published in 1940, and while some pieces have been reprinted since then, having the entire collection back in print, and at such a reasonable price, is a real treat.

"The Field Bazaar" is one of the pieces which has been reprinted in the interim, enough times that it has been suggested that it should really be included in the Canon. "The Adventure of the Unique Hamlet" by Vincent Starrett and P. M. Stone's "Sussex Interview" are the other fiction pieces here, and at least the Starrett has also been reprinted elsewhere.

The non-fiction pieces, on the other hand, have been less available. This may reflect the reading public's greater interest in reading more Sherlock Holmes stories than in reading more a_b_o_u_t the original Sherlock Holmes stories. Maybe that's why the category listed on the back cover is "Crime Fiction" instead of "Crime Fiction Criticism." In any case, this reprint is most readers' first chance to read such classics as Christopher Morley's "Was Sherlock Holmes an American?" Other pieces include

R. K. Leavitt's "Nummi in Arca, or the Fiscal Holmes," Earle F. Welbridge's "Care and Feeding of Sherlock Holmes," Harvey Officer's "Sherlock Holmes and Music," and Frederic Dorr Steele's "Sherlock Holmes in Pictures." Watson is not forgotten, in Elmer Davis's "On the Emotional Geology of Baker Street," Jane Nightwork's "Dr. Watson's Secret," and sharing the spotlight in Richard D. Altick's "Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Samuel Johnson." Rounding out the set are H. M. Bell's "Three Identifications," James Keddie's "Other Boarder," Henry James Forman's "Creator of Holmes in the Flesh," and the longest piece, Edgar W. Smith's "Appointment in Baker Street." You might think the latter a catalogue of all visitors to Baker Street, but it includes other minor characters as well. There is also a "Sherlock Holmes Cross-Word" by F. V. Morley (which fails the symmetry test for an ideal crossword pattern, but what the heck). I can't imagine real Holmes fans actually w_r_i_t_i_n_g in this book, but that's what photocopiers are for (well, one purpose, anyway).

While probably not of interest to the reader who is looking for more Sherlock Holmes s_t_o_r_i_e_s, this is a must-buy for any serious Sherlock Holmes fan.

5. IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: Nicolas Cage plays an honest cop who agrees to share a lottery ticket with a waitress, then finds himself sharing four million dollars. This is a light summer love story that also makes some comment on the selfish and unselfish uses of good fortune. Cage and Bridget Fonda make a likable couple. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)

I_t_C_o_u_l_d_H_a_p_p_e_n_t_o_Y_o_u is claimed to be based on fact both internally and in the publicity. In actual fact, just about none of it is true, but the basic situation of a policeman sharing a lottery ticket as a tip and then splitting the payoff when the ticket actually wins. Jane Anderson's screenplay takes that situation as a springboard to tell a fable about greed and unselfishness. Surprisingly, the invented story is not all that far from credibility.

Charlie Lang (played by Nicolas Cage) is a good, honest cop who lives the kind of life that a good honest cop can expect to live. He has a one-bedroom apartment, a lot of aggravation, and a dissatisfied wife Muriel (Rosie Perez) who is getting ready to give up on Charlie and look for something new. One day Charlie buys a lottery ticket. Then getting a cup of coffee he finds he does not have money for a tip so promises to split any lottery winnings with

his waitress, Yvonne Biasi (Bridget Fonda). When the ticket wins to the tune of four million dollars Charlie's wife Muriel wants Charlie to keep all the money for themselves. Charlie insists repeatedly that a promise is a promise and splits the money with Yvonne.

As Charlie discovers, winning the lottery completely changes who you are and how people relate to you. Charlie and Yvonne find kindred spirits in each other, each wanting to spend much of the money unselfishly. They also begin getting interested in each other. Muriel, on the other hand, wants to enjoy every dollar spending on herself. What is more, she wants all four million. What results is neither entirely expected or unrealistic. On top of this is a rather pleasant love story in which Cage and Fonda work very well together on the screen.

And Fonda and Cage are something of a surprise as a screen couple. Cage has overcome the goopy kid roles he has played in the past and carries the film reasonably well as a leading man. He has, of course, worked with director Andrew Bergman before in H_o_n_e_y_m_o_o_n_i_n V_e_g_a_s. Fonda is captivating with a winning smile and a more winning acting talent. Slightly misjudged is Rosie Perez whose grating voice was somehow an asset when she played the traumatized plane passenger in F_e_a_r_l_e_s_s, but here, playing a human cockroach, she seems just insufferable on the screen. Also disappointing is the limiting of Stanley Tucci to three scenes as Yvonne's wandering husband. Tucci is a rubber-faced actor who proved he had a great deal of comic potential as Alec Baldwin's best friend in P_r_e_l_u_d_e_t_o a_K_i_s_s.

Anderson's screenplay has a lot of what was good in older Frank Capra films. Unfortunately Capra films were far from perfect and an unrealistic turn of events toward the end of the film is lifted straight from a Frank Capra film. What is oddly missing is the attention to well-observed character development that one would find in a Capra film. It is odd because Anderson proved she was good at creating characters in T_h_e_P_o_s_i_t_i_v_e_l_y_T_r_u_e A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_s_o_f t_h_e_A_l_l_e_g_e_d_T_e_x_a_s_C_h_e_e_r_l_e_a_d_e_r- M_u_r_d_e_r_i_n_g_M_o_m for HBO. Here, instead

of developing the minor characters the screenwriter actually seemed to be working with a checklist to make sure a wide variety of ethnic minorities were represented in the film. Also the telling of the story with a narrator seems to be a false move on the part of the author.

_ I _ t _ C _ o _ u _ l _ d _ H _ a _ p _ p _ e _ n _ t _ o _ Y _ o _ u is not a great film, but it is an enjoyable

love story and a pleasant change from much gun-blazing summer entertainment available in the theaters right now. I would give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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Nothing is so aggravating as calmness.
-- Oscar Wilde