

checking his facts and certainly without avoiding saying something stupid.

But I am digressing. Anyway, this computer company is advertising on CNN and they want to impress you with their computer technology.

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They say everybody has the same technology in business. Everybody is making the same technological leaps. But with their product you can stop playing leapfrog and start playing "quantum leapfrog." The idea is that making a quantum leap is a good thing, I guess. Well, you do hear that expression a lot. This is a "quantum leap" of improvement. And it sure sounds good, doesn't it? Well, what actually is a quantum leap? Well, it is actually a leap in an energy level. It seems there is a certain granularity in the energy levels of a particle. Every energy level leap is some whole number multiple of the tiniest possible leap. And guess what we call the smallest possible leap, the leap that is so small it is almost undetectable as a change at all? That is a "quantum leap." When somebody tells you they are going to give you a quantum leap, they are saying they are going to do the minimum for you that is possible. Which you probably knew already, but heck, I bet they don't know they are being so up-front about it. Many of you know that stuff about quantum leaps already, of course (well, don't you?), but the rising tide of ignorance, misinformation, and general unscientific rhetoric through which we daily swim is getting thicker. There is an ever-increasing population of Americans who think that "25 cents" and ".25 cents" are the same thing. In fact there are whole countries in Europe who don't have as many people in all as we have Americans who don't understand their own currency to the extent that that realize .25 cents is a quarter of a cent. (The convenience store near my home now features a vending machine that says "\$.25 cents.") And where will it all end? Mark my words it will not be long until MTV will be introducing characters called Beavis and Butthead, if it has not happened already.

2. IMPOSSIBLE THINGS by Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-

56436-6, 1994, \$5.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the new collection of Connie Willis stories.

Oh, that isn't enough to explain why you should run out and buy it?

How about the fact that the eleven stories here have collected seven Hugo nominations (with two wins) and five Nebula nominations (with three wins)?

Still waiting? Jeez, what a demanding audience.

Okay, for those of you who want hard science fiction, there's "Schwarzschild Radius." For horror fans, we have "Jack," a somewhat different look at the London Blitz. For the conspiracy theorists, there's "Winter's Tale," about who really wrote Shakespeare's plays. For those who are fed up with political

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correctness, try "Even the Queen" and "Ado." The former takes a somewhat non-standard approach to "women's liberation"; the latter says that at the rate we're going, "Winter's Tale" will become irrelevant. And for those who have ever attended a science fiction convention, "At the Rialto" will have a real ring of familiarity.

"Chance" and "Time Out" both deal with how we look at the past and lost opportunities, and both also reflect the perspective of the "housewife," a term that Willis has often applied to herself. "In the Late Cretaceous" displays her knowledge of the world of academia (as do many of the other stories as well--the faults and foibles of our education system seem to be a recurring theme in Willis's work). And "The Last of the Winnebagos" and "Spice Pogrom" round out the line-up.

If it seems that eleven stories isn't very much for 496 pages, it's because Willis writes as many novellas and novelettes as she does short stories. Indeed, last year she was nominated for the Hugo in all three categories, a unique achievement. (In 1971, Harlan Ellison was nominated in both of the t_w_o short fiction categories that existed then, but no one other than Willis has hit three in a year.) And Willis seems to know which length to use for which

stories: her short stories never seem abrupt, nor her novellas padded.

I h i g h l y recommend I m p o s s i b l e T h i n g s. (Her previous collection, F i r e w a t c h, is supposed to be re-issued as well, and I recommend that also.)

3. ANNO-DRACULA by Kim Newman (Carroll & Graf, ISBN 0-88184-967-7, 1993, US\$21) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

What if Van Helsing had not been successful and Dracula had survived and gone on to marry Queen Victoria? Okay, it sounded like an unlikely premise, but let's face it: those readers who can't accept the premise aren't going to read the book in the first place.

Newman has postulated a London split into two factions: the undead and the "warm." Gradually the undead--now living openly--are taking over society. Those who speak or act against them are sent to concentration camps or impaled upon stakes. Sherlock Holmes, for example, has been incarcerated in Devil's Dyke on Sussex Downs. (I should warn Holmes fans who hear of this book that while Lestrade is a genuine character in the action, Holmes is merely mentioned a couple of times. And, no, Lestrade is not "the vampire Lestrade," as one wit suggested.) In addition to Dracula and Sherlock Holmes, we also have Dr. Moreau and Dr. Jekyll, as well as

Jack the Ripper and a plethora of vampires, both historical and fictional. All these well-known characters tend to get in the way of the story at times, which is actually quite engrossing without the "spot-the-reference" game. (The Jack the Ripper subplot is critical to the book, however.)

I initially picked this up because it was both an alternate history and a Sherlock Holmes novel, but its strengths lie in neither of those areas, but in its craftsmanship as a vampire novel in the spirit of Bram Stoker's D r a c u l a, as well as John Polidori's V a m p y r e

and James Malcolm Rymer's V_a_r_n_e_y_t_h_e_V_a_m_p_i_r_e. Its closest resemblance to a Sherlock Holmes story is in its capturing the feel of Victorian London, albeit a somewhat transformed Victorian London. If you find this description at all intriguing, I recommend you seek out A_n_n_o-_D_r_a_c_u_l_a.

4. A NIGHT IN THE LONESOME OCTOBER by Roger Zelazny with illustrations by Gahan Wilson (AvoNova, ISBN 0-688-12508-5, 1993, \$18) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I read this immediately after reading Kim Newman's A_n_n_o-_D_r_a_c_u_l_a, and two more different novels with a similar cast of characters are hard to conceive. A_n_n_o-_D_r_a_c_u_l_a had Count Dracula, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Moreau, Dr. Jekyll, Jack the Ripper, and so on; A_N_i_g_h_t_i_n_t_h_e_L_o_n_e_s_o_m_e_O_c_t_o_b_e_r has Count Dracula, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Frankenstein, Lawrence Talbot, Jack the Ripper, and so on. But where A_n_n_o-_D_r_a_c_u_l_a is a "realistic" novel of vampire control of Victorian London, A_N_i_g_h_t_i_n_t_h_e_L_o_n_e_s_o_m_e_O_c_t_o_b_e_r is a bizarre tale of a gathering in which some of the characters attempt to open a "doorway" to allow the Elder Gods to come to our world, and others attempt to keep the doorway closed. And it's narrated by Jack the Ripper's dog.

Unfortunately, I found it totally unengrossing. All the business of calculating the spot for the doorway seemed like padding, and most of the rest did too. Gahan Wilson is a very talented artist, but his illustrations did nothing for the story. The best thing about this book is probably James Warhola's great cover illustration. It's possible that reading this right after A_n_n_o-_D_r_a_c_u_l_a had me in the wrong frame of mind for it (it didn't "tickle the funnybone" the way the jacket promised at all), but I can't recommend this book.

5. HOUSEHOLD SAINTS (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: This tale of Magical Realism in post-WWII Little Italy tells the story of how a modern saint came to be born and how she lived. That plot could have been saccharine but tales of neighborhood life and different people's reactions to Teresa actually make this film a very watchable fantasy. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4)

If a miracle happened today, would we believe it? Would we explain it away? How would people react? That is the theme of Nancy Savoca's H_o_u_s_e_h_o_l_d_S_a_i_n_t_s. The story is about two generations of a family and takes place over twenty-one years or so. To aid in the suspension of disbelief the story is told in flashback as a neighborhood legend by an old Italian couple. The inner story starts around 1949, taking place in New York's Little Italy. Joseph Santangelo (played by Vincent D'Onofrio) wins Catherine Falconetti (Tracey Ullman) in a game of pinochle. But winning turns out to be one thing and collecting something else. It seems unlikely that these people would be married this way, but it seems the hand of some sort of fate is pushing them onward. The story dwells on their problems of home life: Joseph's superstitious mother (Judith Malina) hates her daughter-in-law; Catherine's brother is bewitched and obsessed by Puccini's M_a_d_a_m_e_B_u_t_t_e_r_f_l_y and devotes his life to getting a wife who Japanese or Chinese--a distinction of which he is unaware. Yet all of this seems directed toward getting Teresa Santangelo born or forming her saintly character. As a young girl (Rachael Bella; older she is played by homely but angelic Lili Taylor) she sees John Brahm's T_h_e_M_i_r_a_c_l_e_o_f_O_u_r_L_a_d_y_o_f_F_a_t_i_m_a and decides to devote her life to being like the saint in that film. The film then follows the first eighteen years of the life of the woman who may or may not be a saint.

This is a slow and atmospheric film that takes a long time to develop its story, but getting to the main story is as interesting as being there. There are details of life in Little Italy told with a sort of magical realism. In humorous contrast to films that focus in on the details of sumptuous meals, here we see the meal that an inexperienced Catherine makes under protest. In spite of the best intentions inexperience dominates and for once an Italian meal on screen looks less than totally appetizing.

Perhaps central to the story is the examination of three kinds of faith represented by three generations of Santangelo women. For Teresa's grandmother faith seems entwined with the dark superstitions of the old country. Catherine found faith later in life, frightened into it by her mother-in-law, and her faith is thin. Teresa's faith is innocent and pure and it is spurred by mystical visions perhaps from neurosis induced by her upbringing, or perhaps they are genuine miraculous events. And each woman responds to life differently--each somewhat strangely--based on her own brand of faith.

While I am personally skeptical about the existence of true saints, I found that if I went with the flow and thought of this as a fantasy film, there was more than enough to keep me interested here both in an exploration into a religious viewpoint and as a window onto the community in Little Italy. My rating would be a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

6. GERONIMO: AN AMERICAN LEGEND (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: In spite of the presence of Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall, this is a bland telling of Geronimo's last uprising. While all the major characters were real people, there are major lapses in historical accuracy. At least it does not fall into the trap of making the Indians all saints and military all bad. Rating +1 (-4 to +4).

I think that the most positive thing I can say about G_e_r_o_n_i_m_o is that it trusts the viewer. It shows historical events and it trusts the audience to make the right decision about who was right and who was wrong. That sounds like a small thing, but it was more than you got from films like D_a_n_c_e_s_w_i_t_h_W_o_l_v_e_s, T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t, or, on another continent, G_a_n_d_h_i. So often when a film shows the old establishment as wrong, it shows everybody who sided with or worked for that establishment as being totally reprehensible. I doubt that anybody can see G_e_r_o_n_i_m_o and not come away with the belief that a great injustice was done to the Chiricahua Apache. But many of the whites in this film are compassionate toward the Indians. And not all of the Indians agree with each other about their relations with the whites. Most of the people in this film are a bit bewildered about what is happening and are ambivalent about United States Government policies toward Indians. As an example, Robert Duvall as an army scout professes his hatred of the Indian in the early parts of the film, but it becomes clear later in the film that underneath the surface he respects Indians and is also indignant over injustices done to them. While other aspects of

this film are not so well handled, the complexity of characters is a change from the pre-digested Political Correctness we often see in films of this sort. However, the film does twist facts to make it a more salable quantity.

The story, as narrated by Lt. Britton Davis (Matt Damon) is not a full biography of Geronimo, but only covers about five years and Geronimo's last uprising, 1881-1886. At the beginning of the film Geronimo (Wes Studi) is already a living legend, but he now wants peace and is willing to turn himself over to the cavalry and settle into life at the reservation. But when an Indian holy man is killed in the incident at Cibicue Creek that led to a battle

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killling several whites, Geronimo (who is present at the incident) decides to break his agreement and head for Mexico. The film covers two expeditions to apprehend Geronimo and his final surrender.

A major component of this film is the beautiful near-desert vistas that serve as a backdrop of many of the scenes. Here also you should take what you are seeing with a grain of salt. The actual terrain over which Geronimo ranged, particularly around Tombstone, Fort Thomas, and Fort Bowie does not look at all as majestic with few of the buttes and other rock formations that we see with most of this film. You find those a little further north in Monument Valley and in Utah, the latter being where the exteriors were filmed. Real "Geronimo territory" is flat or hilly with sand and scrub.

The film is based on a story by John Milius, who also co-authored the script, and that leaves some latitude for fictionalizing.

While the film is supposedly narrated by Davis, it is clearly not based on or even consistent with the real Britton Davis' book about these incidents, T_h_e_T_r_u_t_h_a_b_o_u_t_G_e_r_o_n_i_m_o. Do not take much of

this film as actual history. Geronimo was no place near the Cibicue Creek battle. In real life the incident happened mostly to White Mountain Apaches, though there were a few Chiricahuas present at the time. The two different tribes of the Apache nation did not even like each other more often than not. Chiricahuas did not get

on well with Jicarilla Apaches, Mescalero Apaches, or White Mountain Apaches. Geronimo's breakout was only very indirectly related to the battle of Cibicue Creek. Following Cibicue there was a large buildup in white military force in the area and this buildup of power is probably what frightened Geronimo off the reservation about a month later. Britton Davis greatly respects Geronimo in the film, while the real Davis called Geronimo "a thoroughly vicious, intractable, and treacherous man." He also called the Apaches "wild, intractable, and resentful of restraint." In that book the real Davis had a different point of view both on the campaign against Geronimo and on the warrior himself. Also Davis did not go into Mexico under the command of Miles, as it is shown in the film, and did not participate in the final surrender of Geronimo. If truth be known, other tribes and even other Apaches considered Geronimo a loose cannon and an uncontrollable terrorist. His campaign against the whites probably put him on the side of some justice, but not for what anyone would really consider the right reasons. As for Britton Davis resigning the army in indignation over its policies against the Indians, that too is total invention. Davis resigned because he got a better job offer and did not like army life. So much of this film really is a very inaccurate account of what took place in history, even if it does cover many real events and characters. This is a very distorted view to make history seem to support the Millius' wishful interpretation.

_ G_ e_ r_ o_ n_ i_ m_ o suffers a great deal by comparison to the recent
_ G_ e_ t_ t_ y_ s_ b_ u_ r_ g. _ G_ e_ r_ o_ n_ i_ m_ o's history is not nearly as accurate
and at

the same time _ G_ e_ t_ t_ y_ s_ b_ u_ r_ g's characters were a good deal more interesting. The lead is Jason Patric as Lt. Charles Gatewood. Patric is a good deal too handsome and is not nearly as formal-looking or gaunt as the real Gatewood. And he lacks the real Gatewood's thick moustache. The film wants you to sympathize with his point of view, and has chosen to make him heart-throb handsome rather than to go the extra step to make him look like the real Gatewood's photographs. But Patric is pretty good at horsemanship. Gene Hackman also fails to capture the look of his character. General Crook wore a bushy forked beard that gave the impression of one full beard going off to the right and one to the left.

Director Walter Hill probably decided that the real beard would upstage the actor. Under Hill's flat direction, only Studi seems to project any screen presence at all. The historic Geronimo had a perpetual scowl on his face and Studi is one of the few Indian actors who really looks the part. Ry Cooder's score, using Indian themes, may conjure up an emotional response in people who know more about Indian music than I do, but for me it conveyed very little of the feeling that was called for.

_ G_ e_ r_ o_ n_ i_ m_ o: _ A_ n_ A_ m_ e_ r_ i_ c_ a_ n_ L_ e_ g_ e_ n_ d_ is
generally accurate to history while
still twisting events to support a predetermined set of conclusions. It is more fair to both sides than it might have been, but it still is a lackluster piece of storytelling. I give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

7. Since many of the regular attendees at meetings have moved to Middletown, future meetings have been moved to a Middletown room (1R-400C so far, which we have asked to be given for all meetings if possible). If there are still enough people in Holmdel who wish to schedule meetings there as well, just let us know to announce them. Obviously, if other locations want meetings there, that's great (maybe Dundee, Scotland, or Birmingham, England?). [-ecl]

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Ignorance and superstition ever bear a close and mathematical relation to each other.

-- James Fenimore Cooper