

REVIEW OF *DOOMSDAY BOOK*

It's hard to describe Connie Willis's writing without using the word "charming". *Doomsday Book* has that aspect in common with *To Say Nothing of the Dog* (which I read and enjoyed years ago). But it also has a strange mashup of tones that I appreciated: what starts as a farce develops slowly into a heavy tragedy.

I think something important about the human experience is captured by the way most of the book's loose ends are resolved, or rather, not resolved. Gilchrist never has to face up to the recklessness of his actions, because the virus kills him. The search for Basingame never matters, because events run their course before he's found. Imeyne dies of the plague before her tendency to be aggressive and suspicious can cause any further damage. Eliwys never has to explain her affair with Gawyn to her husband, nor is there any dramatic end to that affair; they don't even realize when they're seeing each other for the last time. Agnes and Rosemund never see nor hear news of their father again. Rosemund's untimely death renders her dread of marrying Sir Bloet a moot point. The plague brushes aside all plans, tramples all other concerns, brings an abrupt (though also torturously slow) end to everything.