

Popular culture analysis

Sociology



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Popular Culture Analysis In writing a cultural analysis of popular culture, I have decided to look into the science fiction genre as represented by the novel “ To Say Nothing of the Dog” by Nebula prize winning and SFWA Grand Master award winner Connie Willis. In my opinion, the aforementioned book, which was written in 1998 became an excellent predictor of the forthcoming 21st century society which at the time could only be imagined. The reality that we now face though, the fact that some of her fictional ideas have actually seen reality or relevance in our current century and world proves that sci-fi writers have an uncanny, Nostradamus like ability within themselves. Willis is an American born author who was born on the eve of the New Year in 1945 (December 31, 1945). Owing to her highly imaginative future setting novels, one can only wonder if her being born on the verge of the New Year had anything to do with that uncanny ability of hers. She has been a prolific science fiction writer since the 1980's and is the recipient of numerous awards in the genre. From 10 Hugo Awards to 6 Nebula Awards, this author is predestined to become one of the most impressive sci-fi writers of her generation. A resident of Greeley, Colorado, she lives with her husband Courtney who is Physics professor at the University of Northern Colorado. Their union was blessed with a daughter named Cordelia (Good Reads “ Connie Willis”). Most of Mrs. Willis' novels involve time travel by sometimes bungling historians who tend to end up getting mixed up in time paradoxes and in effect, end up changing what at that particular point in time in the past, is actually the future. Her characters are mostly British in origin and usually work for the University of Oxford. Her Hugo winning novel “ To Say Nothing of the Dog” is one such work of fiction. Science fiction is normally presented in such a serious manner by her predecessors Jack

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Williamson, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Ray Bradbury (“An Update From Connie in Regards to The Grand Master Award”) that most people tend to think of sci-fi novels as over your head and highly intellectual pieces of work. Mrs. Willis however tends to not take her stories too seriously thus allowing her readers to experience a comedic element in her writing style. She usually accomplishes this by placing her time traveling scientists in odd positions such as the retrieval of something only recognized as The Bishop's Bird Stump in *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, a key element in a story that has her main character Ned Henry traveling through time in order to get the artifact across The Net in time for the blessing of a Cathedral in an era where religion has lost its relevance and churches are located in shopping malls. Having a church in the mall and the discussion about the relevance of religion must sound familiar to some of us by now isn't it? “*To Say Nothing of the Dog*” has a tremendous following among the fans of Mrs. Willis' work and is considered to be one of her finest comedic writing triumphs. The novel tackles themes of relevance that most of the readers of the book manage to identify with. It is perhaps this constant relevance to modern times that has kept the novel as a fan favorite over the decades. Covering relevant themes such as free will vs. determinism, the novel begs the readers to wonder as to whether everything that we do in life and every action that we take are movements based upon a conscious decision or, if there truly is something known as fate that determines our future and we are merely pawns that follow that path to completion. It discusses the relevance of things that we believe in now and the existence of certain traditions in relation to its relevance to the future development of our society (Shulman, Christina “*To Say Nothing of the Dog*”). As it is, the novel has already accurately predicted

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the slow irrelevance of religion in the everyday lives of the public and having a religious mass celebrated in the middle of a shopping mall has also become a real part of our current lives. Life imitating art? Or a fictional prediction becoming a reality? Thus the novel becomes a challenger of all the traditions and values that we currently hold near, dear, and true to our lives at present. Religion is a belief that most people today still cling to as a part of their development as human beings and provides the people with a solid belief structure to anchor their lives upon. However, with the advancements in science that continue to prove religion to be nothing but a control mechanism of certain religious orders, people have been losing their faith in religion. An act that has caused the slow demise of certain church sectors and beliefs. Indeed, religion is fast losing its relevance in the 21st century as discussed in what was an almost factual manner in the book. Perhaps the existence of the book in 1998 had some influence over the way that a new generation of people viewed religion and its relevance to our current society. Maybe it was the key by which our society came to realize that religious factions were trying to control the free will of the people. The novel most likely also proved an influence in the way that people seem to now choose to believe that nobody is predestined for anything because free will does exist and determinism can be altered by our current actions. That I believe, is the true influence of the book "To Say Nothing of the Dog" by Connie Willis has had on our current popular culture. Works Cited N. A. "An Update From Connie in Regards to the Grand Master Award". Connie Willis. net. sftv. org. 17 Jan. 2012. Web. 18 Apr. 2012. N. A. "Connie Willis". goodreads. goodreads. com. n. d. Web. 16 Apr. 2012. Schulman, Christina. "To Say Nothing of the Dog". Epiphyte Book Review. ephiphyte. net. Jan. <https://assignbuster.com/popular-culture-analysis/>

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