

is giving way to the inevitable. Our next event--assuming our management does not get wind of it and objects--is going to be a shameless swap of books. Right on company premises!!! Come and watch what the 90s have brought us. See people making fools of themselves with come-on lines like "I'm a Capricorn, are you a

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Libro?" You can even participate if you like. The scene of this action is Middletown room 1R-400C (follow the signs for the "Teleconferencing Center"); the time is noon on Wednesday, January 26. It's a date.

2. HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-09248-0, 1994, 336pp, US\$22.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Robert Silverberg's last two solo novels (T_h_e_F_a_c_e_o_f_t_h_e_W_a_t_e_r_s and K_i_n_g_d_o_m_s_o_f_t_h_e_W_a_l_l) take place on alien worlds. H_o_t_S_k_y_a_t_M_i_d_n_i_g_h_t takes place on Earth (and an orbiting space habitat) and is definitely a return to the more familiar setting--Silverberg even has a large part of the action taking place in the San Francisco Bay area, his current home. But the world of H_o_t_S_k_y_a_t_M_i_d_n_i_g_h_t is not completely familiar--we are thrust into a future in which many of the ecological disasters which have been predicted have come to pass. The ozone layer is destroyed, the air is unbreathable without masks and filters, there are deserts where now there is fertile land, and vice versa, and San Francisco and Los Angeles are reduced to towing in icebergs for their water supply.

In this world, Paul Carpenter is a "salaryman" for a multi-national corporation who takes on any job assigned with the help of advanced learning techniques. His friend Nick Rhodes is a genetic engineer who is on the verge of developing new techniques to modify humanity to survive in this new environment. Also a major character is Farkas, a man who had been genetically engineered as a fetus by a renegade scientist: he has no eyes but has instead some other sense corresponding to sight which could prove valuable in space travel.

Silverberg is too careful a craftsman for the names "Carpenter" and "Nick" to be accidental. Unlike the Biblical view of their predecessors, both these characters have their good sides and their evil sides. Carpenter is taken into the desert (symbolically) and tested--he doesn't do so well this time around. Nick is not giving humanity a huge change in their mental state, but rather in their physical state.

I'm not sure all the futuristic elements--space stations, multi-nationals with lifetime employment, environmental disasters, and so on--fit together entirely consistently, but Silverberg makes it at least plausible for the duration of the story. H_o_t_S_k_y_a_t_M_i_d_n_i_g_h_t has a lot of ideas, not the least of which is "if we modify ourselves to live in a very different environment, are we still human?" The spy plot seems at times overdone, but on the whole this book is worth a read.

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3. BY ANY OTHER FAME edited by Mike Resnick and Martin H. Greenberg (DAW, ISBN 0-88677-594-9, 1994, 316pp, US\$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I like to read alternate histories. Many people use the terms "alternate history," "alternate universe/world," and "parallel universe/world" interchangeably, but they are not the same. Alternate histories are about history. Maybe I'm just being contentious, but a re-telling of T_h_e_M_a_l_t_e_s_e_F_a_l_c_o_n with Gypsy Rose Lee as the detective is not, to my mind, about history.

Now to be fair, I should say that B_y_A_n_y_O_t_h_e_r_F_a_m_e is not billed as an anthology of alternate history stories. It's billed as an anthology of "23 alternate futures of the world's most famous and infamous celebrities"--a description equally inaccurate, since almost all of the stories are set in the past. DAW's back-cover label of them as "What if?" stories is more accurate, though the fact that Golda Meir's name is misspelled in the blurb suggests that accuracy is not a high priority there in any case.

Given, therefore, that I read alternate history stories for the historical content, I have to say that I found B_y_A_n_y_O_t_h_e_r_F_a_m_e disappointing. The best story--and perhaps even the only good story--is Kristine Katheryn Rusch's "Sinner-Saints," about Lillian Hellman, Dashiell Hammett, and the House Un-American Activities Committee with-hunts of the 1950s. There's history, there's characterization, there's meat--all missing from most of the other stories. The only other story I enjoyed was "A Bubble for a Minute" by Dean Wesley Smith, in which the main character discovers that history may not be what it seems, and that it's far from dead. It uses an old idea, but Smith executes it well. (The same idea is used by Janet Kagan in "Space Cadet," which immediately follows "A Bubble for a Minute"--very poor placement in my opinion, since it forces the reader to compare the two. Kagan's piece also strikes me as derivative of Pamela Sargent's "Danny Goes to Mars" and has the same mean-spiritedness of the latter. I am no fan of the main character of these stories, but I still see the stories as somewhat childish attacks.)

Twelve stories--more than half the stories in the book--center around Hollywood stars or other figures in the entertainment industry. And too many of them have not just one person following a different path, but several, and for apparently unrelated causes. Where is Occam's Razor when you need it? Also too prevalent are familiar stories retold with other participants (e.g., Gypsy Rose Lee in "The Fifteen-Minute Falcon" and Amelia Earhart in "The D_e_f_i_a_n_t Disaster"). Laura Resnick's "Under a Sky More Fiercely Blue" has at least some relation to history, as does Michelle Sagara's "Four Attempts at a Letter" (though this is more musings

on an alternate event than the possible outcomes of it) and Barry N. Malzberg's "Hitler at Nuremberg."

I suppose the cover illustration (Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Humphrey Bogart, and film sprockets) should have given me a clue, but I have to say I found this a disappointing anthology and hope that Resnick's future "alternate" anthologies go back to the history part. When they focus on history, they're some of the best around. (It's also true that his more historical ones seem to have been done for Tor, so it may be that he has different types of

anthologies for different publishers. It is true that Resnick seems to have suggested topics to the authors for many of the stories, so perhaps he was aiming for something less historical here.)

4. IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: This is the true story of the victims of a conspiracy by British police to scapegoat eleven innocent people, many from a single family, for an IRA bombing. The main character spent fifteen years in prison before an enterprising lawyer uncovered the conspiracy and was able to overturn the conviction. Pete Postlethwaite is particularly effective as the main character's father who is imprisoned in the same cell as his son. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4).

In 1974 eleven people from Belfast were sentenced to prison for an IRA bombing of a Surrey pub--four charged with the bombing itself, seven with complicity. Fifteen years later that conviction was proven in court to be a gross miscarriage of justice. Though this conviction could not have been obtained without a conspiracy to subvert justice and knowingly to scapegoat innocent people, the British government has yet to acknowledge wrong-doing. I_n_t_h_e_N_a_m_e_o_f_t_h_e_F_a_t_h_e_r tells the whole story of one of the men falsely imprisoned from his background several months before the bombing to his eventual exoneration. Daniel Day-Lewis plays Gerry Conlon, a petty thief who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and is railroaded to prison along with several members of his family. Gerry, who has never been able to get along with his stern father Giuseppe (Pete Postlethwaite), finds he now must share not a house but a small cell with that father. Where the film could have bogged down as standard prison movie fare we find an engrossing father-son relationship that gives more meaning and poignancy to the court proceedings that will eventually clear the names of both father and son. The insertion of this father-son theme would seem contrived in a fictional account, but since it is true, the film

uses it well.

It almost goes without saying that Daniel Day-Lewis's performance turns in a good performance. He is a first rank actor. Surprisingly, Emma Thompson is considerably less memorable in a script that does not use her considerable acting ability. The real surprise is Pete Postlethwaite as Guiseppe. He had roles in A_l_i_e_n_3, H_a_m_l_e_t, W_a_t_e_r_l_a_n_d and with Day-Lewis in T_h_e_L_a_s_t_o_f_t_h_e_M_o_h_i_c_a_n_s, but none was particularly memorable. This film may be a breakthrough for him as a man of character and older values trying to impart those values to his son. The relationship that the two are able to forge only when locked in together is one of the most moving features of the film.

Jim Sheridan, who previously directed Daniel Day-Lewis in M_y_L_e_f_t_F_o_o_t, both directed and co-wrote the screenplay. Even though the film is 132 minutes, it tells a complete story and never bogs down. Instead it gets more engrossing as we come to see more of the pain inflicted by the miscarriage the degree of wrong-doing on the part of the police. By the end of the film Sheridan has really roused the passions of the audience.

This is a well-crafted film in all regards. While self-critical British films are not really a rarity, this is probably among the most powerful. I would give this film a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale and will almost definitely include it among the top ten films of 1993.

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

Capsule review: This film has a muddled job of directing and a muddled script. One often has the feeling that Demme is trying to say something that isn't quite coming across. The subject of AIDS is brought down to a shallow courtroom melodrama. This film has little to offer beyond Hanks' performance. Wait for A_n_d_t_h_e_B_a_n_d_P_l_a_y_e_d_O_n to come to video.
Rating: 0 (-4 to +4)

Andrew Beckett (played by Tom Hanks) is a successful lawyer for a prestigious Philadelphia law firm. He is clearly something of a hotshot whom his firm has working for lucrative clients. He also is gay and discovers that he has AIDS. When the first visible signs of his disease appear he is fired over an alleged incident of incompetence. He decides to sue his former firm for wrongful dismissal. The only lawyer he can get is a flashy ambulance-chaser who is also an anti-gay bigot, Joe Miller, played by Denzel Washington. These two little-guys take on the big-guy law firm and

the result is the predictable courtroom battle which becomes a major media event. Beckett and Miller must slug it out with the legal giant in a courtroom battle that Beckett may not live to see resolved.

While the story is only too straightforward, the telling is not. The script by Ron Nyswaner has the feel of a stage play adapted to the screen without sufficient consideration for the differences in the medium. The story will jump forward six weeks and then jump to a flashback to show events that took place in that time. At one point the evil law firm seems to have dug up information that only Hanks and one of his lovers would have known, but there is no explanation of how they know what they know. Yet with such a good case they make damaging admissions on the witness stand without any thought of the reaction.

There are major dramatic scenes that we would expect to see but which are omitted. We never see Beckett's immediate reaction to being told he has AIDS, yet Demme takes screen time to give us an extended montage of street scenes of Philadelphia and a helicopter ride around the rooftop statue of William Penn. Equally out of place is Hanks' extended and melodramatic description of the beautiful aria "La Mamma Morta" from the third act of Catalani's A_n_d_r_e_a_C_h_e_n_i_e_r. It is shot from odd angles at Hanks--Demme seems to use a lot of strange camera angles in this film, bathed melodramatically in red light from an unknown source. Apparently Director Jonathan Demme needed show Beckett was a man of deep passion while at the same time not risking showing on the screen Beckett's passion for his lover Miguel, played by Antonio Banderas. In fact, there is virtually nothing in the film about Beckett's private gay life, though we get to see a lot of his biological family and the love and support he gets from his mother, played by Joanne Woodward.

Tom Hanks will probably be considered at Oscar time, though his performance owes a good deal to his makeup artist. Still his performance was at least decent. Neither Jason Robards, as the head of the law firm, nor Denzel Washington seemed to be bringing much to their roles to distinguish this performance from any of their others. Joanne Woodward is given about four scenes and may

well be present only to lend her moral support to the production.

I suppose that Demme should be lauded for making a major Hollywood

film on the subject of AIDS, but _ P _ h _ i _ l _ a _ d _ e _ l _ p _ h _ i _ a pales beside

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_ P _ l _ a _ y _ e _ d _ O _ n. The best of

intentions clearly went at least somewhat awry. My rating would be
a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Mark Leeper

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