

Ms. Fowler's rather eccentric--though pristinely politically correct--interpretation of the history of this period. We see a slice of history like it is not taught in the traditional history books. White menfolk sit around spitting and complain about uppity women while far-seeing women worry about sexual equality in

marriage. Then there is a priceless proto-scientist whose view of the world is entirely framed by his bigotry. The story is well-written and entertaining which perhaps makes it all the more insidious. A rather odd choice for a Nebula nominee.

2. There is a scene in the film W_h_i_t_e_M_e_n_C_a_n't_J_u_m_p that had me a little puzzled. The main character's significant other tells him that she is thirsty. He gets up and gets her a glass of water. She turns on him as being insensitive. Why does he feel he has to solve her problems? What he should have done was tell her, "I too have been thirsty." Where is that coming from? Well, I just found out there is a terrific book called Y_o_u_J_u_s_t_D_o_n't_U_n_d_e_r_s_t_a_n_d by Deborah Tannen. It makes clear the gender differences in communication. Its thesis is that men and women communicate differently and have different expectations from conversation. Silly me, I thought that no two people communicate alike. When Tannen says men communicate this one way and women communicate this other way, it strikes me as a very broad generalization. Gee, now that I think about it, isn't it sometimes considered bad form to say that all women have this characteristic and all men have that characteristic? I guess there must be good stereotyping and bad stereotyping.

Anyway, Tannen says that when a woman says she has a problem, she is looking for empathy. It is empathy that is nourishing to her. Men go in and take a superior position. They try to go in and solve the problem. Being a problem solver puts the man in a position of being "one-up." That is being unfair to the woman. Now Evelyn heard this and dubbed it "hooey!" We use the word "hooey" in conversation a lot because we are too refined to refer constantly to bovine leavings. Evelyn dubbed this "hooey" but as a

woman she may have been hearing it differently than I was. Besides, I am not sure I am allowed to call this idea hoey. It would not be politically correct and I would be in serious danger of destroying my well-known image of being a sensitive, New-Age kind of guy.

So I intend to bow to the pressure. Henceforth at work I will be much more sensitive. When a man complains to me about a problem, I will do my level best to solve the problem. When a woman reports a problem, I won't try to solve it (which would make her feel I had one-upped her). Instead I will sympathize and emotionally nurture her and above all I will make no attempt to solve the problem. And the world will be a better place.

3. THE BROKEN LAND by Ian McDonald (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-37054-5, 1992, \$10) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper): T_h_e_B_r_o_k_e_n_L_a_n_d is a well-written book, but the parallels between the land of the book and modern Ireland are s_o obvious that I found myself groaning more often than being enlightened. The Confessors/Proclaimers parallel to the Catholics/Protestants was bad enough, but when the Confessors gain independence for the land except for the "nine northern prefectures," I came very close to hurling the book at the wall. Frequently I felt that the parallels were closer to puns in some literary sense than to a way to look at an old situation from fresh eyes. This might work in a humorous novel, but T_h_e_B_r_o_k_e_n_L_a_n_d is not humorous. It is an accurate story of what happens in a land torn apart by religious (or racial, or ethnic) strife. This subject is certainly topical (alas), but the precise parallels of the problem to Ireland make the book lose the universal quality that it could have had. It is not surprising that McDonald writes about Ireland, and writes well, as his earlier K_i_n_g_o_f_M_o_r_n_i_n_g,_Q_u_e_e_n_o_f_D_a_y proves, but he can also write very well in a multi-ethnic, non-specific milieu (see his S_p_e_a_k_i_n_g_i_n_T_o_n_g_u_e_s collection and his D_e_s_o_l_a_t_i_o_n_R_o_a_d), and this makes this book particularly disappointing. For someone who knew nothing of Ireland, this would be an excellent book, but as it stands, its

total obviousness and specificity makes this the first Ian McDonald book of the four I've read that I can't recommend.

4. HARM'S WAY by Colin Greenland (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-76883-6, 1993, \$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper): As W_i_n_t_e_r'_s D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r by Charles Whitmore was science fiction written in the style of a Norse saga, so is H_a_r_m'_s W_a_y written in the style of a Victorian novel (though I would call it science fantasy rather than science fiction). We have the poor, semi-orphaned girl who leaves home, has adventures, meets all sorts of people, and eventually discovers her true identity. H_a_r_m'_s W_a_y is set on what is apparently an alternate Victorian-era Earth, an alternate in which at some point between Defoe and Victoria, space flight was developed (using what appear to be typical large sailing ships of that era in our time in their appointments), and all sorts of alien races inhabiting the solar system were discovered. (I place the "change-point" after Defoe, because in a world of space flight, the sense of isolated parts of the earth that Defoe depended on in R_o_b_i_n_s_o_n C_r_u_s_o_e would no longer have been there.) How any of this happened is never discussed, and with the exception of space flight and weaponry the society is technologically at the Victorian level. The result is extremely disorienting--we never know what to expect from the society because it is s_o inconsistent. H_a_r_m'_s W_a_y is an interesting stylistic experiment, but not one I can actually recommend.

5. EINSTEIN'S DREAMS by Alan Lightman (Pantheon, ISBN 0-679-41646-3, 1993, \$17) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper): Remember this novella at Hugo time.

Yes, it is a novella (at about 36,000 words), but there are more ideas here than in most novels three times as long. That what E_i_n_s_t_e_i_n'_s D_r_e_a_m_s is, in fact, about: ideas. Presented as a series of dreams dreamt by Einstein as he is formulating his theory of

relativity, each chapter is a short synopsis of one view of time or one way time might be different. In one, cause may follow effect as easily as precede it; in another, time flows at different rates in different villages; in yet another, people live forever. With only about six hundred words each, Lightman conveys the feeling of what it would be like to live in such a universe. Although he is a scientist by profession, he does not focus so much on the physical effects of the various possibilities as on their effect on the emotional and psychological state of the people who inhabit those strange (and some not so strange) universes. Some are totally impossible, but others may in some sense be our own world.

For those interested in science and for those interested in philosophy, this book has a lot to chew on. I highly recommend it.

6. ALTERNATE WARRIORS edited by Mike Resnick (Tor, ISBN 0-812-52346-6, 1993, \$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Well, it's another Mike Resnick alternate history extravaganza. While I enjoyed the first two (Alternate Presidents and Alternate Kennedys), I found this one a disappointment. Maybe it's the focus. There seems to be a subgenre of science fiction these days that concentrates on the military, the bellicose, and the violent. Some of it is well-written, I know (Lois McMaster Bujold does a good job), but on the whole the category leaves me cold. (The claim has been made that this category is aimed at adolescent boys of all ages, so I'm sure some will say that's why I find it usually dull and often offensive in its glorification of battle, but there you have it.) Only the alternate history aspect of this anthology made it intriguing to me, and I found that part was often a let-down. Why? Well, let's see.

First, though, let me talk about the best stories. "The Arrival of Truth" by Kristine Kathryn Rusch is told in the first person by a slave in an alternate antebellum South in which one could take literally the saying, "And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." It's a human story, full of love and pain, and as the final story, a fitting cap to the theme. Beth Meacham's

"One by One" is a tale of an alternate America where Tecumseh helped the British win the Battle of Detroit and the result was that the Shawnee held out successfully against the white incursion. Now a divided United States finds itself in a race war. Meacham does an excellent job of showing the conflicts between the Shawnee and the white people in a country where neither side could claim its complete superiority by conquest. And Barry N. Malzberg's "Fugato" is a very unusual--and compelling look into an alternate Leonard Bernstein finding in France during World War II. The most complex piece in the book, it demands more attention than the stories around it, and may catch you off-guard if you don't expect it--sort of like jumping six-inch hurdles and suddenly coming up on a two-footer.

Some of the stories don't seem to be real alternate histories in a strict sense. Resnick's own "Mwalimu in the Squared Circle" is an interesting character study, but there is no hint of anything changing in the world because of Nyerere's decision. Kathe Koja's "Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard" doesn't even seem to be alternate history (at least based on everything I've read about Garcia Lorca). "The Battle of All Mothers" by Jack Nimersheim is an unlikely future for Mother Teresa but not an alternate history, and his "Mind over Matter" is similarly an unlikely future for Stephen Hawking. "The Cold Warrior" by Jack C. Haldeman II is a secret history of Marilyn Monroe rather than an alternate history.

Other stories are clearly intended to be just plain silly: George Alec Effinger's "Albert Schweitzer and the Treasures of Atlantis," Lea Hernandez's "Al Einstein--Nazi Smasher!," Josepha Sherman's "Monsieur Verne and the Martian Invasion, and David Gerrold's "The Firebringers." They were, in their own way, entertaining enough, but there's been too many of this sort of silly alternate history story lately, and these lack that spark that would make them stand out.

Some figures are more popular than others. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, shows up in both "Taking Action" by Lawrence Schimel (which has an interesting interpretation of affirmative action) and "Death of a Dream" by Jack C. Haldeman II (a more serious look at "what if?"). Popes also show up twice, in "The Vatican Outfit" by Laura Resnick (which maybe should have been in the silly category above) and "The Mark of the Angel" by Tappan King (this one is actually more a secret history than an alternate history as well). Other religious figures abound: Francis of Assisi in "...But the Sword!" by Anthony R. Lewis (interesting idea but told too much as a history lesson full of dates and battles than as a story with a character), Moses in Bill Fawcett's "Zealot," Thomas Becket (rendered variously as "Thomas Beket" and "Thomas Beckett" in the book, neither correct) in Michelle Sagara's "For Love of God," and (naturally) Jesus in Brad Linaweaver's "Unmerited Favor." It may be because the stories had to be about

"warriors," but all these seem to concentrate more on the fighting than on the religious or philosophical ideas inherent in the concepts. I enjoy religious alternate histories the best of all, because there is where one sees the most philosophy, but these lack that.

The remaining stories are less easily categorized. "Jane's Fighting Ships" by Esther M. Friesner has a cute idea (Jane Austen and Davey Crockett against Napoleon), but left me saying, "So what?" Or rather, thinking what an unlikely and unconvincing premise this was. In Michael P. Kube-McDowell's "Because Thou Lovest the Burning-Ground," Mohandas Gandhi takes another path (though not the rocket-launcher and Rambo look on the rather annoying cover--nor is the name "Mahatma" on the back-cover blurb accurate), and does have some interesting and accurate Indian history in it. (But then, Kube-McDowell usually does his research well.) I don't know my Egyptian history well enough to appreciate "Tut's Wife" by Maureen F. McHugh, and "Queen of Asia" by Judith Tarr similarly escapes me, though to a lesser degree. After "The Winterberry" in A l t e r n a t e K e n n e d y s, I found Nicholas A. DiChario's

"Extreme Feminism" disappointing and predictable. In "Jihad" by Mercedes Lackey, T. E. Lawrence becomes a different kind of warrior, but the story didn't make me care about any of it. Similarly, "A Sense of Loyalty, a Sense of Betrayal" by Brian Thomsen does nothing for me. If you are more interested in Sidney Reilly ("Ace of Spies"), you will probably enjoy it more. "Sam Clemens and the Notable Mare" by Mel. White borders on the silly. Barbara Delaplace's "Standing Firm" has Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill debating the Sudetenland; it's an alternate history, so we know what happens--but then the story ends. I want to see the effects of the change, not just the change itself. (This flaw occurs in other stories as well, but is the most obvious here.)

So there are three excellent stories (the Malzberg, the Rusch, and the Meacham) and several that are enjoyable enough for the moment.

But A l t e r n a t e W a r r i o r s is definitely not up to
A l t e r n a t e P r e s i d e n t s
 or A l t e r n a t e K e n n e d y s. (On the other hand, those two

anthologies

had three Hugo nominees between them, so this third volume had quite a reputation to try to live up to.) We'll have to see if Resnick's next alternate history anthology (either A l t e r n a t e O u t l a w s or B y A n y O t h e r F a m e) is an improvement.

7. THE AGE OF INNOCENCE (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: Martin Scorsese's adaptation of the Edith Wharton novel is like a beautiful, detailed painting of an entire period, yet it remains static

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and uninvolved. The characters seem to be all bland and mostly convention-bound. By the time we can work up any pathos for the principals, it is too late. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4).

Somehow one of the last things we would have expected from Martin Scorsese is a foray into the Merchant-Ivory territory of adapting the early-20th Century social novel. That is exactly the field he is entering with T h e A g e o f I n n o c e n c e, but his results are

of mixed quality. He has created a beautiful recreation of 1870s New York City high society and the bloodlessness that it required from its denizens, but in doing that so well, he has created characters that it is hard to care very much for and their story is considerably less engaging as a result.

The story is of a love triangle that flies in the face of the conventions of society. Daniel Day-Lewis plays Newland Archer, a handsome and intelligent young lawyer engaged to May Welland, a lovely childlike woman played by Winona Ryder. Newland meets and is struck by May's cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska (played by Michelle Pfeiffer). The Countess is rebounding from the scandal of having left her husband, a Polish Count, but upper-class society will not let her forget her past. Newland slowly realizes that he

really loves the countess and that she loves him, but he cannot decide if he is willing to fly in the face of convention. And for roughly two hours of screentime this latter-day Hamlet remains indecisive. Certainly things happen in that time, but this heart of the story does not advance until it is over.

What we get in that static two hours is a beautiful depiction of society in that time and place. Lavish detail shows us what parties were like, what food was eaten at lavish social dinners, what table arrangement there was, what the streets looked like (though many of the exteriors had unconvincing matte paintings that called attention to themselves). Watching this film reminded me a lot of my visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. A segment of society is perfectly preserved in this film.

The visuals, however, are almost unused in telling the story. This story is almost literally a novel on film. The story is told in words in dialog and narration. The narration is by Joanne Woodward, and is said to be a late enhancement to clarify the plotline after editing the film down to 136 minutes. In any case this is a film that genuinely requires concentration on the dialog and a good memory for character names. There are a lot of characters in the book and Jay Cocks and Martin Scorsese did not pare them down by many in the screenplay. The film boasts an impressive cast including Richard E. Grant, Alec McCowan, Geraldine Chaplin (could this be a sly nod to plot similarities in D_r._Z_h_i_v_a_g_o?), Mary Beth Hurt, Sian Phillips, Michael Gough, Alexis Smith, Jonathan Pryce, and Robert Sean Leonard.

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Notable also is another great opening credit sequence by the master photographer of such sequences, Saul Bass (and Elaine Bass). Saul Bass is the Michelangelo of film credit sequences.

There is a lot that works in T_h_e_A_g_e_o_f_I_n_n_o_c_e_n_c_e and a few very basic and important aspects that fail. This is an accurate adaptation of a classic novel not well suited to film adaptation. My rating would be a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

8. AND THE BAND PLAYED ON (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: HBO gives us the most important film of the year and also one of the most compelling. This is a detective story, a story of politics and sex, and has a terrific script and some very moving performances. It is unlikely you will find a more intelligent film this year. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4)

When Stanley Kramer made J_u_d_g_m_e_n_t_a_t_N_u_r_e_m_b_e_r_g, he reportedly had only a modest budget. And yet the film had a cast that can best be described as "star-studded." Actors who usually got high billing were willing to take tiny roles and were willing to be paid very modest salaries because the film had a political message. It told the story of the trial of the Nazis who had committed crimes against humanity in the Holocaust and telling that story was so important that actors put aside self-interest to be part of the project. In A_n_d_t_h_e_B_a_n_d_P_l_a_y_e_d_O_n you see a lot of well-known actors in very tiny roles. And films made for HBO generally do not have huge budgets. This film has itself become something of an event and actors want to be part of the statement it makes regardless of what they can be paid and what billing they can be given.

A_n_d_t_h_e_B_a_n_d_P_l_a_y_e_d_O_n would be an enthralling film even if it were pure fiction, which unfortunately it is not. It is the story of AIDS from 1976 before the first real breakout and continuing the story for about the next decade. It is the story of a disaster; it is the story of politics; it is a detective story; it is a story about prejudice; it is about courage and heroism and vanity; it's a horror story. The cliché is that it would make a great Hollywood film, but in reality Hollywood is making no more films like J_u_d_g_m_e_n_t_a_t_N_u_r_e_m_b_e_r_g and it takes someone like HBO with its captive audience to make a film like this. (Incidentally, HBO made last year's D_e_a_d_A_h_e_a_d, which has some resemblance to this film. D_e_a_d_A_h_e_a_d was not nearly as solid a film as A_n_d_t_h_e_B_a_n_d_P_l_a_y_e_d_O_n and I considered it one of the ten best films I saw last year. This would have to be one classic year for movies for A_n_d_t_h_e_B_a_n_d

_ P_ l_ a_ y_ e_ d_ O_ n not to make this year's top ten list.)

The film basically follows one doctor, Don Francis (played by Matthew Modine) from the very puzzling outbreak--people dying from diseases that usually strike only cats or sheep. Francis as part of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), joins a small team with incredibly insufficient funding slowly assembling the facts about this new disease. And facts they get, but they are facts that a lot of people do not want to hear. And in some cases facts are not available and suppositions must do. So a political element is added. And this is a hard-hitting film that uses the names of famous people, often not in a very positive light.

Of bad touches, there are very few. Glenne Headly does a reasonable job as Dr. Mary Guinan on the CDC team. She is a talented actress but I strongly suspect the real Mary Guinan would not have her Hollywood beauty. They did not feel the need to put in stunningly handsome men in major roles--unless it is Alan Alda as the self-aggrandizing Dr. Robert Gallo--but there is still the perception here that the audience needs to have a pretty face. That is the only serious aspect in which the filmmakers have underrated the audience. With that exception I commend Roger Spottiswoode for the direction and Arnold Schulman for an intelligent screenplay based on the book by Randy Shilts.

A reviewer always has a dilemma when a bad film is made in a good cause. Do you rate the film or the cause? Thank goodness HBO has made such a good film in this particular cause. I give it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

9. THE JOY LUCK CLUB (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: _ T_ h_ e_ J_ o_ y_ L_ u_ c_ k_ C_ l_ u_ b is the stories of four families that have migrated from mainland China in the last generation. It is the story of four mother-daughter relationships in the United States and the story of the four mothers' lives in repressive and sexist Chinese society. The stories are often heart-wrenching and often inspirational. If this is a woman's film, it at least is miles ahead of something like _ B_ e_ a_ c_ h_ e_ s. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4).

It is a party. Friends have gotten together in a celebration.

Several families are represented. The families are Chinese-American, though through inter-marriage not all the people present are Chinese. At the center of the party, four women play Mah Jong. They are the Joy Luck Club, originally four women from different

parts of China who found each other in the new country of the U. S. and have played together and talked for years. One of the original members died months ago and her daughter has replaced her. Each of the four families has a daughter who was born in this country; each has or had a mother who was born and raised in China. T_h_e_J_o_y_L_u_c_k_C_l_u_b is really an anthology film with four pairs of stories, each pair with the story of the mother's life in China and the story of the mother-daughter relationship in the new country. There is a beautiful symmetry in the eight stories. In each pair a single theme will run through the mother's story and the mother-daughter story. Each mother's story will show the hardship placed on women in a country bound by the ancient traditions that still live in China. They are traditions that are particularly hard on women, giving them little choice as to their fate. In the mother-daughter stories, each daughter faces, and of course overcomes, problems caused by freedom from the pre-set roles of the old country. So each pair of stories is also about the changes that go on in a family adapting to a very new way of life. It is a matrix of eight poignant stories woven into a single story. Bracketing the entire film is the story of June (played by Ming-Na Wen) who discovers early in the film that her mother did something bad in China, an act so terrible June does not understand it and one that calls on June to return to China on a mission that she is worrying about. Hanging over most of the film is the question of how June's mother Suyuan (Kieu Chinh) could have done what she did. Yet by the time the full story is revealed we have seen how different mainland Chinese culture is from our own and we will come to understand Suyuan's actions.

T_h_e_J_o_y_L_u_c_k_C_l_u_b is what used to be called "a woman's film." And a "crying film" at that. I will say in its defense that I liked it considerably more than my wife did. I think that the family conflicts I saw in the film are similar to conflicts I have seen in real families, but that Evelyn might have seen less of. Usually we do not see how really different life is in China even today. I

will defend the "crying film" aspect much in the same way I defended the same aspect of T_h_e_C_o_l_o_r_P_u_r_p_l_e. We are looking at very real stories of human misery and the cruelty in parts of this film. If a film that shows you that does not manipulate you and perhaps bring a tear to your eye, the film is broken. Or maybe you are broken. In any case we are talking about a culture that has extreme sexism by Western standards; it has forced marriages; it has terrible poverty. At least the stories are all fairly new and unfamiliar here, which already gives it a point above the recent T_h_e_W_e_d_d_i_n_g_B_a_n_q_u_e_t. One of the eight stories was in some ways reminiscent of R_a_i_s_e_t_h_e_R_e_d_L_a_n_t_e_r_n, but even there it had unexpected touches.

Visually the film brought back memories of China, and particularly the karst-dotted landscape near the Li River Valley and Guilin. The camera work by Amir Mokri is very beautiful when it needs to be

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and downbeat when that is what is called for. The film was directed by Wayne Wang from a screenplay by Any Tan (based on her novel) and Ronald Bass. The three shared production credits with Patrick Markey. T_h_e_J_o_y_L_u_c_k_C_l_u_b is one of several very good films that are coming out this autumn. I would rate it a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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Equality may perhaps be a right, but no power on earth
can ever turn it into a fact.

-- Honore de Balzac

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