

Well, November is coming and this year people are heaving a sigh of relief. Mid-June to mid-November marks the usual hurricane season. This year Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and many other islands in the Caribbean got clobbered very seriously. It will take five or six years to repair the damages and a lot will never be completely fixed. I live in Central New Jersey where we were hit by the Hurricane Sandy storm surge in 2012. We see daily reminders in the form of leaning trees and power company polls. We got no power for nine and a half days. That hit early November, just at the end of the season. They had to postpone Halloween Trick or Treating. For any of you affected by this year's storms I wish you good luck. All times listed are for people in the Eastern Time zone. Hope you make it okay.

As for recommendations for the month, this time I will start with the best, just to vary my style. Even so this is not a month with obvious best-film choices. Maybe I will pick as "the best film of the month" *THE FRONT* (1976).

THE FRONT is Martin Ritt's comedy/drama of how the Hollywood Blacklist did its damage. It destroyed careers, marriages, and upended entire lives. It also dragged down the quality of films. Some of the most talented filmmakers could not find work because of opinions they may or may not have once held most without ever breaking any laws. Woody Allen stars as a talentless nebbish who agrees to submit scripts actually written by a blacklisted friend. All around him are people whose careers were destroyed in the witch-hunts. Allen manages to bring some humor to the situation at the same time the subject matter is deadly serious. The film features writers and actors who were all blacklisted. It is difficult to make a film with comedy and with strong drama. Here it works very well. Those interested in this topic should look up the very fine film *TRUMBO*. [Tuesday, November 28, 8:00 PM]

An old favorite film of mine is *NO HIGHWAY IN THE SKY* (a.k.a. *NO HIGHWAY*) starring Jimmy Stewart. The film is based on a novel by Nevil Shute, who also authored the nuclear war novel *ON THE BEACH*. Theodore Honey (Stewart) is a "boffin"--a sort of absent-minded scientist off in his own world--who is convinced that his company's new super-aircraft will crash after a certain number of hours in the air. He just wants to prove his science is correct and since nobody believes him anyway he retires to his office collecting data for his proof. Then (in a somewhat contrived manner) he finds himself in flight on one of the planes he thinks is doomed. He knows he has to break out of his bubble and convince people he is right or people will die. The film has a lot of wit with few clues of how Stewart's mind is brilliant but somehow oblivious and obtuse, always thinking "outside the box." The film stars Jimmy Stewart, Jack Hawkins, Glynis Johns, and Marlene Dietrich. [Thursday, November 16, 4:00 AM]

French New Wave director Jules Dassin adapted *RIFIFI* (1955) from the original novel. In this French film an ex-con has a choice of going straight or taking part a heist that seems very well planned. The theft sounds foolproof, but the aftermath poses disaster for the whole gang. The heist itself goes for thirty-five minutes without a single word being spoken by the thieves. That makes it grab the viewers' attention and is absolutely magnetic. The final visual image is unforgettable. This is one of the greatest heist films of all time. It certainly inspired a lot of other crime films. The atmosphere and story are delightfully noir. [Tuesday, November 21, 02:00 AM]

[-mrl]

TOMORROW'S KIN by **Nancy Kress** (copyright 2017, Tor, 2017 Blackstone Audio, ASIN: B073C62QWM, ISBN-10: 0765390299, ISBN-13: 978-0765390295, 11 hours and 3 minutes, narrated by Marguerite Gavin) (an audiobook review by Joe Karpierz):

TOMORROW'S KIN is the first book of the "Yesterday's Kin" trilogy, and an expansion of the 2014 novella *Yesterday's Kin*, which won the Nebula award for Best Novella at the 2015 Nebula Awards ceremony held in Chicago. While it was not my favorite that year--"We Are All Completely Fine" by Daryl Gregory would have gotten my vote if I was an eligible voter--I did like it quite a bit. I had a few quibbles with it, but all in all it was a fine story. Sometime after that I'd heard she was going to expand it into a novel; I was unaware and surprised that the intent was to expand it into a trilogy. I wasn't then, and am not now, quite sure where she is going with the story, but the pleasure is in the discovery of reading it, I suppose.

The first third or so of *TOMORROW'S KIN* is the original novella-- probably with some modifications (to be fair, I don't remember the original well enough to be able to pick up on changes, although I suspect they're minor)--while the last two thirds or so continues in the aftermath of the Denebs visit and the Earth passing through the spore cloud. The spore cloud did not kill off humanity as was originally indicated by the Denebs. Instead, the cloud caused havoc with other portions of the ecosystem on Earth, causing the balance of nature to be thrown off thus causing massive economic and ecological issues. To be sure, some humans were killed by the spore cloud, but most were not. Still, the unforeseen--by humanity, but maybe not by the Denebs--have divided the natives of Earth.

As a sign of gratitude, the Denebs have given us the plans and technology to build a starship. But the gift of interstellar travel has, for many, raised even more suspicions of the Denebs. If they knew that the spore cloud was going to have the aforementioned unintended consequences, what else are they not telling with this gift? Feelings and opinions are split. One faction would like to build the starship and make a peaceful visit to "World", as the home planet of the Denebs is called. Another faction would like to use those starships to travel to World and attack the Denebs, and a third doesn't trust them and

want nothing to do with the starship. Maryanne Jenner, the protagonist of the original novella now has a role with a foundation that supports traveling to the stars. She travels the country making speeches on behalf of a foundation that is supporting the effort to build the starship in the United States (it should be noted that many nations world-wide are attempting to build the starship, and that there are at least three different efforts going on in the United States alone. Maryanne is approached by the head of one of the efforts; he wants to give her foundation lots of money to go out and spread the good word of going to the stars. He is a shady character at best, and his motives are questionable.

One of the other side effects of the spore cloud is that children who are born after the Earth passes through the cloud cry almost continuously for a good portion of the first couple of years of their lives. Sometimes the crying stops, other times it does not-- leading to undesirable outcomes. It is discovered that those who stop have a gift; they can hear sound above the highest frequency and below the lowest frequency previously known to be audible by humankind. As you might guess, the discovery of this gift has huge implications for the story.

As with the original novella, Maryanne Jenner's family is central to the entire novel, although the focus really comes down to her grandchildren. Her son Noah has left with the Denebs to go to World. Her daughter Elizabeth is largely offstage for the last two thirds of the book, probably working against the efforts to build a starship, and her son Ryan has descended into depression over his role in the Deneb visit. I expect that all three of Maryanne's children will have large roles to play in the remaining two books of the trilogy.

As is probably obvious, the book is not only about family, but about consequences, unintended or not. All actions have consequences, and it's how we as a race react to and deal with those consequences that define who we are as individuals and as a species. Most times the consequences we deal with are not enormous or far reaching. It's the nature of fiction, however, that consequences that characters deal with are far reaching and significant. I feel that the characters of TOMORROW'S KIN have barely scratched the surface of what's to come, and I'm looking forward to the next book in the trilogy.

Marguerite Gavin is an outstanding narrator, one of the best I've listened to. She has a tremendous ability to voice all sorts of characters, whether they be male or female, child or adult, or even human or machine simulated. I enjoyed her voice and pacing. Like Jefferson Mays, who narrates the outstanding Expanse series of novels, I would be thrilled to listen to more of her narration. I hope she continues to narrate the Yesterday's Kin trilogy. It will make the listening experience all that much more worthwhile. [-jak]

221B Drabbles (letter of comment by Robert L. Mitchell):

In response to [Evelyn's 221B drabble](#) in the 10/20/17 issue of the MT VOiD, Robert Mitchell writes:

A Drabblish acknowledgement:

Evelyn, you wrote a very clever Holmesian Drabble! Thank you for sharing the concept, and your story. It caught Sherlock's personality recognizably, was written in a style evocative of Arthur Conan Doyle's, tied into the SF genre quite snugly by using THE WAR OF THE WORLDS (which would have been contemporaneous with Holmes), and finally, I can't imagine a more appropriate "B" word (since that was a complaint Holmes often expressed, especially in the earlier stories)! I'm inspired to try to write one of my own Drabbles, but it would be hard to outdo the one you shared with us. [-rlm]

World Leadership Correspondence School, 221B Drabble, TRANSFORMATION, CHILLER (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to [Mark's comments on the World Leadership Correspondence School](#) in the 10/20/17 issue of the MT VOiD, John Purcell writes:

I really got a chuckle out of that WORLD LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL schtick Mark reprinted from the MT VOID of June 4, 1986. Now, I understand that he was being frivolous back then, but yeah, in retrospect it sure does sound very prescient considering the whackadoodle currently residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20500. The curriculum offered sure does sound like Drumpf enrolled in this course and passed with flying colors. The problem with this kind of humor is that it is so damned accurate that it should be more of a warning, like all good comedy is, rather than something that makes you laugh just because it's funny. All good humor has a grain of truth in it, as pundits have proclaimed over the years. [-jp]

In response to [Evelyn's drabble](#), John writes:

Thank you, Evelyn, for that "221B Drabble." I really enjoyed this. In fact, this sounds like a great writing exercise for my literature classes next semester. Okay if I steal this idea? Proper credit shall be given to you, of course. [-jp]

Evelyn responds:

Credit goes to the Finns, who apparently invented this (in Finnish, of course). At least that is the impression I got from a panel on drabbles held at the Worldcon in Finland (available on YouTube). [-ecl]

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of TRANSFORMATION](#), John writes:

More thank yous for the review of James Gunn's new novel TRANSFORMATION, which sounds very interesting. I have always enjoyed James Gunn's stories ever since I read THE IMMORTALS (1964) during my senior year in high school, which was in 1972. He's a solid science fiction writer who always puts believable characters into believable settings with believable scientific background. Come to think of it, I need to get TRANSCENDENTAL (2013) and TRANSGALACTIC (2016), too. Gotta have 'em all! [-jp]

In response to [Gregory Benford's comments on CHILLER](#), John writes:

And also Gregory Benford's CHILLER (1993) needs to be added to my shelves. Fortunately there is plenty of room since we just cleared out a bunch of old books to take to the Half-Price Bookstore or donate to Read Africa, something my employer, Blinn College, supports. [-jp]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

On our recent trip, we listened to the audio recording of STAR BEAST by Robert A. Heinlein (full cast audio, ISBN 978-1-933-32247-2). It was surprising how topical it was, with people complaining about robot cars, politicians making outrageous, uninformed statements, citizens complaining about aliens on Earth and starting "humans first" movements, and so on. It was also surprisingly dated, with people smoking every other time you turned around and amazingly sexist comments from both male and female characters. The protagonist's girlfriend is shown as very clever, but his mother is merely domineering. (It is pretty obvious that this is aimed at a male teenaged audience.)

We also listened to THE POLITICALLY INCORRECT GUIDE TO THE CIVIL WAR by H. W. Crocker III (ISBN 1-433-25123-X) or rather, we listened to one disc of the ten. The problem was that it was far too annoying to listen to Crocker's attempts to justify the legality of the South's secession and the rightness of its cause. Do not misunderstand--there are definitely actions of the Union during Civil War that were not only of questionable legality, but that were flat-out illegal: the creation of West Virginia, the suspension of habeas corpus, and the special requirements laid on Southern states before they were "re-admitted" to the Union that the Union claimed they could not leave.

But Crocker persists in saying things like "South Carolina wanted to secede because they felt the Northern states were oppressing it", or "Virginians just wanted to continue their lifestyle and traditions", or "the way of life in the South was slower and easier, with the rough edges smoothed off." What he means, of course, is "white males in South Carolina wanted to secede because they felt the Northern states were oppressing it", or "white Virginians just wanted to continue their lifestyle and traditions", or "the way of life in the South for rich whites was slower and easier, with the rough edges smoothed off."

He also argued both that since the states were independent sovereign entities that formed the United States, they could secede, and because the colonies were colonies they could not secede from England. But when was Arkansas an independent entity? [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Near this spot
Are deposited the remains of one
Who possessed Beauty without Vanity,
Strength without Indolence,
Courage without Ferocity,
And all the virtues of Man, without his vices.
This praise, which would be unmeaning Flattery
If inscribed over human ashes,
Is but a just tribute to the memory of
Boatswain, a Dog.
--Lord Byron,
Inscription on the tomb of his Newfoundland dog, 1808

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