

A case in point is the self-proclaimed "Explosive Nationwide Bestseller" F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_O_l_d_D_o_g which Evelyn recently fished out of a wastebasket for me. (Hey, can you beat the price?) It used to be that there were only a couple of Explosive Nationwide Bestsellers a year and everybody heard of them. Now you see sixty

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or seventy of them a year. I guess people must be reading a whole lot more these days than they used to, which comes as a great relief to those of us who thought that reading skills had gone the way of the quill pen.

This book comes just covered with dried coffee and loving reviews. On the cover W. Griffin, b_e_s_t_s_e_l_l_i_n_g author of the "Brotherhood of War" series, calls it "A SUPERBLY CRAFTED ADVENTURE." Clive Cussler--who I have been told writes the kind of novels that impress Sylvester Stallone--calls it "SUSPENSEFUL AND SPELLBINDING."

On the first inside page it raves: "DALE BROWN KEPT ME GLUED TO THE CHAIR, TURNING PAGES AS THE AERIAL BATTLE ROSE TO A SHATTERING CLIMAX. A TERRIFIC FLYING YARN"--Stephen Coonts, author of F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_I_n_t_r_u_d_e_r. Turn the page and it says: "DALE BROWN KEPT ME GLUED TO THE CHAIR, TURNING PAGES AS THE AERIAL BATTLE ROSE TO A SHATTERING CLIMAX. A TERRIFIC FLYING YARN"--Stephen Coonts, author of F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_I_n_t_r_u_d_e_r. Do you ever get a feeling of _d_e_j_a_v_u? Do you ever get a feeling of _d_e_j_a_v_u? On the back cover it enthuses: "Terrific... A gripping thriller... A shattering climax!"--Stephen Coonts, best-selling author of F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_I_n_t_r_u_d_e_r. They may use his review four or five more places in the book; I haven't checked.

But does all this praise go to Dale Brown's head? No way. Let me tell you what a nice guy he is. There is an ad for another book in the back, A_m_b_u_s_h_a_t_O_s_i_r_a_k by Herbert Crowder. And a quote: "Excellent! Crowder skillfully blends a high-tech action story, a frighteningly realistic plot, and a fast-paced espionage thriller into a very enjoyable book. His technical know-how is right on the mark!"--Dale Brown, author of F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_O_l_d_D_o_g.

Let's face it, these guys just love each other to death. They also

have raves from all the big papers, such as the "Richmond Times-Dispatch," the "Winston-Salem Journal (NC)," and the "Macon Telegraph and News (GA)." I guess readers tend to know what state Richmond is in, but get confused when it comes to places such as Winston-Salem and Macon. Most of these reviews also appear two different places on the book. Does anybody know if these papers publish news? Have you ever heard of them as publishing anything but rave book reviews? I have often thought that the edging on books is yellow because it is pollen. That is all it takes to get a good review from the "Fresno Bee."

Now you notice that you almost never see Classic Coke coming out with raves printed on the bottle like "Bracing... Crisp... The flavor we've all tried to capture for years."--Falcun Schencterby, Chairman of the Board of Pepsi-Cola. That would be more refreshing than anything they put in a bottle. But there's a reason. Somebody at the publisher figures that there is a major market out

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there that will buy all books like F l i g h t o f t h e O l d D o g. If these guys felt they were competing with each other, then you'd really find out what they think of each other. "Jeffrey Broong is a piss-ant author who learned everything he knows reading my last novel whose plot he shamelessly plagerized. If he were in the Air Force I'd sell my savings bonds to take the Berlitz Russian language course."

2. Regarding money and lawyers, Bruce Szablak has the following to say: "I like your assessment but I can't believe you got it so wrong (especially at this time of the year)! But you are close. Money comes from the government (the treasury) and returns to the government (thus the IRS). A closed system. However, what about the conservation of energy? All our work can't leave the system, so where does it go? The lawyers suck it up! They are the economics analog of the thermodynamic concept of entropy! (P.S.: The inescapable conclusion is that at the end of the universe, everyone will be lawyers (entropy always increases)."

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzx!leeper

In the war between falsehood and truth, falsehood
always wins the first battle and truth the last.

-- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

BLACK SNOW DAYS by Claudia O'Keefe
Ace, 1990, ISBN 0-441-00689-5, \$3.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This latest in the "Ace Science Fiction Specials" series (now
billed as "Terry Carr's Ace Science Fiction Specials," which title it
never bore when he was alive) is proof, to me at least, that Terry Carr

will be sorely missed. There is, of course, a certain irony to the fact that they have renamed the series "Terry Carr's Ace Science Fiction Specials" and therefore have to label them as "Edited by Damon Knight." The last Ace Science Fiction Special before this was Richard Kadrey's M_e_t_r_o_p_h_a_g_e two years ago, billed as one of the "New Ace Science Fiction Specials" and "edited by Terry Carr--it was Carr's last.

History aside and back to the issue at hand, what about B_l_a_c_k_S_n_o_w_D_a_y_s? It's possible that a good book might be written about a post-holocaust bionic man with a separate physical entity (?) holding his a_n_i_m_a (as opposed to his a_n_i_m_u_s), but I don't think this is it. Frankly, I prefer my books written in English and this is written in cyberpunk: "He didn't even have the time to be frightened. Before his soul decomposed from his body. Without time, nothing could keep him in place. He busted through his cranium, torched through his fingertips." Ptui.

This reminds me of some of the o_t_h_e_r series of "Ace Science Fiction Specials" that Terry Carr didn't edit, from 1975 and 1976. Remember those? I didn't think so.

ENDANGERED SPECIES by Gene Wolfe
Tor, 1990 (1989c), ISBN 0-812-50718-5, \$4.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1990 Evelyn C. Leeper

This collection of thirty-four stories by one of the leading literary science fiction authors of today is billed on the cover as "one of the most important collections of the decade" (F_a_n_t_a_s_y & S_c_i_e_n_c_e F_i_c_t_i_o_n) and "the best single-author collection you will see this year" (A_n_a_l_o_g). For a change, the blurbs are not just hype.

First of all, this is a much larger collection than one usually sees--almost twice the usual number of stories. The result is that we can see a much wider range of Wolfe's talent than a normal-length collection would show us. Secondly, though all the stories have been previously published elsewhere, they are not what you would call readily available. For example, "Our Friend by Charles Dickens" appeared in R_o_o_m_s_o_f_P_a_r_a_d_i_s_e edited by Lee Harding. Try finding that at your local Waldenbooks--or even Forbidden Planet!

Notable stories include the aforementioned "Our Neighbor by David Copperfield," an excellent story to give your friend who loves Dickens's style. "In the House of Gingerbread" is a wonderful twist and re-twist on the classic children's story; "The War Beneath the Tree" also takes an interesting turn at the end.

Unfortunately, even such a literary work as this is not free of typos; in "The God and His Man" the sword is named either "Maser" or "Master," depending on what sentence you're in.

These stories cover the range of science fiction, horror, and fantasy. My only quibble is the omission of "Slaves of Silver," Wolfe's foray into Sherlockiana, but that's a minor objection. If you're interested in seeing where science fiction concepts meet mainstream literary values, buy this book.

FREEDOM BEACH by James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel
Bluejay Books, 1985, ISBN 0-312-94168-4, \$8.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1990 Evelyn C. Leeper

F_r_e_e_d_o_m_B_e_a_c_h is a strange novel. But then, any novel that contains the Faust legend done as a Marx Brothers movie ("Faustfeathers") would be a strange novel.

Shaun Reed finds himself somehow at Freedom Beach, a sort of purgatorial Club Med at which he has apparently signed up for some sort of therapy which involves amnesia. Through his dreams he sometimes remembers his past as a writer, but is just as likely to find himself the character in some other writers' works.

F_r_e_e_d_o_m_B_e_a_c_h examines an author's psyche, and though I doubt this author is typical, the audacity of the sections overcomes the not entirely convincing characterizations. Recommended if you can find it.

[Note: Bluejay published a very high-quality line of books, but their packaging was, well, abysmal. Classic typos they gave us included the rendering of R_o_g_u_e_Q_u_e_e_n as R_o_u_g_e_Q_u_e_e_n on its spine, the misspelling of Isaac Asimov's name on the title page of S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s T_h_r_o_u_g_h_T_i_m_e_a_n_d_S_p_a_c_e, and this book, which in the back blurb misspells the main character's name five times and confuses Jane Austen with Emily Bronte! Tom Kidd's cover painting of the Sphinx and the Pyramids of Giza is also totally inaccurate, both to the reality and to the description in the book.]

NUNS ON THE RUN
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1990 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: After the negative reviews this film has gotten it turns out to be an intelligent and witty comedy with some solid characterization. In fact, its virtues are many of the same virtues of the better 1950s English comedy films. Take out one scene and it could easily have been a story you would have seen Alec Guinness in in his heyday. Rating: high +1.

StarWars and Raiders of the Lost Ark shifted the market for adventure films. Their slam-bang pacing spoiled audiences who previously were happy with the pacing of adventures such as She and The Man Who Would Be King. Monty Python's various films and television show similarly shifted the comedy audience. By pre-Python standards Nuns on the Run would be a frenetic comedy with some interesting characters and a few good laughs. It has been getting some bad press as being not funny enough and lacking in the punch that a film such as A Fish Called Wanda had. Well, it really does not have the steady laughs of A Fish Called Wanda, but it is every bit as funny as the classic Alec Guinness Ealing comedies. And if it is less substantial than classic Guinness comedy, it is certainly more substantial than most of the modern comedies being made. That means that it is roughly eight times as good as empty comedies such as Throw Momma from the

_ T _ r _ a _ i _ n _ o _ r _ B _ l _ i _ n _ d _ D _ a _ t _ e .

In N_u_n_s_o_n_t_h_e_R_u_n, Brian Hope and Charlie McManus are two aging hoods who want to get out of crime. Their boss cannot afford to have them possibly double-cross the organization, so when the boss finds out they want to leave they know their days are numbered. Their only chance is now to double-cross the organization and steal enough money to escape to Brazil. When their gang is going to rob a local triad gang, Hope and McManus see their chance to make off with the boodle. [Note of explanation: Someone can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe the Triads are the same secret organization sometimes known as the Tongs. The film makes fun of their love of cutlery. The real Tongs are as professional and deadly as any of their European counterparts.] Things do not go well for the two and they end up with both their own gang and the Triads chasing them. Their only escape is to disguise themselves as nuns and hide in a convent. But Hope is bewildered by the Catholic religion he is now expected to know. McManus is Catholic and tries to rescue him, but his explanations are little help. In the discussion of religion, the comedy is at its richest. Hope's very life may depend on his understanding McManus's muddled explanation of the Holy Trinity and the basic doctrines of Catholicism.

For the most part this comedy could have been done in the 1950s. It pokes a little fun at Catholicism, but never to the point that it is

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really disrespectful. The film's only scene that would have been out of place in the 1950s is a delightfully vulgar shower room scene. In general the film works like a well-oiled machine, with many diverse plot elements coming together in unexpected combinations.

Eric Idle of Monty Python fame stars as Brian Hope. Idle's age is starting to show on him and he looks surprisingly middle-aged here, but that helps to give Hope character. For once his antics are outshone by a non-Pythonite, Robbie Coltrane, who played Falstaff in H_e_n_r_y_V and Bob Hoskins's mystery-loving friend in M_o_n_a_L_i_s_a. The film was written and directed by Jonathan Lynn, who in this country is best known for writing and directing the television shows "Yes, Minister" and "Yes, Prime Minister." While lacking those series' sophistication, N_u_n_s_o_n_t_h_e_R_u_n is still an intelligent, whimsical comedy. I give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Readercon 3
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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To be honest, we were not planning on attending Readercon this year. What with Confiction in Holland (two weeks vacation) and a three-week trip to Southeast Asia planned, we were strapped for vacation days, and it is hard for us to get to a convention in the Boston area without taking an extra day. In addition, last year's program was in parts a bit too academic and dry--well, let's be honest: in parts it was unintelligible. Then again, why should anything about a convention on a seventeen-month cycle be intelligible? But I digress, and anyway the cycle has shifted again; the next Readercon is in only fifteen months. However, after I was asked to be one of the judges for the Readercon Small Press Awards (the others were Thomas M. Disch, John Shirley, Kathryn Cramer, Paul Chadwick, Jerry Kaufman, and Greg Ketter), we decided to sandwich it in, resulting in a truly ridiculous schedule for the weekend (March 30 through April 1, 1990).

We left work about 4PM and drove to my parents' house in Chicopee, arriving about 9PM (rain and fog in Connecticut slowed us down somewhat). Having not seen them for at least four months, and having been to Boskone in February and not seen them then, we really could not be this close and not at least drop in. We spent an hour and a half with them, which included telling them I was nominated for a Hugo (which we have taken to describing as "like the Oscars for science fiction" for non-sf types), then drove up to Kate's place in Amherst, arriving about 11PM. More fog on the way convinced me that the weather gods had it in for us, but luckily none of this ever turned to snow.

Saturday morning we left about 8 AM after ascertaining that, yes, I did have a map of Massachusetts--in the hectic packing I had not remembered to check the car. The trip to Lowell was easy, with little traffic and clear(er) weather, and we arrived at the Lowell Hilton about 9:50 AM--not bad timing for a convention that opens at 10 AM.

Registration was fast for us since we were preregistered, though the at-the-door memberships had a bit of a line. Freebies included a Tor Double and James Patrick Kelly's latest novel, L_o_o_k_i_n_t_o_t_h_e_S_u_n. It is unusual to see as major a book as the latter as a convention giveaway, but I suspect Tor figured that Readercon attendees would be the most likely to read it and recommend it to others.

Hotel and Function Space

Unlike last year, the convention was spread out over several floors. The main programming was on the first floor, the fan programming, readings and other one-author items were on the second floor, and the con suite was on the eighth floor (getting it away from

the Green Room--last year they were adjacent and people tended to drift into the Green Room who did not belong there). The rooms all seemed the right size for the groups in them (fairly unusual for conventions or any meetings these days--I attribute this as much to luck as anything else). This year the program guide included a map of the hotel (sorely missed last year) and a restaurant guide.

There is not much point to describing the function space, or Lowell for that matter, in any greater detail--next year Readercon is moving to the Worcester Marriott. (And just when we found a great Southeast Asian restaurant in Lowell!)

Dealers' Room

Of course the Dealers' Room was entirely books. There were about the same number of dealers as last year (a dozen or so), and this year there were a couple of dealers selling new paperbacks (a serious deficiency last year). Several people commented on the relative paucity of the Dealers' Room compared to, say, Boskone, but this was due to several reasons. First, since the committee expected around 300 people actually attending, they aimed for an appropriately sized Dealers' Room. But 400 people attended, making the room seem small and crowded. Second, dealers do not want to compete with a lot of other dealers, all selling the same thing--in this case, books. It cuts down on everyone's margin. And last, no Dealers' Room is ever large enough to satisfy the true reader!

Though the Dealers' Room was scheduled to stay open until 7 PM on Saturday, the dealers all left at 5 PM for dinner. Sunday the Dealers' Room closed at 3 PM. In spite of its small size, I managed to buy ten books in the first five minutes!

Programming

The programming was expanded from last year's, with two main tracks of programming, a "mini-track," and a fan track. For years people have been suggesting that conventions try variable-length items (some panels an hour, some ninety minutes, etc.) and staggered starting times, so the committee decided to give it a try. This did serve one useful purpose. Before, it was just opinion to say that it would not work well. Now when the topic comes up, one can state that there is experiential evidence that it would not work well. By staggering the starting times, the committee made it impossible for me to attend more than about 75% of what I wanted to see. If there was an item from 2:30 to 3:30, for example, it effectively ruled out any items at 2 or at 3. (I do not

like to arrive late to or leave early from a panel--the latter can easily make the panelists think you did not like them rather than just that there was something else you needed to get to.)

On the plus side, the panel discussion were held around a coffee table (a la Dick Cavett's old show) rather than at the usual higher

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table. This made the panelists seem less separated from the audience, and it also resulted in there being no place for panelists to prop up copies of all their books they were pushing. (Consider that a minor benefit, but there was noticeably less pushing of one's own books this year.)

Since we did not arrive until Saturday morning, we missed the Friday night programming, which was not very heavily scheduled anyway. (Many of the pros who would be on panels did not arrive until Saturday either.) What to schedule for the first night's programming is difficult. It cannot be anything truly major, since people are still trickling in. Even the obvious "Meet the Pros" party has problems--not all the pros are there yet. Eric says they have some ideas for next year, but this has been a problem for every convention and I doubt it can be solved by then.

_ R _ e _ a _ d _ i _ n _ g
Kim Stanley Robinson
Saturday, 10:00 AM

Due to the later starts of the major tracks, the first item I attended was the Kim Stanley Robinson reading. As usual, the reading was an excerpt from a forthcoming work rather than a self-contained item, but I cannot for the life of me remember what the title was. I do remember that there were some fairly unpleasant characters and drugs in it.

_ O _ K _ f _ o _ r _ Y _ o _ u , _ B _ l _ a _ s _ p _ h _ e _ m _ y :
_ C _ r _ i _ t _ i _ q _ u _ i _ n _ g _ R _ e _ l _ i _ g _ i _ o _ n _ i _ n
_ I _ m _ a _ g _ i _ n _ a _ t _ i _ v _ e _ L _ i _ t _ e _ r _ a _ t _ u _ r _ e
John Kessel (moderator), Thomas M. Disch, M. J. Engh,
James Morrow, Paul Park
Saturday, 11:30 AM

This began with Kessel asking the panelists to introduce themselves and give their religious backgrounds. If they had all gone into the detail that Engh did, they never would have gotten to the main meat of the panel. Engh described herself as Methodist turned atheist, Morrow as Presbyterian (actually generic Protestant) turned secular humanist, Kessel as ethnic Catholic "in recovery now." Park said he was an Anglican (High Church) who currently is "a mix of strict Roman Catholicism and jeering atheism" and is currently writing theological thrillers.

Disch talked about growing up German in the 1940s (when being German meant trying as hard as possible to have _ n_ o ethnic characteristics) and Catholic in a sort of "S&M" Catholicism with much emphasis on Hell and its torments. As a result(?), he says he loves seeing religious hypocrites "get theirs": Father Ritter, Jim and Tammy Bakker, etc. His religion is currently "ex-Catholic, one of the largest and most passionate religions" today.

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I found it interesting that, given the high proportion of Jews writing science fiction, there were no Jews (or ex-Jews) on the panel. But more on that later.

Morrow flung down the gauntlet, more or less, saying that Bible morality is second-rate and crude, and that this was what led him to write his series of "Bible Stories for Adults," examining more closely this morality. This raised the question of whether authors argue more with God or with the presentation of God by religions. Someone described Christianity as "fascinating stuff, a rich field, and pretty appalling" to which Park responded that one rarely sees the good and pure degenerate into the bad and evil as quickly as in (organized) religion. Kessel claimed that organized religion had stolen Jesus the same way the Republicans have stolen the flag.

In response to a comment from the audience, the panelists agreed that most of their works dealt with Western monotheism (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), avoiding such religions as Hinduism or Buddhism. Engh tried to put forth an argument that neo-paganism was really

monotheism, but I was not convinced and I do not think the audience was either. Morrow claimed that blasphemers are often accused of striking first when they are in fact only striking back.

Disch quoted Thomas Carlyle as saying that writers have taken on the role of prophecy, and Disch concluded that this was one reason why writers, especially science fiction writers, want to dictate or preach to their audiences. Disch asked "why Cardinal O'Conner should set the agenda" in telling people how to misbehave. And, yes, he did say "misbehave"--after all (as I interpret his statement) the Church issues a list of sins which many people seem to treat as checklists.

Of course, science fiction is just a thought experiment, which is what makes all this possible. For that matter, is Morrow's O_n_l_y B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r science fiction? Is any religious science fiction, science fiction or is it fantasy? (For that matter, is Hugh Schonfield's P_a_s_s_o_v_e_r P_l_o_t fantasy?) And as fantasy, does it try to be predictive in the way that science fiction occasionally does?

As for the lack of Jews on the panel, this ties in with my observation that most "attacks" on organized religion attack Christianity rather than Judaism or Islam. Is this due to the fact that an attack on a Christian preacher is somehow more acceptable than an attack on a Jewish rabbi? (Yeah, I know that is redundant.) I cannot help but feel that if someone like Morrow or Parke Godwin took aim at the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem they would be accused of anti-Semitism faster than a speeding bullet. Morrow may also have hit upon part of the answer when he said (in response to a question about whether the panelists were being "dismissive" of religion), "Religion is riding high in the saddle now and by God somebody has to be dismissive!" In the United States it is only Christianity, and a small subset of Christianity at that, which could be termed "riding high in the saddle."

Disch observed that stories of early Christianity and such religious leaders as Joseph Smith would be intriguing, in that the author would presumably have to reconcile the idea that the characters believed they were religiously inspired, while the author believed they were not.

The panel closed with Disch observing (in some context) that no one would ever accuse Isaac Asimov of subtle characters and Park responding, "This is blasphemy!"

After this, we went to lunch with someone from AT&T in Lowell. We ate at the Southeast Asian Restaurant, which serves Thai, Laotian, and Cambodian food--very good and recommended, though the service was a bit slow. Then again, we were under some serious time constraints, since I had to get back for my 2 PM discussion.

_ _ T_ h_ e_ B_ o_ o_ k_ s_ I_ G_ i_ v_ e_ M_ a_ i_ n_ s_ t_ r_ e_ a_ m
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Greg Cox, Daniel P. Dern, Scott E. Green,
Theresa Nielsen-Hayden, Marjorie Bradley Kellogg,
Robert Killheffer, Eleanor Lang, Evelyn Leeper, Susan Palwick
Saturday, 2:00 PM

This was a round-table discussion rather than a panel, so there was no moderator. Some of the books suggested (and the people suggesting them) were:

- Burgess, Anthony, anything
- Dann, Jack, _ W_ a_ n_ d_ e_ r_ i_ n_ g_ S_ t_ a_ r_ s (Leeper)
- Davies, L. P., anything (Green)
- Dickinson, Peter, anything
- Finney, Jack, _ T_ i_ m_ e_ a_ n_ d_ A_ g_ a_ i_ n (someone gave this to his grandmother and she really enjoyed it, having gone through the same "time-travel" experience, albeit in real time)
- Harris, Thomas, _ T_ h_ e_ S_ i_ l_ e_ n_ c_ e_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ a_ m_ b_ s (Palwick)
- Koontz, Dean R., _ L_ i_ g_ h_ t_ n_ i_ n_ g (this seems a bit like recommending Stephen King these days--working with a net) (Green)
- Kushner, Ellen, _ S_ w_ o_ r_ d_ s_ p_ o_ i_ n_ t (Killheffer)
- LeGuin, Ursula K., _ T_ h_ e_ L_ e_ f_ t_ H_ a_ n_ d_ o_ f
_ D_ a_ r_ k_ n_ e_ s_ s (Kellogg)
- Manguel, Alberto, _ B_ l_ a_ c_ k_ W_ a_ t_ e_ r (Leeper)
- Silverberg, Robert, _ D_ y_ i_ n_ g_ I_ n_ s_ i_ d_ e (Killheffer)

- Sturgeon, Theodore, _ M_ o_ r_ e_ T_ h_ a_ n_ H_ u_ m_ a_ n (Palwick)
- Wilson, Colin, anything

Green suggested "John Wyndham's _ E_ x_ i_ l_ e" set in post-holocaust Labrador--I do not know of any such novel.

Someone suggested leading people into science fiction without their knowing what it is. The danger in this is that, as Mark observed, "If you lead someone into science fiction without their knowing what it is, they may leave without knowing they've been there." The example I gave was that Mark's sister had seen and liked _ C_ o_ c_ o_ o_ n, but did not realize it was science fiction. My response to her was that if a film about aliens coming to Earth and giving people immortality was not science fiction, I'd like to know what was.

I observed that one really has to tailor one's suggestions to the recipient, so that (for example) I give my Jewish relatives _ W_ a_ n_ d_ e_ r_ i_ n_ g _ S_ t_ a_ r_ s and my Hispanic relatives _ B_ l_ a_ c_ k_ W_ a_ t_ e_ r. Other people thought near-future stories worked better than far-future, and cyberpunk should be recommended sparingly, if at all. (One person said that a friend to whom she gave _ N_ e_ u_ r_ o_ m_ a_ n_ c_ e_ r kept waiting for the terms to be defined--and they never were.)

Other people thought recommending shorter works was a better idea, since the recipient did not feel they were making as large a time investment. This will only work if the recipient does not have a prejudice against shorter fiction--apparently these days many people will not read anything shorter than a novel. Still, an anthology should make them feel they are getting enough without having only one story on which science fiction will stand or fall. (You had better tell them it _ i_ s an anthology--I have heard stories of people getting anthologies and complaining that the various parts of the "novel" did not seem to fit together!)

After the discussion we sat and talked to Jerry Boyajian for a while (having finally delivered to him a tape we had brought to three conventions for him!) about movies (gasp!) and Usenet. I dropped into the Lucius Shepard reading to get his autograph on _ G_ r_ e_ e_ n_ E_ y_ e_ s, but did not stay because I wanted to go to the next panel.

(to be continued)

