

MT VOID 04/03/20 -- Vol. 38, No. 40, Whole Number 2113



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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 An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Day of the Animals (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

Back in the mid-1970s we saw several low-budget horror films released to theaters with similar plots: films such as DAY OF THE ANIMALS, GRIZZLY, and FROGS. The plots were much the same. Nature had apparently gotten tired of us human animals messing up the environment. The animal kingdom unites to kill all humans. A typical vengeance-of-nature horror film was THE DAY OF THE ANIMALS, in which a business executive takes some of his top underlings to hike in the mountains. The top execs presumably are also there to admire the boss's bare chest. This plot is carried out in all seriousness (well, with the possible exception of having a bad human played by Leslie Nielsen as a captain of industry--playing his role naked to the waist, fortunately in the right direction.)

In the film there were pollutants in the atmosphere that acted like some sort of rabies toxin. Soon there are a variety of species that appear to have declared war on humans. Of course, at the time the idea of animals banding together across species lines to beat humans--this was fantasy in 1977. In 2019 the climate may have altered behaviors and may have brought on new, more cooperative animal behavior.

Here are some examples of brought out new hostile behaviors:

Locusts

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/24/africa/kenya-locust-swarms/index.html>

When I look back over my life this year will (I sincerely hope) be the "Plague Year." I hope no other year contends for that title. We have Covid-19. But in Africa another plague is raging. It is a plague that returns ever and again. The current round is the desert locust swarm in the Horn of Africa. We are approaching the height of the swarming, endangering food supplies. The greatest danger is from voracious "hopper bands" that have eaten 1.3 million metric tonnes this year. There is no way to

chase them away, you just have to get out of their way. While the locusts do not attack humans or even animals, they can fly 80 miles per day and they leave only dirt behind.

Spiders

<https://www.cnet.com/news/dangerous-spiders-could-flood-australian-towns-after-much-needed-rain/>

Dangerous funnel spiders, scary as all get-out, could flood Australian towns after much-needed rain. (See the photo on the provided link.) This is so serious that the Australian Reptile Park is asking people to bring in captured male funnel-web spiders for use in the creation of a life-saving anti-venom. They do warn, "This is an undertaking only for the brave."

Hippopotamuses (Okay, if you want to spell it, I will at least consider your spelling. It might be better to spell it "Hippos")

<https://www.cnet.com/news/pablo-escobars-hippos-have-become-an-invasive-species-in-colombia/>

Pablo Escobar was a fan of animal and could purchase any animals he wanted for his private zoo. Nobody would tell him no. And he financed his zoo with what was undoubtedly drug money. He had four hippos smuggled from Africa. What he did not know--and nobody told him--was that the ecology of Colombia was incompatible with hippos. Hippo poop is becoming a large problem in the South American jungle near Escobar's zoo, especially since the original four hippos multiplied to thirty. The poop is a serious environmental problem.

Iguanas

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/21/weather/miami-freeze-falling-iguana-forecast-trnd/index.html>

Talk about bad awakenings. If you are an iguana living in Florida you can wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself sleeping in a tree with the ground rushing up to meet you. It is probably not a pleasant introduction for the day. Bring an umbrella.

[-mrl]

Corflu, HARRIET, Dogs and Cats, and the Current Apocalypse (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to various items the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

Many thanks for sending MT VOID, Evelyn and Mark. It is always appreciated and enjoyed.

Sorry I haven't responded sooner, but I have been very busy first dealing with the aftermath of running Corflu 37 (March 13-15, 2020), and now converting my classes to fully online for the rest of this semester, which restarted two days ago. Fun and games. As a result, a brief letter of comment will work before I get another cup of coffee and sit behind my computer for many hours catching up on grades and other scholastic endeavors.

My wife and I are looking forward to watching HARRIET. It sounded really good just from the movie trailers, so as soon as it is available on our DirectTV system we plan on catching it. History has long been a side interest for both of us, and we are both very aware of Harriet Tubman's life and legacy. On a side note: putting her face on the \$20 bill is a nice nod to her contribution to America, and that should not be withheld. I won't get into the politics of that decision, but I definitely approve of recognizing her importance to American history. She is a most worthy individual of such an honor.

"Dogs and cats living together: mass hysteria!": That's our household, all right. One dog--an eleven-year-old yellow Labrador--and five cats. Sometimes it's downright crazy around here, and it's amazing how well they all get along. There is definitely a fan article lurking there.

Done deal now. Take care of yourselves during the current apocalypse--collect the whole series!--and remember the words of that great Canadian philosopher, Red Green, "We're all in this together. I'm pulling for ya." [-jp]

Gmail Clipping (letter of comment by Kip Williams):

In response to [David Goldfarb's comments on Gmail clipping](#) in the 03/27/20 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

Thanks, but my point in mentioning the automatic clipping 'feature' is that, since it usually takes off one or perhaps two lines (when it occurs, which is not always), people might want to be aware that it means that saving the email as an archive of the group will not necessarily get you the full texts of the quotations at the end.

Also, perhaps, there was some hope that this is a setting that can be changed. ["Truncate last line of message? Y/N"] [-kw]

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

The "Foundation" trilogy has its flaws but is a classic, and while FOUNDATION'S EDGE does little to correct the flaws it is a reasonable sequel, but Lord, is FOUNDATION AND EARTH bad! Bad as in just plain awful.

In FOUNDATION AND EARTH (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 978-0-553-58757-9), Isaac Asimov decided he had free rein to have his main character be as lecherous, sexist, and bigoted as Asimov himself was. I am used to seeing female characters' appearance described more completely than the male characters', but usually this is kept to a non-sexual level. Asimov spends a lot of time describing women's breasts and rear ends, as well as Trevize's sexual encounters (though these are more like "She was so repressed that when she finally let go, she wore me out" rather than clinical descriptions--thank God!). Trevize is bigoted in his revulsion at the hermaphrodites of Solaria, and with all the talk of sex, apparently no one in any of the societies on any of the thousands of planets is gay.

I can't say "knowing what we know now about Asimov" because we knew it then. Our attitudes have changed since 1986, and the book now just seems repulsive. I was thinking of reading some of the prequels that were published after this, but not any more. There are of course still the three "Foundation" novels by the "Killer B's" and Donald Kingsbury's PSYCHOHISTORICAL CRISIS.

But in reading those, I found some inconsistencies. Because the three "Killer B's" novels take place at the same time as some of Asimov's, there is some overlap of events, and in general they are pretty good about getting the dialogue identical (for example). But FOUNDATION AND CHAOS by Greg Bear (which is concurrent with the first part of FOUNDATION) claims there are a quintillion people in the Galactic Empire, while FOUNDATION'S EDGE by Asimov (which follows SECOND FOUNDATION) and FOUNDATION'S TRIUMPH by David Brin (which immediately follows FOUNDATION AND CHAOS) each claim only ten quadrillion.

Sometimes a passage from a book will come to mind while one is reading a news story. For example, I recently read, "China has reported 3,299 coronavirus-related deaths, with most taking place in Wuhan, the epicenter of the global pandemic. But one funeral home received two shipments of 5,000 urns over the course of two days, according to the Chinese media outlet Caixin" [New York Post] and was immediately reminded of Josephine Tey's DAUGHTER OF TIME:

"Truth isn't in accounts but in account books. ... The real history is written in forms not meant as history. In Wardrobe accounts, in Privy Purse expenses, in personal letters, in estate books. If someone, say, insists that Lady Whoosit never had a child, and you find in the account book the entry: 'For the son born to my lady on Michaelmas eve: five yards of blue ribbon, fourpence halfpenny' it's a reasonably fair deduction that my lady had a son on Michaelmas eve."

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

A barking dog is more useful than a sleeping lion.
--Washington Irving

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