

genuine existential threat. Blaming the people who are working on the problem could well be totally useless and only making things worse. It is like being in a traffic jam and trying to fix the problem by honking your horn. [-mrl]

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by **H. P. Lovecraft** (copyright 1936, 2013 Blackstone Audio, narrated by Edward Herrmann) (audiobook review by Joe Karpierz):

Since I was young, I've been interested in Gothic horror. Like many people my age, I would run home from school every day to catch the latest episode of Gothic horror soap opera Dark Shadows. That show is what hooked me on that particular sub-genre. However, once Dark Shadows was cancelled, for some reason I lost interest. I had the vague notion in the back of my mind that I like ghost stories, vampires, monsters, and psychological terror. I was never interested in the graphic, bloody, splatterpunk type of story. Atmospheric stories were the ones I liked; I immensely enjoyed the movie THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT, with all of the scary stuff happening just off-screen.

Somewhere between Dark Shadows and Blair Witch I finally heard of H. P. Lovecraft. I expect that it was in college, when I first started playing Dungeons and Dragons; our dungeon master was referring to some entity called Cthulhu. I was curious, but never enough to pick up anything by Lovecraft. At either the Toronto or Denver Worldcon I finally gave in to my curiosity and bought a copy of the massive Lovecraft story collection Necronomicon (a reference, of course, to a famous book within his mythology). Seeing that I had a copy in my hands at the dealer and waiting to pay for it, writer Charles Stross pointed at it and said something like "now THAT is going to warp your mind".

I never got around to reading it.

Sometime within the last year I was able to get an inexpensive copy of an audiobook of AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS. Looking for something short to listen to before this year's Hugo finalists were announced (which will be happening 3 days after I write this), I decided to give it a listen (Side note--good thing I did. I was most of the way through it when the shelter in place order came from the governor of Illinois because of COVID-19 and I stopped commuting to work, which is when I listened to audiobooks).

I have mixed feelings about it.

Most folks steeped in genre tradition know the story. It is of an expedition to the Antarctic, where the narrator and his companion discover a lost city of an ancient civilization that came to Earth long ago--not long after the time the Moon was formed--and the horrors that surround that civilization. They discover the civilization after an advance scouting party went mysteriously silent. When the narrator and his companion came to investigate, they discovered the remains of most of the advance party as well as the remains of some strange creatures. Via aeroplane, they traverse a mountain range higher than any other known to man, and discover the civilization of the Elder Things, and the horrors that they encountered.

The narrator and his companion uncover the story by reading carvings and hieroglyphs, which tells of the coming of the Old Ones and their created slaves, the shoggoths. This all happened tens of millions of years in the past. The eventually flee in terror, and see what they believe as a shoggoth. The narrator is documenting all of this in the hopes of persuading a much more well-documented expedition from even attempting to go to the Antarctic.

I know this story is considered by many to be quintessential Lovecraft. I was ... unimpressed. I found some of the things deduced by the narrator somewhat unbelievable--I had no idea how he came to certain conclusions. And it was not frightening to say the least. Maybe I'm old and jaded, but then again I find the audio narration of Bram Stoker's Dracula more terrifying than this, and it was written in a much earlier time frame. Will I consume more Lovecraft? Oh, probably. I'll just be coming at it from a different perspective than I did this time.

Edward Herrmann, the narrator, did well enough. Given that this was a first person account, he didn't have to perform multiple voices. He did his best to give great weight and atmosphere to the story, and I think he did fine, and in my opinion he did the best he could with the material he had to work with.

I've been gravitating to shorter fiction these days, as I've gotten tired of the long format novels. Maybe it's time to pick up Necronomicon and get a better taste of Lovecraft's fiction. [-jak]

Day of the Animals (letters of comment by Ash Marie and Peter Trei):

In response to [Mark's comments on hippos](#) in the 04/03/20 issue of the MT VOID, Ash Marie writes:

This list of plagues made my morning. Notably:

Two months after the terrifying sentence "hippos have become an invasive species," we get this second, unparalleled headline

[<https://www.cnet.com/news/pablo-escobars-cocaine-hippos-may-benefit-colombias-ecosystem/>]:

"Pablo Escobar's 'cocaine hippos' may benefit Colombia's environment"

It includes such jewels as describing hippos as "difficult to catch and dangerous to confront" (well, yes, notoriously); this really indescribable quote:

"Shurin says the hippos in Colombia should still be removed or contained and their effects on the native biodiversity are still unknown. 'Like other plagues recently in the news, they can be controlled more cheaply, effectively and humanely early on when they're rare, rather than later when they're everywhere,' he says."

...and asking, perhaps rhetorically, what effect thousands of hippos in the next twenty years would have on the landscape of Colombia.

My roommate has suggested relocating them to Florida and pitting them against the unstoppable python menace. Truly a joyful Friday morning in this house. [-am]

In response to Mark's comments on animals in general in that issue, Peter Trei writes:

There's also the 2015 TV series 'Zoo', which has exactly this trope--animals all over the world start attacking humans. Somehow, this was spun out to three seasons.

[And regarding hippos specifically:]

This was the topic of a recent Science Friday segment on NPR.

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/pablo-escobar-columbia-hippos/>

There's debate over getting rid of them, with some scientists pointing out that they are filling an ecological niche left vacant when hunters from Asia at the end of the last Ice Age exterminated the native megafauna. [-pt]

Dogs and Cats (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt):

In response to [John Purcell's comments on dogs and cats](#) in the 04/03/20 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

There are many, many examples of dogs and cats being best buddies (and napmates) on

<https://icanhas.cheezburger.com/lolcats>

and its parent site,

<https://icanhas.cheezburger.com/>

It reminds me of a passage in, I think, C. S. Lewis's THE FOUR LOVES where somebody says, "You'd be surprised how often dogs and cats get along together," and the other guy says, "Yeah, but I bet the dog never admits it to the other dogs."

"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]

I'll go along with that. [-djh]

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

[Comments on the Hugo Award, Retro Hugo Award, and other award finalists will appear next week.]

I find myself without a complete review this week. This doesn't mean I am not reading; it means I'm in the middle of a lot of books. I'm reading Boccaccio's DECAMERON along with the "Classical Stuff You Should Know" podcast, but at a story a day, it will be over three months before I am finished.

I have already said something about John Brockman's WHAT TO THINK ABOUT MACHINES THAT THINK, but I'm still reading that at only a couple of articles a day.

The same process is true of Michael Dirda's BOUND TO PLEASE, a collection of dozens of essays and book reviews of classics, biographies, and historical non-fiction. One cannot just plow through a book like this.

Other books I have finished but have little to comment on.

Thomas Nagel's WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? covers many of the basic questions of philosophy (e.g., how do you know anything?), but at a fairly elementary level.

I read David Brin's FOUNDATION'S TRIUMPH, but find I have nothing to say about it.

Dave Hutchinson's EUROPE IN AUTUMN is the first book of a tetralogy, and what I think is the central premise of the series is not even revealed until the last quarter of the book.

Lucian of Samosata's TRUE HISTORY was recommended in the Dirda book above, but I found it not very engaging. It's sort of Homer's "Odyssey" crossed with Swift's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, but not up to either. [-ecl]

Hugo, Retro Hugo, Lodestar, and Astounding Awards Finalists:

Finalists for the Hugo, Retro Hugo, Lodestar, and Astounding Awards.

Hugo Awards

Best Novel

The City in the Middle of the Night, Charlie Jane Anders
 The Ten Thousand Doors of January, Alix E. Harrow
 The Light Brigade, Kameron Hurley
 A Memory Called Empire, Arkady Martine
 Middlegame, Seanan McGuire
 Gideon the Ninth, Tamsyn Muir

Best Novella

To Be Taught, If Fortunate, Becky Chambers
 "Anxiety Is the Dizziness of Freedom", Ted Chiang (Exhalation)
 The Haunting of Tram Car 015, P. Djeli Clark
 This Is How You Lose the Time War, Amal El-Mohtar &
 Max Gladstone (Saga)
 In an Absent Dream, Seanan McGuire
 The Deep, Rivers Solomon, with Daveed Diggs,
 William Hutson & Jonathan Snipes

Best Novelette

"For He Can Creep", Siobhan Carroll (Tor.com 7/10/19)
 "Omphalos", Ted Chiang (Exhalation)
 "Away with the Wolves", Sarah Gailey (Uncanny 9-10/19)
 "Emergency Skin", N.K. Jemisin (Forward)
 "The Blur in the Corner of Your Eye", Sarah Pinsker
 (Uncanny 7-8/19)
 "The Archontology of Love", Caroline M. Yoachim
 (Lightspeed 4/19)

Best Short Story

"Do Not Look Back, My Lion", Alix E. Harrow
 (Beneath Ceaseless Skies 1/31/19)
 "As the Last I May Know", S.L. Huang (Tor.com 10/23/19)
 "And Now His Lordship Is Laughing", Shiv Ramdas
 (Strange Horizons 9/9/19)
 "Ten Excerpts from an Annotated Bibliography on the
 Cannibal Women of Ratnabar Island", Nibedita Sen
 (Nightmare 5/19)
 "Blood Is Another Word for Hunger", Rivers Solomon
 (Tor.com 7/24/19)
 "A Catalog of Storms", Fran Wilde (Uncanny 1-2/19)

Best Series

Winternight, Katherine Arden
 The Expanse, James S.A. Corey
 Luna, Ian McDonald
 InCryptid, Seanan McGuire
 Planetfall, Emma Newman
 Wormwood, Tade Thompson

Best Related Work

Joanna Russ, Gwyneth Jones
 The Pleasant Profession of Robert A Heinlein,
 Farah Mendlesohn
 "2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech",
 Jeannette Ng
 The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and
 the Lost Legacy of Millicent Patrick, Mallory O'Meara
 Becoming Superman: My Journey From Poverty to Hollywood,
 J. Michael Straczynski
 Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin

Best Graphic Story or Comic

Die, Volume 1: Fantasy Heartbreaker, Kieron Gillen,
 illustrated by Stephanie Hans (Image)
 The Wicked + The Divine, Volume 9: Okay, Kieron Gillen,
 illustrated by Jamie McKelvie & Matt Wilson
 (Image Comics)
 Monstress, Volume 4: The Chosen, Marjorie Liu,
 illustrated by Sana Takeda (Image)
 LaGuardia, Nnedi Okorafor, illustrated by Tana Ford,
 colours by James Devlin (Berger Books/Dark Horse)
 Paper Girls, Volume 6, Brian K. Vaughan, illustrated
 by Cliff Chiang & Matt Wilson (Image)
 Mooncakes, Wendy Xu & Suzanne Walker (Oni Press;
 Lion Forge)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Avengers: Endgame
 Captain Marvel
 Good Omens
 Russian Doll, Season One
 Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker
 Us

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

Doctor Who: "Resolution"
 The Expanse: "Cibola Burn"
 The Good Place: "The Answer"
 The Mandalorian: "Redemption"
 Watchmen: "A God Walks into Abar"
 Watchmen: "This Extraordinary Being"

Best Editor, Short Form

Neil Clarke
 Ellen Datlow
 C.C. Finlay
 Jonathan Strahan
 Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas
 Sheila Williams

Best Editor, Long Form

Sheila Gilbert
 Brit Hvide
 Diana M. Pho
 Devi Pillai
 Miriam Weinberg
 Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

Tommy Arnold
 Rovina Cai
 Galen Dara
 John Picacio
 Yuko Shimizu
 Alyssa Winans

Best Semiprozine

Beneath Ceaseless Skies
 Escape Pod
 Fireside
 FIYAH
 Strange Horizons
 Uncanny

Best Fanzine

The Book Smugglers
 Galactic Journey
 Journey Planet
 nerds of a feather, flock together
 Quick Sip Reviews
 The Rec Center

Best Fancast

Be the Serpent
 The Coode Street Podcast
 Galactic Suburbia
 Our Opinions Are Correct
 Claire Rousseau's YouTube channel
 The Skiffy and Fanty Show

Best Fan Writer

Cora Buhlert
 James Davis Nicoll
 Alasdair Stuart
 Bogi Takacs
 Paul Weimer
 Adam Whitehead

Best Fan Artist

Iain Clark
Sara Felix
Grace P. Fong
Meg Frank
Ariela Housman
Elise Matthesen

Lodestar for Best Young Adult Book (Not a Hugo)

The Wicked King, Holly Black
Deeplight, Frances Hardinge
Minor Mage, T. Kingfisher
Catfishing on CatNet, Naomi Kritzer
Dragon Pearl, Yoon Ha Lee
Riverland, Fran Wilde

Astounding Award for Best New Writer (Not a Hugo)

Sam Hawke*
R.F. Kuang*
Jenn Lyons
Nibedita Sen*
Tasha Suri*
Emily Tesh

*Second year of eligibility

1945 Retro Hugo Awards

Best Novel

"Shadow Over Mars", Leigh Brackett (Startling Stories Fall '44)
Land of Terror, Edgar Rice Burroughs
The Golden Fleece, Robert Graves
"The Winged Man", E. Mayne Hull & A.E. Van Vogt
(Astounding Science Fiction 5-6/44)
The Wind on the Moon, Eric Linklater
Sirius, Olaf Stapledon

Best Novella

"The Jewel of Bas", Leigh Brackett (Planet Stories Spring '44)
"A God Named Kroo", Henry Kuttner
(Thrilling Wonder Stories Winter '44)
"Trog", Murray Leinster (Astounding Science Fiction 6/44)
"Intruders from the Stars", Ross Rocklynne
(Amazing Stories 1/44)
"Killdozer!", Theodore Sturgeon
(Astounding Science Fiction 11/44)
"The Changeling", A.E. van Vogt
(Astounding Science Fiction 4/44)

Best Novelette

"The Big and the Little", Isaac Asimov (Astounding 8/44)
"Arena", Fredric Brown (Astounding 6/44)
"No Woman Born", C.L. Moore (Astounding 12/44)
"The Children's Hour", Lawrence O'Donnell (C.L. Moore &
Henry Kuttner) (Astounding 3/44)
"When the Bough Breaks", Lewis Padgett (C.L. Moore &
Henry Kuttner) (Astounding 11/44)
"City", Clifford D. Simak (Astounding 5/44)

Best Short Story

"The Wedge", Isaac Asimov (Astounding 10/44)
"I, Rocket", Ray Bradbury (Amazing Stories 5/44)
"And the Gods Laughed", Fredric Brown (Planet Stories
Spring '44)
"Desertion", Clifford D. Simak (Astounding 11/44)
"Huddling Place", Clifford D. Simak (Astounding 7/44)
"Far Centaurus", A.E. van Vogt (Astounding 1/44)

Best Series

Pellucidar, Edgar Rice Burroughs
Jules de Grandin, Seabury Quinn
The Shadow, Maxwell Gibson (Walter B. Grant)
Captain Future, Brett Sterling
Doc Savage, Kenneth Robeson/Lester Dent
Cthulhu Mythos, H.P. Lovecraft, August Derleth, and others

Best Related Work

"The Science-Fiction Field", Leigh Brackett
(Writer's Digest 7/44)
Mr. Tompkins Explores the Atom, George Gamow
"The Works of H.P. Lovecraft: Suggestions for a Critical
Appraisal", Fritz Leiber (The Acolyte Fall '44)
Rockets: The Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere, Willy Ley
Fancylopedia, Jack Speer (Forrest J Ackerman)
'42 To '44: A Contemporary Memoir Upon Human Behavior During
the Crisis of the World Revolution, H.G. Wells

Best Graphic Story or Comic

Donald Duck: "The Mad Chemist", Carl Barks (Dell Comics)
Buck Rogers: "Hollow Planetoid", Dick Calkins
(National Newspaper Service)
Flash Gordon: "Battle for Tropica", Alex Raymond
(King Features Syndicate)
Flash Gordon: "Triumph in Tropica", Alex Raymond
(Kings Features Syndicate)
Superman: "The Mysterious Mr. Mxyztplk", Jerry Siegel &
Joe Shuster (DC)
The Spirit: "For the Love of Clara Defoe", Manly Wade Wellman,
Lou Fine, and Don Komisarow

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

The Canterville Ghost
The Curse of the Cat People
Donovan's Brain
House of Frankenstein
The Invisible Man's Revenge
It Happened Tomorrow

Best Professional Editor, Short Form

John W. Campbell, Jr.
Oscar J. Friend
Mary Gnaedinger
Dorothy McIlwraith
Raymond A. Palmer
W. Scott Peacock

Best Professional Artist

Earle Bergey
Margaret Brundage
Boris Dolgov
Matt Fox
Paul Orban
William Timmins

Best Fanzine

The Acolyte
Diablerie
Futurian War Digest
Shangri L'Affaires
Voice of the Imagi-Nation
Le Zombie

Best Fan Writer

Fritz Leiber, Jr.
Morojo (Myrtle R. Douglas)
J. Michael Rosenblum
Jack Speer
Bob Tucker
Harry Warner, Jr.

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

In the future, you're going to get computers as prizes
in breakfast cereals. You'll throw them out because
your house will be littered with them.

-- Robert Lucky

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