

La invasión de las bolas peludas

Luke Rhinehart



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Unas pintorescas criaturas han llegado a la Tierra desde los confines del universo: son esféricas, son peludas, son listísimas y quieren divertirse. Vienen a... jugar. Una de ellas, Louie, se instala en la casa de Billy Morton y enseguida cautiva a toda la familia con sus estrambóticas travesuras. Pero nadie podía sospechar sus verdaderas intenciones: cuando empieza a usar el ordenador doméstico para entrar en las redes del gobierno o de grandes empresas, cuando decide desactivar bombas nucleares o desplumar a los bancos y repartir millones a mansalva, advierten que la misión del simpático alienígena es poner el mundo patas arriba. El gobierno lo tiene claro: la nación ha sido invadida por unas bolas terroristas que pretenden subvertir el orden constituido. Y la nación solo juega a la guerra. Los Morton recorrerán el camino que va de la fama a la cárcel pasando por la lista donde el FBI consagra la excelencia de unos cuantos forajidos. Luke Rhinehart irrumpió en la historia de la literatura con "El hombre de los dados", un seísmo burlón que dinamitaba nuestras creencias más sólidas. Ahora, cuatro décadas después, arroja una sátira que no deja institución con cabeza. Una alegre carnicería. Las risas se clavan como dardos en la diana del poder, risas demoledoras que dejan al aire las verdades intocables y las vergüenzas del sistema. La ficción parece discurrir por un tiempo indefinido, pero los hechos la han alojado en el presente imperfecto: ¿cómo iba a imaginar el autor que el nuevo espectáculo de la política americana convertiría su fábula en una crónica de nuestra perplejidad? Pocas veces hallaremos una novela tan certera: la realidad ha asaltado sus páginas.

La invasión de las bolas peludas (Narrativa extranjera) Details

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Alan says

For a novel about invading aliens whose expressed goal is to help human beings have more *fun*, *Invasion* is... well, not that much fun. Its heart is in the right place, granted—I too cannot think of a bigger roadblock to humanity's collective fun than our metastasizing **military-industrial complex** (the term made famous by a 20th-Century U.S. President about whom, *Invasion* claims, "All that is now remembered of him is that his name was Ike" {p.378}). Anti-corporate; anti-militaristic; pro-fun—I'm on board with Luke Rhinehart, at least that far. However, after the first few chapters sink in, this particular countercultural tale is almost devoid of the element of surprise that's so essential to humor—it's just not much fun to force a laugh at the punchline you already knew was coming.

In a word, *Invasion* lacks *subtlety*—and that was disappointing. Perhaps I shouldn't have finished reading it on 9/11, either—that was a little *too* on-the-nose...

I was initially attracted to this book by its cover image, with its bold primary colors (blue over red—hey...) and its sly resemblance to an illustration from some high-school biology textbook... but that picture turns out to be the most subtle thing about the book. Inside, we get bits like this:

ITEM IN THE NEWS
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSMAN INTRODUCES
LEGISLATION OUTLAWING THINKING
Washington D.C.

In what most observers consider a political masterstroke, Rep. Jon John (D-MN) today introduced legislation making thinking for Democrats illegal.

"We Americans believe in a level playing field," the congressman said. "And this legislation will do just that. For the last decade we Democrats have been operating at a severe political disadvantage: gathering facts and thinking about our nation's problems, while Republicans have been proceeding totally without facts and thought and have thus gained an enormous political advantage.{...}

—p.279

Despite its heavy-handedness, I did rather enjoy the narrative portions of *Invasion*. Luke Rhinehart does tell a good yarn, when he's not telling us what to think, and Billy Morton, the cantankerous old Mainer who brings the first Protean invader home on his fishing boat, is a welcome change from the callow, taciturn action heroes who so frequently populate SF. Billy's voice ties the book together despite frequent interruptions, and helps lend it most of its humor. I could see Billy being played by the great Harry Dean Stanton, who—sadly—passed away while I was writing this review.

The other characters don't fare so well, though. The Proteans are, even the book admits, difficult to tell apart if you're not right in the room with them. Billy's wife Carlita gets put onto a pedestal early on, and never seems quite able to climb back off. Billy and Lita's young sons Lucas and Johnny are endearing (and their parents actually *listen* to them now and then, which is a plus) but ultimately interchangeable. Karen Bell, a gorgeous, athletic blonde in her twenties, winds up with the Protean Molière, who says of their match in a way that's *totally not creepy at all*,

"I've looked at tens of thousands of humans since I first landed here," he says, "and I knew what I wanted and I found her."

—p.223

The action shifts quickly after that disturbing confession, which is probably for the best.

But then... and then, after revealing more and more about the Proteans and how we react to them, and after escalating the stakes in the war between Fun and Profit for four hundred pages, Invasion just... stops.

Who builds half a bridge?

There is, it would appear, a continuation in the works (to be entitled The Hairy Balls and the End of Civilization, forsooth), but I'm not sure I want to know what's in it...

Vanessa Romero says

Wow este libro fue toda una sorpresa! Es tan diferente a lo que se suele encontrar en el mercado.

- Disparates - dijo Disparate :)

Terezka says

Ani nedokážu popsat, jak moc jsem se těšila, až si knihu přečtu. Měla jsem od ní jistě očekávání, která byla mnohonásobně překonána. Samozřejmě v tom dobrém smyslu. Od Luka Rhineharta je tohle moje první kniha. U nás v ČR vyšly už dvě knihy kolem roku 1995, pod jiným nakladatelstvím. Jsou to knihy "Kostka? aneb Náhoda je život" a "Všechno je náhoda?".

Děj knihy byl velmi štivý, vtipný a plný pravdy o tom, jak vlastně celý svět funguje. Docela mě překvapilo, kolik té pravdy bylo v knize vykresleno a pojato takovým tím způsobem, že se člověk i zasměje a přitom si říká "svatá pravda". Průtéžané jsou v knize vykresleni všichni rozhodně inteligentní, až si člověk říká, jak mohou být lidé tak hloupí?

V knize se nachází i dost černého humoru, který dodává knize potřebné grády. Takže milovníci černého humoru si zde přijdou na své a hlavní postavu si na 100% oblíbí! :-)

Kapitoly jsou pojaty tak trochu jinak než v obyčejné knize, najdeme zde výřátky z Billyho deníku, slovník Průtéžan?, zápisky nahrávek ze sezení vlády, novinové články apod. Ještě bych ráda zmínila, že kapitoly jsou krátké a díky tomu četná rychle ubíhají stránky pod prsty.

Obálka knihy je z prvního pohledu velmi matoucí, při prvním pohledu si člověk říká, že vidí mšice a lidi, kteří berou nohy na ramena, ale ono se za tím skrývá o mnoho více. :-) Tohle překvapení už nechám na vás.

Knihu bych ráda doporučila všem, kteří mají rádi černý humor a chtějí se pobavit nad tím, jak Luke dokázal Průtéžany neobyčejně vykreslit. A také samozřejmě těm, kteří mají rádi tematiku s mimozemšťany.

Jeff Raymond says

This book is tremendously silly, and there's nothing wrong with that, but silly isn't doing it for me at the moment. May come back to this, but it's not for me at the moment.

Tina says

Invasion is funny and profound in my opinions. I enjoyed it.

Ondřej Puczok says

Rozhodně nemůžu být označen za fandu amerických republikánů, popírání globálního oteplování nebo válek a invazí. A říst sci-fi, které by mělo satiricky tnout do tčto (a mnoha dalších nejen) amerických nešvarů, by mi nevadilo. Jenže Invaze není vtipná, jediná satira se objeví na přebalu - a to jako reklamní slovo, že to satira je - a ono pošťuchávání do amerických republikánů (a nejen do nich) je natolik viditelné a otravné, že to celou knihu kazí. Sci-fi část - tedy invaze mimozemšťanů - pak sama o sobě není nosným příběhem (a reálný vývoj kniha nemá), ale jen nástrojem, který agitku proti všemu autorem nenáviděnému a odmítanému převádí na stránky knihy. V tomto případě mimozemšťané svou "hravostí" a "užíváním si života" kritizují všechno možné od válek po kapitalismus. Začátek knihy nebyl špatný, ale postupně to sklouzlo jen k tomu jednomu. Tení jsem tak radši ukončil někdy okolo dvousté stránky...

Robin says

This is a hilarious, but at times politically obnoxious, fantasy about the effect on a Long Island family's lifestyle when they become bosom friends with a race of extraterrestrial beings, variously called FFs (furry fish), Proteans, Ickies, or (in government parlance) Alien Terrorists. The FFs just want to play, and their message to the world is that people should take life less seriously and spend more time doing things "for the hell of it." The Powers That Be couldn't disagree more strongly. The conflict reaches the intensity of, literally, a nuclear explosion, but even that isn't the end of it.

I was 38-percent entertained by this book about an alien invasion of the present-day world by sentient, hairy beach balls from another universe. I was 62-percent put off by its shrill, over-the-top, left-wing politics. It was about two-fifths funny, weird, thought-provoking fun, and three-fifths Social Justice Warrior bull hockey, tinged with an unmistakable hatred for everything historically American that, in my opinion, demands a blind acceptance of a lot of disinformation and a blithe dismissal of many facts about the flip side. I'm not going to go into for-instances here. I do not want this to become a space for hammering out political arguments. I'm just saying what I felt about the book, which is that it kept me just amused enough to pick it up again after repeatedly provoking me to slam it down in disgust.

I've been up front about the negatives, but the positives all have to do with the characters in the story and their adventures. I could even enjoy reading about them when their political views didn't align with mine. I

think the parts of the book that turned me off were when the author dropped the pretense of telling a story, brushed the characters and their situation aside, and went full-throttle political. In my opinion, his failing as an author in this instance arose from a lack of discipline and trust in his readers to draw their own connections to real-world politics and make up their own minds. I think it would have been a better book if it had stayed focused on the adventures of Billy, Lita, their two boys, and their super-intelligent, shape-changing, furry friends from Ickieland, or whatever their homeworld is called. "Good people against a corrupt system" is a story-shape that has worked in many contexts, and this particular rendition of it really had me in its grip. But Rhinehart, unfortunately, kept loosening that grip to scratch his own peculiar itch.

Luke Rhinehart, a.k.a. George Cockcroft, is the author of *The Dice Man*, *The Book of est*, *The Book of Die*, *Naked Before the World*, *Jesus Invades George*, and at least four other novels, plus the play *The Dice House* and several screenplays based on his own books. There is a rumor that a sequel to this book is coming, titled *The Hairy Balls and the End of Civilization*.

Marie Low says

3.5 stars. An entertaining, wild, and provocative read! The first hundred pages or so are mostly fun sci-fi focusing on developing this furry alien species. As the book progresses, it becomes more political. I'm not sure if I agree with the full extremeness of what the FFs (aliens) are suggesting, but I certainly see their point. The critique of current-day politics, societal values, and segregation of class by income and race is done in a way that is sarcastic and light-hearted. Yet, at its core, there's a lot of content to reflect on.

The plot gets wilder and more outrageous as it goes on. Even without the presence of aliens, the events continue to become more extreme and at times ridiculous. There's a dry, ironic sense of humour in nearly every sentence.

The style was a bit different than my usual type of book, but I enjoyed reading this one! It was lots of fun and interesting. I was also unable to predict the plot, which I appreciate in a book.

A brief non-spoiler note on the ending: It was somewhat conclusive, yet definitely open-ended. I wouldn't say it was a cliffhanger (which usually drives me nuts) but it certainly leaves more to be explored in the sequel. It can be nice to know that beforehand!

g-na says

This is sci-fi written in a comedic style that is reminiscent of Terry Pratchett, both absurd and matter-of-fact at the same time. Earth has been invaded by furry beach ball-shaped aliens that are all about having fun and not taking things too seriously, which also sounds like something Pratchett would have thought up. However, Rhinehart takes the whole story into the territory of political satire. But the thing is, I can't argue with anything he is saying; the book was released just a year ago but it does describe today's political climate.

I found this to be a fun read. The last third or so did start dragging on a bit, and I would call the ending anticlimactic, which is why I didn't rate it as highly as I may have otherwise. Still, it's a good, light book to

read while travelling or on vacation.

Tgv says

Too shallow, too slow.

The premise of the book is fun, and it starts out as an action-packed story. The idea of making it composed of different sources describing the same events is also good.

Unfortunately, both fall flat. The different sources (concurrent news papers, diaries, and reports and a book written afterwards) are all very similar in style, and don't break the chronology, and hardly change the viewpoint. It's all the same.

The plot turns out to be a pretext by the author to lecture his audience. He looks down upon humanity through the hyperintelligent aliens' continuous stream of remarks that are irrelevant to the story: the greenhouse effect, capitalism, discrimination, warfare, everything is briefly sneered at by beings with IQs way off the scale, who then only manage come off as carefree Buddhists that like to virtue-signal. A lot. And we know it's the author, because he repeats it when changing point of view. Unfortunately, the author's IQ is not 660, for then he would have known how boring all this gets.

The action and style also get boring. The author has tried to put in as many elements he dislikes as he could, and that means we've got to read about bankers, journalists, cable tv, FBI, CIA, NSA, US politicians, ISIL, and more, and in order to name them in context, the plot has been sacrificed. The reader has to witness pointless excursions and actions that have been written in such a haste that it would leave a child wondering about the why and how. E.g., at one point the protagonist and his family are chased by some three letter agency, the next moment they are in their home for two weeks without anything happening. And they all, including the small child, magically can scuba dive without making a noise.

All that makes this book nothing like the cover blurb promises. It is not fresh, nor smart, and certainly not very, very funny. Yes, it has some good one-liners, but there comes a point where witticisms become a nuisance. For this book, that is around midway. Had the author cut 50%, it might have been fun, but like this it's only suitable for people that need their convictions confirmed by cartoon characters.

Steve Erickson says

I quit this around the 200-page mark. It's like being lectured by a Democratic Socialists of America member who thinks he's incredibly witty but is actually massively smug, patronizing and annoying. Douglas Adams must be turning over in his grave at this attempt at witty sci-fi. I agree with the politics, but the way they're expressed got on my last nerve: I almost never put down books without finishing them.

Nesdy says

This took me a long time to finish because I didn't like any of it. It's supposed to be satire, but I didn't find it humorous or funny in any way. Some of the messages the author wants to transmit I find absurd and disagree

with completely. There's not much of a plot. The messages don't come from the story/the humour: the author stops the narration to tell you directly everything that he thinks. I don't think this is a well-written book at all.

Deadbeatnik says

Hilarious rip-roaring yarn about a bunch of anarchic aliens landing on Earth to give humanity a massive and long overdue kick in its self-righteous arse.

Rhinehart, true to form, slates and deconstructs the human systems enslaving us whilst giving the pompous bunch of idiots enforcing them a well deserved wedgie.

Invasion picks up where The Dice Man left off with Rhinehart calling out gun nuts, corrupt politicians, evil corporations, big brother style surveillance, the sensationalist mass media and everything else holding us back on a daily basis.

To my mind, Luke Rhinehart's one of the finest satirists alive, not merely because he makes me laugh, but because he does so with such grace and such compassion that however biting the wit, however fierce the polemic, he always draws me back into the curious and open mindset of a child, wanting the world to be right again, wanting us all to get along, and wanting to make the most of this short spark we call a life.

Stuart says

Billy Morton does not realise how much his life will change when he takes a hairy, gelatinous and spherical being home with him to meet his family. The creature or 'Louie' as the family names him is all about playing and having fun, he does not speak but he can mould himself into many different forms and Billy's boys Lucas and Jimmy have a great time with him. Billy's concerns only begin when Louie starts reading, talking and using the computer to hack government entities like the NSA to steal money. Protective of his new alien friend, Billy and his family try to hide him as best as they can, but sightings in the community of a 'hairy beach ball' shaped being as well as other sightings of similar creatures around the world bring the government to Greenport, Long Island to meet the Morton's and their new 'pet'.

Once the 'cat' is out of the bag so to speak, events elevate to a whole other level, with Louie and other 'Protean' friends taking to the media and speaking out against capitalism, war and all the other problems that the common human faces everyday. Billy and his family are taken along for the ride and it is a chaotic one for sure. With an agenda packed full of hacking, sexual innuendo, huge parties, espionage, sold out theatre shows, inter-universe sex and nuclear disarmament to name a few. Invasion is a hilarious/worrying series of events and scenarios that highlight everything that is wrong with the world and what we can do about it. Invasion is a unique and refreshing take on the arrival of a extraterrestrial beings that manages to side step most of the cliches we see in an invasion scenario.

Genre/Writing Style: Invasion is a mash up of many genres. Though focusing highly on the comedy, adventure and political side of things throughout most of the book, there are also elements of thriller, action, romance and other popular genres. The book takes the idea of an alien invasion to a new place, instead of picturing oppression and obliteration, Luke Rhinehart brings us a story of revolution and equality. Invasion definitely stands out from other books in its field. I cannot really put my finger on a definitive audience for

this book as there is a lot of fun, play and light amusement here, but there is also lots of foul language, sexual references and outright violence, so be wary when picking this book up.

The story in Invasion is told from several different view points across multiple formats so it is prevented from being too stale, though my main criticism of this book is its length. I found the story to become slightly repetitive and bizarre in the middle of the book and felt it could have been somewhat shaved down. Mainly I was amused by this book, at times I was scared for humanity and occasionally I was uninterested by the escapades of the hairy aliens and their fisherman friend.

Characters: First off, Billy Morton is a great character, he has a certain way of looking at life and though he is in his early 70s he still embraces the new and tolerates the odd. I found his perspective to be inspiring and his satire to be hilarious, I hope I see things his way when I am that age. The other standout character here is Louie, the leader of the 'Proteans'. These aliens are bizarre, unpredictable and super intelligent but mainly they just want the human race to stop seeking riches and building weapons and just chill out and have some fun. Louie leads this charge and we get to see him evolve and lead his people through the events in this story.

The enemy in the book is the government, Luke Rhinehart has made them paranoid, brutal and devious, which is really much different from reality. The lengths that all the American government entities and politicians go to fight the aliens that just want to help is insanely intense but makes for such a good back and forth storyline between both sides. The 'Proteans' just want humans to see what they are doing to themselves and their planet and they start to make headway but it is left on a cliffhanger. Whether to let us determine what happened next or to set up another book in the series (there is a message at the end that states there will be another book but I am not sure I can take it seriously due to the name of the sequel :D)

Setting: The story starts so small, in a little fishing town in the USA and it just grows and grows until it envelops the whole world. Yes it is focused on America for its storyline and politics, but it does take into the consideration all countries, states of mind and people. The Morton's are taken all over the world, they are harassed, imprisoned, blown up, resurrected and many other crazy scenarios, Luke Rhinehart obviously had a great time writing this story but by the end of it you may just have to hang your head in shame :(.

This is a hilarious and concerning insight into our existence as humans and the fact that an alien invasion may shake things up for the better.

Elizabeth Fisher says

How wonderfully fun, funny and insightful. Now I've got to out there and do something just "for the hell of it" every day!

Seriously, read this book!
