2021 Books

Books read starting December 1st 2020

**-- Non-Fiction –**

**1. The God Delusion** by Richard Dawkins (2-02-21) – Chapter 7 was by far the most interesting of chapters here. In it he talks about how it is assumed without the bible; people would not be moral. He goes on to point out why the bible should not be used as a moral compass in and of itself and should also not be taken literally as many do take it.  
 There is also a section of this chapter called “The Moral Zeitgeist”. In it, he mentions a new 10 commandments to live by and goes on to talk about how we should not judge the past based on current moral topics. For instance, while Lincoln was ahead of his time, he also viewed the “black race” as inferior to the “white race” and believed the superior position should be to the “white race”. Overall, though, he believes that each progressive generation of people is moving in a more moral direction. Really a fascinating chapter of the book overall.

**2. The Killer Across the Table** by John Douglas and Mark Olshaker (2/19/21) – This was very fascinating to read. I am normally not interested into crime stories and what not, but reading about the reasoning serial killers, in their own words, decided to do the crimes they did was interesting. While the crimes themselves were very heart wrenching, the fact that perhaps this insight might be used in the future to help stop killers from killing the first place I believe would be well worth the time to figure out. Looking at the factors that are common behind these people’s actions, from violent homes and sexual assaults during childhood to the things that could be used to help catch someone currently committing similar crimes, this could be very informative to the future of criminology.

**3. The More of Less** by Joshua Becker (03-13-21) – The premise of the book is helping people on a path towards minimalism. While I would not consider myself a minimalist perse’, it is a path I feel I am more on now then I was in the past. While the book was not much more then I had read previously, he explains things in a way that is very approachable and concise. Ultimately, this affirms the path I believe I wish to move forward on.

**4. Hivemind** by Sarah Rose Cavanagh (04-19-21) – All around a fascinating book. It talks about how humanity is very much a social species and is more apt to be like a hivemind like a bee society is. For instance, people tend to take on characteristics of the people who are around them on a regular basis. It also goes into social medias good and bad aspects as well. Made for a very fascinating read all around.

**5. Klaus Barbie: The Butcher of Lyons** by Tom Bowen (5-17-21) – I bought this because I have an interest in WW2 and because I had honestly not heard of him before. It was an interesting read going from his war time deeds with the Nazis all the way till his recapture some 40 years after the war ended. The story included the various bits of where he was under the payroll of the US government after the war was over. While painting a somewhat dark picture of the US after the wars hiring of Nazi war criminals, this was fascinating to see how this man managed to eke out a life afterwards that didn’t really fall too far from his war deeds.

**6. The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt** (7-26-21) – I seem to have an interest in group thought this year. Between this and Hivemind which I read a few months earlier, this is two books that are pushing group think and that humanity is likely similar in some respects to a bee society then to be strictly like apes. The book also seems to lean towards what I believe as well in that both sides of the political spectrum are wrong. The truth lies closer to the middle. In fact, both sides are likely needed to keep the other in check. In the sense that, both sides will see the possible problems that can arise based upon the other solutions. For instance, the lefts belief in social programs can be pushed to far which in turn hurt those that are intended to help. If the right and left work together, its possible that they will be able to reach a solution to help the most people possible, and harm as few as possible.

**7. Fortitude: American Resilience in the Era of Outrage** by Dan Crenshaw (8-06-21) – This was more interesting than I initially thought it was going to be. I expected something that was very one sided (he is a republican representative), and while it was a bit one sided, he did also point out the failings of his own party to an extent as well. Overall, he stated that both sides of the political spectrum are the problem and that people need to not being overly emotional and stop and think and be willing to listen. Considering other people’s perspectives and being willing to update yours based on a compelling argument presented with facts. This was more interesting than I was going to give it credit for, I largely just wanted to read it to get a different perspective then I normally get. I was surprised in the number of times that I found myself agreeing with his analysis and nodding along.

8. **The Sixth Extinction** by Elizabeth Kolbert (9-04-21) – A fascinating book overall but wasn’t what I was expecting (not a bad thing though!). The books chapters go over various things that have caused or are in the process of causing extinctions. Of the examples you expect are meteors such that ended the dinosaurs, climate change which also ended, or at least possible ended, the Permian time. Though it also goes into the chytrid fungus, which is currently killing frogs across the world, as well as talking about how the large animals of the near past which went extinct, tend to also follow the time when humans first came into that area. The book painted an overall picture of why it’s believed we are heading into the beginning of a new mass extinction event, and why its likely to get much worse before it ends of things don’t start to change. Enlightening read for sure, though not exactly a happy read.

**9. Spillover** by David Quammen (11-6-21) – This was quite interesting as it went through how virus tend to come over to humans via an animal. The vector that you are looking at is when a virus jumps from one species of animal to humans. This can be done either by contaminated blood, airborne via breathing droplets or just being brought airborne on the ground via wind, can be done from an animal eating a fruit that is subsequently eaten by a human later. The book goes over various viruses that have made the jump to humans. Included is Marburg and Ebola, Influenza, SARS, Hendra, and AIDS virus among others. Talks about how most of these are carried by a reservoir animal that can infect others but is generally not affected itself. The book while interesting spells out that the encroaching on animal biomes, the increasing population densities is just exacerbating an issue where a virus gets a chance to spread and evolve by creating new variants of itself that might be worse or more likely to infect and spread in the human species. While the book took me quite a long time to read, I found it quite fascinating, especially given we are likely in the middle of a pandemic that was brought about by this very thought.

**10. Doctors from Hell** by Vivian Spitz (11-29-21) – Didn’t think I would finish this before the end of the month, got in here with about a day to spare. The book, while not what I originally was interested in, goes into the trials of the various doctors of the Third Reich who were charged with war crimes. Its basically a break down of the actual trials with a bit of explanation as to what each instance went over. For instance, there is the experimentation with freezing people to near death and then testing the best methods for warming them back up. Experimentation on how best to cure gangrene, tuberculosis, sepsis among several other experiments. All around, a chilling account of what happened, even if the book was not what I was looking for at the beginning.

**-- Fiction –**

**1. Leia: Princess of Alderaan** by Claudia Gray (12-24-20) – Overall the story was a bit interesting. Filling in some of the gaps between Leia joining into the rebellions cause, as well as filling in some character details from The Last Jedi. Claudia Gray has written some of my favorite stories and while this one was not perfect; it was interesting enough. I liked the characters and while we are talking about royal people, they feel real enough throughout the story. All around a good read, though I doubt I would re-read it in the future.

**2.** **Relentless** by R.A. Salvatore (1-25-21) – A nice conclusion to the overall story arc. There is bit of things that I did not recognize being referenced since I have not read several books in between, but overall, I still enjoyed it. I look forward to the next story that will likely be written at some point.

**3. Star Wars: Thrawn Ascendancy** by Timothy Zahn (2-8-21) – Another great entry from this author. I enjoy the back story to Thrawn and the fleshing out of the characters past. While this is the first book in the series, I look forward to reading the next two books of this trilogy. This story has Thrawn using his abilities to weed out and outwit a new enemy. All around a top-notch story from probably my favorite author.

**4. Bedtime Stories** by Russel Smeaton (2-15-21) – All around a fun and engrossing read. The first two stories Monday Morning and Snot had me going from chuckling to cringing all over the course of several pages. Can for sure see the Lovecraftian influences here, especially in couple of the last stories. Also, some of the twist in the stories I didn’t even see until the last page of the stories. All around a fun and quick read.

**5. Resident Evil: Caliban Cove** by S.D. Perry (2-26-21) – Book two of the Resident Evil series of books. This book is a departure from the games as it appears to take place in an event that the games did not follow. Takes the team to a secret base in I believe Oregon (or Washington State). Here this team which includes Rebecca Chambers from the first book is looking to get information to implicate Umbrella about what happened in the Spencer Mansion incident. All around was not that bad and looking forward to continuing the story in the future.

**6. Nights of the Living Dead** by Anthology (3-13-21) – All around was a fairly good book. Like most anthologies, it was a mixed bag of interesting and average stories at best. While most were interesting in some respects, I doubt I would re-read this book. Most of the stories were interesting as a solo read but really none grabbed me enough that I would want to go back and remember them again. The thing I found most interesting with this book was how they usually referenced, or even took place with the characters or location of the namesake movie of the book.

**7. Seveneves** by Neal Stephenson (5-7-21) – This was an exceptionally long but interesting read. The basic premise is that the moon blows up, it is not really stated how, but it does and now the pieces of the moon will be raining down onto the planet. The story goes over how things move on from there. Do not want to give too much away, but was a really good read, just at something near 900 pages, took me forever to get through. All around, probably will not read again, but do not regret reading the book.

**8. Star Wars the High Republic: Into the Dark** by Claudia Gray (5-24-24) – All around a good entry into this new series of books. Taking place I believe about 100 years prior to the events of the movies, this takes place back in an older era of the republic. The events largely set as an introduction to a new set of characters and possibly two new evil characters or races. All around was a fun read and I look forward to reading more in this realm in the future.

**9. Lord of Souls** by Greg Keyes (6-2-21) – This is the final of two novels based in the Elder Scrolls world of Tamriel. A fairly good story overall. I had forgot who the characters were initially because it had been so long since I last read the first book. Reading about the world building, a floating city that runs on souls of those that are killed beneath it, the growth of the main characters and the ultimate choices that lead to the end of the story are quite well done. I thought a few of the story points at the end went a bit too quickly (a primary villain is killed off seemingly over just a page or two from the initial confrontation). Overall, I wish they would keep making books in this world because the lore here is quite deep and could generate many stories, I’m sure.

**10. The Perfect Day** by Ira Levin (6-21-21) – Set in a future world where everyone is basically controlled by a treatment which makes them less violent and overall, more compliant. A dystopian society where you are told what you will do for a living once of age if you are allowed to have children and to ultimately be known when you will die. This is the premise of this story which was quite interesting to read and one of those things where aspects of it seem good on the outside, but you can see the extremes it can be taken to.

**11. Pan’s Labyrinth** by Guillermo Del Toro and Cornellia Funke (7-4-21) – The book was just as good as the movie. It filled in a bit more details behind the fantasy aspects of the overall narrative, for instance, talking about the Pale Man and how he became the Pale Man, but otherwise the book and movie followed each other quite well. I was not disappointed in the slightest.

**12. Resident Evil: City of the Dead** by S. D. Perry (book 3) (7-15-21) – Overall was a great book, but since it was based upon arguably the best game in the franchise that is not too surprising. As mentioned, this book follows the events of Resident Evil 2. The best part is though it gives you more insight into the motivations of some of the side characters like Ada and Chief Irons for instance, plus more into the minds of Leon, Claire, and Sherry. The events play out pretty much as expected if you played the game, you could almost see the events happen as you remember from the game. Looking forward to going on to book four at some point in the future.

**13. Tiamat’s Wrath (The Expanse Book 8)** by James S. A. Corey (8-17-21) – Great in every aspect! Can’t wait for the final in the series. This one pitted the cast against the Laconian’s again and built up a bit more of what killed the protomolecule creators. Can’t say much more without giving things away. Looking like a hell of a last book coming out later this year.

**14. Halo Oblivion** by Troy Denning (9-12-21) – I have been a huge fan of halo for just shy of two decades now. In all this time though I have yet to read of the novels set in that universe. This being the first I am so far not sold on the series honestly. While the book wasn’t that bad, it was sort of strange to read the inner thoughts of the hero from the games which is just the silent hero type more or less. All around, the story wasn’t terrible, but it sorts of built up to something and then that thing didn’t even happen. I will likely read another story in the series, but if the overall narrative doesn’t hold my interest after that, I will likely move on and just stick to the games.

**15. Fearful Symmetries** by Various Authors (10-05-21) – I honestly was mostly let down with this compendium of stories. For a, what I had assumed anyway, was a largely horror based short story collection, the stories were sort of a letdown. There were a few stories a bit over halfway through that I thought were overall good, but the large majority just were uninteresting. I believe I had only bought this because it had stories from authors, I knew who wrote good books. Brian Evenson who wrote the Dead Space novels (which are fantastic) and John Langan who wrote an excellent short story in “A Living Dead” called “How the Day Runs Down”, which was also fantastic. In this one though, I don’t even remember if their stories were the memorable ones or not because everything was mediocre to me at best. All around, a pass.

**16. Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi** by Charles Soule (10-24-21) – So apparently this is really the first book in the new story arc. The book I had read previously was the second. Wasn’t too big of a deal though, the references were passing and didn’t ruin anything. The story really starts with a hyperspace anomaly causing a cargo ship to fall apart in hyper space. The pieces then proceed to scatter through various systems and cause damage killing billions of people. This leads the story to go into the rise of the new villains of this story line, the Nihil. Ultimately this was likely an introduction to many of the characters we will see over the course of the coming Novels, so there was a lot of introductions to be had, many Jedi and many leaders of the Nihil. All around, was a decent book, not great, but not terrible either.

**17. The First Days** by Rhiannon Frater (11-4-21) – So generally when it comes to fiction I don’t like reaching out and reading something I am not familiar with from authors I don’t know. This book I randomly heard it was good from somewhere and figured I would add it to my list and maybe try it. Glad I did as the book was a decent zombie book. The basic premise is as you would suspect, main characters, Jennie and Katie, meet up during the fall of civilization when the zombies start rising and have to survive. Pretty straight forward but the interactions were believable, the setting was believable as well. All around I ended up adding the next book in the series to my list and hope it goes cheaper soon so I can continue the story.

**18. Brave New World** by Aldous Huxley (11-25-21) – So the premise of this is a utopian society that is largely created by forcing society into certain roles by use of hypnotic suggestion from birth onwards. They are created essentially in a factory from initial fertilization up till birth, there is no procreation in society. Various castes are created of various intelligence levels, of which your likes and dislikes are decided from birth as well based on this caste. For instance, a certain cast will have a dislike of being out in nature and will feel sick to the stomach by the thought of having to go camping. In this sort of society, free thinking is forbidden and even the new learnings of science are blocked from being taught if it could lead to free thinking. In this society, someone born outside of it is interjected into it through the story and you see their eventual reaction to this society. All around an interesting story, and while there are certain aspects of this utopian society I would personally jump into, just like with Blackmirror tv show, there are downsides to this which is shown at the end.

**-- Currently Reading --**

1. Quiet by Susan Cain
2. The Living Dead by George Romero and Daniel Kraus

**-- Current Book Completed Count as of 11-25-21 --**

Non-fiction - 10

Fiction - 18