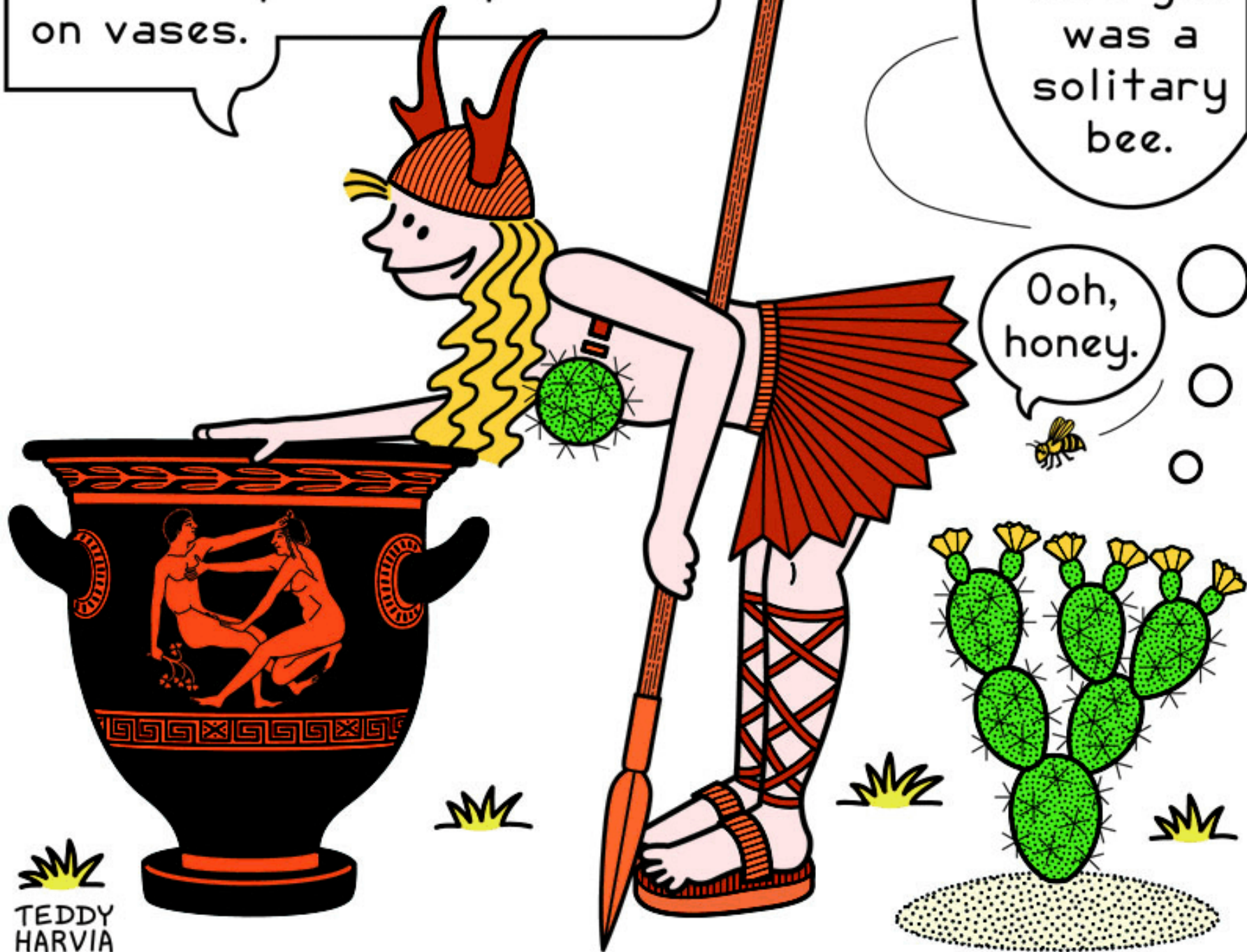


My mother taught me about sex from pictures painted on vases.

I feel so deprived.
All I got
was a
solitary
bee.

Ooh,
honey.



Early May 2016

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

I LOVE A PARADE
photos by Dale Speirs

Calgary Comic and Entertainment Expo 2016 was held over four days ending May 1, with 60,000 paid admissions, down at the Stampede rodeo grounds. The Comic and Entertainment Expo is big business in Calgary. The week prior to the event there were daily puff pieces about it in all the news media. Like other comic cons, it isn't really a convention, just a mob of costumers who happily pay hundreds of dollars to line up for hours to see an actor.

William Shatner held forth in the Corral hockey arena, and 93-year-old Stan Lee was another guest, making what he said would be his final Canadian engagement. I wasn't there, since I don't cosplay or have any interest in superheroes. On the Friday morning of the Expo, the costumers have a parade and march through the downtown core, so I did take that in as a spectator.

Calgary fandom had a general SF convention called Con-Version until it was run into the ground by the Internet generation. Con-Version 26 was the final edition in 2010 but went under because the convention committee booked six minor Star Trek stars, expensive but not a sufficient crowd draw to pay the bills. Con-Version 27 was announced but never held.

After that, SF conventions split into a binary distribution. There is the massive Comic Expo, commercial through and through, which keeps the media fans happy. There is no middle ground anymore. At the other end of the curve are blips for small fan-run conventions such as When Words Collide (literary), Calgary Comic and Toy Expo (I'm surprised they haven't been sued for trademark infringement by the big show), Otafest (anime and cosplay), and Calgary Horror Con. I only attend the WWC; the other three are basically small dealer bourses, although Otafest has cosplaying and some seminars. See OPUNTIA #318 for a report on last year's WWC.

The parade participants marshaled at the Eau Claire Plaza by the Bow River, proceeded south along 3 Street SW, then east along the 8 Avenue South pedestrian mall, ending up at Olympic Plaza. Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi was the Honourary Parade Marshal and led the way.



Anime is always popular.





Hint to costumers: It spoils the effect when you're carrying a cup of coffee.



Calgary Steampunk Association showed their colours. Mainly black.



I'm still not certain if he is carrying a steampunk weapon or a musical instrument. Maybe both.

You absolutely do not mess with Security.



This probably meant something to somebody.





She had bodyguards, so she must be a famous actress somewhere.



Canada Post had a van in the parade for their forthcoming set of Star Trek stamps issued May 5 (for details, visit www.canadapost.ca/startrek). There is a legitimate Canadian connection. Two of the lead actors, William Shatner and James Doohan, were from Montreal and Vancouver respectively.

James Colicos, from Toronto, was a Romulan commander in the original series. Not sure why McCoy was added; he was a Georgia man. The town of Vulcan, Alberta, is recognized by Paramount Pictures as a Star Trek-authorized tourist site.



**IF YOU AREN'T SQUAMOUS,
THEN WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO BE ELDRITCH?: PART 3**

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 2 appeared in OPUNTIA #298 and 333. Issues #22 and 63.1A have related articles on H.P. Lovecraft.]

The Old Home Town Looks Much The Same.

WEIRDER SHADOWS OVER INNSMOUTH (2013) is an anthology edited by Stephen Jones, comprising pastiches based on the HPL story, both original and reprinted from other sources. I won't review all of them because a sameness develops as one reads through the book. The standard plot seems to be that of a narrator in a seaside village where the local sexton worships things to terrible to mention in a cave down at the beach, eldritch creatures are summoned, and somebody gets carried off or eaten.

The anthology starts off with "Innsmouth Bane" by John Glasby. The narrator is Jedediah Allen, who is jealous of his fellow townsman Obed Marsh, a wealthy man with an unexplained pile of gold apparently looted from some tropic isle. He has three ships that regularly sail to the South Seas, bringing back things which are not declared at Customs.

Marsh also scorns the local churchmen, apparently having fallen under the influence of a strange religion of bizarre creatures that look like human-sized bipedal fish, and hop rather than walk. Marsh is smuggling them into Innsmouth and sets up the Esoteric Order of Dagon. He bribes the townsfolk with gold and the promise of immortality. With his eldritch creatures, Marsh takes control of Innsmouth and rules it as a personal fiefdom. Allen is helpless to stop him.

"Richard Riddle, Boy Detective, In The Case Of The French Spy" by Kim Newman tries hard to be a parody of those old BOY'S OWN stories but always stays just a little short of any actual humour. The local Rev. Daniel Sellwood has captured one of those man-fish creatures that HPL was always going on about. Dick Riddle and his chums Ernest and Violet discover the secret in a bit of amateur sleuthing, and liberate the monster. It takes Sellwood with it to a watery grave. The story is a quick and easy read but too self-conscious of itself. A good parody or comedy has to be written or played straight, with no mugging at the audience or breaking the fourth wall.

"Innsmouth Clay" by H.P. Lovecraft and August Derleth is one of those posthumous collaborations that Derleth did. He falsely claimed that he had HPL's copyrights and churned out stories such as this after HPL's death, using notes, outlines, and fragments of the detritus of the HPL literary estate. All of HPL's copyrights expired a few years ago and are now definitely in the public domain.

Derleth was much abused by his critics and deservedly so, but it must also be remembered that the reason HPL is not forgotten today is because Derleth was his original disciple. He reprinted HPL's works in book form and promoted him when no one else did.

The mashup story by Derleth is about the sculptor Jeffrey Corey, a collateral relative of the reclusive and infamous Marsh family. Corey returns to Innsmouth in December 1927 to rent a house and work on a statue. He gradually turns into a man-fish, squamous even, and on that point the story ends. A mildly eldritch vignette.

"The Archbishop's Well" by Reggie Oliver moves the standard Innsmouth plot to Morchester Cathedral in Wessex, England. The well in question is discovered to lead to an underground chamber wherein piscine eldritch horrors, etcetera, etcetera. It reads smoothly but is a string of Lovecraftian cliches, with an obvious plot that can be seen coming from several pages away.

"You Don't Want To Know" by Adrian Cole has the New York Police Department dealing with an eldritch horror in Manhattan. Not squamous, just a giant shapechanger that changes into an equally giant amoeboid and tries to run for the East River in the final battle. All the evidence is destroyed in a fire during the climactic battle, and the narrator makes it to the final page. I'm glad I live in the interior of the continent, far away from any ocean, since those Lovecraftian horrors can easily migrate through the seawater to the next venue.

"Fish Bride" by Caitlin Kiernan is a meandering vignette, narrated by a man who sleeps with a female thing in a shanty town where once was a prosperous fishing village. She collects human detritus, those who have failed or been rejected by society, and who collect around her as ill-begotten disciples. A mood piece where nothing happens.

"The Hag Stone" by Conrad Williams is about a grieving widower who has his own medical problems and decides a trip to the Channel Island of Alderney will

help take his mind off his woes. Insert standard Innsmouth plot here. Remember again that to the eldritch horrors of the deep, all the shorelines and islands are as one land.

Caitlin Kiernan has another story in this anthology titled “On The Reef”, back in Innsmouth, where a regular religious rite takes place in an old abandoned cathedral. Not a Christian one, but rather for Dagon, with two humans sacrificed to the cause. Not to the death, but rather a transformation into ye olde eldritch forms dating back three billion years.

“The Song Of Sighs” by Angela Slatter is about a disciple of Dagon who uses her students at an orphanage as sacrifices, trying to summon one of those horrors back from the sea. Specifically, her husband. She’s getting tired of waiting for him, so she decides that if one human sacrifice a year won’t do, then maybe an entire classroom of them will speed up the process.

“The Same Deep Waters As You” by Brian Hodge brings in the Department of Homeland Security, which has inherited a top-secret concentration camp run since 1928 when the denizens of Innsmouth, in all their eldritch glory, were rounded up and sequestered by a joint operation of the FBI and U.S. Army. The inmates finally get help from their kind out in the ocean, who hijack a freighter and run it ashore against the prison, smashing its walls and allowing an escape.

The stories in this anthology all read reasonably well, with no real clunkers in the lot. They do tend to a sameness because of the restrictions of the theme, but an HPL fan will like it.

Life In Lovecraft Land.

“The Freshman” by Philip Jose Farmer (1979 May, MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF) is about Roderick Desmond, a middle-aged man who enrolls at Miskatonic University. The campus is run down, and the facilities are decrepit. The student death rate is much higher than at other universities because if they get a spell wrong, it isn’t just a failing grade. Desmond doesn’t fit in well and has problems with his mother back home, problems that are resolved with spell casting.

CARTER AND LOVECRAFT (2015) by Jonathon L. Howard is about Daniel Carter, once a homicide detective, now a private investigator. Alfred Hill, a

complete stranger to Carter, left his entire estate to him, which proves to be a bookstore in Providence, Rhode Island. Hill’s niece, Emily Lovecraft (a black woman; take that, you Sad Puppies!) runs the bookstore and is naturally hostile to the usurper. Carter assuages her anger by giving her a half-ownership in the store. In the story, she is referred to as a descendant, but HPL never had children, so presumably she is from a very distant collateral line.

The novel progresses with all types of strange unexplained events, hallucinations and nightmares, and mysterious references to something called The Twist. Carter and Lovecraft eventually cross paths with the Waite family, who are Providence hillbillies with green blood and who have friends and relatives who look like amphibious humanoids.

The finale of the novel moves underground into hidden tunnels and caverns with lakes. The Twist is found and proves to be a gateway between different universes, including one where Providence is replaced by a real Arkham, on the banks of the Miskatonic River. At that point, the novel abruptly ends, so there probably is a sequel in the works.

WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. 2016 will be the 23rd year of the WWP.

At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe.

At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour. Raise a glass, publish a one-shot, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

SHERLOCKIANA: PART 19

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 18 appeared in OPUNTIA's #63.1B, 63.1C, 63.1D, 67.1D, 68.1C, 69.1E, 70.1A, 71.1B, 251, 253, 256, 261, 269, 270, 276, 288, 309, and 333.]

The original Sherlock Holmes stories are referred to as the canon, while stories written by other authors in the Holmesian setting are called pastiches.

It's Novel, My Dear Watson.

THE THINKING ENGINE (2015) by James Lovegrove is a novel that might be called steampunk except that the mechanical computer of the title is powered by a gasoline engine. Professor Malcolm Quantock of Oxford University has deliberately provoked Holmes into coming up to the city of dreaming spires to match wits with a thinking engine. It is said that the device can solve crimes faster and easier than Holmes or the police. A John Henry type of competition develops between Holmes and the thinking engine, starting off with the brutal murder of a woman and her two daughters.

Holmes and the Thinking Machine consider one case after another in competition as the months go by, and seem to be running in a dead heat. The cases, unconnected in the public eye, seem to have similarities of a disturbing kind, indicating there is someone in the background directing events so as to publicly humiliate Holmes and discredit him. The machine begins providing clues it couldn't possibly have derived from the raw data fed to it.

Eventually there has to be a conclusion, so the author drags in Col. Sebastian Moran, the second most dangerous man in Europe. The Colonel is, as usual, a supporting character, and the denouement brings forth his master, the remains of Professor Moriarty, who survived the Reichenbach Falls as a paraplegic. Moriarty now sits at the centre of the Thinking Machine, like the Turkish Chess Player automaton.

There is a succession of endings as the various players are disposed of one by one. The novel is a reasonably good read. Almost all of it takes place in Oxford, and the author does his part as tour guide in explaining town versus gown. There is enough foreshadowing to give the reader a fair chance at guessing what will happen.

Sherlock's Smarter Brother.

In the canon, Sherlock's brother Mycroft is presented in later life as a power behind the throne, and very corpulent, a predecessor to Nero Wolfe. The 2015 novel MYCROFT HOLMES by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (yes, that one) and Anna Waterhouse is a prequel that attempts to set the stage for Mycroft's later appearances. The young Mycroft has just graduated from Cambridge and is an assistant in a government ministry. His fiancé Georgiana and his best friend Cyrus are both originally from Trinidad, where mysterious killings of children are raising alarms. The dead children had their blood drained from their bodies. The natives say it is the return of the lougrou, a giant mosquito, accompanied by douen, which are companion demons.

Georgiana knows more about this than she is telling Mycroft, and abruptly returns to Trinidad, with Mycroft and Cyrus following to see that she comes to no harm. The ships of that time took eight days to make the passage from England to Trinidad. It feels that long to read through the middle section of the book which details the voyage and assorted events on board which are mostly much ado about nothing.

But finally, land ho!, and into the less desirable locales of Trinidad as Mycroft and Cyrus carry on their investigation. There is a conspiracy afoot, with various alarms and excursions. Slavery is outlawed in the British Empire but there are Americans from the losing side of the recent War Between The States who are attempting to re-establish it on Trinidad. They are all part of an elaborate scheme to mulct American investors who bought into Trinidad's famous asphalt lakes. Mycroft overcomes the sharp-practice men but only gains a partial victory. He loses Georgiana, who goes off to South Africa where she likes the way the Boers operate. Mr. Big has some of his ill-gotten loot confiscated but walks free because he is Something among British nobility.

And so to home. The novel reads well except some slow passages in the middle. The plot is quite intricate but it hangs together well.

The Supporting Cast.

MRS HUDSON'S DIARIES (2012) by Barry Cryer and Bob Cryer is exactly that, beginning on January 1, 1881. Holmes and Watson moved into their digs on February 11, and after that the fun began. Mrs Hudson complains in her diary about the stench of Holmes's chemical experiments, him shooting a V.R.

pattern in the wall, and worst of all, his terrible violin playing. She charges the men a high rent in compensation. An ongoing problem is the constant noise of doors banging as disreputable people of all sorts barge in and out, such as street arabs, clients, criminals, and police inspectors.

Mrs Hudson also details her private life. Her social circle gathers for gossip and singing, enjoying such tunes as “Gladstone’s Pen Is Full Of Ink” and “What A Friend We Have In Jesus”. She had various servants, events in whose lives are recorded, and attended celebrations such as Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. A funny book all told, and worth reading.

Sherlock’s French Connection.

THE WEB WEAVER (2012) by Sam Siciliano is a novel written as if by Dr. Henry Vernier, a cousin of Holmes and one who is jealous of Watson, whose stories he considers unnecessarily sensationalized. I reviewed an earlier book in this series, THE ANGEL OF THE OPERA, in OPUNTIA #71.1B.

The story gets off to a slow start with Vernier visiting Holmes at 221B (sans Watson) and the great detective going on at length about spiders. Finally a client arrives, a wealthy man named Donald Wheelwright. Two years ago he was bothered at a fancy-dress party by a supposed gypsy woman who crashed in and screamed various curses at those in attendance.

There are those who think the curse is coming true, but since it was a large party, naturally over time some of the people died or had misfortunes. Two years later, and which prompted the visit of Wheelwright to Holmes, a note is found in the manor house purporting to be from the gypsy. It is overly elaborate, written in actual blood and on parchment, which even then was expensive and only used for documents of great importance. Food prepared in the manor has been spiked with soap and minor acts of sabotage committed.

Holmes zeroes in on the household staff, since an outsider could not have done the acts. He eventually narrows suspicion down to the culprit, who is insanely jealous of those who have money, but also manages to expose just about everyone in the manor for one crime or another. He then declares Professor Moriarty was the brains behind it all, which destroys the credibility of the story, or, in the alternative, indicates Holmes needs the care of a psychologist for his monomania about a criminal that no one else has ever seen or noticed any evidence.

This book could have used better editing. Setting aside the typos, the main difficulty was that the narrators kept changing back and forth. This is not a problem in itself because the thing has been done before and while not common, is an acceptable literary device. However, when the voice of a book changes, there should be some sort of break in the text, whether a chapter or the first sentence in a new paragraph to indicate the narrator has changed. In this book, the changes were often done within a paragraph or within a flow of dialogue from one sentence to the next without warning. As a result, it was often not clear who was speaking, particularly if the gender of the narrator changed.

THE GRIMSWELL CURSE (2013) is the next installment in the series by Siciliano. This chronicle by Vernier takes place a year after the Wheelwright case. Frederick Digby comes to Holmes to consult about his fiancée Rose Grimswell, who for no apparent reason has called off the engagement. Her father died four months previously, in a fall off a tor in Dartmoor near Grimswell Hall. A maiden aunt has muddied the water further by passing on to Rose a document about the Grimswell Curse, about an evil ancestor done to death by a mob and who was said to be a werewolf. No mention of the Baskervilles, but at this point the reader can guess the plot and denouement of this novel.

The story soon shifts from London to the moors. Various alarums take place in Grimswell Hall, and assorted excursions out on the moors. The manor house becomes the venue of an extended Gothic romance, with further characters introduced to complicate the plot. The hound appears, as we knew it would.

Suspicion at first devolves on Digby, who, it turns out, had Rose change her will to name him as sole beneficiary, still valid even though the engagement is off. Corpses begin making their appearances whenever the plot seems to be stagnating. Suddenly there appears a previously unknown heir to the Grimswell title and fortune. He and other guilty parties are exposed after their attempts to drive Rose insane and then to suicide have failed. Rose becomes a wiser if not happier woman. File this one next to HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES as an alternative viewpoint to Watson’s narrative.

Rogers, K.C., et al (2016) **Precocity in a tiny titanosaur from the Cretaceous of Madagascar.** SCIENCE 352:450-453



Authors’ abstract: “*Sauropod dinosaurs exhibit the largest ontogenetic size range among terrestrial vertebrates, but a dearth of very young individuals has hindered understanding of the beginning of their growth trajectory. A new specimen of *Rapetosaurus krausei* sheds light on early life in the smallest stage of one of the largest dinosaurs. Bones record rapid growth rates and hatching lines, indicating that this individual weighed ~3.4 kilograms at hatching. Just several weeks later, when it likely succumbed to starvation in a drought-stressed ecosystem, it had reached a mass of ~40 kilograms and was ~35 centimeters tall at the hip. Unexpectedly, *Rapetosaurus* limb bones grew isometrically throughout their development. Cortical remodeling, limb isometry, and thin calcified hypertrophic metaphyseal cartilages indicate an active, precocial growth strategy.*”

[The image is from the above paper and shows the actual size of the baby titanosaur in relation to a human.]

Brun, E., et al (2016) **Revealing metallic ink in Herculanum papyri.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 113:3751–3754

Authors’ abstract: “*The common belief has been that no metal is present in Greco-Roman inks. In this work, we show that lead is present in the ink of two Herculanum papyrus fragments. The concentration found is very high and not to be explained merely by contamination. The metal found in these fragments deeply modifies our knowledge of Greek and Latin writing in antiquity. Moreover, these concentration values allow the optimization of future computed tomography experiments on still-unrolled Herculanum scrolls to enable the recovery of texts in the only surviving ancient Greco-Roman library. The possibility of using additional material to trace down ruled lines guiding the scribes’ writing along straight lines is also addressed. We demonstrate that no additional material was used for this goal.*”

“*Writing on paper is essential to civilization, as Pliny the Elder remarks in his Natural History, when he describes the various types of papyri, the method of manufacturing them, and all that concerns writing materials in the mid-first century AD. For this reason, a rigorous scientific study of writing is of fundamental importance for the historical understanding of ancient societies. We show that metallic ink was used several centuries earlier than previously thought. In particular, we found strong evidence that lead was intentionally used in the ink of Herculanum papyri and discuss the possible existence of ruled lines traced on the papyrus texture. In addition, the metallic concentrations found in these fragments deliver important information in view of optimizing future computed tomography experiments on still-unrolled Herculanum scrolls to improve the readability of texts in the only surviving ancient Greco-Roman library.*”

Schaefer, H., et al (2016) **A 21st-century shift from fossil-fuel to biogenic methane emissions indicated by ¹³CH₄.** SCIENCE 352:80-84

Authors’ abstract: “*Between 1999 and 2006, a plateau interrupted the otherwise continuous increase of atmospheric methane concentration [CH₄] since pre-industrial times. Causes could be sink variability or a temporary reduction in industrial or climate-sensitive sources. We reconstructed the global history of [CH₄] and its stable carbon isotopes from ice cores, archived air, and a global network of monitoring stations. A box-model analysis suggests that diminishing*

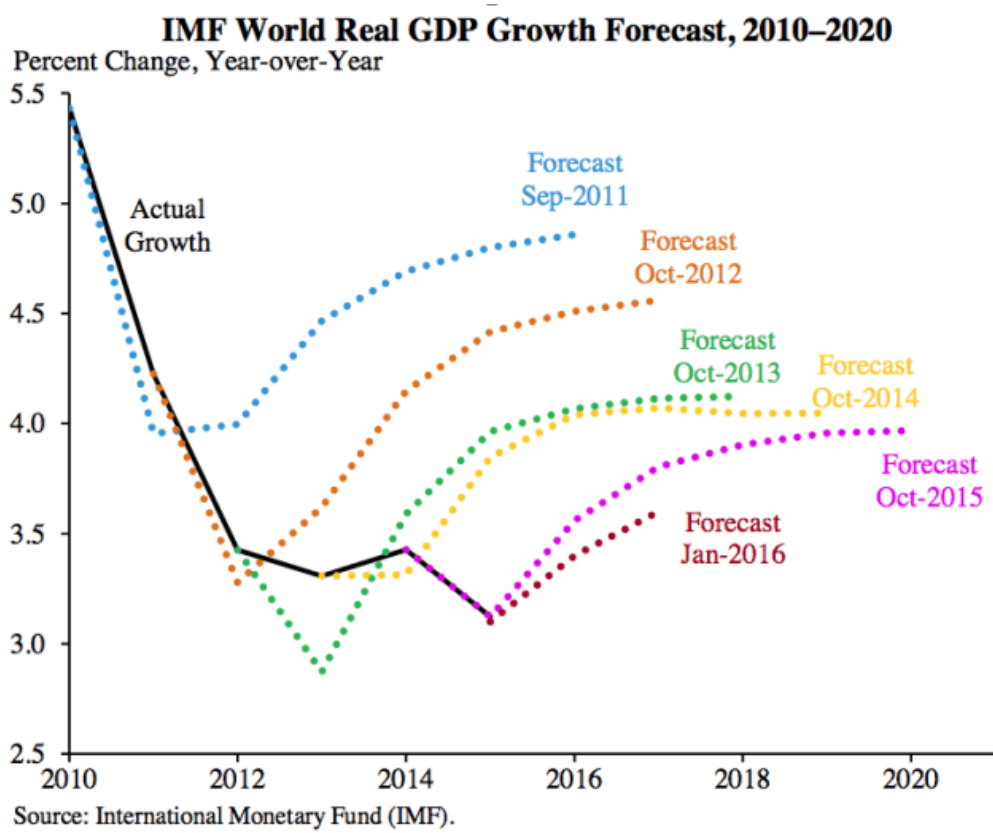
thermogenic emissions, probably from the fossil-fuel industry, and/or variations in the hydroxyl CH₄ sink caused the [CH₄] plateau. Thermogenic emissions did not resume to cause the renewed [CH₄] rise after 2006, which contradicts emission inventories. Post-2006 source increases are predominantly biogenic, outside the Arctic, and arguably more consistent with agriculture than wetlands. If so, mitigating CH₄ emissions must be balanced with the need for food production.”

Speirs: Eat or reduce methane greenhouse gas emissions. Which will it be?

Demory, B.O., et al (2016) **A map of the large day–night temperature gradient of a super-Earth exoplanet.** NATURE 532:207-209

Authors’ abstract: “Over the past decade, observations of giant exoplanets (Jupiter size) have provided key insights into their atmospheres, but the properties of lower-mass exoplanets (sub-Neptune) remain largely unconstrained because of the challenges of observing small planets. Numerous efforts to observe the spectra of super-Earths exoplanets, with masses of one to ten times that of Earth, have so far revealed only featureless spectra. Here we report a longitudinal thermal brightness map of the nearby transiting super-Earth 55 Cancri e revealing highly asymmetric dayside thermal emission and a strong day-night temperature contrast.”

“Dedicated space-based monitoring of the planet in the infrared revealed a modulation of the thermal flux as 55 Cancri e revolves around its star in a tidally locked configuration. These observations reveal a hot spot that is located 41 ± 12 degrees east of the substellar point (the point at which incident light from the star is perpendicular to the surface of the planet). From the orbital phase curve, we also constrain the nightside brightness temperature of the planet to $1,380 \pm 400$ Kelvin and the temperature of the warmest hemisphere (centred on the hot spot) to be about 1,300 Kelvin hotter ($2,700 \pm 270$ Kelvin) at a wavelength of 4.5 micrometres, which indicates inefficient heat redistribution from the dayside to the nightside. Our observations are consistent with either an optically thick atmosphere with heat recirculation confined to the planetary dayside, or a planet devoid of atmosphere with low-viscosity magma flows at the surface.”



WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2016

Calgary’s annual readercon will be held this year on the weekend of August 12 to 14, returning to the Delta Hotel at Southland Drive SE and Bonaventure Drive. The membership cap is 650; last year the convention sold out two months in advance. Details from: www.whenwordscollide.org

When Words Collide covers many genres of literature such as science fiction, fantasy, mystery, romance, westerns, and historical fiction. You can read my account of the 2015 event in OPUNTIA #318 to get an idea of the seminars and events. There will be a steampunk banquet this year, followed by the Aurora Awards. The Auroras are like the Hugos but without any sad-looking puppies.

COWTOWN SUBURBIA
photos by Dale Speirs

A unusual hot and dry spring in Calgary, with century-old temperature records falling like bowling pins.

Below left is a shrub cherry on my boulevard in full bloom on May 3.

Below right, a snowshoe hare in my backyard. They have been caught out by the snowless spring and are still changing over to brown fur. My lawn looks like an Arizona desert.

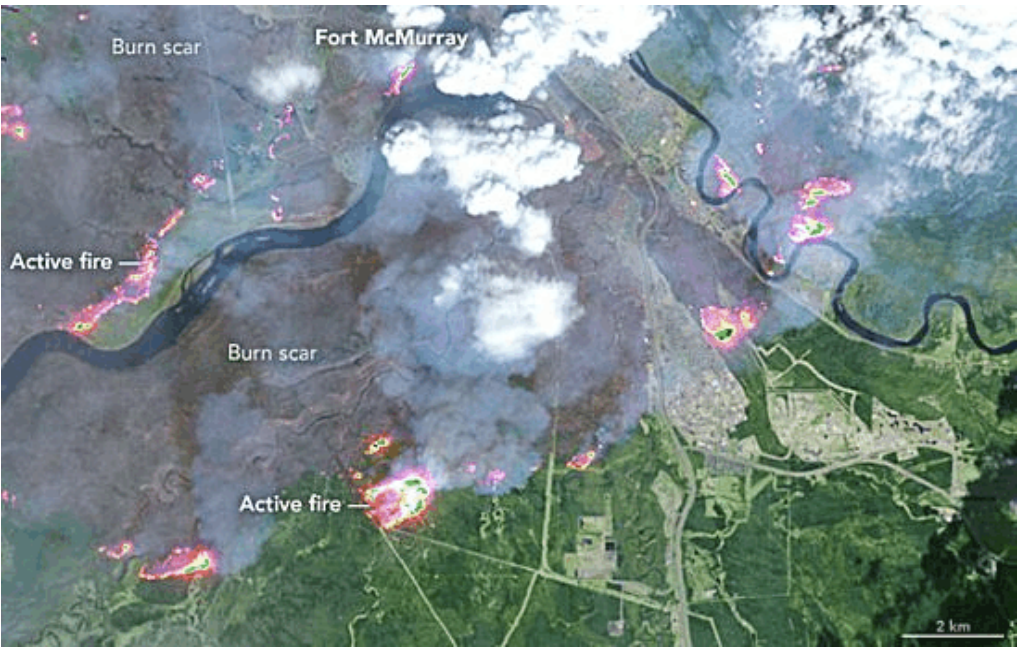


ALBERTA IN FLAMES
(photos from various Internet sources)

Fort McMurray, about 750 km north-northeast of Calgary, is the capital of the Athabasca Tar Sands. The city has a population of about 100,000, which includes numerous work camps fringing it that service the open-pit mines. The worst forest fire in Alberta history forced evacuation of the entire city on May 3. About half of it was burned over the next day (aerial photo at right).

Numerous suburbs have gone up in flames. Not houses, but entire suburbs. The city is basically an island in the centre of endless boreal forest, so finding places for residents to shelter was not easy. On May 4, Fort McMurray evacuees had to move a second time as winds fanned the blaze into the emergency shelters.

Below is an RCMP photo of a burned-out residential neighbourhood. Notice that the asphalt street has been burned into gravel. The oilsands had to shut down, taking a million barrels a day of syncrude off line, spiking crude oil prices. Economists say Canada’s GDP will take a 0.5% hit next month.



The only road out of Fort McMurray is Highway 63. Evacuees fleeing 300 km south to civilization had to run the gauntlet of flames.



Above: Would you like fries with that?
Below: The heat waves from the fire caused this photo image to ripple, not because it is a low dpi resolution.

