



me if I said their real name was Grissom.) This is not the realtor that left the pumpkins that year the week before Halloween. We at least got the pumpkin with a sincere intention to cook it and eat some of the seeds. We didn't and it rotted and the side of the house smelled funny for a few weeks because the garbage people did

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not pick up the garbage and the remains rotted for a while. But at least we pick up our pumpkin. People who didn't get home in time found the wrecked remains of pumpkin crushed and broken all over the front walk and driveway, compliments of ten-year-old Rollo Kvetchdunker. But that wasn't XXX Realty. That was the other big local realtor in our area. I guess it would make it YYY. If they still called themselves YYY. When PPP bought out YYY they changed the name to PPP, but this was before then so I think they were still called YYY. Yeah, it had to still be YYY, because on of the first things PPP did was to say that they would not give out any more pumpkins because they were driving property values down, what with all the broken pumpkins. Do you know what rotting pumpkin smells like? Fyuh! Anyway Rollo could no longer express himself with pumpkin shards and the Kvetchdunkers sold their house through XXX. None of the rest of us in the neighborhood cared who the Kvetchdunkers sold their house to as long as they left and took Rollo. No, I think XXX is the realtor who leaves those little foot-high American flags impaling our lawns just before the Fourth of July. That is another wonderful surprise package. The flags are made out of polyethylene plastic, but they still count as American flags. There are only so many legal ways to dispose of an American flag without getting Cute Newt and his merry band after you. I think you are supposed to cut it up with scissors in some ritualized sacrifice. But it is tough to cut polyethelene with a pair of scissors because it twists and stretches rather than cuts so it ends up wedged between the flat edges of the blades of the scissors. After the first year we decided it was best to store the flags whole in the front closet. Anyway, locals will know which realtor I mean. Anyway, they are putting bumper stickers on their vans saying "Warning: I brake for XXX open houses." Now I ask you, does this make a lot of sense to you? If these people really were saying that, doesn't it mean they go to a lot of open houses? But since nobody buys houses all that often this guy must be spending a lot of time at open houses where he doesn't buy, he is just wasting

the prospective sellers' time. Doesn't anybody think about these things? [-mrl]

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2. Starting in 1996, suggestions for discussion books must be accompanied by blurbs before the books will be scheduled. This is to avoid the problem of the person suggesting the book not getting a description in time to be included in the VOID.

Also starting 1996, we will be meeting in the MT cafeteria rather than in a meeting room. Look for Mark or Evelyn at noon. [-ecl]

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3. 1945 by Newt Gingrich and William R. Forstchen (Baen, ISBN 0-671-87676-7, 1995, 382pp, US\$24) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I suppose it's only fair to state up front that Newt Gingrich is not one of my favorite people. I still think I can be objective about this review, but I thought I should at least say that.

It's also worth noting up front that on page 382, the book says "To Be Continued..." and indeed ends rather abruptly in the middle of events, though the jacket does not indicate anywhere that this is the first book of the series. This leads people to ask where Gingrich is going to find the time to write the sequel, which in turn leads them to ask how much of this he actually wrote. Who knows? He was a professor of history, so he does have the background for developing the concept, but it's not unreasonable to assume that most of the actual writing was Forstchen's.

The premise of this alternate history is that at the time of Pearl Harbor, Hitler was in a coma from a plane crash and so could not declare war on the United States. As a result, the Pacific War was quickly won by us, while Germany overran Europe, leaving only

England standing against it. This could be a fascinating examination of the world that would have resulted, but instead it's an excuse for long descriptions of armaments and the use of incredibly stale cliches ("The film [of the death camps] had run counter to everything he had ever thought he knew about a culture that could produce Goethe, Beethoven and Schiller."). And it falls into the trap of preaching: "There were times when a man had to lay his life on the line, and that meant not just his physical life--most servicemen understood and accepted the probability that from time to time they must step in harm's way--but his career as well, which far too many were afraid to risk." And on top of everything else, what puts our country at risk? The fact that the government has taken away the guns of people in a certain area. Who is going to save the day? The good ol' Southern boys who still have guns.

The one positive thing I can say is that while the famous excerpt about the "pouting sex kitten" turning into "Diana the huntress" is still here--and indeed is the prologue to the book--the rest of the book is not in that style. (And a good thing it is, too, since that style is very un-1940s: it is very jarring to read a historical novel in too modern a style.) In fact, the whole "subplot" of that prologue is somewhat unnecessary, at least in this volume, and appears only once more, and then briefly, making the whole thing appear like a crash publicity stunt to gain attention for the book.

For me, the appeal of alternate history is to see what sort of world, what sort of society, might develop if something were different. As I noted, though, we see next to nothing of the

world--almost the entire book is spent in government offices, on military bases, or in battles. There's no description of how life is different in the United States, no description of how life is different in Germany, and next to nothing about the result of the quick war in the Pacific. In short, there's nothing that \*I\* can recommend here. [-ecl]

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#### 4. How I Spent My Thanksgiving Vacation.... (a reminiscence by Evelyn C. Leeper):

The Dover Bookshop is open only during the week, so even though Mark and I have been to New York hundreds of times, we had never visited it. We finally had the opportunity the day after Thanksgiving.

Located on the ninth floor of 180 Varick Street, the shop is deceptively small--about fifty feet by twenty feet. But high ceilings and exclusively binding-out shelving result in a very large stock. The fact that any given title is limited to only four or five inches of shelf space adds to this as well.

If you go to the Dover Bookshop, you must have an unlimited budget or enormous self-control. One limiting factor may be that they do not take credit cards.

The most dangerous section to one's pocketbook is the back wall: damaged books for half-price. The damage is usually something minor, like a scraped edge or a bent corner.

So what did I end up buying?

- Sir Richard Francis Burton's "Lake Regions of Central Africa" (just released at \$14.95) (See my note below on the Goldman set; I also wish Dover would add an appendix translating all of Burton foreign phrases and sentences!)
- Ignatius Donnelly's "Atlantis: The Antediluvian World" (half of \$8.95)
- Frederick Douglass's "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" (half of \$1!--a Dover Thrift Edition)
- S. Morris Engel's "Fallacies and Pitfalls of Language" (\$5.95)
- Emma Goldman's "Living My Life" (two volumes, one at \$8.95, one at half \$8.95) (My one objection is that this, like many Dover books, has no index. That's how they keep their prices down--by reproducing from the original texts with no additions--but I still miss indices.)
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's "Philosophy of History" (\$8.95) (I figure this is basic reading for an alternate history fan.)

- Peter Kalm's "Travels in North America" (half of \$14.95)  
(After reading his strange description of a Jewish worship service, I had to get this 17th Century travelogue.)
- Friar Diego de Landa's "Yucatan" (half of \$4.95) (I bought this only because Landa was long dead and would get nothing from it--he is the barbarian who burned the Mayan codices in the name of religion and so destroyed the history of a civilization.)
- Charles Nordhoff's "Communitic Societies of the United States" (half of \$9.95) (as a companion work to John Humphrey Noyes's "Strange Cults and Utopias")
- Heinrich Schliemann's "Troy and Its Remains" (half of \$13.95)  
(Some day we'll get there...)

These combined with Mark's purchases, totalled \$165. I did show some restraint, though, and didn't buy Thorstein Veblen's "Theory of the Leisure Class" (which was \$2 in a Dover Thrift Edition).

Staggering out with three shopping bags full, we returned immediately to the parking garage and dropped these off in the trunk of the car. We then proceeded to Footlight Records where we got the soundtrack for Branagh's HENRY V, Miklos Rosza's "Lust for Life" Suite, and FAUST, a rock opera by Randy Newman. Unfortunately, neither CD we were actually looking for (Herrmann's JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH or the SON OF FRANKENSTEIN/WOLF MAN compilation) had arrived yet.

Then we went to the new Barnes & Noble on Union Square North--four floors of books of which we bought exactly one: Robert Neale's "Origami--Plain and Simple." If one considers the relative amount of our purchases in Dover and B&N, I think the former is in good shape. :-)

In B&N I saw something that is really starting to annoy me. In the philosophy and religion section they have various categories, including "Islam" and "Judaica." They also have a category labeled "Religion," which is entirely Christianity. What do they call Judaism and Islam--cults?

We made a quick (half-hour) stop at the Strand, which these days is long enough to look for the books on my want list but not long enough for me to browse. I actually found one the books (Theodore Roszak's "Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein"). I used to require an hour for searching for my want list books, but now that they're mostly things like obscure George Eliot novellas, and even more obscure Sax Rohmer titles (I've been looking for his "Emperor of America" since 1991, when I saw it--in Romanian--in the window of a closed bookshop in Romania).

We restored some of our energy with a meal at Monthien, a Thai restaurant on Broadway, and then hit the sale annex of Tower

Records. (Why is it called Tower Records? They no longer have any records.) Here we picked up a couple of soundtracks on cassette cheap, as well as two videos: the British HORRORS OF BURKE AND HARE and EYES OF FIRE. The latter we saw in a theater, but since it was punctuated by hoods in hairnets running in and shining flashlights on the screen (at least until they decided the film was too boring for them to bother with), we figure it might be worth seeing in a better setting, like our den.

I must be getting old, because by this point I was too tired to go the extra five-block round trip to the Science Fiction Shop. (I never go to Forbidden Planet, even though it's right across from the Strand--it never has anything I want.) [-ecl]

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America is the only nation in history which miraculously has gone directly from barbarism to degeneration without the usual interval of civilization.

--Georges Clemenceau

