



The Atrocity Archives

Charles Stross

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NEVER VOLUNTEER FOR ACTIVE DUTY ...Bob Howard is a low-level techie working for a super-secret government agency. While his colleagues are out saving the world, Bob's under a desk restoring lost data. His world was dull and safe - but then he went and got Noticed. Now, Bob is up to his neck in spycraft, parallel universes, dimension-hopping terrorists, monstrous elder gods and the end of the world. Only one thing is certain: it will take more than a full system reboot to sort this mess out ...This is the first novel in the Laundry Files.

The Atrocity Archives Details

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Author : Charles Stross

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Mangrii says

3,75 / 5

Stross nos mete de lleno en la actividad de la Lavandería, un centro de operaciones secretas del gobierno inglés contra aquello que atenta nuestro mundo. Tanto en nuestro planeta como también en otras dimensiones. Aquí conocemos a Bob, un geek de la informática que trabaja como funcionario en la Lavandería arreglando todos los problemas informáticos de la misma, hasta que pasa a ser un agente activo de campo. Pero no todo es acción como en una película de espías. Como todo funcionario que se precie, la agencia imaginada por Stross está plagada más de burocracia y papeleo que de otra cosa. Una misión en la universidad de Miskatonic tras un accidentado curso de formación en "Demonología computacional" para principiantes será el eje de partida que cambie la vida de Bob como agente de la Lavandería.

Esta primera entrega de "Los Expedientes de la Lavandería" está formada por la novela publicada por entregas en Spectrum "El archivo de atrocidades", la novela corta ganadora del Hugo en 2005 La jungla de cemento, el epílogo En la Fabrica del Miedo, y un necesario glosario de acrónimos sobre agencias secretas. Una novela que se nota al principio ciertos aires de su serialización en entregas, pero que cierra perfectamente su historia y deja con ganas de más, mucho más.

Bastante densa por momentos, con conceptos matemáticos por doquier, fragmentos y personajes históricos interesantes, o referencias informáticas potentes. Stross no se corta un pelo y te obliga a buscarte la vida si quieres entender todo. Más que un defecto es todo un reto, aunque a veces se pase de listillo con sesudas explicaciones innecesarias que cortan el ritmo. Stross no tiene miedo a plantarte un infodump de tres pares de narices cuando le parezca bien y necesario.

Buscando símiles con la historia lo primero que se me viene a la cabeza es todo un Fringe, Expediente X o MIB. Pero le tenemos que sumar criaturas lovecraftianas o leyendas griegas, un nivel de matemáticas (o magia como se llama aquí) bastante más alto, y una cantidad de burocracia insufrible. Gran parte de la diversión es saber encontrar esas referencias reales o históricas, ver cómo les ha dado la vuelta y las ha encajado en su historia.

Stross se monta toda una coctelera de elemento donde sale un tecno-thriller de espías, con toques de ciencia ficción, de fantasía urbana bastante cargado de horror cósmico. Pero también humor, sátira y crítica social. Una gran apuesta para una nueva editorial como es Insolita que aterriza pisando fuerte.

Reseña más extensa: <http://boywithletters.blogspot.com.es...>

? Irena ? says

3.5

The Atrocity Archives consists of two stories connected only by the main character Bob Howard and his weird job. It is more of an introduction to this series than anything else.

And I liked it.

I admit that the mathematical-engineering-scientific stuff mostly went right over my head, but the way Lovecraftian themes are used is enough for me to continue the series.

Trish says

This was fun!

The Atrocity Archives is the first in Charles Stross' *The Laundry Files* books. The Atrocity Archives is an actual archive in Amsterdam where occult and bizarre objects are kept. And Laundry is the name of a super top secret organization in Her Majesty's government charged with stopping stupid people from accidentally inviting god-like creatures into our realm and thus destroying Earth.

The first thing I noticed about this book was the author's style. The MC is a guy working for "IT" in Laundry but, naturally, that doesn't mean the usual computing stuff. We're talking interdimensional portals and such. Nevertheless, it is a rather boring job so he volunteers for "field work". The guy is a nerd and I really liked how authentic the author made the dialogue - there is no euphemism or peeping when he swears, he describes even yucky daily routines or gory details and it's great.

Even greater is the author's sense of humour. He doesn't go slapstick, he's not laying it on too thick, but there is the underlying dry British humour when he speaks about interdepartmental rivalries, bureaucratic warfare about supposedly unnecessary expenses during a world-saving operation and such.

Apart from the MC and his weird work space, we're also introduced to Mo O'Brien, who was just as delightful as Pinky and Brains or Bob's later boss (I really like him). You have other dimensions, the leftovers from the SS's experiments, frost giants, some Middle Eastern fanatics ... but it's really about how the administration can ruin your day when you only come into work at 10am after pulling another all-nighter. Or the debrief after the annoyingly stupid accountant meets an untimely end. Or simply: Monday. We've all been there. ;)

I really enjoyed this first adventure and will definitely stick with the series.

Lyn says

Charles Stross' 2004 publication *The Atrocity Archives* introduces readers to his Laundry Files and protagonist Bob Howard.

Taking inspiration from HP Lovecraft and Robert A. Howard (too much of a coincidence that his hero is named Bob Howard) Stross describes an urban fantasy world building where "The Laundry" is an ultra-secret British agency that deals with the paranormal and occult, kind of a British Men in Black.

Stross' science and mathematics appear to be solid and he artfully mixes in concepts of extra-dimensional wizardry with physical science and technology. Howard, a non-Company man amidst an overly rigid bureaucratic system (kind of a running joke throughout the narrative) gets involved with a supernatural plot involving dimensionally trapped Nazis.

Inventive and often funny, Stross has a great idea and, though his delivery is sometimes stilted and overly complicated, he has crafted an entertaining concept.

J.L. Sutton says

Charles Stross's The Atrocity Archives (The Laundry #1) was a fun read (the scattered Cthulhu references added to the entertainment). I liked the humor inherent in a bureaucracy battling demons and forestalling the coming apocalypse (while making sure timesheets are filled out properly). It felt a little less light-hearted when Nazis and the occult were woven into the plot. Even if this strengthened the plot, I enjoyed it a little less because what I like about The Atrocity Archives wasn't tied to the plot. 3.5 stars.

Apatt says

Charles Stross is an author I want to like. I like his blogs, I like his personality and honesty (in so far as one can gauge such things based on the author's writings, interviews and such). The only snag is I am somewhat ambivalent about his fiction. I don't doubt that he is a talented writer of science fiction. He comes up with some great ideas and is quite popular within his chosen genre. Unfortunately from the three books I have read so far there is something about his fiction writing style that does not appeal to me. His prose style comes across as cocky, hip and chaotic. He often switches to infodump mode in the middle of his narrative, filling them with scientific terms, jargons, geekspeak, neologisms and general techno-babble. I often find it hard to distinguish the real and the imagined terms among them. Generally I find that his writing is lacking in clarity, often veering between flippant and technical and back, and this plays hell with his narrative. Yes, I imagine a lot of people find his writing clear as a bell, I can only speak for myself.

From the synopsis The Atrocity Archives should have been more fun than it turned out to be. Basically this is a spy thriller-sci-fi-supernatural horror hybrid, sort of a cross between le Carré spy fiction, The X-Files and Cthulhu Mythos. It is centered on a super secret British spy organization called The Laundry that "clean up" and protect the country from ghastly supernatural incursions from other dimensions. The edition of the book that I read contain two distinct stories the original short novel "The Atrocity Archives" and the novella "The Concrete Jungle", the later is more entertaining and tightly written than the former. There are multiple instances of excessive exposition in this book (TMI!), some of these infodumps are more interesting and comprehensible than others. Although the book is a mashup of several genres it reads more like sci-fi than anything else, all the supernatural elements have a scientific or pseudo-scientific basis. I like his little infodump about plutonium and nuclear bombs, learning something from fiction is always a bonus. His witticisms and sense of humour provide the element of levity I expected but this is less prominent than I thought it would be. I love the fun twist on the "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs" idiom, and the satire of bureaucratic red tape in an office.

"In the Laundry we supposedly pride ourselves on our procedures. We've got procedures for breaking and entering offices, procedures for reporting a shortage of paper clips, procedures for summoning demons from the vasty deeps, and procedures for writing procedures. We may actually be on track to be the world's first ISO-9000 total-quality-certified intelligence agency."

That stuff is gold! Extra points also for a Monty Python reference elsewhere in the book. For some reason the book is written in first person present tense, I imagine this is supposed to make the story seems more immediate and unpredictable, it does no harm I guess but does not really enhance the story for me. Characterization is on the flat side as the protagonist/narrator spends more time explaining technical details than expressing his feelings, some of the other characters are interesting but basically they are just there to

move the plot along.

Previously I have read Stross' famous *Accelerando* which required two attempts, I could not follow much of the tech and became annoyed with it (and myself), then I read *Singularity Sky* which I quite enjoyed and found the prose to be more readable, sometime after that I read his *Glasshouse* which is brilliant and very readable, vastly superior to his other books that I have read so far.

I rate *The Atrocity Archives* 3.5 stars (4 stars for "The Concrete Jungle" novella).

Megan Baxter says

Dudes, I finally did it! I finally read a Charles Stross novel that didn't leave me feeling vaguely disappointed that I didn't enjoy it more! Apparently this is the series for me, of his work. So far.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision here.

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at Smorgasbook

Belarius says

Every so often I come across a book so laden with obscure references that only my own particular predisposition to trivia sees me through to the other side. Charles Stross has accomplished just such a feat with *The Atrocity Archives*, a bewildering, fascinating, and very funny look inside the bureaucratic world of top-secret British occult espionage.

If I had to capture the tone of the *Atrocity Archives* in one sentence, I'd describe it as three parts *Men In Black*, two parts *The Office*, and two parts of the "Lovecraft Mythos." The stories (as the book is actually comprised of two separate narratives) center on *The Laundry*, the ultra-secret branch of Her Majesty's Government responsible for keeping the Things Beyond Our Reality from invading and destroying the world. The comedy of the book draws heavily from the juxtaposition of supernatural horrors (from Nazi occult torture engines to bodysnatching dimensional travelers) with the mind-numbing dreariness of government office politics (from paper clip audits to matrix management).

The brilliance of Stross' world is also the thing most likely to confound the average reader: the book's reliance on a tightly-woven tapestry of fairly obscure esoterica. The reader has half a chance of being on top of the constant references if they (a) have read the complete works of H.P. Lovecraft, (b) have also read the complete works of Lei Deighton, (c) have taken at least one upper-level computer science course, (d) have a broad familiarity with mythological creatures from a half-dozen cultures or more, (e) have read *A Brief History Of Time* once or twice, (f) know their way around the lexicon of a Crowley-style occultist, (g) know twentieth-century European history fairly well, and (h) watched the Saturday morning cartoons of the mid-90s. But even that might not be enough.

Like *Men in Black*, *The Atrocity Archives* is an action comedy at heart, so knowing the background of every little tidbit being thrown the reader's way isn't necessary. The books does a good job of holding the reader's hand while explaining the basics of modern magic (which turns out to be a mix of applied mathematics and physics) and the alternate history surrounding the occult cold war currently raging. But the references come

so fast and furious that I honestly don't know how this books would look to the uninitiated. Which is a shame, because (knowing what I know) the story is consistently engaging and often hilarious.

I enjoyed Stross' world quite a bit, and I can firmly recommend it to anyone who would also enjoy it. The only trouble is that, as richly borrowed as that world is, I'm not exactly sure who, precisely, to recommend it to.

Veronique says

3.5*

After years of being aware of Stross's Laundry Files books, I finally dived in :0)

This first instalment introduces Bob Howard, a hacker turned agent for a secret British government agency dealing with all the weird and wonderful things that go bump in the night. Don't think James Bond but rather an 'IT guy' working for Men in Black / X Files but with a lot more geekery, maths, and mind-numbing bureaucracy, in triplicates, where computers can summon Lovecraftian demons! Somehow, Bob keeps being thrown into minor investigations that quickly turn major, spiral out of control and endanger the very fabric of the world!

There is a lot of stumbling around, tons of computer jokes, plenty of paperwork and red tape, but also courage and determination. It is fun however even if the cast is mostly stereotyped (with a few entertaining idiosyncrasies) and the plot on the thin side. I guess it all depends if you like this type of story, humour, British-ness, and especially technobabble. There is a LOT of it!

I've been told that these are pastiches too, this one of 'The Hunt for Red October' (seen the film too long ago to remember but the gist of it), while the next one is of our favourite 007 spy. Yep, I've been entertained enough to want to carry on :0)

Bradley says

Update 1/17/18

This is the third read and since I keep getting more excited every time I read it, I'm breaking down and just plopping a big extra star on for sheer enjoyment.

I've decided this book is not only Spy Fiction with a Cthulhu twist with lots of super geeky math moments, but it's also Physics Porn. I've decided that I am exactly the right audience for this book. Or maybe I've become exactly the right audience. I want more. More. More. More. More. More. More.

I chuckle throughout the whole damn novel, and when I start realizing that I actually understand the physics porn, I get this huge giddy feeling. But that's not all this is. Not by a long shot. It's a fight with the damn administration. It's feeling stuck and deciding to follow your instinct to make the best out of things by doing the right thing. Even if it's becoming an active operative in a nightmare scenario. :)

This book, this series, is one of the biggest reasons why Charley Stross is one of my absolute favorite authors of all time. He's wicked smart, funny, and geeky to hell. :)

I can't recommend this enough. :)

Original Review:

This is the second time I'll be reading the Laundry Files to get to the new stuff I haven't. It has so many great aspects that bring those big smiles on my face, namely: Cthulhu hacking spy comedy. The first time I read it, I didn't realize these novels were all based individually on the style of different spy fiction authors, which will end soon and be based solely upon Charles Stross's style. It is an easy and fun read and tickles all my genre bones, so it, therefore, qualifies in some of very top lists for must-reads. That isn't to say the novel doesn't have its dry spots, either in the admittedly authentic sounding military jargon or the specialized mathematical humor that may or may not be lost upon many readers; even so, the voice never falters and the humorous parts are definitely humorous. I will admit that I am a fanboy of his works and will always be skewed in his favor. Guilty pleasures, and all that.

Elizabeth says

You know how you always knew maths class was secretly evil? You were right.

And now Bob has to fight that evil. If only Beatrice from HR would let him get on with and stop hassling him for his expense reports.

A thoroughly enjoyable book. It's the dynamic duo of snarky IT geek humour and an old-fashioned British spy thriller facing off against unspeakable Lovecraftian horrors. And paperwork.

Stephen says

4.0 to 4.5 stars. Incredible concept realized by an outstanding author. Combine James Bond, H.P. Lovecraft, the X-files and science fiction and you get the Atrocity Archives, the first book of the Laundry series. The Laundry is an ultra top secret British agency in an alternate version of our modern world that battles supernatural forces right out of the Cthulhu mythos. Yes, it is as good as it sounds. RECOMMENDED!!!!

Carol. says

Stross' take on the urban fantasy is engaging but clunky in parts. The Atrocity Archives is first in currently seven book series—for those of you looking to sink your reading chops into an established series—that feature Robert Howard, computer programmer and now employee of Her Majesty's Secret Supernatural Service. Bob found his way into the top-secret government organization when he did something precocious with a computer, and now he's facing the unusual dilemma of being a stipend collecting desk-warmer or stepping into the dangerous supernatural spy business.

Well, we all know which he chooses, right?

His first international mission is to go to America and make contact with a British expatriate who is having trouble leaving the country. His decision-making sets a chain of events in motion, including landing him

back in spy basic training. Without being too spoiler-ific, chasing down the perpetrators will require a stay in Amsterdam as well as a trip into another dimension.

It's an entertaining premise that I haven't really run into before in the urban fantasy/sci-fi genre. The blurb and reviews make much of it being "Lovecraftian." I don't know that I agree; there's certainly the sense of evil/malevolence, and there's an interdimensionality thing going on, but for the first part **BIG GIANT SPOILERS AHEAD** (view spoiler) But that does mean that the "Lovecraftian" or supernatural element was a bit of an anti-climax, with significantly less authorial time devoted to developing the ambiance of its awful and destructive potential.

Then there's the plot flow. You know when you first read the Anita Blake series and you were enjoying the mystery, the zombie raising to discover who the killer was, and all of a sudden its about her having sex with jaguars so your eyes drift past that part of the book until you get to the next murder scene? Well, it's not about sex, but Stross has whole paragraphs that did that to me:

"The theorem is a hack on discrete number theory that simultaneously disproves the Church-Turing hypothesis (wave if you understand that) and worse, permits NP-complete problems to be converted into P-complete ones. This has several consequences, starting with screwing over most cryptography algorithms—translation: all your bank account are belong to us—and ending with the ability to computationally generate a Dho-Nha geometry curve in real time."

Yeah, you'll notice I'm not waving. And this little gem was from page 17. Thus my second problem with the book: there's a whole lot of computer jargon that isn't explained well, and moreover, isn't actually necessary except as a device to prove how smart Bob/Stross is (for instance, the NP/P and Dho-Nha are terms which are not used outside of that paragraph). While I struggled through college physics, I'm a sci-fi reader, can use a computer perfectly well, thank you very much, and I still found sections largely incomprehensible. To make it worse, I couldn't tell if Stross was being factual (I'm aware of Alan Turing and computers in general) and where the funky was stepping in (as opposed to the InCryptid series with its faux-bio-ecological descriptions)

So I skipped them. I tend towards skimming at times, so it didn't bother me unduly, and didn't much hamper the overall gestalt of the plot, but I imagine it would prevent a number of readers—particularly those with a predilection to digest every word—from enjoying it.

Oh yeah: he does the technobabble with organizational structure as well (something about when a department in the British government was was disbanded, remade and/or "disappeared" in 1945). He explains more of it in the Afterward, which rather convinced me he was just info-dumping his research instead of telling a cracking good story.

This rather sounds like I didn't like it, doesn't it? On the contrary—I did, but I'm aware that I put blinders on in order to enjoy it. I thought there was more depth to Bob's characterization than one usually gets in this type of book, and better emphasis on action as part of a team. There's moments of ordinariness, such as Bob negotiating with flatmates—and moments of escalating action that are appropriate for Bob's lack of expertise. Setting is generally well done, giving atmosphere without diverting focus from the action. This book also had a short story at the end, "The Concrete Jungle" which I enjoyed even more, It includes a female Detective Inspector who redeems the general treatment of women in Atrocity.

I've already ordered the third book from the library—I'm skipping the second for now, as it's billed as a "James Bond-esque" island sort of thing with sultry evil woman-creature, and that's just too much for me to deal with, given an author I'm ambivalent about. This is one book that it's better to choose with foreknowledge, as it is such a specialized read.

Tfitoby says

A genre bending debut from Stross that takes its cues from Rankin and Holt as well as Morgan and Stephenson, Deighton and Le Carre - Highly recommended.

Read on the plane from London to Vienna and whilst being bored to tears by Vienna

So Vienna is dull, a complete waste of time for anyone looking for a vibrant, friendly and warm city. On the plus side it gave me the chance to sit in the sun drinking coffee and finish reading this great book.

I'd always thought Stross would be a difficult read, hence the lateness in coming to the guy, but this was a highly enjoyable introduction to him. In his afterword he references Tim Powers as having previously written a book that plays with similar ideas but there's something about the concept that makes me think of Jim Butcher. A guy who works in a government office that deals with supernatural happenings wants to get out in to the field and do some wetwork manages to save the day by the end. It's the first in a series of books and one that I will happily continue to read now I've dipped my wick so to speak.

Stross is known for his attention to detail in the science fiction field and even here in this light hearted fantastical novel that is plain to see. He ladels on the humour in a completely deadpan manner that fellow Brit Ben Aaronovitch could only dream of doing in his similar sounding series, and his world building is done so well that you hardly notice it happening yet by the end of the novel you are ready for more from The Laundry.

Structure wise, this book contains two stories, one slightly longer than the other, and this only serves to enhance the similarity to The Night Watch which also came a few years before this was published.

I can pick no faults other than the first story was a little short and the second story not necessary. If you haven't given this series or author a go yet you can't really go wrong with the first book in The Laundry Files.

mark monday says

so there's all sorts of nerds in the world, right? so many different kinds and really they don't have a lot in common outside of their basic nerdiness. I was out for drinks last Friday and someone made some kind of joke about renaming a lesbian club "Aphrodite" and I responded that that doesn't make sense, it should be called "Artemis" or at least "Athena", some goddess who isn't so connected to the male gaze and men in general etc. then I proceeded to describe what each of those goddesses oversees, their hallmarks, and their various equivalents across other mythologies. sadly, I soon noticed glazed looks and averted eyerolls from the guys & gals around the table. being quite familiar with those sorts of looks, I quickly apologized about going off into nerd-land so I could avoid an onslaught of mockery. I guess my apology must have been pleasing because they responded with a chorus of comments along the lines of "Oh but we love our nerdy little mark" or some such attempt to lift my nerd spirits. sigh. I really should find nerdier friends.

the next day, thinking on that, I realized what kind of nerd I specifically am. I like the ancient world, and powers, and god-like beings, and strange cultures and forgotten civilizations. et cetera. magic and comics and mythology and that sort of stuff. I'm not a numbers or tech nerd and I'm definitely not a science nerd. I love science fiction, but I love it for its take on social and societal issues and I love it when it is all about the opera

in space opera, rather than explaining in precise detail what "space" is.

so The Atrocity Archives is definitely for nerds, but not this kind of nerd, not me, no way. every frickin' scientific theory or paranormal doodad is explained in intense detail over the course of long paragraphs punctuated by exclamation points that seem excited about things I barely understand and certainly don't care about. this book was a chore to read and I skimmed through so much technobabble. ugh, I hate when I skim through a book because that's like forcing myself to read. the one thing in its favor was that I was amused by the breezy, casual tone of the narrative and the narrator's voice - it reminded me of the very few urban fantasy novels I've read. but besides that, the book was a bore to me.

this was a 1-star book for me but I'm not giving it that because it wasn't a *bad* book. I didn't like it but it's hard for me to blame the book for the two of us not being a good fit. I'm sure it's perfect for the right kind of nerd.
