

LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 20

LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 20, February 2024, is an issue of a mailing comments apazine published by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122. Produced only for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association). E: perry@middlemiss.org

This fanzine acknowledges the members of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is produced in Hawthorn, Victoria, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Comments on Mailing 336

DAJA VOO #SEPTIC – **Derrick Ashby**

As I started reading about your home renovations I was calculating that you would nearly be ready to take over the house again by about the time of this mailing's deadline. And then I read about the asbestos. Errck, and double errck! As you know it's never a good thing to hear about. I suspect that just about every house that was built or renovated in Australia between 1945 and about 1985 used some form of asbestos somewhere. It sounds like yours is rather isolated and "relatively" cheap to remove. Good luck with it. ●

I agree about the "calamari index". If that's not any good then the rest of the menu will be similar. I tend to apply the same sort of scale to a parma in a pub. ●

Good comments on the current Middle East situation. I'm coming to the conclusion that the current Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank constitute a form of "land clearance and colonisation". The number of Palestinians left in the area, after all of this settles down, will be minimal. Now I am at pains to emphasise here that I am commenting on the current Israeli government and its actions not their State religion. If a country bases its entire existence on any particular religion then any criticism of the country might be construed as criticism of the religion. That isn't so. Unfortunately too many people can't see the difference. ●

I'm glad you like the "Hirsch" series of Garry Disher novels. I can also recommend his "Wyatt" and "Peninsula" series as well. Disher is now in his mid-70s so I'm not sure how much longer he'll be writing but I certainly intend to enjoy his work while it still appears. ●

Quoz 92 – **Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer**

Mark – ReYctoSally: I haven't rented a house or an apartment in Australia since 1993 so I'm in no position to comment on how easy or difficult it is here now. But I do recall that when Robyn and I moved to England in 1990 that we needed a "bank reference" before we could apply to rent a flat. Firstly we didn't know what that was, and secondly we couldn't really get one as we had no banking history in that country. We offered to pay them 3 months rent in advance, but that wasn't an option. They then suggested a note from an employer. And that was another problem as I didn't have a job at that stage and Robyn hadn't stated working at hers yet. In the end the inimitable John Harvey supplied a letter stating that I worked for him and that he was confident that we would be able to afford the rent. The first part wasn't actually true, but the second was. ●

Little Blue Number 20

Re retirement: I think there has been sufficient discussion in these pages about the current state of Australian pensions and superannuation but, as a brief summary, the Australian Government in the early 1990s introduced a superannuation scheme under which employers would pay a set percentage of an employee's wages into a nominated fund. That fund would accumulate, with earnings, until the employee retired whereupon they could withdraw their full fund amount or use it as a "pension". This is different from the Government pension that is paid out of the government's Social Security pension which is paid to people who do not have enough income or super when they retire (currently at age 67). The current contribution rate is 11%.

As you might expect with any new Government superannuation scheme such as this there were a lot of problems in the initial years but these have been gradually ironed out over the past 3 decades. Now people can move between super funds easily and can have the same fund for their entire working lives if they so desire, even if they change employer. So I had two funds at one point, consolidated them and now just have the one, which pays me a fortnightly "pension". For the last ten to fifteen years of my working life, the question of superannuation and retirement seemed to dominate most of my conversations.

And, by the way, congratulations on joining the ranks of the retired. If you are like me then you'll soon start to wonder how you ever found time to actually work. And, yes, it will work out all right.

•

ReYctoMe regarding FANCYCLOPEDIA: I'm very sure that Mark Olson will be happy to have all help he can get with that "monster". I really should do some work there as well. Ah, yes, another project! •



Front left to right: Wendy Hirsh, Robyn Mills, Justin Ackroyd, Lucy Sussex, Irwin Hirsh, Rose Mitchell, Jo Handfield, Carey Handfield, Julian Warner. Yours truly holding the camera so not in the shot, natch.

Little Blue Number 20

ReYCtoMe regarding John Hertz: Yes, you would think there'd be an easy and more reliable method of sending messages. John is just being John, and stubborn. Smail has just become so unreliable in terms of cost and timing that it's probably best relegated to the past. I love receiving mail, I really do, but I don't want to use it with the costs the way they are. My meagre income couldn't cope. ●

Claire – I would very much have liked to have been at Eve Harvey's memorial but the tyranny of distance prevails. We'll be in the UK later in the year for a certain Worldcon and holiday in Scotland and are aiming to get down south to catch up with John if we can. We had our won little gathering in her memory on our back decking in March last year. She will be greatly missed. See photo above. ●

ReYCtoMe about retirement eating and drinking: When you say "we don't intend to eat and drink as though it were always the weekend" is rather good advice. Gone are the days when we could stay up all night imbibing of anything we wanted and then still be able to drag our sorry asses out of the house in the morning and head to work. Those days are long gone, at least for me. I find I do as I used to when I was working, though even that is probably more than my doctor would sanction. ●

Nice to see that you cracked the 1000 unread ebook mark on your Kindle at the end of September. I hope you stood up, holding the Kindle aloft, and gestured to the cheering hordes. ●

Rataplan 33 – Leigh Edmonds

Thank you for your report on our day at the State cricket. You neglected to mention that the price of your ticket was the grand amount of zero! I was actually expecting to have to pay something but the first friend of a member is free, at least it as on that day. So good to know for next season. ●

***brg* 133 – Bruce Gillespie**

It might interest you to know Bruce that Alex Skovron does NOT have a dedicated Wikipedia page. I think that needs to change, so if you had a short two-para biography of the man available I'd be happy to rectify the Wikipedia problem. ●

Frabjous 4 – David Grigg

Every now and then I take the old ChatGPT engine out of the garage and give it a bit of a run just to see what it will do. It sure creates words in a hurry. Pity they don't make a lot of sense. I recently asked it to write me something (I forget the actual way I worded it) about Elvis Costello's song "Pump it Up", which I wrote about in **Perryscope 37**. To say that it was wrong in many aspects would be something of an understatement. I am quite willing to admit that I'm probably not using it the right way, and need to be far more specific in what I want, but I certainly won't be using it for nay written work for some time yet.

On the other hand, I am impressed with the art that both you and Dennis Callegari have produced using other AI software. Impressed, but very wary. ●

ReYCtoClaire regarding the *Wayward Children* series: I've enjoyed all of the eight I have read so far but am starting to see a repetitive nature starting to arise. The trouble is that I'm no so invested in the series that I guess I'll juts have to keep on reading them. She only puts out one a year so the burden isn't too onerous. ●

ReYCtoLeigh regarding *The Left Hand of Darkness*: You ponder if having a woman narrate the audiobook would help – I, on the other hand, wonder about the casting of any screen adaptation (film or television) of the book. The character of Genly Ai would be fine as he stays resolutely

Little Blue Number 20

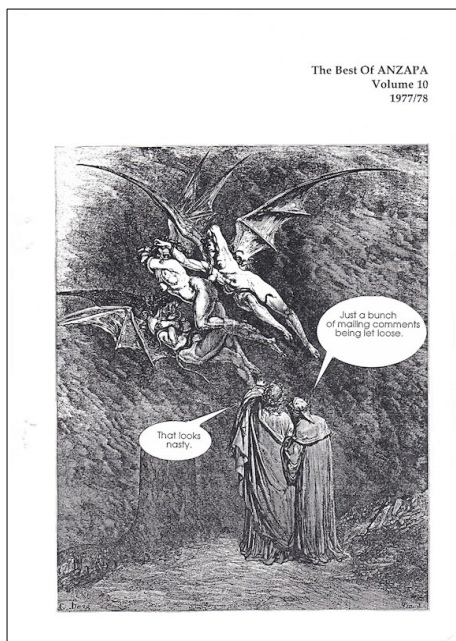
“male” throughout the novel. But what about his companion Estraven, who, during their long haul over the ice, undergoes *kemmer* due to his continued proximity to Ai, and moves towards the female side of his nature. I suppose it might be possible to cast just one person for this role but I think it might be an interesting exercise to utilise two, a brother and sister (twins maybe?) who look remarkably similar, to properly emphasise the physical and sexual change being undertaken. As you say, an interesting exercise in speculation. ●

ReYCtoMe regarding colour backgrounds: No, I have absolutely no desire to take over as OBE of ANZAPA; way too many other things going on for that to occur. I liked the idea of the coloured paper but I can see the difficulty for people who want to print it out. I’ve moved on, David, I’ve moved on...I think. ●

ReYCtoMe regarding secondary schooling: You are correct in that the living away from home was tougher than I put across in my little essays on the subject. I’m always a bit wary of going too deeply into that side of things as I worry that I might get either too maudlin or self-pitying. I made it out the other side without too much trauma or long-term psychological damage so really can’t complain. I do sympathise with the reports I’ve been hearing lately about families in remote rural areas who pack up and move to a bigger town when their eldest kid is looking to start high school. It’s a traumatic time but in many cases it is required in order for the children to get any form of education at all. I did make a point to Robyn when we had kids that I would not allow them to live away from home and, if we needed to, we would move to ensure that didn’t happen. Luckily she agreed and the problem never arose. ●

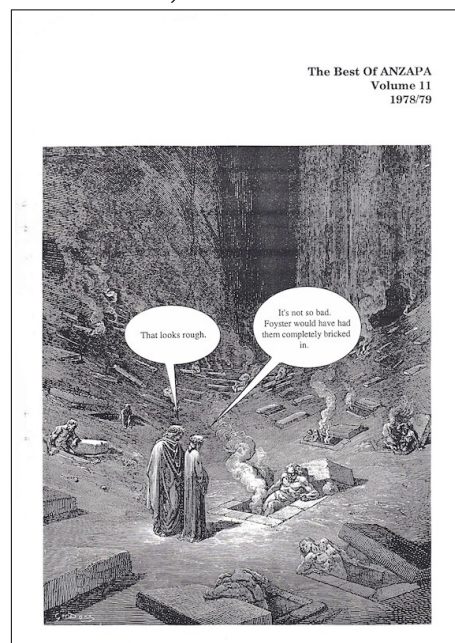
ReYCtoMe regarding *The Bear*: The first season is good but the second is altogether at another level. Create another email address to get another free trial of Disney +. It will be worth for that alone. ●

Re sunburn: Ho, ho... I must write something about this sometime soon: the words, not the sunburn. ●



Re indexes: Yes, I agree about others not consulting my indexes. But that’s not what it’s for. It is specifically for me. If others get something out of it then great, though I doubt whether any of them do. ●

ReYCtoGerald regarding John Foyster’s stints as ANZAPA OBE: I don’t recall John ever using the illustrations from Dore’s drawings of Dante’s *Inferno*. However, I know that I did for my series of the Best of ANZAPA, a couple of which you can see here. And before anyone asks, no, I have no plans to fill



in the rest of the gaps, as tempting as that might be. Just too much work. ●

Frank Nein [& Ernest Ja] – Jack Herman

The USA has looked for some years as a country in very serious decline, hanging on grimly to their old triumphs and successes and now staring down the throat of an authoritarian and quasi-dictatorial regime. I don’t see them getting out of this without some form of major catastrophe to

Little Blue Number 20

shake them up properly. The difficulty with that is that they won't be doing it in isolation and they will drag a lot of the other parts of the Western world down with them. "All the way with LBJ" indeed. ●

I love your Sanskrit word *Anannatannassamitindriya*. I'd love it even more if I could pronounce it. ●

ReYCtoMe regarding Dresden: I do not recall any mention of the bombing of Darwin during my schooling. And it came as something of a shock when I realised the extent of the Japanese bombing across the north of Australia during World War II. I knew about the mini-sub in Sydney Harbour but not the rest. Which leads me to think that school authorities really only wanted us to learn about "victories" rather than what really happened. I think it was Asimov who said that school is only good for teaching us how to learn (or something like that). As I work back through my memories of my schooling I doubt whether they even did that. Hopefully they are better at it now. They would struggle to be any worse. ●

ReYCtoLeigh: Well, question rather than comment: "*Is the fanzine, per se, still relevant?*" All I can say is that it is to me. And I believe we are starting to see a bit of a resurgence, though I do think this might be the final flowering before the long slow death. Recently we've seen new fanzines from Jerry Kaufman and Suzle, Geri Sullivan, Rob Jackson and now comes news of something from Leigh Edmonds. Bruce Gillespie may finally have some company. ●

Thanks for your film and TV recommendations. I will certainly find time to watch *Living* as I regard Bill Nighy as one of the best "quiet" actors working. "Quiet" in that he does so much with so little action and performance. I'll give *The Ipcress File* a go based on your review. I hadn't intended to check it out but will do so now. ●

Gaston J. Feeblehare 33 – Kim Huett

ReYC about the AUSFA fanzine title: I must confess to be the one who changed it from **A.D.** (which I never understood) to **Auto Delirium** and then on to **Spectre**. In retrospect this was a silly idea. ●

Sketchy 22 – Christina Lake

ReYCtoMe about Readings bookstore: Readings in Hawthorn are actually copying a long-held tradition of the bookshop from its Carlton main office. They have a separate children's store there as well and have had for many, many years. While it probably isn't obvious the two stores are linked by a door and corridor behind the main facade so, while it looks like they are separated, you could actually think of them as one and the same. ●

Crash of the Hard Disk 69 – Gary Mason

Your eminence...

Regarding your comments on cheques: I tore up my last cheque book the other day. A quick look in the stubs pile show that I hadn't written any cheques in about ten years so I felt pretty good about destroying them. Now I just need a demand for one in the next few days to make my decision seem totally ridiculous. ●

ReYCtoMe about Unley High School: I am sure there will be more to follow. I'm actually working on the next piece, sort of, for **P41**. And there will be more to follow. I'm finding it interesting the way things come back to me when I start to write about one thing, which then triggers memories of other situations and events. The problem is trying to find some way of making it of interest to

Little Blue Number 20

anyone other than me. ●

...we are not worthy.

Not Falling, Fling 12 – John Newman

ReYctoMe regarding new authors: I'm glad you can find something of interest in the reviews. I'm guessing we are all looking for new authors to read. And I can recommend *Every Version of You*. ●

Knot That I Noticed – Marc Ortlieb

ReYctoMe about the Intermediate Certificate (Year 10): I would have been due to sit that in 1970 but I think it was gone by then. I seem to recall we sat for some Government scholarship or other that year. Certainly the Leaving Certificate (Year 11) was still there in 1971, and, of course, Matriculation Certificate in 1972. I sat for both of those. ●

Antipodean Bestiary 8 – Alison Scott

ReYctoMe regarding schooling: I am hopeful that, by now, the problems that my generation encountered with schooling will have been overcome. Back in my day the country kids were basically treated with disdain, as if all they were good for was working on farms or other manual labour. ●

Lots of Contributors

There were a lot of comments in this mailing about the Voice referendum and its defeat. I thought of writing something in reply but the whole issue has just been too depressing and shameful to contemplate fully. I take heart that so many of you were also disappointed in the final result. ●

And that's it for mailing 336: thanks to everyone else for their contributions. Read and enjoyed but no comments.

The image below is an advertisement taken from *The Bulletin* magazine, 22 February 1923.

