



IN 2010
AUSTRALIA

Perryscope 31

PERRYSCOPE 31, February 2023, is an issue of the personalzine published monthly by **Perry Middlemiss**, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: perry@middlemiss.org
Available for the usual or download at efanzines.com with thanks to Bill Burns, and FANAC.org with thanks to Joe Siclari and Edie Stern. Unless otherwise specified all material is written by me.
Cover photograph by Robyn Mills, Niagara-on-the-Lake, September 2022.

INTRODUCTION

So much for good intentions.

Last time I noted that I wanted to gradually move the monthly publication date of this fanzine back towards the beginning of the month – well, that didn't happen. I also mentioned that I hoped to have the second part of my December winery trip report written up in time for this publication. Nope, didn't get to that one either. I've started, but am nowhere near finished.

The beginning of February was rather a strange time for me. I had a major sense of ennui and boredom: I didn't know whether I actually wanted to carry on with this publication, or with a number of the other projects with which I fill my time. And then, on February 1 my wife, Robyn, went into hospital for a hip replacement operation, and my life started to change. She came out of hospital after three days with all things being successful, settled back home and then I found myself her chief care-giver: driving her each second day to our daughter's place for a shower as our arrangements are unsuitable for her; cooking, cleaning, washing, all the usual things; and, who knew, picking things up off the floor when she dropped them as she's not allowed to bend down – there seems to be a lot of that. Added to that my son was gearing up to move out of home into his own apartment and my time was, mostly, not my own. I'm not begrudging it at all, as it has been a very interesting time, but it hasn't allowed for much contemplation of writing and publishing.

So February basically disappeared in a flash, though I do have to admit that the work I had to do to help out both my wife and son put my pathetic sense of boredom into perspective. I had obviously been thinking too much about "me" and not about anyone else so much. Things happening outside my head suddenly took precedence and restored my sense of life balance.

It seems like a rather difficult way to go about it and I wouldn't recommend it to everyone. I can only say that it seems to have worked for me. But no more promises. I'm not falling for that one again.

One thing I will note, however, is that this issue for the first time contains a major piece by someone other than me. Julian Warner wrote me a long letter of comment about our mutual December trip to the northern reaches of the state of Victoria which I decided might be better served as a separate article in its own right. You'll find that within.

I'm not sure if this is the start of something. As I said above, no promises.

BEST FILM AND TELEVISION OF 2022

I started getting back to the cinema at the end of 2021, but made much more of a habit of it in 2022, and that can only be a good thing. I am lucky in having a small cinema complex within easy walking distance of my house so I have little excuse for not attending. The problem, as I'm sure most people in Australia now find, is that only the big block-busters tend to have an extended season in a cinema. Those more "art-house" films appear to only get a week or two and then they're gone. Some, like *Maigret* with Gérard Depardieu in 2022, got a limited venue release and a very limited set of screening times, though none as much as *Harvest Time* which was only shown on one night. You have to keep on your toes.

FILM

Films watched: 35

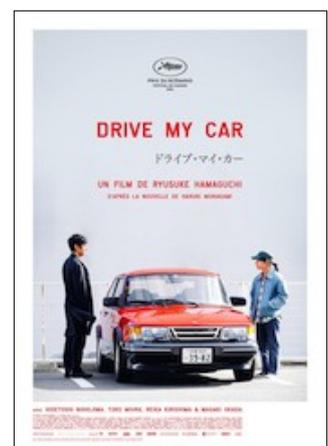
This was down five on the previous year, which surprised me. About a third of films were watched in the cinema, another third on Netflix, only one on DVD, and the remainder on other streaming services.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---------|-----|
| 1 | <i>Drive My Car</i> directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi (2021) | Cinema | 4.7 |
| 2 | <i>Everything Everywhere All At Once</i> directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert (2022) | Cinema | 4.5 |
| 3 | <i>Harvest Time</i> directed by Neil Young (2022) | Cinema | 4.5 |
| 4 | <i>Maigret</i> directed by Patrice Leconte (2022) | Cinema | 4.3 |
| 5 | <i>The Stranger</i> directed by Thomas M. Wright (2022) | Netflix | 4.2 |

Notes on the winner:

Even though it comes in at a touch under 3 hours the winner here didn't seem to be a long film – at least to me. It flowed beautifully and was as close to perfection as I saw all year. Based on a short story by Haruki Murakami it follows a theatre director who is working on a multilingual production of *Uncle Vanya* while also dealing with the recent death of his wife.

EEAAO was the most fun I'd had in a film for quite some time, and in many other years might well have been a runaway winner. It was certainly the best genre film I saw all year. I think you can safely starting etching the title onto the plaque for the 2023 Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation.



The Stranger is the best Australian film I have seen for some time and neatly fits into increasing and intriguing new rural-noir category of cinema.

Honorable mentions:

Coda directed by Sian Heder (2021) 4.0

Being the Ricardos directed by Aaron Sorkin (2021) 4.0

North By Northwest directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1959) 4.0

No Sudden Move directed by Steven Soderbergh (2021) 4.0

Moneyball directed by Bennett Miller (2011) 4.0

TELEVISION

Series watched: 42

TV Documentaries:

Programs watched: 4

- 1 **The Beatles : Get Back** (2022) Disney+ 4.7

Notes on the winner:

Last year I had a whole section devoted to Food Documentaries, this year I didn't watch a single one. In any event the winner here was truly one of the most interesting things I saw all year. Long and slow? Yes, but it needed to be. Of great historical importance, at least in my eyes. As I noted in my initial review: "More than anything else this fly-on-the wall documentary shows the creative process at work and it is amazing to watch songs such as 'Get Back' start from a few bars and gradually evolve over weeks to become the song we know now. I found some of the first half of the third episode a bit repetitious though that might be due to the fragmented approach I had to my viewing. You don't have to be a Beatles fan to enjoy this though it probably will help to get through some of the slower patches. Very highly recommended."



Honorable mentions:

None.

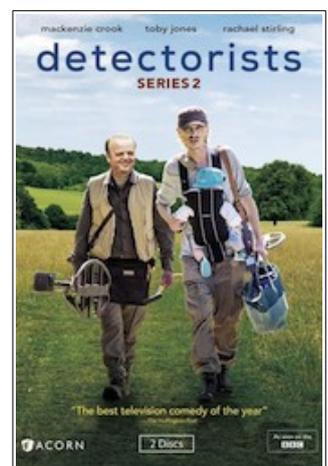
TV Comedy:

Programs watched: 3

- 1 **Detectorists** Season 2 (2015) Netflix 4.4
- 2 **Only Murders in the Building** Season 2 (2022) Disney+ 4.2
- 3 **Midnight Diner : Tokyo Stories** Season 2 (2019) Netflix 4.2

Notes on the winner:

Three very enjoyable comedies here with very different settings (UK countryside, New York and Tokyo) and very different scenarios, which just goes to prove that a good script will find the comic in just about any situation. The other thing about these is that they include their fair share of the dramatic, along with the comic, and don't get their laughs by putting anyone down. All recommended.



Honorable mentions:

None.

TV Drama:

Programs watched: 16

1	Succession Season 2 (2019)	Foxtel	4.7
2	Dublin Murders Season 1 (2019)	SBS On-Demand	4.6
3	The Bear Season 1 (2022)	Disney +	4.5
4	The Staircase (2022)	Foxtel	4.5
5	Bosch Season 7 (2022)	Amazon Prime	4.5



Notes on the winner:

Season 2 of **Succession** was where it all came together: the machinations, the drama, the back-stabbing, and the conspiracies. Season 3 fell away a bit and, while it was still enjoyable, it just didn't reach the standards of the second outing for this business drama which is obviously based on the Murdoch family empire.

Of the others on this list **The Bear** stands out, mostly due to its high emotional content and the fact that it was shown on Disney +. It's not something that I would ever have expected to see on that streaming service.

BEST OVERALL

1	The Beatles : Get Back	Disney +	4.7
2	Succession Season 2 (2019)	Foxtel	4.7
3	Dublin Murders Season 1 (2019)	SBS On-Demand	4.6
4	The Bear Season 1 (2022)	Disney +	4.5
5	The Staircase (2022)	Foxtel	4.5

Cover notes: In September 2022, when Robyn and I were visiting the Niagara Falls area of Canada we took a day to wander around a few wineries near Niagara-on-the-Lake. Our final stop for the day was at Pillitteri Winery where we had a great tasting and then wandered over to the adjoining wood-fired pizza restaurant for dinner. Robyn decided I'd been eating too much red meat so insisted on the lighter option of salad and mushroom pizza. It was actually pretty good. Though I do seem a tad tentative prior to eating.

THE MOOCH OF LIFE – February

According to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land on which I live, February is supposed to be in Biderap Dry season, The weather during these months is characterised by getting hot and dry with very little rainfall. We generally get a number of days in January and February when the hot winds from the north raise the temperatures in Melbourne to extreme levels (high 30s to low 40s Celsius), with warm to hot nights. These heatwaves – usually of only 2-3 days – are ended by a cool change coming into the city from the south-west bringing temperature drops of anything up to 20C in half an hour. If the air is also wet enough we're liable to get a thunderstorm that will drop half the month's average rain in under an hour.

But not so much this year.

This year we're coming to the end of our third La Niña weather pattern in a row, a very rare occurrence. We had a lot of rain during winter and spring (June – October) and the centre and north of Australia have received massive flood events over the past 12 months. I'm guessing Lake Eyre – a dry salt lake in northern South Australia which sits below sea level – is full, and that always means a cooler summer for the Australian Eastern seaboard. And that's what we've been experiencing. We've had a couple of warm to hot days over summer but not, as I recall, more than 2 days in a row. And we haven't hit a maximum daytime temperature of 40C at any time so far.

Autumn looks like it is coming early. The local spiders have their webs out in the garden and that doesn't usually happen until the hot weather is just about ended, the autumn days become still and cool in the mornings and warm during the day, but not really hot. I've also noticed that some of the leaves on the plants and trees are starting to turn, which is something we never see in February.

We are at the end of a long, wettish period in Melbourne though nowhere near as bad as Sydney and surrounds which had its wettest year on record in 2022 with over 2000 millimetres of rain received, against an annual average of around 1150 mm. In contrast Melbourne received about 700 mm against an annual average of 515 mm – above average, but not breaking records like our friends in NSW.

La Niña is a Pacific Ocean weather pattern which is characterised by warmer sea surface temperatures off the north-east coast of Australia. This increases the amount of water in the

February by Zora Cross

A red, dull purple haze lingers still
Proclaims the way the fierce December went
In sudden wrath, with awesome flames bespent,
As if on blood some savage gorged his fill.
Lean January, like a vulture shrill,
Soared o'er the waste on evil missions bent,
And, at the dried creek, flapped her wings and sent
A shower of sullen sparks across the hill.

Now, dazed, we watch the skies and almost pray,
We are so sick of fiery red and black.
Brown desolation stares from every side,
And there is not one day one does not say,
"Come, February, take the bridle track,
And through the land your wild, wet horses ride!"

First published in *The Bulletin*, 1 February 1923

air over the northern part of the continent which leads to strong rain-carrying weather patterns from the Coral Sea, across the top of Queensland and the Northern Territory, and out into the Indian Ocean. For the past three years La Niña has been joined by a negative Indian Ocean Dipole, meaning warmer sea surface temperatures off the north-west coast of Australia. This double whammy of wet humid air in the west and east tropical areas of Australia has cooled the entire continent, overall, and produced massive downpours in northern Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

So the weather has been weird this year. Melbourne, in general, hasn't been too bad. If the only thing Melbournians have to complain about is the lack of a hot summer, then I, for one, am not at all concerned. I expect the summer of 2023-24 to be hot, very hot.

PERRY MIDDLEMISS'S "WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY — A FEW DAYS IN THE COUNTRY" — Addenda and Corrigenda, and possibly irrelevant asides, by Julian Warner

[PM: What follows is Julian's reply to my account, in **Perryscope 29**, of the first part our driving tour through northern Victoria in early December 2022. A level of caution might be recommended.]

[Tuesday...]

Perry basically insisted on doing the driving. That suited us. He'd booked the accommodation in Rutherglen. All he needed from me was dates and some organisation of the Rosewhite (near Myrtleford) and King Valley excursions. We had the usual prevarications about what to pack given the weather was not going to be hot but not exactly cold either. Luckily it was mostly t-shirt weather for the whole trip. Perry picked us up, packing everything and everyone in.

Wallan! One of those new developer's commuter suburbs where they lie outrageously about how long it takes to drive to Melbourne. At least they have a train station.

Glenrowan is possibly too focused on being the 'Ned Kelly Centre' of Victoria. However, it has a decent bakery which is all we ask when passing through.

Baileys set the pattern for most of our winery visits. Almost deserted when we arrived but we were warmly met. Once we had made ourselves out to be knowledgeable wine fanciers rather than indiscriminate quaffers we were given the run of whatever we wished to taste. I can't speak for Perry but I felt slight guilt at every winery that I couldn't buy a case of this and a



case of that — partly to thank the winery for their attention and partly because we tried a lot of good wines. We can't buy them all. And we didn't have a lot of spare space in the car. However we are now veterans of simply ringing wineries and ordering the odd case or two — or even navigating their infernal websites if absolutely necessary.

Anyway — Baileys had many fine wines. I've taken to tasting more of the white wines than I used to. The region isn't famed for its white wines but they make some very good ones. The 'standard' Shiraz that Perry refers to at Booth's is made from grapes grown in vines that date back to 1919. There is a remarkable depth of flavour in their Shiraz wines. The downside is that they can take at least a decade to settle down. It is worth the wait.

I had arguments with Perry and his GPS lady. I have much less trust in the marvels of GPS and more in my ability to read maps. However, we always got to where we intended to.

Wangaratta did indeed pong a bit. We kept looking for a passing sheep truck or something.

Even Warrabilla had obeyed the now prevailing wisdom in Rutherglen, which is that there is no point in making excellent Durifs which require 25 years' ageing to be drinkable. All of the region's wineries are now making Durifs which are much more approachable much earlier. There were some good examples at many of the places we visited.

Our host at Lake Moodemere was slowly recovering from my perceived slight about sustainability when her husband passed and stopped to make comment on winemaking processes. He commented a lot, so his partner decamped for important stuff elsewhere (they were extending their premises to include a large function space) leaving us to learn much more about the winery and wines. We bought some of their sparkling Shiraz and Shiraz-Durif, which have been satisfyingly drunk in the intervening festive season.

Our motel, the Woongarra, was one which I had previously viewed as looking a bit down-at-heel. However, it appeared that the place had been refurbished quite recently. The receptionist/owner was very keen to be helpful. When we started using the barbecue she came over to offer various things which Perry (being a barbecue fanatic) had already brought. We'd bought meat and salad ingredients from the local well-stocked supermarket. There is an adage that winemakers generally drink beer after work. After all our hard work talking about and tasting wine it was natural that we should drink a beer or two. I'd bought some beers from the brewery at Booth's (did we mention there was a brewery at Booth's?)

[Wednesday...]

Breakfast for me is usually no more than a cup of coffee, so by the time that Perry and Lucy had come back from their breakfast, I was ready to hit the wineries. Most of the wineries open at 10.00 a.m. and we waited for Stanton & Killeen to open the door. A friend had asked me to buy a specific Muscat from S&K, which I did. For me, I was keen on the excellent vintage ports (which they are legally bound to call 'liqueur Shiraz' etc.) which they had on offer. In the late 1800s, Rutherglen produced lakes of 'port' for the European market — until phylloxera hit and reduced the industry to a mere shadow. There was a charming little cat at S&K which leapt up on the counter to be patted.

Perryscope 31

We've since heard from Donna Hanson a similar tale of woe about the perils of taking electric vehicles for country drives. Long queues for charging vehicles and running times which are nowhere near those quoted by the manufacturer.

The door at Andrew Buller's winery was closed. Timid Perry suggested we just go but I rang their mobile number and got Wendy Buller who apologised and said that they'd kept the door locked to keep the dogs out of the tasting area. Their dogs were having a great time playing with a dog owned by a contractor who was doing work for them. As we went in, a chap showed up who Perry recognised as being a winery tour chauffeur. It turned out that he had come to pick up some fertilised chicken eggs from Wendy so that his young relatives could hatch some chicks. We'd been chatting for about half an hour before we laid hands on any wine glasses. We were asked to pass on regards to my workmate Ernest, who is a faithful customer of theirs. We picked up some of their sparkling Shiraz — yet more Christmas fuel.

I'd originally suggested Wahgunyah for lunch. It's a tiny town which is easy to miss as there are few reasons to go there unless you want to take the very old one-way bridge into Corowa. There is a much more modern wide bridge not far away. As it was, there was no place in Wahgunyah which inspired us for lunch so we moved on to Corowa. We had lunch at the same place we had on our last trip there. It has shelves full of second-hand books and all of us bought a book.



All Saints remains as Rutherglen's prettiest winery and they have been working further on that image. It's an ideal wedding venue. They had recently modernised their tasting counter to take more customers and had just built a new restaurant which was to open the next day. Perry and Lucy chatted while I tasted wine. I'd been on the mailing list for All Saints and the nearby co-owned St Leonards so I was familiar with their range. I was served by a man with a US accent who I suspect had been brought in as a 'hospitality manager' for their new facilities. He certainly wasn't a local wine person. The All Saints reds are good but they won't keep them for any longer than they have to so you don't get to try aged wine. Their fortifieds are also very good, if not as cheap as some others.

The notoriously grumpy Howard Anderson was in quite a cheery mood. Maybe Perry has that effect on him? We also caught sight briefly of daughter Christobel. I bought a couple of Howard's wines. I'll probably buy some more later.

We were at the Star Hotel because it was there and it was open. The Star is an ordinary country hotel with the usual limited range of beers and a better range of wine due it being Rutherglen. They have an ordinary bistro down the back with some very ordinary 'Chinese' food on the menu. After our last trip to Rutherglen where we had completely failed to get into any restaurants, Lucy was determined that we should have at least one decent restaurant meal while we were there. We then discovered that Rutherglen is basically a town for weekend tourists. Most of the better eating places are only open on Fridays and Saturdays so we had a very limited choice of places to go. The Tuileries was possibly the only fine eating establishment open on a weeknight. As it was, anyone we mentioned it to was full of praise for the place. The food was indeed good, the service was good and there was a broad range of wines available for reasonable prices. They even moved us when we remarked on the rather over-exuberant large group near us. A couple of the women had disturbingly loud laughs.

[To be continued...] should contain details of Chambers, Morris, Alan and Kay Souter, David Coutts, the Mountain View Hotel, Gracebrook and Pizzini.]

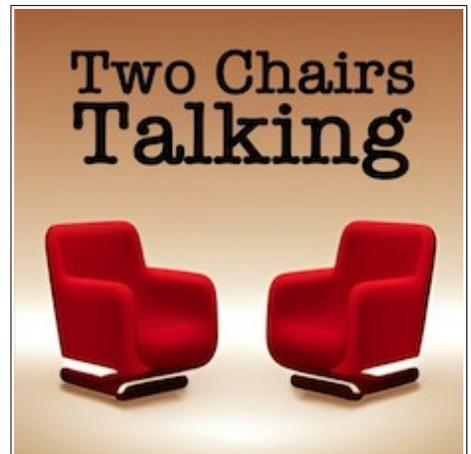
WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

Podcasting – TWO CHAIRS TALKING, co-hosted with David Grigg

Notes from this month's podcasts

Episode 86: (7 February 2023) *Your own private screening theatre*

I talk about my best film and television of 2022, David discusses his work for Standard Ebooks, and then I interview Lucy Sussex about her best books of 2022.



You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at twochairs.website, or you can subscribe through any podcast subscription service.

Upcoming I am giving a talk to Melbourne's sf discussion group, the Nova Mob, on 5th April, ie the first Wednesday of the month. My topic: "1966 and All That – Best Short Sf of 1966". A riveting topic.

And then later in April, on 23rd our time, I will be hosting a FANAC Zoom session with Leigh Edmonds as he continues his discussion of his history of Australian sf fandom. Title: "Wrong Turns on the Wallaby Track, Part 2".

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

Codes – F: format (e for electronic, blank for paper); R: rating, out of 5.0.

Abbr – Anth: Anthology; Aust: Australian; Gdn : Guardian 1000 Novels; Nvla: novella;
Trans: translated.

Jan-Feb 2023 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>Monash's Masterpiece</i>	Peter FitzSimons	Non-Fic	Jan 20		4.4	2018	Aust
<i>Where the Drowned Girls Go</i>	Seanan McGuire	Fantasy	Jan 22	e	3.6	2022	Nvla
<i>The Hundred and Ninety-Nine Steps</i>	Michael Faber	Lit	Jan 23		3.3	2001	
<i>Hotel Iris</i>	Yoko Ogawa	Lit	Jan 23		3.0	1996	Trans (Japanese)
<i>Hex</i>	Jenni Fagan	Lit	Jan 24		3.7	2022	
<i>Analog 6</i>	ed John W. Campbell Jr	Sf	Jan 29	e	2.2	1968	Anth
<i>The League of Frightened Men</i>	Rex Stout	Crime	Jan 29	e	4.0	1935	Gdn
<i>A Sunday in Ville-d'Avray</i>	Dominique Barb�ris	Lit	Feb 1		4.2	2019	Trans (French)
<i>Pulling the Wings Off Angels</i>	K. J. Parker	Fantasy	Feb 2	e	3.4	2022	Nvla
<i>The Employees</i>	Olga Ravn	Sf	Feb 6		3.8	2018	Trans (Danish)
<i>Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: 16th Series</i>	ed Edward L. Ferman	Sf/ Fantasy	Feb 7	e	2.7	1967	Anth
<i>Rizzio</i>	Denise Mina	Lit	Feb 7		3.7	2021	
<i>The Lesson of the Master</i>	Henry James	Lit	Feb 12		3.8	1888	Nvla
<i>The Atrocity Exhibition</i>	J. G. Ballard	Sf	Feb 13		2.6	1970	
<i>The Invisible Land</i>	Hubert Mingarelli	Lit	Feb 13		2.8	2019	Trans (French)
<i>In the Woods</i>	Tana French	Crime	Feb 16		4.4	2007	

Books read in the period: 16

Yearly total to end of period: 22

Notes:

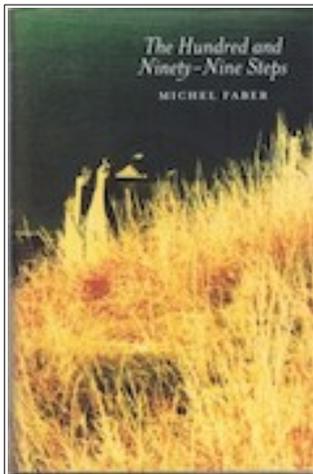
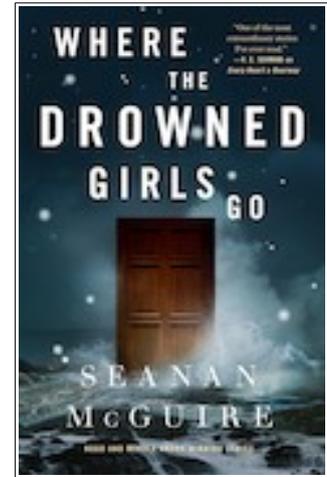
It's been quite a good reading period – 16 books in just under a month. Though, I must admit, that a number of the books here were rather short. You will also notice the larger than usual number of books in translation. Most of these were picked up at my local library and are an attempt to remedy a deficiency in that section of my reading that I have noticed over the past couple of years. My annual "target" for this category is 6 so that's one I'll be able to strike off this year's list of disappointments. And the added bonus is that most of them have been very enjoyable indeed.

Monash's Masterpiece (2018) – See major review below.

Where the Drowned Girls Go (2022) – #7 in the author's Wayward Children series of novellas.

In previous entries in this series we've been introduced to Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children. Now we find there is another school, the Whitethorn Institute, that enforces tough measures to ensure the wayward children lose all desire to return to their "worlds". Cora has decided that she needs something more than comfort and hope to give up wanting to be a mermaid and so she requests a transfer. As expected, it isn't what she thought. McGuire continues to explore the anguish and pain of teenage years with this story of a terrible school. I have a feeling that some of the teachers here are modelled on some I experienced in high school.

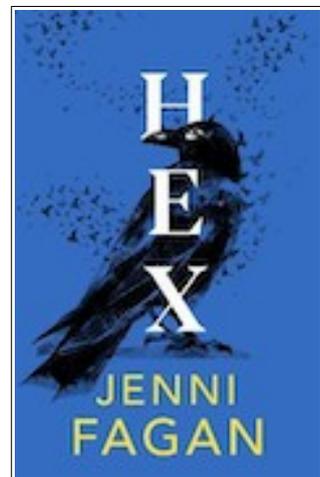
R: 3.6/5.0



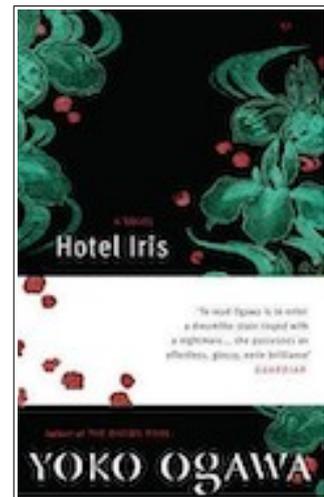
The Hundred and Ninety-Nine Steps (2001) – Siân has joined an archaeological dig at Whitby Abbey, but finds she is awoken each night by a recurring nightmare, one in which she has her throat cut by a strange man. One day she meets Mack, a London medical student clearing out his late father's house, and his dog Hadrian. Mack has found a strange object of his father's – a stoppered glass bottle containing a letter. From the little they can read through the glass it appears to be some sort of confession. As it happens Siân's real job involves paper conservation, of course (!), so the two work at prising the secrets out of the letter in the jar. This is an engaging short novel that reminded me of J. L. Carr's *A Month in the Country*, in style and content but, unfortunately it doesn't rise to those heights. Enjoyable, but slight. R: 3.3/5.0

Hotel Iris (1996) – Translated from the Japanese by Stephen Snyder.

Seventeen-year-old Mari has left school and now works at her overbearing and very strict mother's hotel as a general dogsbody.



One day, at the hotel, a middle-aged man has an altercation with a sex worker. Mari later meets the man, an unnamed Russian translator, and begins a relationship with him which leads her into a world of fetishism and abuse, mirroring, in some ways, the abuse she receives from her mother. This is a coming-of-age novel set in a down-at-heel Japanese seaside town and, while it doesn't have a lot new to say, it provides glimpses of what Ogawa is capable of. R: 3.0/5.0

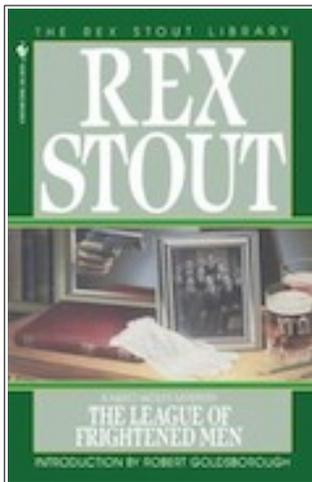
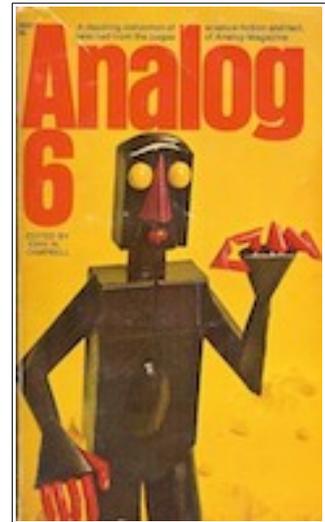


Hex (2022) – Geillis Duncan is a 15-year-old girl, sentenced to death by hanging for being a witch, who is spending her last night

in a cell on High Street, Edinburgh in December 1591. There she is visited by Iris, a woman from the future, who has heard Geillis's call, via a séance, from across the centuries and has arrived, in the shape of a crow, to offer any comfort she can. But there is little of that. As Iris attempts to help Geillis make it through her last night we learn that the young girl has been tortured by her employer in an attempt to get her to implicate others, in particular the man's sister-in-law, for his profit. This is a powerful indictment of men's violence towards women across the centuries. A poetically written short novel. R: 3.7/5.0

Analog 6 (1968) – This anthology was editor Campbell's choice of the "best" stories from sf prozine **Analog** from the year 1966. It is safe to assume, from this selection, that 1966 was not a good year at all for the magazine. This volume consists of six novelettes, seven short stories and one non-fiction essay. Of the novelettes, "Call Him Lord" by Gordon R. Dickson was on the ballot for both the Hugo and Nebula Awards, winning the Nebula (it's an interesting take on the measure of power and responsibility) and is certainly the best of the novelettes here; "The Message" by Piers Anthony and Frances Hall is a tale of first contact, and fits Campbell's preference for humans to always get the better of any aliens; and "...Not a Prison Make" by Joseph P. Marino just sneaks in as it had potential that it didn't quite realise. Of the short stories Bob Shaw's "Light of Other Days", on both the Hugo and Nebula ballots but without a win, is the best of the bunch, and was a truly new concept when published.

The rest are mediocre to poor. J. E. Enver's essay about potential earth-wide problems with "Giant Meteor Impact" is also above average as it tackles a problem that, in 1966, was only just becoming recognised. Overall, this is a rather feeble collection, leaving out some reasonable stories and choosing others that are not worth your time. R: 2.2/5.0



The League of Frightened Men (1935) – #2 in the author's Nero Wolfe series of novels. This novel appears on the Guardian 1000 Novels list.

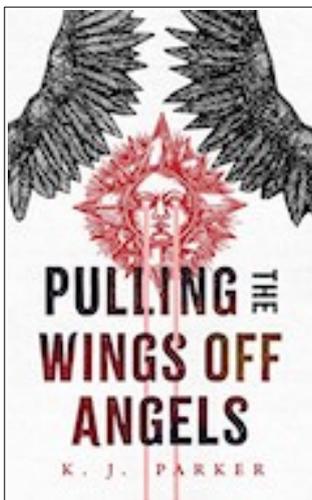
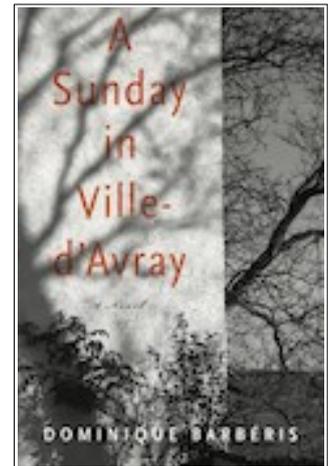
Generally considered the best of the Nero Wolfe novels by Rex Stout this is a complicated affair with lots of red herrings (naturally), a list of suspects (of course), and a fairly large array of characters (did you expect anything else?) This novel is notable in that Wolfe, not once, but twice, leaves his New York brownstone house to venture out into the world. Normally he leaves all of that to his assistant Archie Goodwin. The plot here revolves around a hazing incident at a college some 25 years before the novel starts. In that incident Paul Chapin fell from a building and was badly injured. Now, several members of the group (the League of the title) that bullied him have died and he is the main suspect. Wolfe insinuates himself into the

case and works in a rather roundabout fashion to get to the solution. This is a bit complicated and slow in the early parts but really gets rolling when Chapin is arrested after another of the League is murdered.

R: 4.0/5.0

A Sunday in Ville-d'Avray (2019) – translated from the French by John Cullen.

One Sunday in late autumn Jane travels from her central Parisian apartment to visit her older sister, Claire Marie, in her home on the outskirts of the city. On this particular day Claire Marie confesses to an affair of the mind with a patient of her husband's. Nothing physical happened between the two but she obviously became obsessed with this Hungarian emigre. The story meanders along until the man tries to take the affair to the next level at which Claire Marie balks. She attempts to track him down and to check his backstory, but he is impossible to find and no-one seems to know anything about him. This is a slow and intriguing tale of love and betrayal that always seems to be heading to an obvious conclusion yet veers suddenly off-course and ends abruptly. Quiet and heartfelt this is an absorbing piece of fiction. R: 4.2/5.0



Pulling the Wings Off Angels (2022) – K. J. Parker continues his series of novellas about an alternate Europe where demons and angels exist, and God may well be that old guy walking through the village. His main character here is a student of Saloninus, self-styled as “the smartest man who ever lived” and who has appeared in several others of Parker’s works. Our unnamed protagonist is a priest who has been swindled in a card game and now finds himself in debt to a local gangster named Florio, who will forgive the debt if only he can be provided with a living angel. Which our narrator is able to procure due to the fact that his grandfather concocted a way to cheat god and captured an angel in the process. These stories read like amusing pulp detective fiction with wise-cracking characters, caustic angels and schemes aplenty. But it is all leavened by a dark side that considers the pacts that religion has made with god, and

the way these tend to badly impact the little man. All good fun.

R: 3.4/5.0

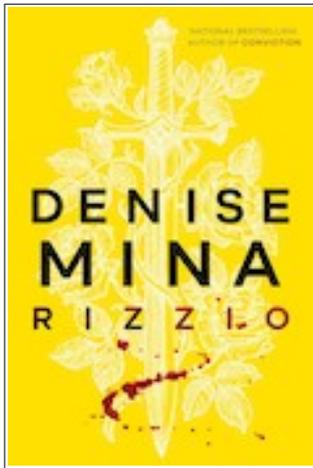
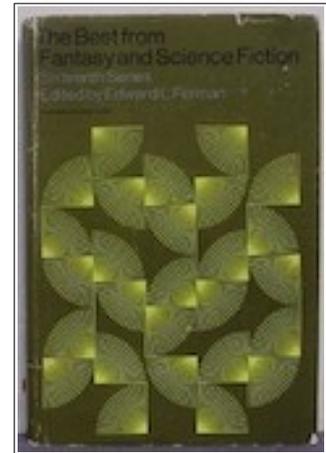
The Employees (2018) – translated from the Danish by Martin Aitken. Shortlisted for 2021 International Booker Prize. Subtitled “A Workplace Novel of the 22 Century” this work is told, in the main, in a series of statements from humans and humanoids who work on the Six-Thousand Ship, a starship which has voyaged to the planet New Discovery where the crew has discovered a number of objects that they have collected to returned to the ship. The numbered statements, not always in order, are small snippets of corporate jargon that, combined together, gradually start to form a larger picture of the alien objects and the way they impact the crew of the ship. It takes a while to get into the flow of the book and I suspect it is probably best to read it in one sitting, and then maybe go back and re-read it shortly afterwards. I did the first of these – it is only 136 pages, many of which only contain one paragraph, or even one sentence – though I suspect I won’t be going back to it in the near future.

R: 3.8/5.0



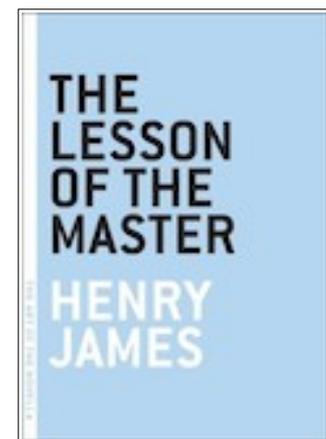
Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: 16th Series (1967)

– This anthology brings together editor Ed Ferman’s selection of what he considered to be the best from his *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1966. It seems, to me, that *F&SF* produced a better range of short fiction in 1966 than *Analog*, although this selection wouldn’t really lead you to that conclusion. Where are the Zenna Henderson stories of *The People*, or the stories by Benford or Bloch? I can only assume that publishing rights precluded their inclusion. But we do have Phil Dick’s “We Can remember It For You Wholesale”, and Zelazny’s “This Moment of the Storm”, as well as “And Madly Teach” by Lloyd Biggle Jr., “The Key” by Asimov, “Experiment in Autobiography” by Goulart and “The Adjusted” by Ken Bulmer to help raise the quality of the book. The less said about the others the better. So, six starred stories out of eleven. Above average, just. R: 2.7/5.0



Rizzio (2021) – This book, along with *Hex* above, forms part of the Darklands Tales series from the publisher Polygon. These short novels are re-imaginings of dark tales from Scotland’s past and this one deals with the murder of David Rizzio in 1566 in the Palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh. Rizzio was a favourite of Mary, Queen of Scots, and was murdered in a coup attempt orchestrated by Mary’s husband Lord Darnley, his father, and a number of Scottish Lords who had been deposed due to their calvinism. Mina is a crime novelist at heart so this story of bloody murder and conspiracy fits her skill-set perfectly and she tells the story with a true novelist’s eye. This is a wonderful tale of treachery, deceit, power lust, conspiracy and high treason. R: 3.7/5.0

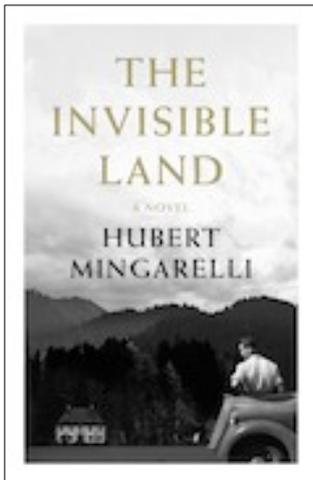
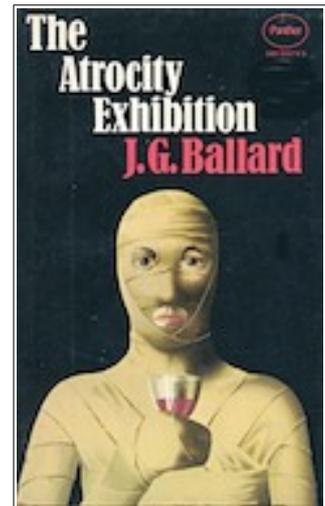
The Lesson of the Master (1888) – This novella was originally published in *Universal Review* in July/August 1888 and is here presented as part of the Melville House Classics *The Art of the Novella* series. Paul Overt is an up-and-coming novelist in London who esteems the work of the older writer, Henry St. George, and is desperate to make his acquaintance. He finally achieves this through the auspices of young Marian Fancourt, although Overt is both attracted to and somewhat repelled by the older man. When the two writers finally get a chance to sit and talk St. George tells Overt to forgo marriage and children and concentrate on his writing. But is there something else at play here? This book has echoes of Roth’s *The Ghost Writer* and Cyril Connolly’s later statement: “There is no more somber enemy of good art than the pram in the hall.” You’d have to think that both Roth and Connolly had read this at some point. A very interesting glimpse into the inner world of a working writer. R: 3.8/5.0



The Atrocity Exhibition (1970) – A number of the chapters of this novel were published as short stories in Michael Moorcock’s *New Worlds* magazine between 1966 and 1969; the stories read better there. Mashed-up into a full novel seems to emphasise the stories’

shortcomings rather than their strengths. Each chapter is presented as a collection of interrelated, but non-linear snippets from the life of the main character Travis, who appears to be undergoing some sort of psychiatric treatment as he tries to make sense of his changing world, becoming fixated with characters from popular culture and the politics of the time – Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and John F. Kennedy being prime examples – and developing some very peculiar sexual proclivities in the process. I don't think this experimental novel works as well as it might.

R: 2.6/5.0



The Invisible Land (2019) – Shortlisted for the 2019 Prix Goncourt; translated by Sam Taylor.

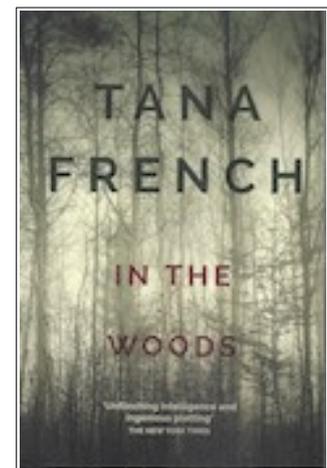
In July 1945 the Second World War has ended in Europe and Germany is now an occupied country. As many Allied combatants are repatriated a few remain to administer the Occupation and to record what has happened. One of these is our narrator, an unnamed photographer, who, we slowly discover, is about to leave Germany to return to England but decides on one last driving trip to record rural Germans and their houses. You get the impression he is suffering some shock from his experiences of the death camps. Accompanying him is his driver O'Leary who has only recently been sent to the country. The book attempts to reconcile the German population's complicity in the horrors of the Nazi regime,

though the prose is written in such a pared-down style the reader is left to do the bulk of the work. R: 3.2/5.0

In the Woods (2007) – #1 in the author's Dublin Murders series of novels. This novel won the Barry and Anthony Awards for Best First Novel in 2008.

Twenty years before the body of a murdered young girl is found in some woods on the outskirts of Dublin, three young children went missing in the same woods, only one of whom came back. Now that young boy, once Adam now Rob Ryan, finds himself as one of the main detectives investigating Katy Devlin's murder. This is a detailed and long police procedural that, for extended periods, appears to be going nowhere, though that isn't to say that the novel is without interest. On the contrary, French is meticulous about covering every aspect of the investigation as she also explores the nature of memory and trauma, and also the deep relationship between Ryan and his detective partner Cassie. This is an excellent piece of work, meticulously plotted with a fine attention to detail. I'm sure this will be one of the better crime novels I read this year. The tv adaptation of this novel is also worth checking out, though for some reason the producers thought it a good idea to combine elements of the first two novels in the series for the first season of **Dublin Murders**, rather than just concentrating on this book. There is surely enough material here.

R: 4.4/5.0



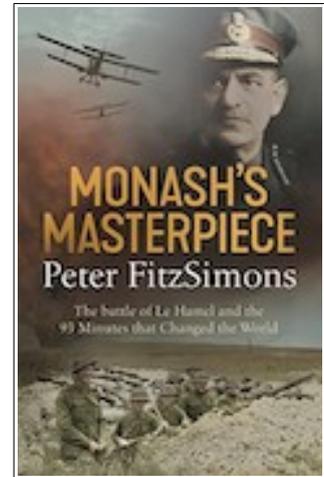
REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

Monash's Masterpiece (2018) by Peter FitzSimons

Subtitled: The Battle of Le Hamel and the 93 Minutes that Changed the World

Genre: War History

The Battle of Hamel, on 4 July 1918, in northern France, was a successful attack by Australian and US Forces, supported by British tanks, against the Germans during World War I. Meticulously planned, and rigorously executed, it was over in 93 minutes. The tactics used, mostly devised by Australian General Sir John Monash, and reviewed and amended by his staff, became the blueprint for later battles in the war, initiating a pattern that hastened the end of that major European conflict. Peter FitzSimons's history provides a detailed record of the planning, the buildup, the execution of the battle plan and its aftermath.



My maternal grandfather, William Ernest Pyne Marles, enlisted in the Australian army on 5th March 1917, and was shipped to Europe on 23 June where he was part of the 7th Reinforcement of the Australian 43rd Battalion. He took part in the Battle of Hamel in his role as a signaller, and was badly wounded, losing his left arm and having a plate inserted in his head. So I was rather interested in this book when my friend Hugh McKay told me about it. My wife and I visited the Sir John Monash centre at the Villers-Bretonneux Australian National Memorial on our 2019 European trip and later travelled over to the Australian Corps Memorial Park at Hamel a few kilometres away. I wish I'd read this book before I visited, as it would have given me a much better understanding of all that had happened in that battle.

FitzSimons begins his history of the conflict as John Monash is being put forward as the first Australian commander of the AIF, the Australian Imperial Force. Previously the Australians had been under the command of a series of British generals, many of whom were old, stuck in their ways, and rather useless. Monash's appointment was not a foregone conclusion even though he was obviously the best candidate for the position. He had three major points against him, according to his critics: he was Australian, he had a Prussian background, and he was Jewish. Oddly enough none of this seemed to worry the British commanders, including Field Marshall Douglas Haig; the major opposition came from two Australians: Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent; and Keith Murdoch, journalist, founder of the Murdoch media empire, and father of Rupert. Both these men actively sought to undermine Monash in an attempt to stifle his appointment, mainly, it appears, because of his religion. Neither of them had served in any form of the armed forces or seen any sort of action up close. Yet they felt they knew best what was needed for the AIF. The major difficulty was that they seemed to have the ear of Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes who happened to be in Europe around this time.

But Monash was finally appointed over their objections and set about building a battle plan that would utilise all aspects of the weaponry available to him – artillery, aircraft and tanks – as well as ground soldiers, in a co-ordinated offensive that some likened to an orchestral

score. Monash's main aim in this battle was to overcome the opposition within the shortest possible time period, and with the smallest number of casualties. As you can imagine, he was very popular with his men, many of whom had suffered under the attritional policies utilised earlier in the war that resulted in vast numbers of dead and wounded for very little gain.

Monash's plans were praised by all who were presented with them. They were incredibly detailed and timed down to the minute. Monash estimated the battle would take 90 minutes – though he was slightly out in this regard as the whole operation took a total of 93, just three minutes longer than planned.

Writing a detailed description of such an operation faces many difficulties, not least being the problem of focus: do you aim for the big picture, or follow one small group? FitzSimons solves this by providing a combination of the two. On the one hand, he describes the overall plan at the full battleground and battalion level, and also includes stories of individual soldiers in various parts of the battle, interweaving the two to great effect.

Some readers may find the earlier parts of this book – the first 190 pages or so – where the author goes into some detail about the plan's preparations, and Monash's interactions with the British forces and the American Expeditionary Force to be rather slow. But this level of detail is important and, from a project management point-of-view, I found it fascinating. After that, when the descriptions of the battle itself begin, the volume turns into a page-turner and you get the full force of FitzSimon's skill as a story-teller. The judicious use of diagrams showing the battlefield layout, and the way he doesn't linger on any one part of the operation, allows the action to flow steadily forward, and you probably spend as long reading about what happened in the battle as the actual thing took to reach its conclusion.

FitzSimons has done a very fine job here indeed. The wealth of material available to him must have been enormous, and the ability to choose the right piece of material to present at just the right time makes this one of the best histories I've read.

But I have a minor quibble: he too often drops into the vernacular in his descriptions which tends to drag you out of the narrative flow. We know that the Australians in the fight, in their letters and diaries and reports, referred to the Germans as "the Bosch", "the Hun", and "Fritz", but does it seem reasonable for the author to use the same terms in his narration? I'd say he could have done away with these and other such phraseology and not had any impact on the final book at all. I found the usage jarring, though who am I to judge? This book, along with many others that FitzSimons has written, has been incredibly popular in Australia. If I'd had something like this at school the subject of history would have been a lot more fun.

R: 4.4/5.0

<p>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.</p>

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

Television

Jack Ryan (Season 1 — 8 episodes) (2018)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Espionage Action Thriller

Otherwise known as **Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan**, this modern-day espionage series is based on the character previously portrayed in the films **The Hunt for Red October** by Alec Baldwin, and **Patriot Games** by Harrison Ford, etc. This series takes us back to Ryan's beginnings in the CIA, where, as a financial analyst in the Terrorist Finance and Arms Division, he stumbles across some unusual financial transactions that he believes are connected to a new Yemeni terrorist, Suleiman. Ryan (John Krasinski) then finds himself co-opted by his boss James Greer (Wendell Pierce) as they move between the middle-east and the US tracking Sulieman, who always appears to be one step ahead of them. This is a slick production with a good script and excellent work by the actors. I enjoyed it. R: 4.0/5.0



Mr In-Between (Season 1 – 6 episodes) (2018)

Platform: Foxtel

Genre: Crime

This Australia urban noir crime drama is a strange mix of family dramatics, social commentary and crime mob violence. It's also rather funny in places. Created and written by Scott Ryan who also stars in the lead role as Ray Shoemith, a hitman who tries to juggle his role as an estranged father to a young daughter, with caring for his disabled brother, starting a new relationship as well as carrying out work for a crime gang. Ryan is wonderful in this role, equally believable in any of the scenarios he finds himself in. This series is the winner of a number of television awards in Australia and is one of those shows that, when you discover it, you ask yourself: "Why didn't I ever watch this before?" Luckily I have another two seasons to go. R: 4.4/5.0

Ozark (Season 3 – 10 episodes) (2020)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Crime

If anything this crime series has ramped up the tension since series 2, pushing all the characters to their limits. The Byrdes (Marty and Wendy) have now been granted a casino licence and they set about using it to launder money for a Mexican drug cartel. But the FBI has decided that they will conduct a detailed, long-running audit of the business, which means Marty is walking a very tight rope indeed. Wendy seems to have found her calling at last and goes behind Marty's back to interest the cartel head in setting up a series of legitimate businesses in the US in order to provide for the future of



his children. Meanwhile, Wendy's brother Ben has shown up, jobless and off his meds. His presence starts to cause a lot of problems which threaten to escalate totally out of control. It has been fascinating to watch Wendy (Laura Linney) undergo a complete transformation from political operative to money-laundering crime boss across these three seasons. While Jason Bateman, working here as Marty and also behind the camera as director of the first two episodes of this season, is a wonderful counter-point. There really is a lot to like about this show though it can be rather brutal at times. R: 4.4/5.0

Film

Carrie (1976)

Platform: DVD

Genre: Horror

This film, directed by Brian de Palma, is taken from Stephen King's first novel published in 1974. It's an interesting take on high school bullying and teenage angst, smothered in religious fanaticism and supernatural powers. It seems to owe a lot to George Lucas's ***American Graffiti***; at least in my eyes, and that is not a bad thing. Sissy Spacek, in the lead role, was nominated for a Best Actress Award and Piper Laurie, as her religious mother, for a Best Supporting Actress Award at the Academy Awards. Apart from those two, who give fine performances, the film also features John Travolta, Amy Irving, William Katt and Nancy Allen in supporting roles. This is not as scary now as when it was first released (but, then, what is?) although it is still a fine horror movie. R: 3.5/5.0



A room of one's own: Is there anybody who hasn't at one time or another wished for such a place, hasn't turned those soft words over until they'd assumed a habitable shape? What they propose, to anyone who admits them into the space of a daydream, is a place of solitude a few steps off the beaten track of everyday life. Beyond that, though, the form the dream takes seems to vary with the dreamer. Generally the imagined room has a fixed terrestrial address, whether located deep within the family house or out in the woods under its own roof. For some people, though, the same dream can just as easily assume a vehicular form. I'm thinking of the one-person cockpit or cabin, a mobile room in which to journey some distance from the shore of one's usual cares. Fixed or mobile, a dream of escape is what this probably sounds like. But it's more like a wish for a slightly different angle on things—for the view from the tower, or tree line, or the bobbing point a couple hundred yards off the coast. It might be a view of the same old life, but from out here it will look different, the outlines of the self a little more distinct.

A Place of My Own by Michael Pollan (1998)

PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 29:

John Hertz: “If that’s your shadow on the cover of **P29**, I like it. If it isn’t, I like it anyway.”

[**PM:** Yes, it’s me, as usual.]

“You’re right about topicality (agreeing with you, aiee). Too much of it in an artwork, and after a while the work is only valuable historically. How tempting it is – but there are songs about yielding not.

“If a satire manages to engage with fundamental conditions, or tendencies, or something, it can be timeless. Perceiving what’s fundamental takes judgment, brains, and maturity. Hence, as McLuhan liked to quote, ‘Whoever discovered water, it wasn’t the fish.’ Or, to paraphrase a teacher of mine, ‘Certainly I know what falling in love feels like. It’s the same for everyone. Your left ear hurts.’

[**PM:** “Judgment, brains, and maturity”? Sadly lacking in this corporeal entity, methinks.]

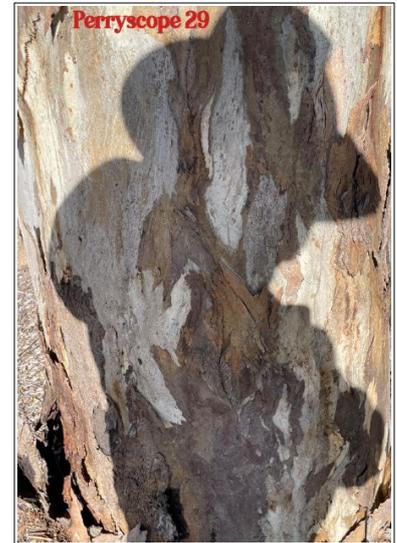
“Thus my operating definition for those Classics of SF discussions is so far still ‘A classic is an artwork that survives its time. After the current which might have buoyed it up have changed, it remains, and is seen as worthwhile in itself.’”

[**PM:** That seems as reasonable a definition as any.]

“Good annotations by Shakespeare scholars and historians will give you more of the jokes. But there’s plenty besides them. Or *The Tale of Genji*. You’ll get more out of it with e.g. Morris’ *The World of the Shining Prince*. But there’s plenty for you without.”

[**PM:** Neither of which I’ve read. I presume we’re still talking about Lafferty’s *Past Master*? The trouble is that I need to do a fair amount of work to get the background to fully appreciate something that I’ll probably never get back to. I don’t see much worth in that, given the amount of years I currently have left – I’m guessing about twenty – and, therefore, the number of books I can read. I can see myself reading *Genji* and the Morris volume; but then going back to relate them to the Lafferty? Most probably not. I’m happy enough to try reading further novels by Lafferty but still think he’s better at shorter lengths.]

“When you say I liked SF of the 60s, I suppose you meant the 1860s. *From the Earth to the Moon*. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The 1960s? *Fourth Mansions*, *World of Ptavvs*, *The Witches of Karres*. [**PM:** Very droll. Yes, I did mean the 1960s.] But we were trying to be topical then. Some stories look timeless now despite their topicality. I’d put *A Canticle for Leibowitz* there. [**PM:** Yes, agreed.] I’ve proposed *Hard to be a God* and *The Wanderer*. [**PM:** I haven’t read the Strugatsky yet, but a “no” to the Leiber.] The science in *A Fall of Moondust* looks bad now but, I



suggest, not fatally. *Rogue Moon* may be timeless. [PM: A classic, certainly.] This is neither complete nor conclusive. Speaking of which, it's a good question whether *Skylark DuQuesne* shouldn't have tried.

[PM: The less said about that novel, the better.]

Perryscope 30:

Lesleigh Luttrell: “I do keep track of what books I read, in a notebook and on a spreadsheet (so I can search for when/if I read that book) and have been doing this for this whole century. My categories aren't quite the same as yours. Fiction and Nonfiction are usually easy to discern — but not always. I also keep track of female/male authors (in these times also not always easy to discern) and a few categories of when published — new (basically this year and last), previous 20 years and a couple of older categories. I also make note of if read for a book group (I am a participant in several — two based at my local library, one in my immediate neighborhood and the occasional other group by zoom) or following my own interests.

“Do I share this information? A bit within the book groups — we often share titles of what we've been reading but for those of us who read a lot it's not usually every title. It's interesting when the same book gets chosen by multiple groups and the discussions go off in very different directions. Here in Madison we've had an 'everyone reads the same book' program for years. The University of Wisconsin took it over in 2010, choosing a book that could be discussed in many different classes, giving copies to incoming students and inviting the author to appear in person. The public libraries here get enough copies to loan to anyone not in the campus community who wants to read it and every local library hosts a discussion of the chosen book.

“So there is no shortage of opportunities to talk about books in Madison. Which is probably why I don't really feel like I need to write about what I've read and publish it. But I'm glad you do.”

[PM: Thanks. I suspect the main reason why I write about what I read is so that I can keep track of it all, one way or another. It acts as an *aide memoire* as I get older and forget whether I've actually read a certain book or not, and it is a valuable tool for my work on the podcast I co-host with David Grigg; without the list I'd be lost. But it also keeps me on track — am I reading too many crime novels in English by men, not enough books in translation, that sort of thing.]

Martin Field: “re *Cold Comfort Farm* — a wonderful book. During first year English at La Trobe Uni I had to read D.H. Lawrence — and his works did nothing for me. For various reasons I found his style and characters extremely irritating — it was torture to write essays on his books at the time. It took decades for me to discover CCF — as it happened an hilarious antidote to my disquieting memories of the much lauded DHL. I don't know if Stella Gibbons wrote it with him in mind but it worked for me and I still have a copy.”

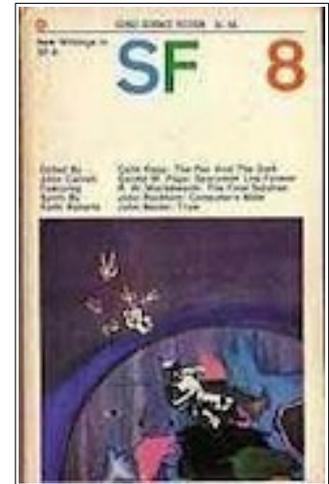
[PM: I can't comment on any such suggestions as I've never read anything by Lawrence. I certainly intend to do so at some point, and I suspect I might well come to the same conclusion as you.]

Nic Farey: “I kind of see your point about the allegedly dodgy last 20 minutes of *Glass Onion*, which might have had its weaknesses but I interpreted it as what we might call a ‘false anticlimax’.”

[**PM:** However we describe it I still thought the ending was a cop-out. Which is a pity as it ruined what was looking like quite an interesting film. I did not find it, in any way, satisfying.]

“Re: *New Writings in SF 8* – UK or US edition? They were completely different: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>”

[**PM:** I was completely unaware of that there were different editions. When I purchased these anthologies originally, back in the 1970s probably, Australia was completely subservient to the UK publishers – they were all we ever saw. So my editions are all from the UK, volumes from the Corgi Science Fiction line. The book covers associated with the mini-reviews are copies of the books I read.]



Kim Huett: “I did try to watch *Wednesday* but had to give up part way into the second episode as it was just too awful to endure. The Wednesday character came across to me as a second-rate

Daria clone (Daria was the main character of *Daria*, a spin-off of *Beavis & Butt-Head*). She seemed to speak solely in one-liners, which were intended to be funny but came across to me as more, ‘You’re a piece of shit and you’re a piece of shit, and you’re a piece of shit.’ Which might have been endurable if Wednesday wasn’t the main character and thus on screen in nearly every scene. On the whole I thought it every bit as tone-deaf as *Velma*, the new animation in which Velma from *Scooby Doo* is turned into an Indian teen and spends her time telling everybody, ‘You’re a piece of shit and you’re a piece of shit, and you’re a piece of shit.’ Well, *Velma* also has an obsession with ethnicity but I can’t say that’s handled any better. Boring is as mediocre writers do you see.”

[**PM:** I can see what you are getting at, though I don’t agree with you. I thought the Wednesday character was handled very well here and was true to the original tv serial. And I don’t think I could ask for anything more than that.]

Rose Mitchell: “I think I have often told you that I admire your penchant for ‘Lists’ and relevant data attached to those Lists, but setting targets for categories of reading material is so focused. I’m a little more informal, changing up my genres when I get a bit bored with my current reading material, mainly focusing on SF and Crime/Thrillers. You have taught me that Lists are important and I began logging my reading in tables, similar to your data collection model, a couple of years ago. All my data showed me was ‘must try harder’”

[**PM:** I’m fully aware that my data-keeping approach isn’t for everyone, it just seems to work for me. The rule is to never get behind in your entries. After a week I can lose some of the relevant information that I want to keep, and rating something after even a few days is very difficult.]

“I too have been reading more paper material than ebooks, mainly because I have been using my local library far more now I am retired (well sort of, retiring hasn’t quite gone how I wanted it to but by Easter will be done and dusted). Also given all this extra time during the day, using an e-reader in sunlight is a tad problematic. Yes, shade helps.”

[**PM:** My increase in reading books on paper is, as I may have mentioned, due to a decrease in job commuting time – so less reading on my ebook reader – more books borrowed from the library – as I’m cutting down my book purchases – and a desire to rid my bookshelves of those old paperbacks that have been hanging around for 30 years unloved.]

“Your Best of 2022 lead me to want to revisit *Cold Comfort Farm*, but alas not on my bookshelf anymore. Found some Amy Tan (*Joy Luck Club*), Anne Tyler (*Dinner at Homesick Restaurant*) and DH Lawrence (*Sons & Lovers*) I had forgotten I had. *CCF* and these other authors I enjoyed when 15-18-ish.

“Thanks for compiling your Recommendation Lists; I find them very useful as it saves me having to go searching and possibly getting some duds. I am very lazy in that regard. Nick Price once told me that life is too short to search out new material given that there is so much product published each year. Recommended Reading Lists are good as far as I am concerned. Yes, I might be behind everyone else in discovering new gems but <shrug>. Ian Mond’s pop up reviews, David Grigg’s *Through the Biblioscope* and *Locus* Best of are my main reference tools as well as *Perryscope* and *Two Chairs Talking*.

“Carey Handfield’s comment for **P25**: another strange twist of fate (cue dramatic music) I worked with the accountant who sole Carey & Jo that house in Eaglemont. middish 2000s).”

[**PM:** It can seem like a very small world indeed sometimes.]

Leigh Edmonds: “The question that comes to my mind after looking at the summary of what you’ve read and the categories you’ve devised is, what do you think makes you interested in some categories and not in others? I mean, only one horror and 12 fantasy for example. Is it because you don’t like horror or is it because there is twelve times as much fantasy about as there is horror. Of course, having grown up with Lovecraft et al I tend to think of horror as fantasy anyhow. And so little fact (or non-fiction as you put it). I find life too short to read fiction (He says glibly.)”

[**PM:** I think it is more likely that I’ve just followed my inklings most of the time and not looked around enough. Sometimes, like last year, I found reading a more difficult task, psychologically, and read what I felt I needed to read, rather than searching out new material. Like new horror authors. I don’t normally set myself a high target for these “minor” categories, usually 6 or so a year, but it is quite easy to get most of the way through the 12 months and realise that I just haven’t read anything at all in a certain category. But I then don’t get all anguished about it and go on a specific category reading binge. I just note the fact that I’ve fallen short and resolve to do better next time, ie the following year. Horror is okay. And I can enjoy it is handled well. Though, as you note, there is a very large amount of fantasy out there.]

“Again, your rummaging around in your memories set mine off. In particular this time is the painful memory of sunburn. It happened every summer. Mostly it was a visit to the only swimming pool within driving distance at Horsham about 25 miles away. Locally we had the river where part of the bank had been turned into a swimming area so a trip down to Horsham to splash around in clear blue water was a real novelty. My parents took us

only rarely, and not for too long, but long enough that the sun burn, the pain and the peeling layers of skin was punishment for enjoying ourselves too much. I can't imagine that it was a deliberate way of teaching we young Methodists about the sins of enjoying ourselves (the pleasure of the flesh so to speak) too much."

[**PM:** I'm sure our sunburn was more a matter of lack of knowledge about melanomas and a lack of attention, rather than any deeper philosophical teachings.]

"Interestingly, while you were visiting your mother's sister in Adelaide I was visiting my mother's sister (and her mother and father) in Melbourne. To be precise, they had a house in Pascoe Vale that looked over the valley to the end of the East-West runway of Essendon Airport. I spent endless hours sitting in their bay window with their binoculars watching the comings and goings. On a couple of occasions, when I was deemed old enough to go by myself, I was allowed to walk over to the airport and spend the day watching the airliners close up. So, while I enjoy watching cricket, I enjoy watching aeroplanes even more."

[**PM:** And that's where we have to differ. I'm okay with watching one or two aeroplanes taking off or landing, especially if I have a special interest in their contents, but couldn't see myself watching them for any length of time. Cricket, on the other hand? I don't see any problem in watching that for 6 hours in a day.]

"You are probably right in suggesting that hybrid cars will do well in Australia. However, that might only be for people who drive outside the big cities where there will be long distances between recharging places. You've no doubt had the experience of driving along, for example, the Newel or Eyre highways where the next petrol station is seventy or more miles away and getting there on the smell of fumes in the tank. (Or not if your calculations were not good.) I wonder what people in the cities will do, buy an electric car which would have enough range for their day to day driving or buy a hybrid in the expectation of being able to get out on the open country roads on their holidays. Of course, if they live in a place like — Hawthorn shall we say — they will be affluent enough to have both kinds of vehicles."

[**PM:** There appears to be a large commuter base in this suburb when people are driving a car from the inner suburbs into the city, or just between suburbs. The total distance travelled during a day will be not much more than 50 kilometres, and that that range you'd have to say that an electric car comes into its own. The longer distances in Australia, where there may be no settlements of any kind for hundreds of kilometres are going to be a real problem. Our mutual friend Eric Lindsay is a big proponent of electric vehicles and is monitoring, and commenting in ANZAPA about those drivers who are attempting to drive around Australia in such a car. It can be done, even now, though it does seem to take a lot of planning, and you need to be meticulous in monitoring your battery levels. I know it will improve as the number of EVs on our roads increases. It's just taking some time.]

"That's a lovely Chong cover. It makes we wonder about the situation in which it was draw, you looking so intense and all."

[**PM:** I think it was after we'd been to see *Avatar*, as neither of our partners were interested in it. We'd stopped off for a drink before heading home and Chong was

Perryscope 31

rather scathing about the film and that might have manifested itself into his rather dark drawing.]

I also heard from: **Charles Taylor** (who enjoyed the range of books last month); **Edie Stern** (who liked the cover of **P30**); and **Barbara O'Sullivan**, thank you one and all.
