

# Perryscope 33



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Available for the usual or download at efanazines.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 Carolyn Marshall, Morocco, May 2023, used with permission.

### INTRODUCTION

This issue seems, and is, a bit rushed. Robyn and I spent the first few weeks of May travelling in Morocco where I found little or no time to write anything. The days were long – enjoyable, but long – which didn't allow for much down time. I got a bit of reading done but not much else.

But I'd already skipped a month this year and didn't want to get into the regular habit of not publishing just because I was running a few days short of my preferred writing time. I thought I'd be able to get enough material together. You can be the judge as to whether it is any good or not.

Luckily, Julian Warner stepped up with a piece to help me out. We have actually been talking about this becoming a regular occurrence for a few months now but no firm commitments have been made on either side. Julian has had a change of lifestyle in the past six months or so and I reckon he just needs a bit more to do to fill in his time. People have remarked to me in the past that all I seem to do is travel, eat out, and drink in various establishments around Melbourne, but I've got nothing on Julian as any follower of his on FaceBook can testify. All I can say is that the man must have some good sleep patterns.

I have included some initial notes here about that trip to Morocco I mentioned. I had hoped to write a travel blog while I was away but that idea came to nothing. I'm still hoping I can get something together, though I still haven't completed the travel blog I was writing for the US and Canadian trip we took last September. I must get back to that.

It looks like I'll be fairly settled for the next four or five months, apart from the odd trip away into the Victorian countryside. We don't have any major travel plans lined up until October when Robyn and I will be spending about three weeks in India, and then there is nothing on the horizon until August/September 2024 when we will be driving around Scotland, after the Glasgow World Science Fiction Convention, visiting a few distilleries and the islands off the Scottish coast: the Hebrides, the Orkneys, and Shetland.

It always looks like we are planning a long way ahead, but half the fun of travel lies in the planning stage. And it also means you have the best chance of getting the most out of the available travel opportunities in a new destination. A bit of research can go a long way.

Well, that's our excuse anyway.

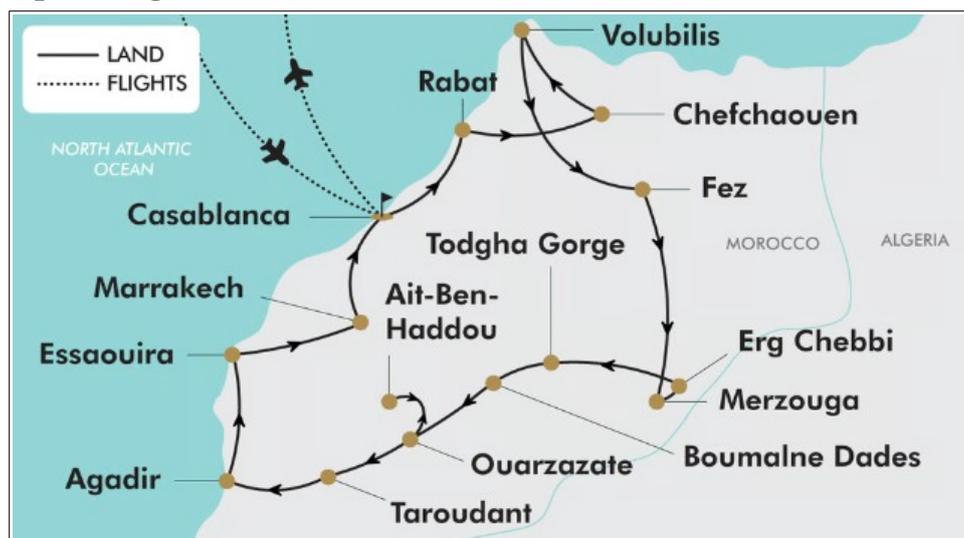
### WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN MY LIFE – A Trip to Morocco : Initial Thoughts

#### 1. Why Morocco?

Robyn and I have long had a yearning to travel to Morocco. She thinks it started some time during our stay in London in the early 1990s, I reckon it's more recent than that, probably since the early 2000s. Most probably we ate some Moroccan food somewhere, then started to notice the country popping up on documentaries and food programs. Whatever the reason, it was there and we wanted to go.

#### 2. The Trip

We had originally planned to visit in 2019/20 a but got sidetracked when we noticed, around March 2019, a long tour through southern Europe being offered by TripADeal. We planned to go in October 2020, we booked, we paid for it, and got snookered by COVID. By the time the travel landscape had sort of recovered from its pandemic woes the original tour was no longer being offered. So we were back to booking Morocco again. This time it seemed the right and proper thing to do.



The “Colours of Morocco” tour being offered was a 17-day bus trip around the country starting in Casablanca, and then travelling on to Rabat, Chefchaouen, Fez, to the edge of the Sahara Desert, Essaouira, Marrakech, and back to Casablanca. And the airline tickets were thrown in as well. It seemed like a great deal. As it turned out to be.

#### 3. The Flights

As Morocco sits on the far north-west of the African continent it didn't take much thought to realise that we were looking at a minimum of 22-23 hours flying time, with an added 8 hours of waiting, checking-in, waiting, being processed and, generally, waiting on the ground. Our flights to Sweden in 2017 took us about 30 hours door to hotel so we were expecting something similar.

Our major problem with the flights to Morocco concerned the need to travel via Sydney. This added about 4 hours to the overall travel time each way and I think that was the straw that really broke the travellers' back. Our travel company, TripADeal, had shifted our flight dates to add a day on the front, so we travelled out to Morocco on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April instead of Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May, and one day on the end, so we travelled back to Australia on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May instead of Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May. Normally, adding two days to a fixed price holiday would be a good thing, and, overall, it was. But this moved us to a day when our airline, Etihad, didn't fly directly out of Melbourne, only Sydney. We just had to grimace and bear it.

We checked in at Melbourne airport and found we were able to check our bags all the way through. This was a bonus as we were flying Virgin domestic on the Melbourne-Sydney leg, then changing over to the international terminal in Sydney for the flight through to Abu Dhabi, and then onto Casablanca. So the airlines did the best they could. Though there was no way they could shorten the flight times: 1h20m to Sydney, approx. 14h15m to Abu Dhabi and then 8h15m through to Casablanca. Nor could they fix the problems with the Casablanca baggage control that meant we took nearly 2 hours to get our luggage, nor the problems with 4 missing people from our tour which added another 90 minutes standing around outside the Casablanca airport terminal, in minimal shade.



All in all, Robyn figured we'd been on the go for 38 hours by the time we put our bags into the hotel room in Casablanca. I estimated that I'd had about 3-4 hours sleep in total on the two long legs of the flight so I was feeling rather shattered by the time I arrived.

The flight home was easier, but it really only removed the Casablanca terminal waiting time, so it was still about 34 hours, hotel to front door in Hawthorn. I got a bit more sleep on that flight, but not a lot.

### 3. The People on the Tour

TripADeal makes a point of their promise not to have more than 16 people on any one bus. Our overall tour numbers came in at 32, which were split into two groups: ours of 17 and the other of 15. I think the disparity had something to do with there being two single travellers, and the company deciding it needed to have one single on each bus. There were some early attempts to move some people from one bus to the other – not us I hasten to state – but it all came to nothing and we had our numbers and allocations figured out on the first night in Casablanca.

All of the 32 on the tour, as far as I could figure out, were Australians. I had worked out back in Australia that the chances of there being any boorish, beer-swilling bogans in that number were very small indeed. And so it worked out. Morocco is not a country you would travel to from Australia unless you had a firm desire to go there. Maybe if you lived in

Europe it might have more appeal as a sixties drug destination, but not for Australians. And I had also worked out that none of the people on tour would be on their first trip overseas. Both assumptions proved to be correct and it was a relief to find that we didn't have anyone who didn't understand the difficulties of long-distance travel in a very foreign country. We did, however, have one member of our bus group who complained about nearly everything: the bus was too small (well, yes it was, but you have to take what you are given); we were travelling too long every day (it is a big country and the buses are restricted to a maximum speed of 80kph, and there's nothing the tour company can do about that); we were getting into our nightly destinations too late (sure, but this was necessitated by the long distances between destinations); we were eating too late (not everyone wants to eat at 6pm on the dot); there was too much luggage; I don't like that person; and the list of complaints went on and on. Everyone else found bits and pieces of the trip annoying, as you do, but I suspect the main point of contention was this person's continual carping. I snapped at her at least once and I'm sure most other people did as well. She just didn't seem to notice.



But while she was annoying we all decided that she wasn't worth being overly concerned about, especially if it meant that our enjoyment of the tour was going to be diminished.

#### 4. The Country



As expected the country was, in the main, dry and dusty. One thing Morocco will never have a shortage of is rocks; they were everywhere. Most of the interior of the country is desert, with some parts of it looking remarkably like parts of South Australia where I grew up. Whenever there was a watercourse of any sort we encountered green swathes of palms and trees, elsewhere it was starkly dry.

The cities on the coast – Casablanca and Rabat, the capital – are mostly modern, while the older towns like Fez and

Marrakech are generally structured around an old town, the Medina, which is fully enclosed by a high wall and which consists of a series of twisty lanes, some barely wide enough to allow one person to pass. Outside of the older areas newer housing has been built and this continues to spread outwards.

The country is home to approximately 38 million people but it doesn't feel like that. The population is 99.6% Muslim, and consists of 67% Arabs and 31% Berbers. It seems like a well-functioning modern Islamic state, though the differences between urban and rural areas is quite marked. In the larger cities women are seen out and about all day, while in many rural parts you only see women on the streets in the company of their children or other women. They are also more likely to be seen wearing the traditional Arab dress, which is uncommon in the cities. People were always friendly and we never felt unsafe anywhere. Yes, the street vendors will overcharge you for their goods, but our view was that if you were happy with the price then you couldn't really complain. If both vendor and buyer come away satisfied then there is nothing to argue about.

### 5. The Accommodation

Our overnight stays were in a mixture of modern hotels and small, family-run riads, which is a large Moroccan house that has been converted into a small hotel. These houses usually have an atrium or open courtyard in the centre with a high ceiling of shaded glass, tiled floors and a small fountain to help keep the air cool. They usually run to two or three floors, with no lift. The staff were generally pretty good at helping out with the luggage, which was really needed on a number of occasions.

Part of the problem of tours such as this is the need to keep on the move. We only stayed for two nights in a couple of places which left little time for the washing of clothes or for writing up any thoughts about the trip. It was usually a matter of: get in late, eat as soon as you can, get to bed, and then get up early for the bus in the morning. It can be hectic and it is certainly tiring.



### 7. Overall Impressions

We are certainly glad we went. It was tiring, but illuminating and extremely satisfying. TripADeal has titled the tour "Colours of Morocco". We can safely say that it lived up to its description.

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**Cover notes:** One of our fellow Morocco tourists took the photo you see here. We had a night "glamping" (ie sleeping in glamorous tents) on the edge of the Sahara Desert, not far from the Algerian border. After a short camel ride we stopped to admire the sunset. And a good one it was as well.

### WANDERINGS AND READINGS – An Occasional Column by Julian Warner

#### Notes on “A Few Days in the Country – Part 2”

##### Thursday...

Mark Loney's accommodation in Rutherglen was a granny flat built at the back of a rather nice house. The place was specifically built to be dog-friendly – down to welcoming dog-treats on the dining table. The owners were a bit disappointed that Mark didn't have a dog. We'd discussed different possibilities about how to charge the electric car at the granny flat but Mark was forced to use a charger at a nearby motel.



The tasting room at Chambers'

I've tasted enough of Chambers' wines that I only need to taste wines which are new or unusual. I do miss the old 'serve yourself' tasting days. When Bill Chambers' mum was afflicted with arthritis, you might have to select your own bottle from a crate as well. I was more keen to ask questions about what was and is being produced. The floods must have been remarkable as the area is largely flat. There would have been incredible volumes of water involved.

The entire range of Morris fortified wines is very good. I restricted myself to just a vintage port. Their Shiraz is very representative of the region's characteristics and very enjoyable. I hadn't been struck before by how much the whole Murray valley had been dependent on the Murray being navigable by boats, and how important the river port towns were. I'm sure someone has written a history on this.

Re Perry's note about the heavy wines of the Rutherglen region: you can see efforts from various winemakers which are clearly about 'refining' the wines. Some, like Pfeiffer, have been attempting this for some time. Newer winemakers are straying further from the

## Perryscope 33

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traditional template. Although Rutherglen is not particularly 'on the way' to other places, it isn't too far off the Hume Highway, which connects Melbourne to Sydney (and passing vaguely close to Canberra). Wine enthusiasts can stay overnight in Rutherglen if they are doing the Melbourne/Sydney trip.

Whilst Lucy had known Kay Souter for some years, I was meeting her for the first time. She is as charming and talkative as Alan Souter. I'm sure the Souters will miss their property at Rosewhite but they won't miss the hard work.

Perry possibly overstates the distance to the river from David's place at Cheshunt. David can work on his block and if he gets a bit hot, he can walk a few metres over the road and go for a dip in the river. The William Hovell dam is upstream, south of David's place. If the dam releases water, as it does occasionally, David assures us that the water is icy cold. His closeness to the river also means that he was cut off during floods earlier this year. He's been happy that the council has recently been re-surfacing his gravel road and clearing culverts.

The beers we had in the evening were from the local King Valley Brewery – and good beers they are too!

I would echo Perry in saying that we were treated very well at Pizzini wines. They were most generous in giving us samples of some of their older – and most expensive – wines. They had some particularly fine Nebbiolos as well as the Rieslings.



Pizzini Wines

Gracebrook has some animal and fowl pens out the back which are good for entertaining children while parents are wine-tasting. Staff at the winery are happy to talk about the history of the area as well as the wines.

As we drove around the area I noticed that David was recognised by several people along the way. He seems to have become a part of the local community quite quickly.

The trip was thoroughly enjoyable. One of these days I'd like to go to Cheshunt and the King Valley via the more difficult route, just for the experience, but I would want to be in the right vehicle with the right driver.

### **Two Days in Clunes...**

The Clunes Booktown Festival for 2023 was run slightly earlier in the year (25 & 26 March) than previously. This is a good thing as they had been cursed with some horribly cold and rainy weather in the past. Justin Ackroyd had asked me whether I could help out with running his stall at Clunes this year. I said I would as I was on long service leave and had time on my hands. Justin was going up to Clunes (about 20 minutes north of Ballarat) on his own on the Friday night with his stock to get set up. There's not much point to helping Justin with setting up as he has his own particular way of doing things and you might just get in the way. So I organised to go up on Saturday morning by train. The organisers had made sure that there would be trains stopping at Clunes for the event. Lucy had some other things to do on the Saturday but said she would come up on the Sunday and drive us back home on Sunday evening. Cindy Clarkson had indicated that she also was going up on Saturday morning and could we sit together on the train? Yes, we could.

I packed as minimally as I could and actually got up at the right time on Saturday. Our local train line was out of action that weekend so I had to figure out the quickest way to Southern Cross Station (from which the country trains run) by trams. As trams are a bit less predictable than trains here, there is a lot more room for error. Nevertheless, I got to Southern Cross with time to spare and bought a coffee. When I was there I got a message from Cindy to say that she had slept in and was doing her best to be able to catch the train with me. I was still getting text messages when I was sitting on the train and as I read the last one – there was Cindy standing beside me. She was looking particularly cool and calm for someone who had rushed to get there and run the last bit. We settled down for a long and leisurely chat and some reading. The trip to Ballarat went quickly. We had to change trains at Ballarat so I dashed off to the gents and then discovered that I had left my phone on the Ballarat train. The train was still standing there so I went back to the carriage and was told that my phone had already been handed in. I went to the desk and was told that I would have to go to Lost Property at the other end of the station. Meanwhile the Maryborough via Clunes train was being announced as departing so I jumped on the train and tried to figure out what to do. The conductor on the Maryborough train gave me a number to call using Cindy's phone. It was confirmed that yes, they had my phone at the station. I then organised for friend Meg Tasker in Ballarat to collect my phone with my authority. Justin and I were going back to Ballarat that evening so I would just have to survive without a phone for most of Saturday.

Ordinarily I would have stayed in Ballarat with Meg Tasker and Richard Pollard but they were recovering from Covid. As it was, Justin and I both stayed with Kirstyn McDermott and Jason Nahrung, up in the north end of Ballarat.

## Perryscope 33

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The train trip to Clunes was short and uneventful apart from the conductor failing to come back to charge me for the fare to Clunes. I'd used my 'Myki' card for all of the travel up until Ballarat but the Clunes section had to be paid for separately. Never mind.



The Clunes Church with Slow Glass Books sign in the doorway

We walked downhill to the Clunes town centre and found Justin in the Wesleyan church, prominently placed near the doorway. He had a large number of paperbacks set out, all priced at \$5 each, which is convenient for customers who actually did come with cash. There were a few other sellers in the church, including some women who make artworks out of damaged books. The stall next to Justin had what we thought were over-priced old books. The woman running the stall was pleasant enough until she went on an anti-vax, anti-government tirade. Apparently she sells books at the Victoria Market on Sundays. This may be a dis-incentive for Justin who was considering doing something similar. My job was to mind the stall while Justin bought lunch or perused other stalls etc. This required remembering my 'client service' skills, being nicer than normal and treating no question as too stupid etc. Invariably people wanted books that weren't on the stall but Justin was keen to keep their custom so I would ask people to come back or take their details so Justin could contact them. Occasionally old customers of his would show up, including Marc Ortlieb's brother (very similar voice). There were people on the program for the weekend who we knew but we didn't manage to catch up with all of them. It would

have been good to chat with J. P. Pomare, who we had met in Rotorua. We saw Sean Williams but not partner Amanda Nettelbeck. Just like a Science Fiction Convention.

As is usual for me, the majority of the books on offer on the various stalls were too recent for my taste, or in very poor condition. I don't mind reading slightly tatty old crime novels but I want all of the pages to be present and correct. Knowing Andrew Nette's interest in Horwitz publications, I was keeping an eye open for those, particularly as I might even like some of them myself – but alas, no cheesy old Carter Browns. Apart from the main bookselling area down the main street of Clunes, there were other sellers tucked away in odd spots around the town. My favourite was the Bowling Club, on the other side of the river. They had a particularly varied 'Opportunity Shop' sort of selection. I spotted a sordid looking Horwitz novel and checked with Andrew – did he want it, yes he did. It was an odd thing set in South Africa but invoking the spectre of Nazism, with a swastika on the cover. I asked the nice woman at the Bowling Club how much she wanted for it. She looked at it dubiously and said "Fifty cents?" in a way that suggested she may be charging too much. I gave her a two dollar coin and said they could keep the change.

The 'Make A Wish Foundation' had a stall in the main street with some particularly untidy looking boxes of books, with some inaccurate labelling. In those boxes I found a large number of books by J. E. MacDonnell – one of Australia's most prolific authors – in various Horwitz editions. Yes, Andrew would like them please. In the time it took me to assemble forty or so of these books in a box, someone else with exactly the same idea made off with a similar number. When I asked how much they wanted for the books they said "make a donation". I gave them \$50. I'd been unaware of MacDonnell until this but his story is quite interesting if you go looking on the interwebs.

There was a lot of 'food truck' style food in the main street but Justin and I tried to support the locals. There was a food stall run by the local primary school which wasn't bad. Reasonable coffee could be had from a couple of stalls. I also indulged in some pies and pastry-goods from the local bakery.

I caught up with Lindy Cameron at her ClanDestine Press stall but sadly not her authors. I also recognised an old workmate who I hadn't seen in some twenty or so years so had a chat with her. Justin found old customers and friends too.

On Saturday night we returned to Ballarat to Kirstyn & Jason's – after picking the mobile phone up from Meg and stopping for a chat. We went out for food and Justin found a fried chicken place which was part of a chain with a place in Geelong. They were enthused by the fact that Justin knew about them already. They also had good craft beer on tap. Afterward we went back to the house for very good cake and red wine. I slept in what Jason described as the 'truckle' bed and it was indeed a bit short but I survived and sleep was achieved. I was awoken by a scrabbling at the door at one point. I'd closed the door so that others did not suffer from my snoring (even if it would have been drowned out by Justin's) but I discovered that I was on the cat highway to the cat door to the outside. Once the door was left ajar, peace was obtained.

Jason kindly gave us breakfast and coffee before we set off again for Clunes. The church was pretty cold and took a long time to warm up, even if it was sunny outside. Lots of

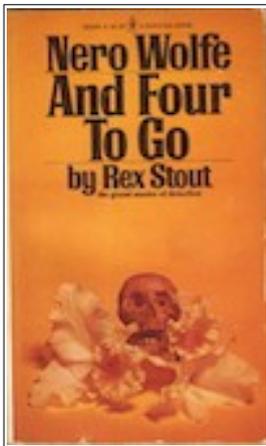
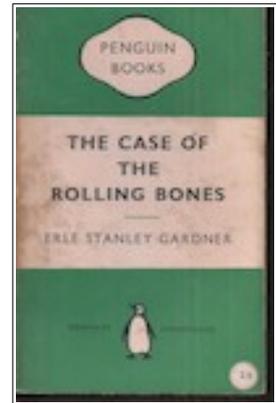
people came and went and Justin even sold some books. After a while you got to spotting the sort of people who were Justin's customers. It was gratifying to see some younger folk keenly seeking certain books. Lucy arrived and browsed around and caught up with people she knew. At the end of the day we helped Justin pack up and took off ourselves as soon as we could to beat the setting sun before we got home.

### Books Recently Read

I'm not as organised as Perry or Bruce Gillespie in noting when I've bought books and when I've read them. If I'm lucky I might have put up a post on Facebook about acquiring a book if it had an interesting cover. Then I can date when I bought it. There are about 120 or so books in the 'to be read' pile and I'm not a fast reader.

#### *The Case of the Rolling Bones* by Erle Stanley Gardner

A green Penguin, written in 1939 and re-published in 1955. A Perry Mason story. I must see if I can find the old Perry Mason TV series. As a lawyer, Perry Mason operates in a way that even some hard-bitten Private Eyes might find a bit 'close to the edge'. More of a Mickey Spillane character without a gun. It's interesting to see how Gardner tries to keep the action rolling along despite the need for predictable courtroom scenes in which things have to slow down.

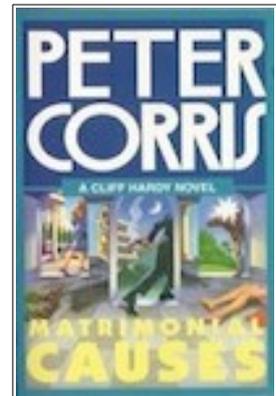


#### *And Four to Go* by Rex Stout

Being four 'seasonal' stories, after a fashion. I'm reading these after having seen all of the televised Nero Wolfe stories and I'm pleased to note that the televised versions stick remarkably closely to the stories as written. I just wonder why I see so little Rex Stout in the secondhand bookshops. Great stuff.

#### *Matrimonial Causes* by Peter Corris

Cliff Hardy's first ever case, told in flashback style. Classic Corris/Hardy with vintage cameos of Sydney in the seventies. Didn't take long to read!



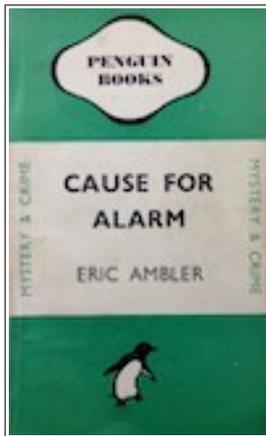
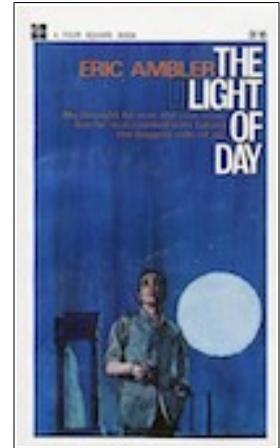
#### *Welcome Death* by Glyn Daniel

Another Green Penguin by an author I hadn't heard of. He had a multi-faceted career, only writing a couple of novels but quite a bit of non-fiction. It was an unfortunately titled book to be carrying around at a period when old friends were dying. The title comes from the fact that a widely disliked figure in a Welsh village is found dead in mysterious circumstances. Apart from the murder mystery, the book says a lot about the end of WWII and the effects it had on small

communities – how some things that happened during the war were brushed under the carpet and how some others could not be hushed up.

***The Light of Day*** by Eric Ambler

A 1962 book under the old Four Square imprint. An international thriller rather than a crime novel. Similar to the world portrayed by the early Bond films – dirty doings in exotic settings. Nothing to set the world on fire but entertaining enough for a few train journeys.

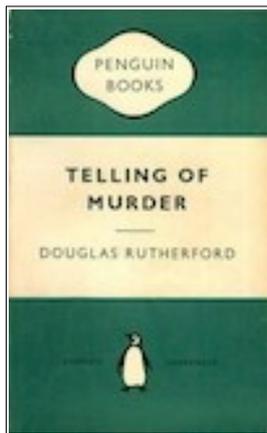
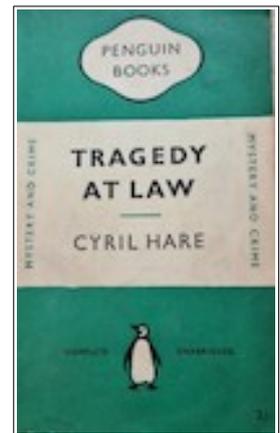


***Cause for Alarm*** by Eric Ambler

A 1938 novel published as a Green Penguin in 1945. Very similar to the above, if earlier. Lots of impressive foreign names and foreign locations. Eager young Brit takes up interesting job opportunity abroad and bites off more than he can chew. Biffo and guns and sneaky foreigners. And a nice girl.

***Tragedy at Law*** by Cyril Hare.

Written 1942 and published in 1953 as a Green Penguin. Cyril Hare was a judge in the Civil Courts and tells a story about a murdered judge. He tells us possibly a bit too much about the ceremony and details of the life of a circuit judge. A lot of the detection work happens "off screen" so you just have to take the story as it rides along. At the end, the solution is a bit slight and disappointing.

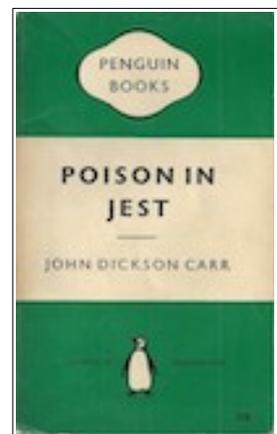


***Telling of Murder*** by Douglas Rutherford.

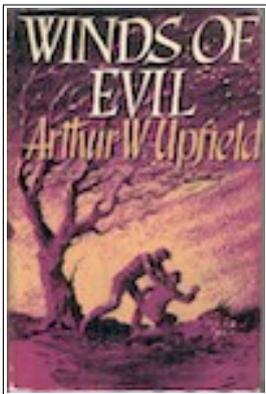
Written 1952 and published in 1956 as a Green Penguin. Rutherford, like so many of the Penguin authors, was in military intelligence. He brings this to bear in a murder mystery set in Trieste at the end of the war. Again, more international thriller than simple detective story. More guns, girls and foreigners.

***Poison in Jest*** by John Dickson Carr

Written in 1932 and published by Penguin in 1940 but my edition is from 1967. Republished several times. Carr (of several pen names) was an Anglo-American author who wrote in a style more British than American. He could get close to the 'academic investigator' style of



story without being as arch and arcane as Michael Innes. This story is set in the U.S. and is literary but resplendent with American argot. It's a classic "one of the people in this house is a murderer" story but without the usual artificial constraints on movement (like being snowed in for example).

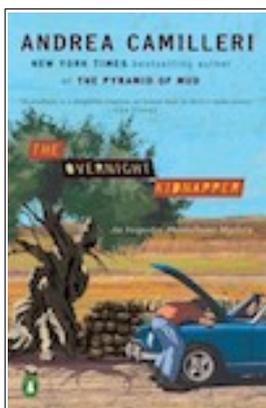
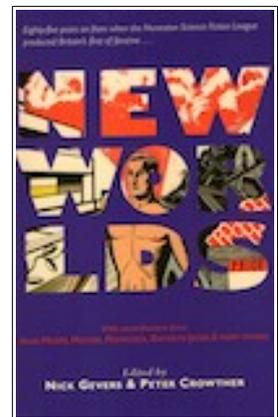


***Winds of Evil*** by Arthur W. Upfield.

Written 1937. This edition is a 1961 Angus & Robertson hardback in very good condition and a nice cover. A classic Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte story which does indeed involve evil winds. Another story where Bony the detective has to deal with a crime scene which has very little to offer in the way of evidence and a town where people have good reasons to be parsimonious with the truth. As usual, he consults with trees and insects and birds to help him along.

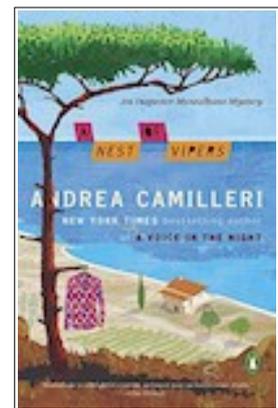
***New Worlds, Issue #1*** edited by Nick Gevers and Peter Crowther

This is the latest 2022 iteration of New Worlds. The introduction by Mike Ashley provides an interesting history of all of the previous iterations of New Worlds with all of the good intentions and penurious outcomes. Then I read the lead story, Alan Moore's "The Improbably Complex High-Energy State" and was appalled. It reads like someone's first short story after leaving high school which should have been left in the bottom drawer. I haven't had the courage to read any more yet. I borrowed the book from Alan Stewart and he tells me it doesn't get much better. I suppose I should read a bit more before I give it back. But...



***The Overnight Kidnapper*** and ***A Nest of Vipers*** by Andrea Camilleri.

Translations published in 2019 and 2017 respectively. As with all of the Camilleri "Inspector Montalbano" books, we got to see the TV episodes which were made from these books before we read the books. Therefore we knew the stories well. Nonetheless there is pleasure in reading Camilleri's writing, ably translated by Stephen Sartarelli. There are nuances of Sicilian



language and jokes and puns and cultural references which TV might portray but where you don't have time to have all of the context explained. The books let you soak all of that in. These are later stories, perhaps not quite as strong as the earlier novels but there is an ease of acquaintance with all of the characters. We are fans of the Montalbano books and have been fortunate to have read them as they have been published. If you haven't read any, I'd suggest you begin at the beginning.

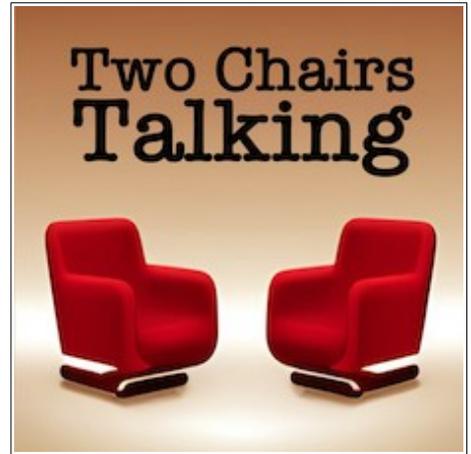
## WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

**Notes from this month's podcasts**

**Episode 90:** (30 April 2023) *De profundis clamavi*

David and I talk about their recent reading and watching, in particular discussing a novel they have both nominated for this year's Hugo Awards, *The Mountain in the Sea* by Ray Nayler.



**Episode 91:** (23 May 2023) *Looking at things from a different angle*

In this episode we look at what we've been reading lately, including some crime, non-fiction, and some 2022 sf novellas – the usual sort of mixture. I then review the Tom Cruise film *Top Gun : Maverick*; I wasn't impressed.

You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at [twochairs.website](http://twochairs.website), or you can subscribe through any podcast subscription service.

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## WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

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

Abbr – Aust: Australian; Edgar: Edgar Award winner; Nebula: Nebula Award winner; Nvla: novella.

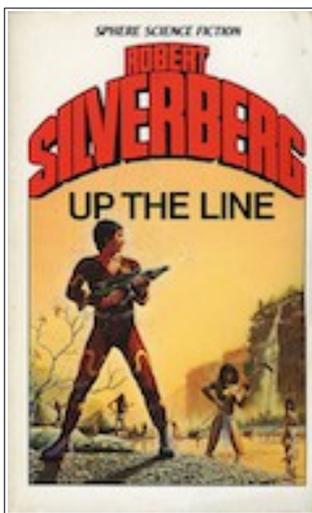
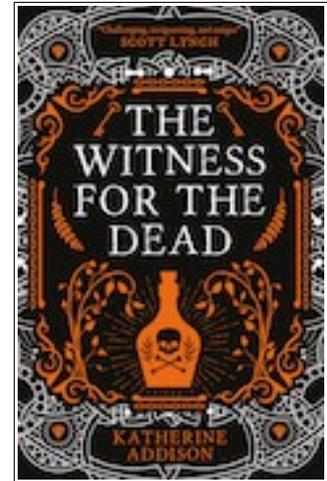
### April-May 2023 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>The Witness for the Dead</i>	Katherine Addison	Fantasy	Apr 25		3.3	2021	
<i>Up the Line</i>	Robert Silverberg	Sf	May 6	e	2.4	1969	
<i>Five Decembers</i>	James Kestrel	Crime	May 10	e	4.2	2021	Edgar
<i>A Mirror Mended</i>	Alix E. Harrow	Fantasy	May 11	e	3.8	2022	Nvla
<i>Spear</i>	Nicola Griffith	Fantasy	May 13	e	4.5	2022	
<i>Even Though I Knew the End</i>	C. L. Polk	Fantasy	May 18	e	3.3	2022	Nvla; Nebula
<i>Rhine Journey</i>	Anne Schlee	Lit	May 25		3.4	1980	
<i>Disquiet</i>	Julia Leigh	Lit	May 26		3.2	2008	Nvla; Aust
<i>Death in Brunswick</i>	Boyd Oxlade	Crime	May 31		3.3	1987	Aust

Books read in the period: 9  
Yearly total to end of period: 46

**Notes:**

***The Witness For the Dead*** (2021) – I was impressed with Addison’s ***The Goblin Emperor*** (2014) when I read it a few years back and so was looking forward to this new book. It’s not exactly a sequel, though it is set in the same fantastical world and does use some of the periphery characters from the earlier novel. Here the prelate Thara Celehar – who was previously commissioned by the Emperor to investigate who killed his father and half-brothers – now resides in the provincial town of Amalo. He acts as a Witness for the Dead, performing the role of advocate, to ensure they can be laid to rest properly. He is called in to investigate the death of a young, unidentified woman who has been found in the river. So what we have is a murder mystery set in a fantastical world where the “detective” can interrogate the recently dead. This is an enjoyable novel, though not to the high standard of the author’s previous outing. There is a lot to like about Celehar and the world he inhabits. This looks like being the first in a new series by this author and it will be interesting to see where they take this setup. R: 3.3/5.0



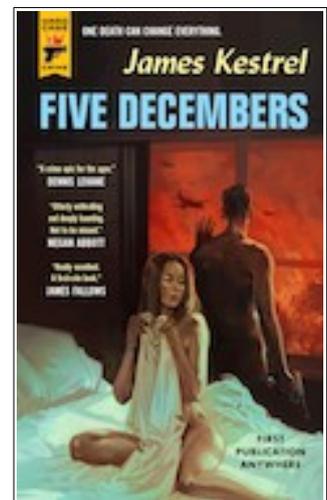
***Up the Line*** (1969) – Nominated for the 1970 Hugo Award for Best Novel.

Judd Elliott is a Time Courier, charged with escorting groups of tourists back in time (“up the line”) to witness momentous occasions in history. His job is to act as both guide and escort, ensuring the tourists all get their money’s worth without impacting the time-line in any major way. Elliott’s period of expertise is 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, and his first forays into that period provide the reader with some interesting material about its major events, and characters. But before long it becomes obvious that both Silverberg and his character Elliott are really only interested in fornicating his way through history. There hardly seems to be a female character anywhere in the novel – either tourist or historical figure – that his time

traveller doesn’t attempt to have it off with. And this relentless pursuit of male sexual fulfilment soon becomes very tiresome and tends to over-shadow what might have been an intriguing examination of time-travel paradoxes and the means of reversing them. Not Silverberg’s best by a long streak. R: 2.4/5.0

***Five Decembers*** (2021) – Winner of the 2022 Edgar Award for Best Novel.

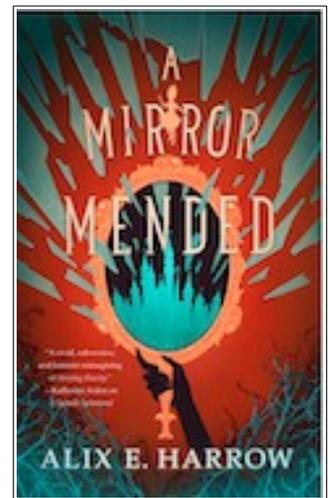
In December 1941 World War I veteran Joe McGrady is working as a detective in Honolulu, Hawaii when he is sent to investigate the



death of a young man, who has been found strung up and gutted in a remote shack. It soon becomes clear that this is not a usual murder case – even if the killing method wasn't enough of a clue – as the victim was the nephew of a high ranking US Admiral, and there was another murder victim in the shack initially missed: a young Japanese woman. As tensions between Japan and America rise sharply McGrady is sent to Hong Kong to follow the trail of the main murder suspect. There he is caught up in the Japanese invasion and thrown into a prisoner-of-war camp and then transported back to Japan, supposedly to spend the rest of the war, or his life, working under slave-like conditions. But here he's lucky, in that he is extracted from the camp by a Japanese bureaucrat who we later learn is a relative of the dead Japanese girl and who desperately wants to find her killer. Kestrel has written an excellent novel here, one that straddles the detective noir, war and adventure genres with quite some success. Yet another intriguing novel from the Hard Case Crime publishers. R: 4.4/5.0

**A Mirror Mended** (2022) – #2 in the author's Fractured Fables series of novellas. Nominated for the 2023 Locus Award for Best Novella.

This novella is a sequel to the author's 2021 novella **A Spindle Splintered**. The earlier novella was based around the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale with the protagonist, Zinnia Gray, travelling to various versions of the story across the multiverse, rescuing the princesses where she can. This new novella finds Gray continuing her work until she chances to look into a mirror and sees someone looking back at her, and thus she is captured by Snow White's Evil Queen, who drags Gray into her world. The Queen knows how her story ends and wants something different, and she believes that Gray might just be the person to help her obtain that goal. This is an interesting continuation of Gray's story and although it doesn't have the sense of freshness and originality of the first it still shows that Harrow is one of the brightest voices in the field. R: 3.8/5.0



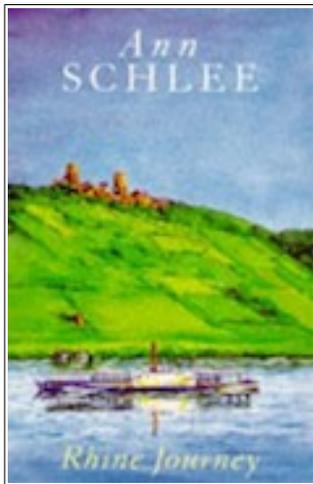
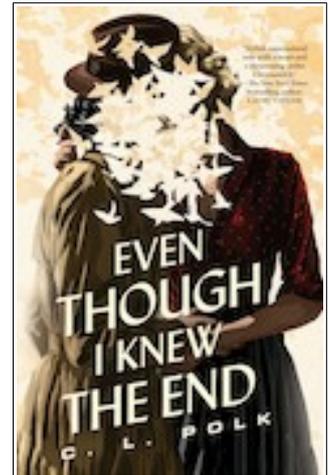
**Spear** (2022) – Nominated for the 2023 Nebula and Locus Awards for Best Novel.

This short novel – only just over novella length – started out reminding me of the more philosophical parts of Le Guin's Earthsea books and then slowly morphs into something else entirely. The novel starts with an unnamed girl living with her mother in the wilderness. The girl finally takes the name of Peredur and leaves home to seek her destiny in the court of Artos, King of Caer Leon. And we come to realise we are reading a queer retelling of the Arthurian Grail Quest set in sixth-century Wales. And a good one it is too. Griffith presents a story that we have all seen many times before in a new and refreshing way, and for that we have to be extremely grateful. A lot of other writers might well have stretched this whole thing out to 400, 500 or even 600 pages, wringing every last drop of life out of the story and concept, leaving it limp and spent. Griffith, on this hand, gives us everything we want and nothing we don't need. A masterful achievement. R: 4.5/5.0

**Even Though I Knew the End** (2022) – Nominated for the 2023 Locus Award and winner of the 2023 Nebula Award for Best Novella.

Let me state up front that I have no problem with mixing genres (here we have noir fiction mixed with angels and demons), nor do I have a problem about recasting classical storylines to illustrate different points-of-view (here we have a queer dark fantasy), but I really do want the author to be on top of what they are attempting to write, and not just throw in elements all over the place in attempt to be relevant. The problem with this novella is that it utilises a predictable plot and tries too hard in the early stages to come across as something out of 1940s pulp detective fiction; it just doesn't work for me. The main character Helen is a private detective with magical powers who was, at some time in the past, booted out of the magician's union for committing an unforgivable act – we later learn what this is and you can see why she was excommunicated. She is hired to look into what appears to be a ritual killing. Before long she has run foul of the legitimate magicians who are also investigating this, and the subsequent follow-up murders. But it all becomes very predictable and as the storyline progresses you can see the wheels turning and the outcome slowly approaching. I'll give the author points for the attempt, unfortunately it falls down in the execution.

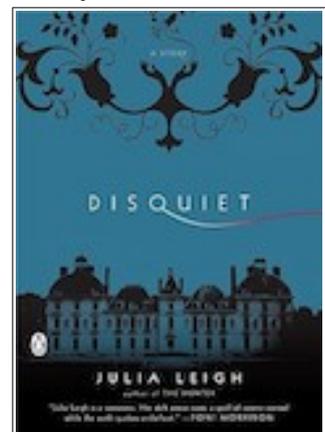
R: 3.3/5.0



**Rhine Journey** (1980) – Shortlisted for the 1981 Booker Prize. Charlotte Morrison – in company with her brother, the Reverend Charles Morrison, his wife Marion and their daughter Ellie – is taking a journey down the Rhine by paddle-steamer in the summer of 1851. Among her fellow passengers Charlotte sees a man who reminds her of the one love of her life, the man she was forbidden to marry by her brother. When the two families find themselves following the same itinerary Charlotte's past regrets and longings start to over-power her thoughts and actions, and she views events around her skewed to fit her own shortcomings. Schlee is obviously attempting to write a 19-century novel of manners, told from the perspective of a 20th-century author, and she largely succeeds. We have all the main elements of such a novel: the exasperating female protagonist who can't seem to get out of her own way; the

ridiculously over-bearing clergyman; the internal monologues that run on and on, yet end up nowhere; and a seemingly endless capacity for the characters to mis-interpret the actions of others. More for fans of such novels than me I think. R: 3.4/5.0

**Disquiet** (2008) – Winner of the 2008 Shirley Jackson Award for Best Novella, and the 2009 Encore Award for Best Second Novel. Out of the blue Olivia arrives back at the southern France home of her mother for the first time in 12 years, with her two children in tow. Something bad has happened back at her home in Australia – she has an arm in a plaster cast – but she doesn't speak of it. Soon afterwards Olivia's brother Marcus and his wife Sophia return from



hospital where she has given birth to their first child. Unfortunately, the child has died during the birth and they have brought Alice home for a family burial. But Sophia is so traumatised by the death that she can't bring herself to part with the dead baby. Meanwhile Olivia is coming to terms with her past experiences and then her children nearly drown in a nearby lake. This novella is full of menace and forebodings and nobody in the story appears to be enjoying life. The prose is told in a sparse, pared-down style which well suits the story and reflects the author's script-writing past. I don't think it works as well as it might, probably due to its needing a close reading to pick up all the clues, which is an uninviting prospect due to the rather unlikeable characters. R: 3.0/5.0

**Death in Brunswick** (1987) – Review next issue.

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### REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

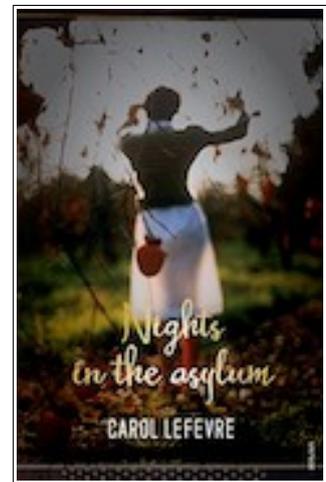
*Nights in the Asylum* (2007) by Carol Lefevre

**Genre:** Literature

This novel won the Nita B. Kibble Literary Award in 2008.

[This review was originally published on my Matilda weblog, 3 August 2007.]

You could be forgiven for thinking that a new genre is emerging in Australian literary fiction: the genre of "escape" fiction. Not escapist, there is certainly enough of that around, but "escape" - the act of leaving a bad place in the hope of reaching somewhere better, or at least acceptable. *Grace* by Robert Drewe would fit, with its protagonist fleeing an inner-city stalker for the wilds of north-western Australia; and there are escapes, of sorts, in both *Dreams of Speaking* by Gail Jones and *Candle Life* by Venero Armano.



Escapes, in this context, should not be confused with "journeys"; the two are very different. Epic fantasy utilises the concept of the physical journey as a means of transforming the protagonists from their initial state of innocence to hero status at journey's end. The literary fiction equivalent is the "road" novel, where the end is less important than the act of getting there, and the life changing events that are experienced along the way. This new "escape" genre almost dispenses with the journey, preferring to emphasise the arrival, or post-arrival, aspects of the story.

Such is certainly the case with *Nights in the Asylum*, a first novel by Australian writer Carol Lefevre. In this book, three very different characters find themselves in an old partly dilapidated mansion in an outback mining town. Each is fleeing a particular form of abuse and, while their respective journeys are described in the novel, "how" they got to the house seems of little importance. Indeed, very much of lesser import than the "why".

Miri, the novel's main character, has left her husband in Sydney after the death of their university-aged daughter, Alice. The triple blow of her daughter's psychiatric illness, followed by Miri's discovery of her husband's infidelities, and then the daughter's death, prove too much for her to cope with and she travels back to the mining town where she was born; back to the house her grandfather built for her Cuban grandmother. Along the way she picks up the hitch-hiking Aziz, a silent man of little English, who, we later find, has somehow escaped from an immigration detention centre and who seems intent on nothing more than never going back. Although the house is supposed to be locked up and empty, Miri finds local townswoman Suzette and her baby daughter hiding from her policeman husband in one of the upstairs bedrooms.

The arrival of the three in this house precipitates another journey in each of them. Aziz is trying to survive in a country he doesn't understand, fleeing the abuse that only a state can inflict on a person, searching for freedom. Suzette is also searching for freedom, but first has to discover the inner courage to escape her physically and mentally abusive husband in order to save her and her daughter's lives.

Miri initially thinks she has reached the end of her journey by returning to where she began. Yet this is just another starting off point for her. She was unable to save her daughter from herself, but discovers that she may just be able to save the others and, in the process, undergo a form of redemption.

It's a pretty good setup, all in all. It allows the author to explore three very different worlds, and three very different lives which just happen to intersect in one old house. Lefevre examines the intersecting story-line strands in chapters told from the different points-of-view of the main and subsidiary characters, in present time and in flashback, building up the layers of novel as she goes. Handled poorly this can be a recipe for disaster as the reader's focus changes too often and with too little delineation between strands. Lefevre doesn't fall into that trap and the overall effect of this technique adds, rather than detracts, from the final result.

The only quibble I have with the book relates to its ending. Suzette's husband comes looking for her and is suspicious of Miri, seemingly all alone in this great house. The presence of Aziz and Suzette becomes known to some sympathetic neighbours, but the more people who know of them only increases the likelihood that the police will be informed. Lefevre decreases the size of her chapters and sentences, instilling a sense of urgency into the formulation of an escape plan, and ramping up the tension as the police spiral in towards them. And yet, at the end, it finishes in a rather off-hand manner. The reader isn't looking for a final "showdown" or resolution as in a mystery novel, but the final scene, of the main part of the novel, feels rather like a let-down.

The last part of the book consists of nine very short chapters describing a set of "undated photographs". You are led to believe these show the novel's protagonists at some time in the future, after the end of the novel, though I found the effect too obscure to render much enlightenment. Maybe if I'd paid more attention to the description of the characters or their surroundings during the course of the book I might have been better placed to appreciate these appendices. It's asking a lot of a reader to be that attentive.

I should say that I'm talking from my own perspective and failings here. In general, the book shows a talent for character, timing and place that augurs well for the future. My misgivings about various parts of the book can probably be explained by the fact that this is a first novel. If future efforts improve on this then they will be very good indeed.

R: 3.4/5.0

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## WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

### Television

Basically nothing – at least nothing finished. I've started a few things but my time away from a television service in the early parts of the month meant that everything I'm watching is a work in progress.

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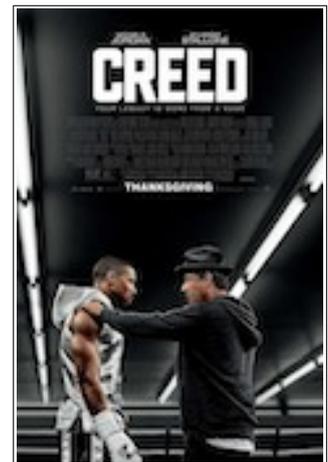
### Film

#### ***Creed*** (2015)

Platform: Airline Streaming

Genre: Drama

This film is a reworking of the Rocky Balboa rags-to-riches boxing epic ***Rocky***, and can essentially be seen as a rebooting of that franchise. Here, Sylvester Stallone, reprising his Rocky role, is convinced to serve as trainer and mentor to Adonis Creed, son of his deceased friend and rival Apollo Creed. This film basically follows the ***Rocky*** script, with slight variations: a young boxer (Creed, played by Michael B. Jordan) is picked by light heavyweight champion "Pretty" Ricky Conlan, to be his last opponent before his retirement which has been enforced by an impending prison term. Conlan hopes to make a large amount of money out of the fight due to Adonis's surname, while Creed just hopes to prove something to himself and to Balboa. If



you like boxing films this is a good entry in the genre. It looks good, has high production values and follows the formula properly. It was good enough for me to want to seek out the sequels. R: 3.6/5.0

#### ***The Batman*** (2022)

Platform: Airline Streaming

Genre: Superhero

Robert Pattinson takes over the bat cape for this latest instalment in this long-running sequence of films. And he does a pretty good job. Luckily the writers and producers didn't decide to "reboot" the franchise, yet again, and give us another origin story. That has been done to death. Here we get hints about it but the story mainly revolves around Gotham City's underlying corruption which raises

many questions about whether Bruce Wayne's parents were involved. Again, lucidly, the writers do not settle on a straight back-and-white result but allow all the shades of grey to come to the fore. Robert Pattinson got a far bit of stick from the fan-boys when he was announced as the next Batman, and I suppose, if all you had seen of his work was his role in the Twilight franchise of vampire movies, then you might be forgiven for being sceptical. I think he does well here. The role calls for a brooding silent presence and he carries that off in his own way. Yes, viewers are always going to be comparing one Batman with another (is this the new James Bond quiz?) and each of them has a lot of similarities with the others. The aim for each new actor is to find their own place and Pattinson does well enough for me to think that he will be far from the worst caped crusader we will see. So, there is certainly enough here to be going on with and I'd hope the team behind this film decides to run the old bat-signal out for another cloud illumination sometime soon. R: 3/7/5.0

### ***Top Gun : Maverick* (2022)**

Platform: Airline Streaming

Genre: War

Tom Cruise returns in this sequel to the original ***Top Gun*** from 1986. You can see why he bothered to get this film made, but I wonder if we really care. Here we are presented with the same old tired storyline and characters: military command comes up with an impossible mission in enemy territory; they assemble a crew of possible participants and engage the only old guy still around who is dumb enough to be their teacher; military command hates him; the film-makers love him; his students are so-so; they all fail to make the grade; the old guy wins. This is all paint-by-the-numbers film-making. It's competent enough and it gets the job done but you really do have to wonder if the job really needed to be done in the



first place. Everything here is predictable, down to the race between motorcycle and jet, the love interest on the side who runs the local bar and the disaffected love interest's kid, the mission, its outcome and the final rescue. There is nothing new here besides some of the special effects and even they have become rather boring. Cruise has stated that this film "saved cinema". Saved it for whom? People who like this sort of dross apparently. I can see no reason why this film was on the list of nominees for Best Film at this year's Oscars. I suspect it might just be the worst such nominee in all Oscar history. Oh, okay, there are some nice flying sequences. R: 2.2/5.0

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I think its better to let the writing flow. Yes, memories occur as the pen flies. You shouldn't force them, but just write, crossing out as little as possible. And in the uninterrupted flood of words and sentences, a few details, which you've forgotten or buried at the bottom of your memory, who knows why, will slowly rise to the surface. Above all, don't break momentum, but rather keep in mind the image of a skier gliding for all eternity down a steep trail, like the pen on a blank page. There will be time enough later for cross-outs.

***Invisible Ink*** by Patrick Modiano, translated by Mark Polizzotti, p87

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### PERRYSCOPE Responses

#### Perryscope 32:

**Martin Field:** “I particularly liked your travel tales in north east Vic. Back in 72 I went there on a La Trobe footy club trip. Met some of the old timers Jack Stanton, Norm Killeen and had a jolly old fortified time. The trip made me a fan of their muscats and some reds for life. I recall on the way home we were drinking a flagon of muscat through straws. You mention Bill Chambers and I agree with your general opinion, I do prefer his fortified wines. Now that Bonza Air flies from Maroochydore to Albury we have a vague plan to fly down and spend a few days wandering around Rutherglen and surrounds.”

[**PM:** Most of these old-timers had passed on by the time I got to the area in the early 1980s.]

**Mark Olson:** “Many thanks, as always. I wish I could enjoy winery tours. To begin with, I'm usually driving. It also offends me to have to pay to see if I want to pay them more (though I do understand why they charge). But mainly because I find a small taste of a wine at a winery rarely tells me how much I'll enjoy it when I get it home. Wine tastings have led me to buy too many expensive wines I don't really like. But I love driving around in the countryside and browsing the wineries.”

[**PM:** We've all done that.]

**Rob Gerrand:** “I share your delight in *The Makanai*. We were in Kyoto last week, and a guide took us through the area where *The Makanai* was filmed, during Covid – they didn't have trouble filming in empty streets – and we did indeed see several maiko and geiko.

“I also liked *Slow Horses*, both seasons 1 and 2, and agree that Gary Oldman is very good.

“I read *Life After Life* and was disappointed; it didn't do much with the idea, which was done so much better in *Replay*.”

[**PM:** As I hope I pointed out, my main problem with *Life After Life* was that it hinted at a resolution but was unable to reach it. I know David Grigg is a big fan of the book but I found it somewhat lacking; as if the author was just playing with a concept he knew little about.]

“Have you seen *Mr Queen* (on Netflix)? An excellent Korean series that we're halfway through. A temperamental celebrity Seoul chef after a near fatal accident finds himself in the body of Queen Kim So-Yong in the Joseon era. Shin Hue-Sun is excellent playing a young and beautiful Queen overlaid with a twenty-first century male personality.”

[**PM:** Not one that I've come across as yet.]

**Joseph Nicholas:** “Many (many) thanks for the last few issues of **Perryscope** – the latest to hand is issue 32, published (or at least received by me) in late April – and many apologies for my non-response....but I've Been Busy. Not just with ordinary life but (because of the time of year) the gardening. And various foreign jaunts – a week in Albania in September last year, a week in Athens in the following month, a long weekend in

Amsterdam in late February for the Rijksmuseum's Vermeer exhibition, a week in Macedonia in March (real northern Greece Macedonia, not the knock-off former Yugoslav republic of the same name), and a long weekend in Bologna and Ravenna late last month (with, for me, a special focus on the Byzantine mosaics of Ravenna, first seen in photographs forty years ago – so the trip was the fulfilment of a long-held desire, and to see the real things after so long a time was rather overwhelming).”

[**PM:** Ah, the joys of living in the UK and being able to drop over to Europe for a week or a weekend. Robyn and I find that we need at least three weeks away if we are travelling almost anywhere. Possible exceptions being Bali or New Zealand.]

“These were all small group art and archaeology tours organised through a company called Travel Editions, which Judith and I often went with because of this focus. There would have been another tour with them next month, to South Tyrol with a focus on the South Tyrol Archaeological Museum in Bolzano and its famous single exhibit Otzi the Iceman, recovered from a glacier on the Austro-Italian border in 1991 – but that was cancelled because not enough people had signed up to it for it to be viable. (Pooh botty wee, as we say here.) So now I'm looking at a visit to Helsinki, for its Finnish take on art nouveau and art deco, later this year, and Seville in February next year, both with the same company.

“With respect to your own forthcoming tour of Morocco, I would say that what you get out of it could depend on the size of the tour group. My experience (our experience) has been that the larger the group, the more general – lowest common denominator, even – the commentary and visitor experience on offer, simply because the tour organisers have to cater to a potentially very broad range of tastes and interests. Small groups, on the other hand – especially small groups with guest lecturers, as was the case with Amsterdam, Macedonia and Bologna/Ravenna – mean you're likely to get a more detailed, more demanding itinerary. (Tours with guest lecturers of course cost more, but you know in advance that everyone else on it shares your interest, and a desire to learn something new.)”

[**PM:** I'd be interested in what number you're thinking of when you say “small”? We had 17 on our Moroccan tour, as the two buses ran to a staggered time line. That was pretty good in that we didn't have anyone being continually late or getting lost. It helped that they had all done a fair bit of overseas travel previously.]

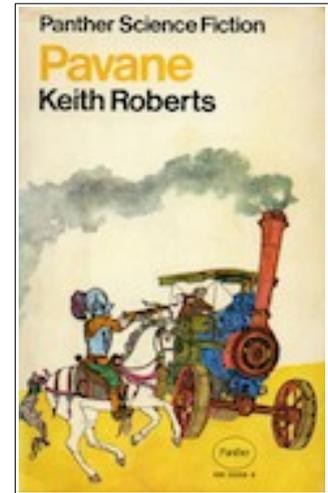
“Having said which, I've also booked to go on a 15-day cruise from Budapest to the Black Sea and back again in April, with an entirely different company, Riviera Travel. We went with them in 2017, on a Danube cruise from Budapest to Linz and back again, and found it fairly easy to keep ourselves entertained despite the fact that there must have been at least a hundred other people on board. Mostly, we entertained ourselves by ignoring the guided tours of the various places at which the boat called and navigating same using our own maps and guides (ensuring, of course, that we were back on board before it sailed on to the next port of call). When just sailing along, we sat on the top deck and read. I expect that I shall do the same on the April cruise.”

[**PM:** That sounds like a perfectly acceptable course of action. Our one river cruise was on the Mekong a few years back and we decided to stay with the group as the numbers of English speakers was small – only fourteen. And there was one Cambodian off-boat tour I skipped; I had no interest in going along to a Khmer Rouge torture house.]

“Turning to other matters, I'd say that I read the two parts of your winery tour with only mild interest, as I have given up alcohol. Gave up many months ago, actually: I was drinking too much following Judith's death, and decided that the best way to cut back was simply to stop altogether. So now I drink only sparkling water, apple juice, and occasionally zero-sugar Coke.

“Your paperback edition of Keith Roberts's *Pavane* is one that I once had, but which I replaced in 1984 with a yellow-jacketed Gollancz hardback edition. I did this because that paperback edition is incomplete: it lacks the story "The White Boat", which is included in the Gollancz hardback and which I read as a stand-alone in a later story collection, *The Grain Kings*, several years after first reading *Pavane*....and only realising part-way through that it belonged in that same alternate universe. Why it was omitted from the paperback is something of a mystery. (Wikipedia is silent on this, perhaps because the authors/editors of Keith Roberts's page are unaware of the story's *Pavane* connection.)”

[**PM:** I'll check that story out and then may make the addition to the relevant Wikipedia page. I've been making a few edits there lately.]



**I also heard from:** **Chong** (who thought the cover made me look like a rapper – just keep taking the tablets mate); **Nic Farey**; **Barbara O’Sullivan** (who “Also liked the movie *The Banshees of Inisherin*. Beautifully filmed and acted, there are, however some very dark moments interspersed with the famed Irish humour.” And who also recommends *The Diplomat*, streaming on Netflix; I will attempt to check it out); and **Murray MacLachlan**; thank you one and all.

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.