

# Perryscope 35



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Available for the usual, or by 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 by photograph by Robyn Mills, Morocco, May 2023.

### INTRODUCTION

Winter has seemed unduly long this year, and I have to admit that I am starting to get more than a little sick of it. Maybe that's why this issue was delayed; I just couldn't get up the enthusiasm for the work. I should note here that winters in Melbourne are not exactly harsh by the standards of those in North American or Europe – we don't get any snow and as a result of continuing climate change we don't get many frosts these days either. Everything is relative, however, and I'm not glad to see that the wattle is blooming out in the countryside and that a certain tree on my street, which is my indicator that spring is on the way, has started to bloom on schedule. Which can only be a good thing.



This issue I write about my early high school years. I had originally thought that I might have had more to say about my earlier schooling in my primary years but, frankly, couldn't find enough of interest to discuss at any length. Whenever I write these things I always need something to spark me off, to get the brain remembering and the writing happening. There just didn't seem to be anything happening in that direction so I decided to move on to the next time period.

This is not to say that I won't return to my early schooling; I'm certain there is more that I could go back and look at. It was just that, in this case, the topic here seemed to be offering more.



Last month I mentioned that I was back editing Wikipedia again. I was drawn back by the mention, on FaceBook, that a Wiki page, whose subject was a well-known UK sf fan, was up for deletion; changes needed to be made. They were and the page now seems to have escaped an ignominious fate. But, of course, others pop up and so it was that Rob Gerrand's page – sometime correspondent of this fanzine – was identified as lacking "notability". According to Wikipedia's own criteria that was probably correct. So I got stuck into the edits, after a bit of research and some input from other people, and now seem to have got it to a point where it will probably survive. At least no-one is screaming at me about it.

My other editing on the online encyclopedia seems to be coming along. It is quite astounding the amount of work that has to be done on the pages I created in my initial Wikipedia editing period of 2005-2016. Many of the formats I used then are no longer in vogue and a lot of work needs to be done to improve them. I see this as a good thing as it means the encyclopedia isn't standing still, that it keeps working to improve its methods of presenting relevant information. It just takes a lot of work to get some of the pages up to scratch. Persistence is the key. That and a certain level of stubbornness.

### WHERE I WENT TO SCHOOL – Off to High School

[The following piece is a sort-of sequel to the article I wrote for **Perryscope 22**, which gave some details about the place where I went to primary school. You may find this easier to follow and understand some of the references if you have read that first.]

Up until the late-1960s secondary students in country South Australia were at a severe disadvantage when compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

In those years the Education Department of South Australia conducted external, state-wide assessments for each of the last three years of high school: Intermediate Certificate for Year 10, Leaving Certificate for Year 11 and Matriculation Certificate for Year 12. If you started like me around the age of 5 then, after seven years of primary school, by the time you entered Year 10, you were 14-15 years old, and, in those days, it was allowable to leave school and get a job when you were 15. I suspect the Intermediate Certificate was designed to give potential employers of those 15-year-olds some idea of whether or not they could read or write; I doubt it examined much else. The Leaving Certificate indicated a higher level of education, enough for Teachers' College, but not so high as for those who wanted to enter a Tertiary institution, University or Institute of Technology, or the like. For that you needed the Matriculation Certificate, or whatever the Year 12 equivalent is called these days.

The difficulty that country students found themselves in revolved around the fact that few country high schools, and certainly none in the near vicinity to Laura where I lived such as those in Gladstone (10 kilometres south) or Jamestown (30 kilometres east), held classes beyond Year 10. If you wanted to move further along in your education you were required to leave home and live somewhere in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. At that time it took about 3 hours to drive from Laura to Adelaide – way too long for a regular commute between home and school.

As both my father and mother had gone to the University of Adelaide, where they met, they had expectations that their three children would follow in their footsteps. So, as my brother, who was a year ahead of me, approached the end of primary school, some decisions had to be made.

There may have been some private schools in the larger rural cities, but the difficulty of travelling between Laura and anywhere else in terms of time and transportation options ruled out any consideration of them. It was down to private school in Adelaide (way too expensive to consider), the nearest high school in Gladstone, or being sent to a state high school in Adelaide somewhere. Added to all of those considerations was the fact that Gladstone High had the worst Intermediate Certificate results in the State in the mid-1960s. My father was not impressed, and, knowing him, he probably sent a few terse letters to both the Education Department and the local State Member of Parliament about the issue.

Few students from Laura Primary School had gone past years 10 or 11 so my parents didn't have a lot of people who could offer them any advice, or example. The choice came down to spending three years at Gladstone and then moving on to somewhere in Adelaide or just starting out in Adelaide from year 8. My parents opted for the latter, and the school they chose was Unley High School.

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Neither my brother nor I are fully aware of the reasons why this school rather than any other was chosen. I can only assume that it was because the school had a good reputation and because my mother had gone there in her schooling years: my father had attended Adelaide Boys' High School.

Okay, so the school was chosen. But where to live? None of my parents' siblings (one sister on my father's side and one of each on my mother's) lived anywhere near Unley High, and anyway, they had enough children of their own to be looking after. The only solution was to look for somewhere to board privately. For my brother my mother made an enquiry at the Unley local Anglican Church and received an offer from a family who could take him on, but only from Monday to Friday. On weekends he had to find somewhere else to live, generally with a relative.

I was luckier. Just as I was about to start at Unley a local farmer's son was vacating his boarding arrangement with a Mrs Murphy who lived not far from the school. It was a common arrangement for South Australian farmers' sons to attend Urrbrae Agricultural High School (which backed onto the Unley High grounds) for 2-4 years to pick up some the skills they'd need if, and when, they took over their family's farm. Mrs Murphy had been taking in these boys, one or two at a time, for about 25 years by the time I arrived; I was the first one she'd had who went to Unley High. Not that that made much of a difference. Her role, as she saw it, was to make sure we were watered and fed, had a roof over our heads and attended school each day. It was a quasi-parental role with a leaning towards discipline but not much in the way of emotional or educational support.



My 1968 year 8 class photo from Unley High School

All in all it worked out fairly well. I was to stay with her for the full five years of my high schooling, and, as it turned out, I was to be the last of her "boys". She was in her early 70s by the time I finished and didn't feel that she could keep up the work of looking after anyone else.

Neither my brother nor I really enjoyed our time away from our home and parents, but it was just one of those things that you had to work through. Within a couple of years Gladstone High School had been turned around by a new headmaster and more input from the State Education Department. It increased its year coverage for all of high school and improved its teaching standards to the point that three of my primary school class-mates from Laura, who all went to Gladstone High, ended up with me in tertiary education after matriculating in year 12. That had never happened to that school before. My sister stayed home and went to Gladstone as well, but she had no ambition for any form of tertiary qualification.

Would it have been better for my brother and I to have stayed home and gone to Gladstone High given how it turned around? It's impossible to say. I ended up moving into the IT field for my adult employment and my brother moved around a bit before deciding on accountancy and became, near the end of his working life, the Business Manager for the major Catholic High School in Bendigo in Victoria — coincidentally the rural city where my wife is from. He asked me once if I thought we might have ended up as we did if we'd stayed in the country rather than attending a city high school. I replied that I didn't think we would have. But who's to know?

Before my father died I discussed my high school arrangements with him. I said that I wished it could have been otherwise, that I could have spent my teenage years at home, especially as my mother was very unwell during those years. But I also made sure to tell him that I held no grudges about it all, that he and my mother had made the best decision they could at the time, and, it had probably worked out the best for me in the end. He was never one to express his emotions about such things, but I think he was happy that I'd told him that.

I'll leave my experiences at the school for another time.

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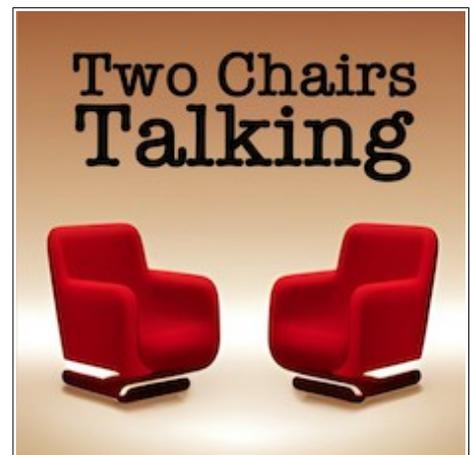
## WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

**Notes from this month's podcasts**

**Episode 93:** (5 July 2023) *Yesterday's tomorrows*

This episode we take the Hugo Time Machine back to 1970, the year that *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* by Ursula K. Le Guin won the Best Novel Hugo. David has a bone to pick with the book, and I discuss the latest Indiana Jones movie.



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.

**WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY**

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

Abbr – Aust: Australian; Clarke: Arthur C. Clarke Award winner; Edgar: Edgar Award winner; Nvla: novella;

**July 2023 books**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Pub Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>The Long-Legged Fly</i>	James Sallis	Crime	6 July		4.1	1992	
<i>The List</i>	Mick Herron	Spy	6 July		3.6	2015	Nvla
<i>The Long and Faraway Gone</i>	Lou Berney	Crime	12 July		4.0	2015	Edgar
<i>The Return of the Sorceress</i>	Silvia Moreno-Garcia	Fantasy	14 July	e	2.8	2021	Nvla
<i>Mothering Sunday</i>	Graham Swift	Lit	16 July		3.3	2016	
<i>Deep Wheel Orcadia</i>	Harry Josephine Giles	Sf	19 July		2.8	2021	Clarke
<i>Here's Luck</i>	Lennie Lower	Lit	30 July		3.4	1930	Aust
<i>Comfort Me With Apples</i>	Catherynne M. Valente	Horror	31 July		3.2	2021	Nvla

Books read in the period: 8

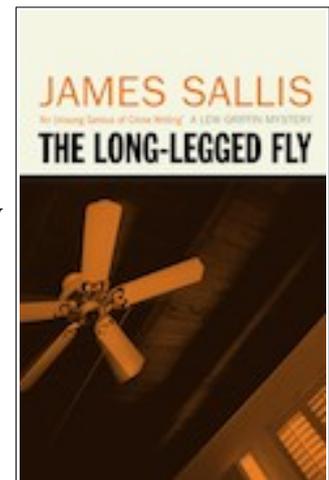
Yearly total to end of period: 59

Reading targets achieved: 2 Edgar Award winners

**Notes:**

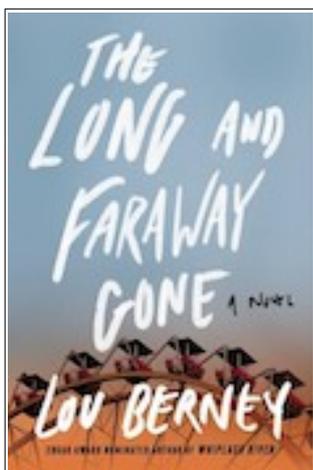
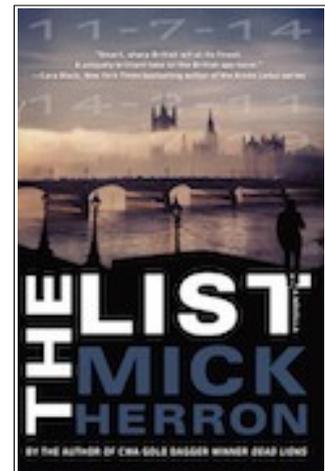
*The Long-Legged Fly* (1992) – #1 in the author's Lew Griffin series of novels.

Lew Griffin is an African-American PI living in New Orleans. When we first meet him in 1964 he's drunk and barely making a living. But he's engaged to find a missing woman activist who caught a flight to New Orleans, evaded the people waiting for her and simply disappeared. And then we jump to 1970, 1984 and 1990 and more missing person cases as we follow Griffin through his life, sometimes in clover with steady work, a loving partner and his drinking under control, and at others when he his drunk, alone and destitute. In many ways the search for the lost is of secondary importance as Sallis writes of mostly about Griffin and his relationship with his city. This is some excellent work and the author seems to be an unsung master of the genre. Definitely worth seeking out the others in this series and his others as well. R: 4.1/5.0



**The List** (2015) – #2.5 in the author’s Slough House series of novels. This is the first novella in the author’s series of spy thrillers featuring the denizens of Slough House. It fits between the novels **Dead Lions** and **Real Tigers**.

Dieter Hess, an old spy – a double-agent for MI6 – is found dead in his home. He died of natural causes so that would normally not be a problem until a secret bank account is found in his name. And the source of the payments cannot be traced. Diana Taverner (aka Lady Di) is livid and tears strips off John Bachelor, Hess’s minder for not doing his job. But it looks like Bachelor can redeem himself when he finds a hidden envelope in Hess’s flat. When he deciphers the letter inside he discovers a list of names. But what is their connection to each other and to Hess? Is this a spy network operating under the very noses of MI6, or something else? This is a very brief episode in the author’s Slough House series and appears to introduce some characters who might crop up in the main novels later. A small taster between the longer meals. R: 3.6/5.0



**The Long and Faraway Gone** (2015) – Winner of the Edgar Award for Paperback Original, Anthony Award (Paperback), and Barry Award (Paperback).

In the summer of 1986 a mass shooting at an Oklahoma City cinema left six people dead and only one survivor. At the same time, in an unrelated incident, a young woman went missing from the State fair leaving her 12-year-old sister, Julianna, waiting for her. Now, 25 years later, the shooting survivor – who has changed his name to Wyatt and become a Private Investigator – is back in Oklahoma City looking into a harassment case for a friend. But while he is working the current case, memories of that terrible shooting start returning to him and he gradually starts piecing together details that seemed unimportant at the time but which now have taken on renewed significance. Julianna, meanwhile, has never given up her search for her sister and when she learns that a main suspect in the disappearance has returned, and she finds a photo on FaceBook of the fair on the night her sister went missing, she finds the mystery starting to envelop her life. I really liked Berney’s **November Road** a couple of years back and this earlier novel is nearly as good. The two stories of Wyatt and Julianna swirl around each other, twice intersecting, but not becoming entangled as another writer might have forced. This is a novel as much about survival, and what it takes to keep on going, as the deeper mysteries at the heart of the plot, and Berney has the writing skills to get the most out of all the various levels of the stories. R: 4.0/5.0

**The Return of the Sorceress** (2021) – The sorceress Yalxi has been deposed from her high office by her lover and now, wounded and alone, must use her wits and skill to seek her revenge and obtain some level of redemption. This novella follows a fairly predictable path with the right people being in the right place at the right time,



and the right people being as gullible and stupid as they need to be and it all works out in the end. You've seen all of this before and it doesn't go anywhere new. If the author had spent more time exploring the reasons behind Yalxi's initial power grab and the falling out with her lover there might have been something more here to grab hold onto. Unfortunately that isn't the book Moreno-Garcia wanted to write. What she did write is rather slight; competent but slight. R: 2.6/5.0

**Mothering Sunday** (2016) – It is Mothering Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March 1924 and this novel starts with Jane Fairchild, housemaid to the Nivens, relaxing in the bed of Paul Sherringham, only surviving son of the owners of the mansion next door, after a sexual encounter. He has to rush away to see his fiancée, who he is marrying in two weeks, so she lingers in the house after he's gone, before heading home and hearing tragic news. In the second half of the book we meet Jane again, at 85, now a semi-retired author of 19 novels, widowed and looking back on her life. At first it seems that Jane is a willing partner in the initial sexual affair, though there are hints that it started as a financial arrangement, and she is quite open in her third-party narrative about what she is getting out of it. The question left unanswered by the author is that of the disparity of social classes between the two and the possible sexual politic and power implications of that. In some ways this is an inversion of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley* set-up and maybe Swift had that in mind when he sat down to write this. He certainly writes well though he is never going to plumb the depths of this relationship fully in such a short novel. Enjoyable but you're not going to remember it for long I suspect. R: 3.3/5.0

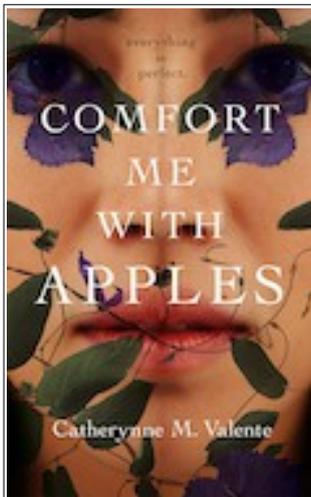


**Deep Wheel Orcadia** (2021) – Well, here's something very different, something that you don't see every day: an sf novel told in verse, originally in an Orkney dialect and then translated into English. So you end up with the Orkney dialect text at the top of the page, and the English translation below. Let's say about 200 English words per page, and a book at 166 pages, in the edition I read, gives you around 35,000 words. Hardly a novel by any stretch. Still, it's pitched as such, or a "verse novel" to be more precise. As you might hope, the book achieves its effect mainly through its use of language, and for that it has to be applauded. The difficulty with it is that it is just way too short for the characters to fully develop, and the plot memes – gender fluidity, big dumb derelict objects floating in space – have all been done before. The interest lies in its presentation and I have the feeling too many critics were wowed by that and didn't take enough notice of what was actually going on. There is talent here but it needs room to breathe and expand. R: 2.8/5.0

**Here's Luck** (1930) – Jack Gudgeon is living with his son Stanley, wife Agatha and sister-in-law Gertrude in Sydney in the 1920s.



Gertrude has been continually telling Agatha to leave her husband as she believes him to be a no-hoper and a drunk. Jack wakes one morning to find the two women have moved out and the rest of the novel follows Jack as he, his son and later his brother-in-law George, get involved in a series of drunken escapades that ends with a spectacular party at their house, which catches fire and burns to the ground. Lower's novel was considered at one time to be Australia's funniest ever novel and, while it can be appreciated for its satire and quality of writing, it has tended to lose its comic bite over the years. We've seen a few too many such tales for it to have quite the impact it had back in its day. One to be read for its historical significance. R: 3.4/5.0



**Comfort Me With Apples** (2021) – This novella was shortlisted for the 2022 Locus Award for Best Novella.

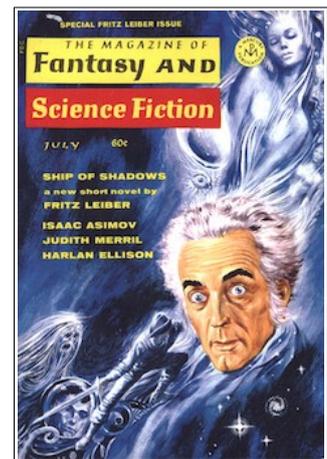
Sophia's life seems perfect. She lives in a perfect community – the “exclusive, upscale gated community” of Arcadia Gardens; she wants for nothing; her friendly neighbours look out for her; she looks, and is, perfect. So why doesn't her husband spend more time at home? Why is he always at “work”? And what is that “work” exactly? Her life seems idyllic until she discovers a mysterious hair-brush in a drawer along with a lock of black hair – her hair is blonde. And then she finds a bone stuck in the knife block in the kitchen which looks remarkably like a finger bone. And why can't she go down into the cellar? Valente here has carved out an intriguing variation on a well-known story that would give the game away if revealed. She does her best to keep the original source material hidden until the details build up so much the reader can do nothing other than realise what she is attempting to achieve. Interesting and effective. R: 3.2/5.0

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### Other short fiction of note:

**Ship of Shadows** by Fritz Leiber (1969) – This novella won the 1970 Hugo Award for Best Novella and was shortlisted for the 1970 Nebula Award.

Spar is a half-deaf, half-blind, alcoholic barman at the Bat Rack, a bar on an interstellar spaceship called Windrush. Also resident on the ship – apart from the crew – are a talking cat, witches, vampires and zombies. Spar is just trying to survive the journey, though he and the rest of passengers have no idea of what that journey may entail. The ending is rather violent with some of the worst characters, and one of the best, meeting rather grisly ends. This story is a strange mixture of fantasy, horror and SF jumping between the three when it appears that the author wants to unsettle the reader. This is one you'll either love or feel very ambivalent about. I tend to the latter. R: 3.5/5.0



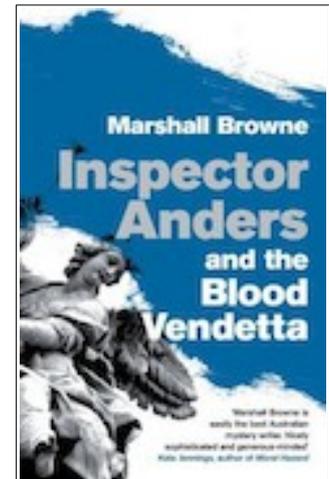
This fanzine acknowledges the members of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is produced in Hawthorn, Victoria, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

## REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

*Inspector Anders and the Blood Vendetta* (1930) by Marshall Browne

**Genre:** Crime

[This review was originally published on the Matilda weblog on 5 February 2007.]



There is a theory, to which I am becoming more and more attuned, that tension in British and US police procedural crime novels is created in two, very different ways. In the US version, the main protagonist fights the bulk of his battles with other branches of the justice machinery: if he works in homicide, then the FBI tries to interfere, and if he works for the Justice Department then it's likely to be a local detective that gets under his feet and in his way — Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch is an excellent example of this. Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus, on the British side of the equation, has no such external agencies getting in his way. He has to work against his superiors, acting as an outsider to their bureaucratic inertia. Rebus is considered a maverick by his bosses, while Bosch is looked upon almost as a star by his.

There is, by implication, a third way: a pan-continental approach that uses tensions within and across countries, and between varying political forces, both legal and illegal. I have come across very few of these novels outside the purely "spy thriller" genre, such as Frederic Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*. Few straight-forward mystery novels attempt to tackle the tensions listed above; whether for want of material or ambition I'm not sure. So it is with a genuine sense of interest and the prospect of a new direction that we can approach the Inspector Anders novels of Melbourne writer Marshall Browne.

We first met the Italian inspector in *The Wooden Leg of Inspector Anders* in 1999, which was followed by *Inspector Anders and the Ship of Fools* in 2001. And we now have the third novel in the series, one to be savoured.

In the first novel one-legged Anders is seconded to southern Italy to examine the murder of an investigating magistrate, a case that the inspector solves in explosive fashion and which only enhances his reputation as a major anti-terrorism expert. Browne won a Ned Kelly Award for Best First Novel for this book, and was lauded by such newspapers as the "Los Angeles Times". It was an auspicious debut. The second in the series saw Anders working in the modern Europe, tracking a killer of high-flying businessmen; a killer with a political agenda who doesn't restrict himself to one country or jurisdiction. I don't believe this novel was as successful as the first: the scope was too diverse, it was hard to keep track of the many minor characters flitting across the main stage, and the many changes of locale tended to dilute the tension. Now, however, Anders is back on track, back in Italy and investigating a series of political assassinations which have the authorities convinced the terrorist Red Brigades have re-surfaced.

Summoned back from his position in Europol in France to Milan, Anders rapidly finds himself at odds with his fellow workers (they believe, rightly, that the Mafia is out to get him and don't want to be caught in the cross-fire); his superiors who would prefer to handle the investigation their way; his political masters who want him to finish his work in a hurry but who don't want him to dig too deeply into peripheral matters; and his "southern friends" who desperately want to enact a brutal revenge for his previous bloody encounters with them. Stirred together it makes for a heady mix. The murders continue with few if any clues, and the Left and Right of Italian politics start blaming each other for the mess. Anders digs ever deeper into the case, following his own lines of thought, hunches and conjectures, sometimes successfully and sometimes to the exasperation of his colleagues.

If this book only relied on its plot it would be worth your reading. You should be aware, however, that Browne is something more than a simple plot-spinner. The best of the current crop of mystery/crime/detective novels have, at their heart, a character of great interest: a fully-rounded human being with strengths and weaknesses, desires and ambitions. An emotional creation that stands out from the page. Inspector Anders is one such character, one that can rank with the best of them. In his fifties Anders is something of an anachronism within the police services: confident but not arrogant, astute but not political, intelligent and yet prone to mis-judgements and misdirection. An ex-lover tells him: "You're a lonely, damaged man with a mindful of dark corners. And it's not your fault. The darkness isn't self-inflicted. It's been inflicted on you. You're a decent man but a sad case."

One of the few corners of his mind where he sees some form of light concerns his literary interests. Throughout the three books so far, Anders has been working on the biography of a famous ancestor, a poet who died in a duel defending a lady's honour. The work, and the details of his ancestor's life, have provided Anders with an anchor in his own life, something to cling to when his day-time work starts to swamp him. And yet, even here, Browne gives him little peace: new acquaintances reveal new details of the poet's life, some good and some devastating. You really start to feel sorry for the poor bloke.

Throughout the book Browne keeps his tension levels high, the plot moving along at a great clip and provides genuine interest in the main character's life to keep the reader moving ever forward. At times the cast and plot-lines seem to get a touch overwhelming but the author rewards a careful reading, and sometimes a more careful re-reading of sections, to bring all the pieces together in a satisfying final outcome. Marshall Browne has written a novel of which he can be proud.

R: 3.8/5.0

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**Cover notes:** Robyn took this photo of me somewhere in Morocco while we were waiting to get served with a meal. It came from my phone so she must have borrowed it to access the internet while we waited. We decided to only buy one data SIM for our phones as we would be spending our entire holiday together so we could get everything we wanted from the one phone. I appear relatively smug here. Must have been feeling rather relaxed.

## WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

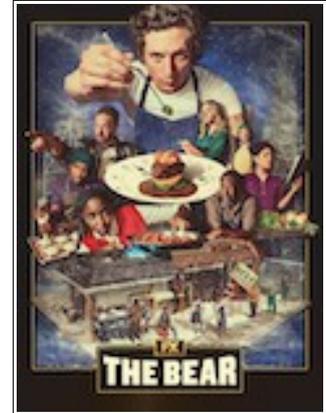
### Television

***The Bear*** (Season 2 — 10 episodes) (2023)

Platform: Disney+

Genre: Drama

I was very impressed with the first season of this TV series from Disney giving it a 4.5 rating. This one is ever better. In that first season award-winning chef Carmy Berzatto (“The Bear”) had returned to his hometown of Chicago to take over the family sandwich shop after the death of his older brother. Carmy tried to maintain the old traditions of the Chicago beef sandwich as well as trying to introduce some of the lessons and techniques he’d learned working in New York and Copenhagen. But it just wasn’t going to fit. So he decided to gut the place and turn it into the fine dining establishment he always wanted. This season tells the story of how he makes that work. Individual episodes follow different restaurant staff members as they also make the transition from one style to another: sous chef Syd wanders around Chicago trying different foods in various restaurants as she attempts to gain ideas for the proposed menu; cousin Ritchie, who seemed to be completely lost in the first season, finds his place after spending a week working in another fine dining restaurant; dessert chef Marcus travels to Copenhagen to learn from a pastry chef who previously worked with Carmy; and veteran line cook Tina is sent to cooking school and comes back with much higher ambitions. But the two main episodes concentrate on, firstly, a Christmas dinner for the Berzatto family while Carmy’s brother Michael was still alive, and the final episode of the full dress-rehearsal of the restaurant’s opening. Both of these are spectacular, dramatic and harrowing. You will struggle to see better television anywhere for quite some time. And keep your eye out for a number of interesting cameos by guesting actors. R: 4.8/5.0



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### Film

***Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*** (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Adventure

It’s been 15 years since the previous instalment in this adventure film series, the lamentable ***Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull***. So it was with a fair amount of trepidation that I wandered along to the local cinema with the family (+1) in tow for this latest movie in the franchise. And while it wasn’t the best in the series it hit all the high points: the multiple, intricate chase sequences (this time with motorbike, plane, horse and car); the battle with Nazis during World War II; the fumbling through an old museum looking for a lost artefact; more Nazis; and long flights across the globe to far-flung places such as Morocco and Greece. Harrison Ford is back and showing his age (though he is “de-aged” digitally for the opening Nazi WW II sequence), but that’s okay as he is aware of it, and he pokes fun at it as well.



And we generally have a good supporting cast with Mads Mikkelsen as the baddie, Phoebe Waller-Bridge as Indy's god-daughter and budding adventurer, John Rhys-Davies back for a cameo role as the side-kick, and Toby Jones as Indy's war-time collaborator. And we also have a new director in James Mangold. I enjoyed it. It's a bit too long so it feels a tad flat in places but there are enough action sequences and jokes and sentimentality to satisfy most viewers. I'd place it as third best in the franchise behind *The Ark of the Covenant* (#1) and *Last Crusade* (#3). R: 3.6/5.0

### ***Mission Impossible : Dead Reckoning Part One*** (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Espionage Adventure

With this seventh film in the Tom Cruise-led *Mission Impossible* film franchise we come to its end, well, nearly; there's still the second half of this feature to come. As an example of its type – action sequences, daring escapes, fast cars, unlikely women assassins, world-weary good guys, world-domination seeking bad guys, and more locations than you can shake a stick at – this entry hits all the high points and actually comes across as a rather enjoyable action movie. One of the main points for me was the way the film is constructed, with a minimum of CGI (is there any other than a short “de-ageing” of one or two characters in a flashback?) and a maximum of spectacular set pieces based purely on stunts, camera work and built infrastructure. This all goes to give the film a sense of the “authentic”, as much as that is possible in such unlikely scenarios. The whole thing hangs on the idea of an AI gone rogue which is intent on something, though I was never really sure what (the destruction of humankind?), and aims to attain it by utilising a series of bad guys, some of whom, of course, have a long history with Cruise's Ethan Hawke. There are always character connections, and there are always monologues, grand-standing and derring-do. It wouldn't be worth going to see these films if there weren't. Overall I came out satisfied. I rank this below the Bourne series and probably equivalent to mid-level Bond films. And that's not at all bad. See it on a big screen up close. Just dive in and try not to think about the plot too much. R: 3.5/5.0



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## PERRYSCOPE Responses

### **Perryscope 33:**

**Garth Spencer:** “You had a beautiful sand dune/sunset cover there, Perry – can't tell whether it was at a beach, or in a desert, but I guess it was in Morocco.”

[**PM:** Very definitely Morocco, down on the northern edge of the Sahara Desert. In each issue there is a small section, hidden away, explaining the cover photo.]

“People may remark that your main activity is travel; I think that's the main activity you write about, and a lot necessarily goes unsaid. (There is a lot of my inner life that I haven't put on paper ... come to think of it, that may be for the best!)”

## Perryscope 35

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[**PM:** It is far easier to write about exotic things, such as travelling in foreign countries, than it is about sitting around at home. I can tell you for a fact that nobody, but nobody, wants to read about me doing that.]

“Had I the opportunity, it would have been a good thing to visit the East End of London before it gets gentrified. About a century ago my father was growing up in the East End, and I would have liked to know something about the environment that shaped him. Ireland and Australia and Switzerland would be other ancestral places good to visit.”

“Julian Warner’s description of wineries and breweries in Rutherglen, Cheshunt and King Valley make me wonder where my Windeyer ancestors had their family farm – I am a little confused about Australian geography. Then again, I wonder what I’m missing, by not touring BC’s own winery regions.”

[**PM:** My wife and I were in the Kelowna winery district, of British Columbia, in September last year as we travelled across Canada towards Vancouver. I would recommend the trip highly.]

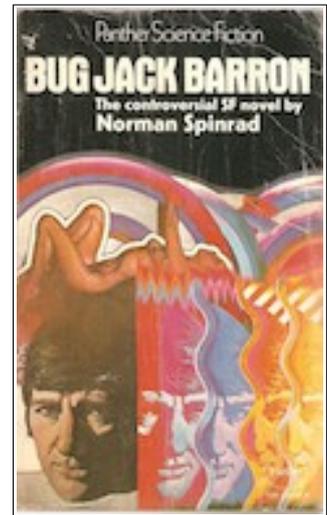
### Perryscope 34:

**Nic Farey:** “Lovely memories of Eve there, mate. I shed a tear anew on reading that.”

[**PM:** I shed way more than one writing it.]

“Also recalling enjoyment of 'Bug Jack Barron' back in the day. The UK pb cover showed Barron with something of a resemblance (I thought, anyway) to Michael Parkinson...”

[**PM:** That would have been the cover that I saw back in the seventies. I may well have that book around here somewhere, though finding it is just a matter of luck these days. My friend David Grigg compared Jack Barron, of the novel, to Tucker Carlson of Fox News in the USA. I thought there might also have been a bit of Donald Trump there as well.]



**Leigh Edmonds:** “I thought you wrote about Eve Harvey very nicely, seeing her through your eyes and experiences. I think Valma and I met her and John two or three times and I’m as certain as my poor memory allows that we spent a day with Eve and John riding on bikes around Rottnest Island one day when they were here in Oz. Very engaging and enjoyable folks, both of them. I hope John is coping okay with her loss.”

[**PM:** I am aware that John has now left France and moved back to Essex in the UK to be nearer his sister. I’m hoping to catch up with him when I’m over there in 2024.]

“I’m not a great fan of writing about food but Robyn caught my interest. Apart from my lack of appreciation of meat it was intriguing and something I’d like to try. I have a feeling that we might have come across some North African food while in Europe one time and enjoying it, but who knows with my memory for such things. I have a vivid memory of

coming across Pigs in a Blanket the first time we were in the US, but probably not for the same reason as you recall North African food.”

[**PM:** I have no idea what that is, and frankly, I don't think I want to know.]

“Julian's piece was the highlight of the issue for me. Apart from his general observations about hi-fi, he reminded me that some time in the late 1960s Lee Harding took me and my \$300 to Douglas Hi-Fi in Richmond and I came away with what was, for me, a pretty high class system. It's been all down hill since then. When we were living in our first house in Ballarat I had things set up nicely and Valma even bought some good speakers for me, but when we moved into Stalag Hemsley Valma liked her quiet so I bought some headphones which cost about \$300 that have served me well for the past 13 years. Lately I've been thinking about replacing them — mainly because they are becoming rather loose on my head (which I hope hasn't shrunk) after all this time. Next time I see Julian I must ask him if he has a recommendation for good new headphones.

“Due to the convergence of various factors my trip to the US West coast is booked and paid for. It involves being strapped into an economy class seat in a United Boeing 777 for 14 hours or so to get from Melbourne to San Francisco and being strapped again into an economy class seat in a United Boeing 787 for a similar duration to get from Los Angeles to Melbourne. To say that I am underwhelmed by the thought of the experience would be an understatement but the difference in cost between economy and premium economy is a whole lot more than my budget stretches to.”

[**PM:** The trans-Pacific 14-hour flight is a doddle. You'll barely have time to watch a movie and eat the food before it is all over. I can recommend a set of noise-cancelling headphones if you want to get any sleep. And they have attachments which allow you to plug into the armrest audio plugs as well. That way you can get halfway decent sound from your screen.]

“However, I'm sure that this ordeal pales into insignificance in comparison to what the experience of flying between Australia in Britain in the 1930s would have been. Apart from anything else, those aircraft, and airships for that matter, flew at much lower altitudes than your modern 777s or 787s fly so the turbulence would have been much worse. I'm sure we've all flown through the turbulence on the way up to and down from cruising altitude, imagine what that would be like for 7 or 13 days, even with a bed to sleep in at night.

“I'm afraid that Kim paints a rather rosy picture of air travel in the 1930s. Not counting the turbulence, there was the noise and the hot or cold. Some airliners had heating but not cooling. The first air conditioned and pressurized airliner was the Boeing 307 that entered service in 1940 and it wasn't until the 1950s .... (forgive me, I was about to launch into a dissertation on this topic.)

“Talking about dissertations, my PhD thesis entailed a lot of work (as we historians say) on air services between Australia and Britain in the 1930s. This means I'm almost certain that Kim's paragraph on the subject conflates two separate services, the Imperial Air Mail Service from 1936 to 1938 and the Empire Air Mail Scheme from 1938 to 1941 or thereabouts. The first one was flown on a mixture of aircraft, and a train trip from Paris to Brindisi in Italy, that took about 12 days. The second was in the Short Empire flying boats and that took seven days. I hear people starting to express concern about the 20 or so hour

direct Sydney to London flights Qantas is going to start, but that will be infinitely preferable to seven days in a flying boat in pre-World War 2 flying conditions. The only thing that would have been worse than that would be the 28 day sea voyage, I don't know how you feel about sea sickness but it is something I can live without."

[**PM:** The big cruise liners of today have stabilizing mechanisms that cut out a lot the rock 'n' roll of the ocean waves. I strongly suspect the sea-going vessels of the 1930s and 1940s did not. Luckily I'm not one for sea-sickness, but I have seen it up close and it isn't a pretty sight, or experience, for anyone.]

"I see that we agree on *Slaughterhouse 5* and *Bug Jack Barron*. I recall reading the latter serialized in Moorcock's *New Worlds* and wondering what all the fuss was about. On the other hand, I read Bangsund's copy of *Slaughterhouse 5* in one sitting and went out to buy my own copy soon after. I don't know if I've read that copy however. It's all a long time ago. I had discovered the Shostakovich String Quartets only a couple of years earlier and was getting into the 8th around the same time as reading the Vonnegut book. They're both about the fire bombing of Dresden which made me sit up and take notice. (Then there was the time a few years back when I was in Sydney and a young woman selling stuff approached me at one of the railway stations. I wasn't interested in whatever she was selling but it turned out that she was a German tourist making a bit of money. I asked her where she came from, and she said it was a place I wouldn't have heard of, called Dresden. 'Everyone knows about Dresden', I exclaimed, and she was very surprised. She'd heard about the fire bombing but I guess that not too many people in Australia have."

[**PM:** As with most things concerning the Second World War, this incident is now ancient history to younger people. I don't recall it being taught in school so I must have picked up the details from reading about it somewhere or other. Maybe it was my first reading of the Vonnegut novel way back in the 1970s that made me follow up his references.]

**Rose Mitchell:** "Hopefully I am 'Doing Better' with sending back LoCs before you publish your next issue *Perryscope*. Wow: 34 issues, it doesn't seem so long ago since you commenced back in August 2020. *Perryscope*, and *2 Chairs Talking*, (as well as David Grigg's *Through the Biblioscope*) have now become my main Go Tos for recommendations for reading, TV and movies. Thank you for sharing and providing useful, incitful reviews. I nearly always get a couple of recommendations from each Issue/Episode to add to my To Read/Watch list.

"Your poignant memories of Eve Harvey made me a little sad by those fond and funny memories of her. Your reminiscences evoked Eve so vividly. I heard her lilting voice as I read: she had the happiest, joyful way of approaching life. I miss her and deeply regret that I allowed myself to be strong-armed into cutting my holidays short in 2019, resulting in not going to Northern France with the rest of you after Dublin Worldcon."

[**PM:** It was a most excellent time staying with Eve and John in France in 2019. The perfect end to a longish trip across Europe.]

**Chong:** "It's always fun to receive *Perryscope* with the imprimatur of its happy author on the cover. [**PM:** Happy? Not an adjective used in my general vicinity very often.] In #34, re: Ray Nayler's editorial in *Asimov's*, you second the comment that art does not

need any justification. Unsurprisingly I agree, but that's an easy axiom given that we live in a minority comfort zone of capitalism. To the point, you quote John Hertz:

“[Nayler] evidently still has to say SF is ‘productive’ (sic), or a ‘lens we can focus on our present moment, our past, and — often incidentally — the places we might be headed’; indeed he says the *Frankenstein* preface is ‘one of the best justifications for the value of science fiction around’.”

“I read Nayler differently. Nayler wants to correct the idea of ‘predictive’ SF to ‘predicative’ SF, ie to emphasise the what-if nature of the enterprise. He writes: ‘Predictive power is incidental. But *\*predicative\** power, which has gifted the world with so many extraordinary stories, is the engine of science fiction.’ When Nayler writes that *Frankenstein* ‘remains one of the best justifications of science fiction around’ he is only saying that SF qua SF has a valuable genre distinction from other fiction; predication as probe and pleasure.

“If Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Frankenstein* is a modern progenitor of SF as LitFic, perhaps the threads will re-converge, now that emergent audiences have grown up with SF entertainment and daily SFnal tech realities. But there is still a line in the moon dust: it’s the difference between hand wavy and sine wave, metaphysics and physics, alienation and alien nations; SF accommodates both ends of the pole, while LitFic does not quite, yet. LitFic may offer token entry to Vonnegut quirk or Ishiguro gravitas, but Le Guin and GRRM must wait by the cloakroom — the taint of too many dragons?”

[**PM:** If readers want a starting point for sf then I’m quite happy to choose *Frankenstein* as that point. The true question is: “do we really need one?” I don’t think we do. “Mainstream” fiction is slowly consuming standard sf tropes like cloning, time travel and time-loops, and I assume, will continue to do so. I see this as more of a consequence of living in a science-fictional world than anything else.]

“In that spirit of one raised eyebrow, I ask the following. Q: What if LLMs are employed to write significant amounts of fiction? Q: If androids write fiction, are we electric sheep?”

[**PM:** I think you may well be rather late to this question as vast amounts of LLM (Large Language Model) fiction has already been loaded up for sale on such bookselling sites as Amazon. The Turing Test question (“Are there imaginable digital computers which would do well in the *imitation game*?”) has been answered in the affirmative. It is now up to us organics to ensure we ask enough questions not to be fooled by glib or right-sounding answers. From what I’ve seen so far, it doesn’t take many.]

**I also heard from:** **Nick Price** (“I noticed Julian avoided talking about cables. Based on the audiophiles I met at Philips, if you would like an article twice as long just mention his omission. “The Copperwire Strikes Back” as a working title.”); **Martin Field** (“Robyn’s improvisations on Moroccan recipes shows you can wing it, a little, when necessary.”); **Mark Olson**; **Murray MacLachlan** (who wanted to thank Julian for spelling his name correctly — Murray’s not Julian’s); and **Barbara O’Sullivan** (who alerted me to a French Impressionists exhibition on at the National Gallery of Victoria and also to a play running in the city); thank you one and all.