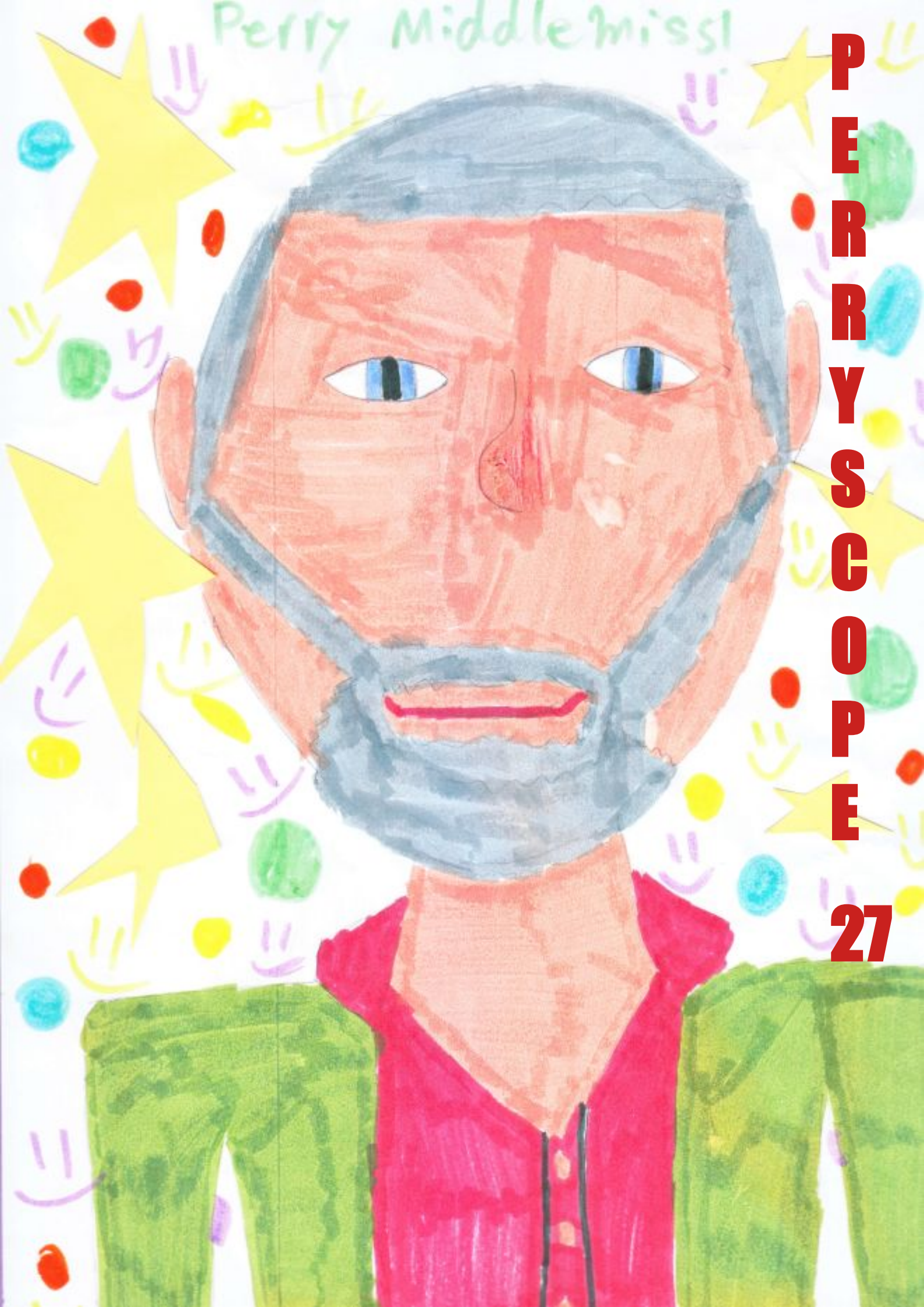


Perry Middlemiss

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**PERRYSCOPE 27**, October 2022, is an issue of the personalzine published monthly by **Perry Middlemiss**, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: perry@middlemiss.org  
Produced initially for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) and then anyone else unlucky enough to receive it. Also available for trade 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 drawing by Will Middlemiss, circa 2007.

### INTRODUCTION

As expected, and as forecast last month, this issue did not appear in its usual time-slot of the start of the month, but at least it did appear as per the date. The travelling that my wife and I have been undertaking in the USA and Canada has been a wonderful experience, and, at the same time, exhausting. I've been too tired at the end of each day to contemplate writing anything of interest.

As also noted last time I have been attempting to write a travel blog of our journeys through North America, and even that is sadly lagging way behind. I've been running with the idea that it is better to write something reasonable, and of interest, rather than just throwing some words and pictures on a page to make some sort of artificial deadline that I've set myself. Well, that's the excuse I'm going with at the moment. I'm hopeful that will get done sometime soon as well.

Regardless of all of that I do like the discipline of having a publishing schedule that I try to stick to and, while I won't make any major promises, I will attempt to drag this sorry little rag back onto my preferred finishing times.

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In the months ahead you may come across things here that you have read before. That will be because they may have already been written or drafted for either my North American travel blog or FaceBook. The first of these will be the next piece here which details my night at the 2022 Hugo Awards Ceremony, where I had been asked to attend as an acceptor for a couple of Australians who weren't able to make it to Chicago.

There will also be some notes about things I encountered along the journey in September and October – some things that I might want to grump about, and some that I might like to praise; compare and contrast, that sort of thing.

I look on any previous versions of these articles as just initial thoughts and reactions. Here, hopefully, I will have had a bit more time to reflect on things. This does not, of course, inevitably lead to an increase in the quality of the writing. Oh no, if anything, it gives me all the more time to be able to introduce that most favoured writerly device for this little fanzine, the typo. Never leave home without one.

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN MY LIFE – A Night at the Hugos

[This account is based on a shorter version originally posted on my travel blog. This version is expanded and, hopefully, corrected.]

About a month before I left Australia in August Melbourne author and editor Andrew Nette contacted me to see if I would be willing to act as an acceptor at the Hugo Awards for him. Neither he, nor his co-editor Iain McIntyre, would be travelling to Chicago and wanted to have someone on hand to pick up their award for them, should they win. I was certainly going to be there and agreed to take on the role. It all seemed easy enough.

I go to the Hugo awards ceremony at the World Science Fiction Convention only occasionally. I certainly did it when I was Chair in 1999 and 2010, though that was as a member of the general audience; I didn't get any special treatment in those years, and didn't expect to. This awards process has to be conducted at arms' length from the rest of the con committee, by the Hugo Awards sub-committee, with the results being kept fully secret right up until the announcements, and everything at the ceremony has to be seen to be above board. You can't have the Chair, or anyone else for that matter, wandering around backstage just because they think they're entitled to do so.



Andrew and Iain were on the Hugo Award ballot under the Best Related Work category for their non-fiction essay anthology, ***Dangerous Visions and New Worlds : Radical Science Fiction 1950 to 1985***. They were in with a chance but with Charlie Jane Anders also being on the ballot in that category the chance was small. Anders, and their partner Annalee Newitz, were the toastmasters for the ceremony this year and are one of the more highly visible couples in the sf community. The total combination of all of these factors led to them being the clear favourites in any category in which they were nominated. That isn't an attempt to diminish the quality of their work in any way, just a statement of circumstance and visibility. Another nominee, who was up against them in another category, had noted their clear favouritism in that category to me earlier in the week as well.

Andrew sent me his acceptance speech in the week before I left for Chicago. I downloaded it, and printed it out in large font. I hoped I was ready for the job ahead.



I picked up the relevant documentation from the program committee and attended the rehearsal as requested at the appropriate time. Basically they wanted to be sure you entered on the right side of the stage, knew how to handle the award – and not to handle it in a way that might be seen as non-PG – and then to walk to the podium and exit properly. It wouldn't do for any of the winners to trip on the way up or drop the award on stage. Nor would it be seemly for anyone to be seen stroking a very phallic looking rocket in a suggestive manner.

The Award ceremony was scheduled to start at 8:00pm, with a reception beforehand beginning at 6:00, and entry to the main ballroom at 7:30. I wore a jacket and tie – my only cosplay for the convention – and only had one glass of wine at the reception. It wouldn't be a good thing to get too under the weather. I could do that later if required.

I got to the right place at the right time for the reception photos, and afterwards I just wandered around a bit, spoke to Jonathan Strahan from Western Australia and wished him luck in the two categories he was nominated in; he didn't seem overly confident. There we probably a couple of others I saw but it all became a bit of a blur.

On the way out of the reception area I ran into Fia Karlsson, this year's TAFF (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) winner from Sweden. She was headed in the same direction

so we strolled along together while she told me that she was presenting a couple of awards that evening. She seemed a little nervous, which was understandable.



We found seats and I told her about my only previous Hugo award presentation (see **Perryscope 11** for an account of this) and we just chatted about what she was going to say. I tried to keep her mind off the ceremony, though I don't think I helped a lot. I started sending Andrew an update every few minutes by instant messaging as he was at work in Melbourne and couldn't get to watch it live over the designated YouTube channel. He seemed to appreciate it.

The Hugo Awards ceremony was hosted by Charlie Jane Anders and Annalee Newitz. They presented the bulk awards, other than the ones they were nominated for and the fan categories that Fia presented, and so handed over to Alec Nevala-Lee for the Best Related Work category. In the funniest part of the evening, Nevala-Lee brought along his young daughter, indicating that *she* was his best related work. It got a laugh.



Unfortunately, Andrew and Iain didn't win. The award this year was won by Charlie Jane Anders for her work *Never Say You Can't Survive*, indicating, yet again, that the Hugos are mostly a popular contest. Anders's work may well have been the best in the category; I can't say as I haven't read it. In any event, being popular and visible certainly didn't hurt their cause. Being Australian, and lacking visibility, would certainly have hurt Andrew and Iain.

The Hugos wandered through to their inevitable conclusion with Arkady Martine winning Best Novel as expected. Big surprise of the evening was Australian author Shelley Parker-Chan winning the Astounding Award for Best New Writer. This isn't a Hugo Award but is presented in the same ceremony and carries a lot of weight in the sf field.



Unfortunately none of the other Australians nominated won any awards either.

The ceremony over I wandered around the hotel and bumped into a few people having a beer in the main bar. Most of the Hugo audience seemed to be headed to the Glasgow Worldcon party which I later heard was very packed

indeed. I didn't make it there and by the time I put my head into the area of the post-Hugo Award reception that had pretty much finished.

It was a long night. Being an award acceptor was very draining. I have no idea of what it must have been like for Andrew to receive all of my stupid messages. I'll have a beer with him sometime and find out.

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.

### THE MOOCH O' LIFE

Folks, here's a story about Minnie the Moocher  
She was a lowdown hoochie cooher  
She was the roughest, toughest frail  
But Minnie had a heart as big as a whale

Cab Calloway: *Minnie the Moocher*

**Modern Design Failures #1:** Black lettering on a silver background may look pleasing to some young punk designer seeking a futuristic, metallic aesthetic, but is useless for old grumps like me who need decent white light and contrast. This particular failure is mostly found in lifts but has also been observed – also utilising a very tiny font indeed – on kitchen appliances. It just DOESN'T WORK.

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I've always been curious about the concept of "jetlag". Wikipedia describes it as "a physiological condition that results from alterations to the body's circadian rhythms caused by rapid long-distance trans-meridian (east–west or west–east) travel." Which I take to mean your sleep patterns are thrown out of whack by the distance, and hence time-zones, you've covered. It's not something I've ever really suffered from; previously. So it was a bit unusual for me to be still feeling tired and wrung-out for three days after landing back in Australia.

We had flown from Vancouver to Sydney (13.5 hours), then a very short lay-over of 2 hours followed by another 1.5 hour flight down to Melbourne. With the time spent in Vancouver airport prior to the flight leaving, and then the hour and a half getting through customs, collecting the baggage and driving home from the airport, I calculate we were about 21-22 hours from arriving at the Vancouver airport until I opened my front door in Hawthorn. Certainly better than the 29 hours we took when we flew to Chicago at the start of the holiday. But I felt worse, for longer, on the trip home than on the way over.

I normally don't sleep all that well on long flights. This time I'd picked up some 10Mg melatonin tablets in Canada and took one of them soon after the flight was in the air. It seemed to do the trick, or, at least, helped a lot. I got about four or five hours sleep during the flight though my wife told me later that she thought it was more as I appeared to be asleep every time she looked at me.

The day we arrived home, Monday, was fine. I probably had a small snooze in the afternoon but slept well that night. Tuesday I was feeling rather flat. And Wednesday wasn't a lot better. It wasn't until Thursday afternoon that I started to feel vaguely human again.

I had tried to get out into the daylight on the Monday – that's the trick we always use when we travel away from Australia – in order to get my body aligned back onto Melbourne time. It didn't seem to work all that well.

Maybe I'm didn't adjust myself properly; maybe I was out of practice in dealing with long flights home; or maybe I'm now just starting to feel the effects of age at last. It's something I'm going to have to keep an eye on in future.

## WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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



**Notes from this month's podcasts**

**Episode 80:** (20 September 2022) *Finding a place in the world*

I was still travelling in North America when David put this episode together. Here he talks to Rob Gerrand about writing and publishing in Australia, and then Murray MacLachlan about growing up in New Zealand and discovering science fiction and fantasy.

A guaranteed “Perry-free” episode.

**Episode 81:** (18 October 2022) *Truth will come to light*

We started out with the idea of talking about what we had been reading lately but we also talked about some recent deaths in the literary and sf fields, what I did in Chicago at the SF Worldcon, and other stuff. We get to the books eventually.

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 – Anthony Best: Anthony Best Novel Award; Anthony First: Anthony First Novel Award; Aust: Australian; CWA Gold: CWA Gold Dagger Award; Nvla: novella.

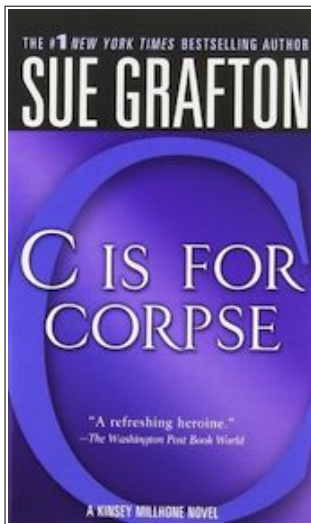
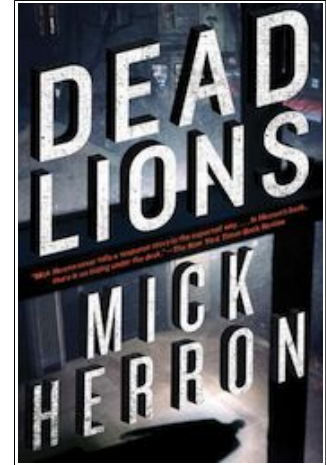
### September/October 2022 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>Dead Lions</i>	Mick Herron	Espionage	Sept 9	e	4.2	2013	CWA Gold
<i>C is for Corpse</i>	Sue Grafton	Crime	Sept 16	e	3.9	1987	Anthony Best
<i>Inside Man</i>	K. J. Parker	Fantasy	Sept 17	e	4.0	2021	Nvla
<i>Backlash</i>	Brad Thor	Thriller	Sept 29		2.4	2019	
<i>Mr. Jelly's Business</i>	Arthur W. Upfield	Crime	Oct 12	e	3.3	1932	Aust
<i>Iron Lake</i>	William Kent Krueger	Crime	Oct 15		3.8	1998	Anthony First
<i>The Green Dwarf</i>	Charlotte Brontë	Literary	Oct 17		3.0	1830	
<i>The Ghost Writer</i>	Philip Roth	Literary	Oct 19		4.4	1979	
<i>Past Master</i>	R. A. Lafferty	Sf	Oct 22	e	2.2	1968	

Books read in the period: 9  
Yearly total to end of period: 61

**Notes:**

***Dead Lions*** (2013) – The second in this author’s Slough House series, and winner of the CWA Gold Dagger Award for Best Novel. An old man is found dead on a rail replacement bus and the police aren’t at all interested, considering it just another case of death by natural causes. But Jackson Lamb, head of Slough House – where British agents are sent when they stuff up or are washed out – isn’t so sure. The dead man, Dickie Bow, was an old spook. Not a good one but he did work with Lamb in Europe and claimed to have seen Popov, an elusive Soviet agent many thought to be a fictitious KGB diversionary tactic. So Lamb sets out to investigate, sending his “Slow Horses” out to gather information while he works the inner halls of the intelligence services. Spider Webb, the “villain” from the first novel is again to the fore here, seconding a couple of the Slow Horses to his own ends. And all of the other characters from the first novel – those that are left anyway – appear here along with a couple of newcomers but it is really Lamb who we come to know a bit more about. Herron is obviously working on this character long-term and he’s not going to give out everything he knows about him in one lump. And the book is all the better for that. This novel is darker and funnier than the first, and the plot is more devious and convoluted. If you read just one of these you’ll want to keep coming back for more. R: 4.2/5.0



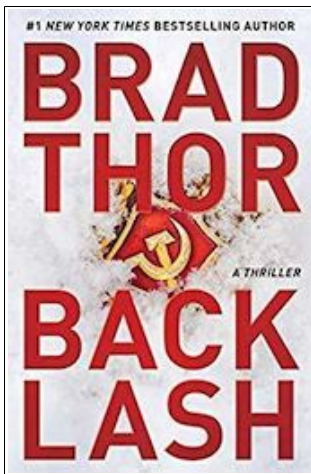
***C is for Corpse*** (1987) – The third in this author’s Kinsey Millhone series, and winner of the Anthony Award for Best Novel.

Kinsey is working out at the gym, recovering from the injuries she received at the end of the previous book, when she meets Bobby Callahan, a young man who was nearly killed when his car went off the road nine months previously. The accident left him with major physical injuries and memory loss but Callahan tells Millhone that he believes he was run off the road, and engages her services to look into the matter. And from that basic beginning we move into classic Californian PI territory: a rich family with secrets, drug abuse issues and psychiatric problems. A few days later Bobby is killed in another car crash which the police put down to him suffering a seizure. But even with her client dead Millhone carries on her investigation and slowly starts to piece together Bobby’s past life.

This novel takes a while to get going as the author sets up the inter-relations between the family members and their assorted hangers-on, and really only starts to motor ahead in the last half. Grafton also allows some of the lesser characters in the series a bit more room here, filling in their backgrounds and allowing their stories to flesh out the novel. This is a step up from the previous two books in the series and you can tell that Grafton was getting into a groove here, one that puts her firmly in line with the work of Ross MacDonald. R: 3.9/5.0



**Inside Man** (2021) – Parker returns to the world of his earlier novella, **Prosper's Demon**, in this tale of a demon who was once a Duke of Hell but who is a noted underachiever and who has been relegated to the role of attempting to interrupt the prayers of monks in order to get them to question their faith. But the monks are having none of it and actually welcome his presence as it forces them to concentrate that little bit harder during their prayer vigils. Then the higher powers are approached by the exorcist from the earlier book who needs the help of a demon in order to further the design of the great Plan. So our curious and suspicious demon is co-opted to the role and finds himself at the mercy of an eternal bureaucracy that appears to have everything worked out way, way in advance. Parker is a fun writer and this is an amusing tale of a demon who likes to think he is in control of his own destiny but who obviously isn't. These are light and amusing tales told from an uncommon point-of-view. R: 4.0/5.0



**Backlash** (2019) – The eighteenth in this author's Scot Harvath series.

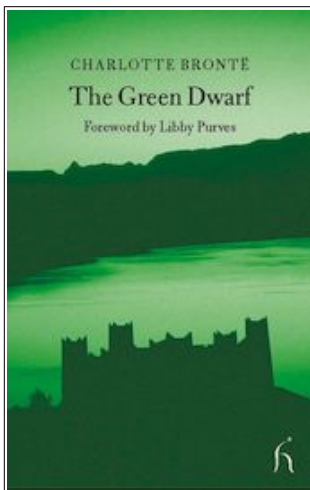
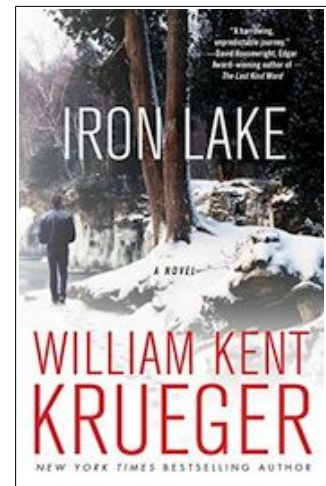
If you ever want to read a Marvel super-hero story in book form then this, and I presume the rest of the series, is probably as close as you're going to get. Think of a character like Captain America, without the super-serum, but with a greater sense of self-righteous patriotism, more willingness to use extreme violence as a method of retribution, an overblown and misdirected sense of revenge at all costs, and a close relationship with Lady Luck that frankly defies all sense of probability. Harvath is not a man to be on the wrong side of. Which is where the Russians find themselves at the start of this novel. Harvath wakes on a Russian military helicopter, and in flashback, we are informed that he's been captured in America, during which time three close friends, including his partner and a long-time mentor, were murdered. He's been tortured and interrogated and now finds himself in extreme bad weather on an aircraft that is coming apart and which subsequently crashes. Needless to say, he escapes and then sets out on 300 pages of exacting revenge on everyone who had anything to do with the killings and his capture. There isn't a lot of depth to this book, though it is interesting to read as an exercise in what it makes to create a best-selling action thriller. You could pretty much use it as a template for that genre: short sentences, two or three sentence paragraphs, six to eight page chapters, most of which end on cliff-hangers. The action is short, sharp and frenetic and the overall pacing drives you to keep turning the pages. And I'm sure that his descriptions of weapons use, military equipment, weather conditions, flight times between destinations and all the rest of the paraphernalia that he uses is completely spot on, and checked down to the second and millimetre. If his list of acknowledgements at the end are anything to go by he has all of that covered. I won't be setting out to read any more of these unless they turn up on awards or "best of..." lists. This one was enough. R: 2.4/5.0

**Mr. Jelly's Business** (1932) – see major review below.

**Iron Lake** (1998) – The first in this author’s Cork O’Connor series, and winner of the Anthony and Barry Awards for Best First Novel in 1999.

Corcoran “Cork” O’Connor is a mixed-race indigenous American, part Anishinaabe Indian and part Irish, and now a former sheriff of Aurora, Minnesota. Added to that he’s in the middle of a marriage break-up and not exactly happy with the world in general. When he’s asked by an old friend to try to find her missing son he stumbles on the murder scene of the town’s judge and, from there, things start to get really complicated. The missing boy’s father is also missing and seems to be implicated in dirty dealings at the local casino, run by the local native Americans, and also a shady right-wing militia. As expected everything is connected, and O’Connor suffers a lot of violence to himself and his loved ones

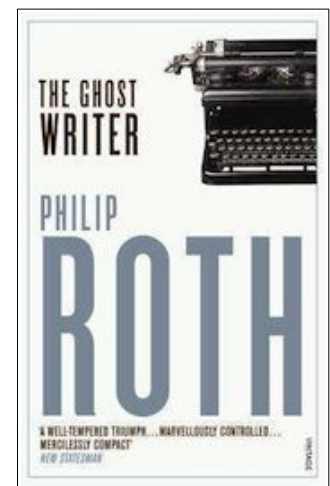
before he can get to the end of the mystery. After having read, and greatly enjoyed Krueger’s 2012 novel **Ordinary Grace**, I knew he was a writer worth reading and I was certainly not disappointed here. There are currently 18 novels in this series, with the latest one being published in 2021, and I can see that I will be enjoying Krueger’s novels, and the doings of his main character, for some time to come. R: 3.8/5.0



**The Green Dwarf** (1830) – I was a little unsure whether I should list this as fantasy or literary as it is set in Bronte’s fictitious world of Verdópolis but it doesn’t contain anything you might consider fantastical, so I opted for the “literary” descriptor. This is a romance set in an age of chivalry: Lady Emily Charlesworth is in love with Leslie, a struggling artist, although her guardian uncle wishes her to marry Lord Percy who everyone sees as a petty, arrogant aristocrat. But Leslie is not who he seems, and as war breaks out between Verdópolis and the neighbouring state of Senegal, the two men find themselves fighting together under the command of the Duke of Wellington. Leading up to the final battle in the war, Percy sees a way to get rid of Leslie and win Emily in the process. Charlotte Bronte wrote this short novel when she was seventeen and you can see a lot of structural issues early on in this story. Yet none of these

literary wanderings are uninteresting even if the work might have been better for them to have been tightened up or excised. Look on this as a piece of juvenalia that gives an indicator of what was to come from this writer. R: 3.0/5.0

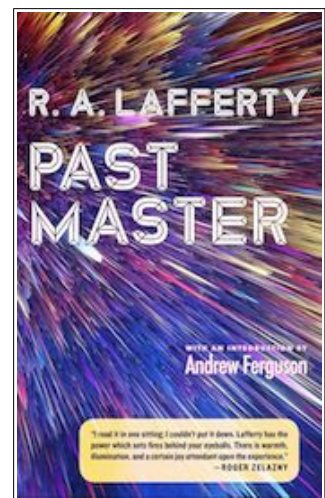
**The Ghost Writer** (1979) – This is the first in this author’s Nathan Zuckerman series of novels. This novel was a finalist for both the 1980 Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. Zuckerman is a promising writer in the 1950s who spends the night in the house of E. I. Lonoff, a writer in his 50s that Zuckerman idolises. While there he also meets Amy Bellette, a young woman with a mysterious past who Zuckerman fantasises may actually be Anne Frank, who somehow escaped Europe and the Nazis and has now come to live in the USA. You would be hard-pressed not to read



this novel as being almost autobiographical, or maybe “auto-wish fulfilment” might be a better term. Did Roth, as a younger man, idolise one or more major American writers? Almost certainly. Did he have long, detailed conversations about the craft of writing? Did he meditate, as Zuckerman does here, about the problems of using friends, family and acquaintances, as well as his lived experience and family tales as the basis for his fiction? Undoubtedly. And did he, again as Zuckerman does, fantasise about the young pretty women he met along his journey? Oh, yes. So Zuckerman is the archetypal young, up-and-coming writer, the next big thing, admired by his mentors for his literary skill, and generally despised by his compatriots. And with so much of this novel happening inside Zuckerman’s head you could think that it would come across as boring or self-indulgent. Well, self-indulgent maybe; but not boring, certainly not that. I’ll be looking to read the other books in this series now. R: 4.4/5.0

***Past Master*** (1968) – A finalist for the 1969 Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel.

In the far-future, Earth has been nearly abandoned and humankind has migrated to a small number of planets in nearby solar systems. On one of them, Astrobe, an attempt at building a Utopian society is in danger of collapse and all attempts to install a ruler to fix the problem have failed. So the leaders decide to snatch Sir Thomas More – chosen for his honesty and legal and moral sense – out of time, shortly before his death. This novel then explores More’s attempts to come to terms with the Astrobe society and documents his conflicts with the planet’s leaders who thought he would be easy to manipulate. There are hints of Cordwainer Smith here, with the strange human hybrids and stranger mechanoids. I’m sure Lafferty meant this novel as a commentary on the whole concept of Utopia, and a discussion of More’s novel *Utopia*, but, if so, it all went over my head. Originally written in 1964, it was then recast as a short story which editor Terry Carr commented was attempting too much for a story of that length. Re-written as a novel, Carr accepted it, though demanded some re-writes as he considered it contained stilted dialogue and too many expositions. I don’t think Lafferty re-wrote enough. He’s way better at a shorter length. R: 2.2/5.0



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Philip Roth sure knows how to skewer a writer he doesn’t like:

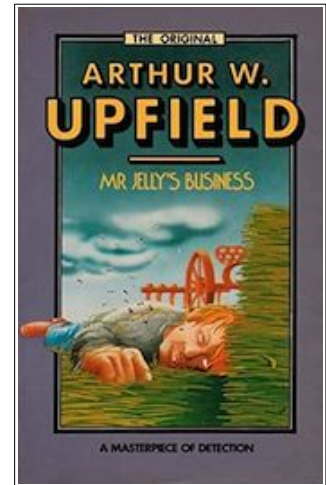
“I admire the man, actually. I admire what he puts his nervous system through. I admire his passion for the front-row seat. Beautiful wives, beautiful mistresses, alimony the size of the national debt, polar expeditions, war-front reportage, famous friends, famous enemies, breakdowns, public lectures, five-hundred-page novels every third year, and still, as you said before, time and energy left over for all that self-absorption. The gigantic types in the books have to be that big to give him something to think about to rival himself. Like him? No. But impressed, oh yes. Absolutely. It’s no picnic up there in the egosphere. I don’t know when the man sleeps, or if he has ever slept, aside from those few minutes when he had that drink with me.” – E. I. Lonoff in *The Ghost Writer* by Philip Roth, pp 52-53.

## REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

***Mr. Jelly's Business*** (aka *Murder Down Under*) (1932) by Arthur W. Upfield  
**Genre:** Crime

Detective Inspector Napoleon “Bony” Bonaparte is a mixed-race indigenous Australian detective working for the Queensland Police Force and the main character in 29 of Arthur Upfield’s novels; this is the fourth in that series.

In this instalment Bony is in Western Australia when he runs into old friend John Muir in Perth. Detective-Sergeant Muir is also a detective, one who is being mentored by Bony, but one who doesn’t always follow Bony’s methods. In a recent case he has let slip the main suspect who has shot through to Queensland with Muir being unable to follow as he has now become engaged in the disappearance of one George Loftus in the small, wheat-belt town of Burracoppin. After a discussion Bony agrees to take on the Loftus case so Muir can travel to Queensland and make his arrest. This suits Bony perfectly as he has become intrigued by Loftus’s disappearance and it allows him to move into the community undercover, in this case as a man working on the rabbit fence.



And thus begins Bony’s inquiries into the case, and we follow him as he meticulously scours the area around the missing man’s car which has been found stuck in a pipeline ditch, as he integrates into the town life, and as he sifts through all of the town’s characters looking for clues.

This is not one of Upfield’s best detective stories: the reason for Loftus’s disappearance becomes rather obvious early on and an astute reader should be able to figure out the location of the body without much trouble. The pleasure here lies in Upfield’s descriptions of the town and its people. Early on he provides a snapshot of the town:

When Bony emerged from the small station he faced southward. Opposite was the Burracoppin Hotel, a structure of brick against the older building of weatherboard which now was given up to bedrooms. To the left was a line of shops divided by vacant allotments. To the right the three trim whitewashed cottages, with the men’s quarters and trade shops beyond, owned by the State Rabbit Department. Behind Bony, beyond the railway, were other houses, the hall, a motor garage, and the school, for the railway halved this town; and running parallel with the railway, but below the surface of the ground, was the three-hundred-miles-long Mundaring-Kalgoorlie pipeline conveying water to the goldfields, and, through subsidiary pipes, over great areas of the vast wheat belts. Thus is Burracoppin, a replica of five hundred Australian wheat towns, clean and neat, brilliant in its whitewash and paint and its green bordering gum-trees.

This town is quintessentially Australian and, as Upfield implies, you can find them everywhere. Similarly with the town’s characters. Most are of the standard supporting

type, but occasionally Upfield hits a seam of gold, such as here with his character referred to only as “The Spirit of Australia”, or better yet, “The Spirit of Orstralia”:

The Spirit of Australia! What a name! How truly appropriate! Courage, strength, dependability; purpose, power, and unbreakable flexibility; dauntless and deathless. The Spirit of Australia! If any man was rightly nicknamed, this man was. Age rested on him as a crown of jewels, not as fetters of lead. More than eighty years old! It was incredible—till one peered deeply and saw that tremendous experiences had been the battlements which defied the onslaughts of Time.

And what of Mr Jelly of the title? This is probably the oddest part of this book. Mr Jelly is a local land owner who is given to disappear from time to time, sometimes for a few days and sometimes a few weeks. No one seems to know where he goes or why. There is speculation early in the novel that the reason is either a woman – Mr Jelly is a widower – or drink. Neither seems to be particularly frowned upon by the town’s inhabitants. The weird thing is that Mr Jelly always returns with more money than he had when he left, which would tend to disprove either current theory. Bony is aware of the problems that Mr Jelly’s disappearances are having and promises Jelly’s daughters that he will solve the mystery. As he does. Yet the true story behind Mr Jelly’s business seems rather tame, even though it does connect with the Loftus case.

There is enough of interest in this book to keep the reader going, though it is certainly not the best book in the series to begin with. For that you should go back to the first in the series, *The Barrakee Mystery*, and work your way through. By the time you get to this one you’ll be more interested in Bony’s workings and analysis, and Upfield’s descriptions than worrying overly about the plot.

R: 3.3/5.0

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## WHAT I’VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

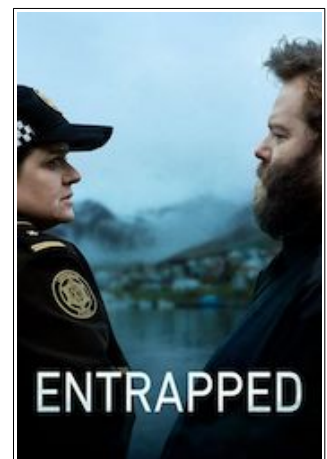
### Television

*Entrapped* (Miniseries — 6 episodes) (2022)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Crime Drama

This is a sequel to the two previous series of *Trapped*, the Icelandic police procedural that I enjoyed so much (see **Perryscope 2** for my reviews of these). In this season, Andri Ólafsson (Ólafur Darri Ólafsson), who starred in the previous episodes, picks up his ex-father-in-law from jail and drives him home to the north of Iceland – the town of Siglurfjörður is used, though never named. There he learns of the death of Ívar, a man he’d man-handled during an interrogation some years before resulting in him being transferred from Reykjavik to the north of the country. Although he’s no longer working in homicide Andri wrangles his way into the investigation



which involves an Icelandic cult, called the Family, and Ívar's ties with drug-dealing and a motorcycle gang called The Horns. Unfortunately, the major concern of the investigation seems to be the gang and the drugs, all of which becomes rather predictable. All the elements for a good police procedural are here but it loses focus and isn't up to the levels of the first two seasons, which is a pity. R: 3.5/5.0

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## Film

### ***Jungle Cruise*** (2021)

Platform: Cruise Ship Streaming

Genre: Comedy/Adventure

I would have loved this film when I was about 15. This film continues the re-making of ex-pro-wrestler Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson to all-round movie star, following the template successfully implemented by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1970s and 80s. Here he plays a fast-talking comic con man hired to take a young feisty woman (Emily Blount) down the Amazon in search of a lost treasure. [Okay, maybe 12 might have been a better age. Yeah, 12.] You've got the standard Disney adventure tropes: treasure map; wicked European villain (Jesse Plemons); jungle horrors and creatures; wimpy brother (Jack Whitehall); waterfalls; bloodthirsty natives and legendary curses. The full set. Think ***Romancing the Stone*** crossed with ***The African Queen***. It's a lot of fun but there really isn't much to it, and at times the humour is rather too forced when it would have been better to let it find its own level without rushing to the payoff of the joke so quickly. [On third thoughts, let's make it 8 years old. I think that's about right. I would have been laughing my head off at 8.] Don't expect to remember anything about this one. It knows what it wants to do and generally gets there, entertaining as it goes along. R: 2.5/5.0



### ***Lightyear*** (2022)

Platform: Aeroplane Streaming

Genre: Comedy/Adventure

"In 1995, a boy named Andy got a Buzz Lightyear toy for his birthday. It was from his favorite movie. This is that movie." So says the lead-in to this animated space adventure featuring the exploits of Buzz Lightyear who we first encountered in Pixar's ***Toy Story*** in 1995. In that film, and in the three sequels, Buzz's voice was provided by Tim Allen; here that task is given to Chris Evans. There was a lot of criticism of this decision at the time but I think it a good one. In order to maintain the fictive premise of this imaginary film being the catalyst for a subsequent imaginary film, then the main characters need to be differentiated, and Evans does a good job. Of course, like all Pixar films, he is aided remarkably by the script, which hits all the plot points you might expect. Lightyear is the Space Ranger on a Star Command exploration vessel which changes course to investigate signs of life on an unexplored world. Naturally life is found on the planet, and it is hostile, threatening the ship and its passengers. In attempting

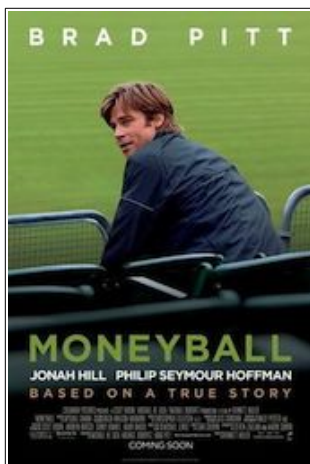
to escape Lightyear inadvertently crashes the ship condemning the expedition to an extended period on the planet until they can discover a way to manufacture the specific fuel required to power the vessel into interstellar space. This is a fun movie which is aimed at kids, and, again with all other Pixar productions, has a lot to say to adults as well. I enjoyed it. R: 3.7/5.0

### ***Crimson Peak*** (2015)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Horror/Ghost

This gothic romance follows the courtship and marriage of Edith Cushing — yes, a bit obvious — (Mia Wasikowska) by Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston). Set in the Edwardian era in New York, where Cushing lives with her father at the start of the film, and Cumberland in England, where the married couple, and Sharpe's sister Lucille (Jessica Chastain) move after their marriage. When she is a young girl Edith's dead mother visits her in the form of a ghost warning Edith to "Beware of Crimson Peak", and, of course, that is the common name given to the hill on which sits Allerdale Hall, the Sharpe family residence. Edith continues to be visited by other ghosts in Allerdale while she slowly becomes sicker and sicker. And...look, the plot is so obvious you can figure it out a mile away; if you've watched any horror movies at all in your time then there will be nothing here that's unexpected. Directed and co-written by Guillermo del Toro, this film can be seen as an homage to the old Hammer House of Horror films of the 1960s and 1970s, but it does nothing new, the plot seems old and tired, and it's really only scary because of the manipulative music and creepy sets. Yes, the sets are good, and the film looks immaculate but the whole is less than the sum of the parts. I would have expected far more from this director. R: 2.2/5.0



### ***Moneyball*** (2011)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Sport/Bio

With the Major League Baseball post-season underway I thought it a good idea to go back and re-watch this. Based on the 2003 book of the same name by Michael Lewis, this film follows the fortunes of the 2002 Oakland Athletics baseball club as they attempt to rebuild their team after a number of star players leave. Their general manager, Billy Beane (Brad Pitt), becomes interested in a new — to him — statistical approach to choosing players, and along with Peter Brand (Jonah Hill) he overthrows years of recruiting policy to pick a team that most people think will be a complete flop. Of course, the opposite happens, with the team setting a then-record for most consecutive wins with 20. They make the post-season against all expectations but lose the American League Division Series to the Minnesota Twins. It has been a while since I read the book though I do seem to recall that I thought it was more an analysis of people management rather than a pure baseball story *per se*. This adaptation concentrates more on the baseball side, and on Beane, as you might expect with Pitt in the lead role. This is an enjoyable film with some excellent support from Philip Seymour Hoffman as the team's on-

field manager and Robin Wright as Beane's ex-wife. I can understand if you were put off by the sports element of this film, but it is much more than just that. R: 4.0/5.0

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### PERRYSCOPE Responses

#### Perryscope 25:

**Lesleigh Luttrell:** "I enjoyed your house-hunting story. The idea of agents taking offers at showings seems a little odd — more like an auction than a real estate transaction. But happy to read how you made it work for your family.

"I'm sure everyone who owns the space where they live has a story — I know all my local friends do. Until I started looking for a house to buy (that was in 1984) I didn't really pay much attention to the process — which at that time involved looking at print listings in the local paper and going to open house showings on weekends and maybe working with a buyer's agent. I did all those things and once I acquired my house I still went to open houses just to learn more about the neighborhood.

"Things are so different now — with Zillow and all the information you can get online. While I still see for sale signs in front of properties for a while things were selling quickly without ever having a sign posted. And during our covid era house showings have gone to 'by appointment only'. So curious neighbors can't as easily step inside just to look the place over. But with so much information available online I guess we don't really need to see in person how much dust has accumulated and whether or not the current owner has any filled book cases. Although I am still curious (about the books, not the dust)."

[**PM:** We still have the open-for-inspections, pretty much unchanged from this story 30 years ago. I had to look up Zillow as it isn't active in Australia.]

#### Perryscope 26:

**Rob Gerrand:** "I remember reading *The Sentimental Bloke* decades ago, and lines like these still ring in my memory (from his recounting Romeo and Juliet that the Bloke attends with Doreen):

Then Juli-et wakes up an' sees 'im there,  
Turns on the water-works an' tears 'er 'air,  
"Dear love," she sez, "I cannot live alone!"  
An' wiv a moan,  
She grabs 'is pockit knife, an' ends 'er cares...  
"Peanuts or lollies!" sez a boy upstairs.

[**PM:** "The Play" is my favourite of the poems in that verse novel. Wonderful stuff. ]

"We also were raised with Dennis' *A Book For Kids*, with its clever and witty rhymes and stories; one of them quite problematic today, and some are dated. But the opening stanza, on the inside front cover, is still relevant:



A very charming gentleman, as old as old could be,  
Stared a while, and glared a while, and then he said to me:  
"Read your books, and heed your books, and put your books away,  
For you will surely need your books upon a later day."  
And then he wheezed and then he sneezed, and gave me such a look.  
And he said, "Mark—ME—boy! Be careful of your book."

"I'd forgotten that the reception of **2001: A Space Odyssey** was not completely one of rapture in the sf community; thanks for bringing Lester Del Rey's and Fred Pohl's disparaging views to our attention. I saw it again in 2018 on its 50th anniversary in the 70mm version at The Astor. It's as timely now as then, and ranks easily as one of the best films ever made."

[**PM:** I watched the film on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary release as well and remember thinking that it wasn't as slow as I recalled it being when I first saw it in the early 1970s. ]

"I've been watching some more Korean series: **Extraordinary Attorney Wu** and **Stranger** are both superb. **Wu** is about an autistic lawyer, each episode showing her learning how to relate to people, very gradually, plus an unusual court case. The writing, acting, direction, music are all wonderful. And **Stranger** is about corruption in the Prosecutor and Police departments — one of the best and most tense thrillers I've watched anywhere, and I'm only up to episode 7."

[**PM:** Okay, more to watch. I have enough lined up already — especially after being away for 6 weeks — but will have to try to fit these in, along with the others you've recommended over the past year.]

"I agree that **Line of Duty** fell off in its last seasons. The first few were up to the standard of **Stranger**. And I also liked **The Guns of Navarone**; I'll try to watch it again."

**Nick Price:** "I thought of you this morning when I read an interview with George Miller. Sounds like the founding experience of the first generation of Australian science fiction fandom

'I think also it's because I grew up in relative isolation as a kid in the '50s in rural Australia. There was no television. There was the Saturday matinee at the local picture palace, though, where we all congregated. Kids from all over the countryside would come there. And there was radio, and there were comics, and there were books. The rest of our time was spent at play. And with all of that, I think I was serving some sort of unwitting apprenticeship to become a filmmaker, which I'm still doing all these years later, really.'

[**PM:** We certainly had to find our own fun back in the 1960s. According to Wikipedia George Miller grew up in Chinchilla in south-eastern Queensland, some 300 kilometres from Brisbane. It looks like a much bigger town than little old Laura. He had a "picture palace" to wander along to. I probably ended up getting into science fiction as it provided that "sensawonder" that all kids need; it was at a time when the US-Russian space race was all over the news; and there was a lot of old science fiction books and magazines lying

around the house. You get your influences where you can find them – mostly in the home or in your local area.]

**James Styles:** “My first fanzine letter of comment for so many years I have forgotten the abbreviation...(loc)?”

[**PM:** Yep. Good to see you getting back into fanzines.]

“Firstly, I liked the cover.”

[**PM:** Don’t worry, you’ll get sick of them soon enough.]

“Secondly the idea of a trip report always goes well with me.”

[**PM:** It has been overwhelmed by other things, including this little publication.]

“I remember I saw you twice at the Chicon with opportunity to discuss the future.”

“The John Bangsund correspondence appears important and I look forward to some future order.”

“I am not so sure about C. J. Dennis. Famous, but not to my taste. Good work, anyway(s).”

[**PM:** I can understand that. Some of it is just plain journeyman stuff, though I suspect you could say that of a lot of writers.]

“Your podcasts are great. I especially liked a previous one with Leigh Edmonds recounting faanish histories.”

“The book and short fiction reviews were interesting as I have not read any of those reviewed so it gave me room to consider possible reading pursuits in the short term.”

“Somehow, I even missed all that TV viewing except the *Guns of Navarone* which was a war movie rite of passage once.”

[**PM:** I’d agree with that. I put it up there with those other war movies of the time: *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Dirty Dozen*, and *A Bridge Too Far*. Some of the others, like *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, were a bit too cerebral for a young teenager. I got to see them later and enjoyed them, probably all as a Saturday matinee in the local movie house.]

“Impressive work to me, as you seem to have a fair bit going on with reading, commentating and travel.”

[**PM:** Retirement does weird things to you; weird, but good. I’ve got the time to do what I want and I do need to find things to fill in the time I’ve got.]

**I also heard from: David Grigg; Nic Farey** (“Nice to see your old mug back on the cover. We disagree on *All the Old Knives* which I liked a lot...”); and **Barbara O’Sullivan**; thank you one and all, and also thanks to those who mentioned **Perryscope** during our chats in Chicago.