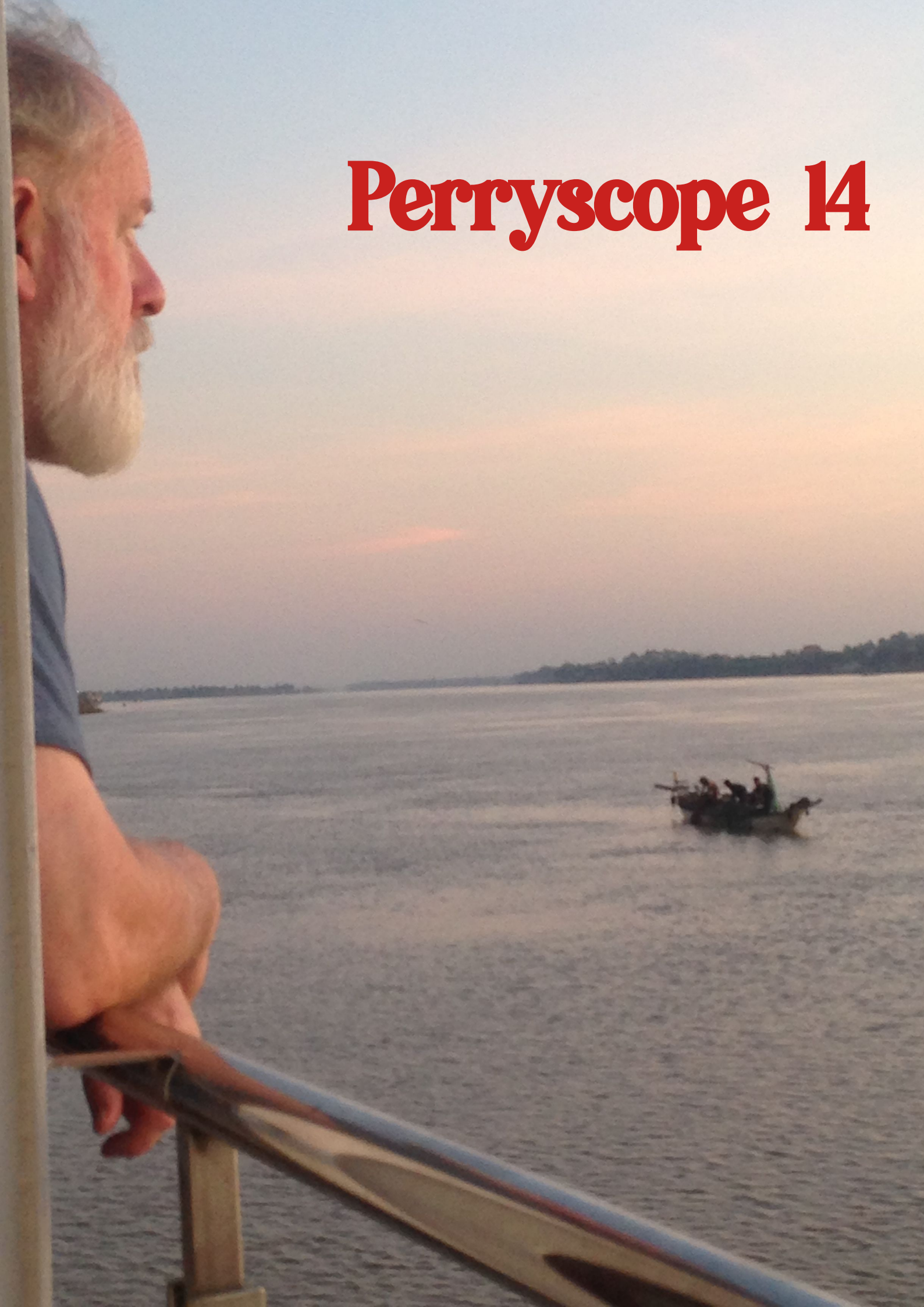


# Perryscope 14



**PERRYSCOPE 14**, September 2021, is an issue of the personalzine published, whenever the mood takes him, 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 whoever 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 photograph by Robyn Mills.

### INTRODUCTION

In his review of *Perryscope 12* in his fanzine, *The Zine Dump 52*, Guy Lillian III writes: “he maintains – and demonstrates the real value of a good perzine: you come to know someone through their writing.” Which is good to read as that was pretty much my intention all along.

I mentioned last issue that my father had started to write a memoir of his life, which ran up to around 1980. I’ve been impressed by the work he did there, and also by his extensive memory of events. I can’t see myself doing anything similar, so the work I do here in this fanzine will have to act as a substitute.

I usually have ideas for topics to write about a few months in advance and, as I gradually work my way through those things I’m currently interested in, I can see myself going back over things that have happened to me in the past. Hence the main piece from issue 13, more of which will follow, sometime in the future. If that ends up representing more than an introduction to me then so much the better.

The interesting thing I found when writing the article for issue 13 – well, one of the interesting things – was that I started to remember other episodes and events from my early childhood years in Laura that I had not thought about for many, many years. Only a couple of them were what you might consider a little distressing, and these were childhood accidents, with the rest being of happy childhood occasions. So the act of writing, and just letting the words flow, stimulated the old memory pathways again. I will be doing that again.

The one thing I cannot guarantee, though, is that all of what I write will be accurate. The memory is a fickle thing, throwing up assumptions – such as my statement that the Laura house was built of brick when it was actually stone – skewing the sequential order of things, and just plain messing things about. That’s just something I’ll have to put up with.

oooOooo

I’ve changed the font of this publication again. In a note in a recent mailing of ANZAPA one of the contributors mentioned that all fanzine editors tend to keep changing the basic fonts

in their magazines right up until they stop publishing. I have a feeling that may well be correct.

I was quite happy using the Dante font — used in the last issue — on screen, and mostly happy with its representation in the final pdf version, until I came across a book title which I had rendered in bold italic. Then I wasn't very impressed with it at all. It was just far too "out there". I wanted a font that would make the title stand out, just not to dominate a page as much as that.

So this time I'm using Georgia, which again seems fine on the screen. Mentioned by Claire Brialey or Mark Plummer in a recent mailing of ANZAPA, it is a serif font developed in 1993 for Microsoft and was designed to appear elegant when printed and on screen. It seems to fit the bill at present. We'll see. Final acceptance will wait until I create the pdf, and I get a bit of a chance to look at it after a week or so.

oooOooo

After about a month of delays the second issue of my serious and constructive (sercon) criticism fanzine, *The Alien Review*, is now out and about in the world. Once again I have to compliment David Grigg on the layout and cover. Based on some feedback on the first issue we made some slight adjustments to the interior text, adding more leading between the lines, which we hope will make it a tad more readable, especially on computer screens.

This issue includes Lucy Sussex and David Grigg discussing *The Sunken Land Begins to Rise Again* by M. John Harrison, my long look at the Short Sf of 1965, David examining Shirley Jackson and her works, my review of the 2021 Hugo Award ballot for Best Novelette, and several reviewers taking on "Nightfall" by Isaac Asimov, among other items. It is available in PDF format only and you can ask me for a copy by email, or you can download it from Bill Burns's fabulous efanazines.com.



Issue 3 is now being prepared, and some contents of issue 4 are being discussed – there is no rest for the fanzine editor in retirement. The next issue will include discussions on the 2021 Hugo Award ballots for Best Novel, Best Novelette and Best Short Story, a deep dive into Richard Thompson and his music, and a look at some Soviet SF films. Expect that one around November.

Cover notes: Robyn took this photo of me in October 2018 as we were sailing down the Mekong River from Cambodia into Vietnam. Whenever possible we liked to hang out over the railing of our balcony watching the passing river traffic as the sun went down. And, as usual, the best photos are those taken when the subject is unaware.



### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MY LIFE

#### Zora Cross

Back in *Perryscope 10* I wrote about how I came to discover the work of Australian poet Edward Dyson and my subsequent activities in indexing his poetry and prose. While I couldn't remember exactly how Dyson's work came to my notice, I surmised that it was probably as a result of seeing his poetry being printed in various Australian magazines of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The same is probably true of Zora Cross. Though with a slight difference.

Back in the years 2005-12 I ran a literary weblog that was dedicated to Australian literature. One of the continuing features of that weblog was the weekly reprinting of an old Australian poem associated with books, literature or the act of writing — poetry or prose, it didn't matter. I discovered early on that the *Bulletin* magazine printed poems about the writing process in a small section titled "The Inky Way". So I was able to snaffle quite a lot of old poetry from there.

But I didn't want to restrict my poetry selections just to "The Inky Way" offerings. I also wanted verse on books, bookshops and reading. Luckily for me, Austlit (the Australian Literary Bibliography run by The University of Queensland) had a facility in their database which would allow me to search for subject topics, such as the ones I was looking for. Soon I had a whole heap of other poems to choose from. And one of the earliest I came across was the poem "In a Book-Shop" by Zora Cross (see page 5); a poet I had never heard of previously.

While being mainly pertinent to bookshops of another era, I was quite taken by the work. It had something to say to me about the act of aimlessly wandering around a bookshop, not looking for anything in particular but being open to the possibility of a wonderful discovery; an activity I had undertaken quite often in my life. So I decided to start looking for other material by her, soon realising that she was quite prolific. And before long I came across "Books", again in the *Bulletin*, and I realised I'd found another poet I could relate to. She was something completely different from Dennis and Dyson. A woman who was as interested in the inner life as much as in the world around her.

Zora Cross's major breakthrough as a writer came with the release of *Songs of Love and Life* in 1917, followed a year later by *The Lilt of Life*, both containing a multitude of excellent poems. She seemed to have the world in front of her. Some literary commentators and reviewers in Australia considered her as good a poet as any that existed anywhere in the world at that time. She was certainly dealing with subjects that were as far away from the standard fare of the Australian bush poet as it was possible to get.

And then, she faltered. She seemed to move away from poetry, her forte, into novels and got bogged down and blocked while writing a long novel set during the classic Roman period of the Caesars. Maybe she felt that the move to long fiction was inevitable and the only way she  
(continued on page 6)

**In a Book-Shop** by Zora Cross

Between these colored colonnades of Thought  
Down which I walk as to a music rare,  
In breathless images of Beauty caught,  
God's life and death I share.

Wild harmonies of Eastern pipe and flute  
Mix in the measure of a Doric dance,  
Where Poesy in pages Fancy-mute  
Slumbers with lost Romance.

By airy memories of palm and beach  
Adventure whistles to a wandering star,  
Sailing the crystal labyrinth of speech,  
Dream-led to lands afar.

Here Fairy-Fiction weaves her wonder-loom  
With rainbow threads of paragraph and phrase,  
Mocking the troubled terraces of gloom  
Where History's banners blaze.

In precious parchments, holy as Content,  
Philosophies forgotten trembling lie.  
I turn the leaves with olden creeds besprent  
And hear a dead world sigh.

O'er painted palisades of cloth and board  
Young fairies spill world-laughter loose and white,  
'Mid azure letterings of crook and sword  
Dimpling eternal Light.

O rich, warm scent of volumes newly-bound,  
Closing immortal melodies and deeds,  
Clean leaf and page with living words profound,  
I follow where each leads.

Down through the murky avenues of Time  
My soul goes singing in its search for Truth,  
Where fragrant books in silences sublime  
Breathe everlasting Youth.

Green fields of Poesy, high hills of Thought,  
Plains, streams and palaces of Wisdom rare,  
Within their miracle of Beauty caught,  
God's life and death I share.

First published in *The Bulletin*, 24 June 1920

**Books** by Zora Cross

Oh bury me in books when I am dead,  
Fair quarto leaves of ivory and gold,  
And silk octavos bound in brown and red,  
That tales of love and chivalry unfold.

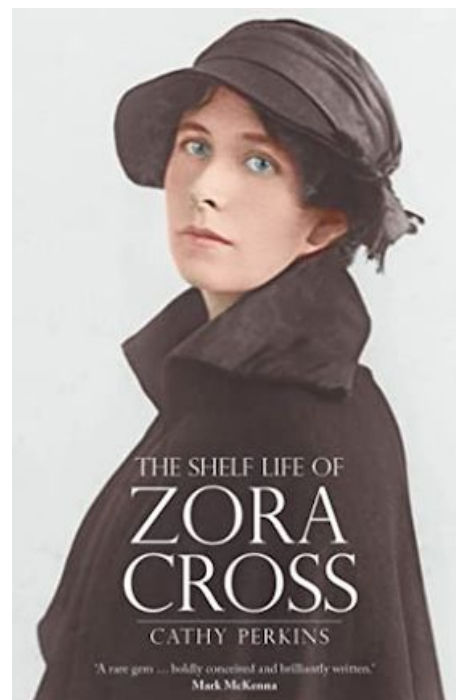
Heap me in volumes of fine vellum wrought,  
Creamed with the close content of silent speech.  
Wrap me in sapphire tapestries of thought  
From some old epic out of common reach.

I would my shroud were verse-embroidered too —  
Your verse for preference, in starry stitch,  
And powdered o'er with rhymes that poets woo,  
Breathing dream-lyrics in moon-measures rich.

Night holds me with a horror of the grave  
That knows not poetry, nor song, nor you;  
Nor leaves of love that down the ages wave  
Romance and fire in burnished cloths of blue.

Oh bury me in books, and I'll not mind  
The cold, slow worms that coil around my head;  
Since my lone soul may turn the page and find  
The lines you wrote to me, when I am dead.

First published in *The Bulletin*, 1 March 1917



(continued from page 4)

could earn more than a meagre income for herself and her family. In any event she has left behind a massive body of work (currently nearly a thousand pieces in the Austlit database) which we can enjoy.

In early 2020 Cathy Perkins released a biography of Cross titled *The Shelf Life of Zora Cross*, which is an intriguing look into the development of Cross as a poet and writer from her early teenage years as a correspondent of Ethel Turner's, through her *Bulletin* period and then on to her marriage to David McKee Wright, motherhood and her novels. Seek it out, you won't be disappointed. The first poem reprinted in that book by the author is "Books", which you can also read on page 5. It has become one of my all-time favourites.

oooOooo

**A brief biography:** Zora Cross (18 May 1890-22 Jan 1964) was born in Eagle Farm in Queensland. By her early teenage years she was corresponding with the children's page of *The Australian Town and Country Journal*, then being run by Ethel Turner (author of *Seven Little Australians* et al). As well as letters Cross began sending in poems and short stories which Turner enthusiastically supported. She set out to become a teacher but left her studies when she got married and had her first child. That marriage didn't last and she entered a de facto relationship with David McKee Wright, and Irish-New Zealand writer some 20 years her senior. After his death in 1928 she had struggled financially, supporting herself with journalism and other writing as well as being assisted by a small pension from the Commonwealth Literary Fund. She was always poor and by the time of her death in 1964 was largely forgotten.

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Review of *Songs of Love and Life*:

Those who have watched the verse-columns of the Australian press last year and this must have become vaguely aware of the growing brilliance of a new star in the Poetic Way. It was named Zora Cross. Who is Zora Cross? *Songs of Love and Life* (Tyrrell's, Sydney, 2s. 6d.) will tell you. Many of the verses in this volume will be recognised by *Bulletin* readers; but the chief feature of this collection is a series of 60 "Love Sonnets" now published for the first time. To write 60 technically correct sonnets upon Love without repeating one self is an achievement; to write five dozen sonnets of such a high average of literary distinction, athrob with the pulse of passion, full of felicities of phrase and touched with imagination and thought, is a triumph of virtuosity. For this sonnet series is poetry of a high order, poetry that is frankly but not pruriently hedonistic. Zora Cross does not write a sonnet to her husband-lover's eyebrow; she writes 60 sonnets to—well, to all of him. Here for the first time in modern English literature a woman-poet becomes articulate; none has hitherto dared to unveil her soul so frankly and so finely. All the others who have tried haven't any soul to reveal. Of course, there is Sappho; and Sappho may henceforth be labelled the Lesbian Zora Cross.

First published in *The Bulletin*, Red Page (p2) 25 October 1917.

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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 58:** (3 August 2021) *An eye on the box*  
 This time we discuss recent award announcements and then move on to some television that we have watched recently.

**Episode 59:** (17 August 2021) *Thoroughly informed*  
 This episode we tackle the stories on the 2021 Hugo Award Ballot for Best Novelette. We don't actually agree on which we'd vote for, though we do get reasonably close. After that it's a trip down the lane of recent reading.

**Episode 60:** (31 August 2021) *Tales twice told*  
 We look at the Best Short Story ballot for the 2021 Hugo awards and come to realise we differ much more on the stories at this length than we did with the novelettes. Then we move on to discussing a few books that we have read recently.

You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at [twochairs.website](http://twochairs.website) (please note the change in url), 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 – Gdn: Guardian 1000 Novels; 1000: 1001 Books to Read Before You Die; Coll – single-author collection; Anth – anthology

**August 2021 books**

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>	Arthur Conan Doyle	Crime	Aug 8		3.8	1902	Gdn/1001
<i>Foundation</i>	Isaac Asimov	Sf	Aug 13		3.4	1951	Gdn/1001
<i>The Third Man &amp; The Fallen Idol</i>	Graham Greene	Crime	Aug 16		3.8	1981	Gdn/1001, coll
<i>Neutron Star</i>	Larry Niven	Sf	Aug 23		3.6	1968	coll
<i>Say No to Death</i>	Dymphna Cusack	Lit	Aug 27		3.4	1951	Aust
<i>The Premonition</i>	Michael Lewis	Non-fic	Aug 30		4.4	2021	
<i>Nebula Award Stories 2</i>	Ed Brian Aldiss & Harry Harrison	Sf/f	Aug 31		3.8	1967	anth

Books read in the month: 7

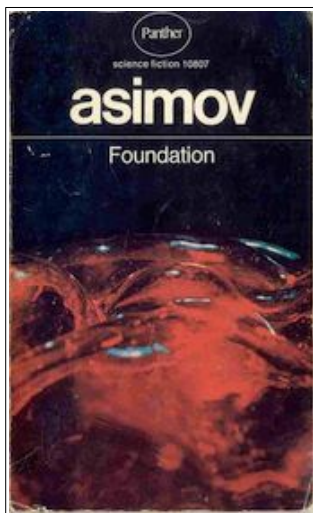
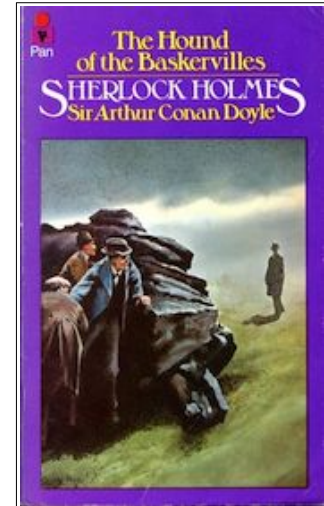


Yearly total to end of month: 64

2021 reading targets met this month: 6 anthologies

**Notes:**

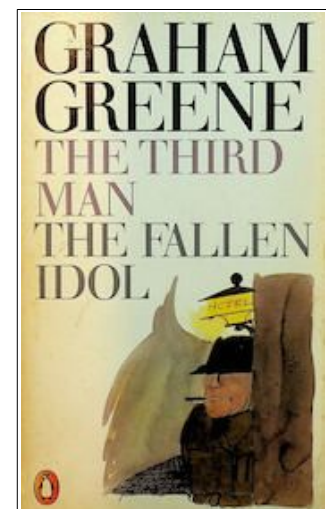
***The Hound of the Baskervilles*** (1902) – The best of the Sherlock Holmes novels by Doyle. This one appears to have been conceived as an actual novel rather than pieced together. It is also the first appearance of Holmes after his reported death at the hands of Moriarty, though it is set prior to that event. Holmes is called in to investigate the death of Sir Charles Baskerville who appears to have died from fright, possibly as a result of being pursued by a gigantic hound of family legend. Sir Henry Baskerville, nephew of Sir Charles and now heir to the estate and fortune, arrives in London and travels down to the property in Devon with Watson as Holmes continues his investigations into this case, and others, back in London. With its overtones of the supernatural, this was a great hit when it was first published, and it is easy to see why. R: 3.8/5.0



***Foundation*** (1951) – The first of Asimov's Foundation series, long considered one of the greatest sf series of all time. The novel is set about 10,000 years in the future when mankind has spread through the Galaxy. The current Empire is predicted to collapse by psycho-historian Hari Seldon who also notes that the only way for the Galaxy to avoid a 30,000 year dark period of war and anarchy is for them to set up two Foundations, at opposite edges of the galaxy, as a last bastion of knowledge and peace. The series is based on the fall of the Roman Empire, with the Foundations taking the part of the Irish monasteries and their role in the maintenance of literature and science. This story is then told in a series of novellas, each set just before predicted crises within and affecting the Foundation on the planet of Trantor. The episodic nature of this novel makes it hard to relate to the characters, though they are completely subservient to the plot and

ideas. R: 3.5/5.0

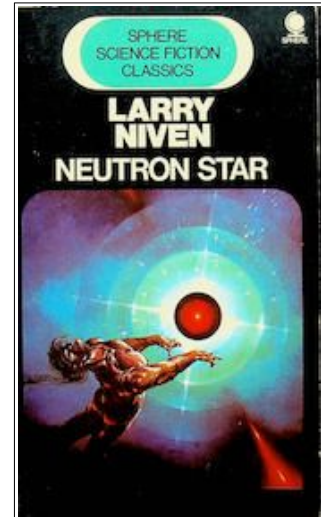
***The Third Man & The Fallen Idol*** (1981) – In the sf world these stories would be listed as a novella and a novelette, and both formed the basis of later films by Carol Reed. In his introduction, Greene notes that he preferred to write a full, complete story which would later be adapted into a screenplay rather than writing the screenplay first up, though he does indicate that the final screen versions differ somewhat from the stories here. ***The Third Man*** is the classic crime story of Harry Lime (played by Orson Welles in the film adaptation) who is involved in black market medicines in Vienna in the immediate post-war years, and his friend Rollo Martins, a writer of westerns, who has travelled to the city to see



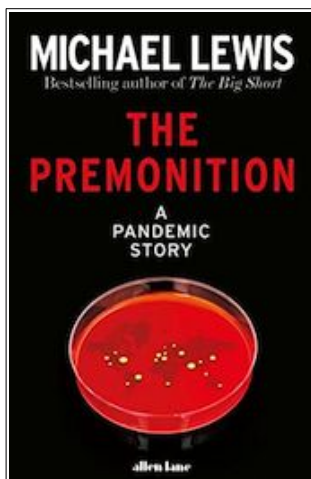


him. *The Fallen Idol* is a domestic murder mystery set in London, also just after the war years. *The Third Man* was originally written in 1949, and *The Fallen Idol* in 1948. The date for this book refers to the first publication of this collection of the two. R: 3.8/5.0

*Neutron Star* (1968) – Niven’s first collection of stories from his Known Space series. The title story won the 1967 Hugo Award for Best Short Story. There are seven stories in this collection, of varying qualities. Here you will get introduced to the author’s weird collection of aliens such as the Pierson’s Puppeteers, the Outsiders, and the Kzinti, along with the vast background to the series, the various advanced technologies in use, and his ongoing character Beowulf Shaeffer. The best are those where Niven sets up an interesting problem and then gets his protagonists to solve it, mostly in the face of rather overwhelming odds – “Neutron Star”, “A Relic of Empire”, “The Soft Weapon”, “Flatlander” and “The Handicapped”. Classic uber-human stories from the 1960s, and a good introduction to Niven’s work. R: 3.6/5.0

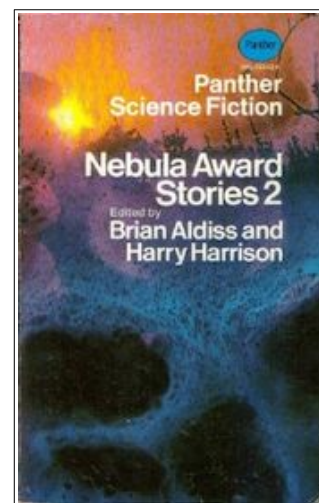


*Say No to Death* (1951) – see major review below.



*The Premonition* (2021) – Michael Lewis turns his investigative and story-telling eye to the current coronavirus pandemic. He begins by taking us back to the early years of this century when someone gave President George W. Bush a copy of a book about the 1918 flu epidemic, which, in the wake of the then recent 9/11 New York attacks, scared the hell out of him. Bush may have been a nifty in many people’s eyes but he did set up a process that allowed for the development of a pandemic response within the US. Lewis covers the development of this plan, concentrating on the important main players (not the heads of departments or politicians) with his usual entertaining and informative style. He then shifts to the Trump administration’s binning of that report and the consequential shortcomings of the US health authorities. Wonderful, timely stuff. R: 4.4/5.0

*Nebula Award Stories 2* (1967) – I’m now turning my attention to the short sf of 1966 in the leadup to a podcast episode later this year. This is the first of the anthologies that I’ll be tackling to get an adequate view of the field in that year (the Niven collection above fits into this as well). I’m not, at this time intending to dig as deeply into 1966 as I did for 1965 in an article I wrote for *The Alien Review 2*, but I do need to read the winners and nominees and some others as well. The best of the stories here are by Jack Vance (see below for that novella), Bob Shaw, R. A. Lafferty, Gordon R. Dickson, Philip K. Dick and Brian Aldiss. Only one woman represented which is very disappointing. Other than that this is a good sampling of that year. R: 3.8/5.0



Other short fiction

**The Last Castle** (1966) by Jack Vance

This novella won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novella of 1966.

On a far future Earth, humans have returned to live a high-tech privileged lifestyle supported by Meks – a humanoid alien race – and Peasants. For hundreds of years these aristocrats have lived a life of idle luxury in a number of massive castles. Only a very few humans live outside the castles, and are considered barbaric. Then the Meks revolt, destroying castle after castle, until only Castle Hagedorn remains. One of the inhabitants, Xanten, undertakes a reconnaissance mission and returns with a plan that is roundly rejected. Some months later the castle, previously considered impregnable, is on the verge of defeat when Xanten is able to convince enough of his fellows to counter-attack. A classic Vance novella exploring the consequences of becoming too distanced from your surroundings, and of not treating others with the respect they deserve.



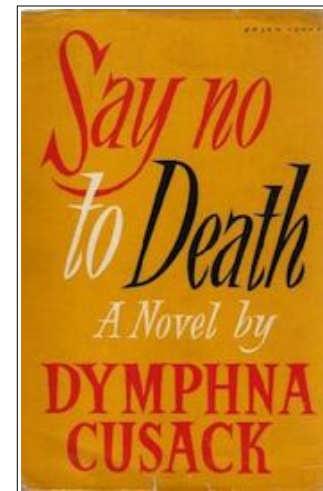
REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

**Say No to Death** (1951) by Dymphna Cusack

Genre: Literary

I reviewed *Heatwave in Berlin* by this author back in *Perryscope 2*, and raved about it there and to a number of people. This is an earlier novel, and, while still of a high quality, didn't really capture me as much as *Heatwave*.

Bart Templeton is an Australian army officer who has returned to live in Sydney after his overseas service during World War II, firstly in the war in the Pacific, and then as a member of the Japanese Occupation force. On his arrival back in Sydney he reconnects with Jan Blakeley and the two start a relationship, much to the annoyance of Jan's sister Doreen, who considers Bart a typical Australian male, always on the make and certain to leave Jan bereft and forgotten.



And, at first, Bart seems to be just like that, but over the course of the novel his character changes from one always putting himself first to one that sees Jan as more than a casual fling, and then as his wife. Of course, a modern reader very well knows that things aren't going to flow smoothly forward, and Jan becomes sick and is diagnosed with tuberculosis.

Set in Australia in the years 1946-1948 this novel details the problems the average Australian had in obtaining adequate medical care. TB was a major killer at this time and treatments were mainly restricted to bed-rest, fresh air and some doses of streptomycin. Better treatments were being developed but weren't introduced on a large scale until the

early 1950s. Rest was usually meant to be in a sanatorium, which was generally beyond the financial reach of the working or lower middle classes.

Jan is luckily transferred to a private sanatorium in the Blue Mountains, and both Doreen and Bart have to expend a large proportion of their wages to pay for her care, what there is of it. (As an aside I found it a bit odd that patients in a TB sanatorium were allowed to smoke! Certainly a sign of the times when nearly all adults in Australia smoked. Though you might have thought that even in the 1940s certain people should have been prevented from partaking.)

Many authors might have allowed the story of Jan and Bart to descend into the realm of a “tear-jerker” but Cusack has much greater skill than that. Yes, there is pathos and emotion here, though it is set against a sense of purpose and resolution that lifts this novel into a powerful denunciation of the Australian medical system as it stood at that time. She writes of Australians with clear eyes and compassion, showing them with all their strengths and weaknesses. Maybe not to the level of *Heatwave*, although a fine read just the same.

R: 3.4/5.0



## WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

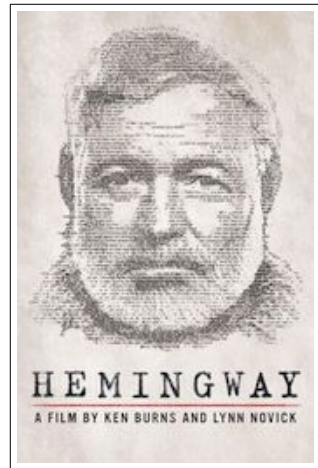
### Television

***Hemingway*** (Mini-series – 3 episodes) (2021)

Platform: SBS

Genre: Biographical Documentary

Ken Burns continues his examination of the American Life with his 3-part, 6-hour documentary series on the life and work of Ernest Hemingway. Burns, this time co-producing with Lynn Novick, utilises his usual technique of combining still photographs, archival footage, readings, interviews and commentaries under an overarching narration to maintain his usual very high standard. You get everything in a Burns documentary, the good and the bad. There



is no celebrity adulation here. Hemingway comes across as a man whose major subject of interest was himself but who was able to produce some truly remarkable writing along the way. The collateral damage to those nearest and dearest to him was extreme. And that, in the end, included himself most of all. Highly recommended, even if you don't like the subject's writing. R: 4.5/5.0



***Midnight Diner : Tokyo Stories*** (Season 1 – 10 episodes) (2016)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Drama

Although released as the first season under this title it is actually the fourth season of *Midnight Diner* – very confusing. This series of



short (25-30 minute) episodes follows the stories of the clients of a small 12-person diner in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Only open between midnight and 7am, the diner is run by The Master, a facially scarred chef who acts as confidante, guardian, adviser, philosopher and chef to his changing set of customers, some of whom have recurring roles. This is a wonderful piece of feel-good television with a mixture of sad and uplifting stories. It is a masterpiece of camera direction being almost entirely set within the confines of the small restaurant. Each episode features a specific dish that is favoured by one of the customers, and then generally taken up by others. Makes me long to return to Tokyo and try out the food again. R: 4.0/5.0

***The Sinner*** (Season 2 – 8 episodes) (2018)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Crime Drama

Bill Pullman returns as Detective Harry Ambrose in this second series of the program I reviewed last month. This time Ambrose is called back to his old home town to investigate the poisoning death of two adults, presumably by their 13-year-old son. It all looks rather straight-forward to the local police department after the boy confesses to the killings, but, of course, Ambrose is not convinced and begins to investigate the boy's backstory. As previously the supporting cast of mostly unknown actors is excellent, especially Elisha Henig as the 13-year-old Julian Walker. I had a couple of problems with the script – one major disappearance not explained, and one major clue not followed up until the end – but overall it is to be commended. Pullman seems to be fleshing out the role of Ambrose more and more as he goes, with the script building up his history; he is a very troubled man. On a par with season 1. R: 3.7/5.0



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**Film**

***Arrival*** (2016)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: SF Drama

Based on the short story “Story of Your Life” by Ted Chiang this is a film of first-contact between humans and aliens. Twelve alien spaceships hover over disparate locations on the planet and the various local governments attempt to communicate with the visitors. The film follows the US team of linguist Louise Banks (Amy Adams) and physicist Ian Donnelly (Jeremy Renner) as they gradually piece together a vocabulary and become able to communicate with the aliens. As mentioned early in the film, thinking in this new language changes a person's way of thinking and Banks starts getting visions of a life she does not understand. Apart from a few cliches about military men being idiots this is an intelligent film that finally makes some sense of the original story, for me. R: 4.2/5.0



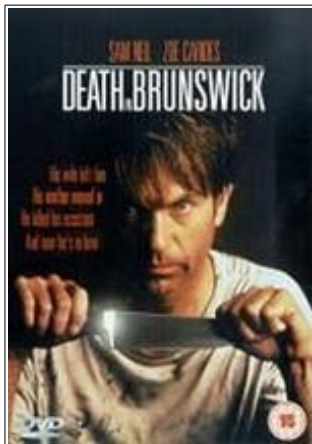
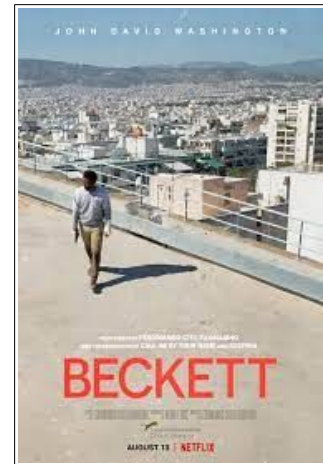


### ***Beckett*** (2021)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Thriller

The title character is an American tourist in Greece with his girlfriend. After deciding to get out of Athens to avoid a noisy political rally the pair have a car accident late at night in which the woman is killed. The car has also piled into a house in which Beckett thinks he sees a young red-headed boy and an older woman. When the police interview him next day they tell him he is mistaken and that no-one has lived in the house for years. When Beckett walks back to the house to investigate the police try to kill him and this sets off a series of action sequences as he attempts to get to the US Embassy and safety. This was billed as a return to the 1970s-style action thriller and, if so, it is a poor return. There are too many points of incredulity and “wait-a-minute” moments for it to maintain any sense of credibility. Beckett comes across as a poor comic-book hero as he survives one shooting or stabbing after another, only to get up and carry on as if nothing had happened. Only watch if you are desperate. R: 2.7/5.0



### ***Death in Brunswick*** (1990)

Platform: Apple Prime

Genre: Comedy Drama

Sam Neill plays the gormless Carl, who takes a job as a chef in a sleazy nightclub. There he meets and falls in love with a Greek-Australian barmaid Sophie (Zoe Carides). One night Carl witnesses his kitchen assistant Mustafa dealing drugs in the laneway at the back of the nightclub, and then, a day or so later, also sees the nightclub's bouncers beating up Mustafa, apparently due to the earlier drug-dealing episode. An altercation ensues between Mustafa and Carl which ends with Mustafa's accidental death via kitchen fork. Carl then contacts his grave digging mate Dave (John Clarke) for help. There is a lot to like about this film: its depiction of

the seedy backstreets of Brunswick in the early 90s before it became hipster central, the relationships between Greeks and Australians at that time, and the interplay between fellow New Zealanders Neil and Clarke. Not as funny as I remembered, and now more a nostalgic trip than anything else. R: 3.4/5.0

### ***The White Tiger*** (2021)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Thriller

This is based on the 2008 Booker prize winning novel of the same name by Aravind Adiga, a book I haven't read. The film tells the story of Balram who rises from his beginnings in a poor, rural Indian village to become a successful businessman in Bangalore. Originally identified as a boy of talent and intelligence, Balram is taken out of school by his grandmother to help support the rest of the family. He resents this bitterly and dreams of one day making good. He gets a chance when he persuades his grandmother to pay



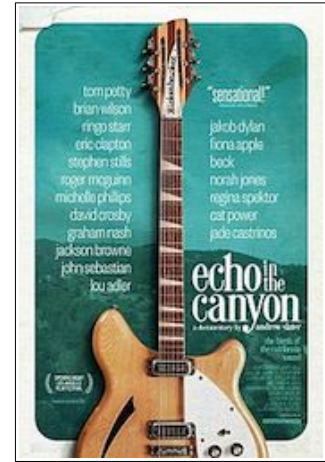
for driving lessons and then he uses his wit and more than an ounce of luck to secure a position as a driver for his village’s landlord’s son. But the work is demeaning and he is treated like a slave until he sees a chance and takes it. Excellent acting by the cast supported by competent direction, the film is let down somewhat by the muddy audio recording. In the end the story becomes rather predictable. R: 3.2/5.0

**Echo in the Canyon (2018)**

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Music Documentary

A documentary by Jakob Dylan which takes an affectionate look at the music that came out of the LA scene in the 1960s, specifically the music of such bands as The Beach Boys, The Byrds, The Mamas and the Poppas and Buffalo Springfield, and associated people living in Laurel Canyon. Dylan interviews participants such as Michelle Phillips, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Brian Wilson, Roger McGuinn and David Crosby, as well as observers Jackson Browne, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr and the late, lamented Tom Petty. The big, brooding, silent elephant in the corner of the room is Neil Young. You get to see him in some early clips, and then, at the end of the documentary, a recent piece; but he isn’t interviewed. He gets mentioned by people, though not in terribly flattering terms. Aside from that, this is all fantastic stuff, and you really wish someone out there would do more of these types of documentaries, especially as some of the main people are getting older and may not be with us for much longer. R: 4.4/5.0



All travelers are optimists, I thought. Travel itself was a sort of optimism in action. I always went along thinking: I'll be all right, I'll be interested, I'll discover something, I won't break a leg or get robbed, and at the end of the day I'll find a nice old place to sleep. Everything is going to be fine, and even if it isn't, it will be worthy of note—worth leaving home for. Sometimes the weather, even the thin rain of Devon, made it worth it. Or else the birdsong in sunlight, or the sound of my shoe soles on the pebbles of the downward path—here, for example, walking down North Hill through glades full of azaleas, which were bright purple. I continued over the humpy hills to Minehead. – *The Kingdom by the Sea* by Paul Theroux, p141.



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.



### **PERRYSCOPE Responses**

#### **Perryscope 12:**

**John Hertz:** “I’ve read Herbert’s *Under Pressure* twice, *Whipping Star* once. So far I haven’t found with *Pressure*, and don’t yet know if I shall with *Star*, the first-there-is-a-mountain-then-there-is-no-mountain-then-there-is adventure I reported with *Dune*.”

[**PM:** I can be of no help here as it’s been decades since I read either of the earlier Herbert novels, and, I must admit, I’m not overly tempted to go back to them.]

“I’ve often re-read Niven’s *World of Ptavvs* (1966; i.e. the novel-length version). He already showed the qualities that made me a Niven fan: deft, poetic, comic. The title itself is a comedy. There’s plenty of characterisation, even of the alien Kzanol. But Niven’s style is spare.”

[**PM:** I have no idea what the comedy might be in the title. It reads like someone’s spitting.]

“Thanks for showing the swell Vincent Di Fate cover for Delaney’s *Ballad of Beta-2*. Just now in a used-book shop I got Davidson’s “Rogue Dragon”, *Ballad*’s fellow Nebula finalist for Best Novella. Fine vintage that year. I recommend *The Avram Davidson Treasury*.”

[**PM:** I can’t say I was impressed with “Rogue Dragon”. As I pointed out in *Perryscope 9* I found it to be a “standard run-of-the-mill story” that harked back to the 1950s in style. I read the original magazine-published novella, which is the version nominated for the Nebula. Looks like we will have to disagree about another author. Davidson may have written some good work in his time, but I don’t think that “Rogue Dragon” is it. As you will see from my article in *The Alien Review 2*, it doesn’t make my top five novellas of that year.]

“Thanks also for recounting how you ginned things up spiritually, if I may so put it. Since gin means juniper anyone who happens not to like that flavor is sadly out of luck. When French brandy — from grapes, usually, though Calvados has something to say — wasn’t to be had in England at the Glorious Revolution, English people wanting to drink spirits went to gin. My Southeast European friends drink plum brandy, appearing plentifully in Ivo Andrić’s *The Bridge on the Drina*, which I got on the same visit as “Rogue Dragon” and recommend (RD has to wait till I finish the Strugatskys’ *Doomed City*).”

**Carey Handfield:** “The Aussiecon membership card brought back memories. Mainly regarding changes in technology — no mobile phones, no internet, no PCs. As membership department head everything centred around the post with weekly clearing the PO box to get the latest memberships. Our records were kept on a main frame computer by a volunteer who did the processing after hours at work.”

[**PM:** I was aware of that story regarding the membership computerisation. I gather the volunteer was found out and got into a bit of trouble as well. Ah, the things we do for fandom.]

#### **Perryscope 13:**

**Mark Olson:** “That’s a fun little history. I grew up in a larger town — 10,000 people and nearly ten years earlier, but otherwise it’s all very familiar. (The freedom of movement for kids, the TV (ours was reliable but static-y — we had five channels from Minneapolis/St.

Paul, about 100km north of us), etc.”

“The things that really struck me as different were small ones: Your house being one story and brick (though it looks like stone in the picture) — there \*were\* brick houses in Minnesota, but they were uncommon, usually two stories and built fifty or seventy-five years earlier for people who wanted to be ostentatious. When I was growing up, nearly all the houses were two stories (plus full basement) and made of wood. One-story "ranch" houses came into style after the War and marked the new parts of town. The climate is another: I have never lived in an arid place and find that an unattractive feature of the US West. (The hills look naked.) Where I grew up the summers were cooler than yours but muggy, while the winters verged on brutal.”

[**PM:** You are right about the house being stone instead of brick. I’m guessing this is just one of those things from my childhood which I had somehow forgotten. My stepmother also informed me that most of the older houses in towns in the mid-North of South Australia were built in stone exclusively.]

“Was it hard to insulate those houses? In Minnesota (and probably the whole of the US) house insulation only became a thing after the War — I (vaguely) remember my parents' house getting insulated in the early 50s. The people who had masonry houses had a hell of a time with that. (Though to be fair, masonry houses were more likely to be built insulated since the very cold winters left no real no alternative, and the people who built them usually could afford it.)”

[**PM:** The houses were totally uninsulated, with no central heating. The main living areas were heated when in use, but that was it. During summer the house would remain cool for a few days but then slowly heat up and take some time to cool down again. The winters weren't that cold – no snow, though there were some frosty mornings.]

“The bit about the Beaumont children was interesting. I don't recall waves of parental panic over kidnappings, but panics over polio were almost a regular feature of summer prior to the Salk vaccine. One summer, word spread that it was transmitted in swimming pools and the municipal pool became off-limits. That was a majorly traumatic event for us!”

[**PM:** Every person my age and older will remember the impact of the disappearance of the Beaumont children. We were sheltered from it a bit as we lived in the country, and they had gone missing in the city. But my wife Robyn, who is four years younger than me, has vivid memories of being warned about “wandering off” when she visited South Australia with her parents in the late sixties.

[**PM:** The polio epidemic swept through Australia in the mid-20th century. We were immunised against it when we were in primary school and I do remember seeing some people in our town wearing calipers as a result of an earlier infection — mostly parents of friends. I suspect I was too young for it to have a lot of impact on me.]

**Joseph Nicholas:** “I see that discussion of *Dune* rumbles on, with a couple of people (including yourself) expressing surprise that it is actually two books in one. The narrative split probably derives from the fact that it was originally published as two serials, *Dune World* and *Prophet of Dune*, in *Analog* in the mid-1960s, although to the best of my knowledge this fact has never been acknowledged on the copyright page of any of the book editions. I wonder why.... (Another *Dune* factoid, while we're at it: there is an apocryphal



story that Frank Herbert and Jack Vance once flipped a coin to determine which of them would write a story set on a desert planet, and which on a planet entirely covered by ocean. Herbert got the desert and Vance the ocean, published as the stand-alone title *The Blue World*. Like much of Vance's output, it is arch, mannered, and probably long out of print.)”

[**PM:** I had heard that story regarding Herbert and Vance somewhere previously. I don't think it's actually true as Herbert had been working on his novel since the late 1950s and based it partly on some research he'd done on sand dunes in Oregon.]

“Although I have of course never seen your old home, there was something familiar about the image of it on the cover of this issue, and when I grasped why my immediate thought was to wonder whether the person who built it had ever worked on the railways in the UK before emigrating to Australia. It is very, very reminiscent of a small station building — a combined ticket office/waiting room/rest room/left luggage office — typical of the late Victorian period, to be seen on countless rural branch lines throughout the country. A great many of these buildings were lost — left to fall into ruin, demolished, taken down and rebuilt elsewhere — following the Beeching cuts of the middle and late 1960s, when the government of the day took a huge axe to the rural railway network on the grounds that it was antiquated, underused, unprofitable and beyond renewal. Plus, as you might expect, the then very strong belief that the motor car was the future of travel, and the railways were therefore redundant. Ironically, some of the branch lines then closed have been or are being rebuilt and re-opened, to restore transport links which nothing else could or did replace. (For example, the "new" line through the Scottish borders.) Other stretches of track have been preserved (or in some cases relaid) as privately-owned "heritage railways", a few of which (for example, the line from Swanage to Wareham in Dorset) have actually been connected to the national network, although most just have lovingly restored old locomotives and rolling stock trundling back and forth from A to B on weekends and during school holidays. And some of the *in situ* old station buildings have been saved from destruction, the most recent example being Brandon Station in Suffolk, which Greater Anglia Railways wanted to demolish but was thwarted by the building being nationally listed as a Grade II heritage asset. (Apart from its age, its principal claim to fame is its appearance in an episode of *Dad's Army*.)

“But I daresay that I should not plunge off along railway architecture byways that I'm sure will be of little interest to the majority of your readers....

“I don't own (and I don't think that my siblings own) any images of the houses where we lived when I was growing up, although I do have clear memories of them. The clearest is (are) the house in Salisbury (a local authority-owned property my parents rented, although I was completely unaware of that at the time) and the bungalow in Porton (a village just outside Salisbury, and nothing whatever to do with the Porton Down chemical weapons establishment!) where we lived for two years before relocating to Camberley in Surrey in 1965. The Porton bungalow was particularly memorable because it had a long garden which ran down to a stream, the River Bourne, where in the summer we caught brown trout, and where a mother duck once came marching up to the back door with her ducklings trailing behind, to get a hand-out of breadcrumbs. (This was long before it was realised that bread is Very Bad for birds.) The Salisbury house was memorable less for itself than its location: at the time, the late 1950s and very early 1960s, the street was right on the edge of the

surrounding farmland – the road did not so much end as peter out at the commencement of a track through the barley fields, while the back garden (and the back gardens of the other houses on our side of the street) overlooked a large bowl-shaped tract of arable land where sheep were grazed. My sister and I came home from school one day to find bulldozers ploughing out the hedgerows and toppling the trees, because the farmer had sold the land for housing – seen at the time as an inevitable development, and without any regard to what would now be condemned as wanton trashing of valuable wildlife habitat. (Barn owls could occasionally be spotted perching on our back fence.)

“The oddest thing about the Salisbury house, however, is that the walking route to it from the centre of Salisbury must be deeply ingrained in my subconscious. Judith and I spent a long weekend in the city in the mid-1990s, and at the conclusion of our visit set off to catch the train home – only for me to realise, a few minutes later, that I wasn't heading for the railway station, but out of town, for St Francis Road and Old Sarum. Looking back, I wonder whether we should have kept going, so that I could have had a look at what the house is like now (or was like then). One can look these things up on Google Earth and Google Street View, of course, but It's Not The Same.”

[**PM:** My wife Robyn gets annoyed when builders knock down a house in our local area. “Now I'll never know what it looked like,” she says. “You can always look it up on Google Street View,” I reply. Her reply is the same as yours. No, It Isn't The Same.]

“You found *State of Play* unsatisfactory. As you may be aware, the film starring Russell Crowe is a remake of a BBC television series of the same name, with the action transferred from London to Washington DC but the characters and their roles unchanged. I haven't seen the film, but I found the series unsatisfactory in many ways, not least because the investigation of the murder of the political researcher and its apparent connection to political corruption gets lost in a welter of other plot lines and is never properly resolved. The writer subsequently said that he was making the plot up as he went along, which might explain this failure. Wikipedia's plot summary of the film suggests it has a more structured and integrated narrative, but I'm disinclined to track down a DVD to see for myself if this is the case.”

[**PM:** I wasn't aware of the film's previous TV version. I am reluctant to try to find a copy to watch based on my reactions to this film. Once through this story was quite enough. Similarly, I would not recommend you looking for a DVD of the film. There are way better political thrillers out there to be watching; *Three Days of the Condor* as an example.]

“My most recent reading has been a number of Geoff Ryman novels which have been in our collection since they were each published, but for some reason were never opened. But opened and read them over the past few months I now have, and I can thoroughly recommend *The Unconquered Country*, *The Child Garden, Was...*, *Lust, Air* and *The King's Last Song* (the last-named of which I am currently two-thirds of the way through). (Ignore **253**, which is a bit of fluff (it was written to be read as a collection of interlinked web pages, and on paper it just meanders along without ever getting anywhere), and *The Warrior Who Carried Life*, which was his first novel and is very much an apprentice work.) But *The King's Last Song* was published in 2006, and he seems to have written nothing since apart from a few short stories published in genre magazines such as *F&SF*. I dare not speculate why, as he is an old friend of ours...”

[**PM:** Yet another author that comes across my radar from time to time – yet another!]

**Leigh Edmonds:** “I thought that Joseph's analysis of the covid problem here and in the Mother Country was accurate and to the point (as usual). I do hope that the ALP is lining up some good election ads to remind the electorate of the stuff up that our bloated capitalist government has made of the whole business, and even the stuff up that Glad made of it in NSW which made it inevitable that it would escape to the rest of us. But I mustn't go on or I will need to order more of those blood pressure tablets.”

[**PM:** I think I need to make a conscious decision to not talk about the pandemic and lockdowns so much. One email correspondent noted that I seem to “bang on” about it a bit. And I have noticed that it just tends to get me depressed talking about it all the time. So, back to fanzines I reckon.]

“I really enjoyed your story of your time and living in Laura. I looked it up on Google Earth to, as they would say, 'enrich the reading experience'. From reading your story, remembering my own experiences and also the interviews I did in Castlemaine when I wrote the history of the bacon factory there, children in Australian country towns in the 1950s and 1960s lived very similar lives. The kids in Castlemaine had an interesting addition because there were a lot of acorn trees around and in the season when the nuts had all fallen to the ground they'd gather them up and took them up the bacon factory to feed to the pigs where they got paid by the bucket load. There was no such source of revenue in Dimboola but there were always the bottles gathered at the footy and the annual show that raised a few bob.”

[**PM:** No such money options for us as I recall. Though it should be noted that we didn't want for anything, didn't have television ads screaming at us to buy, buy, buy. So we didn't really have the need for money.]

“From the air Laura looks very Adelaide-like. Sadly there is no ground level imagery for the town on Google Earth but I think I've located the primary school which would have been only a few blocks from your place. No High School huh? Dimboola's population was around 2,000 so we also had a High School which I endured till the end of Form V and, having been offered a position in the public service, I walked out the school gate on Friday and started work on Monday morning in Melbourne – where I soon fell into the clutches of the Melbourne SF Club. And there's no coming back from that.”

[**PM:** If you look closely that the second map in the last issue you'll see the Primary School indicated. It was, as you say, only a few blocks away. And no High School in town, but more on that another time.]

**Martin Field:** “I enjoyed the tales of Laura. So many people grew up in smaller towns and so few wrote of their experiences.”

[**PM:** There are a lot more to tell. They will dribble out over the coming year(s).]

“I am a big fan of Patrick O'Brian. I have read all his Aubrey books and a few a second time around. His command of eloquent language, story line, and character and plot development are rarely equalled amongst modern writers of any genre. I disliked the film *Master and Commander*. Crowe and Bettany were hopeless as Aubrey and Maturin. Maybe if I hadn't read the books I'd have liked it more, maybe not.”

## Perryscope 14

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[**PM:** The general consensus of opinion, as I recall it, was that the whole concept was flawed, from script onwards. I have been reading rumours of a television series based on the books. O'Brian fans will probably quake in their boots over that news.]

**I also heard from:** **Werner Koopmann; Tineke Hazel;** and **Chong;** thank you one and all.

**Extra note:** based on the couple of letters that I have received from the USA recently (from David M. Shea and John Hertz), it looks like airmail letters are taking 3-4 weeks to make the trans-Pacific route to Australia. If you write and post a letter-of-comment on one month's issue, it will probably not be until the month after that it is acknowledged and/or printed.



**Errata:** Did I really refer to Benedict Cumberbatch as **Bernard** Cumberbatch in an earlier issue? Probably, and, in fact, highly likely. Not sure I want to go back and found out though. My apologies to Benedict and his brother Bernie. And as for the regular typos that appear – you also have my apologies. I do the best I can to weed them out but they just keep turning up.

