

PERRYScope 21



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Cover photograph by Robyn Mills, August 2021.

INTRODUCTION

I must admit that the previous couple of issues of this fanzine haven't turned out as how I would have liked: I've been distracted. Some of the reasons for that will become a bit more obvious as you get further into this issue. It's mostly been a matter of working on other things and getting away from my usual routines as my wife and I have been driving around the state of Victoria, enjoying the countryside, views and towns, and food and wine, and all the rest.

This will be the new normal of my life from now on. Gone are the times when I could just laze around the house spending enormous amounts of time just doing whatever the hell I wanted. Now life is out there again, and it beckons. Hope I can make it out the front door.

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After some months, and delays due to COVID lock-downs, other excuses I can think of off issue of my genzine **The Alien** in the world. It's the biggest 80 pages, with a long transcript Grigg and I had about Soviet 2021 Hugo Award short fiction part of Richard Thompson's associated music albums from work of Becky Chambers; the front and back covers by W. H. magazine is to give you, the the things that interest me, Well, it's a start at least. Issue stages. Similar but different, as copies of TAR 3 directly from download the issue from Bill Bowers' wonderful website at: <https://efanzines.com/Perryscope/index.htm>



the festive season, preparations for my father's funeral, the top of my head, the third **Review**, is now out and about issue yet clocking in at a hefty of a podcast discussion David Sf, films and books; reviews of nominees; a review of the first autobiography, and the the period; an overview of the first ever letter column; and Chong. If the aim of any such reader, an indication of some of then this does a reasonable job. four is now in the planning you might expect. You can get me (pdf only) or you can

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MY LIFE

After almost two years, and on the third attempt, we were finally able to farewell my father in South Australia in early March, after he died on 5 June 2020. The global pandemic, on-and-off again lockdowns, and state border closures put paid to our previous plans. My stepmother, Tineke, and I discussed the plans over and over, trying to find mutually agreeable dates and times, and working out what we were going to do with Dad's ashes. We finally decided to hold a small ceremony at the Enfield Cemetery on Friday 11 March, and then a wake back at their old house in Willunga on the Saturday.

When my mother died, and was cremated, in 1981 my father purchased a 50-year lease on a plot to hold her ashes in a small lawn cemetery in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. None of us in the family had a problem with any of this, though it was only later, when we came to make similar arrangements for my father's ashes, that we started to wonder why he had chosen this particular location. None of us had known then, and we are still none the wiser. Maybe this cemetery offered the best service, or was the only one around that fitted his needs. We'll never know for sure.

We held a number of discussions about what we would be doing with both sets of ashes after the original 50 years had expired and decided that we would spread the combined ashes around various parts of South Australia, where my parents had together, and separately, spent important parts of their lives. The prospect of continuing to keep the ashes in the cemetery didn't really seem appropriate as none of her grandchildren would have known or remembered my mother and we could foresee a time when the lease wasn't extended and the ashes would just be disposed of. We didn't want that to happen, so we keep the original time period of the lease and asked for the single plot to be converted to a double. The cemetery had no problem with that.

It's odd how some things start to worry you at times like this. I remember wondering what I was going to call the "event" we would be holding at the cemetery. My father wasn't a religious man and there was going to be no religious aspect to the day, so "service" seemed inappropriate. So did "commemoration", as that connoted a sense that we would be looking over my father's life; that was planned for the wake the next day. So I settled on "ceremony", though I have to admit to being a little conflicted even with that. In the overall scheme of things, what I called it was largely unimportant. It's just that the wording seemed to take on a significance for me beyond what it needed. I found that puzzling.

By the time we got to the spot under the trees, the cemetery staff had already secured my father's plaque and dug a small hole to take his box of ashes. Chairs had been set up and people started arriving on time. When I had previously been to see the spot two years back my mother's plaque didn't look so bad, especially seeing as it had been there for 40 years. Now, with the new brass



plate bearing my father's name and dates next to it, it seemed quite dirty in comparison. A task for later, I thought.

The day at the cemetery went well. The staff had prepared things as requested – “You’ve got more people here than we usually get.” “Really?” “Yes, it’s normally only a handful.” – we had about 20. My mother’s sister and sister-in-law turned up – neither of whom I had seen since my mother’s funeral in 1981 – along with most of their children, my cousins. Also in attendance were my step-mother, and her brother and sister, Dad’s cousin Val and her husband Don, and a woman I’d never met before who had nursed my mother in her final weeks in the Laura hospital where she died. South Australia can appear like a very small place at times.

The ceremony seemed to go well; I said a few things about who we were and why we were there, and read a few verses from C. J. Dennis’s *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*, both for my mother and for my father. I think I made it through in some sort of intelligible fashion. My stepmother spoke, as did Val. And it was all over before it really seemed to have begun. We didn’t want to drag things out for very long and we were done in about 25 minutes. A number of us hung around for a chat afterwards, and then it was off to the pub for a couple of quiet beers, and then we all went our separate ways.



The wake was held the next day on the Willunga property where Dad and Tineke had lived for nearly 30 years. Tineke had converted an old shed on the property into an artists’ studio which was going to be perfect for the event we wanted. It gave people places to sit and also some respite from the weather, which was forecast to be in the low 30s Celsius. While that wasn’t going to be too oppressive we had to be mindful of the fact that we would have a number of people attending who were getting on in years. I just hoped we had enough room, as we weren’t exactly sure how many would be turning up.

As it transpired we all fitted in quite well. Around 40-50 people showed up, food was eaten, wine and beer were drunk, and lots of discussion was undertaken. Only the immediate

family had also been at the cemetery. Around 2:30pm I interrupted everyone with an introduction to the afternoon, and started the speeches with a summary of my father's life. It's always hard to determine in these circumstances if you're speaking for too long, though I think I kept it within bounds. Then my sister and my stepmother spoke and she also read a verse by Omar Khayyam, I finished off, and we were done. I reckon we gave the old bloke a decent send-off.

Looking back I think I can come to one certain conclusion about that day: I should have bought more beer.

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one, you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to." – Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

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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 71: (8 March 2022) *With all his crimes broad blown*

We're back talking about crime fiction this episode, with an emphasis on Australian crime. David and I discuss Garry Disher's latest novel among other items, and then I also talk about the television series **Troppo** (see below).

Episode 72: (29 March 2022) *A dangerous kind of vision*

This week we discuss the 1968 Hugo Awards and generally agree on our versions of the short fiction, but do disagree when it comes to the novel.

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

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What I Also Talked About

As mentioned last issue, on March 9 2022 I presented a talk at the Melbourne-based Nova Mob, the long-running sf discussion group. My topic was "Short Sf in 1965". The talk was based on the article I wrote in **The Alien Review 2**, which is available <https://efanzines.com/Perryscope/index.htm>. Or you can write to me and I'll send you a pdf copy.



WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

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

Abbr – Aust: Australian; Hugo: Hugo award winner; Neb: Nebula Award winner; Nvla: novella.

March 2022 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
A Psalm for the Wild-Built	Becky Chambers	Sf	Mar 1	e	3.8	2021	Nvla
RazorBlade Tears	S. A. Cosby	Crime	Mar 6	e	4.0	2021	
Fireheart Tiger	Aliette de Bodard	Fantasy	Mar 16	e	3.8	2021	Nvla
Across the Green Grass Fields	Seanann McGuire	Fantasy	Mar 17	e	3.6	2021	Nvla
Light Chaser	Peter F. Hamilton & Gareth Powell	Sf	Mar 21	e	4.0	2021	Nvla
Lord of Light	Roger Zelazny	Sf	Mar 26		2.9	1967	Hugo
The Necessity of Stars	E. Catherine Tobler	Sf	Mar 26	e	4.0	2021	Nvla
The Einstein Intersection	Samuel R. Delany	Sf	Mar 27	e	3.2	1967	Neb
The Spare Room	Helen Garner	Lit	Mar 31		4.7	2008	Aust

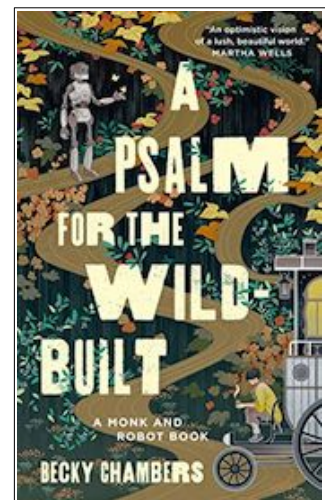
Books read in the month: 9

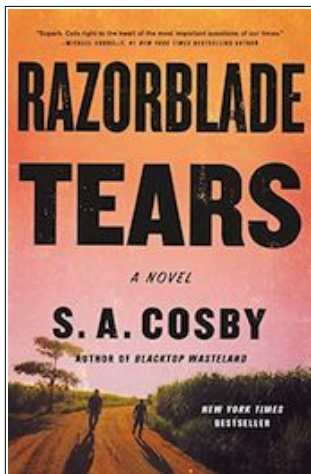
Yearly total to end of month: 23

Notes:

A number of novellas read this month as I start my annual survey of the best stories of that length in the genre.

A Psalm for the Wild-Built (2021) – Nominated for the 2022 Nebula Award for Best Novella. The first in this author's new series under the overall title of "Monk and Robot". Sibling Dex is an ungendered monk who, after some time in a monastery, decides to leave and start new work as a wandering seller of teas. They struggle for a while but gradually become an expert in their new craft, yet they still feel a sense of unease. Then, one day, they decide to take a step off their usual scheduled track and journey into the forest wilderness to a distant ruined building. Along the way they encounter the robot Mosschap who has decided to re-acquaint itself, and robot-kind, with humans after the robots had developed a form of consciousness and left humans a few hundred years previously. This is a quiet, unassuming novella about the journey of two beings on their search for some understanding of themselves and each other. It is also some of the best writing Chambers has done since her debut novel, although there are some structural devices that some readers may find a tad confusing. R: 3.8/5.0





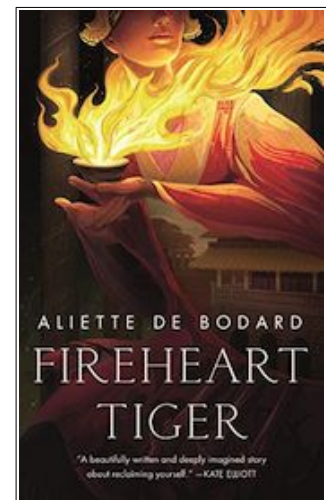
Razorblade Tears (2021) – Nominated for the 2022 Edgar Award for Best Novel. This is Cosby's follow-up to his successful novel **Blacktop Wasteland** which I read at the end of 2020 and enjoyed. That book got a lot of attention and won a few awards. This one is a step-up in intensity, action and style.

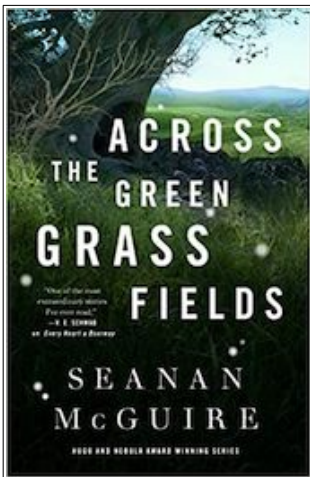
Ike "Riot" Randolph, who's African-American, and Buddy Lee Jenkins, who's white, are the fathers of Isiah and Derek, two gay men who married about a year before the novel starts and who have recently been murdered, in gang-execution style. Ike and Buddy Lee are both ex-convicts and first meet at the funeral. They don't like each other on sight. But they join up to hunt down their sons' killers after the police effectively give up the investigation, and then the sons' gravestone is broken and desecrated. The two men come from

very different rural Virginian backgrounds but both are overtly prejudiced – firstly, racially, but also, and most importantly, prejudiced against their sons. Neither could accept their relationship nor their coming out as homosexual. But blood overrides all, and the two men start to make some headway in their investigation. The action then runs thick and fast as the two men smash and shoot their way through to a final solution.

I thought the solution of who killed the young men was rather pat, but it's the journey the two men take to get there that is of interest here. There is a slow steady change in the two as they start to develop a level of mutual-respect and a loathing for the men, and fathers, they used to be. Don't come to this for literary introspection and precision, you're not going to get that here. The action is coarse and rough, so is the dialog and the writing. But it fits. It just fits. This a better novel than **Blacktop** and Cosby has all the tools to make an excellent Southern noir writer. He just needs to get his plotting into shape. In any event I'll be keeping an eye on his journey. It's going to be a wild ride. R: 4.0/5.0

Fireheart Tiger (2021) – Nominated for the 2022 British Science Fiction Association Award for Best Short Fiction, and the 2022 Nebula Award for Best Novella. Aliette de Bodard continues to impress with this new novella set in a fantasy world inspired by pre-colonial Vietnam. As a young girl, Thanh, daughter of Empress Binh Hâi, was sent away to the neighbouring country of Ephteria, ostensibly as a hostage but also to learn the ways of their court and their people. Years later she returns home to act as political adviser to her mother, who is rather unimpressed that Thanh did not become the powerful young woman she wanted. As a result she tends to treat Thanh as the least of her children. But fire follows Thanh: the castle in which she lived in Ephteria burnt to the ground, and now small fires are breaking out in her mother's palace. She finally gets a chance to redeem herself in her mother's eyes when a delegation arrives from Ephteria which includes the Princess Eldris, a young woman who Thanh had been involved with previously. Against a backdrop of colonial political power games, de Bodard explores the relationship between the two young women and how this impacts both them and their two countries. I don't think she fully lands the ending but this author is one to watch. R: 3.8/5.0



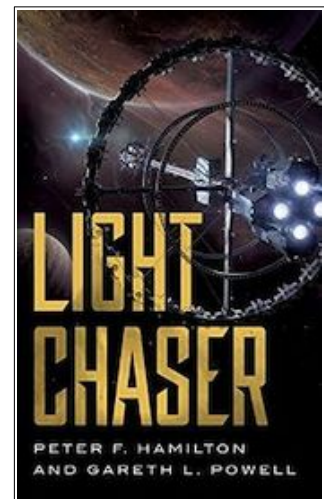


Across the Green Grass Fields (2021) – #6 in the author’s Wayward Children series of fantasy novellas.

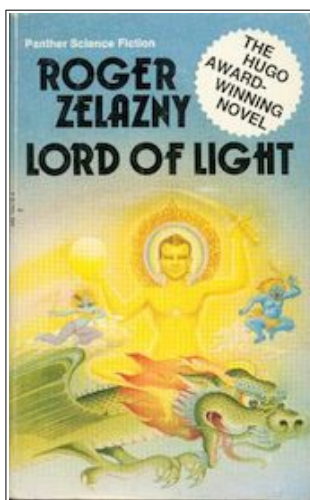
Regan is a young girl whose friends are all starting to develop physically, while she gets bigger but remains in a childlike stage. A difficult conversation with her parents informs her that she is intersex, a revelation that she shares with exactly the wrong schoolmate. In a resultant state of trauma she runs away from school back home and encounters a door near a creek – the classic McGuire portal into another world. This time the world she enters, known as the Hooflands, is populated by unicorns, centaurs and other weird and dangerous hooved animals, most of which can talk, if you take the time to listen. Regan’s arrival portends a major change in the land, as all such human arrivals do, and the reigning queen sets out to capture Regan by any means. McGuire continues to impress with

these tales of children in distress and she always seems to find something new to say. I suspect you could allocate each of them to a different branch of Joseph Campbell’s Hero Cycle. Which is meant in no way to diminish these stories. R: 3.6/5.0

Light Chaser (2021) – Nominated for the 2022 British Science Fiction Association Award for Best Short Fiction. If you are looking for a galaxy-spanning, massive time-span space opera then you would be hard-pressed to go past this one, currently shortlisted for the 2022 BSFA Award. The Light Chaser of the title is Amahle, a genetically altered and almost immortal human female, who is the captain, and sole human occupant, of the starship *Mnemosyne*. Her role is to continually travel between the human-populated planets of The Domain strung across the galaxy, at close to the speed of light, stopping off to distribute new, and collect old, memory collars. These are life-experience recording devices that her employers sell for entertainment. Between worlds Amahle likes to sample the collars as well and, on one voyage, she comes across a 1000-year-old message to her, from someone called Carloman, telling her not to trust the AI controlling her ship. She is intrigued and then starts to find other messages from the same person, from different planets, leading

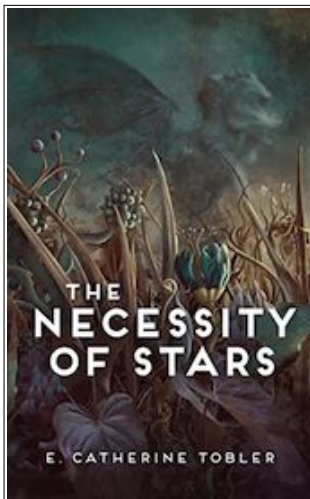


her into a mystery concerning her own life and the future of the human race in space. Classic space opera, with a human touch. What’s not to like? R: 4.0/5.0



Lord of Light (1967) – Winner of the 1968 Hugo Award for Best Novel, and nominated for the 1968 Nebula Award for Best Novel in the same year. On a distant planet, descendants of human colonists from “vanished Urath” (Old Earth) seek to survive against hostile indigenous races by undergoing genetic and physical enhancements that render them almost godlike in their abilities. As a result they start to believe themselves to be actual gods, naming themselves after various Hindu deities. The renegade Siddhartha, who goes under multiple names in the book but who just prefers “Sam”, undertakes a revolt against the other “gods” in an attempt to make

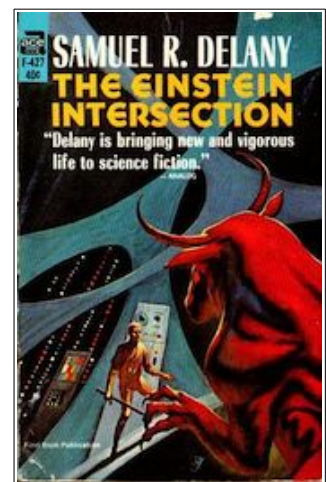
the human technologies available to the natives. I suspect if you were familiar with the Hindu religion, and the Bhagavad Gita in particular, you would find this novel an intriguing re-telling of the mythological stories. I'm not, and didn't. At times the plot seems deliberately obtuse and the dialogue, which can carry on for pages, often appears to be between two virtually indistinguishable characters and written in a faux, comic-book style without the self-awareness of that genre. I can see this as a bridging novel between Zelazny's earlier work and his later commercial Amber novels, and indicates, to me at least, that the author's startling, 1960s burst of creativity and style was on the wane. I was very disappointed in this. R: 2.9/5.0



The Necessity of Stars (2021) – Nominated for 2022 Nebula Award for Best Novella. It's 2148 and Bréone Hemmerli, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, is semi-retired and living on a UN property called Irislands in Normandy, France. In the next house lives her long-term friend Delphine Chefridi. Earth has been ravaged by climate change to the extent that most of it is becoming uninhabitable, but this small section of France appears to be surviving remarkably well. This may be because of the alien that Bréone discovers in her garden one day. Or does she? She can't be sure of what she has seen as she is suffering from ongoing dementia, losing her short-term memory, and is sometimes unable to differentiate between reality and dreaming. This is a story about a silent alien invasion, the usefulness of older people – especially women – and the role of friendship and love in our later years. Tobler writes in an interesting, atmospheric style which perfectly suits the story, though the ending is a tad problematic. She is a prolific author – with around 120 short sf prices published since 2000 – who I hadn't come across previously, as I recall, and who I'll need to start seeking out. R: 4.0/5.0

The Einstein Intersection (1967) – Winner of the 1968 Nebula Award for Best Novel, and nominated for the 1968 Hugo Award for Best Novel in the same year.

Set on Earth in the far-future after a time when the planet has been exposed to large amounts of radiation, causing a vast number of mutations among the human population. After Friza, the life of his life, is found dead, our main character, Lobey, sets out to track down Kid Death – who seems to have committed the murder – and to return Friza from the realm of the dead. This is Delany's take on the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, with bits of the Christ and Minotaur myths, and cultural references to Billy the Kid and Jean Harlow, thrown into the mix. This doesn't quite work for me. Well-written as it is I don't get a sense that it was going anywhere of importance. R: 3.2/5.0



The Spare Room (2008) – see the major review below.

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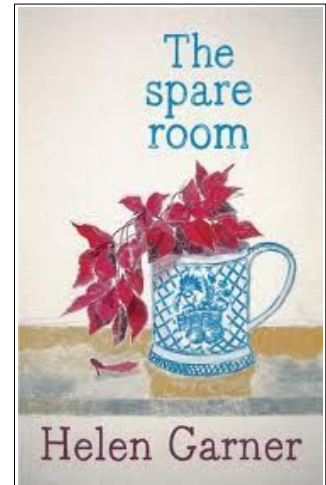
REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

The Spare Room (2008) by Helen Garner

Genre: Literary

Winner of the Queensland Premier's Literary Award, the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, and the Barbara Jefferis Award, as well as being shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize.

This novel, published in 2008, was Garner's first foray back into fiction in around 16 years, following her previous work, *Cosmo Cosmolino*, in 1992. In the interim she concentrated on script and non-fiction work. That experience has obviously formed a major part of the tool set she has used for this novel, as some readers might conclude that this is first personage reportage rather than fiction. But it is as fiction that it is listed, and so should it be considered.



Part of the reason behind the reportage option is that the novel's main character is a writer called Helen, now divorced and living in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, who appears to make her living from her non-fiction writing and reviews, much like Garner herself. Helen has been contacted by Nicola, a friend in Sydney, who is suffering from terminal cancer and has decided to travel to Melbourne to try out a new treatment regime. By the time the novel commences Helen is preparing the spare room for Nicola's arrival, and vaguely looking forward to catching up with her old friend again.

But she is in for a shock. Nicola is in a far worse state of health than she had let on and the flight has left her drained and exhausted. Within a few days the pattern of the relationship between the two is set. Helen sees that Death has arrived in her house and believes Nicola is being conned by medical charlatans, and Nicola is overly optimistic about her chances of recovering, bouncing between child-like enthusiasm and physical and emotional despair. Helen becomes her de facto nurse, cleaning her soiled sheets, cooking her meals, and attempting to get Nicola to see the true state of her position. But Nicola is having none of that. In a few days she'll "be as fit as a Mallee bull", even as the treatments leave her shuddering and sweating profusely. Over the three weeks of Nicola's stay the strain on Helen takes its toll: she can no longer concentrate enough to work, and her relationship with her grand-daughter, who lives next door is being slowly destroyed. She appears to have moved from being a type of Florence Nightingale to become some sort of over-bearing, controlling monster. A character she does not like. This novel outlines the journey that both women have to make to get to the end of their present circumstances.

I was musing, as I read this, that the characters of the two women might be taken as metaphors for their cities of origin: bright, brash and optimistic Nicola from Sydney; and the emotion, stoic Helen from Melbourne. Thought I suspect I am reading too much into that.

This is very definitely a "Melbourne novel". There are references to the vagaries of the Melbourne Loop railway line, the David Jones' Food Hall, and the medical facilities around the Epworth Hospital in Richmond, to name a few. But none of this is forced, it's all part of

the background and the novel is made greater by the depiction of the city environment as being a major character in its own right.

If you've ever had to care for someone in the last stages of their life I suspect this would be a very hard book to read. The emotional turmoils of the main characters would feel too much like your own experience. What was I saying earlier about the author's non-fiction work? Here she has blurred the lines between the two literary forms and reaped the benefits. As a result I may struggle to read a better novel this year.

R: 4.7/5.0

[Note: the cover artist of this edition is none other than Chong who contributed covers for **P4**, **P7**, **P11** and **P15**.]

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Cover notes: At the beginning of 2021 my wife and I booked a week in Mildura for the end of July, stupidly expecting the pandemic to have settled down somewhat by that time. Given the town's location in northwest Victoria, near the borders of both South Australia and New South Wales, we had hoped to undertake some driving into both of those states, getting as far north as Broken Hill. But it wasn't to be. Victoria was out of lock-down but the other state borders were shut, or you could leave but you couldn't return without entering quarantine. So we got to see more of one part of this state than we expected. Including dropping off at a few nature reserves south of Mildura off the Calder Highway. This was at one of them. And then we still had to cut the holiday short by a day and head home as another snap lock-down was called in Victoria.

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

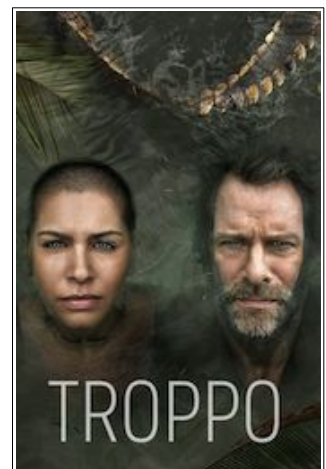
Television

Tropo (Season 1 – 8 episodes) (2022)

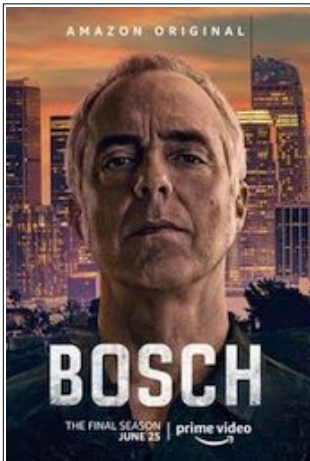
Platform: ABC TV

Genre: Crime Drama

Ex-police detective Ted Conkaffey has left Sydney under a cloud, he was accused of a serious sex crime but later released for lack of evidence. He now lives in Far North Queensland in the town of Crimson Lake. It is there that he is approached by local PI, and convicted murderer, Amanda Pharrell, to help her in an investigation into the disappearance of a local Korean scientist/businessman, who is presumed dead. This tv series is "inspired" by the Candice Fox novel, **Crimson Lake**, in that it takes the bare bones, and two main characters and then adds in a number of plot devices and scenarios which look like they have been designed to appeal to foreign tv markets. For example: Conkaffey is no longer an Australian but an American-Australian cop (played by Thomas Jane from **The Expanse**); and the



missing man is a Korean scientist rather than a local celebrity author. Amanda is played by Nicole Chamoun (from the *Safe Harbour* tv series where she played an Iraqi refugee). It took me a while to warm to Amanda but I got there eventually, though I'm not so sure Thomas Jane works as Conkaffey. The tv series is also probably two episodes too long. This is an interesting series, just don't expect a strict adaptation of the novel. R: 3.4/5.0



Bosch (Season 7 – 8 episodes) (2022)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Crime Drama

This is the last of the TV programs about Hieronymus “Harry” Bosch, based on the long-running series of Michael Connelly novels featuring this LAPD detective, at least in this incarnation. On New Year’s Eve 2019 an apartment building in LA is fire-bombed and a 10-year-old girl, her mother and others, are killed due to smoke inhalation. Bosch is called in to investigate and becomes obsessed with finding the killer and bringing them to justice. This is a police procedural in which Bosch has to tackle interference from his superiors, the FBI and the sometimes distracted incompetence of his fellow officers. The investigation starts to get personal when certain

criminal organisations start to target Bosch, his family and friends, and people close to him suffer. One of the best tv series of its type anywhere. Hopefully the ending forecasts an ongoing Bosch presence on our screens in a slightly different role. R: 4.5/5.0

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Film

Death on the Nile (2022)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Crime Drama

Kenneth Branagh continues his series of films based on Agatha Christie’s novels featuring her Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, following his *Murder on the Orient Express* of a few years back. I enjoyed that film, and it’s a pity that Branagh just didn’t decide to move on as this offering is rather lacklustre in comparison. The plot is well-known – wealthy Brits and Europeans enjoy a boating trip down the Nile while their travelling number is steadily reduced by a series of murders – but I frankly have no idea if the script here follows the original novel or not, though I somehow doubt it. The film at 127 minutes is probably a good 20-25 minutes too long. The first hour, in particular, could have been cut quite a lot as I felt it dwelt far too much on set pieces – dance and music sequences mostly – that added little or nothing to the overall production. The second half of the film is much better as the murders on the paddle-steamer start to mount up. Go for the lavish set design and CGI scenery but don’t expect very much by way of mystery and tension. Best of the acting cast are Branagh in the lead role and French and Saunders as a pair of travelling companions. They were



wonderful. In the end though, I hope Branagh decides to put his moustache away and move onto something else. R: 3.0/5.0

CODA (2021)

Platform: Apple +

Genre: Drama

If you've seen the film *Billy Elliott* (2000) then you'll know the story-line here: precocious and talented kid overcomes family and community hurdles to escape their boundaries and set out into the real world to achieve their destiny. While this isn't a remake of that film it is an English-language version of the 2014 French film *La Famille Bélier*. Here, teenage Ruby is the only hearing member of a deaf family – parents and older brother – whose income is derived from fishing. Ruby acts as unpaid deckhand and general interpreter for her family, a role that clashes with her ambitions to undertake a singing career by studying at a Boston Music College. Encouraged by her music teacher, while negotiating a teenage romance, and avoiding community prejudices she seems to have little time and space for herself. You can guess the ending. Although that description sounds like this would be a trite, derivative film it does have a lot to say about the CODA (children of deaf adults) of the title. Emotional and uplifting, I thought it a much better film overall than I had originally expected. R: 4.1/5.0



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PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 19:

[PM: The following letter really should have appeared in last month's issue. It's failure to do so was completely down to me not following my own procedures. Ah, life!]

Joseph Nicholas: "I empathise with you and Graham Peters about the digitisation of photographs taken in the pre-digital era, because I'm facing exactly the same issue. I have (I've just measured it) 2.4 metres of photo albums stuffed with images from foreign holidays taken between 1988 and 2005 ('the audited photo albums' as Judith called them, because as well as the photographs they contain the invoices, air tickets and other paperwork associated with these holidays). This excludes the scans which have already been taken (just over two years ago now) of photographs from around the UK, which accounted for at least another metre, and the two albums from our tour of Bavaria and Austria in July-August 1986; and it was those latter two albums which really prompted me to commence the scanning, because (as you'll be aware) colour print photographs fade over time — no matter how good the camera, no matter what film stock or the precision of the developing and processing."

[PM: The fading of old photographs is certainly an issue that I'm finding when I come to creating my fanzine covers. It's a problem – one that Chong in particular seems to find rather vexing – but I'll take what I can get. The negatives are probably long gone by now so

there's no chance of a re-print. So it goes. My wife seems to follow the Judith method of travel documentation. She builds up a big folder of all the material for the upcoming holiday which she takes with us. As we travel she gradually works her way through the accumulated material, throwing out what she doesn't want and then replacing it with tickets, receipts etc. The one thing we seem to be missing are the photos. These days they are all digital so it becomes my job to get them all organised. Needless to say, I tend to be rather slow regarding that.]

“Although fading of the prints is the pressing issue — the albums have been reordered to ensure that the oldest will be scanned first — it's the sheer volume of material to be dealt with which has stalled the project. Not to mention, as you and Graham discussed, the issue of where to store it all: a hard drive, the cloud, USB drives, CD-ROMs? All of these are vulnerable to time and technology. Never mind that, realistically, the only person who would have any long-term interest in looking at the scanned images would be myself. In which case, surely I could just pull out the photo albums and go through them directly, especially as they have detailed captions and historical explanations which couldn't be included in a scan? But in fact I have rarely, if indeed ever, looked at any of the photo albums once the record of the holiday has been mounted up.

“At which point, readers may be wondering why I bothered taking all those photographs in the first place. The answer is that taking photographs has been a force of habit since I got my first camera, way back when I were nobbut lad and it were all fields round here. And because, when we got to eighty years of age and foreign travel became impossible due to the general reluctance of travel insurance companies to cover people of such an age, we'd have something to look back on as we had to concentrate instead on the gardening and our library.”

[**PM:** Similar thoughts here.]

“Changing the subject, we have a box set of the *Miss Fisher Mysteries*, which Judith brought back from Australia in 2020, but we only managed to watch up to the fourth episode of the second series before her life-changing event knocked that sideways. As Leigh Edmonds says, the budget is obviously very limited; so much of it is shot indoors, and so little outdoors, that one gets very little sense of what Melbourne in the 1920s was like. But we do have most of the novels, which I must find time to read — although before I get to them I think I need to read Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London* series, which is (soon?) to be turned into a television series. (Need to familiarise oneself with the source material before that happens, what what.)

“Not having Netflix, I haven't seen *Don't Look Up* — but I've read so much about it that I feel as though I don't actually need to. But may I be the 94th person (as a *Private Eye* subscriber would say) to draw your attention to the miscaptioning of *Detectorists* on page 13 as *Framed*. (I assume this is your error, and not a retitling by Netflix.) There was a third series, which wrapped things up nicely, but I won't give away the ending. Don't look at the episode summary on Wikipedia!”

[**PM:** I covered my mess-up last issue. Better proof-reading required obviously.]

Perryscope 20:

Paul Voermans: “Perhaps not oddly, *Harvest* played a similar role in my life. And later, the soundtrack to *Dead Man*.

“I did expose my kids to it, but not forcefully. It didn't have the impact, say, Patti Smith did — who my daughter worshipped—but it did have some.”

[**PM:** My son's not a music fan, and I don't think it would be my daughter's style. I think that records of this type have to catch you at the right time of your life, and, if they do, they'll stay with you forever.]

Leigh Edmonds: “Thanks for **Perryscope 20**, lightish but entertaining and informative as usual. As usual I also check your tv reviews to see what you've recommended that's on Netflix. Valma and I have just finished watching **Designated Survivor** which started out well but became a bit of a soap opera which also started parading all the hot-button issues for American liberals and I got the feeling the show ended just about the time they were running light on issues. Anyhow, with that all watched we will be on the hunt for something new this evening.”

[**PM:** Hopefully you'll be able to find something in my recommendations. Robyn and I watched the first episode of **Designated Survivor** but dropped it for some reason. Maybe I should go back and have a look at it again. Though I will keep your warnings in mind.]

“Nice cover! Also enjoyable was your little chat about how you came to be the person you are. I must be relatively older than you, the first record I bought with my own money was *Rubber Soul*, a considerably better album than *Harvest* if you ask me. I didn't have anything to play it on but it was new in the shops so I had to have it anyhow, and the next thing on my shopping list was a little record player on which to ruin it.”

[**PM:** While I heard The Beatles on the radio back in the early sixties I wasn't much of a fan. That changed after *Sgt. Pepper's* in 1967. But I had no real access to music of my own until many years later.]

“Since Valma and I are no longer news consumers I missed the announcement that QR coding was no longer mandatory and was confounded by the lack of little signs to wave my mobile phone at the next time I went to the shops. I get the impression that many folks have missed the news that masks are no longer compulsory in most places because most people seem to still be wearing them. Or it may be that when I'm out and about it's the same time as other wrinklies and we are still all trying to avoid getting infected.”

[**PM:** I think people are still just remaining cautious. I think it's a good strategy, especially as we, in the southern hemisphere, are moving towards the cooler months of the year. I see that the number of COVID cases nation-wide is starting to rise again. This could be due to any number of factors (such as second infections) so I wouldn't like to speculate as to the root causes of that, whatever the reason, whatever the cause, it just makes me a bit more committed to carrying a face-mask with me at all times.]

“Mark Olson's page long critique of *A Memory Called Empire* was entertaining too. I haven't read the book but, having read lots of stf in my time, I could identify with many of the problems he had with the story. As you note at the end, the superhuman hero is so commonplace in stf that we take it almost for granted. The problems set in many of those

stories are gigantic and so the person to take care of them must be too. It's another aspect of the suspension of disbelief I suppose, and you have to give the writer some slack, otherwise nothing of any interest would happen in most works of fiction. That is certainly the case for most people in real life."

[**PM:** It's said that there are seven distinct plot in fiction, so I'm just putting this down to being one of them. Mark makes a number of interesting pints which I'll have to keep in mind when I get to the second volume on the series in the next month or two. If you wanted to read some modern sf to see what's going on in the field you could do worse.]

"Poor dears, having to go for driving holidays around the rural and regional landscape. It must be hard work. Do you find it different to drive around Australia than to do something similar overseas. I imagine that there are many Australians doing what you are doing and finding it rather novel. Not having been outside Ballarat for over two years now I have to admit that I wouldn't object to a bit of a drive to somewhere a few hours away just to get the feeling of driving out in the open again and seeing the wide landscape ahead — that's my memory and feeling about driving up the Western Highway anyhow. By accident I found myself watching a video of somebody driving across the flat plains of the American mid-west and thinking that would be fun. Then the car pulls up, and everyone there seems to be wearing guns. What seemed like it might be fun suddenly wasn't."

[**PM:** As the saying goes, it's a hard job but someone's got to do it. It's been good seeing so many towns we had always just driven past on the way to somewhere else. Although it's probably time for us to make a few trips outside Australia now I reckon.]

"Haven't you run out of steam after publishing 20 issues. At this rate you'll soon be catching up to Gillespie."

[**PM:** No-one can catch the Archbishop!]

John Hertz: "Yet another good picture of you on the front of **P20**."

[**PM:** Included more for historical purposes than for quality of the photo itself.]

"For me 'cloud cuckoo land' had always been an allusion to Aristophanes' play *The Birds*. I wasn't surprised to see it in Dorothy L. Sayers' preface to *Gaudy Night*; she knew things like Aristophanes plays, and the book was a university story. When Anthony Doerr made it the title of his book I looked it up and found it had been more widely used than I knew. I haven't yet read Doerr's book. I haven't yet heard anyone remark on the historical Antonius Diogenes."

[**PM:** And you certainly won't be getting any remarks from me.]

"I'm sorry Leigh Edmonds got annoyed by my disagreeing with the Moon and Ghetto Argument, instead of reading what I wrote. But he was only agreeing with you, so I couldn't expect anything else."

[**PM:** I believe this refers back to comments made by Leigh in **P19**. Regardless of who said what, and who disagrees with whom, the reductive argument that decries any space program because of earthly poverty and suffering leaves out the possibility of comparing poverty and suffering to any other parts of a nation's budget. A big mistake, which renders the original statement invalid in my view.]

“If I tried to tell you Asimov — early on — was a fine stylist, possibly better than Delany, you’d think I was dull or daft. So I won’t.”

[**PM:** John, if I tried to tell you that you seem to be the only one with this opinion about Asimov, you might well agree with me. Wikipedia quotes **Webster’s Dictionary** when it states: “In literature, **writing style** is the manner of expressing thought in language characteristic of an individual, period, school, or nation.” It then goes on to note: “style is a term that may refer, at one and the same time, to singular aspects of an individual’s writing habits or a particular document and to aspects that go well-beyond the individual writer.” So, if you were to say that Asimov was a fine stylist of *his type*, then you might be right. However, in the modern context, noting someone as being a “fine stylist” implies a sense of how an author selects their words, and how they then arrange them on the page for greatest effect, in order to procure, in the reader, something beyond the mere words in the sentences. Asimov never achieves that for me. With him, what you see is what you get. I never expect any nuance, or rhetoric, or depth of characterisation. Delany, on the other hand, implies far more than he shows. Not always. Sometimes he can seem so superficial (eg **The Star-Pit**, which I read recently) as to appear simplistic. If Asimov had written that story then I would have been justified in thinking that there was no depth in the story at all. With Delany I’m fairly sure there is something lurking beneath the surface, I’m just not sure I get it.]

“The title **A Desolation Called Peace** — another book I haven’t yet read — reminds me of a line Isak Dinesen (why won’t people use the name an author writes under, instead of smugly crying “You can’t fool me”?) in **Out of Africa** says is a quotation, but I’ve never found, ‘I’ve defeated all my enemies. But now I’m surrounded by corpses.’”

[**PM:** Can’t help bad luck I say.]

“You’ll have noticed that although the back cover of Lee Gold’s **Valhalla** says the lead character is Robin Johnson, it’s only a typo; the character is really named Jonson and doesn’t seem to be a Tuckerization. Is ‘Tuckerization’ thought a pun in Australia? Do people talk of eating them up?”

[**PM:** Those of us in fandom know about “Tuckerizations” of course. As to eating them? Only if sprinkled with desiccated drop bear.]

I also heard from: **Andrew O’Rorke** (referring to last month’s cover issue: “Ha ha ha ha ha ha Ha. You didn’t have that much hair when I met you in 1992 lol”); **Charles Taylor; Chong; Jerry Kaufman; Barbara O’Sullivan** (who thought the cover photo on **P20** made me look rather like my son William, which I’m not sure he’s going to appreciate); **Frank McEwen; Marcin Klak**; thank you one and all.

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