Two Chairs In Print

Issue 19
Strange Journeys of the Mind



Strange Journeys of the Mind

Season 2 Episode 19, September 2, 2026



Colophon

Two Chairs in Print is published by David Grigg and Perry Middlemiss. It is based on transcripts of our regular podcast Two Chairs Talking.

—

All textual content in *Two Chairs in Print* is © Copyright 2026 by David R. Grigg and Perry Middlemiss, and is licensed under Creative Commons License CC BY-ND 4.0.

Cover image by Wombo Dream AI.

—

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the members of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this publication is produced in Mill Park and Hawthorn, Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

—

Podcast Website

https://twochairs.website

—

Email

twochairstalk@gmail.com

Transcript Episode 19 Season 2

Introduction

David:

Hello and welcome to Two Chairs Talking. This is episode 19 of our second season. My name is David Grigg and I'm here as always with my good friend Perry Middlemiss. who joins us in the short interval between his frequent overseas trips. I'm not sure where he's going next, but I do know where he will be in twenty 2028. He will be in Brisbane, because he has been chosen as the guest fan guest of honor for Aussiecon 5, which we'll talk about in a bit. So congratulations, Perry, it's a well deserved honour.

Perry:

Thank you very much, David, and hello to you and hello to the listener. Yes, it was a bit of a shock to get asked, but I am very much appreciative of it, but we shall talk about that in a little while. Yes, I am here between overseas trips. I'm off to Sri Lanka in the middle of October, and you're off to the wilds of the northern hemisphere very shortly.

David:

I am. In one week's time, almost exactly in one week's time, I'll be at the airport waiting to fly to Paris.

Perry:

Okay, so you've got your — you've made your full list and you're crossing them all off. You've...

David:

Yes, yes, I've got it all organized, I hope, but obviously things may go wrong on the way, but we'll see.

Perry:

Oh, yes. Well, it's the money, the eSIM, the headphones all charged up and...

David:

Yeah, got over that.

Perry:

Don't forget to make sure that if you're carrying an external power pack for your phone, which is always a good idea, you've got to have it with you in the plane.

David:

Yeah, no, well in fact I'm not going to take any checked baggage in the hold.

Perry:

Really?

David:

Just what I carry onto the plane, yeah. My daughter and her family are doing exactly the same.

Perry:
Oh, okay.

David:
So I don't know how they're going to cope, but we'll see.

Perry:
No, well how long are you away for?

David:
I think it's three and a half weeks.

Perry:
All right, so you've got a carry-on luggage in a backpack or a small bag to carry your electronics and stuff in.

David:
You see I happen to be flying business class and I can get two carry-on bags.

Perry:
What?

Okay. All right, okay. Well, that's not my level. No, I've generally I'm still a suitcase and a carry-on bag. So I just take the two and what I do is but I also always pack a day pack. So I've got one of those hard roller cases that I carry around, but I put the day pack inside the hard roller case.

David:
Yeah, yeah.

Perry:
And then when I'm on the plane, I pull whatever I need out of the backpack in the area where I'm sitting, everything goes up the top and then I'm fine. So, you know, it's just the e-reader and the headphones and that's really it, that's about all I need and you'll be right but flying business class you should be doing fine.

David:
Well, I knew that I couldn't cope with being packed into economy class, not for, you know, twenty or thirty hours' worth of travel. My back wouldn't cope with it, so no.

Perry:
Oh, okay. Well, you can cope. It's just a matter of whether you like it or not. I must admit, I'm a bit like you.

David:
Well, it would be very unpleasant.

Perry:
I don't like it. But unfortunately, in the location that we are, right down here at the bottom end of the world, so to speak, it's a long way to anywhere else.

David:
It is indeed. Yes, yes.

Perry:

But anyway, there we go.

Vale Robin Johnson

Perry:

Anyway, we've got a few things we need to talk about, David. So why don't we get through to those? The first thing I wanted to mention was the unfortunate passing of a good and old friend of ours, Robin Johnson. Robin was the chair of the first Aussiecon in 1975. My first convention ever. It's basically pretty much where I date my entry into Science Fiction Fandom because it was there that I realized what sort of a community it was and who the people were. I don't remember seeing you there, David, but I do remember seeing some of the people that we saw at Robin's wake on Saturday at that first convention. But you knew him longer than I did. You knew him well before the convention, because you worked on that convention, as you said, on Saturday.

David:

I was on the committee.

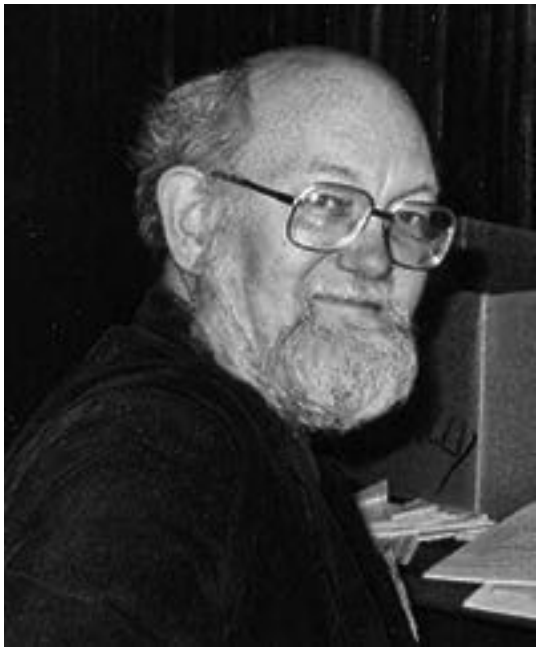
Perry:

Yes.

David:

Yes, I was on the committee. I would have met Robin in 1970, I think, there was a convention, in fact, there were a couple of conventions held down in the Murrumbeena Cinema. There was one, I think, in 1969, which was before my time, and then one in 1970. And I believe Robin went to both of those and I would have then met him there, I imagine. I don't recall meeting him, but I do know that for whatever reason we got in touch when he moved to Melbourne. and I got to know him pretty well, I thought. But he was such a — as I said in my eulogy on Saturday, he was such a gentlemanly, warm-hearted sort of character.

And he had the air of, because he had a very he had an English accent, even though he was born in Australia in Australia, he was born in Tasmania. He just gave me that impression of the English gentleman, but, you know, very dignified and warm hearted as well, I think. That's the how I sum up Robin.



Perry:

Yes.

David:

But yeah, so now I got sucked into being on the committee and Robin, bless him, gave me the job of being the Hugo Awards subcommittee.

Perry:

Oh, you lucky, you lucky, lucky bastard, that's all I can say.

David:

Me, just me So I have to count all the ballots and I goodness knows I didn't know what I was doing, I'm sure I made lots of mistakes, not in the counting of the ballots, but in certainly there were people who didn't get a ballot who perhaps should have and things like that. You know, just it with first time out, it was pretty hard.

Perry:

Yeah, I know. Yeah. It's just one of those things, but it's really sad that, but he had a good life and I think that he was well remembered on Saturday at his wake. We had a good turnout, about 30 people. There was a lot of stories told about him, and a lot of people reminisced. Everybody really, really liked Robin. He was a good person to always talk to. I used to see him more often at overseas conventions than I did in Australia. But there's a few people that are a bit like that.

I saw him a couple of times up in Ballarat when he was living there. Yeah, it's sad, but you know, all things must pass. And he lived to about 89. He had a very, very interesting life, lived in a few countries, well, the UK and Australia mainly. He lived in a few cities. In Australia, Melbourne, Ballarat, Sydney, Hobart. So he got around a little bit, and I think he certainly travelled a lot.

David:

Oh, yes, he loved travel.

Perry:

Oh man, did he travel a lot and he helped a lot of people with their travel arrangements In fandom over the years, and he was very much appreciated for that. And so, I think we gave him a good send-off, David.

David:

We did, I think. I'm sure we did.

Perry:

I think we did. And I think our friend Leigh Edmonds, who was there, said that he thought that Robin would really have enjoyed his time if he'd been able to be there. But he was in spirit, and that's all we can ask for. So that worked out well.

Aussiecon 5

Perry:

Now the other bit of news, as you've mentioned, is that the WorldCon this year was in Los Angeles over this past weekend. And at that convention, they had a ballot, a site selection to determine the site of the 2028 World Science Fiction Convention. And that is going to be held in Brisbane, in Queensland, and for the first time. Australia is going to hold a Worldcon outside Melbourne.

David:

I hadn't thought of that, but that's very true.

Perry:

So yeah, and it's going to be the first time that neither you nor I are actually going to work on the convention. Although, not if we're going to help it.

David:

Not if we can help it.



Perry:

As you said, I've been invited to be a fan guest of honor, for which I'm appreciative and grateful. And I will probably be trying to keep an eye on a few of the fannish things that go on there to make sure that there's a good coverage of fannish activities both on the program, in the displays and in the fan lounge or the fanzine lounge. And so that I'll be trying to ensure that all that stuff's kept ticking over. I'm not going to just sit back on that. I think I'm going to be a bit more proactive and say, well, how's it going? Who do I need to talk to? I've got a few ideas for program items for the fannish program, and I think that we need to keep it rolling. And I'll try and make some suggestions as to who should be on program items and that sort of thing.

David:

Well, I certainly intend to be there.

Perry:

Good. Oh, that'll be good. I think it will be it'll be an interesting convention. It's been it will have been Actually, thinking of this, believe it or not, it will be the longest gap between any two WorldCons on Australian soil since the first one.

David:

Yes.

Perry:

Because there was 75, then 10 years to 85, then 14 years to 99, 11 years to 2010, and this one will be 18 years.

David:

Mm, mm. About time then.

Perry:

I mean, it boggles the mind, David, to sit back and think that here we are, and we were both at the first AussieCon, and that is now over 50 years ago.

Let's just sit and think and just go, my brain's my brain spins. And I remember, I remember being at that convention with my father, which was — which is very good.

It was his first convention ever as well. And he was a tad older than me, but he was — what would he have been? Forty five for that stage. So yep, about the age I was when I ran Aussiecon 3. Interesting. Sorry, we're rambling a bit too much. But anyway.

That's all right. Anyway, so look, so that's good, and we hope that the listener and any other listeners that happen to listen in to this podcast. Especially if you're in Australia, but even if you're overseas as well, I think it'd be really good to come down. Now, the good thing about Brisbane, which they are going to call Aussiecon 5, which is another good thing, I'm very glad they've decided to do that, that the good thing about the timing of it is that it occurs very soon after, I think the week or weekend after, there's a total eclipse of the sun that passes through Queensland, New South Wales, and right over the top of Sydney.

David:

Oh, wow, that's very interesting.

Perry:

It is very interesting. So that if people coming in from overseas

David:

You could take a trip to Sydney and then Brisbane.

Perry:

Yes, so take a trip to Sydney and then maybe catch a train up to Brisbane and see a bit of the countryside on the way, or fly, your choice. I assume that I'll be flying up there and got to do a bit of thinking about that total eclipse of the sun, and see whether I can fit that in as well in the bit beforehand. So we'll see what happens. That's a ways off, two years off, but got to start planning and thinking about it early, David.

David:

Absolutely.

Perry:

Otherwise, it'll all just get away from you and you won't know what's going on. Anyway, so moving on, other things that happened over the weekend in Los Angeles, because it was the Worldcon, they had the Hugo Awards. And so the Hugo Awards winners were announced.

And I can tell you, I'll read some of the major ones that we occasionally talk about from time to time on this particular program that might impact us. And in fact, when we get to the novel, it might be worthwhile putting a little marker up over there somewhere and saying that maybe later in the year we can review it because I haven't read it.

So the best dramatic short presentation was the *Murderbot* series, and I think I don't know whether they gave it to the whole series or whether they just gave it to one episode, probably one episode, “All Systems Red”. This is the Apple TV series based on the Martha Wells series of novellas. Certainly worth reading and

certainly worth watching. But I would suggest that what you do is you binge watch it. Because each episode's only about thirty minutes, twenty-five to thirty minutes. And you really need to watch them back to back. It gave me the impression that once you got started watching it, you really wanted it to keep going. And if you had to wait a full week for another half hour programme, I think you might feel as though, meh, maybe you wasn't really…

David:

Yeah, yeah, it's not enough at a time.

Perry:

Not enough at a time.

David:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Perry:

So binge watch it, but it's all out.

It was all out last year, so it's all there and available. You can sit down and watch it in two halves, and I think you probably get a good run with that. And the next one, the best dramatic presentation, long form, was *Sinners*, directed by Ryan Coogler, an excellent vampire movie. I thought it was very, very well done. One of my favourites from last year.

The Best Series, which is a category that came in a few years ago in the Hugo Awards, which I'm a little bit suss about. Anyway, that was one by *Old Man's War* by John Scalzi. Yeah, it's okay. Very Heinlein-ish, but interesting.

The short story, "In My Country" by Thomas Ha. Not one that I've read, but given that I was a supporting member of LACon, I do have a copy of it in the Hugo Awards packet.

Novelette, "Never Eaten Vegetables" by H H Pak. Probably a good description of a large number of science fiction fans that we might be able to name.

Novella, "The River Has Roots" by Amal El-Mohtar. I have read that, and that is really quite an excellent novella. Short. It's only about 65 pages. Excellent novella.

And the novel, *The Everlasting*, by Alex E. Harrow. Not one that I've read, but I have heard very good things about.

David:

Oh well, let's look at that.

Perry:

Yeah, so we'll have a look at that. Maybe we can have a look at that for later on in the year. We have something lined up for next month. And maybe we can do this one the month after. So I'll have to make sure you get a copy of it, David, so you can have a look at it.

David:

Well, I — because I was a member of, a supporting member of LACon, I got the Hugo packet.

Perry:

Oh, there are you've already got it.

David:

So I will I will have a copy of it already.

Perry:

Yeah, go and have a look at that. Take that with you on your overseas travels and read the book that we're going to be talking about next month, which we will mention at the end of this episode. And you can also have a look at that.

David:

Sure.

Perry:

And I'll do the same, so we can have a look at that later on in the year. Anything else Anything else of news at this point?

David:

I think that's more than enough, really, by now.

Perry:

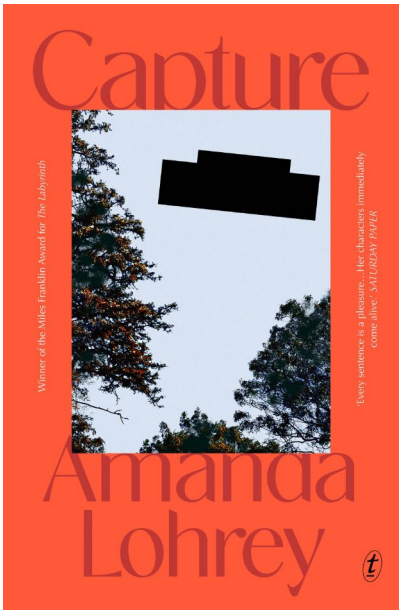
I think it is.

I think we've been rabbiting on a bit too long for that. But anyway, but that's okay. A few things you have to cover. The Ned Kelly Award shortlist is now out, but we'll wait until the actual winner of that is named before we actually go into it. And that should be in the next, well, should be in the next few weeks, I think, David. Anyway, that'll be there while you're away and we'll do that next episode. How about that?

Discussion

Capture by Amanda Lohrey

Perry:



Okay, so let's move on to our reviews for this episode. I'm first up and I'm going to be reviewing the book *Capture* by Amanda Lohrey.

Now she's an Australian author, and I'm going to take a leaf out of your book here, David, by first introducing the author, which I think is always a good idea. We've mentioned her before on this podcast, specifically her 2021 Miles Franklin Award and Prime Minister's Literary Award-winning novel *Labyrinth*, which we both really liked. By my count, this is Lohrey's tenth novel, the second after her literary awards with the intervening novel being *The Conversion*, which we also mentioned here on the podcast at the end of 2023, almost three years ago. I have to admit that I only came to Lohrey's work via *Labyrinth*, and I suspect that I keep on saying that I should go back and read a back catalogue, but of course you know what it's like. I haven't got around to that as yet. But I've, you know, I've read three now, so I'm getting there.

But what I have read inclines me to the view that Lohery is one of the more interesting Australian novelists working today. All of that brings us to her latest novel, the one that I'm talking about here, *Capture*, which was published by Text Publishing earlier this year. The novel, which I have here, David, which I'll hold up for you so that you can see it, but the listener won't be able to, unfortunately, but if they go to the local bookshop, they will – the novel has an interesting cover by our friend Chong showing a photograph of a patch of sky framed by high branches of some trees. The sky is a bland wash of blue-grey, perhaps with a little bit of green in it, but anyway, blue-gray, except for a black shape near the top of the photograph. This shape is in the form of two rectangles. A large one at the bottom and a smaller one stuck on top, set at an angle to the photograph's edge. It looks vaguely familiar, or at least identifiable. You suspect you know what it might be. And the reason for that will become clear very shortly as I talk about it.

The novel starts in Prague, where Jim Mather, an Australian scholar and working psychiatrist, is having dinner with an old friend and academic mentor. Mather is at a bit of a loss as to what to research next. He's just completed a long study on the suicide of young men, and he sounds rather burnt out by the experience. He wants something new, something different to do. And his mentor friend tells him of a patient of hers who claims to have been abducted by aliens. She suggests that Mather might like to undertake a study of similar such cases. At first, he's rather dismissive of the whole thing, but he thinks about it, and later decides to accept her suggestion. But his wife is worried that he may be opening his research and career up to ridicule. Why would anybody want to research such a delusion? Maybe it has got more to do with him, that is Mather, than his patients.

In fact, I had the very same thought about Lohery, the novelist, as I got to this point in the book. Why would anybody want to write about this? What would be

the point? How could she make this of any interest at all? If this novel bombs, then will that do what will that do to her reputation? Heaven forbid she'd be referred to in the future as a (in quotes David) “sci-fi novelist”. No, no, no, no, we can't have that. But we need to trust a novelist's instincts in these things, and especially one that we know to have a specific level of talent and who has held our interest in the past. Maybe the novel will fall over, or maybe the author's skill will allow her to bring it off. With an author with this sort of track record, we just have to go with the flow and see basically what transpires.

Back in the novel itself, Mather begins his research by thinking that all of these patients will be little different from the others of his who hear voices or suffer from extreme religious manias or obsessions. He decides not to use hypnosis in his sessions as he believes this will raise just a bunch of false recovered memories and will taint his final research. He hires a talented young scholar, Lucy Cheng, as an assistant, recorder and scribe. She's an historian by training and Mather thinks that her presence in the interviews will provide a different perspective to his own. Does this give us a hint that he really doesn't trust himself, or do we just take it on face value? Lohery is always asking these sorts of implied questions. Not directly to the reader. She doesn't state it out loud. She just allows the reader to come to them in their own time. And I think that's one of her good attributes.

The novel then consists of a series of accounts of these interviews, such as a young petroleum engineer who believes he was abducted during a camping expedition in the deserts of Kazakhstan; a former Navy pilot who recounts he was snatched in mid-flight and woke from a dream on the tarmac next to his plane, which he had no recollection of landing; a beautician and mother of four who encountered a ball of light in her bedroom; among many others. Though not all of Mather's interviews are included because he mentions others that he had been through, but not all of them are transcribed. As we read these accounts, we begin to see repeated descriptions of the inside of the alien spacecraft, because don't forget these are all alien abductions we're talking about. We have the well-known grey aliens, some tall and some very short, and the standard medical examination. I’ll leave that to your imagination there. Mostly the communication between abductor and abductee on these alien spacecraft is undertaken by some form of telepathy.

Now, it was all generally familiar, though Mayfair and by extension Lohrey misses some opportunities here, or maybe Lohrey is well aware that they are there, but just doesn't want to go down those paths. Anyway, by Mather's own definition, the bulk of these patients are completely sane. As they can easily function in modern society without, in quotes, “undue harm to themselves or others”, unquote. A couple almost relive their past experience while talking to Mather, and one is so overcome by it that he later takes his own life. But overall they are as sane as any of the rest of us. Most of them have never spoken about their experiences to anybody other than their nearest and dearest, or to a referring therapist.

The recounting of all of these stories is a transformative experience for some of the patients who seem to be unburdened by the retelling. But I think it's far more transformative for Mather himself. He begins his research with, as he puts it, in quotes, “a patronising view that I was likely to be dealing with people whose unconscious desires had manifested as a perverse means of escaping the banality of the mundane world”. Well, fair enough. He has a very different view at

the end of the novel of these patients, though it would probably not one that a lot of readers are going to be happy with.

Lohrey isn't about to give you any pat answers here. She has set all of this up to allow you space to come to your own conclusions. It is a novel about late career burnout, followed by an attempt to regain a purpose in life, but it's also about a lot more than that, and that is certainly something I wasn't expecting when I went into this book. Is it successful? Well, to me, it is, though I can see that a lot of readers will be very dissatisfied with it.

I gave it to my daughter, and she said it just wasn't for her.

If you come into this looking for definitive answers, then I fear you've come to the wrong place. But I still found it an enjoyable reading experience. What about you, David?

David:

I enjoyed reading the book, but I did find it hard to work out where she was going with it, or what points she was trying to make. In a way, it seemed to me to be one of the interesting parts of the book is really this relationship between the Mather and his assistant Lucy Cheng, which I mean, doesn't develop into a romantic relationship, but it becomes a very close working relationship. And that's kind of interesting in itself. And the other thing I suppose which is interesting is the affection that the both of these people, Lucy and Mather develop, this feeling of friendship, and they really start to feel that these people telling these stories are very personal to them. They become very, very affected by them in all sorts of ways. And so it's really about — yeah, I don't know what to make of what the author wants us to think about the alien abduction stories themselves. They can all really be dismissed in various ways if you take various approaches to it. So none of — she's not there, the author isn't trying to convince us that any of these abduction stories are real things, that there really were alien abductions. I don't think that's what she's trying to get to tell us. But she is exposing, I suppose, very intense experiences that these people have. So intense that in some cases it's like a religious conversion.

Yeah, I really didn't — when I got to write my review, I really wasn't sure where to go with it. I don't think I pinned it down at all, really. I suppose you could say that the theme of the novel is this hazy border between belief and unbelief, between sanity and insanity. Where's the line? Where do you draw the line? I thought I said in my review on my website that I thought it was interesting that it starts with the first sentence of the book is how vividly I recall that morning on the first day of my folly. You know, he sees this is looking back at it now, he sees the whole research episode as a folly, which I thought was interesting. And the fact that, and again on the first page, he's crossing the campus and he sees the campus madman who is spouting religious mania basically all over the place and, you know, telling us that the world is coming to an end, all that sort of stuff. So that was interesting, but I don't know quite what that means in respect to the rest of the book.

I also thought it was interesting that the book ends with very touching letters from his subjects to Mather, from a number of his subjects, and they're writing these letters. Thank you for listening to me, even though they didn't come to any conclusion about whether what I was telling was reality. You know, I really appreciated the chance to tell my story. So, yeah, it's an intriguing book. I think that's all I'll go and put it down to. I'm still not quite sure what to make of it. But I

enjoyed reading it and I'll certainly keep following Lohrey as an author, I think, with whatever she comes up with next.

Perry:

I thought it was an interesting take on it, and it did not to come down on one side or the other, as you say.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

And also not coming down on one side or the other in terms of whether the people are sane or not. And they, as I said, in my review Mather is of the view that they're as sane as you and I. Well, I don't know about you, David, but you know, I'm completely mad.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

But you know what I mean. You basically well, we're all we're all a bit mad.

David:

We're all trying to think.

Perry:

Everybody's mad bar me and thee, and sometimes I worry about thee. So you know, basically I think she allows the reader to make up their own mind.

And I think that you could have readers that come out and basically agree that these people really have experienced something, or they could basically come out thinking that it's a complete mass delusion. So that's what I said. There's opportunities there for certain paths where Lowry, the author, could have taken the thrust of the novel down one particular line or another. And so there were three ways that I think she could have gone.

And she goes down through the middle. And I think that is as an acceptable outcome as either of the other two. But it's not one that I think a lot of people, as I said, are going to like because she doesn't give a definitive answer. But I think that adds to a little bit of the mystery to the novel. So I was impressed with it.

I gave it four out of five. As I said, she writes a very easy reading book. You know, you can work your way through this without any problem whatsoever. But it's the build up of the subject matter that slowly starts to impinge on you, and you start to realize what either she's implying or she's leading you towards, which you have to make up your own mind about, which is what I like about her.

David:

Hmm. Yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely well worth reading.

Perry:

Yep, okay. I've got a feeling though, David, it will not be on any awards list next year.

David:

No, I suspect not.

Perry:

I don't think that it is one of those books that is going to resonate terribly heavily with the literary community. But I think it's an intriguing. I think it's an intriguing book for science fiction fans to read because I think they will probably get more out of it than a lot of literary fans will.

David:

Hmm.

Perry:

Now, maybe I'm being prejudicial there, but I think it's probably the case.

David:

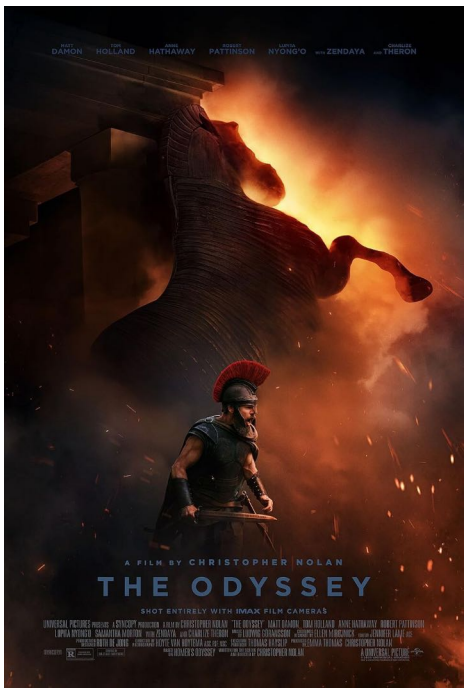
Yeah, yeah, I think so.

Perry:

I think that we look at this and go, yeah, okay, that's really interesting. But you end up going into a novel like this with your own prejudices. Do you believe that we've been visited by aliens or do you not?

Do you believe in that case whether people have been abducted and submitted to examinations or communication by aliens or not? And where you stand on those is going to give you a different view of this particular book, and I think that's interesting as well. All right, okay, so let's move on to the film that we're going to talk about, and you're going to review.

The Odyssey, directed by Christopher Nolan



David:

So we're going to be talking about *The Odyssey*, directed by Christopher Nolan.

Perry:

Shock horror, given that nobody's ever heard of this film.

David:

This well, I mean, I won't go into a background of Christopher Nolan and I won't do a biography of him. He's a pretty well known director.

Perry:

And we pretty much covered him last time when we were talking about The Prestige, so yep.

David:

Yeah, yeah, we did too with *The Prestige*, yes, that's right. All right, so the story of The Odyssey, as written by Homer, is probably familiar to most of us, even if we haven't read the original poem, let alone read it in the Greek. But even if we haven't read the original in any of the translations that have come out, I'm quite keen to get hold of the recent translation by Emily Wilson.

Perry:

I had a recent birthday and requested it.

David:

Okay. Well, I'd like to get hold of that.

Perry:

It's very interesting. I will quote a bit from it later on. Keep going.

David:

Christopher Nolan said somewhere that that translation was the basis of his screenplay, only to have Wilson angrily denounce the film after it came out. We'll talk in a bit about why that might have been, and one particular episode in the story which Nolan leaves out of his version. But whether you've read a full-length translation or not, the basic story of The Odyssey is embedded deeply into our culture. I mean, I grew up being fascinated by Roman and Greek mythology when I was a kid, you know, primary school kid. And so my knowledge of the basic story of the Odyssey and the background of the Greek gods goes way back in my life. Now I'm not going to worry about giving away spoilers here. I mean, the poem was released almost 3,000 years ago, so if you haven't read it by now, you know, surely most people are at least familiar with the story of the Trojan horse, which has now become a common phrase, of course, in our language and particularly in computer security circles. Fewer people, perhaps, but nevertheless many people would be familiar with the other elements of the story, I think, such as the Cyclops and the blinding of the Cyclops, the sorceress Circe turning Odysseus' men into pigs.

Scylla and Charybdis, The Song of the Sirens, all of which are actually covered in Nolan's film. So we should be pretty familiar with the basic story, I think. The real question really then is how well does Nolan deal with this material? And I would say the answer is, I would say, pretty well. I've seen the film twice now, by the way, which I enjoyed seeing the second time. It was actually on a bigger screen than the first time. So I haven't seen it on the IMAX screen, but it was a biggish screen the second time I saw it. So I think it does a pretty good job. It follows Homer's original in being told in a non-linear fashion. And it starts with the, I don't know what you call these things that come up before movies begin, the label or, you know

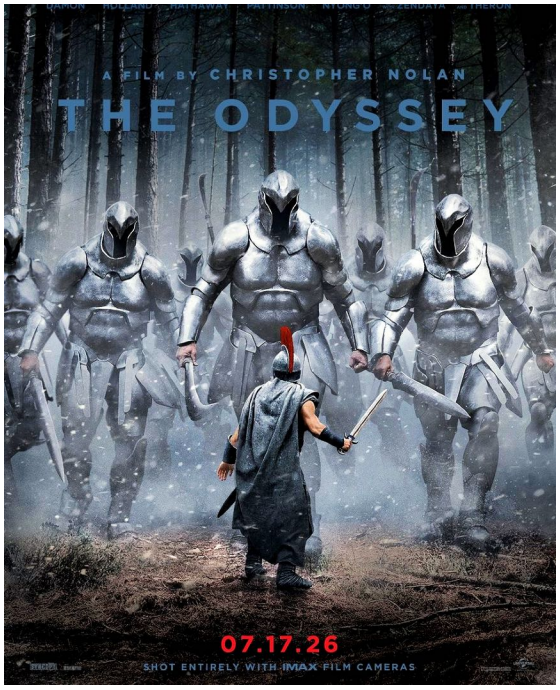
Perry:

Intertitle, I think they're called.

David:

An intertitle, okay, it comes up with the intertitle, "In a Time of Apparent Magic". That word apparent is interesting and obviously very deliberate there on Nolan's part, because when you think about it all of the fantastical features of the story are recounted by Odysseus himself while on Calypso's Island, and quite possibly while he is under the influence of a psychotropic drug. Perhaps also a psychedelic drug in the form of the lotus flower. I think it's very clever that Nolan combines the story of Calypso's Isle with the land of the lotus-eaters part of the story, which is a separate story in the original. But he blends them together, which I think is very clever. By doing this in having Calypso feed Odysseus the lotus flower, Nolan makes it much more believable that Odysseus could have forgotten his home for a period of seven years, and also perhaps that his memories have been confabulated into an adventure with one-eyed giants and seven-foot tall warriors dressed in full suits of armor. So everything told by everyone else is basically set in reality, the actual war and the siege of Troy.

The film begins very dramatically, as we hear the loud thumps of heavy staff as a bard begins to tell his tale. Thump, thump, a face, thump, thump, a war, thump, thump, a fleet, I can't remember the whole lot, but a trick. Bump, thump, Man. We're in the palace of Ithaca, in the banqueting hall, which is full of half-drunken men trying to be suitors to Odysseus' wife, Penelope, when they all want to marry her and become the king of the island. So we're in this hole and there we meet Odysseus' son Telemachus and his mother Penelope. It's clear that Telemachus's life is under threat as he's bullied by the suitors who are trying to bait him into fighting with them and therefore they can kill him honourably because they want to get rid of him so he's not going to be the next king.



So eventually he decides that he has to leave Ithaca and visit the court of Menelaus, husband of Helen, to hear whether Menelaus has any word of Odysseus. Now Menelaus is a hard-edged cynical character, or he's played that way in the film anyway, and he has heard nothing of Odysseus' fate. But there's a wonderful



bit of editing where he's talking to Telemachus and he says to Telemachus, “Some say that your father is alive, some say that he's dead, some say that he's lost at sea, some say that he's in prison. But what kind of prison could hold a man like Odysseus?” And we get an instant jump cut and we're on Calypso's Isle. That's the kind of prison that could hold a man like Odysseus. You know, he's being held in enchantment, if you like, or by a drug. And that's why — that's kind of, I thought it was very clever cutting.

I also like the fact that the Trojan horse that we see early on in the film, constructed by the Greeks, looks like something that could have been put together out of ship timbers. You know, it really has that look of the boards and so on. And it doesn't come equipped with wheels. Like so many kids' versions of the story of the Trojan War, this thing is on wheels like a child's toy, and they pull it. But in this case it doesn't have any wheels, it's half buried in the sand and they have to drag it laboriously into the city. And they — someone says that they're doing this so that this offering to the gods isn't destroyed by the waves. And that kind of makes more sense than you know, this great big horse on wheels that you just oh, well, that looks interesting. We'll just take that into the city. So it was I thought that would made it much more credible, what they actually did.

I thought the casting was excellent in this movie. I thought that Tom Holland was a very good choice as this wet behind the ears youth bullied by the suitors. It did grete on my nerves a little bit that Telemachus refers to his mother as his “mom” and to Odysseus as his “dad”, but you know, it says translation, you know. In the original it may have been some pet word for his parents in the original Greek. Who knows? I don't know. I thought Anne Hathaway was great as the bitter Penelope, who for twenty years has had to do all the work of ruling Ithaca while receiving none of the credit because she is not a man. She's especially good when she's blazing forth in anger about that, I thought. That was really good. Menelaus is played by John Bernthell, who has played many tough guy roles, such as Marvel's The Punisher. He's also in the latest Spider-Man movie, by the way, as the Punisher. Robert Pattinson is terrific as the villainous Antios, the most threatening of the suitors for Penelope's hand. You hate his sleaziness and his you know, he's just so good as this villain.

Chalize Theron was perfect as the beautiful Calypso. Elliott Page, though not on screen for very long, is a clever bit of casting for the young Sinon, who is left to guard the Trojan horse while the Greeks depart. And he's been he's been fooled by Odysseus because Sinon doesn't know what's inside the horse, which of course is the Greek warriors. So I thought Elliot Page was an interesting choice. Listeners may remember him as Evanya slash Victor in the TV series The Umbrella Academy.

I was completely happy with Nolan's choice to cast Lupita Nyong’o, I hope that's how you pronounce it, as Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. Those white supremacists who screamed that Helen couldn't possibly she couldn't

possibly be black. You know, how could the most beautiful woman in the world be black? Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit. They've got no idea what they're talking about. I mean, Helen was the result of her mother, Lida, being raped by Zeus in the form of a swan, and Helen was born out of hatched out of an egg. And you're complaining that she's got black skin. Come on, get real. Anyway, I did like the line here stolen from Christopher Marlowe's play Faust, many thousands of years after Homer, of course. I did like the line where Menelaus says, talking about Helen, this is the face that launched a thousand ships. And then he turns her head to show her scars, and then says dismissively, well, maybe only 500. I mean that's actually a misogynist line.

Perry:

But what a fantastic, what a fantastic piece of writing though.

David:

Yeah, it was a very clever bit of scripting.

Perry:

Yeah.

David:

And it shows how little that Menelaus really cares for his wife. Nyong'o also briefly plays Helen's twin sister Clytemnestra. We don't see much of Beni Safdi as Agamemnon. who's always on screen as this towering dark figure with a mask obscuring almost all of his face.

Perry:

Darth Vader. Looking like Darth Vader.

David:

Surely, surely that's a tip to Darth Vader. It's got to be. Particularly the moment where Odysseus and his men have forced open the gates of Troy to reveal Agamemnon standing there, really tall figure, black, you know, you don't see his face, it's just all black. this dark figure. He's there with all his men.





I thought that was a wonderful bit of work. Safdi, by the way, played Edward Teller in Nolan's film Oppenheimer. Himesh Patel plays Odysseus' exasperated second in command. He does a good job of that. It's hard to know what to say about Zendaya. Is that right how you pronounce it? Zendeya, as Athena, the goddess seen or imagined by Odysseus at various points in the story. To me, she was a bit too reserved and self-effacing for that character. I mean, Athena, you might remember if you know the Greek mythology, Athena leapt from the forehead of Zeus, fully armed. She was a goddess of battle as well as of wisdom.

But here she seems more like Odysseus' therapist, you know. Anyway, and so we come to Matt Damon as Odysseus. And I have to say I don't think that choice was as good as some of the other casting. Damon's believable enough as Odysseus, but I think we've seen too much of him in other movies to find him completely convincing here. It's just it's always a bit Matt Damon, you know. Anyway. But it — yeah, I mean, he does a workmanlike job. I know I've been talking for a long time, but I'm not quite done yet.

I want to say two things before I finish. Firstly, throughout the film we hear often of the people of the sea who were raiders who were laying waste to Mycenaean cities. And this is true history, by the way. Most historians believe that these raiders played a large role in the collapse of that Bronze Age civilization. So I really like the passage towards the end where Odysseus has come home, is in disguise as a beggar, and he's speaking to Penelope. He's talking to her about how we felt in Troy. And he's basically saying that there was a point at which he realized that he'd broken all the standard laws, you know, Zeus's law, all the rules of warfare, by this trick. He's basically saying that he's ashamed of himself for what he's done. And the toppled towers of Ilium are falling to the ground, and the Temple of Athena is in flames. And he has come to an understanding that, to Troy, it was the Greeks who were the people from the sea, destroying their civilization.

The second final thing that we must discuss is what Nolan leaves out towards the end of the Odyssey. And this is one of the things which particularly attracted Emily Wilson's ire: the omission of the part of the story where Odysseus hangs, without any trial, hangs twelve young women for having had sex with the suitors. In her translation she emphasizes that these young women were slave women.

They didn't have any choice, they had no power to resist the advances of the suitors. But it's clear that including such a horrific scene would greatly sour our view of Odysseus in Nolan's film, and you understand why he left it out. Nevertheless, you can see that why Wilson might have been very annoyed by that. I've talked far too long, Perry. I really enjoyed the film. I'm glad I've seen it twice.

What did you think of it?

Perry:

I really enjoyed it. I'm fully aware that there have been a lot of criticisms about it. I thought Emily Wilson's criticism, how she said, and I'm probably misquoting her here, how she said she would have been ashamed to have written any part of it, I thought was really disingenuous.

There's a lot to say about this particular film. A lot of people, yeah, you can criticise it all you like, but really what it comes down to is, it's an adaptation of a translation of a work that's 3,000 years old that was probably written by numerous hands. Adaptations don't necessarily have to include every single thing that's in the original work. We see countless versions of Shakespearean plays which leave out large slabs of it. Slabs of the text, and sometimes it is going to leave out parts of the original play that a viewer might say, but that's my favourite. I really wish that should be in there.

David:

I think it is possible to do that.

Perry:

I think that's vitally important. But what it comes down to is this is an adaptation made by Nolan, and so it's Nolan's vision of what he sees.

Let me quote you for the first couple of lines here. Now this is from the Emily Wilson translation. Book one, titled The Boy and the Goddess. And it starts off, “Tell me about a complicated man.” That's the major thing. It's the complicated man. Odysseus is the complicated man. “Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost, where he had wrecked the holy town of Troy, and where he went and who he met, the pain he suffered on the sea, and how he worked to save his life and bring his men back home.” I'm of the view that Nolan has given a modern take on this.

And what it is, is really part two of his texts about men who have broken the world. The first one being Oppenheimer, who says, You know, I've become death, the destroyer of worlds. Oppenheimer is fully aware that after he has helped build the atomic bomb, the world will never be the same again. You cannot go back to what it was before he's broken it.

David:

Yeah, yeah.

Perry:

And that's exactly what Odysseus says here.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

He realizes that he's broken Zeus's law.

David:

Yes, yeah.

Perry:

The world will never be the same again. What was there has now gone. And I thought that was really, really interesting. I don't know whether that's in her translation, but I thought that was a very interesting take on it.

David:

Yeah, that's a good insight, yeah.

Perry:

And I thought that so there's a real solid connection there for me to Oppenheimer. Now the other thing about leaving things out, the film's already two hours, fifty minutes. How much bloody more do you want? I mean, I don't know about you, David, but people were saying to me when I went in there, I put a little note on Facebook saying, I've been watching this. And somebody put a note up saying, "Don't have the big Coke". Well, firstly, I said, "I don't drink Coke", and I thought Oh, now I understand what they're talking about. So it's like, don't take any water in there because you're going to need to have a toilet break halfway through. It is a long film already. You add more to this and it is going to be difficult for you to be able to get people to go through it without intermissions.

Now I don't know whether you've been to the cinema in the last four or five years or ten years, David, where there has been a film with an intermission. I was in it when I went to see Seven Samurai and intermission comes up, and I knew it was coming. Up and out, off to the toilet, back again. There are a whole lot of people sitting around, and I heard somebody say, "What's going on?' They didn't know, didn't know what an intermission was. And so there's not that expectation for people. To be able to sit through a long piece. I have heard people say, two hours, fifty minutes, couldn't stand it. Too long, I'm not going to sit through it.

David:

Too long did not read. It's the way of the world now, isn't it?

Perry:

Yeah, that's right. I mean, well, yeah, I know, but sometimes when you're in a hurry, too long didn't read. But in this instance, I really do think that it is worth everybody's while going along to see this, whether you like it or you don't like it. I think it's one of those films that come up every few years that are basically in the general conversation. That really, if you haven't seen them, you just can't converse about them. You can't have an opinion. And so, this is one of them. And I think that it's one of the ones that you really need to get along to have a look at.

I also think that Nolan's take on Odysseus is that he's a man suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, which is why he's so happy, maybe happy is not the word, maybe contented or just okay with the idea that he spends seven years with Calypso. Now, the other thing that Wilson said was, where's the sex? You know, basically Odysseus is in a velvet cage. He's there on an island that he can't really escape from because he's basically Calypso's sex slave in the saga, as I believe. And he's also basically continually drugged all the time. But all you get from Wilson's view of what Nolan does is that Calypso acts as basically his psychotherapist, you know, trying to get him over this disorder, and in the end, saying, "Well, you've been here long enough now, I think you can probably go home now, you can make your way home, you're okay to do so. I don't think

there's anything wrong with that interpretation of things." That's what these major sagas and classics are all about. They're there to be interpreted in different ways. And frankly, my view is if you don't like the bloody thing, make your own adaptation of it. And there have been plenty. And there's one that I need to get to recently is called The Return, which I haven't seen, which is..

David:

Yes, that's got rather fine way finds in it, yeah.

Perry:

Ralph Fiennes in *Coming Home* and it's only about the part when he comes home. So it's short sharp and sweet, only that little piece when he comes home and gets back to Penelope and he basically gets there and he kills all the suitors. Now that's again not a spoiler because if you don't know what's going on about that, well bad luck.

I agree with you, I think there's a problem with Matt Damon, but I've also got the point that the bloody thing costs \$250 million to make. And you have to look at it from the mechanics of things, of the finances behind things. How are you going to raise \$250 million, even if it is Christopher Nolan? If you don't have a big name up front, if you're not going to have him, who are you going to have? Brad Pitt?

I don't know. No.

David:

Yeah, it's a good thought. I don't know who else I would hav.

Perry:

No, I don't know. Well, let's not go there because the choice is made that we're then getting into those things that we say that we shouldn't do.

David:

Yeah, yeah. I mean, he does a pretty good job.

Perry:

He does a pretty good job.

David:

But he doesn't do an outstanding job.

Perry:

I'm just, I'm not, I'm not entirely convinced that he's the leader of the men in the way, let us say, going back to another film that he was in. Saving Private Ryan. I'm not sure that he's the leader of the men that, say, Tom Hanks was in that film. That's all I'll say.

Tom Holland's fine is Telemachus. I'm not sure I like the way Telemachus is presented. There's a scene early on-ish where he has been taught how to fight. Now he would have been taught how to fight since he was about ten. So by the time he gets to about eighteen, I assume he's about eighteen, late teens.

David:

Yeah, yeah, he isn't yet of age.

Perry:

He should be a little bit better than he is and he's still having trouble, but they're still trying to teach him. And while they're showing him practising, he is getting better. And then the two times when he has to fight, he's bloody hopeless.

David:

Yeah, yeah, that's absolutely true.

Perry:

And which I thought, what the hell? That didn't make a lot of sense to me. Why go to that other bit before and show all of that? Anyway. There's probably a reason for it, and there's probably a good thing because I think everything that Nolan has done here has been thought through. I don't think you can say he just chucked it in willy-nilly. I think that he has a very specific reason why he has every single scene in this film.

And I think it will take a lot of viewings to be able to..

David:

Yeah, no, it's very cleverly the various cuts, you know, I think are just very good.

Perry:

Parse your way through it all. It's beautifully made. It looks fantastic.

When he goes to the black sands of Iceland, which is the depiction of hell, and all the men come up out of the sands, including Telemachus. No, no, not Telemachus.

David:

I think we've been pronouncing that wrong, and I think it's Telemachus, I think, is how we pronounce it.

Perry:

Telemachus well, including Agamemnon, who he doesn't know is dead, and he's suddenly there.

David:

That's right.

Perry:

And he that's he is taken aback by that a bit, but then realizes that, you know, he has to get out of there.

But look, I think it's an incredibly well made film. I think it's one that you really need to see on a very big screen. And I think it's one that you really just shouldn't miss. You really do if you're interested in modern cinema at all, and whether you agree with it or not, whether you go in deciding that you're going to hate it, go and see it so you have a reason to hate it, or go and see it so you have a reason to like it, or just be ambivalent about it. But go and see it. It's a cultural experience in my view, and I think he's done a very, very excellent job of it.

As to whether you like it or not, up to you.

I did like it, and my wife liked it. And I'll be happy to go back and see it again at some point. Would I go and see it on IMAX? It'll be an interesting experience. But, you know, \$47 a ticket, David.

David:
Yeah, that's pretty much it.

Perry:
It's a bit much. And it's booked out. It's really hard to get a seat.

David:
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, the second time I saw it, I saw it in gold class, and I was fairly towards the front, so I had a very big angle of viewing..

Perry:
Okay.

David:
on using laser protection that they use a lot these days. So it was a pretty good experience.

Perry:
You need it. You need to see it on a small screen which will help you dissect small individual pieces. But you need to have this is one of those experiences where you need to have it wash over the whole lot of you. Just completely, you want to be completely surrounded by the world.

David:
Yeah, I think so.

Yeah, what you got on TV at home wouldn't have the impact.

Perry:
No, no, no. Unless you've got to turn the lights off and you've got to get rid of everybody and you've got to sit right down the front on a bean bag and just let it just cover you. Otherwise, you've got to miss part of it, I think.



David:

Yeah.

And you'd have to crank the volume up, very loud 'cause there's a lot of shaking of the floor through some of those scenes, particularly the storms and so on.

Perry:

Oh, yeah.

David:

There's really some big bangs and things going on.

Perry:

Yeah.

David:

So that was very effective.

Perry:

I think it took a lot of effort to build this. I'm very interested to know that he used no CGI in this at all. And how he did some of the scenes, I think are just astounding in terms of the foreshortening when Odysseus and his men confront the seven foot tall warriors, it's very interesting when you read about the fact that Odysseus is played by a stunt woman who is about four foot ten, and they found every single stunt man over seven foot they could find to have as the monsters, and then they had the foreshortening of the cameras, you know, like they did like Peter Jackson did in Lord of the Rings. So you could have the hobbits being really small with Gandalf in the back.

David:

The one that's hard to imagine being done without CGI is when Circe turns the men into pigs.

Perry:

Yeah, that was astounding, but I believe that yeah, but it's...

David:

It was that's so good, it's so physical. You know, it's like she doesn't just wave a magic wand, she shapes them into oh, it's...

Perry:

No, she shapes them. So, there's some really excellent pieces here. I mean, you could go on and on and on. You could talk about this for ages, and big papers should be written about this and having it broken down. I think it'll be one of those films that will be considered to be a classic. It'll certainly be appearing in *A Thousand and One Films You Must See Before You Die*. And I'm happy that I've seen it and I'll be happy to go along and see it again. And what more could I say? Well, I think we're done with that.

David:

I think so. We'd better get on to something else.

What Else We've Been Reading and Watching

Perry:

Yeah, so what else have you been — let's do reading first. What else have you been reading lately?

The Talented Mr Ripley, by Patricia Highsmith

David:

All right, well I've read a couple of interesting books. I read I hadn't actually read it before, I read The *Talented Mr Ripley* by Patricia Highsmith.

Perry:

Oh, yeah, that's good. Yeah, yeah.

David:

And that was a very entertaining book about this villain who you are basically meant to be with, you are meant to follow his stories with interest and kind of hope he succeeds, even though he's a complete villain. So it's cleverly done.

Perry:

Have you seen the most recent miniseries based on that, the black and white one that I've talked about?

David:

I saw the first episode, but I thought, look, I'd rather read the book first, and then I'll go back to the TV series.

Perry:

Yeah, go back and do it. I think you'll find it's very interesting.

David:

So, yeah.

Perry:

Very well made. Very, very good.

The Wheels of Chance, by H. G. Wells

David:

Yeah, so that was very enjoyable. Because I did it for Standard E-books, I read a H. G. Wells book, which I bet you've never heard of, called *The Wheels of Chance*.

Perry:

No, I haven't.

David:

A bicycling idle. It's all about a cycling journey. It's one of his comic novels.

Perry:

Oh, okay.

David:

And it was written it was written about the same sort of time as *The Time Machine*, believe it or not.

And because both of them are quite short, they're really novellas, they were initial editions which combined bothh *The Time Machine* and *The Wheels of Chance* in the same volume.

So that was interesting.

So it was it was an interesting comic read, it was fun. And that's obviously available on Standard Ebooks for free.

Perry:

Was it serialized in magazines at the time when it first came out?

David:

I have no idea.

Perry:

Okay, well sorry to ask you a question without notice there, David.

David:

Yeah, no, I don't think so because it was as relatively short, it's not really long, but it was entertaining.

Perry:

Okay.

The Pelagius Book, by Paul Morgan

David:

I read and also designed a book called *The Pelagius Book*, which was published by Norstrilia Press by Paul Morgan. This is a reissue of a book he came out with about twenty years ago, I think. And it's about the Christian philosopher Pelagius. So set in Roman times, just as the Roman Empire is really starting to collapse. Towards the end of the book, we actually have Rome attacked by the Visigoths or whatever. And Pelagius was interesting because he was in opposition to the thoughts of St. Augustine. So Pelagius rejected the whole idea of original sin, and he had a much softer, less, you know, less dictatorial, I suppose, version of Christianity, a much softer version of Christianity than Augustine did.

But of course eventually things swung the way of Saint Augustine and Pelagius was declared a heretic, and all his works were destroyed. As many as they could find were destroyed. So it's an interesting book about him. It's supposedly written by his assistant, his Emenuesis, his secretary, if you like, and they travel — Pelagius was born in Britain, and they travel to Rome as part of the story. It's a very short book. It's actually really not much more than a novella. It's about 40,000, 50,000 words, I think.

Perry:

Okay.

David:

Anyway, but anyway, that's out from an Australia press, and that's quite entertaining.

Perry:

It's a work of fiction

The End of Everything, by M. John Harrison

David:

It is a work of fiction, but based on the real story, with quite a bit of research behind it. And then the last book I'll talk about is a book called *The End of Everything* by M. John Harrison, which is a very strange invasion story. And it's told from the point of view of a couple of people, a man, a middle-aged man, and his aunt, who's obviously in her 60s or 70s or something.

There's been some incident where the earth, well certainly England anyway, has been invaded by these aliens, maybe, called the iGhetti, but it manifests itself as strange things going on. The ocean is filled with strange creatures which wash up on the shore and people try to collect them and do things to them and it's a very odd book. I must read it again before I do a proper review of it. I've got to read it twice. I definitely recommend it. But it's it's not the kind of invasion story you might you know that you we're familiar with at all. It's not *War of the Worlds*.

It's very odd. So the aliens may not have even come from outer space. They may have come from somewhere else. Anyway, it's good. It's well worth reading. That's the books. What about you, Perry?

Bomber, by Len Deighton

Perry:

Well, the major one that I want to talk about is *Bomber* by Len Deighton. This is a book that my father always told me that I should get around to reading, and I never did until just recently, and then I decided, saw it on the shelf that, well, I better get to this. Though I had to get myself an e-book of it, David, because I pulled the book off the shelf. I saw that I'd paid, I don't know, a dollar thirty for it in a second hand bookstore. It was probably published in around about 1980. It was a penguin paperback or a pan paperback, and all the pages were this browny colour.

David:

Yes, I know that happens.

Perry:

And so dark, the text had gone a bit, so light text on brown I couldn't read.

Read it. Not a hope. So couldn't read that at all. Anyway, it's set during the Second World War, near the end of the Second World War, when the Allies are undertaking bombing raids over Germany, generally over the Ruhr Valley to knock out the German Industrial complex during World War II. And it gives you a hint that, of course, it's completely and utterly fictional because the day on which the raid takes place is June the 31st. A day that, of course, does not exist. I thought that was clever.

It jumps around between people on the ground and people in the air in both Germany and in England. So it leads up to the takeoff of the bombers, discusses and goes into great detail about everything, including the weather, and that has a vital impact on things. And I was talking to our friend Leigh Edmonds about this,

because I know that he's very interested in aircraft. And of course, he's read it. And I said, it reminded me of those gig films, big war movies we used to get, you know, like D-Day, Bridge Too Far, the ones that made with a very large ensemble cast showing both sides of the conflict. And I thought, you know, I was amazed that this film this book had never been made into a film like that. And he basically came out and said, well. probably because it doesn't put the Bomber Command in very good light because they end up carpet bombing a civilian area and killing vast numbers of people. And they bomb things specifically to start fires.

David:

Like Dresden.

Perry:

Yeah, it's like Dresden. So what they're doing is they're basically committing a war crime. And as Leigh said, and he's very, very correct, a lot of filmmakers don't like that idea. They want heroism. They don't want to depict war crimes by our side. Okay to depict war crimes from the other side, but not from ours. And so that's probably why it wasn't made.

But it's a very interesting book, quite long, 500 odd pages, but really quite interesting to read. So I'm glad I've got through that. What have you been watching?

For All Mankind (Apple TV)

David:

I've been watching a fair bit of TV. I don't know though, I've watched any films since we spoke last. No, it's all been TV shows. I actually got back into watching *For All Mankind*.

Perry:

Okay.

David:

When the first time it came out, I got stuck partway through.

Perry:

Season two, yeah.

David:

The second season, season two, and it was just a little bit too, I don't know, soap opera-ish. But anyway, I finally got back into it and finished season two, which actually ends very well. It's very dramatic ending to that, and just went out and watched all that they've done, which is five seasons. Can't imagine they'll go to a sixth season.

Lucky (Apple TV)

David:

It started to flag a bit, I thought, in season five. Anyway, I watched all that. I watched a new TV series on oh, this is on Apple TV. New TV series called *Lucky* which has got Anna Taylor Joy in it. Very good, well worth watching. She's the daughter of a criminal who's at the start of the story, he is in jail, and she and her husband have managed somehow — you don't quite find out how, the initial

thing, but at the start of the movie, they've made a great hole and they've got bags full of cash. and they drink to celebrate, and she gets drunk or she's been drugged, and she wakes up in the morning and her husband's gone, and so is the cash. And it goes from there.

Dark Matter (Apple TV)

David:

So that was very good. I really definitely recommend that. I binged re-watched *Dark Matter* on Apple TV. Have you seen that?

Perry:

No, no, you still keep recommending it to me. I've got to get to it.

David:

Oh, it's it's very good. There's now a second season.

Perry:

Oh, well, okay then.

David:

So I thought it's been a while since I saw the first season.

Perry:

Forces me into it, then, doesn't it?

David:

And so I thought, no, I've got to refresh my memory of it. It's such a clever idea, clever SF idea. I won't go into detail about it, but it's very well done. It's got the Australian actor Joel Edgerton in it. His face appears a great deal, as you'll find, a great deal in this story. That's well worth watching as I mean I started watching the first episode of the second season last night and it's it's keeping up the quality.

The West Wing (DVD)

David:

I'm nearly finished! The other thing I've been watching is *The West Wing*.

Perry:

Okay.

David:

Because believe it or not, I never saw *The West Wing* when it first came out.

Perry:

Oh.

David:

I saw the last couple of seasons, I think, after Aaron Sorkin had left, and I'd been wanting to catch up to the first seasons first. And I looked around and you can buy it from the Apple store and it costs like \$150 or something. I didn't want to do that. But anyway, I found a second hand copy of the box set of the whole lot for forty dollars on the Savers website. And so I've been watching all the way

through. So I'm really enjoying that. I'm up to season three, I think, near the end of season three.

So there we are. I've been watching a lot of TV shows. How about you, Perry?

Tony, directed by Matt Johnson

Perry:

Okay. Well, I haven't been watching so much TV, but I'm still going to the cinema a bit. And the film that I saw a week and a half or so ago is a film called *Tony*, which is directed by Matt Johnson and features Dominic Sessa as a young Anthony Bourdain. Now, I'm not sure if you know who Anthony Bourdain is. He wrote a book called Kitchen Confidential, and he's very much, well, he was very much a travel and food writer and critic. I really like Bourdain's travelog documentaries that appear on a lot of streaming services. He's not one of these guys that goes out and says, Okay, I'm now going to cook this new recipe and that I've learnt blah blah blah over here, over there.

What he does is he travels to a country to find out a bit about how it works, and he does that by eating the food and sitting down and talking to people. about the food they eat and what that does, how it impacts what they do in their lives. And I've always really liked his style and I think it's good stuff. He unfortunately committed suicide about seven or eight years ago, but he'd always suffered from manic depression, which you get a bit of an idea of in this particular film. The film is based, well, it starts when he's at college, when he's around about 19, and he's trying to get himself a scholarship by saying that he's going to write this long novel. But he doesn't get it, doesn't know what to do, decides to chase after this young girl who's gone off to this town right out off the coast of Massachusetts on a small island, and he ends up there, can't pay his way, gets beaten up. But gets taken in by a chef in a local restaurant who's played by Antonio Banderas. And first off, he starts off as a dishwasher.

Now he's an arrogant, narcissistic pain in the ass. And actually, there's a quote from Bourdain right at the very, very beginning. It's another one of those intertitles which Bourdain quotes and that describes himself as a narcissistic guy that really needs a gigantic kick up the ass. And that's basically what he gets in this particular film. So it's a biopic about Anthony Bourdain from the time when he first starts getting an inkling that food is something that he would like to be involved in and follows him until he decides to take it up for good. You know, only for about a year or so over that particular summer, which is a good thing about this biopic, it doesn't try to be too much, it doesn't try to take in too many years. It's like, here's a summer. This is when he starts realizing that he's really got to start getting his act together. He's got some talent, he's got to be able to use it. And really, very well done.

Banderas, good chance to be up for a Supporting Actor Award. Dominic Sessa, young actor who I think does a very good job here. And I think you may or may not have seen him before. He was in a film called *The Holdovers* from a couple of years ago, which I really enjoyed. but he hasn't done a huge amount of work, but he looks like a young Bourdain. And so ,interesting film, probably not one you need to see in a cinema. I was glad I did. I like seeing things in the cinema. Look for it when it comes on to the streaming services.

And that's about it. I was only going to talk about the one. I thought one would be enough. Not like some people who want to rabbit on about 10,000 different things, David.

David:

Sorry.

Perry:

I don't know who that might be, but. Anyway, so I think we're done, are we?

David:

I think we are done. So, what about next time?

Windup and Next Episode

Perry:

I think, well, next time we're going to be we're going to be reviewing a book which was discussed at the Nova mob about a month ago, but I think it really needs a bit more of another look, and I'll be interested to hear what you have to say about it, because you'll be reviewing it. And that's a book called *The End of Romance* by Maria Takolander. She's a Victorian poet who has taken about ten years to publish this particular novel and it's a science fiction novel, which was warmly received by the Nova Mob, and I'll be interested to hear what you have to say about it.

And the film that we're going to have a look at, we're going to go back a little bit. Moving away from Christopher Nolan at last and going and re-watching *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*. Which I've only seen the once but really enjoyed, and I'll be happy to go back and have a look at it again and dig into it because I thought it was a great film when I saw it the first time, and I'm looking forward to seeing it again.

David:

Yeah, same here, same here. Yeah.

Perry:

So that's what we will do when we're actually going to be doing the next episode. We're not entirely sure.

David:

No, we're all flying overseas and things.

Perry:

Yeah, because you're away. We might be able to squeeze it in early October, but we'll just have to see. It might be four, might be five weeks before we get to it, but we'll see what happens.

David:

So that's the short term.

Perry:

But until such time, David, keep reading, keep watching films, and I hope the listener can do the same. And we'll talk to you again.

David:
Thanks.

Perry:
Thanks. Bye.