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PERRYSCOPE 10, May 2021, is an issue of the personalzine published, whenever the mood takes him, by **Perry Middlemiss**, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: perry@middlemiss.org
Produced initially for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) and then whoever else unlucky enough to receive it. Also available for download at efanazines.com with thanks to Bill Burns and FANAC.org with thanks to Joe Siclari and Edie Stern. Unless otherwise specified all material is written by me.
Cover photo by Brian or Nan Middlemiss, Tailem Bend, South Australia, circa 1957.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent review of this zine Nic Farey notes in *This Here... 41* that “It might be considered solipsistic that this [personal zine] is all about him, including the cover illo”. To which I plead guilty as charged.

The way I look at it is this: nobody else is going to talk about me so I might as well. Which is true though only part of the story. The covers come about due to my total lack of graphic layout skills: I can’t draw, and haven’t spent enough time with any graphics application to get all the spiffy effects figured out. It’s not something that particularly interests me, though I certainly appreciate a good cover when I see one. So cover photos of me it is, interspersed with the occasional cover by Chong, who really does know what he’s doing. I trust you will have noticed the stark difference between the two.

I mentioned last time that there will be a change for the first anniversary issue (number 13, due in August) and maybe that might indicate a change of tack for the second year’s issues. It depends on what I can find that is half-way decent.

Life in the Hawthorn household has been a little hectic over the past few months. Which may explain why last month’s *Perryscope* was a little more “light on” than hoped. Looking back I put that down to the work I was doing, or, for a while, putting off doing, on another publication that I talk about below in the “Fannish Activities” section on page 7. Time to get a bit more organised methinks.

Cover notes: this month’s cover photograph was taken by one of my parents (Brian or Nan), not sure which. I look about 2 years old here so that would make the locale Tailem Bend in South Australia around about 1957. There isn’t anything on the back of the photo to confirm this, though my father did tell me that is me in my red suit and that may be his motorcycle in the background. I wonder if this is where my love of the colour red comes from? Looks like I’ve taken a nose-dive at some recent point. Hardly surprising.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MY LIFE

C. J. Dennis, Edward Dyson and *Melbourne Punch*

(This article continues the story of my ongoing fascination with the works of Australian author and poet C. J. Dennis (1876-1938). Previous entries in this series can be found in *Perryscopes* 3 and 5.)

After living a rather aimless life in my old home town of Laura in South Australia, C. J. Dennis joined the staff of *The Critic*, a weekly arts and gossip magazine published in Adelaide, in 1898 at the age of twenty-two as a cadet. This first stint at the paper was only to last a year before he headed off for a stint in the New South Wales mining town of Broken Hill. But Dennis's time at the magazine had given him a taste for the publishing life and had introduced him to a number of literary figures who would re-appear at later times in his life, people such as the Dyson brothers (Will, Edward and Ambrose), Edward Sorenson and Henry Lawson.

In 1901, Dennis was back at *The Critic*, now on staff and producing more and more prose and verse material under a variety of pseudonyms. As time progressed he began to take on a senior role at the magazine while occasionally submitting prose and poems to the *Bulletin* magazine, probably Australia's pre-eminent weekly newspaper, and various other newspapers and magazines, including the *Weekly Times*

At the beginning of 1904 Dennis was appointed to the position of editor of *The Critic*, although within 18 months the magazine's conservative political stance was starting to wear on the writer who believed he had invented the word "wowser" (defining it as "an ineffably pious person who mistakes the world for a penitentiary and himself for a warder"). In the middle of 1905, Dennis, along with a couple of literary friends (Archie Martin and Beaumont Smith) formed The Gadfly Syndicate. The aim was to produce another weekly arts and gossip magazine called, reasonably enough, *The Gadfly*. But Adelaide was too small a market for two such publications and by the end of 1907 Dennis had left the paper and headed to Melbourne.

He was still submitting poetry to *The Gadfly* and to the *Bulletin*, but this probably wasn't enough to sustain the hectic, alcoholic lifestyle he was attempting to live among the literati in Melbourne and by the middle of 1908 he was living in a small tent near Toolangi, on the edge of the Yarra Valley about seventy kilometres north-east from Melbourne.

His living costs at that time would not have been high, but he would have needed some income to survive and to finance the occasional drinking bout at the Toolangi pub. Living in the bush did give him more time to write and his publications in the *Bulletin* started ramping up at the end of 1908 – he published 8 poems there in December 1908 alone – and then they started to taper off in 1909.

So there seemed to be a bit of a problem here. He was scraping a living, just, and I had a feeling
(continued on page 5...)

The Old Whim Horse by Edward Dyson

He's an old grey horse, with his head bowed sadly,
And with dim old eyes and a queer roll aft,
With the off-fore sprung and the hind screwed badly,
And he bears all over the brands of graft;
And he lifts his head from the grass to wonder
Why by night and day the whim is still,
Why the silence is, and the stampers' thunder
Sounds forth no more from the shattered mill.

In that whim he worked when the night winds
bellowed
On the riven summit of Giant's Hand,
And by day when prodigal Spring had yellowed
All the wide, long sweep of enchanted land;
And he knew his shift, and the whistle's warning,
And he knew the calls of the boys below;
Through the years, unbidden, at night or morning,
He had taken his stand by the old whim bow.

But the whim stands still, and the wheeling
swallow
In the silent shaft hangs her home of clay,
And the lizards flirt and the swift snakes follow
O'er the grass-grown brace in the summer day;
And the corn springs high in the cracks and
corners
Of the forge, and down where the timber lies;
And the crows are perched like a band of
mourners
On the broken hut on the Hermit's Rise.

All the hands have gone, for the rich reef paid out,
And the company waits till the calls come in;
But the old grey horse, like the claim, is played out,
And no market's near for his bones and skin.
So they let him live, and they left him grazing
By the creek, and oft in the evening dim
I have seen him stand on the rises, gazing
At the ruined brace and the rotting whim.

The floods rush high in the gully under,
And the lightnings lash at the shrinking trees,
Or the cattle down from the ranges blunder
As the fires drive by on the summer breeze.
Still the feeble horse at the right hour wanders
To the lonely ring, though the whistle's dumb,
And with hanging head by the bow he ponders

Where the whim boy's gone — why the shifts don't
come.

But there comes a night when he sees lights glowing
In the roofless huts and the ravaged mill,
When he hears again all the stampers going —
Though the huts are dark and the stampers still:
When he sees the steam to the black roof clinging
As its shadows roll on the silver sands,
And he knows the voice of his driver singing,
And the knocker's clang where the braceman stands.

See the old horse take, like a creature dreaming,
On the ring once more his accustomed place;
But the moonbeams full on the ruins streaming
Show the scattered timbers and grass-grown brace.
Yet he hears the sled in the smithy falling,
And the empty truck as it rattles back,
And the boy who stands by the anvil, calling;
And he turns and backs, and he "takes up slack".

While the old drum creaks, and the shadows shiver
As the wind sweeps by, and the hut doors close,
And the bats dip down in the shaft or quiver
In the ghostly light, round the grey horse goes;
And he feels the strain on his untouched shoulder,
Hears again the voice that was dear to him,
Sees the form he knew — and his heart grows bolder
As he works his shift by the broken whim.

He hears in the sluices the water rushing
As the buckets drain and the doors fall back;
When the early dawn in the east is blushing,
He is limping still round the old, old track.
Now he pricks his ears, with a neigh replying
To a call unspoken, with eyes aglow,
And he sways and sinks in the circle, dying;
From the ring no more will the grey horse go.

In a gully green, where a dam lies gleaming,
And the bush creeps back on a worked-out claim,
And the sleepy crows in the sun sit dreaming
On the timbers grey and a charred hut frame,
Where the legs slant down, and the hare is squatting
In the high rank grass by the dried-up course,
Nigh a shattered drum and a king-post rotting
Are the bleaching bones of the old grey horse.

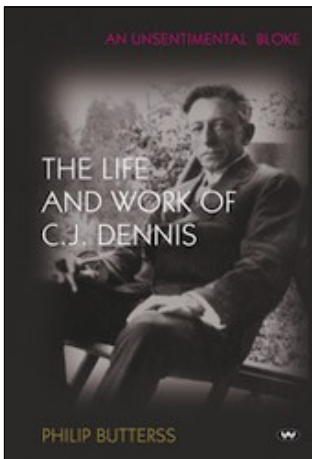
First published in The Bulletin, 30 July 1892

(...continued from page 3)

that he might have been publishing his work elsewhere. I just had to find it.

A search in the State Library of Victoria turned up copies of *Melbourne Punch* on microfilm. A bit of research confirmed that the editor of this weekly Melbourne version of the UK magazine was none other than Edward Dyson, who Dennis had had dealings with when in Adelaide. It seemed a decent place to begin.

Over the next year or so I wandered down to the State Library one lunchtime a week and studiously scanned the *Punch* film transcribing by hand the entries as I went, looking for lost Dennis poems.



I didn't find any in the 1908-10 period I was concentrating on. There were a couple in 1910 and 1911 but by then I knew that Dennis had started up a prolific period when he was publishing two or three pieces a month in the *Bulletin*. It wasn't until 2014, when Phil Butterss published his definitive biography of Dennis, titled *An Unsentimental Bloke*, that I came to realise that Dennis had barely survived this period. He'd stayed out in the bush and used his meagre earnings, and any monies he could beg or borrow from friends, on a minimal diet, and occasional drinking bouts at the Toolangi pub. He stayed that way until he met up with R. H. Croll in mid-1913 who introduced him to

Garry Roberts, who was later to help with the completion and publication of the Sentimental Bloke poems. But that is another story.

My indexing of *Melbourne Punch* kept on turning up a number of poems, short stories and prose pieces that were obviously written by Edward Dyson under a variety of transparent pseudonyms: Ed Ward, Ward Edson, W. E., Dy Edwardson, etc. The man was a veritable writing factory for the magazine, as I suppose Dennis was when he edited *The Gadfly* and needed material urgently to fill a gaping hole in a page. Some of this material had a byline, but a lot didn't.

I had used Austlit, the Australian Literature Bibliography index, in the State Library to check up on Dyson, and contacted them directly to see if they were interested in the work I was doing. They indicated that they would be happy to receive anything I gave them. Which may well have been a mistake on their behalf.

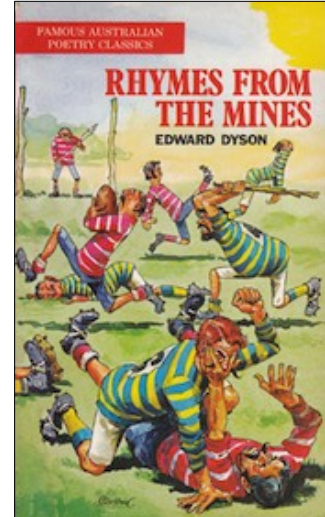
I used to type up the hand-written *Punch* magazine index entries each two weeks or so and send them along to Austlit, along with any other bits and pieces that I might have found in various other newspapers and journals. Some of these were Dennis entries as I searched through "Christmas Issues" and "Annuals" from various Victorian and other state journals, but the bulk of it was from *Punch*. It took about six months before they decided that this arrangement



Edward Dyson, by his brother Will

wasn't the best and offered me a free account on the index so I could enter the items directly. (I indicated in an earlier piece in this series that this came about due to me sending in Dennis material. That was partly true, though the real impetus for them offering me editing access was due to the items from *Punch* I was swamping them with.)

By the time I had indexed three or four years' worth of *Punch* issues I was almost as hooked on Dyson as I had been on Dennis previously. And as with Dennis I started to go back to the *Bulletin* again checking out Edward Dyson's poems. I was taken by the way he handled very different subjects, concentrating on the men, and women, who populated the gold and other mining fields of Victoria. It wasn't the standard poems of bullock teams or drovers, though he could do those, it was more concerned with the hardships, triumphs and tragedies of the mining life. A life, I was later to discover, he had grown up around on the outskirts of Ballarat. (You can read one of my favourite Edward Dyson poems, "The Old Whim Horse", on page 4.)



With the petering out of the gold in Ballarat the Dyson family settled in South Melbourne in the mid-1880s. Edward, being the eldest son, worked for a while in a factory and supplemented his income with his writings. It wasn't long before he was on the staff of the Melbourne *Punch*, and later took over the editorship.

As I started to follow up on Dyson's poems I began printing off the full page of the *Bulletin* each time – it was just as cheap for a full page as for one poem. And there I started to notice other poets appearing on a regular basis. Some I knew, but others, such as Zora Cross and Mabel Forrest were the most intriguing. Firstly they were females writing in a very male-dominated world, and, secondly, they were writing about topics that the men just weren't going anywhere near. Another enthusiasm beckoned.

Brief biography: Edward Dyson was born at Morrison near Ballarat in 1865. His first published pieces appeared in the *Ballarat Courier*. These were followed by publication in *Australian Tit-Bits*, *Life* and the *Bulletin*. Dyson's reputation was firmly established in 1889 when his short story "A Golden Shanty" (which clearly reflects the racial intolerance of the day) was selected as the title piece in the *Sydney Bulletin's* Christmas anthology. From this time Dyson made a very comfortable living as a freelance writer, publishing a number of collections in addition to his newspaper work. An attack of encephalitis after the 1919 influenza outbreak caused a marked decline in his health and creative output. He died in 1931.

Edward Dyson's family was closely intertwined with that of Norman Lindsay – his brother Will married Norman's sister Rose (see the review of the Will Dyson biography starting on page 11) and his sister Jean married Norman's brother Lionel. This is hardly surprising as the two families were both from the Ballarat area and met up in Melbourne in the early 1890s. A book detailing these connections would make for fascinating reading, as these were two of the great Australian artistic families.

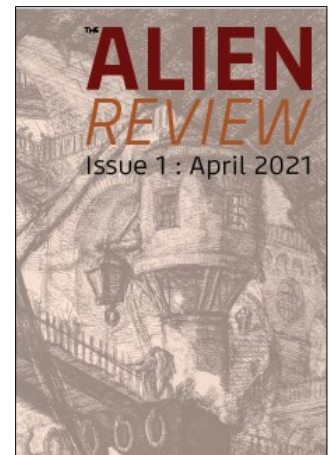
Fannish Activities

The first issue of *The Alien Review* eventually dropped on April 7. The final scramble to get it into shape took longer than expected, mainly due to me not proof-reading my work properly. I think I need to allow a longer time-period between finishing a piece of writing and then going back over it to fix the errors. Noted.

There was also one occasion when I had used the same phrase in two different reviews, written some time apart, which ended up in very close proximity in the final layout. Need to be more careful of that in the future as well. Noted.

As a first issue I'm reasonably happy with it. The parts where I struggled to finish off either the book or the written review are fairly obvious to me, hopefully not so much to the reader. Need to get the required reading done in plenty of time, and to write the reviews as soon as possible after the reading has finished. Noted.

The big plus about the issue is the look of the thing. And again I have to thank David Grigg for his sterling work on the layout. It looks far, far better than anything I could have produced. I've now purchased the same software that David is using (Affinity Publisher) so that I can undertake the final piddly little edits rather than asking David to do all of that tedious work.



The plan is for the next issue to be completed in July. Unless I get swamped with material from other people that will be the best I can hope for.

As mentioned previously, this, and the other titles I've produced, can be downloaded from either efanzines.com or FANAC.org. Or you can write to me and ask for a copy. PDFs only. [<https://efanzines.com/Perryscope/index.htm>]



WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

Notes from this month's podcasts

Episode 50: (13 April 2021) *The bones of the dead*
Apart from hitting the half-century we also noted our second anniversary. Never thought we'd still be here doing this stuff. This episode we discuss crime fiction: David talks about *Gathering Dark*, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*



and *Darkness for Light*, while I look at *Consolation*, *The Sentinel* and *A Song for the Dark Times*.

Episode 51: (27 April 2021) *My Uncle Oscar had a sudden flash*

This episode we talk film and TV. I discuss four films that were contenders for this year's major Academy Awards (*Nomadland*, *The Father*, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* and *Mank*) and David talks about "The Flash", a short film based on a Terry Pratchett work and *The Current War*.

You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at www.rightword.com.au or you can subscribe through any podcast subscription service.



WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

2021 targets met this month: none. I've been reading a lot of shorter sf which I don't list here so it looks like I'm a long way behind. Actually, I think I am a long way behind. I assumed at some point that the number of books I was reading in a year would drop off, just didn't expect that it would happen so soon. Then again, if I can get a couple of good months' reading in I may well be able to get back on track. Can't see myself setting any records this year, however.

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

Abbr – nvla : Novella; Hugo : Hugo Award winner; Nebula : Nebula Award winner; YA – Young Adult.

April 2021 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>A Song for the Dark Times</i>	Ian Rankin	Crime	Apr 5		4.2	2020	
<i>The Sentinel</i>	Lee Child and Andrew Child	Thriller	Apr 7		3.4	2020	
<i>Flyaway</i>	Kathleen Jennings	Fantasy	Apr 20	e	3.0	2020	nvla
<i>Dune</i>	Frank Herbert	Sf	Apr 25		4.5	1966	Hugo, Nebula
<i>The Tombs of Atuan</i>	Ursula K. Le Guin	Fantasy	Apr 28		4.5	1974	YA
<i>The Moon is a Harsh Mistress</i>	Robert A. Heinlein	Sf	Apr 29	e	3.4	1967	Hugo

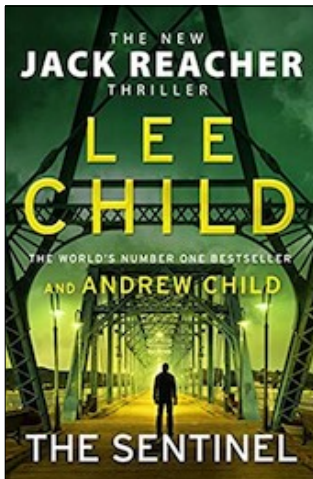
Books read in the month: 6

Yearly total to end of month: 30

If I keep up this rate I'll only get to 90 books in the year, well below my current target. I'm also noticing that the author gender rates are dropping off on the male side again. Hopefully that will be adjusted when I read the Hugo Award nominees over the next few months.

Notes:

A Song for the Dark Times (2020) – Rankin returns with the 23rd novel in the John Rebus series. Rebus's son-in-law has gone missing so he heads north out of Edinburgh to help his daughter as best he can, though that results in his normal manner of barging in and trying to take control. Meanwhile, back in the city, Siobhan Clarke and Malcolm Fox are investigating the death of a young Saudi who has ties to that Arab country's royal family, and, as the novel progresses, there appear to be links between the two cases: the young dead man appears to have been a business partner of someone developing a site near where Rebus's son-in-law lived. Rankin is in his usual good form here, bringing in all his old characters, setting up new relationships between them, and laying the groundwork for more books in the future. One of the best crime series going, if not ever. R: 4.2/5.0



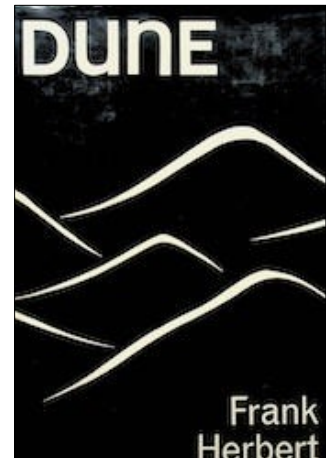
The Sentinel (2020) – The 25th Jack Reacher novel and the first by Lee Child and his brother Andrew, who will be taking over the main writing duties in coming books. Reacher arrives in a small town just in time to thwart what appears to be a kidnapping attempt. The victim, Rusty Rutherford, is the town's ex-IT manager who was fired when he failed to prevent a ransomware attack on the city's infrastructure. It soon becomes obvious to Reacher that Rutherford knows more about the attack than he lets on, or even knows himself. As the book progresses the number of villains increases and the body count keeps on growing. This is pretty much standard Reacher fare, though it seems to be missing some of the sparkle of earlier books in the series. That may be down to Lee Child's fading interest, or a product of the writing transition period, or a series and character that is just running out of steam and ideas. We'll have to wait for the next couple of books to be entirely sure. R: 3.4/5.0

Flyaway (2020) – Bettina Scott's father walked out one day and her brothers have gone missing from the small Australian town of Runagate. Her search for them will take her out of her half-life in a house run by a reclusive mother into the Australian bush, where she will encounter strange mystical dogs, vanished schools and magical bottles. This is the equivalent of a European fairy-tale set in an Australian landscape. The well-written prose doesn't do enough to overcome the lack of character development, the rather mundane story and the fact that the author tries to put too much into too small a space. Not for me R: 3.0/5.0



Dune (1966) – Winner of the 1966 Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel.

It's hard to know what to say about this book that was the first dual award winner in the sf field and is considered one of the greatest sf novels ever written, by some. That some would include me by the way. This is the final version of the novel combining the two series ***Dune World*** and ***Prophet of Dune***, both published *Analog*. The story is a planetary romance set in a sprawling galactic empire ruled over by a despotic Emperor, aided and abetted by grasping and corrupt Houses. Chief among these is House Harkonnen which had been controlling the spice trade from the planet Arrakis until replaced by House Atreides. But this fiefdom is a trap for Atreides which is sprung when the Harkonnens invade backed by disguised Imperial troops. The first part of the novel details the invasion, death of the Atreidian Duke and the survival of his concubine, Jessica, and son, Paul. The second part follows the rise of Paul to become leader of the native Fremen, and his retaking of the planet. Epic stuff. R: 4.5/5.0



The Tombs of Atuan (1974) – Second volume in the author's Earthsea series.

In my past readings of this book (this is my 3rd or 4th reading I think) I had always considered this to be the weakest in the series. That may still be true, though given the quality of the other books that is far from a damning indictment. I'm guessing my trouble was that Ged, the hero of the first book, doesn't appear until a third of the way through this. This book's main character, Tenar, is taken from her family as a five-year-old to train to be the Eaten One, the re-incarnation of the high priestess for the Nameless Ones. She accepts this as just her part in this life fulfilling her daily duties and guarding the temple's treasures in a sub-subterranean labyrinth. Then, one day, she finds a man (Ged) in the Undertomb, a place where no man is allowed. She traps him in the a room in the labyrinth, and rather than just allowing him to starve and die of thirst, she keeps him alive and talks to him about the world

outside, a world she knows nothing about. A powerful book of a young woman coming into her adulthood in a repressive world. R: 4.5/5.0

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (1966) – Nominated for the 1966 Hugo Award for Best Novel. Winner of the 1967 Hugo Award for Best Novel.

(Note: I'm reading this in the original magazine serial form.)

In the 2070s the moon is largely a penal colony run by the Authority, headed by the Warden. Government control is practically non-existent with the three million "Loonies" living in an essentially anarchist society. The Authority's oppressive taxation and financial regime leads to an uprising that overthrows the existing structure with the aim of introducing a utopian government. Earth, of course is



not prepared to give up its colony so easily and a battle ensues. Heinlein pushes his idea of how a revolution can be run and won, and also his concept of a self-regulating society; a rather naive version of the concept in my view. This novel was nominated for the 1966 Hugo Award although only one instalment of the serial appeared in the eligibility time period. It was also be nominated for the 1967 Hugo Award which it would win. It may be the only novel to be nominated in two separate years. Better than the few Heinlein novels that preceded it. R: 3.4/5.0

Penguin had published the occasional science fiction novel in the worthy British tradition but there were vast American sources which remained untapped. There was a boom on the way and Penguin could get in first. The same applied to books about the movies – not boring studies by Paul Rotha about Film or Cinema, but books about the movies. I wrote Godwin a long memo on the subject. To his credit he took me out to lunch on the strength of it. I must have put my case badly. Proving to him that I was a fanatic in both fields was probably a mistake. Dismissing his driver and taking the wheel of the big Jaguar himself, he drove us to a secluded pub. Seizing my opportunity before he got the car into third gear, I spoke continuously, but instead of raving about twenty different science fiction writers with names like Cordwainer Simak and swooning over twenty different film directors with names like Ray Siodmak, I should have been judiciously enthusiastic about a maximum two of each. ‘We might do a bit more science fiction,’ Godwin said, in a tone of voice that told me my cause was lost, ‘but I don’t need a buff who knows all about the neglected minor novels of Kohl and Pornbluth. I need an editor who can see a big project all the way through without wasting my time and the company’s money.’ Dandyish himself, he perhaps took my beard as a sign of unsoundness. He would have been right, of course. ‘Pohl and Kornbluth,’ I said feebly, knowing that he had slipped up on purpose as a contribution towards letting me down lightly. – *Falling Towards England* by Clive James, pp. 185-186

REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

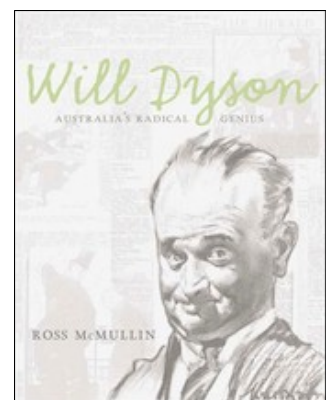
Will Dyson : Australia’s Radical Genius (2019) by Ross McMullin

Genre: Biography

[Originally published on the Matilda litblog on 12 May 2006.]

Over the past couple of weeks while I have been reading this book, I have been asking my friends and acquaintances if the name of "Will Dyson" rings any bells. Most look blankly, but a few know of him. Not well, just a passing familiarity. Which is a pity really, as the man deserves to be better known.

Will Dyson was born in September 1880 in Alfredton on the outskirts of Ballarat in Victoria. From an unassuming birth he was later to become Australia's first official war artist, poet, orator and a world-renown cartoonist. How he got there is the



material for Ross McMullin's new biography, a reworking of his previous version published in 1984.

The early part of Dyson's life was spent in Melbourne and surrounds honing his craft and meeting and marrying Ruby Lindsay, the sister of Norman Lindsay. In fact the Lindsay and Dyson families, who grew up not very far apart near Ballarat, were both to become famous in artistic circles with Norman, Lionel, Percy and Ruby on the Lindsay side, and Edward, Will and Ambrose of the Dysons all achieving a degree of fame through their writing and art. The two families were later to become even more entwined through the marriage of Lionel to one of Will's sisters, which gives some indication of the closeness of the two groups.

By the time he was 29 Will had decided he needed to move to greener pastures in the form of London's literary life, a situation that he expected would provide him with greater opportunity for his cartooning. He was right. He achieved great fame in London before World War I but it was the Great War and its immediate following years that were the making, and in some ways, the breaking of Will Dyson. He forced himself into the role of official Australian war artist over the objections of the Australian military command and went on to produce some of his greatest works as he placed himself at the forefront of the fighting. His aim was simply to show life in war as it actually was, not the sanitised versions being peddled by some of his contemporaries. Needless to say he was something of a trouble-maker, rocking the military boat and producing the work that he saw appropriate rather than apply himself to topics dictated from above. And the Australian war record is the richer for it.

In the post-war years Will set about re-entering London artistic life and was regaining some of the ground lost though his absence at the war when his wife died in the influenza epidemic of 1919. He was devastated, turning to poetry and publishing *Poems in Memory of a Wife*. From this time on he was never really settled, returning to Australia for a five-year period in 1925-1930, then trying his luck in the USA before finally ending up back in London where he died in 1938.

McMullin has divided Will Dyson's life into 6 distinct periods and spends a chapter of this extensive work looking at each period in depth. There is a lot of material to be dealt with in Will's life and McMullin attempts to cover as much of it as he can. His research is exemplary, indicating investigative journeys through libraries and newspaper repositories in Australia and the UK, consultations with Australian War memorial material and a number of interviews with the subject's friends and relatives. Unfortunately, in the main, the book does not wear the fruits of this research lightly.

There almost appears to be two writers at work on this book: the one who follows the thread of Dyson's life when he, himself, is single-minded, and the other which allows himself to be distracted by surrounding events when Dyson is similarly distracted. The first chapter in the book, which deals with Dyson's early years up to his departure from Australia for London, comes across as very disjointed. The cast of characters introduced, which flit across the stage of Dyson's life, is rather overwhelming and allowing them all to step forward and have their say leaves the reader confused and uncertain as to the direction the book is taking. I have some understanding and knowledge of what was going on in Melbourne at this time, and I was

getting continually confused as to what point the author was trying to make. It is almost a relief to find Dyson on the boat to England.

From there on the book picks up. McMullin is very good at incorporating the English politics of the day and the machinations of the military into his story, and he handles Dyson's work at the front-line very well. It is here we start to get an understanding of Dyson the man, rather than Dyson the gadfly we have been introduced to previously. Maybe this is true of most of us, that our true identities only become visible in times of stress and grief. In any event, Dyson's experiences at the war and the death of his wife appear to change McMullin's approach to his subject and change it for the better.

The best and most enduring of Dyson's work was produced during the First World War and McMullin is generous in reproducing a number of these pieces in the book. These, along with 8 pages of colour prints, enhance the look and feel of the book emphasising Dyson's art and giving it its correct status.

In the end I was impressed with this book and glad I read it. There are problems with it to be sure – the first chapter is an unfortunate introduction which I hope won't put too many people off – but overall you come away with a sense of the man, his work and times in which he lived. I'm not sure you can ask much more than that of any biography.

Rating 4.2/5.0



WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

Television

Ugly Delicious : Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner (4 episodes) (2019)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Documentary Food

Dave Chang visits four cities (Vancouver, Marrakesh, Los Angeles and Phnom Penh) in the company of a celebrity friend. The first three are with people who know the city intimately – though as Chang now lives in LA he can almost be considered an expert there as well – and the last with someone who has always wanted to visit Cambodia. These aren't visits you can make yourself as Chang and his guest get to go behind the scenes of various food outlets but it does give you a good idea of the diversity of food cultures in each location. Vicarious travel again, with the added bonus of extra food. The pick of them is probably Chang's visit to Vancouver in the company of comedian Seth Rogen. The two of them spend the bulk of the program just stoned enough to make it vastly amusing, and hungry, of course. R: 3.5/5.0



Call My Agent (Season 3 – 6 episodes) (2018)

[Original title: *Dix pour Cent*]

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Comedy Drama

This French comedy/drama about the goings-on at a Parisian actors' agency keeps up the high levels of the previous two seasons. And it is good to see that there isn't a drop off in quality as the show progresses. This season is dominated by Andrea's pregnancy and subsequent delivery of a daughter, handled in typically humorous and dramatic fashion. There is also the continuing appearances of various French actors playing overly exaggerated versions of their public personas – for example, Isabelle Huppert stars in one episode where she is acting in multiple film productions at the same time, forcing the agency to take drastic action to forestall litigation regarding a contract breach. Excellent entertainment. R: 4.3/5.0



Film



The Father (2020)

Platform: In the cinema

Genre: Drama

Anthony Hopkins plays Anthony, a man in his early 80s who is determined not to be moved out of his flat in London (co-incidentally only a block away from where we lived in Maida Vale in the early 1990s). But his daughter Ann (Olivia Colman) has a differing view and tries to persuade him to move in with her and her husband. Or does she actually have a husband? Is she moving to Paris or staying in London? Where is the missing younger sister? Is Ann really Ann? Anthony's obvious encroaching dementia means he is mixing up scenes from his life, one over another until neither he nor the audience is really sure what is the real story. Characters change, relationships

change and the décor and layout of the rooms change. Be prepared for an emotional ride, and to shed a few tears. I know I did. It is hard, if not impossible, to see how any actor could do a better job than Anthony Hopkins in a role this year. Or Colman as Best Supporting Actress for that matter. R: 4.6/5.0

The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Drama

Written and directed by Aaron Sorkin (of *West Wing* fame) this film follows the trial of the seven men accused of conspiring to cause riots in Chicago at the time of the Democratic Convention in 1968. From



what was obviously a great wealth of material Sorkin has woven an intricate, well-crafted two hour film which hits all the high points of the drama. But a side is most definitely taken. The trial judge is an oaf and a bully played to perfection by Frank Langella; Sacha Baron Cohen is Abbie Hoffman; Eddie Redmayne is Tom Hayden; and Mark Rylance is defence attorney William Kunstler. All excel in their work here and are shown in a sympathetic light. Nominated for Oscars for Best Film, Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Cohen) and Best Original Screenplay. R: 4.4/5.0

***Zack Snyder's Justice League* (2021)**

Platform: Foxtel (HBO)

Genre: Science Fiction

Although dropping in at a touch under four hours this seems like a much better version of the DC Comics Justice League of America film than the one delivered previously in 2017. That version was completed by Josh Whedon after Zack Snyder stepped down following the death of his daughter. This version is Snyder's original concept of the film and uses only about 15-20 minutes of the previous iteration. Basically the plot is DC's version of the MCU Avengers concept – getting a number of superheroes into a team to fight an alien menace. In this instance Batman takes the leading role, joining forces with Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Cyborg and the Flash. They would have liked Superman to join them, though as he's dead at the start of the film that proves a little problematic. But never fear – they will find a way. And they do. It is very long so I watched it in two sittings. R: 3.7/5.0



PERRYSCOPE Responses

Carey Handfield: “Thank you for Perryscope 9 I enjoyed it.

“In particular the Weg cover. It shows the 'real' Perry. I have a Weg drawing from the same event. It is stored somewhere.”

[**PM:** Robyn and I framed ours very soon after the event and hung it up on our family portrait wall. I've always liked it.]

“Your home maintenance stories reminds me of our deck. The big deck and stairs leading down to the back garden was showing lots of wear when we moved in. We got a handy man in to do repairs. He did a good job although it might have been cheaper to replace it with a new deck.”

[**PM:** I'm coming to the conclusion that home maintenance might well be necessary but that it can very easily get away from you if you're not careful; and the older the house the greater the cost. Or so it seems.]

Lucy Sussex: “Ha, maybe I should get some tips from you how to paint and repair sash windows.” [PM: I am certainly not the one to talk to about sash windows. I love them but they are a nightmare to deal with. I am not going to make any attempt to fix the broken cord. I’ll have to get an expert in.]

Martin Field: “Your review of *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction 15th Series* (1969) brought back fond memories of the mag. I used to wait for the latest issue to appear at Mr Almond’s newsagency in Boronia, and devour it – so to speak – when it arrived. *Galaxy* also was a favourite.”

[PM: I started buying the sf professional magazines from second-hand book stores in Adelaide back in the late 1960s. With issues at 10c/20c a pop they were all I could afford at that time. I didn’t get into buying the latest issues, off the shelf when published, until I started to get some of my own money from a cleaning job from about 1976 onwards. My father was only interested in *Analog* so I left that one and bought *F&SF* and *Galaxy* mainly.]

“As previously mentioned my great op-shop find recently was C. J. Dennis’ *Glugs of Gosh*. It is the ‘Pocket editions for the trenches’ volume published in 1917 – in near perfect condition. It must have been sitting in someone’s trunk all these years. At \$3 a great bargain.

“Unfortunately I struggled to get into it. I didn’t find it nearly as readable or enjoyable as *The Sentimental Bloke*, *Rose of Spadgers* and *The Moods of Ginger Mick*. (Trenches editions of which, coincidentally, I also found in an op-shop years ago – for 50 cents each. The cost of living rises inexorably.)”

[PM: I must admit that the first time I tried reading *Glugs* I felt the same way, until I realised that it was a satire on bureaucracy and the stupidity of politicians. Then it all started to make sense. I won’t say it’s his best work but it is certainly a departure from his more realistic poetry material of the *Sentimental Bloke* and its sequels. Keep an eye out for *Jim of the Hills* and *Digger Smith*, which are in more of his standard style.]

Mark Olson: “I’m amazed that you are able to read so much SF – I find my SF reading dropping off. For one reason (probably the main one) I read a lot of non-fiction, mostly history, and a typical NF book takes me longer than three SF books or mysteries. (I’ve been logging my reading for decades, and lately I’ve been pretty consistently running about eight books/month. But that does count books I put aside partly-read, something I have finally managed to train myself to do). The secondary reason is because I find most current fantasy (which seems to dominate) to be ... uninteresting? I’m groping for the right word. It just feels contrived, unfresh, vaguely formulaic.

“I think SF (including fantasy) is suffering from maturity. Forty or fifty years ago, I could count on at least a couple of books each year which blew me away with a big new idea. Now? It’s been years since I read something that left me gasping. (A few left me choking, but that’s a different thing.) I miss that, and its lack makes a lot of SF feel somewhat mundane to me. But that’s an inevitable consequence of eighty years of good SF.

“It appears to me that the overall quality of the writing has improved a lot over those decades.

When I re-read old classics (and I'm not talking stuff from the 30s here) I frequently find myself stumbling on sloppy bits of writing. That hardly ever happens today, but it's replaced by 'Ho, hum. Very nice. I wonder what's next. Oh. Right. I should have expected that.'

"In the end, I guess I like the blinding flash of something new with adequate writing over higher quality, but less original, writing."

[PM: There is certainly a "sameness" to a lot of sf and fantasy these days. And if you think the novels are bad you should try the shorter stuff. It is very rare to find a short story that actually tells a story, rather than reading like it has been ripped from a larger work. The ones that do work stand out from the crowd like beacons. Unfortunately these are usually ignored by award nominators.]

"Your comments on Greg Egan were interesting. He is indeed among the greats — about a quarter of the time. Unfortunately close to half his works are brilliant scientific or mathematical tours de force, but pretty boring. (I recall one that took place on a body closely circling a black hole (neutron star? Doesn't matter) and the primitive protagonist is exploring and noticing the world around him and comes up with the theory of General Relativity in the heavily tidal environment without ever having known the Newtonian theory of gravity. When I caught on, I started thinking 'No, no. You can't be doing this!' He was. It was really clever — brilliant — but the story was a bore. But Egan's best are very, very good indeed — among the very best hard SF that has been written."

[PM: which pretty much sums up my thoughts on the matter as well. His shorter works tend to work better than his novels.]

"I'm glad you liked *Way Station* as it's one of my favorites, too. I met Simak at my very first SF convention — Minicon I, held Saturday afternoon at the student union at the University of Minnesota. The guests were Simak, Gordy Dickson and a much lesser-known writer. Gordy (as I learned later) was Gordy and Simak struggled to get a word in edgewise. But what I heard was marvelous. And that single slip led me into a depraved life of fandom..."

"I grew up in Red Wing, Minnesota, a small city on the Mississippi about an hour south of the Twin Cities. A further hour south and the land on both sides grows moderately rugged, all hills dissected with numerous creeks and small rivers flowing into the Mississippi, and that's where *Way Station* was set. While it nominally took place in the 1950s or 60s, culturally it was set in the pre-War period. By the 60s there was no more than an echo of the people Simak remembered — the War widened many horizons. But the countryside he remembered was spot-on. It really is pretty country — the whole upper Mississippi valley is gorgeous until it gets far enough south that it's all boring floodplain.

"Nowadays, rather than finding ginseng hunters, you're more likely to come across a clearing on a south-facing hillside with a few acres of wine grapes in it. They do make wines in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but this is more a matter of persistence than good sense. Winters will hit 40 below zero on the coldest night, and there's 40 inches (a meter) of precip that comes evenly through they year — there's nothing like a dry season. *Not* the recipe for great wine grapes!"

[**PM:** The more I read of Simak’s work the more I realise that the physical environment he utilises is as important a piece of the overall structure of the work as anything else. And he evokes a sense of place better than just about anyone in the field.]

Nick Price: “Loved the fencing problems bit. I don't think anyone will need to do any DIY projects in the UK for a few years as that's all a lot of people have had to do for the last half a year. The review of **Ring Shout** brought to mind the 2018 movie *BlacKkKlansman*. I thought it was going to be too political but it was more a good police story.”

[**PM:** I know of the film you mention but haven’t seen it as yet. Must rectify that at some time.]

SMALL STEPS ACROSS A FOREIGN LAND Responses

Some readers may recall that, at the end of 2020, I put out a fanzine titled *Small Steps Across a Foreign Land* which told of the trip that Robyn and I took to Iceland in 2019. Occasionally people download it from efanazines or FANAC and write to me about it. Given I won’t be putting out another issue of *Small Steps* until much later this year at the earliest I thought it best to include any responses here.

Mark Olson: “Priscilla and I visited Iceland after Interthingy 2 in 2005 and while our visit was short – 46 hours – we managed to see a lot of the Reykjanes peninsula. I envy you your longer visit and circumnavigation. (I can't say I envy you the weather though – it was pretty nice while we were there.)”

[**PM:** It was a great trip and one I heartily recommend. Especially if you live in Boston. You can stop off on the way over to Europe. Something I envy you about. I reckon if I flew to Iceland directly from Melbourne it would take me close to 35 hours, door-to-door. Assuming I could get a halfway decent connection out of the UK or Europe.]

I also heard from: **Nic Farey; Andrew O’Rorke; Leigh Edmonds** (who thinks I may be setting a bad example in my retirement with my fanzine publishing schedule – Ha! is all I say);

