



Coming Rain

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Western Australia, the wheatbelt. Lew McLeod has been travelling and working with Painter Hayes since he was a boy. Shearing, charcoal burning, whatever comes. Painter made him his first pair of shoes. It's a hard and uncertain life but it's the only one he knows.

But Lew's a grown man now. And with this latest job, shearing for John Drysdale and his daughter Clara, everything will change.

Stephen Daisley writes in lucid, rippling prose of how things work, and why; of the profound satisfaction in hard work done with care, of love and friendship and the damage that both contain.

‘Daisley’s reverence and knowledge of the outback transcends the cliché of heat, dust and flies, inviting readers into a mesmerising world of desert flora and fauna...He minutiae of the woolshed and animal behaviour are brought to life with skill and affection.’ Readings

Coming Rain Details

Date : Published 2015 by Text Publishing

ISBN : 9781922182029

Author : Stephen Daisley

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Australia, Literary Fiction

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From Reader Review Coming Rain for online ebook

Linda says

Drunken ramblings of two men, who almost communicate in a secret language of violence. Dingo story great, but still does not lift this to three stars.

David Whish-wilson says

My full review of this brilliant novel can be found at the ABR - <https://www.australianbookreview.com....>

Carolyn McK says

This has proved to be an excellent novel to discuss with my online Aus/NZ book group. Daisley is by birth a New Zealander but has worked and lived for some time in Western Australia. In this confronting novel, set in the 1950s in rural WA, he shows us the harsh life of shearers of that era and the class distinctions that applied to life in the bush.

But this novel offers much more than this. Alternate chapters are written about the human characters and a pregnant female dingo whose pack has been hunted and who is set on survival for herself, her pups and a young male dingo that joins her. As readers we become very much involved with this dingo and her future, as we do with the human characters.

Daisley writes about the best and the worst in human nature and also about the beauty and savagery of nature. He can write about violence and tenderness with equal facility. I was often shocked by brutality and then touched by tenderness.

Emma Sea says

Jesus Christ, this was fantastic! Wow, no wonder he won the NZ Book Awards this year.

Even if you're not a fan of literary fiction, consider giving this a go. The writing is fucking incredible.

Breakaway Reviewers says

An emotional journey set in the Australian outback

This is Stephen Daisley's second novel and based on the praise for his debut novel he has once again

delivered a great modern novel. The writer covers so many subjects in the seemingly simple story of a friendship between two nomadic sheep shearers - multiculturalism, class, love, loyalty and so much more.

The book is beautifully written and weaves a story from two perspectives, one through the eyes of Lewis McCleod and one through the eyes of a wild, female Dingo. It sounds bizarre but it works. The stories seem to be totally separate at first but then they conjoin and neither can escape the other as their fates intertwine.

I could not put the book down and was so drawn to the intricately woven characters. There are not many characters but they have such a deep impact on one another and the overall story. Stephen Daisley has an amazing gift and he can transport the reader to another world of heat and dust and death and danger but also lust, love and friendship. It is said of his debut novel that Daisley's greatest success is the depiction of a simple man with great depth and once again he has managed to do just this. Lewis McCleod is a man that has not had many breaks in life but he has a steely determination once he sets his sights on what he wants and he grows emotionally as the story unfolds until the beautiful conclusion. A man with compassion towards man and beast, a man prepared to stake everything for love, a man that refuses to be bound by the confines of the class system.

Daisley paints a picture of rural Western Australia as a barren, hot, hard land with even harder inhabitants. Men that perpetrate despicable acts towards the Aboriginals, men that kill and poison the wildlife in an attempt to tame the land. His writing is neither sentimental, nor melodramatic - there is no judgement. The writing allows the reader to reach their own conclusions.

All in all, a very beautiful piece of writing and a well-deserved 5 stars.

Gillian Minogue

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

Xerodog says

A really brutal but beautiful book. Having returned to Western Australia after living overseas for some years, this one really got me going. The descriptions of locations were perfect -- even down to a very short scene at Mason's Landing on the Canning River -- and I loved the way that Lew was developed and even the way that it was hinted that Painter was very unwell throughout the novel. In fact all of the characters were wonderfully realised. It is an uplifting story and it is not a sentimental one. I don't think that I have read a writer who writes so well and evokes a landscape and specialised culture so powerfully in a very long time. The dingo story was extremely well woven in to the main narrative, but remained a separate entity in itself. How wonderful to have writers of this quality working and publishing here.

John Bartlett says

I kept putting this book down as if it was a dangerous object, too afraid to read more perhaps or needing to

absorb the depth of what I was reading.

For me it was one of those books you keep putting aside because you don't want it to finish.

The language is sensual and cruel at the same time. Perhaps it's even erotic in the best sense, the descriptions of the land, the animals the people, all joined together in this unfolding drama.

I'd have to read the book again to quite understand what Daisley does with language. There's a strange interconnectedness between dialogue, description where sometimes it seems grammatical sentence structure is dispersed with. Not quite D H Lawrence but something more subtle.

The last few chapters were amongst the most moving I've read for along time.

For me Daisley's earlier novel 'Traitor' was one of my favourite books of all time and 'Coming Rain' exceeded my hopes.

It's a book that still lingers in my consciousness.

I do hope he keeps writing,

PattyMacDotComma says

5★

Unparalleled story-telling. I can't limit a nutshell to "life on a rural sheep station" or "dingoes in the dry country" or "loss and love in the bush". It has all those things, but so much more.

There are concurrent stories running along and across each other. One story is about the people. Two shearers--old hand and a younger offsider--go to shear on Drysdale Downs, an old family property, for a recently widowed, grief-stricken owner, his daughter, Clara, and a Malay cook, Jimmy.

The other story is about a pregnant dingo bitch and a young, half-grown male who are being tracked by an eccentric dingo hunter.

The author interweaves these stories with such skill that, as we drop in and out of them, we find our sympathies shifting and hoping that somehow, all will have happy endings. No spoilers here!

Painter is a heavy drinker and tells young Lew about a Fitzroy cocktail.

"Methylated spirits mixed with brasso. Strain the metho through a loaf of bread. Mix the Brasso in, it turns a cloudy colour. Give you an off balance no worries, son. . . Good company and doesn't ask questions. Tastes like wet bread and fuckin' door handles."

How many descriptions of country and skies and moods must I have read? Daisley's are so good that I kept rereading them.

The shearers at night.

"The huge arch and swirl of stars across the night. 'Look at that,' he said. 'A blackfella once told me they up there . . . the stars? . . . Babies hiding in an old woman's hair.'"

And in the morning: *"The sun woman's fire spread across the sky as the moon fled and the red light came down and over them all. A great flock of pink and grey galahs flew above the road and Lew watched as the light rose and for as far as he could see, the earth turned pale blue and mauve in the smoky pink of early morning."*

The shearing and preparations brought back all the smells and sounds of the woolshed (which I love) and the stories I've heard from shearers who've travelled with contractors. So-called "suburban shearing", (which I know) where shearers live in town and go to their own homes at night, is quite different from this rough semi-camping life so well-described here.

Clara, the daughter, features as a talented dog handler and horsewoman. I hesitate to use the term "whisperer" because it makes this sound like a light rural romance romp, and it is so much more than that. The author shows in perfect detail how her horse stands, twitches, turns, pulls, and stamps when she's pulled him to a stop to talk to someone.

About the only thing that gave me pause, was I admit I was surprised that the two shearers were their own rouseabouts—doing the picking-up, the sweeping, the skirting, the classing, and the pressing, as well as keeping the pens full. We are told that the owner is just too upset to work (and the daughter is off-limits), but for two shearers, you'd usually expect at least one other person to be keeping the wool away. Then again, trying times call for adaptability.

Absolutely first-rate. Thanks to NetGalley and Text Publishing for an advanced copy for review.

Outstanding!

**Quotes are from my advance copy, subject to change (but I certainly hope not).*

Karen says

Terrible and wonderful all at once. This book is the first for so many years to hold me completely under its spell as I read. There is beautiful and individualistic use of language for wordy nerds, but not so much that it ruins things for those who love a story with a good plot and riveting characters. Western Australia comes alive within these pages and I'm missing it already now I'm done. I will be reading more from Mr Daisley, you can be sure of that.

Jenni Ogden says

The story is set in Western Australia's outback in the 1950s. (We had a campervan trip through much of this country a few years ago, and his lyrical descriptions took me straight back there. It is mind-blowingly beautiful country with colours so vivid they seem impossible.) Daisley's writing style where he frequently uses sentence fragments, evokes the spareness and harshness and beauty of the place and characters. There are two parallel story lines; the first is that of a lone dingo bitch, and seeing the world through her senses is the best part of the book. A young male dog links up with her as the story moves on. They see the other human characters, but are not seen in return. Painter and Lewis, old and young, both shearers and drifters, end up on an isolated farm for the shearing. The farmer has lost his wife and is already partly mad with grief, and his only daughter, whose large pack of farm dogs and horses adore her, finds in young Lewis a much-needed friend and then lover. The relationships between these spare characters, each grappling with their own hard histories and devils, are poignant, harsh, beautiful, brutal, and in the end horrifying. It is one of the most beautifully written novels I have read in a long time, and it absolutely deserves its recent win of the NZ

inaugural \$50,000 Acorn Foundation Literary Prize.

Jean says

This is a new author for me. The story takes place on a sheep station in Western Australia in the 1950s. There are actually two narratives: one of Lew McLeod and Painter who are sheep shearers, and the other is an animal story about a pregnant dingo and her fight for survival.

The book is well written. I particularly enjoyed the story of the dingo's fight for survival in an extremely harsh environment. The life on the sheep station is in many ways equally harsh. The characters are interesting and complex. Daisley's descriptions made me feel as if I was on the station or hunting with the dingo. My only dislike about the book was the foul language. At least I did not feel the author overdid it. It was kept within the violent scenes or drunken ramblings of the two men.

I understand this book won the 2016 Ockham New Zealand Book Award for fiction.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. The book is almost seven and a half hours. Paul English does an excellent job narrating the book. English is an actor and audiobook narrator.

Lesley Moseley says

Very disappointed that a 4 star book was so tedious. I skipped the 'fox' story, and the other chapters had the most foul language I have ever read. I am not a prude, but its like listening to teenagers use like every few words.

Too clever by half, for me.

Mandy says

This short but powerful novel is set in the outback of Western Australia in the 1950s and it is evident from the first page that it is a world New Zealand author Daisley knows well. Wonderfully atmospheric, with vivid descriptions, it's a lyrical and often poetic tale of a life that is harsh and brutal and often violent. Two "mates" turn up to shear on a remote station and what follows is in turn moving and horrifying. This is a masterful piece of writing. With fully-developed and intriguing characters, authentic dialogue, well-paced and well-plotted, Daisley has written an expertly crafted novel. I found myself totally drawn into this alien world. Yes, there's violence here but there's also friendship and love, grief and loss, and it all combines into a compelling and unforgettable narrative. Excellent.

Margaret Galbraith says

I agree with some off the reviews here with having to put the book down. It is rather brutal at times but can not explain here unless I give spoilers. I found one scene in particular very confrontational and I could not stop thinking about it for a couple of days, even now it upsets me. I almost stopped reading the book a few times but do not like giving up on a book so I I persevered and I'm so very glad I did. In the end I found it so well written and descriptive it took my breathe away. Well worth a read and I'm interested to read more reviews too.

Lisa says

Stephen Daisley's second novel, *Coming Rain*, is a brutal book in many ways; it's grounded in the harsh reality of harsh country and the harsh people who live in it.

Just recently there has been an animal welfare campaign featuring shocking injuries done to sheep being shorn. It's drawn a swift response from rural communities claiming that sheep are too valuable to be damaged in the way that's depicted. The truth probably lies somewhere in between – after all, despite her best efforts, a hairdresser occasionally accidentally cuts a child who won't keep still. Perhaps it's inevitable with very sharp scissors and uncooperative wriggling children. The difference, I suppose, is that a hairdresser can't do whatever it takes to keep a kid still. Still, Daisley's depiction of what it can take to keep a sheep still, isn't pretty. This author's bio includes working on sheep and cattle stations so presumably he writes from experience. (But there's nothing in the novel to suggest that what he depicts is universal practice, or contemporary practice either. The novel is set in the middle of last century, if Wikipedia is right about the date that Evening Peal won the Melbourne Cup. Let's not have any arguments about livestock welfare here, ok?)

There are two narratives in *Coming Rain*. There's the story of Lew McCleod and his substitute father Painter taking seasonal work on a WA sheep station; and there's the story of a pregnant dingo encroaching into human territory. They're not parallel narratives though they seem so for much of the book: farmers don't muck about when it comes to dingoes raiding their stock. Yet there is a tenderness about the way Daisley brings this dingo to life:

The dingo stood and felt the giddiness, the ground whirling before her. She waited until it stopped. Took three steps, again waited. She needed to hunt and this need was as great as that to mate and to suckle; it was if she breathed. Without glancing back at the young dog she put her nose to the ground and at first walked, then trotted into the long yellow grass. Soon she was invisible.

As her mother had taught her to hunt she now hunted. Mostly it was patience and listening. Stilling to become as the moving land, the earth, the smoke bush. Yate trees and gimlet, salmon gums, ghost and white gums wandoo. The hushing of her heart and quiet breathing and to wait and then to attack. Nothing else. It was nearly dark, but not to her. (p. 137)

To read the rest of my review please visit <http://anzlitlovers.com/2015/04/24/coming-rain/>
