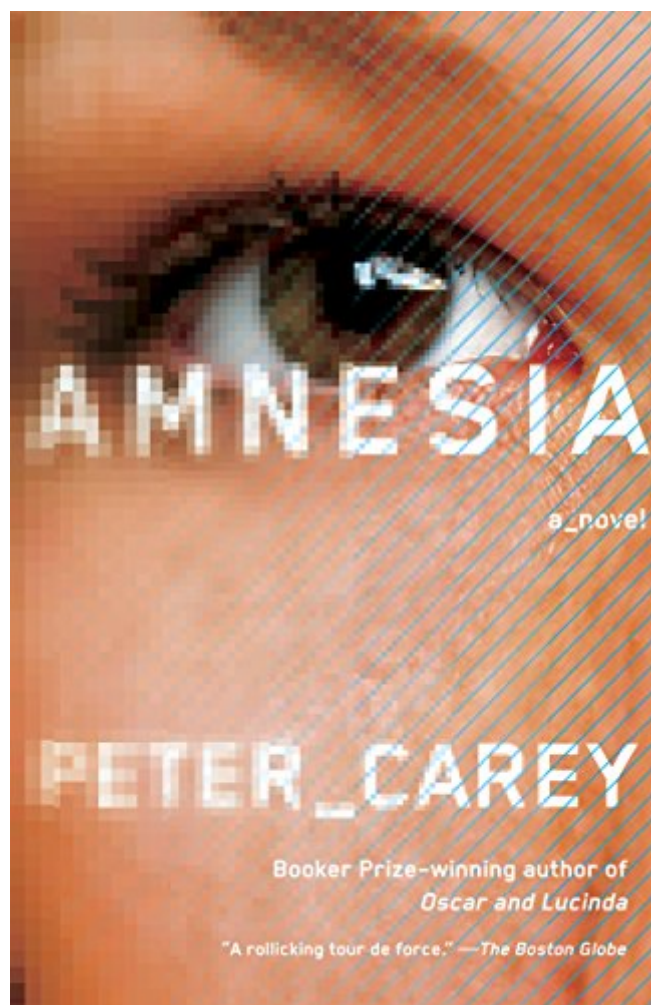


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Amnesia: A Novel (Vintage International)



Synopsis

The two-time Booker Prize winner now gives us an exceedingly timely, exhilarating novel "at once dark, suspenseful, and seriously funny" that journeys to the place where the cyber underworld collides with international power politics. When Gaby Baillieux releases the Angel Worm into Australia's prison computer system, hundreds of asylum-seekers walk free. And because the Americans run the prisons (let's be honest: as they do in so many parts of her country) the doors of some five thousand jails in the United States also open. Is this a mistake, or a declaration of cyber war? And does it have anything to do with the largely forgotten Battle of Brisbane between American and Australian forces in 1942? Or with the CIA-influenced coup in Australia in 1975? Felix Moore, known to himself as his sole remaining left-wing journalist, is determined to write Gaby's biography in order to find the answers "to save her, his own career, and, perhaps, his country. But how to get Gaby "on the run, scared, confused, and angry" to cooperate? Bringing together the world of hackers and radicals with the "special relationship" between the United States and Australia, and Australia and the CIA, *Amnesia* is a novel that speaks powerfully about the often hidden past "but most urgently about the more and more hidden present. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Amnesia*, Peter Carey blends a story of young Australian hackers with a powerful overlay of socialist politics. The result could have been outstanding, if only it weren't so difficult to read. *Amnesia* is written in an elliptical style that's clearly not intended to make things easy for the reader, and that's only the beginning of the confusion. The novel is divided into two parts. In the first part, the first-person narrator is Felix Moore, one of Australia's best-known journalists. Felix has just been convicted of libel in a high-profile trial where he was pitted against one of his favorite adversaries, a government minister. In Part Two, the narration is couched in the third person, although passages slip back into the first person, sometimes featuring Felix and other times featuring (separately) the mother and daughter who are two of the novel's other principal characters. As I said, confusing. As though all that doesn't make things sufficiently difficult for the reader, Carey liberally scatters Australian slang and obsolete British formulations throughout the text — words such as *cobber*, *dobbin*, *pash*, *mestered*, and *sooled*. If you know the meaning of these words and aren't Australian, I'd wonder how you've been spending your time all these years. Admittedly, I have no patience for such things. If you're prepared to brave your way through this novel, you might enjoy it immensely. The story that emerges at length is timely, engaging, and important. The amnesia of the title — Carey puts it as "The Great Amnesia of 1975" in the text — refers to the media's obfuscation and the public's indifference to what he describes as the extra-constitutional ouster of Australia's Labor government in that year, spearheaded, he claims, by the CIA.

'Amnesia' is a difficult book to put together that makes sense. The first third of the novel sounded promising like most of the Carey novels I have read. I am a Peter Carey fan, and understand most of his Australian words and terms. However, the middle third of this novel is a mish-mash, that does not hang together. The last third gave me the answers I was looking for, and is the kind of novel I expected. Felix Moore, a journalist, has just finished a trial that he lost, sued for defamation. His entire career was down the toilet, he had spent all his money on the trial, his wife wanted him out of the house after a careless fire. His biggest friend, Woody Townes, a millionaire of nefarious means, offers him a job writing a positive biography of a young girl, Gaby Baillieux, an activist who hacked into the Australian penal system's computer network in order to free migrants. The computer virus spread to dozens of American prisons, and the US government wanted to extradite Gaby and put her on trial. Felix knows Gaby's mother, Celine, from his college days. Celine does not trust Woody, says he works for the CIA, and ships Felix to the dense forest in a hidden conclave to write

the book. As Felix listens to the tapes he comes to understand Celine's background, and he enters the political fray of 1975, when the Australian Prime Minister was ousted with the help of the CIA. All of this comes to the fore, when he enters the computer/digital world of security leaks vis a vis, Snowden. Frederick, Gaby's boyfriend is the computer genius, and we see the level of intelligence it takes to enter this world. Much of the recordings of Gaby and Celine are too much, and the resultant conversations on the page bog this novel down.

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