

Peter Carey

The Fat Man in History

(AUSTRALIA)

1. His feet are sore. The emporium seems endless as he shuffles an odd-legged shuffle with the double-bed sheets under his arm. It is like a nightmare—the exit door in sight but not coming any closer, the oppressive heat, the constant swarm of bodies flowing towards him like insects drawn towards, then repelled by, a speeding vehicle.

He is sweating badly, attempting to look calm. The sheets are badly wrapped. He wrapped them himself, surprising himself with his own nerve. He took the sheets (double, because there were no singles in blue) and walked to the wrapping counter where he pulled out a length of brown paper and set to work. To an assistant looking at him queringly he said, smiling meekly, "You don't object?" The assistant looked away.

His trousers are large, floppy, and old-fashioned. Fortunately they have very large pockets and the pockets now contain several tins of smoked oysters. The smoked oysters are easy, always in big tubs outside the entrance to the self-service section. He has often wondered why they do this, why put them outside? Is it to make them easier to steal, because they are difficult to sell? Is it their way of providing for him and his friends? Is there possibly a fat man who has retained his position in the emporium? He enjoys himself with these theories, he has a love of such constructions, building ideas like card houses, extending them until he gets dizzy and trembles at their heights.

Approaching the revolving door he hesitates, trying to judge the best way to enter the thing. The door is turning fast, spewing people into the store, last-minute shoppers. He chooses his space and moves forward, bustling to get there in time. Deirdre, as tiny and bird-like as she always was, is thrown out of the revolving door, collides with him, hisses "slob" at him, and scurries into the store, leaving him with a sense of dull amazement, surprise that such a pretty face could express such fear and hatred so quickly.

Of course it wasn't Deirdre. But Alexander Finch reflects that it could have been. As he sadly circles inside the revolving door and walks slowly along the street he thinks how strange it is that the revolution should have produced this one idea that would affect his life so drastically: to be fat is to be an oppressor,

to be greedy, to be pre-revolutionary. It is impossible to say if it arose from the people or was fed to them by the propaganda of the revolution. Certainly in the years before the revolution most fat men were either Americans, stooges for the Americans, or wealthy supporters of the Americans. But in those years the people were of a more reasonable mind and could accept the idea of fat men like Alexander Finch being against the Americans and against the old Danko regime.

Alexander Finch had always thought of himself as possessing a lovable face and figure. He had not thought this from any conceit. At school they had called him "Cuddles," and on the paper everyone called him "Teddy" or "Teddy Bear." He had signed his cartoons "Teddy" and when he included himself in a cartoon he was always a bewildered, rotund man with a large bum, looking on the antics of the world with smiling, fatherly eyes.

But somehow, slowly, the way in which the world looked at Alexander Finch and, in consequence, the way Alexander Finch looked at himself altered. He was forced to become a different cartoon, one of his own "Fat Americans": grotesque, greedy, an enemy of the people.

But in the early days after the revolution the change had not taken place. Or, if it had, Finch was too busy to notice it. As secretary of the Thirty-second District he took notes, recorded minutes, wrote weekly bulletins, drafted the ten-day reports to the Central Committee of Seventy-five, and still, somehow, found time to do a cartoon for his paper every day and to remember that General Kooper was spelt with a "K" and not a "C" (Miles Cooper being one of the infamous traitors of the revolution). In addition he was responsible for inspecting and reporting on the state of properties in the Thirty-second District and investigating cases of hardship and poverty wherever he found them. And if, during these early days, he occasionally became involved in unpleasant misunderstandings he regarded them as simply that, nothing more. People were accustomed to regarding all fat officials as either American or Danko men, because only the Americans and their friends had had enough food to become fat on. Occasionally Finch attempted to explain the nature of glandular fat and to point out that he wasn't a real official but rather the cartoonist "Teddy," who had always been anti-Danko.

Finch was occasionally embarrassed by his fatness in the early days when the people were hungry. But, paradoxically, it wasn't until the situation improved, when production had reached and passed the pre-revolutionary figure and when the distribution problems had finally been more or less ironed out, that the fat question came to the fore. And then, of course, food was no problem at all. If anything there was a surfeit and there was talk of dumping grain on the world market. Instead it was dumped in the sea.

Even then the district committees and the Committee of Seventy-five never passed any motions directly relating to fat men. Rather the word "fat" entered slyly into the language as a new adjective, as a synonym for greedy, ugly, sleazy, lazy, obscene, evil, dirty, dishonest, untrustworthy. It was unfair. It was not a good time to be a fat man.

Alexander Finch, now secretary of the clandestine "Fat Men Against The

Revolution," carries his stolen double-bed sheets and his cans of smoke oysters northwards through the hot city streets. His narrow slanting eyes are almost shut and he looks out at the world through a comforting curtain of eyelashes. He moves slowly, a fat man with a white cotton shirt, baggy grey trousers, and a slight limp that could be interpreted as a waddle. His shirt shows large areas of sweat, like daubs, markings deliberately applied. No one bumps him. At the traffic lights he stands to one side, away from the crowds. It seems to be a mutual arrangement.

The sheets under his arm feel heavy and soggy. He is not sure that he has gotten away with it. They may be following him still (he dares not look around), following him to the house, to discover what else he may have stolen. He smiles at the thought of all those empty cans of smoked oysters in the incinerator in the backyard, all those hundreds of cans they will find. And the beer keg Fantoni stole. And the little buddha he stole for Fantoni's birthday but somehow kept for himself, he felt so sorry for (or was it fond of?) the little fat statue. He accuses himself of self-love but reflects that a little self-love is tonic for a fat man in these times.

Two youths run past him, bumping him from either side. He assumes it was intentional but is uncertain. His whole situation is like that, a tyranny of subtlety. To be fired from his job with the only newspaper that had been continually sympathetic to Kooper and his ideas for "slovenliness" and "bad spelling." He had laughed at loud, "Bad spelling." It was almost a tradition that cartoonists were bad spellers. It was expected of them and his work was always checked carefully for literals. But now they said his spelling was a nuisance and wasteful of time, and anyway he was "generally slovenly in dress and attitude." Did "slovenly" really mean "fat"? He didn't ask them. He didn't wish to embarrass them.

2.

Milligan's taxi is parked in front of the house. The taxi is like Milligan: it is very bright and shiny and painted in stripes of iridescent blue and yellow. Milligan spray-painted it himself. It looks like a dodgem car from Luna Park, right down to the random collection of pink stars stencilled on the driver's door.

Milligan is probably asleep.

Behind Milligan's taxi the house is very still and very drab, painted in the colours of railway stations and schools: hard green and dirty cream. Rust shows through the cream paint on the cast-iron balcony and two pairs of large baggy underpants hang limply from a line on the upstairs verandah.

It is one of six such houses, all identical, surrounded by high blocks of concrete flats and areas of flat waste land where dry thistles grow. The road itself is a major one and still retains some of its pre-revolutionary grandeur: rows of large elms form an avenue leading into the city.

The small front garden is full of weeds and Glino's radishes. Finch opens the front door cautiously, hoping it will be cooler inside but knowing that it won't be. In the half-dark he gropes around on the floor, feeling for letters. There are none—Fantoni must have taken them. He can still make out the

dark blotches on the door where May sat and banged his head for three hours. No one has bothered to remove the blood.

Finch stands in the dark passage and listens. The house has the feeling of a place where no one works, a sort of listlessness. May is upstairs playing his Sibelius record. It is very scratched and it makes May morose, but it is the only record he has and he plays it incessantly. The music filters through the heavy heat of the passage and Finch hopes that Fantoni is not in the kitchen reading his "correspondence"—he doesn't wish Fantoni to see the sheets. He shuffles slowly down the passage, past the foot of the high, steep stairs, through the strange little cupboard where Glino cooks his vegetarian meals in two battered aluminium saucepans, and enters the kitchen where Fantoni, wearing a florid Hawaiian shirt and smoking a cigar, is reading his "correspondence" and tugging at the large moustache which partially obscures his small mouth. Finch has often thought it strange that such a large man should have such a small mouth. Fantoni's hands are also small but his forearms are large and muscular. His head is almost clean-shaven, having the shortest of bristles covering it, and the back of his head is divided by a number of strange creases. Fantoni is the youngest of the six fat men who live in the house. An ex-parking officer, aged about twenty-eight, he is the most accomplished thief of them all. Without Fantoni they would all come close to starving, eking out a living on their pensions. Only Milligan has any other income.

Fantoni has connections everywhere. He can arrange food. He can arrange anything but the dynamite he needs to blow up the 16 October Statue. He has spent two months looking for the dynamite. Fantoni is the leader and driving force of the "Fat Men Against The Revolution." The others are like a hired army, fighting for Fantoni's cause which is to "teach the little monkeys a lesson."

Fantoni does not look up as Finch enters. He does not look up when Finch greets him. He does nothing to acknowledge Finch's presence. Because he is occupied with "my correspondence," the nature of which he has never revealed to anyone. Finch, for once, is happy that Fantoni doesn't look up, and continues out onto the porch with the green fibreglass sunroof, past Fantoni's brand-new-bicycle and Glino's herbs, along the concrete path, past the kitchen window, and comes to what is known as "the new extensions."

"The new extensions" are two bedrooms that have been added onto the back of the house. Their outside walls are made from corrugated iron, painted a dark, rusty red. Inside they are a little more pleasant. One is empty. Finch has the other. Finch's room is full of little pieces of bric-à-brac—books, papers, his buddha, a Rubens print, postcards from Italy with reproductions of Renaissance paintings. He has an early map of Iceland on the wall above the plywood bedhead, a grey goatskin rug covering the biggest holes in the maroon felt carpet, a Chinese paper lantern over the naked light globe.

He opens the door, steps back a pace, and pulls a huge comic fatman's face to register his disgust to some invisible observer.

The room has no insulation. And with each day of heat it has become hotter and hotter. At 4 A.M. It becomes a little cooler and at 7 A.M. it begins to heat

up again. The heat brings out the strange smells of previous inhabitants, strange sweats and hopes come oozing out in the heat, ghosts of dreams and spilt Pine-o-Kleen.

The window does not open. There is no fly-wire screen on the door. He can choose between suffocation and mosquitoes.

Only a year ago he did a series of cartoons about housing conditions. He had shown corrugated-iron shacks, huge flies, fierce rats, and Danko himself pocketing the rent. Danko's men had called on him after the fourth one had appeared. They threatened to jail him for treason, to beat him up, to torture him. He was very frightened, but they did nothing.

And now he is living in a corrugated-iron room with huge blow-flies and the occasional rat. In a strange way it pleases him that he is no longer an observer, but it is a very small pleasure, too small to overcome the sense of despair that the smells and the suffocating heat induce in him.

He opens the roughly wrapped parcel of sheets and arranges them on the bed. The blue is cool. That is why he wanted the blue so badly, because it is cooler than white, and because it doesn't show the dirt so badly. The old sheets have turned a disgusting brown. If they were not listed in the inventory he would take them out and burn them. Instead he rolls them up and stuffs them under the bed.

If Fantoni had seen the sheets there would have been a row. He would have been accused, again, of self-indulgence, of stealing luxuries instead of food. But Fantoni can always arrange sufficient food.

He peels off the clinging, seat-soaked clothes and throws them onto the goatskin rug. Bending over to remove his socks he catches sight of his body. He stands slowly, in amazement. He is Alexander Finch whose father was called Senti but who called himself Finch because he sold American cigarettes on the black market and thought the name Finch very American. He is Alexander Finch, thirty-five years old, very fat, very tired, and suddenly, hopelessly sad. He has four large rolls of fat descending like a flesh curtain suspended from his navel. His spare tyres. He holds the fat in his hand, clenching it, wishing to tear it away. He clenches it until it hurts, and then clenches harder. For all the Rubens prints, for all the little buddhas he is no longer proud or even happy to be fat. He is no longer Teddy. But he is not yet Fantoni or Glimo—he doesn't hate the little monkeys. And, as much as he might pretend to, he is never completely convincing. They suspect him of mildness.

He is Finch whose father was called Senti, whose father was not fat, whose mother was not fat, whose grandfather may well have been called Chong or Ching—how else to explain the narrow eyes and the springy black hair?

3. There are six fat men in the house: Finch, Fantoni, May, Milligan, Glimo, and one man who has never divulged his name. The man-who-won't-give-his-name has been here from the beginning. He is taller, heavier, and stronger

than any of the others, Fantoni included. Finch has estimated his weight at twenty-two stone. The man-who-won't-give-his-name has a big tough face with a broken nose. Hair grows from him everywhere, it issues from his nose, his ears, flourishes in big bushy white eyebrows, on his hands, his fingers and, Finch has noticed, on his large rounded back. He is the only original tenant. It was because of him that Florence Nightingale suggested the place to Fantoni, thinking he would find a friend in another fat man. Fantoni offered accommodation to Milligan. A month or so later Finch and May were strolling along 16 October Avenue (once known as Royal Parade) when they saw three men talking on the upstairs balcony outside Fantoni's room. Fantoni waved. May waved back, Milligan called to them to come up, and they did. Glimo moved in a week later, having been sent with a letter of introduction from Florence Nightingale.

It was Fantoni who devise the now legendary scheme for removing the other tenants. And although the man-who-won't-give-his-name never participated in the scheme, he never interfered or reported the matter to the authorities.

The man-who-won't-give-his-name says little and keeps to himself. But he always says good-morning and good-night and once discussed Iceland with Finch on the day Finch brought home the map. Finch believes he was a sailor, but Fantoni claims that he is Calsen, an academic, who was kicked out of the university for seducing one of "the little scrawnies."

Finch stands in front of the mirror, his hands digging into his stomach. He wonders what Fantoni would say if he knew that Finch had been engaged to two diminutive girls, Deirdre and Anne, fragile girls with the slender arms of children who had both loved him with a total and unreasonable love, and he them, before the revolution.

4. May turns his Sibelius record to side two and begins one more letter to his wife. He begins, Dear Iris, just a short note to say everything is all right.

5. Finch is sitting in the kitchen leafing through the Botticelli book he has just bought. It took half the pension money. Everyone is out. He turns each page gently, loving the expensive paper as much as the reproductions.

Behind him he hears the key in the front door. He puts the book in the cupboard under the sink, among the saucepans, and begins to wash up the milk bottles; there are dozens of them, all dirty, all stinking.

There is cursing and panting in the passage. He can hear Fantoni saying, the little weed, the little fucker. Glimo says something. There is an unusual sense of urgency in their voices. They both come into the kitchen at once. Their clothes are covered with dirt but Fantoni is wearing overalls.

Glimo says, we went out to Deer Park.

There is an explosives factory at Deer Park. Fantoni has discussed it for

months. No one could tell him what sort of explosive they made out there, but he was convinced it was dynamite.

Fantoni pushes Finch away from the sink and begins to wash the dirt off his hands and face. He says, the little weeds had guns.

Finch looks at Glino, who is leaning against the door with his eyes closed, his hands opening and closing. He is trembling. There is a small scratch on one of his round, smooth cheeks and blood is seeping through his transparent skin. He says, I thought I was going in again, I thought we'd gone for sure.

Fantoni says, shut up, Glino.

Glino says, Christ, if you've ever been inside one of those places you'll never want to see one again.

He is talking about prison. The fright seems to have overcome some of his shyness. He says, Christ I couldn't stand it.

Finch, handing Fantoni a tea towel to dry himself with, says, did you get the dynamite?

Fantoni says, well, what do *you* think! It's past your bedtime.

Finch leaves, worrying about the Botticelli book.

6. Florence Nightingale will soon be here to collect the rents. Officially she arrives at 8 P.M., but at 7:30 she will arrive secretly, entering through the backyard, and visit Finch in "the new extensions."

Finch has showered early and shaved carefully. And he waits in his room, the door closed for privacy, checking with serious eyes to see that everything is tidy.

These visits are never mentioned to the others, there is an unspoken understanding that they never will be.

There is a small tap on the door and Florence Nightingale enters, smiling shyly. She says, wow, the heat. She is wearing a simple yellow dress and leather sandals that lace up her calves Roman-style. She closes the door with an exaggerated sort of care and tiptoes across to Finch, who is standing, his face wreathed in a large smile.

She says, hello, Cuddles, and kisses him on the cheek. Finch embraces her and pats her gently on the back. He says, the heat . . .

As usual Finch sits on the bed and Florence Nightingale squats yoga-style on the goatskin rug at his feet. Finch once said, you look as if Modigliani painted you. And was pleased that she knew of Modigliani and was flattered by the comparison. She has a long straight face with a nose that is long vertically but not horizontally. Her teeth are straight and perfect, but a little on the long side. But now they are not visible and her lips are closed in a strange calm smile that suggests melancholy. They enjoy their melancholy together, Finch and Florence Nightingale. Her eyes, which are grey, are very big and very wide and she looks around the room as she does each time, looking for new additions.

She says, it got to 103 degrees . . . the steering wheel was too hot to touch.

Finch says, I was shopping. I got a book on Botticelli.

Her eyes begin to circle the room more quickly. She says, where, show me? Finch giggles. He says, it's in the kitchen cupboard. Fantoni came back while I was reading it.

She says, you shouldn't be frightened of Fantoni, he won't eat you. You've got blue sheets, *double* blue sheets. She raises her eyebrows.

He says, no significance, it was just the colour.

She says, I don't believe you. *Double* blue sheets. Florence Nightingale likes to invent a secret love life for him but he doesn't know why. But they enjoy this, this sexual/asexual flirtation. Finch is never sure what it is meant to be but he has never had any real hopes regarding Florence Nightingale, although in sleep and half-sleep he has made love to her many times. She is not quite frail enough. There is a strength that she attempts to hide with little girl's shyness. And sometimes there is a strange awkwardness in her movements as if some logical force in her mind is trying to deny the grace of her body. She sits on the floor, her head cocked characteristically on one side so her long hair falls over one eye. She says, how's the Freedom Fighter?

The Freedom Fighter was Finch's name for Fantoni. Finch says, oh nothing, we haven't done anything yet, just plans.

She says, I drove past the 16 October Statue—it's still there.

Finch says, we can't get the explosive. Maybe we'll just paint it yellow.

Florence Nightingale says, maybe you should eat it.

Finch loves that. He says, that's good, Nancy, that's really good.

Florence Nightingale says, it's your role, isn't it? The eaters? You should be have in character, the way they expect you to. You should eat everything. Eat the Committee of Seventy-five. She is rocking back and forth on the floor, holding her knees, balancing on her arse.

Finch tries not to look up her skirt. He says, a feast.

She cups her hands to make a megaphone and says, The Fat Men Against The Revolution have eaten General Kooper.

He says, and General Alvarez.

She says, the Central Emporium was devoured last night, huge droppings have been discovered in 16 October Avenue.

He says, you make me feel like the old days, good fat, not bad fat.

She says, I've got to go. I was late tonight. I brought you some cigars, some extra ones for you.

She has jumped up, kissed him, and departed before he has time to thank her. He remains on the bed, nursing some vague disappointment, staring at the goatskin rug.

Slowly he smiles to himself, thinking about eating the 16 October Statue.

7.

Florence Nightingale will soon be here to collect the rents. With the exception of Fantoni, who is in the shower, and Glino, who is cooking his vegetarian meal in his little cupboard, everyone is in the kitchen.

Finch sits on a kerosene drum by the back annexe, hoping to catch whatever breeze may come through.

Milligan, in very tight blue shorts, yellow T-shirt, and blue-tinted glasses, squats beside him, smiling to himself and rubbing his hands together. He has just finished telling a very long and involved story about a prostitute he picked up in his cab and who paid him double to let her conduct her business in the backseat. She made him turn his mirror back to front. No one cares if the story is true or not.

Milligan says, yep.

Milligan wears his clothes like corsets, always too tight. He says it is good for his blood, the tightness. But his flesh erupts in strange bulges from his thighs and stomach and arms. He looks trussed up, a grinning turkey ready for the oven.

Milligan always has a story. His life is a continual charade, a collection of prostitutes and criminals, "characters," beautiful women, eccentric old ladies, homosexuals, and two-headed freaks. Also he knows many jokes. Finch and May sit on the velvet cushions in Milligan's room and listen to the stories, but it is bad for May, who becomes depressed. The evenings invariably end with May in a fury saying, Jesus, I want a fuck, I want a fuck so badly it hurts. But Milligan just keeps laughing, somehow never realizing how badly it affects May.

May, Finch, Milligan, and the-man-who-won't-give-his-name lounge around the kitchen, drinking Glimo's homemade beer. Finch has suggested that they wash the dirty milk bottles before Florence Nightingale arrives and everyone has agreed that it is a good idea. However, they have all remained seated, drinking Glimo's homemade beer. No one likes the beer, but out of all the things that are hard to steal alcohol is the hardest. Even Fantoni cannot arrange it. Once he managed to get hold of a nine-gallon keg of beer but it sat in the back yard for a year before Glimo got hold of a gas cylinder and the gear for pumping it out. They were drunk for one and a half days on that lot, and were nearly arrested en masse when they went out to piss on the commemorative plaque outside the offices of the Fifty-fourth District.

No one says much. They sip Glimo's beer from jam jars and look around the room as if considering ways to tidy it, removing the milk bottles; doing something about the rubbish bin—a cardboard box which was full a week ago and from which eggshells, tins, and breadcrusts cascade onto the floor. Every now and then May reads something from an old newspaper, laughing very loudly. When May laughs, Finch smiles. He is happy to see May laughing because when he is not laughing he is very sad and liable to break things and do himself an injury. May's forehead is still scarred from the occasion when he battered it against the front door for three hours. There is still blood on the paintwork.

May wears an overcoat all the time, even tonight in this heat. His form is amorphous. He has a double chin and a drooping face that hangs downwards from his nose. He is balding and worries about losing hair. He sleeps for most of the day to escape his depressions and spends the nights walking around the house, drinking endless glasses of water, playing his record, and groaning quietly to himself as he tries to sleep.

May is the only one who was married before the revolution. He came to

this town when he was fired from his job as a refrigerator salesman, and his wife was to join him later. Now he can't find her. She has sold their house and he is continually writing letters to her, care of anyone he can think of who might know her whereabouts.

May is also in love with Florence Nightingale, and in this respect he is no different from the other five, even Fantoni, who claims to find her skinny and undemourished.

Florence Nightingale is their friend, their confidante, their rent collector, their mascot. She works for the revolution but is against it. She will be here soon. Everybody is waiting for her. They talk about what she will wear.

Milligan, staring intently at his large Omega watch, says, peep, peep, peep, peep, on the third stroke . . .

The front door bell rings. It is Florence Nightingale.

The-man-who-won't-give-his-name springs up. He says, I'll get it, I'll get it. He looks very serious but his broken, battered face appears to be very gentle. He says, I'll get it. And sounds out of breath. He moves with fast heavy strides along the passage, his back hunched urgently like a jungle animal, a rhino, ploughing through undergrowth. It is rumoured that he is having an affair with Florence Nightingale but it doesn't seem possible.

They crowd together in the small kitchen, their large soft bodies crammed together around the door. When Florence Nightingale nears the door there is much pushing and shoving and Milligan dances around the outside of the crowd, unable to get through, crying "make way there, make way for the lady with big blue eyes" in his high nasal voice, and everyone pushes every way at once. Finally it is Fantoni who arrives from his shower and says, "For Christ's sake, give a man some room."

Everybody is very silent. They don't like to hear him swear in front of Florence Nightingale. Only Fantoni would do it, no one else. Now he nods to her and indicates that she should sit down on one of the two chairs. Fantoni takes the other. For the rest there are packing cases, kerosene tins, and an empty beer keg which is said to cause piles.

Fantoni is wearing a new safari suit, but no one mentions it. He has sewn insignia on the sleeves and the epaulettes. No one has ever seen this insignia before. No one mentions it. They pretend Fantoni is wearing his white wool suit as usual.

Florence Nightingale sits simply with her hands folded in her lap. She greets them all by name and in turn; to the-man-who-won't-give-his-name she merely says "hello." But it is not difficult to see that there is something between them. The-man-who-won't-give-his-name shuffles his large feet and suddenly smiles very broadly. He says, "Hello."

Fantoni then collects the rent which they pay from their pensions. The rent is not large, but the pensions are not large either. Only Milligan has an income, which gives him a certain independence.

Finch doesn't have enough for the rent. He had meant to borrow the difference from Milligan but forgot. Now he is too embarrassed to ask in front of Fantoni.

He says, I'm a bit short.

Florence Nightingale says, forget it, try and get it for next week. She counts the money and gives everyone a receipt. Finch tries to catch Milligan's eye.

Later, when everyone is smoking the cigars she has brought and drinking Glino's homebrew, she says, I hate this job, it's horrible to take this money from you.

Glino is sitting on the beer keg. He says, what job would you like? But he doesn't look at Florence Nightingale. Glino never looks at anyone.

Florence Nightingale says, I would come and look after you. We could all live together and I'd cook you crêpe Suzettes.

And Fantoni says, but who would bring us cigars then? And everybody laughs.

8. Everyone is a little bit drunk.

Florence Nightingale says, Glino, play us a tune.

Glino says nothing, but seems to double up even more so that his broad shoulders become one with his large bay window. His fine white hair falls over his face.

Everybody says, come on, Glino, give us a tune. Until, finally, Glino takes his mouth organ from his back pocket and, without once looking up, begins to play. He plays something very slow. It reminds Finch of an albatross, an albatross flying over a vast, empty ocean. The albatross is going nowhere. Glino's head is so bowed that no one can see the mouth organ, it is sandwiched between his nose and his chest. Only his pink, translucent hands move slowly from side to side.

Then, as if changing its mind, the albatross becomes a gypsy, a peddler, or a drunken troubador. Glino's head shakes, his foot taps; his hands dance.

Milligan jumps to his feet. He dances a sailor's dance. Finch thinks it might be the hornpipe, or perhaps it is his own invention, like the pink stars stencilled on his taxi door. Milligan has a happy, impish face with eyebrows that rise and fall from behind his blue-tinted glasses. If he weighed less his face might even be pretty. Milligan's face is half-serious, half-mocking, intent on the dance, and Florence Nightingale stands slowly. They both dance, Florence Nightingale whirling and turning, her hair flying, her eyes nearly closed. The music becomes faster and faster and the five fat men move back to stand against the wall, as if flung there by centrifugal force. Finch, pulling the table out of the way, feels he will lose his balance. Milligan's face is bright red and steaming with sweat. The flesh on his bare white thighs shifts and shakes and beneath his T-shirt his breasts move up and down. Suddenly he spins to one side, drawn to the edge of the room, and collapses in a heap on the floor.

Everyone claps. Florence Nightingale keeps dancing. The clapping is forced into the rhythm of the music and everyone claps in time. May is dancing with Florence Nightingale. His movements are staccato, he stands with his feet apart, his huge overcoat flapping, stamps his feet, spins, jumps, shouts,

nearly falls, takes Florence Nightingale around the waist and spins her around and around, they both stumble, but neither stops. May's face is transformed, it is living. The teeth in his partly open mouth shine white. His overcoat is like some magical cloak, a swirling beautiful thing.

Florence Nightingale constantly sweeps long hair out of her eyes.

May falls. Finch takes his place but becomes puffed very quickly and gives over to the man-who-won't-give-his-name.

The man-who-won't-give-his-name takes Florence Nightingale in his arms and disregards the music. He begins a very slow, gliding waltz. Milligan whispers in Glino's ear. Glino looks up shyly for a moment, pauses, then begins to play a Strauss waltz.

Finch says, the "Blue Danube." To no one in particular.

The man-who-won't-give-his-name dances beautifully and very proudly. He holds Florence Nightingale slightly away from him, his head is high and cocked to one side. Florence Nightingale whispers something in his ear. He looks down at her and raises his eyebrows. They waltz around and around the kitchen until Finch becomes almost giddy with embarrassment. He thinks, it is like a wedding.

Glino once said (of prisons): "If you've ever been inside one of those places you wouldn't ever want to be inside one again."

Tonight Finch can see him lying on his bunk in a cell, playing the "Blue Danube" and the albatross and staring at the ceiling. He wonders if it is so very different from that now: they spend their days lying on their beds, afraid to go out because they don't like the way people look at them.

The dancing finishes and the man-who-won't-give-his-name escorts Florence Nightingale to her chair. He is so large, he treats her as if she were wrapped in crinkly cellophane, a gentleman holding flowers.

Milligan earns his own money. He asks Fantoni, why don't you dance?

Fantoni is leaning against the wall smoking another cigar. He looks at Milligan for a long time until Finch is convinced that Fantoni will punch Milligan.

Finally Fantoni says, I can't dance.

9.

They all walk up the passage with Florence Nightingale. Approaching the front door she drops an envelope. The envelope spins gently to the floor and everyone walks around it. They stand on the porch and wave goodnight to her as she drives off in her black government car.

Returning to the house Milligan stoops and picks up the envelope. He hands it to Finch and says, for you. Inside the official envelope is a form letter with the letterhead of the Department of Housing. It says, Dear Mr Finch, the department regrets that you are now in arrears with your rent. If this matter is not settled within the statutory seven days you will be required to find other accommodation. It is signed, Nancy Bowlby.

Milligan says, what is it?

Finch says, it's from Florence Nightingale, about the rent.

They walk for a long time. Finch wonders why the thistles grow in these parts, why they are sad, why they only grow where the ground has been disturbed, and wonders where they grew originally.

He says, do they make you sad?

May says, what?

He says, the thistles.

May doesn't answer. Finally he says, you were crazy to mention it. He'll really do it. He'll *really* do it.

Finch stubs his toe on a large block of concrete. The pain seems deserved. He says, it didn't enter my mind—that he'd think of Nancy.

May says, he'll really do it. He'll bloody well eat her. Christ, you know what he's like.

Finch says, I know, but I didn't mention Nancy, just the statue.

May wraps his overcoat around himself and draws his head down into it. He says, he *looks* evil, he *likes* being fat.

Finch says, that's reasonable.

May says, I can still remember what it was like being thin. Did I tell you, I was only six, but I can remember it like it was yesterday. Jesus it was nice. Although I don't suppose I appreciated it at the time.

Finch says, shut up.

May says, he's still trying to blow up that bloody statue and he'll get caught. Probably blow himself up. Then we'll be the ones that have to pinch everything. And we'll get caught, or we'll starve more like it.

Finch says, help him get some dynamite and then dob him in to the cops. While he's in jail he couldn't eat Florence Nightingale.

May says, and we wouldn't eat anything. I wouldn't mind so much if he just wanted to screw her. I wouldn't mind screwing her myself.

Finch says, maybe he is. Already.

May pulls his overcoat tightly around himself and says, no, it's what his name, the big guy, that's who's screwing her. Did you see them dancing? It's him.

Finch says, I like him.

May says nothing. They have come near a main road and they wordlessly turn back, keeping away from the streetlights, returning to the thistles.

Finch says, it was Nancy's idea. She said why don't we eat the statue.

May says, you told me already. You were nuts. She was nuts too but she was only joking. You should have known that he's serious about everything. He really wants to blow up everything, not just the fucking statue.

Finch says, he's fascist.

May says, what's a fascist?

Finch says, like Danko . . . like General Kooper . . . like Fantoni. He's going to dig a hole in the backyard. He calls it the barbecue.

12.

In another two hours Finch will have earned enough money for the rent. Fantoni is paying him by the hour. In another two hours he will be clear and then he'll stop. He hopes there is still two hours' work. They are digging a hole

Milligan says, seven days?

Finch says, oh, she has a job to do, it's not her fault.

10.

May has the back room upstairs. Finch is lying in bed in "the new extensions."

He can hear Milligan calling to May.

Milligan says, May?

May says, what is it?

Milligan says, come here.

Their voices, Milligan's distant, May's close, seem to exist only inside Finch's head.

May says, what do you want?

Milligan shouts, I want to tell you something.

May says, no you don't, you just want me to tuck you in.

Milligan says, no. No, I don't.

Fantoni's loud raucous laugh comes from even further away.

The-man-who-won't-give-his-name is knocking on the ceiling of his room with a broom. Finch can hear it going bump, bump, bump. The Sibelius record jumps. May shouts, quit it.

Milligan says, I want to tell you something.

May shouts, no you don't.

Finch lies naked on top of the blue sheets and tries to hum the albatross song but he has forgotten it.

Milligan says, come *here*. May? May, I want to tell you something.

May says, tuck yourself in, you lazy bugger.

Milligan giggles. The giggle floats out into the night.

Fantoni is in helpless laughter.

Milligan says, May?

May's footsteps echo across the floorboards of his room and cross the corridor to Milligan's room. Finch hears Milligan's laughter and hears May's footsteps returning to May's room.

Fantoni shouts, what did he want?

May says, he wanted to be tucked in.

Fantoni laughs. May turns up the Sibelius record. The-man-who-won't-give-his-name knocks on the ceiling with a broom. The record jumps.

11.

It is 4 A.M. and not yet light. No one can see them. As May and Finch leave the house a black government car draws away from the kerb but, although both of them see it, neither mentions it.

At 4 A.M. it is cool and pleasant to walk through the waste lands surrounding the house. There are one or two lights on in the big blocks of flats, but everyone seems to be asleep.

They walk slowly, picking their way through the thistles.

Finally May says, you were crazy.

Finch says, I know.

among the dock weeds in the backyard. It is a trench like a grave but only three feet deep. He asked Milligan for the money but Milligan had already lent money to Gino and May.

Fantoni is wearing a pair of May's trousers so he won't get his own dirty. He is stripped to the waist and working with a mattock. Finch clears the earth Fantoni loosens; he has a long-handled shovel. Both the shovel and the mattock are new; they have appeared miraculously, like anything that Fantoni wants.

They have chosen a spot outside Finch's window, where it is completely private, shielded from the neighbouring houses. It is a small private spot which Fantoni normally uses for sunbathing.

The top of Fantoni's bristly head is bathed in sweat and small dams of sweat have caught in the creases on the back of his head; he gives strange grunts between swings and carries out a conversation with Finch, who is too exhausted to answer.

He says, I want the whole thing . . . in writing, OK? . . . write it down . . . all the reasons . . . just like you explained it to me.

Finch is getting less and less earth on the shovel. He keeps aiming at the earth and overshooting it, collecting a few loose clods on the blade. He says, yes.

Fantoni takes the shovel from him. He says, you write that now, write all the reasons like you told me, and I'll count that as time working. How's that? And he is not sure how it is. He cannot believe any of it. He cannot believe that he, Alexander Finch, is digging a barbecue to cook a beautiful girl called Florence Nightingale in the backyard of a house in what used to be called Royal Parade. He would not have believed it, and still cannot.

He says, thanks Fantoni.

Fantoni says, what I want, Finch, is a thing called a rationale . . . that's the word isn't it . . . they're called rationales.

13.

Rationale by A. Finch

The following is a suggested plan of action for the "Fat Men Against The Revolution."

It is suggested that the Fat Men of this establishment pursue a course of militant love, by bodily consuming a senior member of the revolution, an official of the revolution, or a monument of the revolution (e.g. the 16 October Statue).

Such an act would, in the eyes of the revolution, be in character. The Fat Men of this society have been implicitly accused of (among other things) loving food too much, of loving themselves too much to the exclusion of the revolution. To eat a member or monument of the revolution could be seen as a way of turning this over towards the revolution. The Fat Men would incorporate in their own bodies all that could be good and noble in the revolution and excrete that which is bad. In other words, the bodies of Fat Men will purify the revolution.

Alexander Finch shivers violently although it is very hot. He makes a fair copy of the draft. When he has finished he goes upstairs to the toilet and tries, unsuccessfully, to vomit.

Fantoni is supervising the delivery of a load of wood, coke, and kindling in the backyard. He is dressed beautifully in a white suit made from lightweight wool. He is smoking one of Florence Nightingale's cigars.

As Finch descends the stairs he hears a loud shout and then, two steps later, a loud crash. It came from May's room. And Finch knows without looking that May has thrown his bowl of goldfish against the wall. May loved his goldfish.

14.

At dinner Finch watches Fantoni eat the omelette that Gino has cooked for him. Fantoni cuts off dainty pieces. He buries the dainty pieces in the small fleshy orifice beneath his large moustache.

15.

May wakes him at 2 A.M. He says, I've just realized where she is. She'll be with her brother. That's where she'll be. I wrote her a letter.

Finch says, Florence Nightingale.

May says, my wife.

16.

Gino knows. Milligan knows. May and Finch know. Only the man-who-won't-give-his-name is unaware of the scheme. He asked Fantoni about the hole in the backyard. Fantoni said, it is a wigwam for a goose's bridle.

17.

The deputation moves slowly on tiptoes from Finch's room. In the kitchen annex someone trips over Fantoni's bicycle. It crashes. Milligan giggles. Finch punches him sharply in the ribs. In the dark, Milligan's face is caught between laughter and surprise. He pushes his glasses back on the bridge of his nose and peers closely at Finch.

The others have continued and are now moving quietly through the darkened kitchen. Finch pats Milligan on the shoulder. He whispers, I'm sorry. But Milligan passes on to join the others where they huddle nervously outside the man-who-won't-give-his-name's room.

Gino looks to Finch, who moves through them and slowly opens the door. Finch sums up the situation. He feels a dull soft shock. He stops, but the others push him into the room. Only when they are all assembled inside the room, very close to the door, does everybody realize that the man-who-won't-give-his-name is in bed with Florence Nightingale.

Florence Nightingale is lying on her side, facing the door, attempting to smile. The man-who-won't-give-his-name seems very slow and very old. He rummages through the pile of clothes beside the bed, his breathing the only sound in the room. It is hoarse, heavy breathing that only subsides after he has

found his underpants. He trips getting into them and Finch notices they are on inside out. Eventually the-man-who-won't-give-his-name says, it is generally considered good manners to knock.

He begins to dress now. No one knows what to do. They watch him hand Florence Nightingale her items of clothing so she can dress beneath the sheet. He sits in front of her then, partially obscuring her struggles. Florence Nightingale is no longer trying to smile. She looks very sad, almost frightened.

Eventually Finch says, this is more important, I'm afraid, more important than knocking on doors.

He has accepted some new knowledge and the acceptance makes him feel strong although he has no real idea of what the knowledge is. He says, Fantoni is planning to eat Florence Nightingale.

Florence Nightingale, struggling with her bra beneath the sheet, says, we know, we were discussing it. Milligan giggles.

The-man-who-won't-give-his-name has found his dressing gown in the cupboard in the corner. He remains there, like a boxer waiting between rounds.

Florence Nightingale is staring at her yellow dress on the floor. Glimo and May bump into each other as they reach for it at the same time. They both retreat and both step forward again. Finally it is Milligan who darts forward, picks up the garment, and hands it to Florence Nightingale, who disappears under the sheets once more. Finch finds it almost impossible not to stare at her. He wishes she would come out and dress quickly and get the whole thing over and done with.

Technically, Florence Nightingale has deceived no one.

Glimo says, we got to stop him.

Florence Nightingale's head appears from beneath the sheets. She smiles at them all. She says, you are all wonderful . . . I love you all.

It is the first time Finch has ever heard Florence Nightingale say anything so insincere or so false. He wishes she would unsay that.

Finch says, he must be stopped.

Behind him he can hear a slight shuffling. He looks around to see May, his face flushed red, struggling to keep the door closed. He makes wild signs with his eyes to indicate that someone is trying to get in. Finch leans against the door, which pushes back with the heavy weight of a dream. Florence Nightingale slides sideways out of bed and Glimo pushes against Finch, who is sandwiched between two opposing forces. Finally it is the-man-who-won't-give-his-name who says, let him in.

Everybody steps back, but the door remains closed. They stand, grouped in a semicircle around it, waiting. For a moment it seems as if it was all a mistake. But finally, the door knob turns and the door is pushed gently open. Fantoni stands in the doorway wearing white silk pyjamas.

He says, what's this, an orgy?

No one knows what to do or say.

18.

Glimo is still vomiting in the drain in the backyard. He has been vomiting since dawn and it is now dark. Finch said he should be let off, because he was a vegetarian, but the-man-who-won't-give-his-name insisted. So they made Glimo eat just a little bit.

The stench hangs heavily over the house.

May is playing his record.

Finch has thought many times that he might also vomit.

The blue sheet which was used to strangle Fantoni lies in a long tangled line from the kitchen through the kitchen annexe and out into the backyard, where Glimo lies retching and where the barbecue pit, although filled in, still smokes slowly, the smoke rising from the dry earth.

The-man-who-won't-give-his-name had his dressing gown ruined. It was soaked with blood. He sits in the kitchen now, wearing Fantoni's white safari suit. He sits reading Fantoni's mail. He has suggested that it would be best if he were referred to as Fantoni, should the police come, and that anyway it would be best if he were referred to as Fantoni. A bottle of Scotch sits on the table beside him. It is open to anyone, but so far only May has taken any.

Finch is unable to sleep. He has tried to sleep but can see only Fantoni's face. He steps over Glimo and enters the kitchen.

He says, may I have a drink please, Fantoni?

It is a relief to be able to call him a name.

19.

The-man-who-won't-give-his-name has taken up residence in Fantoni's room. Everybody has become used to him now. He is known as Fantoni.

A new man has also arrived, being sent by Florence Nightingale with a letter of introduction. So far his name is unknown.

20.

"Revolution in a Closed Society—A Study of Leadership among the Fat" by Nancy Bowlby

Leaders were selected for their ability to provide materially for the welfare of the group as a whole. Obviously the same qualities should reside in the heir-apparent, although these qualities were not always obvious during the waiting period; for this reason I judged it necessary to show favouritism to the heir-apparent and thus to raise his prestige in the eyes of the group. This favouritism would sometimes take the form of small gifts and, in those rare cases where it was needed, shows of physical affection as well.

A situation of "crisis" was occasionally triggered, *deus ex machina*, by suggestion, but usually arose spontaneously and had only to be encouraged. From this point on, as I shall discuss later in this paper, the "revolution" took a similar course and "Fantoni" was always disposed of effectively and the new "Fantoni" took control of the group.

The following results were gathered from a study of twenty-three successive "Fantonis." Apart from the "Fantoni" and the "Fantoni-apparent," the composition of the group remained unaltered. Whilst it can be admitted that studies so far are at an early stage, the results surely justify the continuation of the experiments with larger groups.



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for Books and Writers
by *Bamber Gascoigne*

Peter Carey (b. 1943)

Australian short story writer and novelist, who has combined in his works realism, fantastic, and surreal situations. Carey's first novel, *Bliss* (1981), can be read as a posthumous fantasy, *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* (1994) is set in an alternate-world Earth, and *The Big Bazoochley* (1995) involves a witch. His dark satire *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988) won the Booker Prize for fiction and was filmed in 1997.

"My great-grandfather drifted up the Bellinger River like a blind man up the central aisle of Notre Dame. He saw nothing. The country was thick with sacred stories more ancient than the ones he carried in his sweat-slippery leather Bible. He did not even imagine their presence. Some of these stories were as small as the transparent arthropods that lived in the puddles beneath the river casuarinas. These stories were like fleas, thrip, so tiny that they might inhabit a place (inside the ears of the seeds of grass) he would later walk across without even seeing. In this landscape every rock had a name, and most names had spirits, ghosts, meanings." (from *Oscar and Lucinda*)

Peter Carey was born in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria. His parents, who had a General Motors dealership, sent him to Geelong Grammar School, one of the leading private schools, "where the children of Australia's Best Families all spoke with English accents". Carey studied briefly in 1961 at Monash University, where he failed a science degree. After leaving university, Carey worked in advertising agencies in Melbourne and London. He started to read passionately, especially the work of Joyce, Beckett, Kafka and Faulkner, and in 1964 he began to write. By 1968 he had composed three unpublished novels. In 1974 Carey moved to Sydney, where he became one of the best copywriters in the country. He campaigned among others for Lindemans winery, with the slogan, "You make us smile, Dr. Lindeman." In the 1980s he opened McSpedden Carey Advertising Consultants with Bani McSpedden. About 1990 Carey moved with his wife, Alison Summers, a theater director, and his son, to New York, where he taught creative writing at University of New York. When his American editor asked if he would like to co-write the memoirs of his fellow Australian, Julian Assenge, he dismissed the idea. "Two control freaks? It wouldn't work," he said in an interview to the *Bookseller* in 2014.

As a writer Carey made his debut with *The Fat Man in History* (1974), highly praised by critics. It was followed by *War Crimes* (1979), an award winning collection of short stories, most of which Carey wrote in an "alternative community" at Yandina in the rainforest of Queensland. *Bliss* was a darkly comic novel about an advertising executive, Harry Joe, who wakes up from a heart operation and believes that the life he has known is in fact Hell: his wife is having an affair with his business partner, his clients poison the environment, his daughter uses drugs, his son is a Communist; they have incestuous relationship. Harry must die again before he is free from the world he hates.

While living in Bellingen in northern New South Wales, Carey wrote *Illywhacker* (1985), which partly drew on his grandfather's experiences

delivering the first mail around Australia. The book took its title from an Australian colloquialism for *con artist*. Herbert Badgery, the 139-year-old "illywhacker," confesses at the novel's beginning that he is a liar, but anyhow tells the history of twentieth-century Australia through his comic adventures. In the true spirit of postmodernist playful treatment of "reality," Herbert questions the truth of the very stories he is telling, and parallels the official history of the country with prodigious lies.

The Bellingen Valley and its surroundings left also marks on *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), an historical *tour de force* set in the 19th century. It is a caricature of the bigotry of Christianity and a love story of Oscar Hopkins and Lucinda Leplastrier. Oscar quarrels with his father and escapes into Anglicanism – his father is one of the Plymouth Brethren. Compulsive gambling - Oscar has proved the existence of God for himself by gambling - takes the young Reverend to Australia. On the ship he meets Lucinda, an orphaned heiress, and an obsessive gambler. She owns a glass factory and together they built a 12-ton cathedral made from glass. Lucinda bets her inheritance that Oscar cannot deliver his church to his remote missionary post. But Carey has already made it clear, that the union of Oscar and Lucinda is impossible. Oscar's foolish attempt fails and the church sinks into the Bellinger river. "And when the long-awaited white fingers of water tapped and lapped on Oscar's lips, he welcomed them in as he always had, with a scream, like a small boy caught in the sheet-folds of a nightmare." The theme of gambling was for Carey a handy plot device but it also reflected the author's postmodernist philosophical stance: "I remembered what Pascal said about belief in God being a gamble – and when I find two things that fit like that, it interests me." Gillian Armstrong's film version of the book, starring Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett, dealt the theme of self-restructive passion in more distant manner than Werner Herzog in his films *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* (1972) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

Tax Inspector (1991) was a tragicomedy of modern life in run-down town outside Sydney, set amongst Catchprices, a cursed family of car dealers. In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, which Carey wrote in New York City, he presents the reader two imaginary lands: the domineering high-tech Voorstand and the archipelago called Efica, populated by rebellious and nationalistic people. The title of the novel refers to *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne (1713-1768). As in his earlier works, Carey shows his laid-back mastery over the techniques of storytelling: "'Please sit in your seats,'" Tristan, the disillusioned narrator, starts, "while I have you understand exactly why my heart is breaking." In *Jack Maggs* (1997) a departed criminal returns in secret to England from Australia, to see his beloved son. Carey took his protagonist from Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Magwitch in the book. The novel won the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Departing from the standard custom, according to which the winner receives an invitation to meet the Queen, Carey dropped the invitation for family and personal reasons.

Carey's novels have been a gold mine for critics who look influence of magic realism, Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, Charles Dickens, postmodernism, and postcolonial political literature. Carey himself has

not explained too much of his work. He has said that Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had a huge effect on him, but in a *New York Times* interview Carey confessed that he has "never really read Dickens. I quit 'Bleak House' after I encountered this nauseatingly good little girl. But I will read Dickens one day, I promise."

True History of the Kelly Gang (2001) won the prestigious Booker Prize in 2001. It drew a colorful portrait of the famous Irish-Australian outlaw and tragic martyr. Receiving the award, Carey told that he was indebted to his wife and the writer Ian McEwan, one of the favorite candidates, promising to buy him an expensive meal. Carey adopted in the book the language of late-19th-century rural Australians, using among his sources the outlaw's one surviving letter. "I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false." Carey takes the reader from Ned's childhood and teenage years in prisons to his horse stealings and bank robbings, and finally to his years as a leader of a rebel band of farmers, fighting against servants of a corrupt system. In 2001 Carey also published *A Wildly Distorted Account*, a travel book of the author's 30 days visit to Sydney.

My Life as a Fake (2003) was inspired by Australia's most famous literary hoax, the "Ern Malley Scandal" of 1944, which completely humiliated one editor and a number of modernist poets, and sent two joking poets into exile. *Theft: A Love Story* (2006), narrated by two brother, was about art, forgery, murder, and true love. "Peter Carey is a superb writer, whose prose is always active, and who infuses his characters, however eccentric, with a warmth that lets them live in our minds. But "Theft" is not a superb novel; there is something displaced at its heart." (John Updike in *The New Yorker*, Issue of 2006-05-29) *The Chemistry of Tears* (2012), Carey's 12th novel, is set in two timelines. Catherine, a horologist, mourns in contemporary England the sudden death of her lover, and in nineteenth century an Englishman, Henry Brandling, hires a German watch-maker to built an automaton for his son, who suffers from consumption. Through Brandling's notebooks, Catherine reconstructs the clockwork machine, a swan, and at the same tries to mend her broken heart. "This tour de force of the imagination succeeds on all fronts," said Rebecca K. Morrison in the *Independent*. *Amnesia* (2014) was populated by a variety of characters, among them Gaby Baillieux, a young female hacker, her mother and grandmother, a journalist named Felix Moore who is commissioned to writer Gaby's story, and Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and President Richard Nixon. Reviewers were mostly unimpressed by the book.

Peter Carey was one of the writers, who withdrew from the PEN American Center gala in 2015 after the organization decided to honour the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* with an award. 12 people were killed in January 2015 in a terrorist attack on the magazine in Paris. Referring to the magazine's fiercely brutal cartoons of the prophet Muhammad and other Muslims Carey said in an interview that "All this is complicated by PEN's seeming blindness to the cultural arrogance of the French nation, which does not recognise its moral obligation to a large and disempowered segment of their population." In 2018, Carey's

14th novel, *A Long Way from Home* (2017), was longlisted for The Miles Franklin Literary Award, Australia's most prestigious literature prize.

For further reading: *Rewriting History: Peter Carey's Fictional Biography of Australia* by Andreas Gaile (2010); *Peter Carey: A Literary Companion* by Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2010); *Dancing on Hot MacAdam: Peter's Carey's Fiction* by Anthony J. Hassall (1998); *Peter Carey* by Bruce Woodcock (1997); *Peter Carey* by Graham Huggan (1996); *Aspects of Narration in Peter Carey's Novels* by Hermine Krassnitzer (1995); *Dancing on Hot Macadam* by A. Hassall (1994); *Peter Carey* by Karen Lamb (1992); *Australian Voices* by Ray Willbanks (1991); *Liars: Australian New Novelists* by H. Daniel (1988)

Selected works:

- The Fat Man in History, 1974
- War Crimes, 1979
- Bliss, 1981
 - Hurmio (suom. Matti Kannosto, 1983)
 - film adaptation: Bliss, 1985, prod. New South Wales Film Corp., Window III Productions, screenplay written with Ray Lawrence, directed by Ray Lawrence, starring Barry Otto, Lynette Curran, Helen Jones, Miles Buchanan
- Illywhacker, 1985
- Oscar and Lucinda, 1988 (Booker Prize in 1988)
 - Oscar ja Lucinda (suom. Leena Tamminen, 1989)
 - film adaptation in 1997, prod. Australian Film Finance Corporation (AFFC), Dalton Films, Fox Searchlight Pictures, dir. by Gillian Armstrong, screenplay by Laura Jones, starring Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett, Ciarán Hinds, Tom Wilkinson
- Exotic Pleasures, 1990
- The Tax Inspector, 1991
- Until the End of the World, 1992 (screenplay)
 - film adaptation: Bis ans Ende der Welt, 1991, prod. Argos Films, Road Movies Filmproduktion, Village Roadshow Pictures, dir. by Wim Wenders, starring William Hurt, Solveig Dommartin, Sam Neil, Max von Sydow, Jeanne Moreau
- The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith, 1994
- Collected Stories, 1994
- A Letter to Our Son, 1994
- The Big Bazoohley, 1995
- Jack Maggs, 1997
- True History of the Kelly Gang, 2001 (Booker Prize in 2001)
 - Kellyn koplá: tosi tarina (suom. Seppo Lojonen, 2002)
- 30 Days in Sydney: A Wildly Distorted Account, 2001
- Four Easy Pieces, 2002
- My Life as a Fake, 2003
- Wrong about Japan, 2005
- Theft: A Love Story, 2006
- His Illegal Self, 2008
- Parrot and Olivier in America, 2010
- The Chemistry of Tears, 2012
- Amnesia, 2014
- A Long Way from Home, 2017