



A Long Way from Home

Peter Carey

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The two-time Booker Prize-winning author now gives us a wildly exuberant, wily new novel that circumnavigates 1954 Australia, revealing as much about the country-continent as it does about three audacious individuals who take part in the infamous 10,000 mile race, the Redex Trial.

Irene Bobs loves fast driving. Her husband is the best car salesman in south eastern Australia. Together they enter the Redex Trial, a brutal race around the ancient continent, over roads no car will ever quite survive. With them is their lanky fair-haired navigator, Willie Bachhuber, a quiz show champion and failed school teacher who calls the turns and creeks crossings on a map that will remove them, without warning, from the white Australia they all know so well. This is a thrilling high speed story that starts in one way, and then takes you some place else. It is often funny, more so as the world gets stranger, and always a page-turner even as you learn a history these characters never knew themselves.

Set in the 1950s, this a world every American will recognize: black, white, who we are, how we got here, and what we did to each other along the way.

A Long Way from Home is Peter Carey's late style masterpiece.

A Long Way from Home Details

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Author : Peter Carey

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From Reader Review A Long Way from Home for online ebook

PattyMacDotComma says

4.5★

“There was no money in the Redex Trial. Two hundred lunatics circumnavigating the continent of Australia, more than ten thousand miles over outback roads so rough they might crack your chassis clean in half. . .

Now we would face the killer country. We would face roads with dust two feet deep. We would circle the whole of our murderous continent in the same car Joe Blow drove to work.”

I stand corrected! This is what I said in my original review: *“Part of the fun of the particular Aussie edition I read was the misspelling of “Redex Trial” on the car. It reads ‘Redex Trail’, which makes me wonder if the artist is too young to know what car trials are.”*

Well shame on me! Mind you, I heard the author asked about this spelling on the cover illustration, and he said he hadn't seen it, so he had no idea. A reader has admonished me severely for making a wisecrack about the artist's age and said it's from an old poster. I haven't found the poster, but I did find what looks like the car that inspired it, TRAIL instead of TRIAL and all the same sponsors, I think. I apologise. I do love the cover illustration, but I still wonder about the spelling.

B+W photo of what looks like the car on the cover. This Holden sedan was the 1954 Redex Trial entry of Ross Krieg, Ron Treloar, and Ron Sanders, Jr. of Willaston South Australia.

This story takes place in the 1950s, and the Redex was a popular event followed by all car enthusiasts as we waited to hear what Gelignite Jack Murray had blown up each day (to clear the track with “jelly”, of course).

Titch Bobs and wife Irene take part in the trial with neighbour Wille Bachhuber as navigator. Titch is a tiny man, ever so handsome, according to his equally tiny wife. His father is a con-man, a slick, womaniser who drives Fords and drives Irene nuts. The family dynamics of the Bobs family is the backbone of the story as Titch and Irene try to open a Holden (!)* dealership and promote it through the Redex. The Titches and Willie live in Bacchus Marsh, a town west of Melbourne, where the author grew up.

But Willie, as a schoolteacher and radio quiz master at only 26, is a major part of the body of the story. He has been married, left his wife and new-born son (sure it isn't his), and lives next door to the Titches. He's fascinated by maps, and when his school principal assigns him to create a school syllabus about the wool industry, he starts researching.

He's surprised to find the bloody colonial story he never learned in school and somehow never ran across when studying for the quiz show. As he travels back and forth from Bacchus Marsh to Melbourne to film the show, he says

“. . . , the landscape beside the railway line was always dreary and denuded: rabbit burrows, erosion, L-shaped plantations of hard conifer windbreaks in the corners of the lonely paddocks . . . I would soon see that same landscape outside the window for what it had always been: a forgotten colonial

battleground, the blood-soaked site of a violent ‘contact’ between the indigenous blacks and the imperial whites. If it was not a state secret, it might as well have been.”

He begins comparing today’s property boundaries with maps of indigenous lands.

“... maps of the pastoralist properties which lay like a lethal patchwork on top of the true tribal lands. . I was at peace transcribing the famous properties of Deanside and Rockbank. It was a map of murder of course. What else was I to do?”

As an Australian, Willie Bachhuber is horrified, but as a man who was mesmerised by his grandmother’s old European atlas, he is fixated on mapping itself and the fact that he never felt he belonged in South Australia where he was born but rather has an **“unshakeable belief that I did not belong where my mother had delivered me . . . ,my true home must be in the atlas of the Habsburg Empire and the lands of Hungary.”**

Of course, this removes him personally from the issue of Aboriginal bloody dispossession, not being of colonial background. But he finds he can’t dismiss it and takes his maps in the car. As the trial begins and they work their way up the east coast of Australia, more bits of Aboriginal history surface.

I have heard Peter Carey interviewed about this story, and he said he felt compelled as an Australian writer, to find and tell the truth about the history of his homeland. He gives away more of the story in his interviews than I’m prepared to share here, but suffice to say that “the Bobbseys”, as Willie calls them, get an unexpected education about Aboriginal slaughter from their educated navigator.

When Irene finds a child’s skull in a pile of bones in a hollow in the bush, she brings it back to the car and notes that it has a bullet hole. She wonders how many bodies were buried in the hollow. They work their way across country with arguments and battles and heat and dust and eventually find the locals looking at them strangely. They discover that Aboriginal people can’t move freely in towns but are assigned to wherever they’ve been put.**

The Titches and Bachhuber are ‘adopted’ by an old Aboriginal they call the Battery Doctor (because he does a good Bush Mechanic’s trick to fix the battery - Aussie readers may know the wonderful TV series of that name, where Aboriginal ‘mechanics’ in the outback replace broken axles with logs, etc.) We meet his family and see how they live.

I sometimes get impatient with Carey’s writing, and I don’t know exactly why. The chapters rotate between Titch, Irene and Willie, mostly, and it isn’t always obvious at first who’s speaking, which I find annoying. I’m not usually THAT thick. Had I opened it in the library to read the beginning, I would have put it back. It didn’t appeal to me at all. But having heard about it, heard Carey read some, and being interested in both the Ford-vs-Holden (GM) rivalry in motor sport and in Aboriginal history, I had to give it a go.

I’m glad I did. There is much to recommend it, including this passage:

“I had waited for it, the wet season, through every blistering morning and the heated rocks of afternoon, and still I was not prepared, not for its density, immensity, the roar upon the roof, the obliteration of all distance, the air sucked from my lungs, as if it meant to kill me. The rain was the temperature of blood.”

A couple of footnotes:

*Until recently, General Motors Holden manufactured cars in Australia in fierce rivalry with Ford, like the American Ford-Chevy rivalry but this is almost a religious thing in Australia!

** Aboriginal people had cards or tags to allow them to move around. This is the “exemption” that the Battery Doctor carried. Full-bloods were restricted.

“General Certificate of Exemption. This document entitles the bearer, HALF CASTE Aboriginal known as LOCHY PETERSON (1) to leave Quamby Downs Station, (2) to walk freely through town without being arrested, (3) to enter a ship or hotel (individual may not be served—at proprietor’s discretion). N.B: Speaking in Native Language prohibited.”

Faith says

I really struggled to read this book. Every once in a while there was some tidbit that piqued my interest and kept me from giving up on it, but I wasn't crazy about the writing style, pace or tone of the book. I was also sometimes flummoxed by Australian expressions. I'd round 2.5 rating stars up to 3. I think the author had good intentions but perhaps he is not the right person to tackle the history of the cruel and racist treatment of the Aborigines in Australia. By combining that history with that of a road race it diminished the impact of an important story about which I know very little.

The blurb makes it sound like the book is centered around a road race, but the race in 1953 doesn't even begin until the second half of the book. The beginning of the book is an introduction to three quirky characters. Irene and Titch Bobs are struggling to open a car dealership in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria. Their neighbor is Willie Bachhuber, a 26 year old high school teacher and celebrity quiz show contestant who loses both jobs. The story is told in alternating chapters by Irene and Willie and it often took me a while to figure out which one was talking. The three of them decide to enter the Redex Trial, an 18 day road race. "Two hundred lunatics circumnavigating the continent of Australia, more than ten thousand miles over outback roads so rough they might crack your chassis clean in half."

Interspersed with details of the Redex, which is a pretty boring race, we get random information about the lives of Willie and the Bobs (or, as Willie sometimes calls them, the Bobbseys), Willie's nazi brother, quiz shows, and the history of Australia. The most interesting part of the book to me is the last part which is devoted to the period after Willie leaves the race. He reluctantly gets another teaching position educating the children of Aborigines workers. "They paid me twenty pounds a week to erase the past, to modernise the blacks, to make them as white as possible in the hope that they would grow up as stockboys and house lubras and punks wallahs." It turns out that Willie is the one getting the education. The dialect used occasionally in this part of the book was too much work for me to follow. "They been fight whitefellah. They been have a spear and whitefellah been have a rifle. If whitefellah been come up got no bit of a gun, couldn't roundem up, killing all the people. They never been give him fair go." This was my first time reading this author and I was hoping to like the book more than I did.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Jennifer says

This book really is two books within one. The first part is an exploration of white Australian culture and its enduring motifs including cars, masculinity and yobbo culture. Carey interrogates how those who don't fit into this might navigate the Australian way of life.

But these perceived struggles between masculinity and feminism, as well as yobbo culture and intellectualism are only part of any exploration into Australian culture. History tells us that Australian culture has been built over the top of the subjugation of Australian Aboriginal culture. Carey goes where few Australian authors have dared to go. Some possibly because of a belief that this aspect of the Australian experience isn't white Australian's story to tell and some probably because it is so far from our everyday experience that we are simply not capable of writing about it. As a result the second part of the story has a very different feel and pace to. However it is no less compelling for that.

Even though I found it inexplicable at times, if I let the writing wash over me, hang on and stay the ride, I discovered that I experienced an understanding at a much more elemental and emotional level rather than a logical intellectual one. This is Carey's genius; he is able to elicit this reaction in the reader. His ability to evoke the feel of the outback from the ever-present enveloping dust in the dry to the unrelenting mud in the wet probably had a lot to do with it.

In hindsight, Willie's status as the outsider in the first half of the book telegraphed his status as the centre of the story in its second half. The title of the book also provokes questions as to who is a long a way from home, where is home, whose home is it and how far do we have to travel to get there?

The book is sad, compelling and forces the reader to stare directly into the underbelly of white Australian history. It also shows us a culture that has survived despite its subjugation and draws for the reader everyday small acts of rebellion as well as suggesting big acts since colonisation that have largely gone ignored by white culture. I believe that this book will be remembered as one of Australia's great stories.

Latkins says

I knew nothing about the Redex Trial, a round-Australia competition to test out cars and gain publicity for them, until reading this book, which is set in the 1950s, but this brings it to life. This novel is so well-written it's hard to stop reading it. Told in alternate chapters by Willy, a young man who has fled his wife and child in Adelaide to become a teacher in the remote Bacchus Marsh in South Australia; and Irene Bobs, Willy's next door neighbour, wife of 'Titch' (an aspiring car salesman), and mother of two. Titch, Irene and Willy team up to take on the challenge of the Redex Trial, but there are secrets that Irene and Willy will discover along the way. Towards the end of this novel, the lighthearted antics become a lot more serious, as Willy begins a journey of self-discovery. There are some sad and horrific truths about the ingrained racism and maltreatment of the aboriginal population in Australia, which come out and haunt all the characters. Believe me, this is one of those books you will not forget.

Ron Charles says

What we want from two-time Booker winner Peter Carey is another propulsive Australian masterpiece like "True History of the Kelly Gang." What we get is this opaque tale of spoiled affections and disinterred racism called "A Long Way From Home."

Not that you'd know that from the novel's jaunty opening or snazzy dust jacket. The early chapters, set in postwar Australia, feel like the setup for a rom-com road race. One of the novel's two narrators is irrepressible Irene, wife of Titch Bobs, the greatest Ford salesman in rural Victoria. Irene adores him: "I was put on earth to love your tortured body and your. . . .

To read the rest of this review, go to The Washington Post:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/entert...>

Radiantflux says

9th book for 2018.

The Commonwealth of Australia was founded under the concept of Terra Nullius. The Empty Land. No land was taken because no owners existed before the first white settlers arrived. This was obviously a fiction, but one only struck down by the Eddie Mabo case High Court in the 1980s, when Australia finally acknowledged prior black settlement of the continent (Mabo's grave was subsequently desecrated by angry whites).

I had almost no knowledge of aboriginal history growing up in Melbourne in the 1970s. When aborigines appeared at all they were either presented as exotic foreigners in Australia culture – the uncanny bushman who could track anything, able to hunt with a boomerang, eat exotic foods, goanna, witchetty grubs, emu – or as lazy hopeless dirty drunks who would never be able to fit into civilized society.

Australian settlement pretty much started with the gold rush in the 1850s, or if you were lucky you could trace your ancestors back to the original penal settlement from the 1820s or before. Blacks had no part in this story. They were part of the backdrop like kangaroos and eucalyptus trees.

The Melbourne I grew up in was a vibrant multicultural city (my mother and grandmother were two of those new immigrants of Balts after the Second World War mentioned by Carey early in the book), but one almost without blacks.

I remember once sitting around a kitchen table sometime in the early 1980s, drinking beers with a group of university friends. Kate, was telling of her recent trip up North. Once, walking in a northern country town, alone, shortly before sundown, she suddenly felt a black arm was around her shoulder. She was terrified. I am protecting you the voice said. Those white guys over there are bad. They will hurt you. Come with me. And so she was led by this aboriginal to drink with group of blacks sitting on the grassy nature strip in the middle of the main road that passed through town. You are safe now she was told. Those whites won't touch you now that you have been with us.

Around the same time a couple of friends decided they would walk through Redfern, an aboriginal suburb in Sydney. They assumed that since they were left/green that everything would be OK. But suddenly as they were walking empty bottles were being thrown out of houses all around them and they had to make a hasty retreat running along the middle of the road. They were so white they had assumed being white wasn't a problem.

As a student I hitched up North as far as Cairns. I remembered visiting once as a child when it still a fishing

village, now it was full of tourists – Japanese honeymooners, and backpackers – heading out to the reef or up into the rainforest. One night I was walking along the beach, and 50 meters away a I saw a group of eight or so aborigines gathered around in a circle drinking. Suddenly a police wagon appeared all were arrested. I remember my anger/shame watching as a frail older woman, who could have passed for my grandmother's age, along with the rest being put onto the metal floor at the back for the arrest wagon. Cleaning up the town for the tourists.

And so it goes on: On one of my returns to Australia in the 2000s I remember throughout my drive to my airport arguing with my parents who were insisting that all aboriginal children were in danger, as pedophilia was entrenched in Aboriginal culture.

I mention these stories by way of a long prelude because Carey's book annoyed me in the way it wrapped up this atrocious part of Australian history in a sort of horrible nostalgic glow (while Carey probably had little to do with the cover, its telling that it shows a 1950s auto in all its retro beauty). It's a lot safer to talk about racism through the prism of a lost time more than sixty years ago, especially when most of the action occurs a very long way from the main population centers of Melbourne and Sydney (the slave markets in Libya are about as far as the techno clubs in my wintery neighbourhood of Berlin). It would have been very interesting if he had set his book not in the Far North in the 1950s, but in the 2000s in Melbourne or Sydney.

The structure of the book also doesn't work for me as it tries unsuccessfully to be two very different things at once – a mythic retelling of Carey's own childhood in Bacchus Marsh in the Australia in the 1950s (where his father owned a Holden dealership) and subsequent Redex race around the country – and the discovery of another man's Aboriginal heritage. The two stories never really meshed well, and by the end they wander off in their own directions. I found the final third of the book the most interesting, but the ending itself (a form of epilogue) suggests to me that Carey didn't know where he was going with his own story. There are lots of interesting facts here, but it doesn't mesh into a coherent narrative. Also I found the magic realistic touches (babies snatched by eagles; an old man appearing as if by magic across long distances) distracted and didn't add to the narrative.

A very interesting topic that deserves a more serious treatment.

2-stars.

Gumble's Yard says

It is perhaps to the detriment of this book that I read it on my journey to and from the announcement of the shortlist for The Republic of Consciousness Prize for UK and Irish small presses. Any book by a long established, double Booker prize winning, elderly white male was likely to lack freshness and vibrancy when compared to the hardcore literary fiction and gorgeous prose on the long and shortlist for that prize; and the great authors and wonderful small presses I had the privilege to meet at that event.

This is a book of three distinct sections, which at times can feel like three different books, albeit with a reasonably clear sense of where the author is steering the book.

The first section is enjoyable if undemanding – introducing a number of great characters and in particular the two alternating first party narrators – Irene Bobs (wife of Titch) and Willie Bachhuber, neighbours in a small Australian town near Melbourne in the 1950s.

Titch (and the equally small Irene) and their two children have moved to the town with a hope to set up a Ford dealership, but also (particularly in Irene's eyes) to escape Titch's larger-than-life and good-for-nothing father Dan Bobs (an aviation pioneer) – an attempt that proves futile.

Willie, son of a Lutheran pastor is a part time school teacher but temporarily suspended for dangling a schoolchild out of a window as punishment for anti (white) immigrant comments, and resident expert on a radio quiz show where he regularly wins large but fake cheques. During his He is also (secretly) fleeing but in his case the law (with bailiffs chasing him for matrimony payments – he having walked out on his wife and young child who he believes not to be his).

This section ends with Titch, on the verge of a Holden dealership entering the (real life) Redex Reliability motor rallying trials around Australia, with Titch as co-driver and Willie (an expert map reader) as navigator.

The second section chronicles the Redex trials. At first I was reminded of nothing more than a combination of two staples of 70s UK childrens' TV: Wacky Races (with Irene as Penelope Pitstop, Dan as a Dick Dastardly/Muttley combination, and with Titch backed by the Ant Hill Mob) crossed with Skippy.

A more complex (if rather heavily telegraphed) theme starts to emerge – the Australian treatment of its Aboriginal population: casual and overt racism (with Willie increasingly shocked to find that people regard him as part-black); past genocides (a massacre site that they stumble across – and the casual indifference of the authorities to the discovery); the obliteration of the Aboriginal lifestyle and worldview (as Willie becomes aware of the different concepts of land that the Aboriginals possessed and which has been covered over by Western concepts of boundaries and land ownership). The Redex itself – celebrating the pioneering spirit of the settlers and literally riding roughshod over sacred sites – becomes a metaphor for this process.

The third section, changes gear once more. Willie becomes aware of his own (much hinted at) racial origins via a rather improbable co-incidence, and Irene of the truth of his son's parentage (and why Willie deserted him at birth). Willie ends up stranded as a cattle station where he is asked to teach the aboriginal children. He starts trying to explain the map of Australia and received white Australian history to the children, but ends up asking the Aboriginal elders to share their stories with the class and replaces the map with pictures of these stories.

This part however well-intentioned seems badly forced rather than natural, and seems to descend into patronising, with heavy handed attempts to convey Willie's conversations with the aborigines.

It is really difficult to know what positive comment can possibly be made however when reading the following examples of passages:

'Proper film star' Doctor Battery said, approximately. Actually he said something like 'him, proper film star' or "im proper film star" but I will spare you my own confusion

He dream for you ('E dream for you' to be precise.)

Overall this is clearly an earnest attempt by a well-known author to finally come to terms with the dark history of his country, but it is not a very coherent one.

In the very final chapter, Willie's son reflects on Willie and then on Willie's later activities in a way which

can only be taken as a conclusion on the book itself.

My father may have been, a many have suggested, a meddlesome well-meaning amateur anthropologist, but he was also a well-educated, deeply read man, an intellectual whose soul had been seriously contorted as a result of his country's practice of ethnic cleansing

What may seem to be the signs of madness might be understood by someone familiar with alchemical literature as an encryption whose function is to insist that our mother country is a foreign land whose language we have not yet earned the right to speak

Phrynne says

My history of reading Peter Carey so far:-
Oscar and Lucinda 3 stars (it was pretty good)
Bliss 5 stars (loved, loved, loved it!)
The Chemistry of Tears 1 star (great title)
Amnesia 4 stars (it was good)

I think that means Mr Carey and I have an up and down relationship. *A Long Way From Home* was more on the down side.

The idea of the book sounded good - people racing cars around the Australian outback in the Redex Trial in the 1950's. The trouble was that that part of the book became boring. The characters were all rather flat with only Irene and Willie even approaching people the reader could sympathise with. The father was so awful I was actively pleased when (view spoiler)

This does not mean my relationship with the author is over. This man wrote *Bliss* after all! He has a lot more titles for me to try in hope of another winner.

Vit Babenco says

As usual **Peter Carey** peoples the pages of his offbeat prose with all sorts of oddball personalities...

This was Titch's only fault, the belief he could have anything he wished. This is how birds fly into window glass, how women fall pregnant.

In style and playfulness *A Long Way from Home* somewhat resembles his early novel *Illywhacker*. On the side of plot the novel is about the national car race around the continent...

This is the atmosphere of the races:

Dwarfed behind the wheel, Mrs Bobbsey was coughing and spitting and we had four hundred miles to Mount Isa, creek crossings and – worse than that – certain competitors who had

disconnected their brakelights to cause accidents behind. No competitor on that leg will forget the dust coating every surface, the drumming violent gibber stones like a malevolent spirit with a sledgehammer clouting the bottom of your car.

And this is the atmosphere of the car:

The smell of a rally car, the stink, the whiff, the woo, you will never find the recipe for this pong in the Women's Weekly but ingredients include petrol, rubber, pollen, dust, orange peel, wrecked banana, armpit, socks, man's body. I drove into the night on the ratshit regulator. My headlights waxed and waned depending on the engine revs. Beneath us was bulldust, two feet thick.

But of course *A Long Way from Home* is much deeper than that and underneath the plot there are significant psychological depths.

Every life is unique and it is given unto you but once so you must try hard not to waste it...

Paul Lockman says

Set in the early 1950s in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, the main characters are Irene and Titch Bobs, a happily married couple who want to be Ford dealers and set up their own car yard but Holden has recently emerged and is challenging Ford for supremacy. Irene and Titch decide to go on the Redex trial, a type of car rally that circumnavigated Australia and was quite popular at that time. Their neighbour Willie Bachhuber, a handsome schoolteacher who fancies Irene, ends up with them on the Redex trial as their navigator.

There is certainly an autobiographical element in the book as Carey grew up in Bacchus Marsh and his parents ran a General Motors Holden dealership. Carey also ventures into indigenous stories and characters for the first time in his writing career. On the Redex trial a massacre site is discovered and a child's skull is brought into a police station where the local cop labels it 'Abo infant skull found near xxx'. I read an interview with Carey recently where he was asked why he decided that after 14 books the time was right to explore Aboriginal culture and the white man's rewriting of Australian history. Carey said he was at a writers' conference in the mid-1980s where the indigenous activist Gary Foley said he understood that white writers wanted to help but 'we've got enough shit to deal with.' Carey had always felt that Foley was right but... "On the other hand, you can't be a white Australian writer and spend our whole life ignoring the greatest, most important aspect of our history, and that is that we -I - have been the beneficiaries of a genocide... I can't spend my life not writing about this, and if I make a dick of myself, well I will but at least I'm going to have a try".

There are a couple of acclaimed Aussie authors that I have trouble getting into and Peter Carey is one of them. It's a long, long time since I read Oscar and Lucinda and Illywhacker and I wanted to try another of his books to see if my perspective would change but it didn't. For a start, it takes ages, around 150 pages, before we get to the meat of the story. Plus, similar to my thoughts on other books of his, for all the flashes of brilliant and witty writing, I just think Carey tries to be a little too clever, cute, quirky, call it what you will, and the tangents he often goes on detracts from the character development and makes it difficult for me to engage and connect with the people and the story. I do admire him for tackling Australia's 'big issue' though and give him 3 stars for that.

Celia says

A Long Way From Home, by Peter Carey is about to be published in the US and for that I say, “Hurray, Yay, It’s about time”.

Do not be afraid to read this book because it is written by an Australian author and uses Australian idioms and discloses some ugly Australian history*. It is a GOOD book and worth the time to understand all of that.

Narrated in turn by Irene Bobs and Willie Buchhuber, it describes the preparation for, the running of, the results of, and the aftermath of the Tedex, a grueling 9700 mile automobile endurance test. Why do the Bobs participate? Because... Irene’s husband Titch wants to make a name for himself so that he can become a successful dealer of GM Holden, Australia’s very own General Motors Car. Titch engages Irene to help drive and Willie to navigate.

In this back and forth narration, we learn that Irene loves her husband, that she has two children, that she is an excellent driver. Willie, her neighbor, is a teacher, has left his ‘wife’ to rear their black son alone, and is an excellent navigator.

According to some reviewers, this book is a satire. In me, it elicited feelings of both humor and sadness. There are some funny as well as sad things that happen to the participants. Personalities and relationships seem to change. Upsetting when it happens to someone you have begun to know and love.

I did not want this book to end. Pun intended, it was quite a ride.

*Let me be clear, that I do not mean to denigrate Australia for its mistreatment of the Aborigine; the US has some VERY ugly history regarding the mistreatment of blacks, as we ALL know.

Kimbofo says

Earlier this year, in the depths of winter, I went to Dublin for a long weekend, specifically to see Peter Carey in conversation with Joseph O’Connor at the Pepper Cannister Church on Upper Mount Street. It was essentially the Irish launch of his latest novel, *A Long Way from Home*, which has since been longlisted for the 2018 Miles Franklin Literary Award.

It was an entertaining evening — albeit very, very cold (even with the heating on, the church was akin to sitting in a giant refrigerator and after an hour in the pews I could barely feel my feet because they’d turned numb with the cold). He largely spoke about the background behind the novel, which is based on the Redex Australia Trial, a road rally dating from 1953 that circumnavigated Australia and was open to pro and amateur drivers in unmodified cars unsuited to the tough terrain.

Carey’s own family ran a Holden car dealership in Bacchus Marsh, the country town where he is from, so he shared a lot of funny tales about cars and this particular rally, which he followed obsessively as a young boy

— among other topics, including politics, travel, writing and why he'd waited so long to write about Australia's indigenous history.

This novel — his 14th — is based very much on the Redex Trial and focuses on a trio of eccentric characters that enter the event, before it morphs into an intriguing exploration of a different kind of race — that of white Australia's crimes against its indigenous population.

To read the rest of my review, please visit my blog.

Lisa says

Of all the novels I've read by two-time Booker winner Peter Carey, this one is the best. I romped through it, trying fruitlessly to slow down my reading so that it would never end. Fast-paced, utterly engaging and full of trademark Carey eccentricities, *A Long Way from Home* is a comic novel which also reveals the slow dawning of Australia's recognition of its real history.

A Long Way From Home is a story of an Australia long gone. It's set in the 1950s, an era of unbridled optimism and prosperity, when there was full employment. Women were expected to conform to a domestic role, and Australia's Black History was decades away from being acknowledged. Australia's enduring love affair with the motor car was taking off because ordinary people could afford to buy one, and the branding of cars was beginning to be linked to male identity.

The diminutive Titch Bobs and his feisty wife Irene are a couple determined to get ahead. Titch is one of the best car salesmen in Australia, and to get away from his overbearing father Dan, he wants to set up his own Ford dealership in Bacchus Marsh, about 60km north-east of Melbourne (and also Peter Carey's birthplace.) When those efforts are sabotaged, Irene wangles their way towards Ford's great rival Holden, and as part of their efforts to raise the profile of their business, they decide to enter the Redex Reliability Trial.

The 1950s was the era of the original Redex Trials which captivated Australia, but these round-Australia endurance events were still spoken of with reverence even in the 1970s when I was first learning to drive on dirt roads. The trials, following a route of about 10,000 miles (15,000km) through some of the harshest country in the land, were supposed to prove the reliability of the ordinary car when driven in the worst conditions an Australian could ever expect to encounter. In those early days the competitors weren't professionals: I could use the term mum-and-dad teams except that female competitors were rare. Those were the days when the 'family car' was driven by dads who considered the car was theirs alone, and women mostly didn't even have a driving licence.

Although they were allowed to have mesh headlight protectors and bull bars, the cars were not supposed to be modified, and there were strict rules about the kind of repairs that were allowed. I bet Carey's depiction of the skulduggery that went on behind the scenes is based on authentic events... having done a bit of rally driving myself (as a terrified navigator) I can certainly vouch for the authenticity of Carey's breath-taking sequences that take place on outback roads that barely merit the name. How the drivers managed to stay in their seats on that back-breaking terrain without full-harness seat belts I do not know...

To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2017/11/14/a...>

Rosemary Atwell says

An absorbing, fearless probing of the 1950s Australian psyche when whitefella post-war optimism ruled and

the secrets of the country's dark heart were yet to be openly acknowledged. The unfolding of the novel's central core is masterful - if this doesn't want to make you go back and revisit the entire Carey canon, nothing will.

Robin says

This is a momentous review. Why, you may want to know? Well, two reasons:

- 1) For the first time since I read *A Little Life*, I am bestowing a 1-star rating to a review. I have always thought of that "book" whenever determining if I should award 1 star. *Do I hate this book as much as A Little Life?* In all honesty, I do NOT hate this book as much as I hate *A Little Life*. How could I? But I still disliked this book to the point of... well, I'll get to that in reason #2 in a second. My point is, I'm bringing back the 1-star reviews.
- 2) For the first time in my 3+ years on Goodreads, I am reviewing a book that I have **abandoned**. This is a big deal, folks! So many times, I have suffered through books that I did not enjoy, books that failed to engage me, books that were a chore to read and return to. FINALLY, I am allowing myself the luxury of saying "this is not for me, bye-bye now." Aren't you proud of me?

I was so interested in reading this new book by Peter Carey. He's a Booker Prize winner (x2) and a new-to-me author. So why am I breaking all the rules and tossing it aside? It wasn't written poorly (Mr. Carey is an established author, no danger of that). It didn't have an unbelievable story (well, at least, not to the 30% mark when I finally gave up).

I was simply BORED TO TEARS. I didn't feel interested in any of the characters - "Titch" the tiny little man married to Mrs. Bobs, somewhere in a dusty ramshackle place in Australia, and his dislikeable father who wants to open a Ford dealership to spite his son who wants to do the exact same thing. There was a big long boring scene with Titch's wife destroying a propellor... which meant absolutely nothing to me. They have a neighbour Willie, a German guy, a teacher who is tired of feeling like an outsider and who shook a student outside of a window (again, somehow don't care) and who is on a game show, having a relationship with a woman who his competitor on said game show. Are you still with me? Really?

Honestly, I can't remember being less engaged in a story full of people who do not interest me even slightly. I understand from the plot synopsis that they will be participating in some sort of automobile race, and good lord, I can't force myself through 2/3 more of this book to find out how that goes. Tiny Titch and Mrs. Bobs and Willie will have to figure it out on their own. I'm outtie!

And damn, it feels good!

Thank you to Netgalley and Penguin Random House Canada for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.
