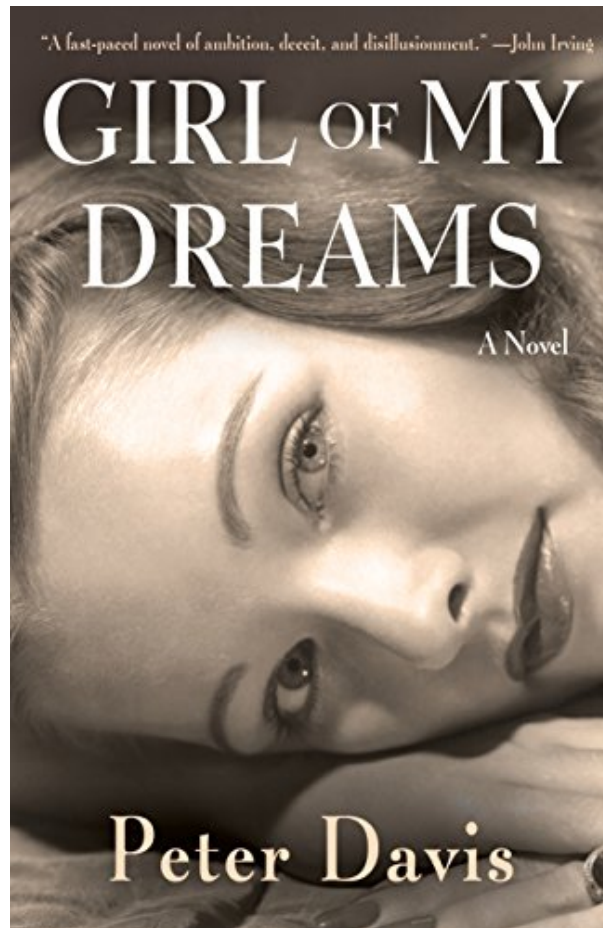
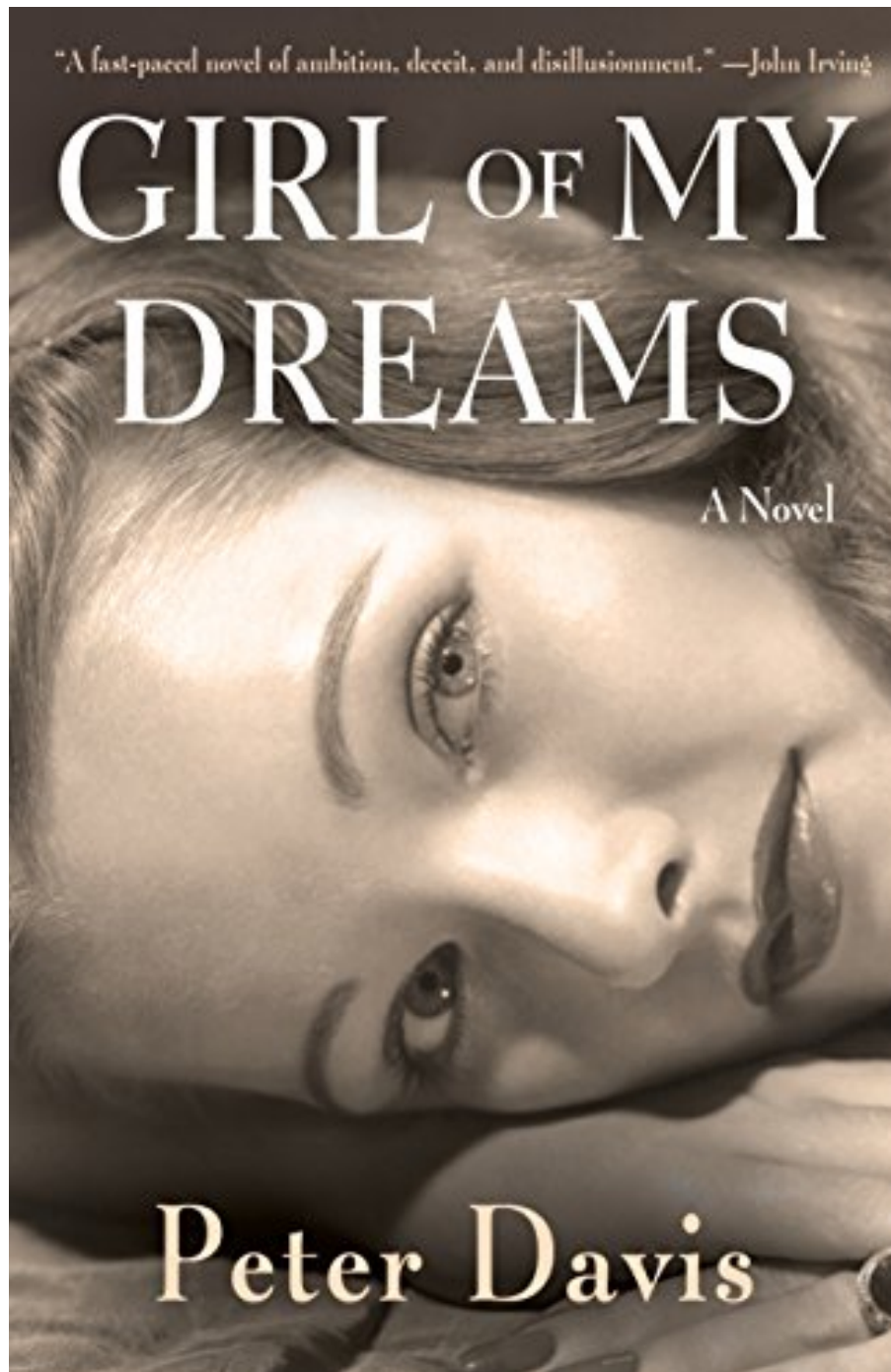


GIRL OF MY DREAMS: A NOVEL BY PETER DAVIS



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Review

"Nostalgia in a novel, especially in a first-person narration, has to be earned. From the opening suicide of a stuntman—"taker of all falls"—a screenwriter recounts "the damage I caused in bygone days." This is a bildungsroman of Hollywood dreams and cover-ups, a novel of "failure and conspiracy" on a lavish scale. "Movies and fame: what a perfect marriage, each dependent on projection," the young writer observes, after admitting: "I'm the sucker who tells the story because the rest are gone." There's even a daughter named after a movie studio, and the Communist Party is, finally, just "another dream that had been imported to Southern California." Perhaps our screenwriter's most challenging story is telling a little girl that her mother has been murdered. When the Communist witch-hunters are raging in Hollywood, our writer runs off to Rome and buries himself in spaghetti Westerns. A fast-paced novel of ambition, deceit, and disillusionment, *Girl of My Dreams* is as thrilling as a hit movie; yet it's also an indictment of the way the movie business works. The language is impeccable; the architecture is so tightly constructed that the ending is both inevitable and not what we're expecting." —John Irving, National Book Award-winning author

"Thrumming with kinetic energy, *Girl of My Dreams* is a mad dash through Hollywood in the 1930s. With insight and humor, Peter Davis explores the magic of filmmaking, the vagaries of fame, and the lives of the many players and participants—from directors to actors to writers—who populate this outrageous and captivating world." —Christina Baker Kline, #1 New York Times–bestselling author of *Orphan Train*

"*Girl of My Dreams* is irresistible. It has been a long time since I read anything so interesting in every way." —Joan Didion, National Book Award-winning author

About the Author

Peter Davis is an author and Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker (*Hearts and Minds*). The son of screenwriters, he grew up in Los Angeles. *Girl of My Dreams* is his fourth book and first novel.

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A sweeping novel of the 1930s that captures the essence of a golden, lurid era when Hollywood became the fantasy capital of the world

Girl of My Dreams follows a wide-eyed young screenwriter in the 1930s when Hollywood, the Depression, and the Communist Party intersected powerfully in the American psyche. From the glamorous and mysterious star Palmyra Millevoix to the ruthless studio mogul Mossy Zangwill, protagonist Owen Jant struggles to navigate a world that is as seductive as it is toxic. Filled with scandal, romance, murder, riots, and celebrities of the day, *Girl of My Dreams* shines a spotlight on an American moment in all its magic and malice, glory and greed.

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

GREAT NOVEL OF 1930's HOLLYWOOD

By Avid Hiker

A finely detailed and deeply resonant story of Hollywood in the 1930's. There is the glamor, of course, which plays uneasily against the gray backdrop of America's Great Depression. But there is also the story behind the glamor: the struggle to create films that will provide entertainment for a country hungry for dreams of better times, of better places, of energy and light. Davis shows us the studio system at the time of its greatest power--bosses ruthlessly exploiting whoever they think might create stories that will bring them money. Caught up in this greed is an ever-shifting hierarchy of actors, directors, set-designers, stunt men, every one of them desperately wanting to be recognized by someone important--who is likely to be only temporarily powerful. Peter Davis knows this world: he grew up surrounded by people who had worked in and lived through this period. And, as an adult, he knows the film industry well, having directed "*Hearts and Minds* " an Oscar-winning documentary on the Vietnamese war. *GIRL OF MY DREAMS* is told by a writer who knows the history and the details of the business. *GIRL* is a great story that rings completely true. The quality of the writing is extremely high. The characters come so fully alive that the fictional figures are every bit as believable as the real ones the author brings in. And the narrator has so many fascinating stories to tell. This is a terrific novel about the film world of the 30's. I highly recommend it.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Great, Big, American Novel

By Dean Miller

(Full disclosure: Peter Davis is a friend. But you can see I have been pretty hard on friends' books, so...)

Hollywood. During the Depression. A most American backdrop for a story about America making it up – messily - as it goes along, probably getting it wrong, but riding lucky momentum.

“*Girl of My Dreams*” may not be *THE* great American novel. But like Mark Twain or Toni Walker, Peter Davis has slyly laced a tumbling story with the reminder we can simultaneously dread learning our history and demand more of our future.

The sheer joy in reading that this book delivers gives me hope we are not complete idiots. So long as we pay a little attention, we can find ourselves in this well-imagined world and demand something other than the bargain to which we have so far acquiesced.

I'm easily bored by polemics and partisan nattering, so I think it's safe to say you could read this book just for story, even if you don't sympathize with striking dockworkers or hate studio bosses. As a novelist, Peter Davis turns out to be the best kind of show-off: he weaves big history around psychoanalysis. He minds the imperative to make something happen every so often. He spiels out song lyrics and movie treatments, dazzlingly, in service to characters about whom we give a damn, because we don't merely admire them. Davis writes men and women clearly, in ways both archetypal and idiosyncratic. This is his *FIRST* novel?

Hot Damn.

Perhaps I show my age (54) but I love that there's nothing now-now-now about this book. Rather, it reads like the distillations of a lifetime of close observation of humanity's excesses and trivia, arranged not in a grand theory, but in a recognizable community of strugglers.

Immature writers should read "Girl of My Dreams" with this caution: It's one of those books like "Beloved" or "A Soldier of the Great War" that manages to be both so big and small that it could convince you there are gods and you're not one of them. You can't be trained to write like this. You either are or are not a Peter Davis, a Toni Morrison.

Given American publishing's cliquish cheerleading for prep-school-ivy-league-Breadloaf-groomed girls of the moment, it's hard to imagine what they made of hoary-headed Peter Davis and his manuscript, if ever he sent it to Toffistan on the East River.

If "Girl of My Dreams" gathers a great big audience, could it momentarily change our expectations of literary fiction in America? What if other publishers began looking for craft of this magnitude, rather than marketable children of the 1%?

Thank God for Jane Friedman and her ilk at Open Road, who trusted readers want something more substantial than glib newness and irony.

Great book.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Davis creates a world that pulls you in

By Tim Byrne

Girl of My Dreams tells a story set in 1930's Hollywood of studio intrigue, political conflict and ambivalent interpersonal relationships. It's not a satire, though - Mr. Davis is far too generous and understanding of his characters' precarious positions within the studio hierarchy and the larger Depression-era world to judge them. He reports (or, in the character of screenwriter Owen Jant, recollects).

Davis spins up a world that includes dusty back lots, opulent front offices and wisteria-encircled swimming pools and the machinery, dreams and delusions that keep it all going. He also creates characters, like actress/songwriter Palmyra Millevoix and studio head Mossy Zangwill that will remind you of real-life 30's counterparts, but become every bit Davis' personal creations.

I'd imagine that world-building is (or can be) the hardest part of novel writing, especially when that world is far removed from our current one. Davis succeeds in creating a world, letting us in, and then making us care what happens to its inhabitants.

Oh, and there's sex. And violence. And Communists.

If you love this period (and I do), read it.

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