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The Secret Life: Three True Stories Of The Digital Age



Synopsis

The slippery online ecosystem is the perfect breeding ground for identities: true, false, and in between. The Internet shorthand IRL-"in real life"-now seems naïve. We no longer question the reality of online experiences but the reality of selfhood in the digital age. In *The Secret Life*, the essayist and novelist Andrew O'Hagan issues three bulletins from the porous border between cyberspace and IRL. *Ghosting* introduces us to the beguiling and divisive Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, whose autobiography the author agrees to ghostwrite with unforeseen-and unforgettable-consequences. *The Invention of Ronnie Pinn* finds the author using the actual identity of a deceased young man to construct an entirely new one in cyberspace, leading him on a journey deep into the Web's darkest realms. And *The Satoshi Affair* chronicles the strange case of Craig Wright, the Australian Web developer who may or may not be the mysterious inventor of Bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto-and who may or may not be willing, or even able, to reveal the truth.

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Customer Reviews

"Splendid . . . O'Hagan's grasp of storytelling is prodigious, and the ending of his essay on Pinn is a particularly inspired, even moving, piece of writing. Taken as a whole, this is an unmissable collection of up-to-the-moment insights about life in our digital era." *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)"Three intriguing pieces of journalism about the new threats of a digital age . . . [O'Hagan is] razor-sharp." *Kirkus Reviews*"O'Hagan is an immensely engaging writer: wry and witty, and insightful . . . despite their technological background, these are ultimately human

stories and O'Hagan tells them superbly." *Alan Critchley, Sunday Times*"Altogether, *The Secret Life* is nothing less than an affirmation that using words well still matters, even now." *David Sexton, Evening Standard*"It is a tribute to O'Hagan's quiet and effective betrayal of Assange that the reader's ambivalence towards the Wikileaker does not prevent the reader's gradual antipathy." *David Aaronovitch, The Times*"O'Hagan [is] a vivid and meticulous writer . . . at the core of this excellent collection we glimpse the unbridgeable difference between the real and the invented." *Andrew Anthony, Observer*"O'Hagan's prose is always a delight. The cadence of his sentences, the way in which he balances extension and brevity, the unspooling and the reeling in, is a masterclass in the art of prose. This is not just a good book, but a necessary one." *Stuart Kelly, Scotland on Sunday*"The theme is identity in the digital age and [O'Hagan's] three subjects are exquisitely fit for purpose . . . Thrilling." *Esquire* --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Andrew O'Hagan is the author of the Man Booker Prize nominee *The Illuminations*, among other novels. Named one of *Granta* magazine's Best of Young British Novelists in 2003, he has won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He lives in London. Liam Gerrard is an award-winning voice artist with over ten years of experience working in every field of the voice industry, as well as a highly acclaimed stage and screen actor. A 2017 Audie Award nominee, he has narrated over thirty audiobooks in a wide range of genres and styles.

A fascinating account of the chaotic attempt by Julian Assange to write his autobiography. We are in the period before Julian took refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy but nevertheless was forced to wear an electronic tag and sign in each day at the local police station while he fought extradition to Sweden on rape allegations. His ghost writer, Andrew O'Hagan, put together a 70,000 word draft compiled from his visits and interviews with the WikiLeaks entrepreneur despite Julian's constant procrastination over many months and finally refusals to let it go, so that the publishers demanded the return of the \$2.5 million advance. In that absence, Canongate Books put the book out as an unauthorised biography. This version, the story of how the book was written, gives us those torturous months that O'Hagan struggled to get it written and ends with visits to the Ecuadorian embassy - a nation not famous for its respect for freedom of speech - where Assange was holed up and isolated, most his 'friends' and fans having abandoned him. And no wonder. The supposed champion of free speech about everyone else except himself, Assange comes across as an

unreliable and narcissistic man who has no social graces, eats like a pig and repeatedly turns against those trying to help him. This is not a biography but still its pages reveal the founder of WikiLeaks unfettered and paranoid. The rest of this book about two other secret lives are equally fascinating and I recommend it. Freak Out! My Life with Frank Zappa

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