

Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts



In this book can be heard the merest edge of an enormous conversation. As they never were in life, we can imagine the speakers all gathered in some vast room, wearing name tags in case they don't recognize each other (although some recognize each other all too well, and avoid contact). My heroes and heroines are here. The reader will recognize some of their names, while other names will be more obscure. My intellectual betes noires are here too, and the same division might apply. An almanac combining a comprehensive survey of modern culture with an annotated index of who-was-who and what-was-what, Cultural Amnesia is Clive James' unique take on the places and the faces that shaped the 20th century. From Anna Akhmatova to Stefan Zweig, via Charles de Gaulle, Hitler, Thomas Mann and Charlie Chaplin, this varied and unfailingly absorbing book is both story and history, both public memoir and personal record - and provides an essential field-guide to the vast movements of taste, intellect, politics, and delusion that helped to prepare the times we live in now.

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