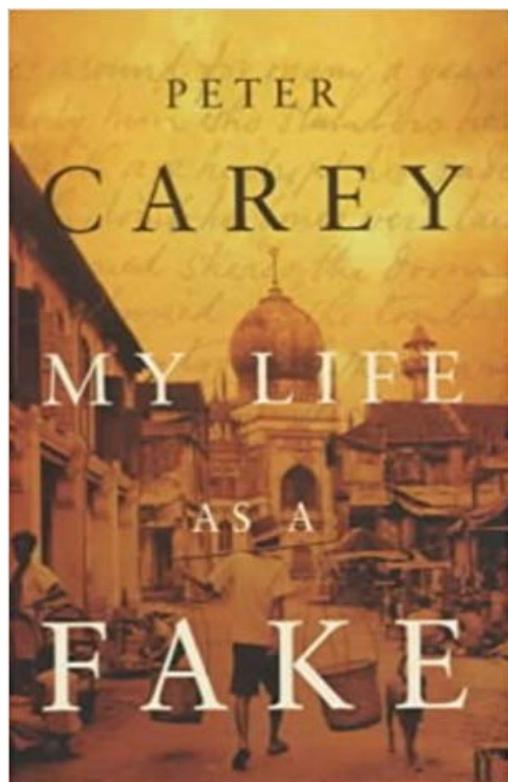


## My Life as a Fake by Peter Carey



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**ISBN:** 1740512464

**ISBN13:** 978-0571216185

**Author:** Peter Carey

**Book title:** My Life as a Fake

**Pages:** 292 pages

**Publisher:** Faber and Faber; 1st edition (2003)

**Language:** English

**Category:** Contemporary

**Size PDF version:** 1196 kb

**Size ePUB version:** 1645 kb

**Size DJVU version:** 1819 kb

**Other formats:** doc azw rtf lrf

1740512464



## Reviews of the *My Life as a Fake* by Peter Carey

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\*My Life as a Fake\* is, in the main, the story of unsuccessful poet Christopher Chubb, an Australian whose life is forever marred by a literary hoax he perpetrated in his youth. Chubb invented a deceased poet by the name of Bob McCorkle and passed off McCorkle's poetry--his own work, of course--on an unsuspecting editor whose ignorance Chubb wished to expose. (The story is based on a real-life literary hoax, the similar invention of a certain Ern Malley in the 1940s.) When he first appears in the story, Chubb's stint as literary hoaxer is long behind him. He is filthy and destitute and quite possibly mad, employed as a bicycle mechanic on a cramped street in Kuala Lumpur. He is discovered there by Sarah Wode-Douglass, the editor of a London poetry magazine, to whom Chubb spins out the unlikely story of his post-hoax life. Wode-Douglass in turn relates Chubb's story to us:

The creature of Chubb's imagination, the fictional Bob McCorkle, was--or so Chubb was led to believe by the creature itself--given flesh by Chubb's pen. That is to say, someone who fit the description of Chubb's manufactured poet entered Chubb's life claiming to be the flesh-and-blood product of the hoaxer's fiction. Who or what this man is in fact is never fully explained. Whatever he is, the McCorkle creature endeavors, successfully, to destroy his alleged creator's life. The story of Chubb's ruin involves all manner of cruelties, but chief among them is McCorkle's kidnapping of Chubb's infant daughter, a crime which determines Chubb's unhappy future.

The better part of *\*My Life as a Fake\** is narrated by Chubb to Sarah Wode-Douglass. Within Chubb's narrative, moreover, are remembered conversations, sometimes lengthy stories, which Chubb now recounts. But while much of the book might justly have been encased in quotation marks, there is not a single such punctuation mark to be found in the text. The result is not as confusing as one might expect, though direct and indirect discourse blend together into an inseparable mass of speech. Chubb's language, meanwhile, is often difficult to understand, an Australian English tinged with the expressions and verbal tics of his adopted country.

One reads the book increasingly curious to discover how Chubb came to be in his current situation, repairing bikes in Kuala Lumpur, but the read is not a wholly pleasant one. Chubb's convoluted story is interesting, but its narration leaves one with numerous questions, not least of which involves the true nature and motivation of McCorkle. The story of Wode-Douglass, too, which frames Chubb's tale--her reasons for being in Kuala Lumpur, her interest in a collection of poetry by the monster McCorkle, her relationship with Englishman John Slater, her companion on the trip--seems in the end to have been largely unnecessary. Too little, in particular, is made of the character of Slater, a likeable rogue who is put to little use in the story. Carey's novel is indeed bold and imaginative, but the truth in it is uncomfortably elusive.

Reviewed by Debra Hamel, author of *Trying Neaira: The True Story of a Courtesan's Scandalous Life in Ancient Greece*

- **Black\_Hawk\_Down**

This is an enchanting story. Peter Carey has borrowed the plot from a series of events that took place in Australia. He has changed the names, the times and the places but the core of the story is true. Carey writes exceptionally well. I found myself dog-eared pages to mark sentences and phrases that resonated with me so that I could return to them. The plot device he invokes is a bit of surrealism. If you like John Irving's stories you will like Carey's. He leads the reader into a bit of surrealism - if you accept it, all is well and on you go. If you can't accept it, best put the book down. I prefer not to divulge the nature of the surrealism - it spoils the story if you don't discover it for yourself

Carey is superb at character development. They develop out of their actions and their words, not from narrative. Carey is a great story-teller as well.

I have read two of his novels and this book will make me read another.

- **Rasmus**

Not Peter Carey's best, which can be to me amazingly good, but I thought quite entertaining in the main. A further pursuit of Carey's ongoing fascination with counterfeiting of anything from currency to master paintings to, in this case, poetry in all its cloaks from truth to plagiarism.

- **happy light**

One of my all-time favorite books. There's nothing rise like this.

- **Love Me**

Confusing at times but the excellent writing leads you through a wonderful read.

- **Abuseyourdna**

Interesting novel on the magical realism genre, but nothing especially appealing or innovative about it.

- **Gigafish**

The power of the imagination and the aspects involved in creating art are cleverly discussed in this book, which gets increasingly complex and fascinating.

This book was not only confusing but also disappointing. I expected more from a Booker prize winner although the Kelly Gang was not a favorite for me. The Fake story just never held my interest except for some of the sensory imagery about the food now and then. Much of it seemed contrived or just plain boring with lack luster characters.

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