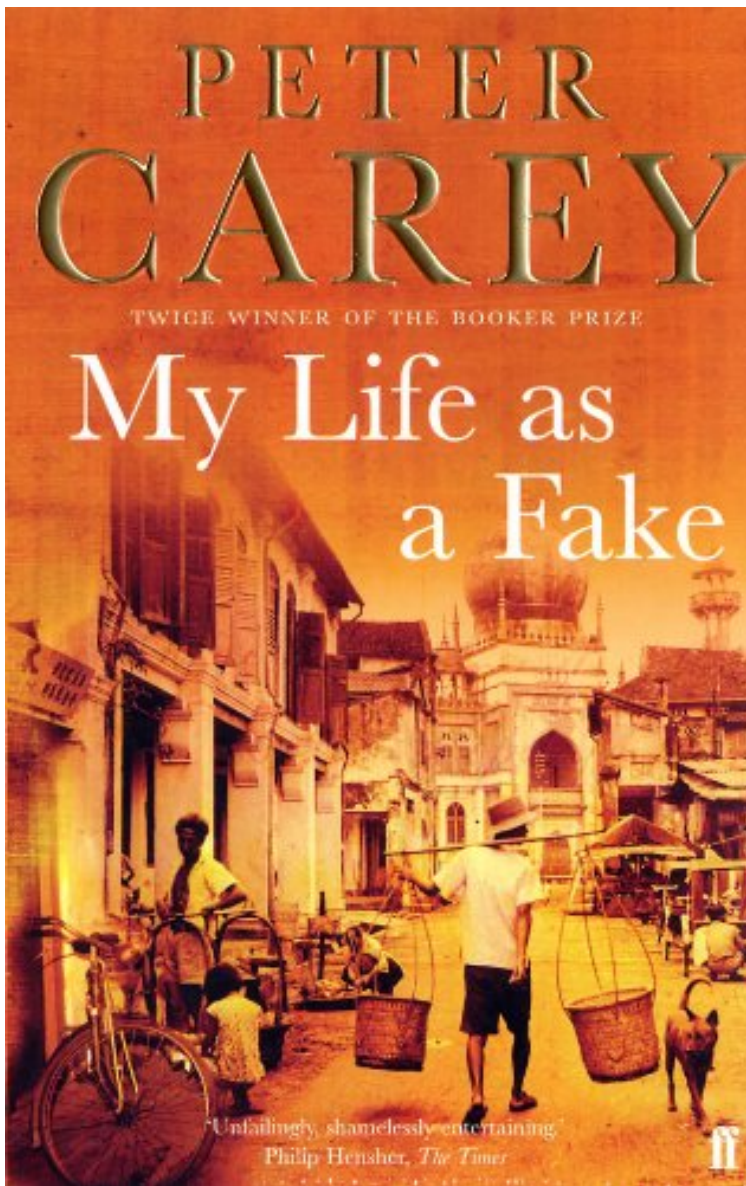


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My Life as a Fake (English Edition)



Par Peter Carey
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Description : Description du produitIn his remarkable new novel, the two-time Booker-winning author Peter Carey creates a Creature as indelible as Frankenstein.In Melbourne in the 1950s, an arrogant young Australian poet named Christopher Chubb decides to teach his country a lesson about pretension and authenticity. Choosing as his target the trendiest of the literary magazines, he submits for publication the entire oeuvre of one Bob McCorkle, a working class poet of raw power and sexual frankness, conveniently dead at twenty-four and entirely the product of Chubbs imagination. Not only does the magazine fall for the hoax, but the local authorities also sue its editor for publishing obscenity. At the trial someone uncannily resembling the faked photograph of the invented McCorkle leaps to his feet. At this moment a horrified Chubb is confronted by the malevolent being he has himself manufactured.Using as a springboard a real

literary hoax that transfixed Australia in his boyhood, Peter Carey wickedly and ruefully explores how the phantom poet taunts, haunts and otherwise destroys his maker, pursuing Chubb from Melbourne to a seedy, sweaty, bitter ending in the tropical chaos of Kuala Lumpur. Inexorably the Creature steals Chubb's life, eclipsing him as a poet and a man. In a twist that is truly devilish, Chubb's own existence finally comes to depend on the Creature's real unpublished poems. Peter Carey has composed a manic, endearing and penetrating ode to fakery at its most truthful and truth at its most fake, a novel that penetrates to the heart of the alchemy of literature itself.

Presentation de l'auteur Melbourne, the late 1940s. A young conservative Australian poet named Christopher Chubb decides to teach his country a lesson about pretension and authenticity. Choosing as his target the most avant-garde of the literary magazines, he submits for publication the entire oeuvre of one Bob McCorkle, a working-class poet of raw power and sexual frankness, conveniently dead at twenty-four and entirely the product of Chubb's imagination. Not only does the magazine fall for the hoax, but the local authorities also sue its editor for publishing obscenity. At the trial someone uncannily resembling the faked photograph of the invented McCorkle, leaps to his feet. At this moment a horrified Chubb is confronted by the malevolent being he has himself manufactured....com Peter Carey's *My Life as a Fake* is a literate mystery of forgeries and doppelgangers with a fictional manuscript at its heart. The mystery--the origin of a brilliant but purportedly faked poem--fuels a whirlwind pursuit through Australia and across the wilds of Malaysia. Grappling with her own childhood demons, Carey's bibliophile sleuth, Sarah Wode-Douglass, sometimes becomes lost in the exotic and bloody chase. The novel opens as Sarah, the reluctant tourist and editor of *The Modern*, is dragged by a foppish poet-friend, John Slater, to Kuala Lumpur. Sarah is intent on biding her time in her hotel, but a chance encounter with a scabrous reader of Rilke soon transforms Sarah's plans and, ultimately, her life. The reader, the Australian poet Christopher Chubb, is the disgraced initiator of a great literary hoax--the faked poems of the non-existent Bob McCorkle. The McCorkle hoax was Chubb's attempt to bring down a rising poetry editor, David Weiss. When the hoax was exposed, Weiss was believed to have committed suicide. But, living in exile, Chubb has hidden a secret for decades: Bob McCorkle had seemingly materialized in human form, killing Weiss and destroying Chubb's life. Sarah is tantalized by a fragment of supposed McCorkle poetry that Chubb has shared with her. Whether it is a fake or the work of a madman, Sarah believes it is genius. Her obsession, however, drives her and Chubb to the precipice of self-destruction. The primary story--Chubb's pursuit of McCorkle--lives in the fictional past, and the plot occasionally becomes muddled in the nest of narrators recalling conversations second or third hand. In playing out the McCorkle affair, Carey's denouement comes too quickly. If Sarah is transformed, Carey doesn't reveal enough of her in the text. He is mesmerized, as is the reader, by Chubb's horrific tale. With its small shortcomings, the novel offers a sophisticated interrogation of authorship and fakery and the power of art. Carey avoids simplifying the McCorkle mystery, leaving the reader to puzzle out McCorkle's bizarre incarnation. While *My Life as a Fake* is frequently entertaining, the atmospheric mystery occasionally glimpses the profound. --Patrick O'Kelley Extrait *The Old Rectory*, Thornton, Berkshire. August 1985 I have known John Slater all my life. Perhaps you remember the public brawl with Dylan Thomas, or even have a copy of his famous book of 'dirty' poems. If it's an American edition you'll discover, on the inside flap, a photograph of the handsome, fair-haired author in cricket whites. *Dew Song* was published in 1930. Slater was twenty at the time, very nearly a prodigy. That same year I was born Sarah Elizabeth Jane to a beautiful, impatient Australian mother and a no less handsome but rather posh English father, Lord William Wode-Douglass, generally known as Boofy. Slater's own class background was rather ambiguous, though my mother, a dreadful snob, had a tin ear, and I know she thought Slater very grand and therefore permitted him excesses she would not have tolerated from the Chester grammar-school boy he really was. It was Slater who carved my father's thirtieth birthday cake with his bare hands, who rode a horse into the kitchen, who brought Unity Mitford to dinner during the period she was stealing stationery from Buckingham Palace and carrying that nasty little ferret around in her handbag. I cannot say that I understood his role in my parents' marriage, and only when my mother killed herself -- in a spectacularly awful style -- did I suspect anything was amiss. In the last minutes of her life I saw John Slater put his arms around her and finally I understood, or thought I did. From that moment I hated everything about him: his self-absorption, his intense angry good looks, but most of all those electric blue eyes which inhabited my imagination as the incarnation of deceit. When my mother died, poor Boofy fell apart completely. He drank and wept and roared, and after falling down the stairs the second time he packed me off to St Mary's

Wantage in Berkshire, which I did not like at all. I ran away, was returned in a post-office van, fought with the headmistress, and adopted the perverse strategy of writing with my left hand, thus making almost all my schoolwork illegible. I was so busy being a bad girl that no-one noticed that I also had a brain. But even while I was receiving D's in English I somehow managed to see that Slater's celebrated verses were nothing so much as bowers constructed by a male in order to procure sex. This was far from being my only insight and I was not reluctant to let the Great Man know exactly what I thought. Somewhere in his papers there may still be evidence of my close reading of 'Eastern Oriental,' with its impertinent corrections, its queries about his heavily enjambed lines, all of which I archly hoped might be 'helpful to him.' I was, in short, a precocious horror and you will not be at all astonished that John Slater and I did not become friends. But, London being London, I did keep on running into him over the years, and as he continued to write poetry and I had ended up as the editor of *The Modern Review*, we knew many of the same people and had reason to sit at the same table more than once. Time did not make the association easier. Indeed, as I grew older his physical presence became more and more disturbing. I will not say that I was obsessed with him, but I could not be in the same room without looking at him continually; I was drawn to him and repulsed by him all at once. He was an appallingly unapologetic narcissist and so full of iconoclastic opinion and territorial enthusiasms that there was not a dinner party, be it ever so packed with the Great and the Good, where one could escape his increasingly bardic presence. Of course I could not look at him without thinking of my poor unhappy mother. In spite of the fact that we were so very intimately connected, it took all of thirty years for us to speak with more than superficial politeness. He was then sixty-two and while perhaps better known for his novels -- *The Amersham Satyricon* had been a huge bestseller -- he was still generally referred to as 'the poet John Slater.' Which was exactly how he looked: rather wild and windburned, as if he'd recently returned from tramping over the moors or following Basho's path all the way to Ogaki. Slater does seem to have worked very hard at the social side of literature, and there was scarcely a British poet or novelist whom he could not call his friend, or for whom he had not, at some time, done a favour. The Faber crowd he cultivated particularly and it was at a Faber dinner party, at the home of Charles Monteith, where we finally came to talk to each other. Our conversation aside, I don't recall a great deal about the evening except that Robert Lowell -- the guest of honour -- had inadvertently revealed that he didn't know who Slater was. This, one could hypothesise, is why Slater chose to turn and talk to me so urgently, calling me 'Micks,' a name belonging to my family and all that lost time at Allenhurst at High Wycombe. What he had to say was not in the least personal, but his use of the nickname had already touched me and his voice, perhaps as a result of the famous American's careless judgement of his life, took on a wistful, elegiac tone which I found unexpectedly moving. For the first time in years I looked at him closely: his face was puffy, its colour, uncharacteristically, a little grey. When he began to talk about revisiting Malaysia, a country where so much of Dewson and its successors had their roots, it was hard not to wonder if he might be tidying up his affairs. Come with me, he said suddenly. I laughed sharply. He grasped my hand and held me with those damned eyes and of course he was such a Famous Crumpeteer that I looked away, embarrassed. We should go, he said. Don't you think? It was impossible to guess what he meant by 'we' and 'should.' We must talk, he insisted. It is very bad that we never have. This sudden intimacy was as off-putting as it was wished for. I have no money, I said. I have tons of it. He watched me closely as I poured more wine. You've got a boyfriend, he suggested. I have a very jealous cat. I adore cats, he said. I will come and talk to her. And suddenly his cab arrived and he had to go on to a very glamorous party where he was expecting to meet John Lennon and as he rose there was a general clamour of farewells and it was my understanding that our conversation had been of no great moment -- merely a cover for his embarrassment at the hands of Robert Lowell. But he telephoned me, at home in Old Church Street, at eight o'clock the next morning and it was very quickly clear that this journey was not at all impulsive. He had already arranged for the British Council to pay for one ticket, while two thousand words for Nova would fund another. He would be delighted to foot all of my expenses. My father had died just the year before in circumstances that were not at all happy -- a sulkily sort of estrangement on my part -- and it was not in the least dotty for me to think that John Slater was offering this trip as an opportunity for us to talk, for me to understand my own unhappy family a little better. Of course he never said so, and even now, all these years later, I cannot be sure what his intention was at the beginning. Certainly it was not sex. Let me dispense with that immediately. It was well known that I had no interest in it. John, I said, I am an awful tourist. I have no intention of slogging through the bloody jungle with binoculars. I am an editor. It's all I do. I read. I have no other life. You love to eat, he said. I saw you polish off that curry. Well, it was very good curry. Then Kuala Lumpur will be paradise for you. Darling, I've

known K.L. for almost as long as I've known you. Of course he did not 'know' me at all. What's the worst thing that can happen? I'll make a pass at you? Micks, for God's sake -- it's a bloody week of your life. We'll all be mouldering in the ground soon enough. Do come. That did it -- the mouldering. After lunch I burgled our safe and took the last of the magazine's petty cash. In the King's Road I purchased forty-five pounds in travellers' cheques, a pair of sandals, and a summer frock. So prepared, I entered that maze from which, thirteen years later, I have yet to escape. In those days it was a thirty-hour flight from London to Kuala Lumpur, but we suffered a long delay in Tehran due to fog in Dubai, and then an interminable wait in Singapore. You would think that forty-two hours would be a sufficient opportunity for the two of us to begin our conversation, but it seemed that Slater liked to sleep on aeroplanes and he was so drugged with Phenobarb and whisky when we landed in Singapore that the air hostesses thought he was dead. He passed through Malaysian Immigration in a wheelchair and so my very first memory of Kuala Lumpur involves the difficulties of transporting a large and meaty man into a taxi and from there into the extraordinarily kitsch foyer of the Merlin Hotel, and there his fame preceded him, thank God. Apart from the awful gold and tartan decor of the Merlin, my only impressions of this foreign capital were heat and smells, sewage, floral scents, rotting fruit, and a general mustiness which seeped into my skin and permeated my large plain room where someone had written 'Fuck Little Duck' in grey pencil beside the toilet bowl. The next day Slater did not answer his telephone and I became concerned that he really might have died. Then, on the off-chance, I checked with the desk and discovered he and his luggage had departed the hotel. No message. Just gone. I immediately felt like someone who has been passionately seduced, fucked, and abandoned. This is not a pleasant feeling at the best of times and all my old animus against Slater came surging back. I was far too angry to read and far too agitated to sleep, and this was how I came to be inspecting the Indian haberdashers on Batu Road. I like to buy fabrics, but nothing pleased me her...