

## Miles Franklin Literary Award 2004 Shortlist

### ***My Life as a Fake***

**Peter Carey**

Knoph (Random House)

*My Life As A Fake* is a fantastical gothic tale, in part inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, about a hoax poet who mysteriously materialises and then pursues, taunts, haunts and otherwise destroys his maker. Two-time Booker prize winning author Peter Carey uses the Ern Malley hoax as a springboard, but the leap he takes is into the realms of richly imagined fiction.

Sara, an English poetry editor on holiday in Kuala Lumpur, stumbles upon an Australian, Christopher Chubb, reading Rilke in a bicycle shop. The man shows her a scrap of poetry the like of which she's never seen. She becomes determined to get her hands on the poetry, to publish in (and revive) her ailing poetry journal.

Chubb insists that Sara hear his story first. His tale is told over many sittings, and is the central story of *My Life As A Fake*.

As a conservative young poet in Melbourne in the 1950s, Chubb decided to teach the country a lesson about pretension and authenticity. Choosing as his target the most avant-garde of the literary magazines, he submitted 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 did the magazine fall for the hoax, but its editor was prosecuted for publishing obscenity. At the trial someone uncannily resembling the man in the faked photograph of the invented McCorkle leapt to his feet. At that moment the horrified Chubb was confronted by the malevolent being he had himself manufactured.

Peter Carey wickedly and ruefully explores how the phantom poet taunts, haunts and otherwise destroys his maker, pursuing Chubb from Melbourne to the seedy, sweaty, tropical chaos of Kuala Lumpur.

An unforgettable follow-up to the spectacularly successful *True History Of The Kelly Gang*, *My Life As A Fake* has all the Carey trademarks and more: an irresistible narrator, a tragi-comic anti-hero, a world that is so familiar yet utterly strange and disorienting, and a story that keeps you reading way past your bedtime.

### **About Peter Carey**

**Peter Carey** is the multi-award-winning author of eight novels, plus two highly acclaimed collections of short stories now all in *Collected Stories*. His books have won or been short-listed for every major literary award in Australia. He has won the Booker Prize twice - in 2001 for *True History of the Kelly Gang*, and in 1988 for *Oscar and Lucinda*. In 1998 he won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for *Jack Maggs*, and won it again in 2001 for *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Born in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Peter Carey now lives in New York.