

## From Context to Text: Peter Carey's Monstrous Creation in *My Life as a Fake*

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“Take salt upon your tongue.  
And do not feed the heart  
With sorrow, darkness or lies:  
These are the death of art.

James McAuley. An excerpt from “To Any Poet”

**Abstract:** Analysing one of Peter Carey’s hallmarks—fact vs fake or fiction, truth vs untruth —, this article explores the wide-ranging implications and ramifications of the Ern Malley affair in Peter Carey’s *My Life as a Fake*, a story published in 2003, but which still resonates in 2020 given the current global attention for “fake news” and “fake truths” often used in Donald Trump’s toxic propaganda. This timely recovery of a debate in Australian literature that started in the 1990s is instrumental in making a case for rigorous textual analysis while tying it up with questions of legitimacy which have always haunted colonial and postcolonising Australia. By probing the text/context issue and linking it to the critique of New Criticism’s isolation of the text from contemporary circumstances as insufficient to capture textual meaning fully or appropriately, Vernay’s analysis attempts at reconciling the word and the world.

**Keywords:** fake; creativity; influence; Peter Carey; hypertextuality; context; literary hoax

Peter Carey’s *My Life as a Fake* (2003) comes in the wake of a tradition of literary hoaxes in Australia which originated with the 1944 Ern Malley affair and flourished half a century later (see Nolan and Dawson; Vernay, *A Brief Take* 102-107). A thumbnail sketch of this outrageous literary scandal which inspired Carey, will put *My Life as a Fake* into historical perspective and help reveal its full implications. The Malley hoax is the brainchild of two conservative poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, who in early October 1943 created a collection of poems entitled *The Darkening Ecliptic* from phrases and quotations arbitrarily chosen from a variety of academic and non-academic sources. They presented this work as the musings of a working-class poet, Ern Malley. The faked manuscript turned out to be, as Stewart predicted, a “wonderful jape” which resulted in the discontinuation of *Angry Penguins*, an avant-garde literary magazine co-edited by Max Harris, Sidney Nolan, John Reed and his wife Sunday. Because the possibility of a literary prank loomed large in Max Harris’s mind, the editorial committee ferreted about in Malley’s past but in vain, since most details provided by his no less fictitious sister Ethel could neither be confirmed nor denied. In June 1944, *Fact* dealt a severe blow to the reputation of Modernism in Australia by exposing the trick. As a crowning misfortune, Mr. Harris eventually had to stand trial for publishing obscene material. This article attempts to show the importance of bridging the gap between the word and the world, arguing that full understanding of an imaginative story is impossible if reference to the real world outside is excluded. We will see that if the gist of the text can be grasped and analysed out of context, readers still run the risk of misinterpreting information.

**“Every [text] should be an autarchy”**

When an existing text is taken out of its original context for literary purposes, there is still a relationship, usually of opposition, to the previous context and even to reality. Ern Malley’s

avant-garde recommendation in his fake “Preface and Statement” will definitely not contradict such assumption: “These poems are complete in themselves. They have a domestic economy of their own and if they face outwards to the reader that is because they have first faced inwards to themselves. Every poem should be an autarchy” (qtd. in Heyward 81). In the 1960s, the decontextualised approach of New Criticism to literature extended the claim of autarchy (originally made by the Modernists for poems) to any literary text, thus emphasizing the word over the world. As things stand at present, any textually-oriented study of fiction tends to demonstrate that the text is a self-contained unit, the surface meaning of which can be grasped without any consideration given to any external element.

Yet, despite Malley’s statement, Max Harris wanted to see beyond the coded language of the text with the help of the context. He therefore asked Ethel Malley to “give me as much biographical information as you can—his life, his work, the nature of his illness, his interest in architecture and art, and so forth,” and concluded that “This would be extremely helpful to enable me to get a *perspective* of his work” (qtd. in Heyward 72, my emphasis). Claims that such personal details give depth to a work of art are at once presumptuous and thoroughly misleading. If an autarchy-oriented reading of a text can lead to a one-dimensional interpretation of the work, several such readings will reveal additional angles of approach (by probing the literal, symbolic and allegorical meanings, for instance) which, palimpsest-like, will add depth to the text under scrutiny. For it is the paradoxical fate of the text that it must be seen as an enclosed space in order to *open up* the way for manifold interpretations. As readers are left with no props to cling on, no particular meaning can be favoured.

A cursory reading of *My Life as a Fake* reveals an engrossing story with an intricate plot. Sarah Wode-Douglass, editor of a London-based poetry magazine accepts a trip to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) offered by distinguished Modernist poet John Slater, with whom she has a love-hate relationship. As she is left on her own by her generous but very elusive host, she happens on a mysterious Australian living in sordid circumstances as a bicycle repairer. He turns out to be Christopher Chubb, the notorious hoaxer who discredited an editor in the late 1940s by compiling a string of randomly-picked words, the meretricious poetry of which was the signature of a fabricated Bob McCorkle. The practical joke was meant to expose the ludicrousness of avant-garde poetry and criticism but turned into a sour obscenity trial which drove the disgraced editor to hang himself. To Chubb’s surprise, a giant man turns up claiming to be Bob McCorkle and accusing Chubb of stealing his poems and his life. In revenge, the “monster” steals Chubb’s baby daughter and flees with her to South East Asia. Here he creates a brilliant manuscript, “My Life as a Fake.” While Chubb tries to attract Sarah’s attention to the McCorkle manuscript, he sets out to tell his life story and laments that his monstrous creation has come back to haunt him and claim a past. Unable to give Bob a birth certificate and a childhood, Chubb pays for his irresponsible creation of “McCorkle” by engaging in a fifteen-year search to recover his kidnapped daughter. When he catches up with the dying McCorkle in Malaysia he is forced to realise the futility of his search and how inferior he is to his creation. His daughter and her stepmother finally murder him to prevent him selling the manuscript to Sarah. A subplot involves the story of the Tamil Mulaha, narrated by Chubb, who avenged his wife by murdering a brutal officer by means of a subtly poisoned melon during the Japanese occupation of Malaya.

This surface reading of *My Life as a Fake* fails to disclose the more meaningful implications encoded in the text, the code of which can only be cracked with the context in this particular case. On the downside, what reads as a complex story might just reveal itself to be a fairly derivative plot once put into context.

### **Of Literary Influence: From Hypotale to Hypertale**

As Nataša Kampmark observes, Peter Carey, often influenced by his predecessors, has been adept at translating one text into another, thus authoring up to this point in time three novels based on “already existing texts of British and Australian cultures:” *Jack Maggs* (1997), *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) and *My Life as a Fake* (2003) (Kampmark 1). The structure of the latter novel borrows both from actual events taken from Australia’s literary history—*The Darkening Ecliptic* composed by James McAuley and Harold Stewart, and from Michael Heyward’s *The Ern Malley Affair*, the manuscript of which Carey read in 1990-1 (Wyndham 5). Two stories are embedded in each other: the nonfiction story of Ern Malley and the fictional story of Chubb-McCorkle. For clarity of argument, let us posit that the 1943-44 events constitute the hypotale, while Heyward’s non-fiction will be referred as hypertale 1 and Carey’s fiction as hypertale 2.

As Salman Rushdie has it in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the world of imagination is analogous to an ocean (Rushdie, *Step Across This Line* 65). Fleshing out his idea, Rushdie reminds readers in his 2002 collection of non-fiction *Step Across This Line*, that the term “influence” etymologically denotes “something ‘flowing in’” (62), something which suffuses, so to speak, the text: idea-wise (hence allusions and echoes), structure-wise (the text becomes a palimpsest involving a Genettan hypertext derived from a hypotext), and style-wise (when it is written “in the manner of...”). In the wake of this fluid metaphor which so aptly characterises literature, I wish to introduce a new metaphor which could explicate the interactions between text and context. I would like to see the text as a heart, traditionally considered on a symbolical level as the seat of all feelings but on a factual plane as the seat of life—feelings and life being the prevalent subject-matter of literature.

By extending the metaphor, it could be argued that, as a vital organ, the text (like hypertale 1) pumps the blood flow through vessels called veins from the living organism (i.e. the context or, more specifically in this instance, the hypotale: the Ern Malley hoax in 1940s Adelaide) to recycle and enrich the circulating blood flow. Arteries, another set of blood vessels, will then carry the blood away from the heart (i.e. from the text, namely hypertale 1 in this instance, *The Ern Malley Affair*) to distribute it back to the organism (the new 1990-1 context), which henceforth benefits from an element-rich supply from the heart/ text (hypertale 1, i.e. *The Ern Malley Affair*). Then the organic text (hypertale 2, i.e. *My Life as a Fake*) pumps the blood flow from the living organism (the context, i.e. Carey reading the manuscript of hypertale 1). Arteries will then carry the element-rich blood away from the heart (i.e. from the text, namely hypertale 2, i.e. *My Life as a Fake*) to distribute it back to the organism (the new 2003 context in which Bill Ashcroft reads the narrative of hypertale 2).

The organ/text is thus renewing the flow by drawing its substance from the altered organism/context. In other words, the publication of hypertale 1 has influenced hypertale 2, just as the publication of hypertale 2 (i.e. *My Life as a Fake*) has informed Bill Ashcroft’s article. Similarly, Bill Ashcroft’s publication in *Australian Literary Studies* has influenced the writing of this article. Such a life-giving creative cycle channels free-flowing writing in a never-ending sequence of influence. As I have argued elsewhere when discussing the translation process and the role of influence, it becomes apparent that originality can only stem from the original (Vernay, *Water From the Moon* 128). When the “lunatic” reads Chubb’s poem (which is of course actually the first Ern Malley poem) in *My Life as a Fake*, it has become something different: “What had been clever had now become true, the song of the autodidact, the colonial, the damaged beast of the antipodes” (Carey, *My Life* 82-3). Carey is hinting in the novel that

literary works are to some extent independent of the author, but also that all literary works are derivative as they echo other sources consciously or unconsciously.

However, the notion of influence is hardly laudatory as writers often face charges of epigonism, if not plagiarism. As Salman Rushdie notes, “Perhaps because so much second-rate writing is derivative—and because so much writing is at best second-rate—the idea of influence has become a kind of accusation, a way of denigrating a writer’s work. The frontier between influence and imitation, even between influence and plagiarism has commenced of late to be somewhat blurred” (Rushdie, *Step Across This Line* 65). There is indeed a thin line between a conspicuous literary reference (like the insertion of a quotation or the rewording of some hypotext) and the illegitimate borrowing from printed sources. The reader faces such a dilemma when at some stage Peter Carey paraphrases Ethel Malley’s letters, conveniently reproduced in Heyward’s *The Ern Malley Affair*. Compare:

Dear Sir,

When I was going through my brother’s things after his death, I found some poetry he had written. I am no judge of it myself, but a friend who I showed it to thinks it is very good and told me it should be published. On his advice I am sending you some of the poems for an opinion.

It would be a kindness if you could let me know whether you think there is anything in them. I am not a literary person myself and I do not feel I understand what he wrote, but I feel that I ought to do something about them. Ern kept himself very much to himself and lived on his own of late years and he never said anything about writing poetry. He was very ill in the months before his death last July and it may have affected his outlook.

I enclose a 2 ½ d stamp for reply, and oblige,

Your sincerely,

Ethel Malley. (qtd in Heyward 69)

Dear Sir,

When I was going through my brother’s things after his death, I found some poetry he had written. [...] I am no judge of **poetry** myself, [...] but a friend who I showed it to thinks it is very good and told me it should be published. On his advice I am sending you [Ø] the poems for an opinion.

It would be a kindness if you **would** let me know whether you think there is anything in them. I am not a literary person myself and I do not feel I understand what he wrote, but I feel that I ought to do something about them. **My brother Bob** kept himself very much to himself and lived on his own of late years and he never said anything about writing poetry. He was very ill in the months before his death last July and it may have affected his outlook.

I enclose a 2 ½ d stamp for reply, and oblige,

Your sincerely,

**Beatrice McCorkle**. (Carey, *My Life* 33-4)

Save some minor changes (highlighted in bold type) brought in to adjust the original text to the new context, the wording is unmistakably and virtually identical. Carey borrows more sparingly from Ethel’s second letter:

I am very glad to know that you think they are so good. (qtd. in Heyward 76)

Mother died in August 1933 and I could not stop Ern from leaving school after that as he was set on going to work. I have always thought he was very foolish not to have got his Intermediate but he was determined to go his own way. (qtd. in Heyward 77)

[Ø] I could not stop **Bob** from leaving school **at fourteen**, [...] **and** after that as he was set on going to work. I have always thought he was very foolish not to have got his Intermediate. [Ø] (Carey, *My Life* 41)

**I am so pleased** you think the poems are [Ø] **good enough to publish**. (Carey, *My Life* 41)

It may be noteworthy that the paraphrasing would be lost on most readers. Even though the Ern Malley affair—like the Ned Kelly myth on which Carey heavily drew for his *True History of the Kelly Gang*—is part and parcel of Australia’s cultural history, readers would need a sound knowledge of the hoax to recognise Ethel’s prose.

In a book-saturated world, it may be utopian to think that all readers share the same cultural and literary references, so they need to be spelled out at some stage. Peppering the book with hints alluding to the historical context is one of the novelist’s ploys to elucidate the text. To some extent, the paratext, which acts as an interface between the textual and the extra-textual, would be the ideal place for Carey to reveal his sources. While no detail on the book cover alludes to Australia’s oldest literary hoax, the only giveaway is the *Harpers & Queen* quote (“Carey’s irresistible re-imaginings of a literary hoax in 1940s Australia...”) on the first inside page of the Faber and Faber edition.

Within the textual space, the mentioning of “The Darkening Ecliptic” on page 80 is the only clue which makes text and context overlap and paves the way for a historicist analysis of *My Life as a Fake*. However, this reading hint will only come in handy for just one type of reader, Umberto Eco’s Model Reader who possesses the required encyclopaedic background to grasp the full meaning of a text.<sup>1</sup> The well-informed reader will be able to draw parallels between Carey’s text and the original story. Such a Model Reader will consequently construe Christopher Chubb, Robert McCorkle, Beatrice McCorkle, and David Weiss, editor of *Personae* as the respective literary avatars of McAuley & Stewart, Ernest Malley, Ethel Malley and Max Harris, editor of *Angry Penguins*.

To allude to the context and encourage readers to look below the surface of the text, Carey addresses three types of readership at different stages of erudition. The unnamed hoax in the paratext will locate the story for lay readers who can at least put a name on this literary hoax. Then, the passing mention of the title of the fake collection of poems will confirm the suspicions informed readers had, while stimulating further analogies in their minds. Finally, the rewording of genuine documents may just be food for thought addressed to the scholarly readers. These erudite readers might also recognise the changes which Carey has made to Heyward’s non-fictional account, such as the relocation of the magazine and the court case to Melbourne from Adelaide and the change from two hoaxers (McAuley and Stewart) to one (Chubb) who, like McAuley, writes non-modernist poetry and ends up living in Asia, like Stewart. However, whatever the degree of understanding, the context once known to readers will channel their thoughts and determine the way in which they read *My Life as a Fake*. The pre-textual (i.e. the

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<sup>1</sup> See the third chapter of Eco’s *Lector in fabula. Le rôle du lecteur*.

non-fictional Ern Malley hoax, which could be defined as the contextual), plus the influences which build up the intertextuality, will certainly prompt readers to focus on specific issues like creation and the creative process.

### **Peter Carey's Monstrous Creation**

In a later 1944 edition of *Fact*, the magazine supplement to the *Sunday Sun*, the hoaxers set out to explain their "serious literary experiment" (qtd. in Heyward 171). In response to "the gradual decay of meaning and craftsmanship in poetry" (qtd. in Heyward 172), McAuley and Steward brought into disrepute a "literary fashion" which "rendered its devotees insensible to absurdity and incapable of ordinary discrimination" (qtd. in Heyward 172). In the face of such accusations, Max Harris replied unabashed: "... time tells the story, and time will explain the fact that the myth is sometimes greater than its creator" (qtd. in Heyward 189). At that very moment, he might not have suspected that he had just worded a prophecy which ironically echoed the curse of a Mary Shelley overshadowed by her myth.<sup>2</sup> As good myths die hard, Ern Malley returns with a vengeance. Not only has he outlived his spiritual fathers whose further work is less famous but he has outshone them as *The Darkening Ecliptic* kept being republished piecemeal or as a collection over the following years.

Unsurprisingly, *My Life as a Fake* is informed on a thematic level by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which itself has also fed on various literary sources:

Carey's novel investigates the role and significance of authenticity in a specifically literary context and one of the reasons for *Frankenstein* being Carey's starting and major reference point is because Mary Shelley's novel is composed of a number of textual sources including Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and notes of Erasmus Darwin, who was known for his experiments in galvanism. (Kampmark 4)

Should we proceed with a cross-reading of the Shelley, Heyward and Carey tales, Doctor Frankenstein, Stewart and McAuley condensed as Christopher Chubb in Carey's account, all read like Promethean figures who have given life to a monstrous creation which ultimately runs out of control and turns upon its creator(s). To be sure, Carey interpolated the Malley story by turning Christopher Chubb into a Victor Frankenstein haunted by his ghastly fabrication which is now and again referred to as "the creature" (Carey, *My Life* 98, 156, 253). The comparison with the Shelley myth is quite tempting indeed. No matter how hypothetical the situation might be, a sister giving birth to her brother in the 1940s was as unlikely a fact as a man creating life out of death in the early nineteenth century. Besides, both creatures, unable to live on in their children (Victor destroys his almost completed female monster out of disgust before the creature gets to know her and the imaginary Ernest dies an untimely death), are condemned to a sterile life. Such is the doubled-edged power of imagination which can be either creative or destructive. Having said this, could the parallel with the Shelley myth be carried further?

Traditionally associated with parturition, creation is often envisioned as a delivery, if not as an evacuation (as French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu would audaciously argue in *Créer, détruire*) while the creative process is seen as an ongoing and energy-consuming effort—in other words, a gestation. In *My Life as a Fake*, John Slater describes Mr. Chubb's fake collection of poems as "a phantom pregnancy" (Carey, *My Life* 20, my emphasis). This

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<sup>2</sup> While in the heat of the 1944 debate some academics sustained the argument that the poems had great value, critics validated their content at the turn of the century by analysing them in literary terms.

pregnancy could only be for Mr. Chubb a phantom or phantasm, since Ethel Malley was actually the woman who delivered her own brother: the monstrous creation!

There is a widespread misreading of the Ern Malley affair which Peter Carey has unfortunately taken up and which tinges many parallels to the Shelley myth with inaccuracy. The Carey narrative unarguably hinges on the assumption that Mr. Chubb is the genitor—so to speak—of Bob McCorkle:

[Chubb] gave birth to a phantom poet, a certain ‘Bob McCorkle’ who of course never really existed but to whom our bitter little Australian gave a ragingly modern opus: life, death, a whole biography—including, believe it or not, a birth certificate. And then he delivered the lot—with the exception of the birth certificate, which came later—to a journal with a rather pretentious name of *Personae*. (Carey, *My Life* 20)<sup>3</sup>

This is different from the “creature” of the conservative hoaxers McAuley and Stewart who originally made Ern as shadowy as possible. McCorkle is assumed to have emerged “from the darkest recess of Chubb’s disturbed imagination” (Carey, *My Life* 86)<sup>4</sup> whereas this can hardly be said of Ern Malley who was created as a joke with many hints about the hoax hidden in the verse. To set the chronology straight, it would be worth recalling that when Max Harris discovered the manuscript, Ern Malley’s character was hardly more than a blank page. At his death, poetry and a few documents were the few clues which could vouch for his existence. As Ern confesses in his “Preface and Statement,” “Every note and revision has been destroyed. There is no biographical data” (qtd. in Heyward 81). Max Harris could not resist enquiring further and forcing the fictitious Ethel to introduce her brother’s work to him and to breathe life into the Ernest Lalor Malley character (1918-1943) by giving him a biography: origin, filiation, education, occupation (see Heyward, 77-8).

In Carey’s novel, the editor Weiss has a minor role in the creation of McCorkle. When confronted by the monster, Weiss affirms that McCorkle “was your [Chubb’s] creation, that you’d put my parts together” (Carey, *My Life* 83). McCorkle means no harm to Weiss whose death, fleeing from him, is an accident. This makes Chubb the sole spiritual parent of McCorkle, unless Beatrice McCorkle were also to come to life, whereas Ern Malley can be seen as a joint creation of McAuley, Stewart and Harris, helped by the imaginary Ethel Malley. In keeping with such reasoning, if the monsters were to pursue their cursed creators as in the Shelley tale, Ethel Malley and Beatrice McCorkle would be in for a hard time. But how could they anyway, since they have no more existence than their creatures, being themselves the fictitious creatures<sup>5</sup> of Stewart/McAuley and Christopher Chubb?

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<sup>3</sup> As further evidence: “Poetry on the front page! Imagine! The photograph I recognised as one I made myself, patched together from three different men. My creature. Over six feet tall. Fantastic head, huge powerful nose and cheekbones, great forehead like the bust of Shakespeare. I had put him together with the help of my friend Tess McMahan. Chopped him up and glued him” (52); “[Weiss] said I was incapable of writing what I wrote. What hubris-*lah*. Takes the breath away. I reminded him that I was the one who made Bob McCorkle, not just the words, but also cut up his head and legs and body. I physically pasted him together” (53-4); “I finally understood, [Mr Chubb] said quietly. I had brought him forth. ... From hell, I suppose. ... I imagined someone and he came into being” (100).

<sup>4</sup> To be compared with Christopher Chubb’s declaration further in the narrative: “I imagined someone and he came into being” (Carey, *My Life* 100).

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, Pr. David Lewis assumed that Malley’s name was inspired by Austrian philosopher Ernst Mally who “expounded a theory of non-existent objects” (Heyward xxiii).

Since the novel revolves around the notion of fakery, the reader cannot be entirely certain that McCorkle has ever existed. Chubb is the authority for McCorkle's tale and McCorkle could be his fabrication, not just in the original sense of deception which the surface of the novel implies—but also a product in the making, an assemblage of parts like Frankenstein's monster. On this level, Chubb remains a literary faker to the end, with two kinds of poetic creation: the anti-modernist neo-classical poems rejected by the modernist poetry magazines, and the "fake" modern poems of McCorkle. At the end of his life, the two personalities are merged into the disreputable bicycle mechanic in a back street of Malaysia. With its fittingly chosen title, *My Life as a Fake* makes a point that all literature has an element of fake, invention and creation—as indeed do all biographies.

Admittedly, Malley's and McCorkle's lives are entirely textual constructs. As such, their credibility is based on a hackneyed realist trick, namely the oft-claimed newfound manuscript which gives credence to the tale by accounting for its origin. Ethel and Beatrice, by sending their letters to the editors of avant-garde magazines (Heyward 69; Carey, *My Life* 41) ground the poetic texts in a convincing context with the help of deceptive verisimilitude. Such attempt to unite language and its referent is enhanced by the epistolary device (also used at the outset of the Frankenstein tale) which aims at indicating that the conveyed information is borrowed from our daily lives.

Ernest Malley and Robert McCorkle came to the world as epistolary words and took on a specific voice tone through their assumed poetic words. As Bill Ashcroft makes it clear, "to read Ern Malley through Peter Carey is to connect the events with the poetry, to see the life and the poetry as inhabiting the same text, to suggest that Ern Malley's life demonstrates the textuality of all lives. Ern Malley—as Carey suggests, and Max Harris emphatically believes—lives" (Ashcroft 31). There is no mistake that *My Life as a Fake*, whose "subtle sub-plot ... involves the comparative power of writer and publisher in producing a life" (Ashcroft 32) illustrates what I would term *omnipotence fallacy*: that is, the hubris illusion. By sustaining the belief that the *logos* can generate an existence, readers carry the imagination beyond the bounds of the plausible and enter the realm of fantasy which they mistake for reality. It might be wiser to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground and not overlook the basic fact that the existences of Ernest and Robert were purely cerebral as they passed on from one intellect to another. Born in the imagination of their respective spiritual fathers, they will only live on in the readers' mind.

The text/ context divorce which has been established by criticism as a means to improve the quality of literary analysis has perversely prevented the critic from being too analytical. Would I have found out that the intertextual references to Shelley's masterpiece were ineffective and misleading without the help of the context? Clearly no! Is my reading of *My Life as a Fake* tangentially related to literary studies for that matter? I should not think so either. Seeing the text as an autarchy is a deeply entrenched illusion which New Criticism has harboured and propagated for so many years. By cutting the text from the context or the word from the world, this school of thought has sucked the substance out of the heart. In other words, it may be said that the exclusive and hermetically-sealed approach of New Criticism to literary texts has in fact desiccated literature by stripping down its body to a mere skeleton. But hush! For who would dare expose academia's skeleton in the cupboard?

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