

## LIES

Lies are falsehoods. They are counterfactual statements, made normally with the intention to deceive, and are in bad social repute. From childhood on, the child is admonished to 'tell the truth.'

Great literature has been known to come to the defence of the lie. (Great cultures, like the ancient Greek, put high emphasis on the value of skill and craftiness, in opening paths of success to the youngster setting out to make his way in a threat rich world.) Homer, in his *Odyssey*, anatomizes the painful difficulties presented to his hero Odysseus, as he devotes twenty years to his perilous return from Troy to his island home, Ithaca. En route with his men, the hero meets a monster, Polyphemus, who though blind in his one huge eye has figured out a crew resembling Odysseus has entered the cave where he lives. The monster paws around in the dark hunting for human flesh, and when he scents Odysseus he cries out WHAT'S YOUR NAME? to which Odysseus replies OUTIS (that is the name NO MAN) which convinces Cyclops that no one is there. With ruse Odysseus wins a temporary reprieve, and eventually leads his men to safety.

By another trope—exploited by the French novelist Jean Giono, in *The Birth of the Odyssey*-- the returning Odysseus scatters extravagantly exaggerated tales of his own prowess, so that when finally he reaches his home the suitors of his wife flee in terror, believing the tales they have been hearing, of her lord and master. Odysseus reconquers the peace and prosperity of his own home, in large part because he knew how to tell a series of good lies.