

LOVE



CLANCY MARTIN

AND

**AND WHY YOU CAN'T HAVE
ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER**



LOVE

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About the Book

Is it possible to love well without lying? Love should lead us to the truth, about ourselves and about those we love, shouldn't it? But in the real world we find that love and lies often work hand in hand, and that it may be difficult to sustain love without illusions or even deception.

Ranging widely across philosophy, his own experience, neuroscience, psychoanalysis, and many writers on love, Clancy Martin - divorced twice and married three times - explores how love, truthfulness and deception work together.

Love and Lies is provocative, wise, funny and relentlessly honest.

About the Author

A former owner of a variety of jewellery operations in Texas, Clancy Martin is presently an Associate Professor and Chair of Philosophy at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. He is the author of the acclaimed novel *How to Sell*. He is married and has three daughters.

Also by Clancy Martin

How to Sell

Travels in Central America

Introducing Philosophy

The German Sisyphus

The Philosophy of Deception

Ethics Across the Professions

Honest Work

Since Socrates

Morality and the Good Life

Above the Bottom Line

For my parents:

Anna Victoria Moody

John William Martin (1940-1997)

LOVE

CLANCY MARTIN

AND

AND WHY YOU CAN'T HAVE
ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER

LIES



Harvill Secker
LONDON

Lie to me
I promise, I'll believe
Lie to me
But please don't leave.
—Sheryl Crow

Prologue: Why I Wrote This Book

My wife, Amie, and I were lying in bed that morning, being lazy and reading. It was a Monday morning, so we both should have been up working, but we weren't ready for the weekend to be over. We were in Iowa City—my wife was at the Writers' Workshop—and spring had arrived at last. It was lovely with the tulips and the swollen river and the very sudden arrival of such a late spring. I had just finished a book, and she was in the middle of hers. "Okay, I'm getting up," I said, and she said, "No, let's stay in bed a little longer," and dug another book out of the big tin steamer—a kind of old sailor's trunk—that she keeps at the end of the bed. She gave me the book. It was William Maxwell's *So Long, See You Tomorrow*. I knew about his reputation as an editor but, I am a bit embarrassed to admit, had never read any of his writing. I didn't want to read the book because I did not know its name and something about the title bothered me. Also, I sometimes have the stupid, arrogant idea that if I have not heard of a book, it's probably not very good.

The book opens with the account of a shooting. Then Maxwell's narrator goes back to his own childhood, which was very much like my own—bookish, the middle of three brothers, raised by his own parent and a stepparent he could never accept. His narrator seemed to understand that feeling of confusion that characterized my own childhood. I was drawn into the book; I had that exhilarating feeling—the best feeling we can get, perhaps, from reading—of encountering a long-lost friend, someone whom I would never meet (Maxwell died in 2000, at the

age of ninety-two), but who saw the world through eyes similar to my own, who felt some of the things I had felt; I had that feeling of being not so alone in the world as I was before I opened the book. Then I came to this passage:

What we, or at any rate what I, refer to confidently as memory—meaning a moment, a scene, a fact that has been subjected to a fixative and thereby rescued from oblivion—is really a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling. Too many conflicting emotional interests are involved for life ever to be wholly acceptable, and possibly it is the work of the storyteller to rearrange things so that they conform to this end. In any case, in talking about the past we lie with every breath we draw.¹

“Listen to this,” I said to my wife, and read it to her.

“Well, maybe you guys lie about the past,” she said, “but not me.” She is a very intelligent, very funny person, my wife.

There are many books, like Maxwell’s *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, or Marguerite Duras’s *The Lover*, or Stendhal’s *Love*, that may in a more artistic way capture what I try to say in a more analytical way here in this little book of my own. One way of restating my own thesis would be to say, with Maxwell: “In talking about love we lie with every breath we draw.” But obviously for Maxwell and me talking about the past and talking about love are also how we get to the truth of things. Talking about the past, like talking about love, is not so much lying as it is trying to tell a story that must be told and cannot be told any other way—telling the truth, but telling it slant, as Emily Dickinson famously recommends. Perhaps the truth we are trying to get at could be told in many different ways, none of which would be nakedly factual. In any case, what we mean by “telling the truth” is itself much more complicated than we normally pretend it to be, particularly when we’re talking about the past and about love.

Furthermore, for most of us, we can’t talk about love without also talking about our pasts. In this prologue and

throughout this book, I will be talking about my past in order both to illustrate how I came to be fascinated with the interconnections of love and lying and to provide concrete examples of the arguments I make: to provide grist for the philosophical mill. Consequently, this book is part memoir, part self-psychoanalytic analysis, part philosophical argument, and, because many of the most fascinating lovers are in literature, part literary criticism. Here and there a little science also finds its way in, because much of the most interesting recent research on deception is being done in experiments and laboratories.²

When I was twelve or so, my mother found some *Penthouse* magazines under my bed. When she confronted me with them, I lied, and said: “Dad gave them to me.” I had recently returned from his home in Miami—we lived in Calgary, Alberta—and it was a plausible fib.

When my mother called my father to confront him, he said, “Clancy has some difficulty when it comes to the truth.”

“Well, at least he comes by it honestly,” my mother said, and hung up on him.

My father was a great storyteller. So is my mother, and for a long time I believed both of their stories were true, even when they disagreed. It was perhaps for this reason that it was natural to me when, later in life, I encountered the philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom argue that truth is a matter of one’s perspective, that not only will different people see the truth differently but also the truth itself may vary from person to person. This way of thinking about truth doesn’t work very well with statements like “ $7 + 5 = 12$ ”; it looks as though we’d all better agree about the truth of that claim, if we understand the claim at all. But it works much better with statements like “We were meant to be together, son” or “Your father and I were never happy” or “I’ll never

love another woman” or “The marriage could never work” or “That was the best year we ever had.” Statements that we genuinely care about, in short, are the ones in which their truth looks as if it were involved with the perspective of the narrator. “Subjectivity is truth,” Kierkegaard provocatively wrote, under a pseudonym (thus showing that he was speaking from a particular perspective); what I sometimes think he intended by this was “Subjectivity is *meaning*.” My perspective, my truth, is inextricably bound up with what I find to be meaningful.

When I say, for example, that it’s true that I love my daughters or that I love my wife, I couldn’t attempt to specify the truth conditions that govern that claim. I can’t point to the truth of it in the way that I can point to the truth that “The apple is on the table.” Furthermore, the fact that I love them seems to be an importantly different kind of fact from the fact that the apple is on the table. That the apple is on the table is fundamentally a matter of indifference to me. It’s the sort of fact that is easily demonstrated to be true, but I don’t care that much about it, even if I’m hungry. That I love my children and my wife is the kind of fact that is of the utmost importance to me. But it’s also the sort of fact that is private to me, though naturally I hope they know it too. And it would be difficult, perhaps impossible to “prove” that I love them in the way I could prove that the apple is on the table. The truth or fact of my love is subjective; the truth or fact of the apple’s being on the table is objective. The crucial difference between the two sorts of facts is that my love for my wife and children is part of the world of those truths that matter most to me, that give my life meaning, that define who I am and how I inhabit the world. And I am involved with those facts or truths in an active way, in which I am not particularly involved with the fact about the apple. If I die today, my love for my wife and my children goes with me, but that darned apple stays right where it is. This

requirement of my active participation with the truth of my love is part of why it is meaningful to me; it is also part of why that kind of truth—the truth of my love—is much more complex, slippery, and interesting than the usual sort of truth or fact.

Here's a story from early in my first marriage (I've been married three times) that will help illustrate just how complicated and tricky these sorts of subjective truths are. Again, I want to emphasize that these subjective truths are the most important sorts of truths for us.

It was a spring afternoon in Nazaré, a little fishing town on the Portuguese coast. I was vacationing with my first wife. We'd been married for about a year and were living in Copenhagen. I was trying to write a dissertation on Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* but was in fact just going to the Royal Library every day and turning the delicate pages of two-hundred-year-old manuscripts that, despite my years of studying Danish, I couldn't really read. I took notes for a book that would never be written. But we'd decided to get away, and Portugal was cheap then, and it was a sunny break from the dreary weather of Denmark in March.

We'd taken a funicular—a little, meticulously crafted mahogany car on narrow train tracks and cables, with old cracked-leather seats and windows that louvered open—up the side of the mountain to a peak. We stood near the edge of the cliff, holding hands, and watched the waves breaking against the rocks hundreds of feet below. Then the funicular man gestured, we saw the sky—enormous black thunderheads were coming in swiftly from the sea—and all of us, a dozen or so, maybe fewer, crowded back into the funicular for the ride down. The storm broke. The little car rocked in the rain; we closed the windows. We laughed and cried out as the lightning struck. At the bottom we all ran down the cobblestoned, high-curbed seaport streets for our little hotels or guesthouses—it was out of season, and the

one big hotel was closed—and my wife and I accidentally passed our house.

“Let’s get something to eat!” I shouted—we both were soaking wet, and the pouring warm rain, heavy as standing in the shower, was rushing down the streets higher than our ankles—and we ran, still holding hands, down almost to the beach, where we saw a light under an awning and a tiny restaurant crowded with Portuguese. It was not much larger than a large hotel room, and they squeezed us in on one of the benches and brought us bread and red wine. Almost everyone was wet, but it was warm from the bodies. They brought us huge bowls of fish stew. The main fish in the stew was entire; it still had its head, tail, and eyes. The room was smoky from cooking and lit with candles. We couldn’t understand what people were saying or laughing about. The stew was too fishy for me, but I ate it, and I looked up at my wife, thinking, “This is the most romantic moment in my life. It will never be more romantic than this.” Her face was twisted into that sad frown she used to make, and when she saw me looking into her eyes, she started to cry. “I don’t want this stew. I want to go home,” she said. I waved the woman over—she was cooking in plain sight—and paid our check. She was worried that we didn’t like the stew, and I gulped down my wine and tried to explain that we were just wet and tired.

This event meant more to me than a simple miscommunication between a young husband and wife, and helps illustrate what Kierkegaard means by the claim that “Subjectivity is truth” or I mean by “Subjectivity is meaning.” My experience of that rainstorm in Portugal was that it was one of the most intensely romantic experiences of my life, until I abruptly realized that my wife was experiencing it entirely differently. In his *Discourse on the Passion of Love* Pascal puts the same point nicely: “A true or false pleasure can equally fill the mind. For what matters

it that this pleasure is false, if we are persuaded that it is true?”

Both experiences, both the romance and the disappointment that followed it, had their unique truthfulness. I still nostalgically remember that rocking funicular and that run down the flooding cobblestoned streets. When I talk to my ex-wife about it now, she also remembers it as a beautiful moment in our early marriage (she has entirely forgotten the fish stew incident). And I also will never forget how intensely close I felt to my wife, until I suddenly, vertiginously understood how far apart, at that moment, our experience actually was. Then the whole event took on a new meaning. None of the “facts” of the afternoon had changed, but the way it mattered to me, the meaning of it all, its “truth,” was fundamentally altered.

That sounds solipsistic, and it should: we can never get all the way inside each other’s heads, no matter how much we love each other. Interestingly, much of the story I tell here will illustrate that love is simply the long journey we make from our early identification with another human being (usually a parent, commonly our mothers) to the recognition that we are fundamentally separate from others and our subsequent creative attempts to return to that state of union. To love is to try to transcend the boundaries of our own minds. It seems like an impossible project, and yet we manage to accomplish it over and over again. How we do it, and that it requires not only truthfulness but also deception and self-deception, are the subject of this book. In fact, every time you lie, like every time you love, you are engaged in a kind of projection of your own mind into another’s.

But let me be honest, there’s more to my interest in love and deception than my philosophical fascination with the subject. I’ve long had a practical interest in deception because I spent seven years of my life as a professional liar.

Ever since I was a kid, I'd struggled with telling the truth. But the jewelry business was my graduate school in the dark arts of confabulation, prevarication, secrecy, and misdirection.

Here's that story. A few months after the trip to Portugal, I decided to drop out of graduate school and join my older brother as partner in his luxury jewelry store. When I did it, I decided to burn all my bridges. I didn't fill out any forms. I didn't have the ordinary courtesy even to contact my two dissertation directors, Robert C. Solomon and Louis H. Mackey. I simply vanished.

I told myself that it was a conscious strategy, to prevent myself from going back, but I also knew the truth: that I was simply too ashamed to tell them that I had gone into business for the money. Like many of our deceptions—both of ourselves and of others—mine was motivated by cowardice: "Tell the people what they want to hear," or if you can't do that, simply don't tell them anything at all.

A few years later my next-door neighbor (my first wife and I had just moved in) caught me in the driveway and asked, "Hey, Clancy. Did you go to grad school at the University of Texas?"

"I did, that's right." I was already uncomfortable. I opened the door of my convertible. The Texas summer sun frowned cruelly down on me.

"I'm an editor of Bob Solomon's. He told me to say hello."

Busted. This was Solomon's way of calling me on my bullshit. It was his personal and philosophical motto, adopted from Sartre: "No excuses!" Take responsibility for your actions. Above all, avoid bad faith. Look at yourself in the mirror and accept—if possible, embrace—the person that you are.

But I was on my way to the jewelry store, and Bob Solomon, at that point in my life, was the least of my problems. I had him stored neatly in the mental safety-

deposit box of “people I had not lied to but had betrayed in a related way.”

I often think, now, of that decision to leave graduate school to go into the jewelry business. Being a professor, I have since learned, plays to my strengths: curiosity, the love of reading and writing, storytelling. Selling jewelry, by contrast, played to all my weaknesses, because the jewelry business depends on the art of creating illusions. The vast majority of jewelry has no inherent value; the salesperson must create the perception of value. It is, in this way and in many others, a business that encourages deception. I used deception to take the easy way out of selling. I was too eager to please my customers. When we were in trouble with the bank, there was always some lie I could invent to sell my way into a quick deal and easy cash from one of my regulars. I was miserable most of the time, but I told myself that this was how business was done.

The jewelry business—like many other businesses, especially those that depend on selling—lends itself to lies. (I should add that my brothers, both in the jewelry business today, are two of the most scrupulously honest people I know.) It’s hard to make money selling used Rolexes as what they are, but if you clean one up and make it look new, suddenly there’s a little profit in the deal. Grading diamonds is in many ways a matter of opinion, and the better a diamond looks to you when you’re grading it, the more money it’s worth—as long as you can convince your customer that it’s the grade you’re selling it as. Here’s an easy, effective way to do that: first lie to yourself about what grade the diamond is; then you can sincerely tell your customer “the truth” about what it’s worth.

As I would tell my salespeople, if you want to be an expert deceiver, master the art of self-deception. People will believe you when they see that you yourself are deeply convinced. It sounds difficult to do, but in fact it’s easy; we are already experts at lying to ourselves. We believe just

what we want to believe. And the customer will help in this process because she or he wants the diamond—where else can I get such a good deal on such a high-quality stone?—to be a certain size and quality. The customer wants to believe just as much as the salesperson does. At the same time, he or she does not want to pay the price that the actual diamond, were it what you claimed it to be, would cost. The transaction is a collaboration of lies and self-deceptions.

Pretend you are selling a piece of jewelry, a useless thing, small, easily lost, that is also grossly expensive. I, your customer, wander into the store. Pretend to be polishing the showcases. Watch to see what is catching my eye. Stand back; let me prowl a bit. I will come back to a piece or two; something will draw me. You wait for and then seize the moment when you recognize the spark of allure—all great selling is a form of seduction. Now make your approach. Take a bracelet from the showcase that is near, but not too near, the piece I am interested in. Admire it; polish it with a gold cloth; comment quietly, appraisingly on it. You're still ignoring me, your customer. Now, almost as though talking to yourself, take the piece I like from the showcase: "Now this is a piece of jewelry. I love this piece." Suddenly you see me there. "Isn't this a beautiful thing? The average person wouldn't even notice this. But if you're in the business, if you really know what to look for, a piece like this is why people wear fine jewelry. This is what a connoisseur looks for." If it's a gold rope chain, a stainless steel Rolex, or something else very common and mundane, you'll have to finesse the line a bit.

From there it's easy. Use a mixture of the several kinds of lies Aristotle identified in *Nicomachean Ethics*: a good blend of subtle flattery, understatement, humorous boastfulness, playful storytelling, and gentle irony will establish that "you're one of us, and I'm one of you." We are alike; we are friends; we can trust each other.

The problem is, once lying to your customer as a way of doing business becomes habitual, it reaches like a weed into other areas of your business and then into your personal life. Soon the instrument of pleasing people becomes the goal of pleasing people. For example, who *wouldn't* want to buy a high-quality one-carat diamond for just three thousand dollars? (Such a diamond would cost forty-five hundred to ten thousand, retail, depending on where you bought it.) But you can't make a profit selling that diamond for three thousand dollars; you can't even buy one wholesale for that amount. Since the customer can't tell the difference anyway, why not make your profit and please the customer by simply misrepresenting the merchandise? "But that's deceptive trade! There are laws against that!" There's a body of federal law, in fact: the Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Texas awards triple damages plus attorney's fees to the successful plaintiff. "Aren't you worried about criminal—or at least civil—consequences? And how do you look at yourself in the mirror before you go to bed at night?"

During my bleakest days in business, when I felt like taking a Zen monk's vow of silence so that not a single lie would escape my lips, I often took a long lunch and drove to a campus—Southern Methodist University, Texas Christian University, the University of Texas at Arlington—to see the college kids outside, reading books or holding hands or kissing in the sunshine or hurrying to class, and to reassure myself that there was a place where life made sense, where people were happy and thinking about something other than profit, where people still believed that truth mattered and were even in pursuit of it. (Yes, I was a bit naive about academic life.)

I was in the luxury jewelry business for nearly seven years, and though I don't believe in the existence of a soul, exactly, I came to understand what people mean when they say you are losing your soul. The lies I told in my business

life migrated. Soon I was lying to my wife. The habit of telling people what they wanted to hear became the easiest way to navigate my way through any day. They don't call it the cold, hard truth without reason: flattering falsehoods are like a big, expensive comforter.

It seemed that I could do what I wanted without ever suffering the consequences of my actions, as long as I created the appearance that people wanted to see. It took intellectual effort. I grew skinnier. I needed more and more cocaine to keep all my lies straight. And then, one morning, I realized that I had been standing in the "executive bathroom" (reserved for my brother and me) at the marble sink before a large gilt Venetian mirror every morning for days, with my Glock in my mouth. I still remember the oily taste of that barrel. Before I confronted the fact that I was trying to kill myself, I had probably put that gun in my mouth, oh, I don't know, twenty, thirty times. I said, "Enough."

I called my old mentor Robert C. Solomon. That was in May 2000.

I was relieved when he didn't answer his phone. I left a message. "I'm sorry, Dr. Solomon. I'd like to come back to graduate school." Words to that effect, but at much greater length. I think the beep cut me off.

When he called back, I was too frightened to pick up. I listened to his voice mail message. He said, "Clancy, this is not a good time to make yourself difficult to get hold of."

I called again. He let me off easy. (He was one of the most generous people I've ever known.) I caught him up with the past seven years of my life. He told me to call him Bob, not Dr. Solomon: "We're past that." Then he said, "So, why do you want to come back?"

"I want to finish what I started, Bob."

"That's a lousy reason. Try again."

"I need to make a living that's not in business. I hate being a businessman, Bob."

“So be a lawyer. Be a doctor. You’ll make a lot more money than in philosophy. It’s not easy to get a job as a professor these days, Clancy.”

“It’s the one thing I really enjoyed. Philosophy was the only thing that ever truly interested me. And I have some things I want to figure out.”

“Now you’re talking. Like what? What are you thinking about?”

“Lying.”

He was quiet for a few seconds.

“Lying is interesting. Deception? Or self-deception? Or, I’m guessing, both?”

“Exactly. Both. How they work together.”

With the help of a couple of other professors who remembered me fondly, in the fall semester of 2000 Bob Solomon brought me back to the philosophy doctoral program at Austin, and I started work on a dissertation titled “Nietzsche on Deception.”

I went to work on deception not because I wanted to learn how to lie better—I had mastered that twisted skill, as far as I was concerned—but because I wanted to cure myself of being a liar. What had begun as a morally pernicious technique had become a character-defining vice. I had to save myself. I needed to understand the knots I had tied myself into before I could begin to untangle them.

It seems like an odd solution now. But in fact it’s an old idea: the Delphic injunction “Know thyself” is an epistemological duty with moral muscle, intended for a therapeutic purpose. Throughout the history of philosophy, until quite recently, it was thought that the practice of philosophy should have a powerful impact on the philosopher’s life, even, ideally, on the lives of others. So I studied deception and self-deception, how they collaborate with each other, why they are so common, what harms they might do, and when, in fact, they may be both useful and necessary. The more work I did on the subject, the more I

realized that deception was much more complicated than I had initially supposed. I also learned that it was much more common than I had thought—in short, that everyone practiced lying and other forms of deception and often for morally legitimate reasons. I was never so naive or narcissistic that I supposed I was the only liar out there in the world plying my false wares. But I hadn't realized how pervasive deception was, and I hadn't thought about how necessary and valuable it can be. I also hadn't realized how closely interwoven deception of others is with deception of oneself.

Because deception of others and self-deception so often collaborate, and because we will be working with these concepts throughout the book, let me quickly distinguish the two. This is a rough distinction, which we will refine as we proceed. When I deceive someone else, I persuade some other person that something I believe to be false is true. When I deceive myself, I persuade myself that something I believe to be false is true. The former act—deception of others—is relatively easy because I can hide the contents of my head from the person I am trying to deceive. The latter act—self-deception—ought to be impossible, as we normally suppose that we can't hide our own thoughts from ourselves. But the truth of the matter is that we are experts at hiding our thoughts from ourselves, and we are probably even better at deceiving ourselves than we are at deceiving other people. Perhaps that shouldn't come as a surprise, since we know ourselves better than we know other people, and so we know which buttons to push and levers to pull to get ourselves to believe what we want to believe, regardless of its truthfulness.

Briefly consider the example that, in many different ways, will occupy us for the rest of this book: falling in love. Who hasn't asked, when falling in love, "But am I making all this up?" When we are falling in love with someone, we engage in so many and such a variety of misrepresentations,

evasions, creative manipulations, and often straightforward lies. (“How many people have you slept with?”) Not to mention the self-deceptions, both in how we see the person we are falling in love with and about ourselves. As Erving Goffman famously argues in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, we are always “presenting ourselves,” playing a part, acting a role, selling ourselves: and how much more so when love is at stake. Chris Rock gets it exactly right in his joke “When you meet someone new, you aren’t meeting that person; you’re meeting his agent.”

Here’s another way of thinking about the complexities of deception, especially in love: try making a list of all the people you love to whom you’ve never told a lie. Maybe that’s not fair to ask; it’s not so easy to make a list of people you’ve never lied to, period, much less the same list focused on people you love. So try making a list of—or merely stop and think a moment about—the people you lie to most often. It’s an uncomfortable question: Whom do I lie to the most? For the majority of us, we lie most to the people we love most. Why that might be the case is fascinating. Because for thousands of years, at least since Plato taught in the *Symposium* that love is a ladder that leads us to the truth, our culture has supposed that intimacy and truthfulness go hand in hand. Of course in many instances they do. And yet while we are holding the beloved by one truthful hand, we’re using the other hand, fingers crossed, to hold on with deception.

Once while I was delivering a lecture on this subject to a large, mixed crowd at a university, a woman who must have been in her late seventies or early eighties raised her hand and said: “So I take it you think we lie a lot to our relatives?”

“Yes, I do,” I said.

“But my sister is the only person on earth I always tell the truth to,” she said.

“And how do you get along with your sister?” I asked her.

“Oh, I hate that bitch,” she said. Everyone laughed, and she smiled too, but she wasn’t joking.

So in part this book is my attempt to summarize much of what I’ve spent the last thirteen years learning, as an academic, about deception. More important, it’s what I’ve spent the past forty-five years learning about how deception works in love, which I take to be, for most of us, one of the highest values in life. This book is about my truth, my perspective, my meaning, my life. It is my attempt to make sense of my own life within the context of whom and how I have loved, the ways in which truth and deception have played into those loves, and why, at the end of the day, I believe so deeply in the value of love. I rarely talk about my children in this book or why and how we love our kids because, well, they are my kids. I do discuss why part of loving our children includes lying to them and also why we should accept that they will—indeed, often should—lie to us.

“A man’s life of any worth is a continual allegory,” Keats writes. The worth of all of our lives seems to be in the people we love and try to love—and try to love well or love better—and that allegory is worth a good-natured investigation. I should add that none of this will work—the reading or the writing, the loving of ourselves or of others—if we don’t try to keep our sense of humor. As Baudelaire observes, a bit humorlessly, sounding very much like a Buddhist, and thinking of his own life explicitly as an allegory (“in this allegory,” he writes): “Lord give me strength and courage to behold my body and my heart without disgust!”

Imagine a samurai who was the worst warrior ever to carry a sword. This samurai was so bad that he couldn’t take his sword from its sheath without accidentally slicing himself or someone he cared about. So he decided to write a book titled *How to Be a Samurai*.

Why did I write this book? I guess, at age forty-six, standing at a crossroads in my life—this book began when I was married to my second wife, continued through a yearlong affair and a two-year divorce, and now has been completed two years into my third marriage—I am trying to figure out how I've loved and how to do it better. More brutally put—and more honestly?—I am trying to behold my body and my heart without disgust. Along the way I hope to familiarize myself and you, my reader, with what I think we both already know: how intimately deception and self-deception have informed our conceptions of love from childhood forward.³ I think the greatest threat to a mature and enduring conception of erotic love—the reason, in short, that I think we still ought to marry or engage in long-term monogamous romantic partnerships—is the popular, thoughtless idea that genuine love depends upon absolute truthfulness (with either the beloved or oneself). It is this cultural myth, which comes with our Greco-Judeo-Christian heritage, that makes for so many unhappy love affairs and disastrous divorces. Curiously, then, I am arguing in defense of lies in the service of the truth. Let's be honest about our lying. Then we will be better able to love.

The story I tell develops in five stages. In the first chapter I give the reader a bit of the history of philosophical thinking about lying and deception in order to provide us with some of the tools we will use in the subsequent discussion. In the second chapter I examine how we learn to lie and to love as children; our first attempts at loving are inextricably interwoven, I show, with our first attempts at lying. In the third chapter I look at our first great direct encounter with perhaps the most powerful psychological force in human psychological life—self-deception—and how it influences our early attempts at romantic love (so-called first love). In chapter 4 I examine the wildly complex phenomenon of deception in erotic love. Finally, in the fifth and final chapter, I show how self-deception and deception