# SPURIOUS FACTS AND

# APOCRYPHAL TALES

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In response to Christina Read's Exhibition The Usual: Some of the Most Interesting Things In the World RM gallery, Auckland, May 2012.

Spurious Facts and Apocryphal Tales.

### **NAMES FOR LIES**

Act

Bluff

### **NAMES FOR LIARS**

Bilker Invention Ambiguity Libel Casuist Artifice Cheat Lie Machination Con Aspersion Bilker Make-believe Mendacity

Misrepresentation Cabal Canard Misstatement Con Monkey business

Con man Myth Conspiracy Perjury

Contrivance Play Cozener Plot Ploy Deceit Pork Pie Deception Disinformation **Porkies** Double-cross Pretence Racket

Rumour

Ruse

Scam

Sham

Shift

Scheme

Slander

Stratagem

Subterfuge

Swindle

Tall story Treachery

Tactic Tale

Trick

Wile

Untruth

White Lie Whopper

Entrapment Expedient Exaggeration Fable Fabrication Fake Fallacy Falsehood **Falsity** Feint Fib Fiction Forgery Fraud Gambit

Gimmick Grift

**Imitation** Inaccuracy Intrigue

Gyp

Hoax Hypocrisy

Con man Confidence-trickster Cozener Detractor Dodger Double agent

Double-Crosser Fibber Fraud Grifter Hypocrite Kidder Liar

Mountebank Muckraker Perjurer Phony Pretender Quack Rip-off artist Sell-Out Sophist Swindler

"... Little girl, here is a book entitled the 'Child's Guide'; read it with prayer, *especially that the* part containing 'an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G--, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit." With these words Mr. Brocklehurst put into my hands a thin pamphlet sewn in a cover and having rung for his carriage, he departed. Mrs. Reed and I were left alone [...] I got up, I went to the door; I

came back again; I walked to the window, across the room, then close up to her. Speak I must: I had been trodden on severely, and must turn: but how? What strength had *I to dart retaliation* at my antagonist? I gathered my energies and launched into this blunt sentence: ¬-"I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved you; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the

world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is *she who tells the lies,* and not I"

Exert from Jane Eyre

### **DESCRIPTIONS OF LIARS**

Affected Artful Artificial Backbiter Backstabber Bent Casuistic Crafty Crooked Cunning Deceitful Delusive Designing Devious Dishonest Disingenuous Disreputable Dissembling Dodgy Double-crossing Double-dealing **Duplicitous** Fishy

Greasy

Guileful

Indirect

Phony

Savvy

Shifty

Shonky

Shuffling

Slippery

Sophistical

Suspicious

Two-faced

Two-timing

Underhand

Tricky

Wily

Sly

Hypocritical

Questionable

Dickens' description of the pickpocket Jack Dawkins, better known as Artful Dodger:

He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age: with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off every moment--and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back, half-way up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves: apparently with the ultimated view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers; for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in the bluchers.

### **DESCRIBING MISREPRESENTATIONS**

Ambiguous Apocryphal Artificial Beguiling Bogus Counterfactual Counterfeit Crafty Crooked Deceitful Delusive Devious Dishonest Disingenuous Disreputable Dodgy Doubtful Dubious

Unsound Untrue Untruthful Unverified Wilv

Duplicitous Fanciful False Faulty Feigned Feint **Fictitious** Fishy Fraudulent Hypocritical Incorrect Inexact

Inexplicit

Mendacious

Misleading

Ouackery

Shifty

Shonky

Problematic

Questionable

Misrepresentative

Invalid

Shuffling Slv Sophistical **Specious Spurious** Suspect Suspicious Treacherous Tricky Two-faced Unclear Underhanded

Unsubstantiated

Unfounded

Unfrank

Unreal

### **OF OBJECTS**

Artificial Bastardise Counterfeit **Ersatz** Fake, faked Forged, forgery **Imitation** Mock Pirate Pseudo Shonky Simulated Synthetic Unauthentic

"You know, Stevens, Mrs Wakefield wasn't as impressed with this house as I believe she ought to have been.'

'Is that so, sir?'

'In fact, she seemed to think I was exaggerating the pedigree of this place. That I was making it up about all these features going back centuries. She kept asserting everything was "mock" this and "mock" that. She even thought you were "mock", Stevens." 'I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you?"

Exert from Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

### **LEGAL**

Defame, defamation Forswear Libel Perjury, perjure, perjurer Swear falsely

### **POLITICAL**

Cabal Conspire, conspiracy Disinformation Double agent Espionage Intrigue Machinations Mole Propaganda Sleeper Spook Subterfuge Treachery

No one exploited fear to better effect than Joseph R. McCarthy, Republican senator from Wisconsin. In 1950, in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, he claimed to have in his pocket a list of two hundred and five Communists working in the State Department. The next day he claimed to have another list with fifty-seven names on it. Over the next four years McCarthy waved many lists, each claiming to show a different number of Communist operatives. In the course of his spirited ramblings he helped to ruin many lives without ever producing a single promised list.

[...] In 1954, McCarthy finally undid himself. He accused General George Marshall, the man behind the Marshall plan and a person of unquestioned rectitude, of treason, a charge quickly shown to be preposterous. Then he took on the whole of the United States Army, threatening to expose scores of subversive senior staff that he claimed the Army knowingly shielded within it ranks. In a series of televised hearings lasting thirty-six days in the spring of 1954, and known as the Army-McCarthy hearings, he showed himself to be a bullying, blustering buffoon of the first rank without a shred of evidence against anyone - though in fact he had always shown that. It just took this long for most of the nation to realize it.

Later that year McCarthy was severely censured by the Senate - a signal humiliation. He died three years later in disgrace [...] McCarthy's downfall didn't slow the assault on Communism. As late as 1959 the New York office of the FBI still had four hundred agents working full time on rooting out Communists in American life ...

Exert from The Life and Times of The Thunderbolt Kid by Bill Bryson:

### ON HIDING A TRUE CHARACTER

Act Misrepresent Mislead Affectation Mole Assumed Charlatan Pretence Prevaricate Contrived Disingenuous Pretend Dissemblance Pretender Dissimulation Pseudo Double agent Put-on **Puzzling** Evasive Fake, faked Quack Feigned Ruse Fraud Simulated Fraudulent Sleeper Guile, guileful Spook Hypocritical Spy **Imitation** Stonewalling **Imposter** Tergiversate Two-faced Indirect Unfrank Irregular

As to [Wickham's] real character, had information been in her power, she had never felt a wish of inquiring. His countenance, voice, and manner had established him at once in the possession of every virtue. She tried to recollect some instance of goodness, some distinguished trait of integrity or benevolence, that might rescue him from the attacks of Mr. Darcy; or at least, by the predominance of virtue, atone for these casual errors under which she would endeavour to class what Mr. Darcy had described as the idleness and vice of many years' continuance. But no such recollection befriended her. She could see him instantly before her, in every charm of air and address; but she could remember no more substantial good than the general approbation of the neighbourhood, and the regard which his social powers had gained him in the mess.

Exert from Pride and Prejudice:

### **ULTERIOR MOTIVES**

Cabal Racket Collude, collusion Ruse Chicane, chicanery Play Concoct, concocted Plot Connive, connivance Ploy Conspire, conspiracy Scam Defame, defamation Scheming Defraud, defrauding Sham Double-cross Shuffle Double-dealing Skulduggery Duplicity Subterfuge Swindle Entrap, entrapment Tactic Feint Gambit Trap Gimmick Treachery Hoax Underhandedness

Intrigue Machination Manoeuvre Manufacture

## ULTERIOR MOTIVES BETWEEN A GROUP OF PEOPLE

Cabal
Collude, collusion
Connive, connivance
Conspire, conspiracy
Intrigue
Machination
Plot

Scheme

### **OF ARGUMENTS**

Unfounded

Vague

Unsubstantiated

### OF STORIES OR STATEMENTS

Casuist, casuistic Apocryphal Calumny Fallacious Canard Faulty Counterfactual Inaccurate Defame, defamation Incorrect Disinformation Inexact Falsify Inexplicit Invalid Falsification Obfuscate Fiction Obscure **Fictitious** Sophistical Inaccurate **Specious** Inaccuracy **Spurious** Incorrect Invalid Suppositious **Ouestionable** Invent, invention Unclear Make-believe

Misrepresentation, misrepresent, misrepresentative Misstatement

Misleading Palter

Perjury, perjure, perjurer Prevaricate, prevaricating

Rumour Slander Tale Tall story Tergiversate Unauthenticated Unfounded Unsound Unsubstantiated Untrue

Untruth, untruthful

Unverified

Counterfeit

Disreputable

Distorted Doubtful

Dubious

Duplicitous

Equivocal

Exaggerated

Fabricated

Fake, faked False

Falsified

Faulty Feigned

**Fictitious** 

Fraudulent

Imperfect

Inaccurate

Incorrect

Indefinite

Indeterminate

Inexact

Inexplicit Invalid

Invented

Irregular

Manufactured

Misrepresentative

Misleading

Perjured

Problematic

**Specious** 

Spurious

Suspicious

Suppositious Unauthenticated

Unfounded

Unsound

Unsubstantiated

Unverified

Vague

# Wakefield's article linking MMR vaccine and autism was fraudulent

The Office of Research Integrity in the United States defines fraud as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism.13 Deer unearthed clear evidence of falsification. He found that not one of the 12 cases reported in the 1998 Lancet paper was free of misrepresentation or undisclosed alteration, and that in no single case could the medical records be fully reconciled with the descriptions, diagnoses, or histories published in the journal. Who perpetrated this fraud? There is no doubt that it was Wakefield. Is it possible that he was wrong, but not dishonest: that he was so incompetent that he was unable to fairly describe the project, or to report even one of the 12 children's cases accurately? No. A great deal of thought and effort must have gone into drafting the paper to achieve the results he wanted: the discrepancies all led in one direction; misreporting was gross.  $[\ldots]$ 

Exert from the British Medical Journal: Editorial

BMJ 2011; 342 doi: 10.1136/bmj.c7452 (Published 5 January 2011) Cite this as: BMJ 2011;342:c7452 [...]

### **OF MONEY**

Bilk
Cheat
Defraud, defrauding
Fleece
Grift
Mountebankery
Racket
Scam
Swindle
Take to the cleaners

One morning, not long after this transaction, I was awakened by a man shaking my shoulder. It could not have been much past eleven. He requested me to get up and leave his house immediately. He was most correct, I must say. His surprise, he said, was no less than mine. It was his house. His property. The Turkish woman had left the day before. But I saw her last night, I said. You must be mistaken, he said, for she brought the keys to my office no later than yesterday afternoon. But I just paid her six months' rent in advance, I said. Get a refund, he said. But I don't even know her name, I said, let alone her address. You don't know her name? he said. He must have thought I was lying. I'm sick, I said, I can't leave like this, without any notice. You're not so sick as all that, he said. He offered to send for a taxi, even an ambulance if I preferred. He said he needed the room immediately for his pig which even as he spoke was catching cold in a cart before the door and no one to look after him but a stray urchin whom he had never set eyes on before and who was probably busy tormenting him. I asked if he couldn't let me have another place, any old corner where I could lie down long enough to recover from the shock and decide what to do. He said he could not. Don't think I'm being unkind, he added. I could live here with the pig, I said, I'd look after him. The long months of peace, wiped out in an instant! Come now, come now, he said, get a grip on yourself, be a man, get up, that's enough. After all it was no concern of his. He had really been most patient.

Beckett, Samuel. The End (1954). In First Love and Other Novellas. (1977). Penguin: London.

### I

Bluff
Cheat, cheating
Feint
Gambit
Gimmick
Match-fixing
Play
Plot
Ploy
Spot-fixing
Stratagem
Tactic

Take advantage of

**OF GAMES** 

Article on Stuff website:

# Three Pakistan cricketers jailed for spot-fixing Spot-fixing shame 'taints game forever': Judge

A British court has handed down jail terms to three Pakistan cricketers and an agent for fixing parts of a test match against England at Lord's last year. Former captain and opening batsman Salman Butt, 27, received 30 months, the longest term of the three players. Fast bowler Mohammad Asif, 28, was sentenced to one year, while 19-year-old speedster Mohammad Amir, 19, will serve six months. Agent Mazhar Majeed was sentenced to two years and eight months.

[...]

The judge added that they engaged in corruption in a game whose very name used to be associated with "fair dealing on the sporting field".

"It's not cricket' was an adage. It is the insidious effect of your actions on professional cricket and the followers of it that make the offences so serious.

"The image and integrity of what was once a game but is now a business is damaged in the eyes of all, including the many youngsters who regarded you as heroes and would have given their eye teeth to play at the levels and with the skills that you had."

### WITH A TOUCH OF MAGIC

Bamboozle Beguile, beguiling Craft, craftiness Distort, distortion, distorted Fable Fanciful Fiction **Imaginary** Intrigue Invent, invention Make-believe Myth, mythical Play Smoke and mirrors Tall Story Trick, trickery Unreal

### LYING BY OMISSION

Connive, connivance
Dodge
Evade, evasion
Inexplicit
Stonewalling

### BEHIND ONE'S BACK AND WITHOUT FOUNDATION

Libel Aspersion Backbite, backbiting Malign Backstab, backstabbing Misrepresent Belittle Muckraking Besmirch Mud-slinging Calumny, calumnious Slander Defame, defamation Smear Denigrate Trumped up Unfounded Depreciate Detract Vilification Disparage

Who said, 'Let them eat cake'? Wrong again. It wasn't her. You probably remember the history lesson as if it were yesterday. It's 1789 and the French Revolution is under way. The poor of Paris are rioting because they have no bread and the Queen, Marie Antoinette – callously indifferent, trying to be funny or just plain stupid – comes up with the fatuous suggestion that they eat cake instead.

[...]

Frame

Except that Marie Antoinette didn't say it. The line had been used in print as an illustration of aristocratic decadence since at least 1760. Jean-Jacques Rousseau claimed he'd first heard it as early as 1740. Lady Antonia Fraser, Marie Antoinette's most recent biographer, attributes the remark to the Queen Marie-Thérèse, wife of Louis XIV, 'The Sun King', but there is a host of other grand eighteenth-century ladies who might have said it. It's also entirely possible it was made up for propaganda purposes.

Exert from QI: The Book of General Ignorance

### **DONE TO SOMEONE TO TRICK**

Bamboozle

Beguile

Cozen, Cozening

Cheat

Deceive

Defraud, defrauding

Delude

Entrap, entrapment

Fleece

Fool Gull

Gyp

Hornswoggle

Infidelity

Inveigle

Mislead

Play

Scam Screw

Suck in

Take advantage of

Take for a ride

Take to the cleaners

Trap

Treachery

Trick, trickery

Wile

### **CLOUDING THE ISSUE**

Ambiguous

Amphibology

Apocryphal

Bamboozle

Beguile

Belie

Delude Distort,

distortion,

distorted

Equivocate,

equivocating,

equivocal

Exaggerate

Fuzzy

Hazy

Hyperbole

Imperfect

Impure

Indefinite

Indeterminate

Indistinct

Inexact

Inexplicit

Intangible

Irregular

Mistaken

Muddled

Muzzy

Obfuscate

Oblique

Obscure

Palter

Pernicious

Play

Prevaricate,

prevaricating

Problematic Pretend

Puzzling

Rumour

Smoke and

mirrors

Specious

Tenebrous

Tergiversate

Unclear

Undecided

Vague

Transcript from The Ricky Gervais Show (second episode, third series)

Spurious Facts and Apocryphal Tales.

Karl Pilkington: That's something else I've read about, that there's more sea life happening.

Ricky Gervais: What do you mean? Then what?

KP: Um, then stuff happening on land.

RG: Well, yeah, it's a bigger place isn't it?

KP: Yeah, there's more... There all coming further in because it's getting so crowded, everything's, ah, being pushed outwards, so we're going to get to a point where people won't go walking in the sea, 'cause there'll be something deadly, just floating about on the, on the, near the shore.

RG: Again, that's no information at all

Stephan Merchant: I don't know...

RG: There's no information in that statement at all

KP: Yeah, I said, I said how the sea's so overcrowded that everything's being pushed to the edge

RG: It's not overcrowded.

KP: It is.

SM: What's being... You mean that things that are in the sea are being pushed to the edge of the sea.

KP: Yeah, because there's new stuff happening all the time, there's new creatures being made, they're changing quickly,

they were saying how, like, I don't know, 50 years ago, jelly fish didn't even have a, have a sting

RG: That's rubbish; try fifty million and you'll get closer to the truth

KP: But, but, what I mean is in terms of, like, land, we all look the same, don't we? We've had two legs and two arms for ages. Whereas in the sea things are changing at a really fast rate, so like jellyfish were knocking about...

RG: The sea is a much more stable environment than the land anyway.

KP: What are you on about?

RG: Well, I would have thought, I wouldn't have thought that evolution is any faster in the sea then it is on land.

KP: Yeah, it is.

RG: Well, no, where's the evidence for this?

SM: The Internet.

KP: Well I'm telling you now, I'm telling you how jellyfish have changed, and look at them...

SM: And how have they changed then? So fifty years ago they didn't have a sting, now they have...

RG: Trilbies, they wore trilbies fifty years ago.

SM: [laughs] yeah, and they just spoke with a much more, you know, refined accent.

RG: [laughs] yeah, yeah,

KP: Just that, that, though, is quite a lot innt? Because jellyfish were nothing, right...

RG: But, no, you made that up, that's not a fact! There, there's no facts to come out of this discussion, you haven't said anything! Jellyfish haven't changed in fifty years!

KP: No, they have, they've changed a lot in terms of ...

RG: Well, they haven't changed in hundreds of millions of years so I don't know what the sixties had to do with anything. I just don't know what influence the Beatles and Mary Quant suddenly had on jellyfish where they suddenly had on anything

where they haven't changed for hundreds of millions of years! SM: Because with all this, sort of, loose, free sex, you know, free love they were just going berserk.

RG: [laughs] yeah, no yeah.

SM: There were no inhibitions amongst the jellyfish anymore.

KP: Things are changing a lot, to think that jellyfish, when they first came out they were nothing. Jellyfish are nothing, aren't they? They're just a blob.

RG: [Laughs]

SM: When they first came out.

KP: So...

SM: 'When they were first released'.

RG: New by Ronkel.

SM: [laughs] yeah.

KP: But what I'm saying is even though they were nothing, they've grown to have a bit of something just to get by in a busy place.

RG: I don't know what you're talking about. It's all guesswork and conjecture.

KP: It's not conjecture

RG: It's all nonsense!

KP: Look, I've been reading all this interesting stuff.

RG: Karl! You haven't learnt anything

...1

RG: Will you now read some great works? Will you now read some poetry at all?

KP: Ah, probably not. I don't like reading made up stories because...

RG: Fiction. KP: ...because life's, life's interesting enough, innt? RG: Right.

KP: If I'm gonna read someone else's lies I might as well make some of my own up and save me money.

RG: But you do read lies and made up things, you just take them as the truth.

KP: Umm...

RG: Most of the spurious facts and apocryphal tales and the ridiculous stories you read on the Internet are, I mean, fiction.

KP: Yeah, but as long as it gets you thinkin, then it really doesn't matter. Say like, I was telling you about the sea being full up...

RG: Yeah

KP: Right, how there's too many fish in it and they're all being pushed out. Then, um, you know, it was saying about how the

jelly fish has been changing from a bit back just being a blob, to now being a blob with stinging bits, you go, oh, and then...

RG: No, I don't, I think I wonder what he read, I'll wonder what he's been reading...

KP: And then I'll think of what other things are in the sea, how are they changing, and then that's when I might do a poem about an octopus with two heads, because it's got me thinking, so no longer am I just reading someone else's stories, spending a full week reading someone's story, I've read a little paragraph and that's got me thinking about an octopus...

SM: That's inspired you to make great art.

KP: ...with, ah, an octopus with two heads. And you just think, yeah that would work, you know, that's a good, good way for them to evolve, they've got all the arms, give them two heads.

SM & RG: [laughter]

RG: They've got all the arms.

KP: And, you know, it would work. Because like I've said to you before they are just one big head, make it two smaller heads. So it's just looking at science, looking at how things can move...

RG: It's not looking at science.

SM: [laughing] But it's not looking at science! You then speculating on an octopus having two heads is of no value, is it, to anyone, or anything.

KP: But there's people out there bringing out books who are writing stuff like that, sci-fi stuff, and I think why am I reading their...

RG: But that's entertainment, everyone knows it's not true, they're just doing it to...

SM But they do more than just say what would it... wouldn't it be great if there was an octopus with two heads. They, then, paint a world in which this octopus exists. And, presumably causes some sort of narrative interest.

KP: I can do that on me own, though, without...

SM: So what's the story of the octopus with two heads?

KP: It's happier in the end. Everyone like a happy ending. It's got company.

SM: But that's not a story, Karl! What? What? Tell us the story.

RG: What, you made up a story about an octopus with two heads?

KP: No! I'm just saying I've thought about how the sea's changing. Right. What else is in the sea? Octopus. Right. What's an octopus like? Well, it's just a big head with a load of arms. Right. How would I change that?

RG & SM [laughing]

RG: I love this thought process!

SM: But it's not a story! This is not a story! It's not anything! It's just ... some thoughts you've had.

KP: But a story is there to make you think and have thoughts.

SM: But what is it that you've thought? You've not... I don't see what you've thought here!

KP: I've just thought, 'Yeah, that would be alright'.

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4 Austen, Jane. (1813). Pride and Prejudice. ()
5 Transcript from The Ricky Gervais Show. (2005). First episode, first series. Released by Audible.com
6 Retrieved from: http://www.bmi.com/content/342/bmi.c7452

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10 The Noticeably Stouter Edition. Faber and Faber: London. Pp. 43-44.

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