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INQUIRY

The Journal of Kitsch, Camp and Mass Culture

**NARRATIVE MODES:  
CONSPIRACY THEORIES,  
FAKE NEWS, POST-TRUTHS,  
NEW WORLD ORDERS, NEGATION  
THEORIES AND INFODEMICS**

Volume 1 / 2021

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# EDITORIAL

**Paco Barragán**

*Popular Inquiry* and I are very happy to present to you this fascinating issue titled *Storytelling and its Narrative Modes: Conspiracy Theories, Fake News, Post-Truths, New World Orders, Negationist Theories and Infodemics*. We sincerely think the topic is not only timely but challenging and mandatory in a time characterized by an exacerbated narrativity fueled precisely by post-truths, fake news, conspiracy and negationist theories and infodemics. The outstanding feature of today's society, where telecommunications networks, information systems, mass and social media coalesce, is that we're all potential producers, manipulators and distributors of alternative narratives able to challenge official statements and commonly accepted truths.

In *Storytelling and its Narrative Modes...* we address this beginning of the century's *Zeitgeist* which, we feel, manifests a strong desire by human beings—be it a celebrity, a politician, or a normal citizen—to deliver a logical and comforting explanation for the origin of a virus or the supposed control that the elites want to impose through vaccines on the world population.

The first two essays are of an introductory and contextualizing nature: while Andrea Mecacci takes a philosophical stand by analyzing the close relationship between postmodernism and hypernarrativity, Paco Barragán looks at its political origins and suggest a communications theory based on the concept of “credibility” as filter or counterpower.

The second block of essays delves straight into the heart of today's fake news and conspiracy theories with a set of recent examples of how these (new) narrative modes compete with and de-stabilize traditional media by offering alternative stories. Roman Horbyk, Isabel Löfgren, Yana Prymachenko and Cheryll Soriano address the fascinating and widespread proliferation of fake news in Brazil (Bolsonaro), the Philippines (Duterte), Russia (Putin) and Ukraine (Zelenksy) and how “mainstream media storytelling is hacked, imitated and hijacked.” On his turn, Siim Sorokin analyzes the crisis of trust in our contemporary societies, that has brought about a “malleable reality and a fluidity of truth,” by looking into the historical, etymological, and epistemological nature of conspiracy and conspiracy theory (CT) and illustrating it with a close reading of the conspiracy forum *Para-Web*.

The third part reflects on the augmented need and pressure of narrating the self and the office or workplace as a highly narrated space. While Saara Mahbouba delves into Reality TV and cultural industries as “avant-garde” sites that forge sophisticated narratives for the

transformation of identity and labor, Maria Teresa Russo suggests that our social media culture of the “show-and-tell”, the “always-on” and of “connectivity” turns life into a permanent stage where the contemporary subject must respond performatively so to meet the demands of our hyper-narrated societies. Paola Jalili analyzes precisely one of those spaces where the neoliberal subject spends most of her/his time—the office—and how “office aesthetics” through its careful staged narratives enhances precarious labor.

In the fourth and final part we address the fascinating relationships between the visual arts and narrativity. While Maribel Castro focuses on the photographic works of Taryn Simon and Thomas Demand and how they both question and contest the limits “between reportage, conceptualism and portraiture”, Manuel González de Ávila investigates the pop and kitschy paintings of Audrey Flack as sophisticated and active “devices of the feminine condition and its production.” Finally, Cuban artist Yalili Mora presents a special visual essay curated by Paco Barragán titled *New World Order* in which a series of world leaders have been portrayed from a rather unusual and fascinating perspective: headless!