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RHETORIC OF KITSCH IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA: 'MEDIA, LITERATURE & CULTURAL STUDIES'

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Abstract

The current age in its placid reckoning of rib-tickling political spectacle staged on a global scale has been unanimously dubbed the 'post-truth era', an adjectival term which has of late gained wide currency and critical sanction in academic spheres of cultural studies, denoting especially a lambasting incline in titillating media buzz, which is blatantly and consciously transferred into the inimical language of caustic 'kitsch'. As such, the paper at hand as its objective, attempts to theorize and review the petulant phenomenon of kitsch in the post-truth era, by inspecting its varied avatars and inherent complexities from a polemical perspective. In accord, the paper furthermore deems to predicate the cultural bearing of kitsch in the realm of art, aesthetics, politics, media, language, and literature, whereupon the historical origins of the term kitsch has been delineated, i.e. by way of sieving its cultural potency through the following key expressions: 'bad taste', 'bad art', 'bad sentiment'.

Keywords

Post-truth era, Kitsch, Aesthetics, Rhetoric, Media, Literature, Cultural Studies

1. Kitsch in the Post-Truth Era: An Introduction

The word 'kitsch' by common parlance is a pejorative expression. In its simplest meaning it translates to 'bad taste' or a 'bad sketch'. Perhaps for the same reason, its shortening is comparable to – 'itch' – an itch for kitsch (Calinescu, 1977, p.234). In lieu, 'kitsch' as a concept in the realm of art mushroomed in the early 19th century amongst German art dealers to describe the nature of seemingly 'bad art'. By this measure, the etymology of the term equates it with – *etwas verkitschen*, which means 'to knock off cheaply' (Kulka, 1988, p.1). 'Bad taste' and 'bad art' in this regard branches out to a whole universe or paradigm of inimical verbiage: gaudy, tacky, glittering, ostentatious, blatant, risqué, brassy, brazen, ribald, chintzy, flaunting, glaring, raffish, tawdry, coarse, tasteless, depraved, smutty, gross, etcetera. Thereby, kitsch in particular signalled the birth of a perverse form of 'mimesis': it indicated the commercial outpour of cheap 'imitative art' imbued with the veneer coating of culture, allied with the thrill and frill of 'vulgar' entertainment; basically, it pointed to art devoid of seriousness, bulk-produced and marketed to the masses with the motive of profit.

French sociologist Abraham Moles sees kitsch within the frame of a 'cultural cycle', pointing to its most obvious features: the principle of overstatement, lack of style, accumulation, synaesthesia, mediocrity, comfort, repetition, and imitation, amongst others (Kokot, 2014, p.100). It is understandable, in hindsight, as to why scholars have expanded the scope of kitsch from the traditional category of 'painting' and 'sculpture to areas as far-fetched as 'furniture', 'interior design', 'landscaping' and even 'television programs' (Morreall et al., 1989, p.63). In this connection, given the ideological conduit of cultural studies, another connotation that eventually gets appended to kitsch is – 'to coat', 'to smear', 'to mask' or by far 'to obliterate'. What this implies is the ominous possibility of staging a facade in the name of culture, alluding to *the erasure of truth* by the application of a metaphoric sentimental 'saccharine glaze' onto almost anything in sundry reach: a quote (e.g. repetition of 'good days shall follow' pickled for posterity in public speeches), an abstract idea (e.g. the 'burning question' emitting smoke on the news screen in the wake of a juvenile rape-case verdict), an ideology (e.g. the conspicuous visage of a scarlet Che complete with Promethean hammer and scythe printed on teen t-shirts), a persona (e.g. the representational banner of the great neo-Gandhian figure with his *charaka* and 'holy cow'), a party symbol (e.g. the emblem of the common man's zesty 'broom' sweeping away corruption and ushering progress), a colour (e.g. the flowery pink sheen of 'femininity' on the cover of

sanitary pads), a special day (e.g. the sale of snow-globes emulating the postures of metro-sexual King Khan, pillow-hearts representational of the movie *Kuch-Kuch-Hota-Hai*, and other such saucy knick-knacks of *Bollywood* 'love' eulogising Valentine's Day), an event (e.g. the auction of bric-a-brac curio items related to what must be globally portrayed as the *most* significant tragic event in the world – 9/11 with collections ranging from pebbles to photographs to rags), a festival (e.g. tinsel smiling Nordic Santa figurines hung on plastic Christmas trees), a city (e.g. post-cards of flashy neon lights shimmering in the sensual dream-city of artifactual bliss - Las Vegas). Extending the metaphor, one presumes, a make-believe smattering of gooey sugar followed by the subtle ironing of fondant onto a cake is all it takes to assure the artificial semblance of beauty presented on the exterior, so that much of the ugliness of social reality is safely tucked away from public review and insurgent critique. As such, in year 2017-18 we formally invoke the reality of 'the post-truth era', whereupon according to experts we describe an alarming situation in the domain of mediated public-opinion world-over where 'objective facts' are tainted with 'emotions and personal beliefs'.

2. Rhetoric of Kitsch in Cultural Studies: Art & Aesthetics

Whilst the meta-narrative of Marxism acquainted the 'vulgar' masses in the ailing world with the vocabulary and rhetoric of oppression, stressing the dialectics of class-divide in particular, other cultural narratives allied with the directives of epistemic experience are known to have gradually evolved as its protégé, each to the other paying a subtle tribute of nodal continuity, by way of acknowledging what may be considered 'ideological congruity' or more poignantly 'historical embeddedness': one visualizes a structural phenomenon akin to the nestled holarchy of the famed Russian matryoshka (mother) figurine – i.e. a set of wooden dolls of decreasing size sequentially placed one inside the other. But here are no dolls in the aesthetic conundrum of Literature, Media & Cultural Studies. One daily deals with the egregious polemical nature of ideological structures embodied in the 'visual rhetoric' of mass culture. As such, history is testimony to the rhetoric of Marxism symbiotically having paved way to the discursive rhetoric of Racism and Ethnicity Studies, Feminism and Gender Studies, and the latter anomie of Queer Theory. However, in continual debates on Cultural Studies -- on issues of class, race, sex, gender and ethnicity -- the one crass aesthetic sentiment that currently reins the culture-scape is the ceaseless penchant for kitsch.

In *Aesthetic Theory* (1997) German Sociologist Theodor Adorno views kitsch as a force of mass culture which stylizes 'emotions into the hyperbolic', an aspect which is applicable to the post-truth era. Further, the German-Jewish philosopher, Walter Benjamin, in

The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction perceives kitsch as ‘thoughtless overproduction’ (Arendt, 1968). American art-critic Clement Greenberg in *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1989) proclaims, ‘the new art of the masses is kitsch’. Czech writer and critic Milan Kundera in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) quaintly assigns to kitsch the metaphor of ‘the second tear’. “The Kitsch-man’s need for kitsch,” as Kundera explains, “is the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and be moved to tears of gratification at one’s own reflection.”

In the focal-light of prevailing theory, one may argue, kitsch in the post-truth era is a systemic perversion of a culture’s visual rhetoric, it is the vehicle of ‘false consciousness’; an extension of what the French cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard termed ‘simulacra’ – in that it is an injected sentiment which is shallow, passive, predictable, programmed, fantasized, pre-digested, and confabulated. Kitsch pervades the realm of language, literature, media, politics, religion, art, education, and ideology alike, making it a comprehensive post-truth phenomenon.

3. Kitsch in Visual Rhetoric: As ‘Object’ & Sentiment’

Amongst the literary intelligentsia, the list of attributes describing the generic malady of kitsch may claw onward and scuttle into pages ad infinitum. However, kitsch can immediately be classified into two categories: it may be externalised and viewed as an ‘object’ or internalised and perceived as ‘sentiment’. Either way, as object or sentiment, kitsch is definitely a characteristic of what may be called ‘visual rhetoric’ – the study of image, sign and symbol in the context of communication at large.

‘Visual rhetoric’ is a rather recent zone of study within the deep-rooted arena of traditional rhetoric. It is often discussed how it was only in 1970 that the first formal decision was taken to incorporate visual images in the discipline of rhetoric, which for long had been perceived merely as verbal discourse. In 1970, at the National Conference on Rhetoric, a proposal was doled out by the congregation which invited an extension of the definition of rhetoric "to include subjects which have not traditionally fallen within the critic's purview; the non-discursive as well as the discursive, the non-verbal as well as the verbal"; it was deemed that a rhetorical perspective "may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact" that "may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behaviour" (Sloan et al., 1971, p.220). Later, it was surmised, the acceptance of Kenneth Burke as a rhetorical theorist by the discipline of rhetoric strongly led to the materialization of rhetorical research on visual images. It is said, for Burke, the question of ‘symbolicity’

meant not 'only language' but also 'all other human symbol systems', including "mathematics, music, sculpture, painting, dance, architectural styles, and so on" (Burke, 1966, p.28).

Subsequently, the pathway to visual rhetoric broadened as eminent academics such as Douglas Ehninger, whose reputation amongst classic rhetoricians was unquestionable, proposed a description of rhetoric that did not harbour merely verbal symbols, and was adequately broad to include the visual. He viewed rhetoric as the manner in which humans "may influence each other's thinking and behaviour through the strategic use of symbols" and alluded to other areas such as – art, architecture, dance, costume (Ehninger, 1972, p.3). Additionally, descriptions of rhetoric such as "the social function that influences and manages meanings" (Brummett, 1991, p.14) reinforced the essential link between visual imagery and rhetoric. The argument posited, "experiences that are spatially oriented, nonlinear, multidimensional, and dynamic often can be communicated only through 'visual imagery' or other 'non-discursive symbols' (Foss, 2005, p.143).

Foss proposes, the expression 'visual rhetoric' may be understood in many ways. It is used to suggest both 'a visual object' and 'a perspective on the study of visual data'. In the first interpretation, visual rhetoric is "a product that individuals create as they use visual symbols" while communicating. In the second instance, it is an angle of vantage that scholars apply to focus on "the symbolic processes by which images perform communication". Foss adds, currently visual rhetoric is abstracted to include both 'two and three-dimensional images'; that the images integrated under the rubric of visual rhetoric are equally broad in terms of their functions. Interestingly, both 'aesthetic and 'utilitarian' images are known to constitute the body of visual rhetoric. And yet sufficient caution should be exercised. Every visual object is not a component of visual rhetoric. What turns a visual object into a communicative artefact — a symbol that communicates and can be studied as rhetoric — is the presence of three characteristics. As prescribed by Foss, "the image must be symbolic, involve human intervention, and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communicating with that audience."

An investigation of the 'visual rhetoric of kitsch' must therefore begin with a clear understanding of the demarcation between 'image', 'sign' and 'symbol'.

An 'image' is a mental picture of something we see. It is characterised by its relation to the original. In short, an image makes sense only when the original is absent – lost in time or space – although we would like to contemplate it nevertheless. By making an image of it,

we make it accessible here and now: the image makes present an absent or non-existent original.

A 'sign' is that which communicates a brief message. It can be a word, a picture, an object or an action. It is characterised by its relation to an assigned meaning. In English, the term 'to represent' means 'to stand for' as well as 'to depict'. A sign represents a meaning in the sense of 'standing for', not in the sense of 'depicting'. For example, 'smoke' is a 'sign of fire'. Signs are hence easy to recognise and their meaning is always obvious for everyone. Many signs are internationally recognised too: pictograms, trademarks, logos etc. The point would be, a sign in most cases does not affect us in any significant way.

A 'symbol' on the contrary is more powerful than a sign because it deeply affects how we feel, think and imagine. It is abstract, metaphoric and figurative in construction. Symbols are known to function when one finds it difficult to place thoughts or feelings in words. People often use them to express emotions. A symbol is then visible, assumedly an object or action, which represents the invisible, or that which is difficult to place in words. For example, 'the cross as an object' is a symbol of 'Christian belief'; whereas 'the act of lighting candles' is considered 'a symbol of hope and 'faith'. A good example for the use of the figurative symbol is found in the 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. The boys in the story take a pig's head and fix it on a stake that is pointed at both ends. Then the head is jammed into the ground. The head represents the creation of a religious icon as the boys move away from civilized life. It also represents the savage behaviour that the boys engage in.

Kitsch in its rampage of visual bombardment is known to blur the essential boundary between image, sign and symbol in many ways than one, an issue to be addressed in the post-truth era. A deadly surge of images flood the imagination. Traditional signs are cut out of their context and plastered elsewhere, to the point of utter confusion and chaos. Symbolic myths are meticulously constructed to influence opinion, manufacture consent and market desire. And that brings one to an understanding of the formal features of kitsch, expressed as object and sentiment.

The formal features of kitsch typified as an 'object' connote the following attributes: the element of pastiche, focus on ludic display, the parade of loud vibrant colours, rupture of form, displacement of context, fracture of meaning, loss of original intent, homogeneity of content, multiplicity of copies, use of tinsel material, sale for a profit. Additionally, 'kitschy' objects are bracketed as 'vulgar' in its original sense of 'lacking sophistication or good taste,'

and loaded with the dull aura of a forged pre-sentiment: kitsch as ‘souvenir’ is engineered to sell ‘nostalgic sentiment’; kitsch as ‘ruin’ markets ‘melancholic sentiment’. Objects recognized as kitsch are usually coupled with items integrated into the everyday lives of people. Consider, for example, the stoic motif of religious motifs printed on cushion covers, or souvenirs of the Taj Mahal sold as key-chains on streets by peddlers. In the first instance, the sentiment of religion represented by the motif is quaintly commodified and reduced to mere decor; the sign in this case is devalued, and deteriorates into mercantile insignia. Today, there are religion themed crass accessories. In the second instance, the idea of Taj Mahal as a unique symbol of ‘craftsmanship’, ‘history’ and ‘art’ is tragically derailed to the effect that the pluralism of its kitschy representation is poisonous cliché. The original Taj is made of pure white marble, a laudable facet of artistry in itself; its copy though is replicated in wood, paper, plastic, and even sold as moulds for semolina pudding.

The formal features of kitsch typified as ‘sentiment’ resonates with the tardy collision of ‘mass culture’ with ‘popular culture’ and ‘media culture’. Mass culture hinges onto the production of culture, popular culture relates to the consumption of culture, and media culture acts as the kitschy bridge between the two. Depending on the context theorists have symptomatically used different expressions for this phenomenon: the desire for ‘phantasmagoria’, the pageantry of ‘spectacle’, the seductive lure of ‘simulacra’. American art-critic Clement Greenberg in *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* proclaims ‘the new art of the masses is kitsch’. And here is where a quote by Greenberg lends perspective:

“One and the same civilization produces simultaneously two such different things: a poem by T. S. Eliot and a Tin Pan Alley song, or a painting by Braque and a *Saturday Evening Post* cover. All four are on the order of culture, and ostensibly, parts of the same culture and products of the same society. Here, however, their connection seems to end. A poem by Eliot and a poem by Eddie Guest – what perspective of culture is large enough to enable us to situate them in an enlightening relation to each other? ... The answer involves more than an investigation in aesthetics... the really important issues are left untouched because they involve controversy... The same themes are mechanically varied in a hundred different works, and yet nothing new is produced...” (Greenberg, 1989, p.1).

As stated afore, in the world of ‘art’ kitsch takes on many pseudonyms – cheap art, imitation art, fake art, pseudo-art, non-art, null-art. It has come to mean everything despicable which is the ‘the opposite of art’. It has also of late been ascribed to the mass-sentiment of wanting to possess, appreciate & critique ‘art’ for the sakes of it. Art, here, as previously

clarified, is reduced to the ‘signage of decor’ or is subject to the horror of ‘lack of genuine intent and purpose’.

Kitsch in its continuity is an integral component of several post-truth investigations; its meaning laterally shifts from context to context. It can be applied to the study of language, literature, media, politics, religion, education, philosophy and various forms of ideology.

4. Kitsch, Language & Literature

Plumbing into ‘language’, kitsch putrefies the aura of a meta-language, flushing down formal grammatical structures into degenerate slang: in its deluge, it creates murky islands of meaning separated by boundaries of idiosyncratic disparity.

In ‘literature’ kitsch borders on the understanding of ‘bourgeoisie realism’ as a technique of representation. In turn, it invites the reader to investigate the patterning of ‘the sentimental novel’ – the 18th century literary genre which sought to celebrate the emotional precept of sentiment above reason, in the vain hope of raising the analysis of emotion to a fine art. The mawkish valorisation of so called ‘fine feeling’ often exploited the reader’s capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to the detriment of the pedantic plot which was just as unrealistic as its prudish stock characters. The ability to incite the sentimental appeal was thought to affirm the essence of character and experience, and to shape social life and relations. The genre miserably failed but for the conscious use of kitschy lineage in the spirit of irony and satire, as in the case of Jane Austen’s *Sense & Sensibility*.

Kitsch additionally could suggest the sentimental attitude of a distinct sect of non-native speakers’ of English – characterised by yearning for the ‘English’ sentiment. Mastery over the master-language of colonization in this relation presumes a direct claim to Englishness – access to Wordsworth’s ‘experience of daffodils’ or Coleridge’s ‘encounter with the Ancient Mariner’. It means to graze through the country-side depicted in English novels, wander through the lake-side poems, and live the imaginative life of the gentry; to prick their manners into one’s bosom as one does place the English feather on the English hat. The thinking-turban then is out of question, which makes the exoticization of sentiment kitschy to the core.

In ‘philosophy’ kitsch derives its presence from the philosopher’s pre-sentiment for a utopian or a dystopian ethos. The philosopher is lost in his own web of self-obsessive ‘intellectual kitsch’. In this relation, the novelist Milan Kundera (1984) in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* quaintly assigns to kitsch the metaphor of ‘the second tear’. “The Kitsch-

man's need for kitsch," as Kundera explains, "is the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and be moved to tears of gratification at one's own reflection."

5. Kitsch, Mass Media & World Politics

The German-Jewish philosopher, Walter Benjamin, in *The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction* perceived kitsch as 'thoughtless overproduction'. His concern resonates with the aesthetic rubble of 'commercial kitsch' marketed through the medium of advertisements, its logical end being 'consumerism' (Arendt, 1968). Endless and mindless fads, fetishes, fashion trends, figure in this grouping. For instance, given the topic of religion, kitsch precedes the commercial sale of religious motifs by conceding to the vile marketing of 'religious sentiment'. In the contemporary scenario, to market 'desire' is to affirm sales of the product on display. Consider this: water is deemed freshest when bottled; mango juice and milk taste their natural best in tetra packs; a cooling drink can only mean Coca-Cola; happy food is Mac-D at its symbolic best.

In 'media', kitsch unveils the shameful inventory of 'paid news' fostered by the drive for 'sensationalism'. It moreover indicates the upsurge of various TV Shows ('reality' shows such as the Master-chef series/ Roadies/ Splits-villa) that cater to mass-sentiment, hankering over images of love, terror and horror. Finally, it pinpoints the ceaseless fetish of the masses to emulate the life-style of celeb-gods in 'popular cinema'.

In *Aesthetic Theory* German Sociologist Theodor Adorno views kitsch as a force of mass culture which stylizes 'emotions into the hyperbolic'. Truly so, kitsch in the spirit of myth-making has found its most convenient nest in politics. "Culture has become a common appendage, coating, glaze on a cake or an artificial heart-shaped gift. All this for the purpose of daily political propaganda, rosy-cheeked deception and groundless optimism" (Bozilovic, 2007, p. 44).

From a historical perspective, it may be noticed, political consciousness has always been inexorably entwined with the mythic imagination of a nation's people. Myths are a vile weapon in the hands of an authoritarian or insufficiently democratic government. In that, the 20th century's four most fierce political systems may be studied for kitsch. Myth here translates to the manipulative display of 'political spectacle': the visual rhetoric of terror, nationalist love & heroism packaged in speeches and displayed on TV.

The words of the Czech writer and critic Milan Kundera, kitsch has established a strong ground in politics: "[Kitsch] is an aesthetic ideal of all the politicians, all the parties and movements". Idyllic scenes of cheerfulness and compassion, urban and pastoral

landscapes ‘painted clean’, and similar symbols of happiness add to the democratic scene of political showmanship in voting events. Political movements deftly elude rational reasoning being largely strung onto emotions. Vividly, the uniqueness of kitsch, writes Kundera, is not given by political strategy but by opulent images, strident metaphors and a passionate vocabulary which together form the foundation of ‘political kitsch’.

The vulture of surveillance hovers over all political myths. Politics then seeks the camouflage of Public Relations, Image Gurus, and propaganda at its zenith of zealotry, with media mobilised towards the ‘manufacture of consent’.

Political kitsch in India is ubiquitous with symbols of ‘the benevolent palm’, ‘the sagacious saffron lotus’ and ‘the broom of progress’ posted in every nook and corner. In this direction, one can markedly envisage the presence of red/saffron/green – kitsch.

Victoria Prego, President of the Madrid Press Association, Spain, in her article *Informative Bubbles* associates post-truth with ‘fake news’, ‘the virilisation of lies’ and the proliferation of ‘half-truths’ in the sphere of journalism. She further links it with the polemical stance of media ‘coercing citizens towards specific directions or standpoints’, which in her opinion ‘threatens the health of democratic systems’. This lapse is observed as the result of traditional media losing its trustworthiness with the mainstream populace, with trust replaced by a ‘practically boundless faith in the information they [people] receive through social media’. She cites how ‘citizens are now masters and authors of their own informative environment’ which at a glance accrues to a sense of autonomy, although manipulation is growingly the hallmark of the new ethos. For instance, she cites how internet services such as Facebook are known to post each individual the type of data that mirrors their peculiar needs in a manner that the receiver lives forever cloistered within “a bubble that they don’t need to or in reality are not able to get out of”. The fact highlights how most data is manipulated to underpin the ‘passions’, ‘interests’ and ‘opinions’ of the news consumers at large. This develops into a condition where there is technically zero exposure to ideas that do not reflect their own fixations regarding some universal topic. In perspective, the ‘atomized world’ is also a constricted one with limitations where the full story lies cloaked in its tomb. The ethical dilemma is when the individual getting fake news admits it to be true because it underlines their own attitudes, whereby it is ‘resent to those who share their own bubble’, thus enhancing the intensity of circulation. (www.developing-ideas.com)

Antony Gooch, Director of Public Affairs and Communications, UK, in his critique titled *In Pursuit of the Truth*, postulates, “politicians’ narratives, influencers and media

outlets... play to sensationalism and the convenience of selective information”. He sees this trend as a synonym for post-truth: where ‘alternative facts’ and ‘fake news’ have rampaged public media. Gooch sees this upsurge as the result of digitalization in the context of networking where there is a radical turn in the manner that the layman can create or process information, i.e. ‘citizen journalism’. He stipulates the blossoming of an obvious paradox: the ceaseless flow of news could make the world more distorted on the fact-scale than it ever was. He cites an example: “Facebook content with false information was shared the same number of times as true information...” Herein, he posits, algorithms are known to breed ‘virtual ecosystems’ that reflect diverse likeminded sentiments and in most cases nudge the lay-folk to craft their own idea of truth. By way of appropriation, top search engine results encourage the churning of ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ where ultimately ‘virality’ takes precedence over quality and ethics. (www.developing-ideas.com)

Adalberto Palma, Executive Director of The Aspen Institute Mexico, in *Descartes could be a Yardstick*, states, an alternative view of reality is not to be equated with the spree of deliberate un-truths that is observed constantly from the peak of governance. He points to an ethical dilemma where ‘stating the facts’ is seen futile, as it is presently fashionable to rope in the recipient into the fact-grid so that they express their “endorsement with a simple click and are able like never before to spread an opinion or new piece of information.” He opines, “in a digital era of high technological consumption... there is only a short time span for analysis... with immediacy being a benchmark.” (www.developing-ideas.com)

Armando Medeiros, Vice President of ABC Publica, Brazil, in *The Danger of Indifference to Truth* expresses how “emotional appeals that activate personal beliefs are more efficient at winning over public opinion than objective facts.” He associates the problem with people gleaning content through ‘selective perception’ given the predicament of ‘information explosion’. Medeiros sees this condition as an off-shoot of ‘social media’ where there is “the absence of an institution to establish filters.” The examples he cites are news oriented – ‘Great Britain’s exit from the European Union’ and ‘the contentious American electoral campaign’ – with seeming ‘warriors of truth’ and ‘warriors of lies’ pitched against each other, positioned “in highly flammable and radicalized situations”. The one populist reading which is garnered is – ‘the press are liars’, a ‘dishonest species on the planet’. According to him, “the state, press and citizens are mainly characterized by the appropriation of the digital buzz of social media and public brawls over the ‘truth’...” In effect, Medeiros points to the accepted reality of ‘spin doctors’, ‘haters’, ‘fake portals’,

‘pages specialized in rumours’ and those ‘who take advantage of anonymity’ in the political scene in media spectacle. He laments “when people no longer believe that truth exists, or anything that resembles it, when all that matters is simply believing our own reasoning, it seems as if truth is being abolished or expelled from social coexistence.” (www.developing-ideas.com)

6. Conclusion

The current research study is limited to the extent of providing theoretical perspectives on the malady of ‘kitsch in the post-truth era’. In reinstating its prevalence and veracity, the idea is to anticipate constructive change, in hope that the masses will be acquainted with the compelling changes ushered in the millennia.

Considering the scope of future research, ‘kitsch’ per se in the ‘post-truth’ era must be examined in a multi-pronged fashion: i.e. while delving deep into the heart of cultural theory, all its diverse avatars must be observed in minute detail – it may signpost the demise of the serious; it may highlight the absurdity of a flawed imagination; it may point to the inane commerce of trivia seconded by forces of capitalism and consumerism; lastly, and most potently, it may indicate a counterfeit attitude to life, where the quality of true emotion is depleted by the presentation of fake sentiment. Thereof, be it in art, aesthetics, language, literature, media or politics, kitsch in its entirety must be regarded with utmost cautiousness, for it is after all an elusive camouflaged poison that gradually infiltrates the fabric of truth in communities, societies and nations *with irrevocable change*.

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