Post-Truth Infocracy: Navigating Algorithmic Governance and Data Fragility in Malka Older's *Centenal Cycle*

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Abstract

Malka Older's *Centenal Cycle* trilogy (*Infomocracy, Null States, State Tectonics*) offers a speculative exploration of truth, information, and power in a near-future world of micro-democracy. The current paper analyzes this trilogy through the frameworks of post-truth theory. The paper tries to connects the novels' themes including algorithmic governance, truth mediation, and narrative control to contemporary post-truth discourse with theories of Ralph Keyes, Steve Fuller, and Hannah Arendt. The study illustrates trilogy's dramatization of core post-truth dynamics including data manipulation, electoral misinformation, and affective populism shape civic life despite an ostensibly omniscient information infrastructure. In parallel, the paper investigates epistemic vulnerability through the trilogy's portrayal of political discourse, misinformation, and data susceptibility. Ultimately, the *Centenal Cycle* emerges as a rich case study of how digital infrastructures and post-truth politics collide, providing urgent insights into real-world struggles over truth and the technological mediation of reality.

Key Words: Post Truth politics, Algorithmic governance, Epistemic vulnerability, Micro-democracy, Misinformation

1.   Introduction

In an age often described as "post-truth," where objective facts compete with appeals to emotion and belief, speculative fiction provides a critical mirror for examining our shifting relationship with truth. Oxford Dictionaries famously declared "post-truth" the 2016 Word of the Year, defining it as a condition in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotion and personal belief (Steinmetz, 2016). Malka Older's *Centenal Cycle*, comprising the novels *Infomocracy, Null States, and State Tectonics*, envisions a near-future global micro-democracy governed by an all-pervasive information infrastructure. Published between 2016 and 2018, as real-world politics grappled with fake news and "alternative facts," Older's trilogy is strikingly timely. The series imagines a world divided into "centenals" of 100,000 people who elect governments in global competitions, all under the watchful eye of a central data repository called Information. This futuristic system promises to eliminate misinformation by verifying facts and providing universal access to knowledge. Yet as the trilogy progresses, it becomes clear that even a high-tech "infocracy" is not immune to classic problems of politics: spin, propaganda, power struggles, and the fragility of truth. Older's narrative follows Information operatives and politicians across elections and crises, revealing how truth itself becomes a battleground when knowledge is both highly centralized and highly contested.

The significance of the trilogy lies in how it links questions of technology and governance with the conditions of post-truth politics. The term "post-truth" describes a socio-political climate in which feelings and personal beliefs often trump factual evidence (Keyes, 2004; McIntyre, 2018). Older's books set this event in a futuristic context: even with plenty of information, people and politicians in the micro-democracy usually act on narrative and emotion rather than fact. Well-meaning information policies create new kinds of epistemic instability and algorithmic systems meant to protect truth turn into instruments for manipulating it. The trilogy therefore beckons a layered interpretation using post-truth theory to grasp its representation of power, lies, and truth. Algorithmic systems intended to safeguard truth become tools for controlling it, and well-intentioned information policies engender new forms of epistemic instability. Thus, the work invites a layered analysis through post-truth theory to understand its depiction of truth, lies, and power. Each novel highlights facets of a central tension: the promise of data-driven democracy versus the peril of human fallibility and political opportunism. Older's work implies that while technology can mediate truth, the power to do so is itself a major political weapon. At last, the conclusion looks back on the trilogy as a warning for our current time, therefore reminding us that the search for an educated utopia could unintentionally generate fresh kinds of "post-truth" difficulty.

2.   Literature review

Post-truth theory provides concepts for understanding the trilogy's political dynamics. Several theorists have identified aspects of the post-truth condition that are relevant. Ralph Keyes (2004) noted the cultural acceptance of "truthiness," where emotionally appealing falsehoods can override facts (p.13). Lee McIntyre (2018) defines post-truth as the political

subordination of reality, warning that sustained assaults on truth breed public cynicism and open the door to authoritarianism (p.11). Steve Fuller (2018) argues that a "post-truth" world is an outgrowth of epistemic democracy: as more people gain the power to produce and share information, knowledge becomes a contested game of competing narratives (p.15). Hannah Arendt's (1962) earlier insights complement these modern theories. Writing on propaganda and truth, she observed that a constant flood of lies can make people lose faith in truth altogether, leaving them unable to judge reality. The normalization of lies, the breakdown of shared reality, and the power struggles over truth—all of which are portrayed in the *Centenal Cycle*—are highlighted by these viewpoints, which together provide a basis for examining Older's imagined society. Shoshana Zuboff's (2019) concept of surveillance capitalism, particularly her idea of instrumentarian power, the control over society exercised through pervasive data surveillance, sheds light on the trilogy's scenario of an all-seeing information infrastructure. Similar to real-world tech giants, information in the novels has enormous control over people's knowledge, and Zuboff's work helps frame the possible risks of that power. The trilogy itself foreshadows but also precedes some public discussions about platform monopolies and algorithmic bias. Alternate, decentralized information networks emerge by the story's conclusion, reflecting current debates about severing the major platforms' monopoly on truth (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022, p. 169). The examination of how the trilogy depicts the confluence of power, truth, and technology will be guided by these frameworks.

3.   Research gap and scope of study

Despite the *Centenal Cycle's* critical acclaim and obvious relevance to current debates on information and democracy, scholarly engagement with the trilogy remains limited. Existing discussion has mostly appeared in book reviews and blog posts that praise Older's world-building and political savvy but do not deeply analyze the work in theoretical terms (SF Bluestocking, 2017; Crichton, 2018). So far, few scholarly studies analyzes the trilogy with the post-truth age or question their portrayal of technology as something contributing towards epistemic vulnerability. Treating the trilogy as a serious object of study at the crossroads of political theory, media studies, and literary scholarship, this study fills in those gaps with an in-depth, theory-informed analysis. This paper presents a novel multidisciplinary approach by conceptually investigating how tools such as network analysis or sentiment analysis could highlight the text. In so doing, it not only increases literary analysis of Older's work but also connects into debates of data and society.

4.   Research questions

    i.   How does Older's *Centenal Cycle* portray algorithmic governance in a micro-democratic system, and what does it suggest about the promises and pitfalls of a data-driven democracy in a post-truth context?

    ii.   In what ways does the trilogy depict epistemic instability—the fragility or breakdown of shared truth—and what insights do these depictions offer about maintaining a shared reality in a post-truth era?

iii.   How do narrative control and affective populism manifest in the trilogy's political landscape, and how do emotional, populist appeals influence democratic processes despite the presence of an advanced information infrastructure?

5.   Discussion

5.1.   Algorithmic governance: promise and peril of a data-driven democracy

The concept of information-based governance lies at the core of *Infomocracy*. The premise of the global micro-democracy is that rational decision-making by citizens will lead to good governance if they have access to accurate, up-to-date information. This is algorithmic governance in its purest form: society relies on an all-pervasive data system (the central information hub) to filter and validate content for the general public in order to make decisions. Older initially presents this as a utopian impulse; in fact, we discover that, ever since Information assumed control, war has been eliminated and democracy is thriving on a number of levels. Information ensures that everyone receives the same verified facts, acting as a kind of all-seeing electoral commission and news network. This, optimistic setting demonstrates the promise of algorithmic governance: a more informed electorate and a more peaceful world through the impartial management of knowledge.

As the trilogy progresses, the perils of such a system become increasingly apparent. The narrative constructs scenarios that test the integrity and resilience of the Information infrastructure. One key moment comes in *Infomocracy*, when an organised cyber-attack and interruption cause a global Information outage on the eve of a crucial election. The well-tuned apparatus of fact-based governance suddenly comes to a complete stop, leaving entire populations in the dark. A single point of truth had turned into a single point of failure: society descends into anarchy when the system fails. A serious flaw in highly centralized, algorithm-driven governance is starkly highlighted by this dramatization. Entrusting all truth to one source, even under ideal conditions, concentrates risk and power in that source. This worry is confirmed by the outage sequence, which makes everything built on top of the one dependable channel teeter when it fails. People who had become totally reliant on the steady stream of verified information are now uncertain about what to think or how to behave. The author also portrays confusion as a weapon, used by opportunists to spread false rumours and grab at power amid the chaos. A quote states in *Infomorcracy* as "There's a fair amount of unrest out there… We've seen five or six riots, and at least a dozen places where people are preparing for violence… And that's only in the limited areas where we have eyes and ears—maybe fifteen percent" (Older, 2016, p. 296). It's a scenario that resonates with real-world events—just as a flood of fake news or a major disruption in communication can cause the public to lose faith in democratic outcomes, Older compresses and intensifies this dynamic to show how fragile the link between knowledge and collective decision-making truly is. The "information crash" nearly shakes micro-democracy apart (Older, 2016), affirming that no matter how advanced an information system is, its failure can imperil the entire political structure.

Moreover, algorithmic governance in the trilogy cannot be seen as value-neutral or incorruptible. Older explores instances where Information's supposedly impartial algorithms turn out to be biased or subject to manipulation. In *State Tectonics*, for example, an Information employee is put on trial for surreptitiously "adjusting reality to suit her own ends" — essentially altering with data outputs for political advantage. This plot line brings to light the issue of algorithmic bias and the opacity of automated decision systems, directly mirroring real-world concerns that algorithms often carry the biases of their creators or controllers (O'Neil, 2016, p.79). The fact that even the guardian of truth (Information) can be compromised from within raises the question: who watches the watchers? When the public learns of this algorithmic interfering, it triggers a trend of distrust. What had seemed like a perfectly neutral system is revealed to be built on human-designed code and judgments, and thus fallible. Echoing O'Neil's (2016) warnings about "weapons of math destruction," the novel shows that powerful algorithms operating as black boxes can do great harm when misused or unchecked (p.3). The moment a single lapse in integrity is exposed, and opponents of micro-democracy seize on it to claim the whole system is rigged. In reality of post-truth fashion, one single breach of trust, fuels a cascade of conspiracy theories and public cynicism. The trilogy demonstrates how quickly trust can be eroded. An algorithmic governance system may inspire tremendous initial confidence (people trusted Information more than any human politician), but once that trust is undermined, the damage is profound and hard to repair.

By the end of the trilogy, algorithmic governance as originally conceived — a single omniscient, centralized information regime — is on the verge of transformation. *State Tectonics* implies that to survive its own success and pitfalls, the system must become more open and accountable. The solution that emerges is to decentralize and diversify the truth-making process. In the story's conclusion, there are strong suggestions that Information will evolve from being the sole gatekeeper of truth to being a coordinator among multiple information channels and citizen contributors. In other words, the remedy for the flaws of an algorithmic monopoly is to involve more stakeholders in validating and disseminating truth. This fictional resolution resonates with real-world calls for greater transparency and oversight of big data platforms (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022, p. 168). It aligns with Fuller's argument that democratizing the knowledge-power structure is essential, and with Zuboff's caution that unchecked data monopolies concentrate dangerous levels of power (Fuller, 2018, p. 15; Zuboff, 2019, p. 376). Older's work, therefore, doesn't reject algorithmic governance outright — after all, the infocracy delivered two decades of peace and prosperity — but it suggests that such a system must evolve to remain viable. The promise of algorithmic governance can only be realized if its inherent fragility is addressed by structural changes: distributing the responsibility of truth, building in checks and balances for algorithms, and ensuring public accountability. Ultimately, the trilogy gives the message that technology can augment democracy and truth, but it cannot substitute for the human element of trust and oversight. Algorithmic governance must be leavened with democratic transparency and pluralism to avoid becoming its own undoing.

5.2.   Epistemic instability: when truth itself is in flux

The dramatic election-night chaos in *Infomocracy* is a prime example of epistemic instability in action. A "cataclysm" happens just as the results are in: communications networks are disrupted, false information is purposefully spread, and the public is left in a panic without trustworthy updates. An electorate that was previously knowledgeable is abruptly thrown into a maze of rumors and uncertainty. In essence, this sequence is an information earthquake that is trembling the shared reality's foundations at the most inconvenient time. The story demonstrates a phenomenon observed by post-truth observers through this crisis: rational decision-making can be circumvented if sufficient confusion is created. The chaos in the work directly echoes Arendt's warning that a constant assault on truth or a sudden removal of truth can unmoor people from reality. "If everybody always lies to you… nobody believes anything any longer… And a people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind. It is deprived not only of its capacity to act but also of its capacity to think and to judge" (Arendt, 1978, p. 18). Opportunistic actors attempt to take advantage of the void created by the blackout and the rumor mill that follows; some attempt to take control, while others disseminate misleading information to incite the populace. The instability itself becomes a weapon. It is difficult to ignore the real-world parallels, such as the way unverified claims of election irregularities or a surge of misinformation on social media can cause widespread public distrust in electoral outcomes. Older's fiction amplifies this pattern to emphasize a crucial message: when people are uncertain about what is true, democratic systems either stall or spiral unpredictably. The carefully constructed micro democratic model begins to collapse, not due to external threats, but because its citizens can no longer rely on the information they receive.

The real-world parallels are hard to overlook, such as how a spike in false information on social media or unsubstantiated allegations of election irregularities can lead to a general public mistrust of election results. This pattern is emphasized in Older's fiction to highlight a key point: democratic systems either stall or unpredictably spiral when people are unsure of what is true. The meticulously crafted micro democratic model starts to fall apart—not because of outside dangers, but because its people can no longer trust the information they are given. The idea of epistemic instability is expanded in this context by Null States from a singular breakdown to a structural disparity in the "truth infrastructure." Some parts of the world live in what is effectively a semi-post-truth condition by default, due to lack of connectivity and oversight. The novel poses a pointed question: how can a truth-based governance system be upheld when entire communities are located on the outskirts of the information network? According to the Darfuri plot, in these situations, government should concentrate on establishing communication channels and trust from the ground up rather than merely enforcing external facts. Older exposes another flaw in the infocratic ideal by illustrating a place with limited information: if access to the truth is unequal, the integrity of the system as a whole is in jeopardy. We observe that the promise of micro-democracy may not materialize in areas where information is not fully accessible, making those populations more vulnerable to misinformation or scepticism. Quoting *Null States*, "There's a rumor going around that it wasn't really Al-Jabali who was killed, and another saying the deputy was killed with him and nobody's in charge" (Older, 2017, p. 78). The author even gives us an explicit contrast: the same assassination in a fully connected centenal might have been resolved swiftly with data, but in the null state it spirals into uncertainty. In short, *Null States* adds tone to the theme by

demonstrating that epistemic instability can be the result of unequal information distribution, not just deliberate damage. It underscores that a "post-truth" crisis can stem from absence of information as much as from an overload of misinformation.

Malka Older examines epistemic instability throughout the trilogy, not only as a plot device but also as a critique of the notion that truth can be completely secured by any system. It is demonstrated that when the social consensus around truth erodes, even a society built to eradicate false information becomes vulnerable. The narrative takes a self-aware turn by the third book, *State Tectonics*, when even the Information leaders acknowledge the limitations of centralized truth control and contemplate reforms that promote decentralized, community-based information flows. This change points to a positive rather than apocalyptic response to post-truth circumstances, which aligns with practical ideas like independent media, crowdsourced fact-checking, and open government. In the end, the trilogy issues a warning: both technical and social institutions need to actively support truth. The work critiques both over-centralization, which risks collapse if trust is broken, and over-fragmentation, which creates a cacophony of incompatible truths. Instead, the author advocates for a balanced approach that combines robustness and pluralism, echoing theories of epistemic democracy (Fuller) and the Arendtian idea of a truth-sustaining community. By grounding these ideas in tangible crises—riots, investigations, trials—the trilogy transforms abstract post-truth theory into a vivid narrative of both caution and possibility.

5.3.   Truth mediation: the power and pitfalls of the information monopoly

The trilogy persistently grapples with the concept of mediated truth – the idea that what people experience as "the truth" is delivered to them through some medium or institution. In Older's future world, the primary mediator is the omnipresent Information system, a global infosphere that stands between raw reality and the individual citizen. This setup allows the story to explore both the benefits and the dangers of having truth so heavily filtered by a single source. "Information 'pioneered the switch' from warring nation-states to a global micro-democracy, functioning as a powerful search engine and central authority for knowledge" (Older, 2016, p. 404). Early in the narrative, we learn that information "pioneered the switch" from warring nation-states to a global micro-democracy, functioning as a powerful search engine and central authority for knowledge. The design deliberately evokes Google or another tech giant in our own world. Information employees verify candidates' statements during debates, correct misinformation in real time, and push tailored data to citizens about local issues. In essence, Information combines the roles of an election commission, a public encyclopaedia, and a 24/7 news network, all in a near-omniscient form. At first, this mediation of truth is taken for granted by the populace. Much as many of us today trust that a top search result or an official news alert is likely accurate, people in the *Centenal Cycle* trust that if something is important, Information will tell them and that what it tells them is true. Knowing anything means checking Information. In many ways, this has made truth more accessible and uncensored. This scenario reflects media theorist Neil Postman's caution that over-reliance on information technology can erode our own critical faculties (Postman, 1985, p.xix).

The second issue is control, which poses a question, who controls the narrative when truth is centrally mediated? Throughout the trilogy, various actors attempt to game or influence the Information system to their advantage. Political parties and factions try to sway which stories get priority or how events are framed in the official feeds. There are even covert attempts to hack the system or insert biased data. This scenario is akin to modern tactics in algorithmic marketing or media manipulation, where content creators design messages to exploit the algorithms of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. We're reminded how today politicians and advertisers carefully tailor their output to match what automated systems will amplify. The public sees Heritage's narrative coming through official channels and assumes it's legitimate. Here, the trilogy highlights a subtle but serious pitfall. A warning that the truth mediation system can give a false sense of security. In short, controlling the mediator can become as strategically important as controlling the message itself. Older's story thereby demonstrates that even without telling direct lies, actors can manipulate truth by exploiting how it's delivered.

In *State Tectonics*, the very notion of a single truth mediator is put on trial. Alternative information networks spring up, established by dissidents who are frustrated with (or distrustful of) Information's monopoly. Suddenly, society faces a debate that mirrors real-world discussions about media plurality: is it better to have one central "truth authority" or to allow a pluralism of sources and let the public navigate among them? In the novel's political arena, this debate centres on a draconian law that had made it illegal to disseminate information outside of the official channels. "More sources of data mean people will believe what they want" (Older, 2018, p. 388). Characters begin to argue that such exclusivity is doing more harm than good by stifling transparency and adaptation. One politician contends that allowing multiple information platforms could act as a check on Information itself, introducing competition that would keep the primary system honest. This resonates strongly with contemporary ideas about decentralizing media power or breaking up big tech monopolies to ensure a healthier information ecosystem (Nielsen, 2022). The trilogy's climax involves a public reckoning with the question, who should control truth? The outcome leans toward a more distributed model. Information's role evolves: rather than remaining the sole gatekeeper of truth, it becomes one node in a network of information sources. Unverified information is no longer outright banned; instead, a more nuanced approach to vetting and sharing is suggested. Older effectively stages a thought experiment about reforming a truth-media regime from a monopoly toward a more federated or open system. The trilogy demonstrates that even a well-intentioned, highly efficient monopoly on information has inherent flaws. Older's narrative leans toward the argument that truth mediation must be coupled with vigilance and diversity to be sustainable. By the end of the series, the introduction of parallel, citizen-run info-networks, essentially the public "watching the watchers" are portrayed as part of the solution. This result is consistent with Arendt and Fuller's views that a balanced mix of grassroots input and centralized authority, as well as active participation by numerous voices, are necessary for a healthy public sphere. It also reflects contemporary notions of networked truth-seeking, which hold that in order to provide checks and balances, central institutions should coexist with a number of independent verifiers, such as a strong free press, citizen journalists, and local fact-checkers. According to the *Centennial Cycle*, opening up the

infrastructure rather than just abandoning it is the best way to counteract the risks associated with a truth monopoly. In a hypothetical blueprint for our own world, it suggests that in order to prevent any one entity from having unbridled control over reality, we may need to regulate big information platforms and encourage independent channels.

5.4.   Narrative control and affective populism: emotions in micro-democracy

Although the *Centenal Cycle* is centered around data and factual accuracy, it does not neglect the deeply human influences of emotion and storytelling. One of the trilogy's most striking observations is that, despite the abundance of information, societies remain vulnerable to emotional and narrative persuasion. Malka Older explores how these dynamics operate within a futuristic micro-democracy, revealing that technological systems cannot displace the emotional dimensions of politics. A clear example is how leading political factions shape and promote competing versions of reality through carefully crafted narratives. The corporate party Heritage, for instance, consistently pitches a narrative of continuity and stability: essentially, "We have delivered prosperity and order, so stick with us." In contrast, insurgent voices like those from the null states separatist movement spin a counter-narrative that the micro-democracy is elitist and culturally oppressive, arguing that local autonomy or even a return to nation-states would restore dignity and self-determination. Both narratives contain kernels of truth but gloss over inconvenient details. Heritage downplays discontent and inequities in outlying regions; the separatists gloss over the tangible benefits that micro-democracy's global peace and infrastructure have brought. The point is that beyond the raw information everyone has, these factions are fighting to define the meaning of events. For example, in *Null States*, after an assassination occurs, one side frames it as proof that micro-democracy fails in marginal areas, while the other frames it as exactly the kind of chaos that micro-democracy was designed to prevent (if only its reach had been more complete). The factual outline (a local political murder) is the same for all, but the interpretations diverge radically. Older thereby highlights that narrative, not just data, is a battleground: whoever's story gains traction will influence public reaction more than the facts themselves. The trilogy demonstrates that even the truth-focused institution known as Information must grapple with the power of storytelling. Tasked with disseminating objective facts, its members increasingly realize that without appropriate context and framing, facts fail to resonate. In *State Tectonics*, officials carefully deliberate how to communicate the results of a trial exposing algorithmic bias, aiming to preserve public confidence—this calculated storytelling echoes Hannah Arendt's notion that facts only gain political relevance through narrative. Older's portrayal suggests that in a post-truth environment, even data-centric bodies must engage in political strategy, illustrating the inherent limitations of purely technocratic neutrality.

Emotional populism energizes many of these narrative battles. Within the novels, it becomes evident that citizens are more easily stirred by emotional appeals—such as fear, pride, or nostalgia—than by statistics or rational debate. This is particularly apparent in campaign events and propaganda, where a populist figure exploits dissatisfaction by accusing micro-democracy of diluting cultural identity, evoking a deep sense of loss and grievance. Objectively, the data might show that those regions have improved economically and socially under micro-

democracy, but the emotional narrative of "loss of identity" resonates more deeply with some citizens. Older quotes in *State Tectonics* (2018).

"You don't remember what it was like before Information." Nejime's voice trembles, and Maryam wonders if this is going to be the melt-down-and-admit-all scene, but Nejime has far more self-control than a film villain and she continues in her usual dispassionate tone. "Competing data sources tore down any idea of truth; people voted based on falsehoods. We didn't invent surveillance: there were plenty of feeds and search trackers, but they were fragmented and firewalled by governments and private companies. The surveillance was used to propagate falsehoods." (p. 374)

The author is illustrating that phenomena we know from our current politics as demagoguery, scapegoating, and appeals to tribal identity, as alive and well in her futuristic setting. All these incidents take place in a highly informed society, which is ironic. Even though everyone has access to the facts, many people still decide to believe the story that appeals to their emotions. This emphasizes a key finding from post-truth studies: a rational public is not always ensured by an ideal information flow. How information is interpreted and used is mediated by social dynamics and human psychology. In a way, the *Centenal Cycle* asserts that human nature cannot be circumvented by technological means. Even if all the facts are presented, people may choose to ignore them if they are scared, angry, or motivated by another narrative. Older quotes in *Infomocracy* (2016), "democracy is of limited usefulness when there are no good choices, or when the good choices become bad as soon as you've chosen them, or when all the Information access in the world can't make people use it" (p.291). Arguably, one of Older's sharpest critiques of a data-driven society is the recognition that while facts can inform, they do not guarantee belief or loyalty.

Throughout the trilogy, emotional populism and narrative shaping are not treated as occasional flaws in an otherwise rational system, but as consistent features of political life. The micro-democracy must deal with rumors, propaganda, and charismatic movements just as any society does. In some ways the stakes are even higher, because those who would manipulate opinion have access to the same sophisticated tools as the truth-tellers. In *State Tectonics*, a particularly unsettling moment reveals how a faction exploits data-driven tools to amplify emotional manipulation. In one particularly telling example, analysts use sentiment analysis to detect emotionally charged language and develop targeted messages intended to spark outrage within specific voting units, or centenals. This strategy mirrors real-world practices such as algorithm-driven political advertising and echo chambers. Older powerfully illustrates how technologies built to analyze and understand public sentiment can just as easily be exploited to manipulate it. Her narrative warns that tools of the infocracy, far from being neutral, can serve either democratic engagement or authoritarian manipulation, depending entirely on who controls them.

By the trilogy's conclusion in *State Tectonics*, Information no longer monopolizes public narrative but becomes one voice in a broader, more contested discursive field. This transformation resembles a moderated version of the "marketplace of ideas," where multiple

narratives coexist and compete. However, the text stresses that free competition among ideas is not sufficient; it must be accompanied by media literacy and responsible curation. The trilogy ultimately insists that even in an age of abundant information, enduring challenges like narrative manipulation and emotional populism remain. Upholding truth, therefore, requires more than raw data. It demands compelling and ethical storytelling, supported by collective responsibility among platforms, communities, and engaged citizens.

6.   Conclusion

Through the speculative analysis of the trilogy, we can see that even an enlightened, information-rich society is vulnerable to familiar traps such as misinformation, power struggles, and public disillusionment. *Infomocracy*, *Null States*, and *State Tectonics* collectively argue that technology alone cannot guarantee truth or trust within society; rather, human elements—narrative, emotion, and ethics—remain central. Viewed through the lens of post-truth theory, Older's work reflects real-world dynamics: widespread disinformation can destabilize democracies (McIntyre, 2018, p. 11), the collapse of shared reality and rise of cynicism can pose threats as grave as deliberate lies (Arendt, 1978, p. 18), and democratizing the truth-making process may spark conflict but also foster empowerment (Fuller, 2018, p. 15). Essentially, the *Centenal Cycle* foreshadows many of the current discussions concerning how to strike a balance between distributed networks and central authority, expert knowledge and popular wisdom, and openness and information security. Older's trilogy provides a comprehensive case study of the intricacies of algorithmic governance and mediated truth for both readers and academics. It suggests that the quest for an informed utopia is fraught with paradoxes. The more we centralize and streamline truth, the more catastrophic its failure can be. Also, the more we decentralize it, the harder it turns to maintain a shared reality. In the final pages of *State Tectonics*, when Information's role evolves to integrate citizen contributors and parallel networks, we are left with a cautiously optimistic vision that perhaps truth can be made more resilient by making its guardianship a collective endeavor rather than a singular one.

At a time when misinformation is an issue for both actual governments and tech companies, the findings of the paper seem especially relevant. This modern work of fiction pushes us to imagine new frameworks for truth in the digital age. The framework that integrates democratic accountability, technological innovation, and human-centered design. In the end, the work of fiction asks us to think about how we might uphold the ideal of an informed populace in a time of manipulation and information overload. While the trilogy does not present easy solutions, it does present hope that societies can defeat the post-truth threats that even the most advanced technologies cannot totally eliminate through adaptability, transparency, and active citizen engagement. In an algorithm- and network-mediated world, Older's work is a reminder that human values such as trust, integrity, and community must be at the center of any solution to our truth crisis.

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