

Contents

BOOK ONE A HISTORY OF THE HOAX

ONE

The American Museum

On the madness of crowds

- CHAPTER 1 **The Age of Imposture** 7
Humbug – P.T. Barnum – Matthias the Prophet – The Moon Hoax – Poe – Tales
- CHAPTER 2 **The Freaks of Dame Fortune** 27
Joice Heth – The Mummy – The Mammy – What is It? – The Circassian Beauty
- CHAPTER 3 **Splitfoot** 45
Spiritualism – William H. Mumler – The Fox Sisters – Spirit Photography – Heaven Tourism – The Cottingley Fairy Hoax – Arthur Conan Doyle
- CHAPTER 4 **Bearded Ladies** 63
The Lincoln Letters – The “Dreadnought” Hoax – George Psalmanazar – Girl Wonders – Opal Whiteley – Joan Lowell – Travel Liars

TWO

Neverland

On race & other popular delusions

- CHAPTER 5 **Cowboys & Aliens** 95
Pornographies – Imaginary Indians – Grey Owl – Nasdijj
- CHAPTER 6 **Blood Nation** 117
Memoir – James Frey – Margaret B. Jones – Little Tree – Captivity – Poetic License
- CHAPTER 7 **Lost Boys** 139
Faction – Forbidden Love – Three Cups of Tea – Gay Girl in Damascus – Mutant Message Down Under
- CHAPTER 8 **The Time Machine** 161
Lost Races – Professor Agassiz – Dr. Moreau – Degeneration – Miscegenation – War of the Worlds – Piltdown Man – The Cardiff Giant – The Tasaday

THREE Mysteria

A sideshow

- CHAPTER 9 **The Heart Is Deceitful** 189
JT LeRoy – Lance Armstrong – Laura Albert – Sybil – Anthony Godby Johnson – Hysteria
- CHAPTER 10 **Eve Black** 211
Eve White – South Virginia – Avatar – Millennialism

BOOK TWO THE HOAXING OF HISTORY

FOUR The Vampire's Mirror

Of imposture, forgery & monsters

- CHAPTER 11 **Butterfly Books** 233
Frankensteins – Frederic Prokosch – Lily – Thomas Wise – Major Byron – Voices
- CHAPTER 12 **Spruce Goose** 253
The Hitler Diaries – The Autobiography of Howard Hughes – Can You Ever Forgive Me? – Fake! – Elmyr
- CHAPTER 13 **Bakelite** 271
Han Van Meegeren – The Hitler Diaries – Jerzy Kosinski
- CHAPTER 14 **The Vampire's Wife** 285
The Painted Bird – Benjamin Wilkomirski – Laura Grabowski – Autofiction

FIVE Hack Heaven

Of the journalist & the liar

- CHAPTER 15 **Glass Ceilings** 305
The New Narrative – Ravi Desai – The New Republic – Ern Malley – Ruth Shalit – Stephen Glass – The Journalist & the Murderer

- CHAPTER 16 **The Gingerbread Man** 327
Taxis & the Meaning of Work – Kae Bang

- CHAPTER 17 **In Bad Blood** 343
Susan Smith – Brutal Imagination – The Washington Post – Jimmy's World – Ben's World – Volunteer Slavery

- CHAPTER 18 **Burning Down** 359
The New York Times – Jayson Blair – Michael Finkel – The Truth

SIX Unoriginal Sin

On plagiarism, murder, bad poetry & other crimes

- CHAPTER 19 **Blacker than Thou** 381
Rachel Dolezal

- CHAPTER 20 **Professor Plum** 391
Plagiary – Clark Rockefeller – Gatsby

- CHAPTER 21 **Ghostbusters** 397
Kaavya Viswanathan – Opal Mehta – Adam Wheeler – William-Henry Ireland

- CHAPTER 22 **Michael Brown's Body** 411
Trumpism – The Ecstasy of Influence – Conceptual Poetry – Lynching – Christian Ward – Brad Vice

- CODA **The Age of Euphemism** 431

Acknowledgments 449

Notes 451

Annotated Bibliography 509

Illustration Credits 535

Index 539