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## Editorial

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### Donald Trump, the presidency and the media

#### ABSTRACT

This introduction by the editor to the Special Issue on 'Donald Trump, the Presidency and the Media' outlines the issue's theme and articles on the topics of the relationship between Trumpism and a 'neo-liberal mediascape', ABC's 1977 historical miniseries *Washington Behind Closed Doors* as a prescient warning of the Trump presidency, the representation of Trump in the cataloguing and use of stock music, graphic novels' depiction of Trump through form and style and cosplay activism drawing on Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* as a feminist response to the Trump presidency.

#### KEYWORDS

US politics, American television, library music, graphic novel, cosplay activism, cable news, historical miniseries

Welcome to this Special Issue exploring a variety of ways in which the media has engaged with the presidency of Donald Trump. The politicized exploitation of the media became a hallmark of Trump's administration, alongside the persistent characterizing of journalism as 'fake news' and the president's preoccupation with his position as a media personality. The Trump presidency, however, has equally been a source of fascination across all media genres and forms, resulting in screen, audio, digital and print representations of an extraordinary time in American politics. As these articles explore, the cultural impact of this historical moment has been significant and can be seen and heard across the fields of journalism, music, television, performance and the graphic novel. Represented as the politics of the past, present or future, and considered through texts that cross the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, the Trump era is explored in this issue as a period during which the American presidency became recognized as an historically persistent media event.

The issue opens with an article by Liane Tanguay who considers the difficulty of defining the extremist nature of 'Trumpism' through traditionally recognized political terms such as populism and fascism. Establishing instead the framework of a 'neo-liberal mediascape', Tanguay argues that the politics of the Trump era has both emerged from the contemporary relationship between capitalism and the media and lingers as a force that this powerful combination is unable to control.

Karen McNally follows with an article examining ABC's 1977 television miniseries *Washington: Behind Closed Doors* and its dramatization of a fictional Richard Nixon-style presidency as a prescient forewarning of the United States' political future under Donald Trump. Positioned in contrast to the contemporary HBO drama *The Comey Rule* (2020) and considering the increasingly blurred boundaries between fact and fiction at play in various screen depictions of Watergate, as well as the development of the miniseries as historical narrative, McNally explores how the show might be read as much as an imagined American future now realized under Donald Trump as a fictionalized version of the nation's past.

Toby Huelin and Júlia Durand discuss in their article the depiction of Donald Trump as president in library or stock music. Through an analysis of library music catalogues and using a variety of television case studies, the authors consider public perceptions of Trump, where and how his presidency was represented through stock music and the broader significance of library catalogues and music in the construction of audio-visual meaning.

American graphic novels are the focus of Oliver Gruner's article as he considers the response of this genre to Donald Trump's presidency. With some key publications as examples, the article examines the ways in which form and style create narratives concerned with the impact of Trump on individuals and communities and engage in broader political debates that are both historical and contemporary.

The issue's final article by Jen Atkins explores cosplay activism drawing on Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017–) that emerged in response to the election of Donald Trump. The article considers how modes of dress and movement inflicted upon the fictional handmaids of Gilead and employed by activist fans of the show become strategies of feminist resistance to and emancipation from the patriarchal political mood and policies of the Trump presidency.

This collection of articles seeks to illustrate the wide-ranging ways in which Donald Trump's tenure as president and the accompanying political culture has become a theme across the media landscape, prompting original areas of research and analysis initiated by these authors.

#### CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Dr Karen McNally is reader in American film, television and cultural history at London Metropolitan University. Her work centres on the representation of US history, culture and politics in American film and television. Her edited volume *American Television During a Television Presidency* was published with Wayne State University Press in 2022. She is also the author of *The Stardom Film: Creating the Hollywood Fairy Tale* (Columbia University Press, 2020) and *When Frankie Went to Hollywood: Frank Sinatra and American Male Identity* (University of Illinois Press, 2008), editor of *Billy Wilder, Movie-Maker: Critical Essays on the Films* (McFarland, 2011) and co-editor of *The Legacy of Mad Men: Cultural History, Intermediality and American Television* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Karen has also published a variety of book chapters and articles in publications including *Journal of American Studies* and *Film & History*.

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