Trump's Media War

Catherine Happer • Andrew Hoskins
William Merrin
Editors

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Editors
Catherine Happer
University of Glasgow
Glasgow, UK

Andrew Hoskins
University of Glasgow
Glasgow, UK

William Merrin
Swansea University
Swansea, UK

PREFACE

Bewildered, exasperated, and exhausted, the liberal left mainstream news media appeared defeated a year into President Trump's openly declared war against them.

Katy Waldman (2018) in an essay in *Slate* entitled 'There's Nothing More to Learn About Trump' concedes, 'The more we cover him, the more we excite the desire to explain away, account for, and tame his outrageous behavior. But we can't. All we can do is stoke the fever with fresh data points, new revelations'.

Kyle Pope (2018), editor-in-chief of *Columbia Journalism Review*, writes, 'We continue to spend our days, and our audience's time, reacting to the president's bumbling with a level of disbelief and outrage that has boiled over into a stinking froth'.

And several months earlier, Mark Danner (2017) in *The New York Review of Books* wrote,

'It is our outrage, our disgust, our knee-jerk shock and condemnation that animate the play and give verisimilitude to the battle being fought. We are the enemy and our screams of dismay are vital to the drama'.

And yet this 'we', this 'media', that Trump is at war with, is merely a ghost of what was the liberal left mainstream media. The media's disbelief at Trump is increasingly a cover for their own anger at having been pushed out of that place from where they once painted the world in their own colours. The catastrophic fall of the mainstream is not a matter of the digital tsunami upending the business of news but is rather the widespread 'post-trust' (Happer and Hoskins forthcoming) contempt from the left and the right it is now held in. As Angela Nagle (2017, 2–3) describes, 'It

is a career disaster now to signal your left-behind cluelessness as a basic bitch, a normie or a member of the corrupt media mainstream in any way'.

Trump's war on media continues to be fundamentally armed by a uniquely potent mix of a new critical mass of anti-establishment fervour and the mainstream's deep resentment of precisely this, or at least its acting in the vain hope that the multitude will stop hating it and that it will shake off its Trump dependency. The latter seems more likely to arrive—resulting from Trump leaving office—than the former (hatred of the establishment) but only because Trump's period in office has term limits.

To tell the story of Trump's war on media then requires a holistic vehicle that can at least illuminate the right and left's collusion in outrage alongside a vision of the imploding mainstream.

Through a series of short interventions from academics and journalists, this volume interrogates the emergent media war fought by Donald Trump in a fluid digital media ecology. Rather than a standard edited volume of extended essays, we use a series of interconnected clustered themes to set an agenda for exploration of Trump as the principal beneficiary as well as a sign of the shattering of mainstream consensual reality.

This work began through a symposium hosted by the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow in June 2017. We are very grateful to all our participants and our contributors here for their innovative work on this project. Finally, thanks to Lina Aboujieb, Heloise Harding, Connie Li, Martina O'Sullivan, Lucy Batrouney, and the proposal reviewers in helping guide us through to these final pages.

Glasgow, UK   Catherine Happer
                                                     Andrew Hoskins
Swansea, UK   William Merrin

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Notes on Contributors

Abdullah K. Al-Saud is the Director of Research, and Head of the Security Studies Research Unit at King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS). He is also an assistant professor at the College of Strategic Sciences at Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS) in Riyadh. Between September 2016 and March 2018, he was a visiting research fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), King's College London. His research interests include security studies in general, with a special focus on radicalisation, terrorism, armed non-state actors, political violence, and the ideology of political Islamism.

Stuart Allan is a professor and Head of the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, UK. He is the author of several books, including *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis* (2013), and editor of numerous edited collections, including *Photojournalism and Citizen Journalism: Co-operation, Collaboration and Connectivity* (2017).

Tom Allbeson is Lecturer in Modern History at Swansea University. His research addresses post-conflict societies, photographic history, and cultural memory. His articles have been published in the *Journal of Modern History*, *Modern Intellectual History* and the *Journal of War & Culture Studies*. He and Stuart Allan are co-authoring a book on the history of war photography.

Peter Geoghegan is an investigative journalist and writer living in Glasgow and a lecturer at the University of the West of Scotland. His latest book, *The People's Referendum: Why Scotland Will Never Be the Same Again,* was published in January 2015, and was nominated for the Saltire Society First Book Prize. He is a co-founder and director of The Ferret, an investigative platform launched in 2015 and nominated for a British Journalism Prize for its work. He has written and reported from numerous countries for a wide range of publications including the *Guardian*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Scotsman*, and the *Irish Times.*

Catherine Happer is Lecturer in Sociology and a member of the Glasgow University Media Group. She is co-author of *Communicating Climate Change and Energy Security: New Methods for Understanding Audiences* (2013) and her work has been published in international journals including the *European Journal of Communications and New Political Economy.* She has collaborated with Chatham House on a major international study, has given evidence at the House of Commons Select Committee on Climate, Policy and Public Understanding, and appeared on the BBC and Al Jazeera. She was previously a Factual programme-maker with the BBC. *Broken Media: The Post-Trust Crisis of the Mainstream*, with Andrew Hoskins, is her forthcoming work (https://brokenmedia.net).

Michael Higgins is senior lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Strathclyde. His writings on media and politics have been widely published, and his books include *Media and Their Publics* (2008), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Culture* (2010), and most recently *Belligerent Broadcasting* (2017).

Andrew Hoskins is Interdisciplinary Research Professor in Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. His research connects multiple aspects of emergent digital society: media, memory, war, risk, security, and privacy. His latest books are (with John Tulloch) *Risk and Hyperconnectivity: Media and Memories of Neoliberalism* (2016) and (edited) *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition* (2018). *Broken Media: The Post-Trust Crisis of the Mainstream*, with Catherine Happer, is his forthcoming work (https://brokenmedia.net).

Jeff Jarvis is the Leonard Tow Professor of Journalistic Innovation and Director of the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism at the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism. He is

author of numerous books including *Geeks Bearing Gifts: Imagining New Futures for News* (2014), *What Would Google Do?* (2009), and *Public Parts* (2011). He blogs about media and news at Buzzmachine.com and co-hosts the podcast *This Week in Google*. Jarvis was creator and founding editor of *Entertainment Weekly*; Sunday editor and associate publisher of the *New York Daily News*; TV critic for *TV Guide and People*; a columnist on the *San Francisco Examiner*; and assistant city editor and reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Douglas Kellner is George Kneller Chair in the Philosophy of Education at UCLA, and is author of many books on social theory, politics, history, and culture, including *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film*, co-authored with Michael Ryan; *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity;* and *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*; works in cultural studies such as *Media Culture and Media Spectacle*; a trilogy of books on postmodern theory with Steve Best; and a trilogy of books on the media and the Bush administration, encompassing *Grand Theft 2000, From 9/11 to Terror War*, and *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy*.

Lisa W. Kelly is Lecturer in Television Studies at the University of Glasgow. She is the co-author of *The Television Entrepreneurs: Social Change and Public Understanding of Business* (2012) and *The Rise and Fall of the UK Film Council* (2015). Her research interests are around talent and diversity in film and TV, both onscreen and behind the scenes.

Paul Levinson is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University. He has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, the BBC, NPR, and numerous radio and television news shows. His non-fiction books, including *The Soft Edge*, *Digital McLuhan*, *Realspace*, *Cellphone*, *New New Media*, *McLuhan in an Age of Social Media*, and *Fake News in Real Context*, have been translated into 12 languages. His novels include *The Silk Code* (winner of Locus Award for Best First Science Fiction Novel of 1999), *Borrowed Tides*, *The Consciousness Plague*, *The Pixel Eye*, *The Plot To Save Socrates*, *Unburning Alexandria*, and *Chronica*. His stories and novels have been nominated for Hugo, Nebula, Sturgeon, Edgar, Prometheus, and Audie Awards.

Ben O'Loughlin is Professor of International Relations and Co-Director of the New Political Communication Unit at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is co-editor of the Sage journal *Media, War & Conflict*.

His latest book is *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations* (2017). He was Specialist Advisor to the UK Parliament's Select Committee on Soft Power, producing the report *Power and Persuasion in the Modern World*. He is about to complete a book on narrative diplomacy and the 2015 Iran peace deal.

Dounia Mahlouly is a research associate at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), King's College London, as part of the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence. She holds a PhD from the University of Glasgow. Her thesis investigates the role of social media campaigning in the constitutional and presidential debates in post-revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt. It discusses the process through which different political groups incorporated participative media as part of their campaigning strategy and assesses to what extent such tools might contribute to consolidate a sustainable ideological message.

William Merrin is Associate Professor of Media Studies at Swansea University. His research and teaching focus on media and cultural theory, contemporary developments in digital media, and the history and philosophy of technology. Merrin developed the concept of 'Media Studies 2.0', starting the blog of the same name in November 2006 to follow developments in digital media and critically reflect upon the state and future of media studies. His books include *Media Studies 2.0* (2015) and *Digital War: A Critical Introduction* (2018).

Jennifer Pybus is Lecturer in Digital Culture and Society in the Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London. Her research looks at the politics of datafication and everyday life, specifically in relation to those critical points of tension that lie at the intersections between digital culture, Big Data and emerging advertising and marketing practices. This includes research around youth and privacy which relates to how third party ecosystems found on social media platforms are transforming the advertising industry via the rise of data analytics and algorithmic processes.

Alex Symons is Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies at LIM College, New York. His publications include *Mel Brooks in the Cultural Industries* (2012), as well as articles in *Celebrity Studies*, the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, and the *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. His most recent work examines social media and podcasting in the careers of Doug Stanhope, Louis CK, and Marc Maron.

David Torrance is a freelance writer, journalist, and broadcaster with the specialist topic of Scottish independence and the constitutional debate more generally at *The Herald*. He holds a PhD from the University of the West of Scotland. He is also the author of a number of books on Scottish politics including *We in Scotland – Thatcherism in a Cold Climate* (2009), *Salmond: Against the Odds* (2010 & 2011), and, his most recent, *The Battle for Britain – Scotland and the Independence Referendum* (2013). His contribution to this volume was written in late 2017.

John Tulloch taught and researched between 1973 and 2015 at four universities in Australia (UNSW, Macquarie, Charles Stuart, and Newcastle) and three universities in Britain (Cardiff, Brunel, and Glasgow) after his undergraduate degree in History at Cambridge University, England, and his Masters in the Sociology of Art and Literature (and Media) at Sussex University, England, followed by his Sussex PhD in the History, Sociology and Aesthetics of Anton Chekhov. Tulloch has researched and published for fifty years across (and between) the disciplinary fields of film studies, media and cultural studies, photojournalism theory, literary theory, theatre and performance studies, political science, social psychology, and sociology (with a particular emphasis on 'risk society' theory and debate). In other fields, his most recent books are *Risk and Hyperconnectivity* (with Andrew Hoskins) and *Real Sex Cinema* (with Belinda Middleweek).