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FORUM

Introduction: the ‘quiet charisma’ of Brad Pitt; Trump and Hitler; and Elvis at the 02

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This is my last introduction to the *Celebrity Studies* journal Forum writing in my capacity as section editor before I hand over to literary celebrity scholar Gaston Franssen, who attendees of the *Celebrity Studies* journal conference will remember fondly and well as the host and chief organiser of the June 2016 conference held at the University of Amsterdam and who, appropriately, takes up the role as section editor for the Forum from October 2017.

In this fourth and final Forum of Vol. 8, Kendra Marston makes a fascinating intervention into celebrity studies work on the phenomenon of charisma, with her conceptualisation of ‘quiet charisma’ as it applies to the micro-case study example of Brad Pitt’s cameo appearance in Steve McQueen’s 2013 ante-bellum slavery epic *12 Years a Slave*. This work thus sits well alongside that compiled in Christopher Schaberg and Robert Bennet’s edited collection *Deconstructing Brad Pitt* (2014) in subjecting Pitt’s star and celebrity text to critical and analytical scrutiny, as well as work published in Vol. 2 of this journal by Joy V. Fuqua on Pitt’s celebrity activism in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Seán M. Williams in his contribution to this Forum explores the latter day (re)celebrification of Adolf Hitler, taking the frequently made comparisons between Hitler and the authoritarian celebrity of current US President Donald J. Trump in the contemporary mediascape as his jumping off point. In this way his work joins that of other *Celebrity Studies* journal contributors like David Zeglen (2016) in exploring some of the meanings carried by the figure of the celebrity dictator.

And finally Ann-Marie Fleming's contribution employs star studies and spatial and narrative theory to explore some of the questions raised about the relationship between posthumous celebrity and the operational logics of the cultural industries in her discussion of the 2016 Elvis Presley exhibition at London's O2 arena. Her work thus sits well alongside discussions in this journal of the V&A museum's 2013 'David Bowie is' exhibition that appear in pieces by Toija Cinque and Sean Redmond (2013) and Martin James (2013).

It is with sadness that I step down from this editorial role at a time when some of our worst fears about the dark side of celebrity culture have come to pass with the shocking election to the US presidency late last year of celebrity entrepreneur, reality TV star and harbinger of ultra-right wing politics Donald J. Trump. While it may be tempting at a time like this to retreat into less political forms of cultural scholarship that might better enable us to celebrate the pleasures of celebrity culture rather than criticise its pitfalls, as producers and holders of some of the knowledge and expertise so maligned by this so called 'alt-right' and the celebrity figureheads it has produced, it is incumbent on us to continue to act, resist and critique when, as now, our circumstances call for it.

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