

The War of Images in the Age of Trump

Tom Allbeson and Stuart Allan

This chapter aims to contribute to pressing debates surrounding the issue of ‘fake news’ by focusing on the politicisation of visual imagery. The Trump administration’s use of ‘fake news’ as a term of critique directed at journalists and their news organisations represents a cynical strategy of deflection and deception, one that risks destabilizing confidence in the free flow of information underpinning political deliberation in a democratic system. Gaming the journalist-source relationship in this manner – often orchestrating ‘debate’ regarding the truth-value of particular imagery – has proven to be both click-bait infotainment and effective image management. We aim to promote discussion by highlighting ways in which the public circulation of photographs prove consistent with purposeful, albeit inchoate strategies of distraction and diversion mobilized by the Trump administration and its supporters, as well as how publicly-circulating photographic images can also occasionally disrupt or frustrate such strategies.

To fully grasp the nature of contemporary media spectacles, we suggest, the position of photography within the current newscape deserves careful scrutiny. From the illustrated magazines of the nineteenth century, to the photo-magazines pioneered in the interwar period and the advent of television news in the postwar decades, visual material has long been a formative facet of the news. Never incidental, news images have always been instrumental in making meaning; they are ‘evidence of a practice whose history included the construction of the very objects and subjects they claimed to merely represent’ (Hill and Schwartz, 2015: 4). Moving from a period dominated by print or broadcast news to one dominated by digital platforms, however, has entailed a shift in the contours of media audiences. From Benedict Anderson’s imagined national communities of the nineteenth century and Marshall McLuhan’s purported global village of the late-twentieth century, the fear is now that – as a consequence of the algorithmic determination of online content – news audiences of the contemporary digital era are segmented in a series of dislocated echo chambers or filter bubbles (Krasodonski-Jones, 2016). While the media infrastructure may have changed dramatically in recent decades, photographic images remain as significant in shaping the image of public figures and the perception of political events. Perhaps now more than ever, photographs are both basic building blocks of news content and vital vehicles of media spectacles. Certainly, they can journey much more readily between *The Guardian*, *New York Post* or *Breitbart* websites and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. The distinction, moreover, between user-generated content and that emanating

from established news institutions or politically-motivated organisations is often far from obvious.

Photography is central to fake news, both as a media phenomenon and a political discourse. From established media outlets to the social media platforms used to disseminate bogus stories, publicly-circulating imagery is an integral component of the digital ecology of the twenty-first century. Indeed, it was public debate about a comparison between two photographs that prompted Kellyanne Conway, Counsellor to the President, to coin the phrase ‘alternative facts.’ Two photographic depictions of the Mall in Washington, taken on the inauguration days of Presidents Obama and Trump in 2009 and 2017 respectively, precipitated a controversy concerning the size of inauguration crowds. Seeking to explain away the discrepancy between the sizes of the crowds in each photograph, Sean Spicer, the then White House press secretary, claimed that plastic sheeting ‘had the effect of highlighting areas people were not standing whereas in years past the grass eliminated this visual’ (BBC News, 2017a). It was this dissembling that Conway sought to categorise with the infamous coinage. Tellingly, from one perspective discussion of the inauguration photographs was embarrassing for the new administration, while from another it was a fortuitous diversion from news coverage of the Women’s March that took place in Washington and in cities around the world the day after the inauguration. This co-ordinated protest produced a multitude of eye-catching images disseminated by major news agencies. For instance, Reuters circulated various photographs by Steffi Loos and Gregor Fischer of a woman wearing a headscarf fashioned from the US flag at the rally in Berlin, while Getty Images made available a photograph of actor Scarlett Johansson in the crowd in Washington. Attention, however, was drawn away from the global protest concerning women’s rights to the trivial issue of which President drew the largest crowd.

The inauguration photographs appear to come from a camera positioned on top of the Washington Monument. They are ostensibly ideologically neutral, having been mechanically captured as part of an objective visual relay. Familiar adages aptly characterize everyday attitudes to such imagery, such as ‘The camera never lies’ and ‘Seeing is believing.’ Even in a climate of considerable cynicism about media coverage, the sense of a technical, dispassionate point-of-view afforded by the camera continues to be central to journalistic authority. The resultant image’s presumed status as unmediated visual evidence is typically taken for granted – at least until proven otherwise. Photographs such as this, and what they purport to show, are repeatedly the subject of fractious debate. In this context of the ambiguous epistemological status of the photographic image within a refashioned newscape, then, we address the role of particular images in pro- and anti-Trump discourse; anxieties about faked or staged images; and the need to critically engage more thoroughly with this partisan war of images to fully grasp the fluid, uneven dynamics of political communication.

We propose a typology of relatively distinct yet inter-related categories intended to facilitate efforts to attend to pertinent imagery with sufficient analytical specificity. This typology is based on insights drawn from consideration of news coverage and public debate across mainstream news organisations, as well as social media platforms. The coverage examined spans a roughly twelve-month period from spring 2016 to summer 2017, encompassing the US presidential election campaign and the first months of the Trump administration. These categories are neither exclusive nor exhaustive; one particular photograph may share characteristics with different types listed below and not all news imagery practices may be captured by the typology that follows. Rather, this is a formulation of illustrative examples, each of which helps to pinpoint pertinent tensions warranting closer inspection. Our proposed typology is intended to contribute to establishing the conceptual space necessary to investigate the relationship between photography and ‘fake news’. Our hope is that this tentative typology may be a springboard to further critical engagement. Such analysis, we suggest, invites a reconceptualization of the ways various modes of depicting Trump resonate with ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1961) consistent with cultural, and thereby rhetorical appeals characterised by the antagonistic political voice of an adversarial media profile aiming to advance the administration’s ideological interests and priorities.

1. Misappropriated photographs

On 7 August 2016, pictures by two photographers – Jonathan Ernst and Mark Makela – were published in a Breitbart story by Patrick Howley (2016), headlined ‘Internet Melts Down over Photos of Hillary Clinton Getting Helped Up the Stairs.’ The photos of the presidential candidate were actually taken months earlier in February. Nonetheless, the first line of the article, as well as painting a particular image of the Clinton campaign entourage, explicitly references the authenticating role the photographic illustration is supposed to fulfil: ‘Hillary Clinton needed to be physically helped up a moderate flight of stairs by her team of staffers and handlers, according to campaign-trail photos that made the rounds on the Internet Sunday.’ Complementing the minimal, but effective text are quotations from, videos about, and links to other stories insinuating ‘Clinton’s various health problems.’ Makela, in a *Wired* interview, later recalled that the photographs captured a moment when, having slipped, Clinton was simply steadied by the aides standing next to her. He drew attention to what he characterized as a ‘really bizarre and dispiriting’ use of photojournalistic images in media discourse about politicians. ‘We’re always attuned to photographic manipulation,’ Makela suggested, ‘but what was more sinister in this situation was the misappropriation of a photo’ (Mallonee, 2016).

The familiar principle animating such misleading uses of photographic imagery – a commonplace from the work of pioneering Weimar-era photojournalists like Erich Salomon, through postwar paparazzi such as Tazio Secchiaroli – is that candid photographs can reveal truths that their subject is working hard to obscure. This imputed objectivity is central to the force of such images, as evident in the pointed highlighting by the Breitbart writer that the illustrations are ‘Reuters and Getty photographs.’ The presumed credibility of these two agencies underwrites the imagery’s tacit promise to offer a view through a chink in the spectacle of modern politics. In this way, viewers are effectively invited to imaginatively join a virtual community of like-minded, interested individuals party to the same exposure. The sharing of such misappropriated photographs on social media platforms – presumably the prompt for the ‘Internet Melts Down’ assertion, as well as being promoted by it – amplifies this strategy of collective identification with its emotive undertones.

In the same vein, making acrimonious allegations about the ‘liberal’ media is a further aspect of the Trump media team’s strategy, one where ‘fake news’ is used as a shorthand for supposedly deliberate distortions, even propaganda, advanced by the administration’s ‘enemies’. Such forms of finger pointing include making complaints about a lack of so-called ‘appropriate,’ ‘balanced’ or ‘fair’ coverage. On 10 August 2016, Breitbart again published Makela’s photograph, this time under the headline, ‘Physician: Mainstream Media “Strangely Silent” About Hillary Clinton’s Health’ (Berry, 2016). The article, credited to Dr Susan Berry, cites Dr Jane Orient, ‘executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons’, as raising questions about the spurious possibility that the photograph depicts the moment of a seizure or stroke. The operative element of the story, reliant on its recycling of photographic illustration as visible evidence, is the accusation that this proof is being denied by the ‘mainstream media’ for reasons of partisan bias, if not outright conspiracy.

While many such attacks directed at journalists by the Trump administration find their mark, some backfire. A key example is the ‘Bowling Green Massacre’. In January 2017, Conway cited the event as evidence of the need for the travel ban or ‘extreme vetting’ to protect the country’s interests.¹ As was quickly determined by journalists, however, while two Iraqi refugees had been arrested in Bowling Green Kentucky in 2011, no massacre occurred. Commentators – not least late-night television talk show hosts – were quick to ridicule Conway for proclaiming otherwise. Evidently, such criticisms did not make Trump think twice about making comparable claims about attacks in Sweden the following month.² Likewise in

¹ See for example Rutenberg (2017)

² At a rally in Florida on 18 January 2017, President-elect Trump appeared to refer to a terrorist attack that did not take place: ‘You look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden? Who would believe this? Sweden!’ (Bloom, 2017).

August 2017 at a now-notorious press conference addressing the violence in Charlottesville surrounding the 'Unite the Right' rally, the President attributed 'blame on both sides' and asserted that 'I saw the same pictures as you did' (Segarra, 2017). The frequent suggestion that news stories, and often specifically photographic evidence, are being withheld is a common thread in the attacks on journalists and their news organisations by the Trump administration and its supporters. Misappropriated photographs and this sort of misdirection alluding to supposedly deficient photographic coverage are flip-sides of the same coin.

2. Manipulated Photographs

While misappropriation and misdirection seldom feature as talking points, the question of photographic manipulation – the faked photograph – provokes lively debate, particularly across social media platforms. The actual incidence of certified fake (as opposed to misappropriated) photographs is relatively rare, but this has not devalued the currency of this issue in contemporary political discourse. A salient example surfaced following the inauguration on 20 January 2017. President Trump, having been sworn in, shook hands with former-President Obama as he was about to board an air force helicopter. A photograph of this handshake was taken by a photographer attached to Getty Images and was reported by ABC news to have been framed and hung on a wall in the White House. Two versions of the same photograph subsequently surfaced, the difference between them being that Trump's left hand appears larger in one than in the other. The perceived discrepancy was highlighted in a tweet by Dana Schwartz, a writer for the New York *Observer*, suggesting the President-elect was manipulating his media image owing to insecurities about the size of his hands: 'Trump 100% photoshopped his hand bigger for this picture hanging in the white house, which is the most embarrassing thing I've ever seen'.³ It soon became apparent, however, that while one version of the photo was doctored, it was not as Schwartz speculated. Someone had reduced the size of Trump's hand in the version she took to be the original, authentic photograph. As with most Twitter storms, Schwartz's error prompted intense anger from some respondents, including accusations about the dire state of twenty-first century journalism. Schwartz – who writes on arts and entertainment – felt obliged to distance herself from political journalism, apologising for her error and writing it off as a bit of fun. Many failed to see the joke. Others weighing-in sought to clarify the precise nature of the confusion, reasserting the credentials of thorough, fact-checking journalistic practice (Bump, 2017). In doing so, however, they implicitly set news journalism in opposition to photojournalism, suggesting that the former is the arbitrator of the latter.

³ The original tweet and subsequent comments by Schwartz are reproduced on camera and photography website PetaPixel (Zhang, 2017).

The debate about (more than the instance of) photographic manipulation reveals the extent to which news photography, political journalism and commentary on social media platforms are inextricably linked in the current digital ecology of news and social media. Moreover, this debate has Janus-faced ramifications. In drawing attention to contending discourses of facticity, it invites media audiences to be more sceptical about the truth-value of news imagery. Yet simultaneously, the revelation of falsification or forgery also work to underscore the general credibility of imagery: 'Fakes will be called out'. Back in 1990, at the dawn of digital news photography, art critic Andy Grundberg wrote in *The New York Times* about how photographic manipulation might change our attitudes to the medium:

In the future, it seems almost certain, photographs will appear less like facts and more like factoids - as a kind of unsettled and unsettling hybrid imagery based not so much on observable reality and actual events as on the imagination. This shift [...] will fundamentally alter not only conventional ideas about the nature of photography but also many cherished conceptions about reality itself. [...] Those disciplines based on the veracity of photographic appearances, including photojournalism, will either change radically in appearance or wither. (Grundberg, 1990).⁴

A quarter century later, these seem a prescient set of insights. Twenty-first-century ideas of photographic representation are uneasily positioned between authenticity and unreliability. This equivocal conception of photography may not be novel, but photographs are more ubiquitous than ever, and integral to public debate at all levels. Arguably, the cognitive dissonance arising from this equivocal conception is such that while scepticism about photography may be widespread those images that confirm one's point of view can still carry the stamp of authenticity. Photographs that meet one's expectations may be experienced as 'real' or 'objective' images, while the photograph that jars with a pre-existing point of view can seem ideologically motivated, and as such less trustworthy.

3. The Photo-opportunity

Far more ubiquitous than the faked photograph is the photograph of the staged or manufactured event – the event envisioned and dramatically performed, at least in part, with the purpose of producing a desirable image outcome. Such a 'photo-opportunity' is both a

⁴ See also William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-photographic Era* (MIT Press, 1992).

response to and a driver of image-saturated political cultures, where news values blur into those of advertising, public relations and publicity. The highly contrived 'pseudo-event,' as Danial J. Boorstin termed it in his classic study *The Image* published in 1961, 'comes about because someone has planned, planted or incited it,' more often than not 'for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced' (Boorstin, 1961: 11-12). Today the stage-managed nature of the photo-opportunity is all but taken for granted, the absence of such effort likely to warrant greater news comment than its routine operationalisation in Presidential media management from one day to the next.

In the plethora of photo-op images produced and circulated in the media, handshakes and signings are two of the most commonly featured subjects. Examples organised and set in motion by the Trump media team abound. On 11 January 2017, the President Elect held a press conference at Trump Tower in New York flanked by members of his family and his tax lawyer, on a stage festooned with flags. It was explained that the piles of manila folders on a table to his right contained the paperwork transferring business assets to a trust run by his sons. The stage-managed event was intended to indicate that Trump had divested himself of his business interests to ensure no conflict of interest once he assumed the office of President. A Freedom of Information Act request subsequently revealed the disjuncture between that image and the content of the files (Craig and Lipton, 2017). It appears that the incoming administration was more concerned with producing an image that purports to show this happened, than a paper trail that demonstrates it was achieved. Likewise, on 27 January 2017, now President Trump called a press conference for the media to witness his signing of a range of executive orders, including one calling for 'extreme vetting' of individuals travelling from seven predominantly Muslim countries. The signing of the so-called 'travel ban' took place in the Hall of Heroes at the Department of Defense in Arlington, Virginia. No matter that the ban was quickly mired in legal wrangling, photographs by Olivier Douliery were put in circulation of the President signing the order and then, to emphasise how projected image amounts to action, holding up the order with his signature on it for the assembled cameras.

The photo-opportunity's success is measured by how widely it is reported. As Boorstin remarked, 'The question, "Is it real?" is less important than, "Is it newsworthy?"' (1961: 11). Such disingenuousness is central to analyses of how the public image of political figures are manufactured in the Trump era. Containing, if not controlling, claims and counterclaims about accuracy or integrity are not the primary concerns of such an image-focused media strategy; rather, this 'packaging' of news becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy at the heart of a 'post-truth' media strategy. Truth, in other words, is not just relative, it is incidental; perception carries the burden of representation. What is different in the age of digital communications catering for the illusion of spontaneity in a swirl of social media sharing is the dominance of the photo-

op as news event in its own right, notwithstanding its disconnect from verifiable facts. The images produced from photo-ops are a key structuring principle in public debate. Issues, by this logic, are secondary to images.

4. The inopportune photograph

This dominance of the photo-op is similarly rendered evident in the column inches devoted to its discursive repair following a failure in execution. These are inopportune photos in the sense that they miss their mark despite a successful staging, possibly because an aspect of the performance is off-key or, even worse, off-message. Trump's first visit with UK Prime Minister Theresa May produced a flurry of discussion after a photograph by Christopher Furlong emerged of the two holding hands as they walked to a press conference at the White House on 27 January. Likewise, the President's global tour in May 2017 produced a number of visual miscues poured over by media commentators. For instance, *Vanity Fair* (Bryant, 2017; Weaver, 2017) analysed apparent snubs to the President from his wife Melania (who appeared to be unwilling to hold his hand) and Agata Kornhauser-Duda, wife of the Polish President (who seemed to snub Trump's proffered hand, shaking the First Lady's instead). *Time*, in turn, scrutinised the imagery of the First Family taken during a meeting at the Vatican: 'One image in particular, of a grinning Trump next to a stone-faced Pope Francis, has gone viral,' it reported (Katz, 2017). Indeed, one could be forgiven for thinking the only legacy of the whistle-stop tour of five countries in seven days was a series of inopportune photos, from the opening of the Saudi Arabia's Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology in Saudi Arabia (where Trump was photographed next to the Egyptian President and the Saudi King, each with their hands placed on an illuminated model of the globe) to the 43rd G7 Summit (where Trump had a tense, 25-second handshake with French President, Emmanuel Macron).⁵

In addition to the failed photo-op there is the less common phenomenon of the deconstructed photo-op. These are inopportune photos in the sense that they reveal something other than what was intended in the envisaged script, thereby undermining – and at times symbolically reversing – its ideological impact. A scene captured by Drew Angerer in the Oval office on 28 January had, by the summer of 2017 when it was recirculated by BBC News, CNN and other news outlets, became illustrative of turmoil in the White House (BBC News, 2017b; Cillizza, 2017). It depicted President Trump receiving 'a congratulatory phone call from Russian President Vladimir Putin following his inauguration,' as well as five close

⁵ May gave her version of events ('I think he was actually being a gentleman') in an interview with *Vogue* for which she was photographed by Annie Leibowitz (G. Wood, 2017). Macron too was quizzed on the images resulting from his photo-op with the President (Henley, 2017).

(white, male) members of staff. Of the five, Vice President Mike Pence was the only one still in post seven months later. Earlier in the year, *The Washington Post* also used the same photo to address the lack of gender diversity (Nakamura and Phillip, 2017). *The Guardian*, in turn, ran a picture by Evan Vucci of the President signing executive Orders in the Oval Office on 23 January 2017 with the caption, ‘This photograph is what patriarchy looks like.’ He was flanked by five men: Reince Priebus, Peter Navarro, Jared Kushner, Stephen Miller and Steve Bannon. The article addressed ‘Trump’s assault on women’s rights’ as a consequence of an order ‘removing US funding to any overseas organisation that offers abortions’ (Cosslett, 2017).

When inopportune photographs become the story, opined reactions reverberate across the newscape to the detriment of fact-based reporting. What was once fodder for the ‘and finally’ segment of broadcast news is all too often elevated to the top of the story order, and in online contexts, serves as shimmering ‘click-bait’ attracting quick and easy ‘hits’ on websites. The handshake photo-op (a microcosm of political power-play with its subtle stratagems, like the hand on the shoulder or in the small of the back as you enter the building last of all) is now a central facet of the confected public image of politicians. Perhaps this is because so much of political action and impact (from trade agreements to diplomatic talks) cannot be captured in the frame of a single photograph. Perhaps it is because one’s handshake, like the signature, is taken to be representative of one’s character – such images being projected as validating signifiers of authentic personality. Certainly, the quasi-obsessive reproduction of handshake photographs highlights the consistent efforts taken to sustain the ‘illusions which flood our experience,’ to borrow another phrase from Boorstin. More than a matter of shadow becoming substance, their significance for Trump’s media team lies in their value as infotainment which distracts and diverts. Again, even when the photo-op fails, images trump issues.

5. The action shot

Related to the photo-op is the image of the President conducting the business of his office – what we might call the action shot, to distinguish it from the practice of appearing in front of assembled media, as with the photo-op. The action shot may be the result of a photojournalist’s working for a picture agency or news organisation, but often it will be taken in-house by a photographer attached to the administration.⁶ One of the most significant action shots in the early days of the Trump Presidency was the image of the command room at the Mar-a-Lago resort taken by Shealah Craighead (Chief Official White House Photographer for the Trump Presidency) and distributed through Associated Press. It shows

⁶ The template for this sort of in-depth coverage was provided when Cornell Capa photographed the first 100 days of John F. Kennedy’s Presidency for Magnum Photos in 1961.

the President surrounded by advisers and administration members during air attacks against Syria's Assad regime on 8 April 2017. It was widely circulated, often alongside surveillance imagery taken after the attack released to the press (e.g. Awford et al., 2017). This action photo closely resembles another, as remarked on at the time by BBC News and others: 'A quick glance at the Trump team photo,' it surmised, 'instantly recalls what was perhaps the most memorable modern "war room" image, from 2011, when President Barack Obama and his national security team clustered around a monitor to watch the raid to kill Osama Bin Laden unfold' (Zurcher, 2017).

As well as being considered as in dialogue with one another, both shots were considered to be inviting inter-textual references with earlier imagery. The Obama Command Room photograph, some commentators maintained, deserved to be read as a response to the images of the September 11, 2001 attacks. It proffered, at least in their view, both narrative and ideological closure. The Trump Command Room photograph was frequently typified in the ensuing news coverage in similar terms. The military action was framed as retaliation in response to the shocking images of victims of the chemical attacks in Idlib Province on 4 April 2017, in which 20 children were amongst the 72 casualties, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. It was widely reported that Trump's daughter, moved by the images of children who had died during the gas attack in Northern Syria, appealed to her father to intervene (e.g. V. Wood, 2017). The al-Shayrat airfield in Homs province was held to be the source of the attack and it was reported that US forces launched 59 Tomahawk missiles against the base. This sort of 'war of images' (to use W J T Mitchell's terminology) or 'iconoclash' (to use Bruno Latour's phrase) is an ever-present feature in twenty-first century international relations, whether it be conflict between nations or so-called asymmetric warfare with non-state actors.

Conclusion

Given the speed of the news cycle regarding the Trump administration and the crises it is facing, much of the imagery under scrutiny here may soon fade from view. Nonetheless, we hope that the typology and critical reflection outlined here will serve to inform discussion of the prominent role of photographs in contemporary political communication. This chapter has simply sought to categorise the symptoms engendered by the condition. More research and debate is needed to determine appropriate treatments. With this in mind, we offer three observations.

First and most obvious, cynicism and satire are not sufficient. Just as 'fake news' has been weaponised by the Trump administration (see chapters by Paul Levinson and Douglas Kellner in this volume), satire risks being effectively deactivated. Alison Jackson's witty work

with look-a-likes, for instance, pricks the bubble of the President's manufactured image by offering putatively candid shots behind the mask. Trump, however, has worked to deflate and defang such caustic critique. At a rally in Florida on 7 November 2016 the day before the election, for example, the presidential candidate seemed more than happy to be photographed by Getty-affiliated Chip Somodevilla and Reuters' Carlo Allegri holding a mask with the likeness of his face. He reputedly asked the crowd, 'Is there any place more fun to be than a Trump rally?' (Omar, 2016). Sean Spicer similarly co-opted comedy when he appeared at the Emmys in September 2017. It would appear that we have entered not only a 'post-truth era,' but also a post-satire one.

Second, greater analytical and linguistic precision is needed. Photographs and phenomena such as those discussed here are frequently the focus of journalism and news reporting, as we have highlighted (cf. Friedersdorf, 2016; Maheshwari, 2016). A wider debate is needed, however, with a sharper critical edge. A common, jargon-free vocabulary is required to facilitate broader discussion and critique of the ways in which photographs facilitate and frustrate, divert and dynamize political deliberation. Moreover, the revelation of specific instances of misappropriated and manipulated photographs must be called out. See for example the anti-Islamic comments alongside the photograph of a woman in a headscarf at the scene of the terrorist attack on Westminster Bridge, London in March 2017 – an image that subsequently appeared on both the *Daily Mail* and *Sun* websites in the UK – which was traced back to Russian involvement (see Booth et al., 2017). The deconstructed photo-op likewise offers a valuable model for critical engagement with the politicisation of visual content in contemporary newscape.

Finally, the debate about photography should be situated within a wider project of renewing political dialogue in democratic societies prompted on both sides of the Atlantic by the 'populist' surprises of recent years. Submissions to the select committee inquiry into fake news by the UK government's Department for Culture, Media & Sport (concluded prematurely owing to the snap UK general election of June 2017) made next to no references to photography. This is as imprudent as it is understandable. In one sense, to focus on images is to fall into the trap set by the media strategy of political communicators. It is to play within the rules of the game prescribed by others; to be distracted from actions and transgressions, focusing instead on representations. In another sense, discussing the central role of photography in the current news ecology is fundamental to understanding the course of contemporary political debate. As has recently been argued regarding photojournalism and its position in public culture, 'healthy democracies are those in which citizens are accustomed to arguing thoughtfully about how they are influenced' (Hariman & Lucaites, 2016: 24 & 28). Engaging with the role of photographic imagery in shaping public perceptions, we believe,

should be a central tenet of any wider initiative to understand and reinvigorate a public interest ethos in the contemporary digital news ecology.

References

Awford, J. et al. (2017) One Step from War, 8 April 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3275613/donald-trump-us-attacks-syria-chemical-attack-sarin-latest-news/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

BBC News (2017a), Trump claims media 'dishonest' over crowd photos, 22 January 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-38707722> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

BBC News (2017b), The photo that highlights White House turmoil, 18 August 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-40982305> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Berry, S. (2016) Physician: Mainstream Media 'Strangely Silent' About Hillary Clinton's Health, 10 August 2016 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/08/10/physician-strangely-silent-mainstream-media-fitness-hillary-clinton/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Bloom, D. (2017) Donald Trump refers to incident 'last night' in Sweden that didn't happen and blames it on migrants, 19 Feb 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/donald-trump-refers-incident-sweden-9848299> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Boorstin, D. J. (1961) *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Harper.

Booth, R. et al. (2017) Russia used hundreds of fake accounts to tweet about Brexit, data shows, 14 November 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/14/how-400-russia-run-fake-accounts-posted-bogus-brexit-tweets> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Bryant, K. (2017) Melania Trump and the Hand-Graze Seen Round the World, 22 May 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2017/05/melania-trump-donald-slap-swat-saudi-arabia-israel-trip> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Bump, P. (2017) No, the White House didn't Photoshop an image of the president's hand, 27 January 2017 [Online]. Available at:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/01/27/no-the-white-house-didnt-photoshop-an-image-of-the-presidents-hand/?utm_term=.fc24181720cd [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Cillizza, C. (2017) 1 picture that explains the remarkable White House staff turnover, 19 August 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/18/politics/trump-bannon-white-house-chaos/index.html> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Cosslett, R. L. (2017) This photo sums up Trump's assault on women's rights, 24 January 2017 [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/24/photo-trump-womens-rights-protest-reproductive-abortion-developing-contries> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Craig, S. and Lipton, E. (2017) Trust Records Show Trump Is Still Closely Tied to His Empire, 3 February 2017 [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/03/us/politics/donald-trump-business.html> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Friedersdorf, C. (2016) Donald Trump, Master of the Pseudo-Event, 8 December 2016 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/all-the-president-elects-pseudo-events/509630/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Grundberg, A. (1990) Ask It No Questions: The Camera Can Lie, 12 August 1990 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/12/arts/photography-view-ask-it-no-questions-the-camera-can-lie.html?pagewanted=all> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J. L. (2016) *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Henley, J. (2017) Emmanuel Macron: My handshake with Trump was 'a moment of truth', 28 May 2017 [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/28/emmanuel-macron-my-handshake-with-trump-was-a-moment-of-truth> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Hill, J. and Schwartz, V. R. (2015) *Getting the Picture: The Visual culture of the News*. London: Bloomsbury

Final text, pre-copy edit

Howley, P. (2016) Internet Melts Down over Photos of Hillary Clinton Getting Helped Up the Stairs, 7 August 2016 [Online]. Available at <http://www.breitbart.com/2016-presidential-race/2016/08/07/hillary-clinton-needs-help-getting-stairs/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Katz, A. (2017) The Story Behind the Viral Photo of Pope Francis and Donald Trump, 24 May 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://time.com/4792245/pope-francis-donald-trump-viral-photo/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Krasodonski-Jones, A. (2016) *Talking To Ourselves? Political Debate Online and the Echo Chamber Effect*. London: Demos.

Maheshwari, S. (2016) How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study, 20 November 2016 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Mallonee, L. (2016) How photos fuel the spread of fake news, 21 December 2016 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.wired.com/2016/12/photos-fuel-spread-fake-news/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Nakamura, D. and Phillip, A. (2017) Trump's administration isn't very diverse. Photo ops make it glaringly obvious, 5 February 2017 [Online]. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-administration-isnt-very-diverse-photo-ops-make-it-glaringly-obvious/2017/02/02/a0353e28-e956-11e6-bf6f-301b6b443624_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.7262884e3712 [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Omar, M. (2016) Donald Trump Lifts Donald Trump Mask At Rally Because Nothing Makes Sense Anymore, 7 November 2016 [Online]. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/07/donald-trump-holds-trump-mask_n_12846332.html [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Rutenberg, J. (2017) The Massacre That Wasn't, and a Turning Point for 'Fake News', 5 February 2017 [Online]. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/business/the-massacre-that-wasnt-and-a-turning-point-for-fake-news.html?_r=0 [Accessed: 21 November, 2017]

Segarra, L. M. (2017) Read the Transcript of President Trump's 'Blame on Both Sides' Comments on Charlottesville, 15 August 2017 [Online]. Available at:

<http://time.com/4902144/donald-trump-charlottesville-blame-both-sides-kkk-nazi/>
[Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Weaver, H. (2017), The First Lady of Poland Smoothly Avoided Shaking Donald Trump's Hand, 6 July 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2017/07/first-lady-of-poland-avoided-donald-trump-handshake> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Williams, R. (1961) *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Wood, G. (2017) U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May on Leading Britain Post-Brexit, 20 March 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/british-prime-minister-theresa-may-interview-brexit-political-views> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Wood, V. (2017) Donald Trump carried out Syria missile strike 'after being convinced by daughter Ivanka', 9 April 2017 [Online]. Available at:
<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/789399/Donald-Trump-Ivanka-Trump-Syria-Missile-Strike-Assad-US-Russia-Tomahawk> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Zhang, M. (2017) Fake Photo of Trump's 'Photoshopped' Hand Fools the Internet, 28 Jan 2017 [Online]. Available at: <https://petapixel.com/2017/01/28/fake-photo-trumps-photoshopped-hand-fools-internet/> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].

Zurcher, A. (2017) Decoding the Trump 'war room' photograph, 7 April 2017 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-39486617> [Accessed: 21 November 2017].