



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Hodson, Dermot (2021) The visual politics and policy of Donald Trump. *Policy Studies* 42 (5-6), ISSN 0144-2872.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/44166/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

The Visual Politics and Policy of Donald Trump

Dermot Hodson

Professor of Political Economy

Department of Politics

Birkbeck College, University of London

Malet Street

London WC1E 7HX

Abstract

Political scientists seeking to understand politics and policy-making typically start with what political actors say and do. But Donald Trump's tumultuous presidency reminds us that images also matter. Engaging with methods, concepts and theories from visual studies, this article analyses images of the 45th president produced by official photographers, photojournalists, political activists and foreign governments between 1985 and 2021. W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of the pictorial turn, it argues, helps us to understand the importance of such images for Trump's post-truth politics, but also anxiety about their influence. This article finds that attempts to deride, deface or destroy Trump's charismatic, strong-man persona were never likely to succeed because, as Mitchell predicts, they reduced the president's supporters to idolaters in thrall to the power of images. Images played a more productive role, this article finds, by debunking the president's political falsehoods in ways that textual corrections struggled to do and by documenting his administration's disruptive approach to policy-making in areas such as foreign affairs and immigration policy. Such images did not tell the whole truth, but they were no less successful at confronting Trump's post-truth politics as a result.

Key words; Donald Trump; post-truth politics; image science; idolatry; iconoclasm

Introduction

Donald Trump was not the first US president to be accused of post-truth politics (Alterman, 2005). John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush have all been accused of lying, which is endemic to presidential politics (Pfiffner 2020: 17). But Trump mastered the art of this pernicious deal (Keyes, 2004) before riding to the White House on a wave of ‘bullshit’ (Ball, 2017). The Washington Post Fact Checker counted more than 30,000 false or misleading claims made by Trump during his presidency, covering a broad range of policies, from foreign affairs, to the economy, immigration and his administration’s response to COVID-19 (Kessler, Rizzo and Kelly, 2021). Trump’s indifference to fact checking and his reliance on elaborate rhetorical and emotional appeals bear the hallmarks of post-truth politics (Suiter, 2016), without which we cannot fully understand his leadership, governance style and political legacy.

The point of departure for this article is that Trump’s post-truth presidency was rooted not only in the written and spoken word; it also had a strong visual dimension (Bohr, 2018: 90). Scholars of visual communications are all too familiar with acts and accusations of fakery (Mitchell, 1994), but this is less familiar territory for those who study politics. While some political scientists were puzzled by Trump’s willingness to dissemble, peddle conspiracies, question scientific consensus and cry fake news (Jennings and Lodge, 2016), others recognised that these expressions of post-truth politics were part of his ‘show’ (Chou, Bleiker and Premaratna, 2016: 43). The

importance of ‘electoral theatre’ for post-truth politics is a key theme in the emerging field of global visual politics (Bleiker, 2018: 26).

This article engages with methods, concepts, and theories from visual studies to understand the politics and policy of Donald Trump’s presidency. Drawing on W.J.T. Mitchell’s image science, it conceptualises Trump as being at the centre of a pictorial turn that revealed the power of images but also anxiety about them (Mitchell, 2015). Trump’s carefully-honed image as a charismatic strongman, it argues, played a part in his 2016 election victory and thereafter helped to maintain a bond with his supporters. Images were also central to his administration, it contends, shaping certain policy choices and his ability to fulfil some functions of the presidency.

A key finding of this article is that attempts by Trump’s opponents and critics to eradicate the president’s political image through satire, mockery and ridicule made little difference to his supporters. The power of images to debunk and document offered a more effective way of confronting the 45th president’s post-truth politics, it is shown. Images helped to challenge Trump’s political falsehoods, including claims over the size of his inauguration and the events leading to the storming of the United States Capitol four years later. They also shone a light on the Trump administration’s disruptive approach to policy-making, drawing attention to the strains it placed on foreign alliances and contributing to the president’s policy reversal over family separations at the US-Mexican border. The power of images to debunk and document lies not in their veracity, this article concludes, but their effectiveness over the written and spoken word when it comes to challenging post-truth politics.

The analysis that follows discusses images of Trump – primarily photographs – between 1985 and 2021. It goes beyond existing analyses of White House photography and the president’s own use of imagery on Twitter (see, for example,

Chun 2018; Strand and Schill, 2019) to include images produced by photojournalists, foreign governments and political activists. Following Bleiker and Kay (2007), the method of image selection employed seeks not to be comprehensive but symbolic of the kinds of visual politics under interrogation. Given Trump's ubiquity, it is not possible to include every image of his presidency that provoked public comment, but the selection employed includes some of the best known viral images of his time in office. A common denominator in these images is people, whether it is Trump himself, his supporters or those affected by his policies. The various flags, insignia and cartoons adopted by alt-right affiliates of Trumpism are not explored here (Glitsos and Hall 2019). No images are re-produced in this article, in keeping with the textual tradition in visual politics, but links are provided where possible (Johnson, 2011).

Image Science

A fundamental concept in W.J.T. Mitchell's image science, a seminal theory of iconology and visual culture, the pictorial turn refers not to a historical moment when the power of images became apparent. Rather it captures periodic concerns that images threaten the established order. As such, the pictorial turn is associated with idolatry: 'the fear that masses of people are being led astray by a false image, whether it is an ideological concept or the figure of a charismatic leader' (Mitchell, 2015: 14-15). Such moments accompany new technologies, from the camera to social media, but not exclusively so. God's anger at the Israelites for worshiping a molten calf in *Exodus* illustrates, for Mitchell, the enduring ability of social, political and aesthetic movements to fuel anxiety about images (Ibid: 14).

Idolatry is linked with iconoclasm, an attempt to re-establish order by destroying images. Such efforts are in vain, Mitchell argues, because images can never truly be destroyed. Although the golden calf was burnt, ground down, diluted and forcibly consumed, its image lived on (Mitchell 2015: 31). Iconoclasm is also premised on demeaning assumptions about what others think. “‘I’ am never an idolater”, suggests Mitchell, because ‘I am an enlightened, modern subject who knows better than to worship mere images’ (Mitchell, 2005: 19).

Seen in these terms, idolatry and iconoclasm straddle the fault line between elitism and populism. Iconoclasts think of idolaters as primitive types seduced by the power of images rather than guided by words, laws or norms. The Israelites, in the story of the golden calf, fearing abandonment, turned aside from God and ran wild. Rather than succumbing to the power of images or smashing them, Mitchell advocates ‘sounding the idols’. This strategy, inspired by Nietzsche, calls for images to be struck with the “‘tuning fork’” of critical or philosophical language’ (Mitchell, 2005: 8). Its aim is to confront images rather than destroy them.

W.J.T. Mitchell’s image science has been applied not only within the humanities but to issues in the study of politics and public policy, including images of the HIV/AIDs epidemic (Engelmann 2018) and public demonstrations (Sarfati and Chung, 2018). The visual politics of the US presidency is a recurring interest of Mitchell, especially the George W. Bush administration. Images were pivotal to Bush’s foreign policy, he argues, from the president’s fumbled attempts ‘to project an icon of success’ in his ‘Mission Accomplished’ photo opportunity on the deck of the USS Lincoln to what obscene images of torture and prisoner abuse from Abu Ghraib prison revealed about the War on Terror (Mitchell 2011: 91).

In 2008, Barack Obama struck Mitchell as an ‘icon’ who ‘made himself a mirror for an international community of frustrated desire for peace, hope and change’ (Mitchell, 2009: 126). This interpretation fits with, what is arguably, the most iconic image of Obama, Shephard Fairey’s ‘Hope’ Poster. This stencil portrait of a red, beige and blue Obama looking into the distance, which recalled photographs of Ché Guevara, J.F.K. and Obama himself, ‘played a key role during Obama’s 2008 presidential election campaign’, Bleiker (2018: 9) argues, as ‘a symbol of support for Obama and the ideas he stood for’.

Mitchell’s image science invites further reflection on how images interact with politics and governance. His willingness, alongside others, to see Obama as an icon overlooks the fact that one person’s icon is another’s idol. As one Obama critic put it: ‘When this generalized hope attaches itself to a specific human, it becomes worship. And worship of a human being – any human being – is idolatry’ (Feder, 2009). Mitchell’s image science also leaves open the question of what a strategy of sounding the idols would look like. Critical philosophical language provides a useful tuning fork, but precisely how should the visual dimension of post-truth politics be confronted?

This article adds three broad claims to conventional accounts of image science. The first posits that efforts to ridicule or otherwise deface a political idol are likely to be counterproductive. Research on satire suggests that targeting politicians tarnishes their image only among those who were already negatively disposed towards them (Baumgartner and Morris, 2008). The second claim suggests that images have a more productive role to play in debunking political falsehoods. Textual corrections of misinformation can backfire because they require the debunker to repeat the myth and by so doing strengthen belief in it (Lewandowsky, Ecker and Cook, 2017). But Nyhan

and Reifler (2019) find that graphical information outperforms textual information when it comes to correcting unsupported factual beliefs. The final claim is that images can confront post-truth politics by documenting its disruptive approach to policy-making. The golden age of documentary photography may be over, but photography still provides an important window into policy-making (Hodson 2021). Post-truth politics, with its hyperbolic promises and disregard for evidence-based policy-making is a policy upheaval waiting to be photographed.

Trump's political image has been widely written about (see Appadurai 2021), but it has attracted limited attention from students of image science. Indeed, Mitchell's claim that Trump's 'iconic presence...has such a power to mirror and reinforce a collective form of madness in a large group of people who, taken as individuals, are reasonable people' risks reducing the president's supporters to the status of idolaters (Mitchell 2017). The remainder of this article takes a closer look at Trump's presidency through the lens of image science before considering how his critics and opponents sought to confront his political image.

American Idol

As a younger man, Trump worked with leading photographers to promote his image as an entrepreneur with one eye on politics. A case in point is William Coupon's 1985 portrait of the future president holding a dove to symbolise his interest in brokering world peace.¹ Four years later, Norman Parkinson's photograph of Trump holding an ace of diamonds (a symbol of ambition) made the cover of *Time*.² The accompanying

¹ Image available at: <https://www.topic.com/trump-and-the-dove>

² Image available at: <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19890116,00.html>

feature even raised the possibility that Trump might one day run for president (Friedrich, 1989).

When Trump descended an escalator in the golden atrium of his Midtown Manhattan skyscraper in June 2015 to launch his presidential campaign, commentators doubted his sincerity. The *Huffington Post* initially decided to cover the campaign in its entertainment section. ‘We won't take the bait’, promised HuffPost’s Ryan Grim and Danny Shea: ‘If you are interested in what The Donald has to say, you'll find it next to our stories on the Kardashians and The Bachelorette’ (Grim and Shea, 2015). Incredulity quickly gave way to accusations of idolatry. A turning point was the candidate’s appearance in Mobile, Alabama two months later. Media coverage of his first mega-rally was suffused with the idea of citizens running wild and in thrall to Trump’s outsize public image. ‘Are you here for Trump the politician or Trump the celebrity’, a CNN reporter facetiously asked one group (Leitch, 2015). ‘Trump Fails to Fill Alabama Stadium, but Fans’ Zeal Is Hardly Diminished’, reported the *New York Times*, framing political supporters into fanatics and zealots (Blinder, 2015).

There were many striking images of Mobile, from Trump’s stadium flyover to his opening evocation of Billy Graham’s religious revivals (Time Staff, 2015). But one of the most widely circulated was Mark Wallheiser’s viral photograph of Trump greeting an open mouthed mother, Sydnie Shuford, and her baby.³ A powerful ‘meta-picture’ (Mitchell, 2015: 18), Wallheiser captured dozens of supporters straining to photograph Trump while a second woman held a sign aloft bearing the words ‘Thank You, Lord Jesus, for President Trump’. The iconoclasm was immediate, with Shuford

³ Image available at: <http://markwallheiser.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Best-of-2015/G0000auD9E2pk4eM/I0000UB5ZL0PdwyI>

dismissed as ‘crazed’, ‘creepy’ and a ‘wild-eyed mom’ (Abramovitch, 2015). No die-hard Trump supporter, Shuford insisted that she attended the rally out of curiosity rather than conviction (Abramovitch, 2015). No matter. The stage was set for a campaign, presidency and re-election bid marked by iconoclasm, a battle over images (Mitchell 2005: 11).

Iconoclasm

Trump’s instinctive understanding of visual politics helped him to win the 2016 presidential election, which provided a masterclass in visual politics for the post-truth age. His visual challenge to the established order, a key characteristic of the pictorial turn, can be seen from the primaries. Jeb Bush, an early frontrunner for the Republican Party nomination, launched his campaign in shirtsleeves surrounded by the American flag and a sea of supporters. Trump tore up these tropes, appearing besuited and alone on a mock presidential podium to launch his campaign, boasting about his net worth and denouncing Mexico for sending ‘criminals’, ‘drug dealers’ and ‘rapists’ across the border (Time Staff, 2015). Whereas Jeb Bush presented a picture of ‘hope’, ‘striving’ and ‘success’ (Miller, 2015), Trump announced that ‘the American dream is dead’ (Time Staff, 2015).

The pictorial turn in US presidential politics did not begin with Donald Trump. Presidents since Dwight D. Eisenhower have been accused of manipulating voters through their use of political imagery and engagement with new technologies, such as television (Cramer Brownell 2017). But Trump's image was qualitatively different to that of his predecessors and the anxiety it produced about the power of images was of a different order of magnitude. Whereas presidents since Eisenhower had projected

essentially optimistic, positive and non-threatening images, Trump cultivated an image as a conspiratorial, anti-politician who would defend the people from a corrupt, lying elite. Ross Perot offered a variation on this theme in 1992, but he was no strongman. Charisma of the kind projected by Trump is central to post-truth politics because the post-truth politician asks supporters to believe palpable lies and too-good-to-be-true promises (Bluemle, 2018). Trump's image also reflected and refracted the strong anti-establishment mood among some voters in 2016. His red rope hat allowed him to flout political dress codes and was quickly taken up by his supporters (Spodak, 2017). His body language, which combined grimaces, emotional displays and outright expressions of anger, broke the norms of presidential campaigning (Hall, Goldstein and Ingram, 2016: 77; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). 'With his bragging, chest-pounding and hypermacho posturing', Douglas Kellner writes, the candidate 'provide[d] a promise of restoration of White Male Power that will restore America to its greatness' (Kellner, 2016: 26).

Trump's image made a difference in key swing states in 2016. Although surveys suggest that Hilary Clinton was seen as more competent, concerned, and reliable than Trump, the latter was viewed as more open and honest as well as more trustworthy on security and tackling terrorism (Shockley-Zalabak Morreale and Stavrositu, 2019). Research finds that voters' exposure to Trump via *The Apprentice* helped to form a 'parasocial bond' that made them more likely to believe the candidate's pledges and disregard his provocative pronouncements (Gabriel, Paravati, Green and Flomsbee, 2018: 299).

The backlash against Trump's political image also went well beyond the norm in US presidential politics, detracting from the more fundamental question of why trust in the political process is so low and politics so polarised that people were prepared to

believe or tolerate lies. Photographs such as the president pretending to drive a truck,⁴ looking at a solar eclipse without protective glasses⁵ or struggling to drink water⁶ provided endless fodder for newspapers, TV news and late-night shows seeking to portray Trump as weak, unintelligent and, even, senile. The resulting surge in ratings, readership and advertising revenue became known as the ‘Trump bump’ (Farhi 2021).

Manipulated images of Donald Trump fuelled an even more vituperative discourse. This included the ‘girther movement’, which mocked the president’s claims about his health and appearance, and countless other contributions to, what Adrienne LaFrance (2018) calls, Trump’s ‘meme presidency’.⁷ More controversial still were Tyler Shields’s images of comedian Kathy Griffin holding a prop resembling Trump’s severed head.⁸ Multiple photos falsely depicting Trump associating with members of the Ku Klux Klan (including, in one fake photo, his robed parents) were widely circulated and mistaken for genuine images (Snopes, 2017).⁹

Relentless attacks on the president made it all too easy for him to portray the press as ‘the enemy of the people’ (Rutter Pooley, 2018); and this following the 2016 election campaign, in which photographers, including OC Weekly’s Julie Leppo and Brian Feinzimer, were assaulted at Trump rallies.¹⁰ Defacing Trump’s image through photos, be they manipulated or otherwise, also served as a distraction from other, more practical forms of political protest. This point speaks to the clictivism/slacktivism distinction (Halupka, 2014). Whereas Twitter and other

⁴ Image available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/gallery/2017/mar/23/donald-trump-18-wheeler-big-rig-truck-pictures>

⁵ Image available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/us/politics/trump-eclipse.html>

⁶ Image available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/donald-trump-drinking-water_uk_5a38d449e4b0860bf4aabbf9

⁷ Image available at: <https://www.snopes.com/tachyon/2017/05/john-daly-compared.jpg>

⁸ Image available at: <http://www.tnz.com/2017/05/30/kathy-griffin-beheads-donald-trump-photo-tyler-shields/>

⁹ See: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/donald-trumps-parents-kkk/>

¹⁰ See: <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/all-incidents/oc-weekly-photographer-brian-feinzimer-attacked-pro-trump-rally/>

platforms are now indispensable for raising awareness and building support, such online displays of solidarity can distract from more meaningful contributions to political change.

Visual presidency

Trump's visual politics were largely unchanged after he was elected. White House photographer Shealah Craighead's images showed a stiff and perpetually suited president almost exclusively at work.¹¹ Candid images with friends or family were kept for Trump's private archive (Flock, 2017). Craighead's photography has been unfavourably compared to Pete Souza's photos of Obama (O'Kane, 2017) but the more relevant comparison is with her earlier images of George W. Bush. Craighead shows the 43rd president as jovial, informally dressed, interacting with politicians, staff and members of the public.¹² Chun's (2018: 33) systematic analysis of Flickr images produced by the Trump administration in its first 100 days identifies 'power, individuality and popularity' as overarching themes alongside 'the downplaying of humanizing characteristics'. Strand and Schill (2019) reach a similar conclusion about Trump's use of images on social media during the same period. These images, they conclude, sought legitimacy by projecting 'success, power and leadership' (Strand and Schill, 2019: 178).

Trump's visual politics helped him to maintain a connection with his supporters. His overall approval ratings as president were the lowest since George H.W. Bush, but his standing among Republicans averaged 87% between 2016 and 2020 (Dunn 2020). And yet, Trump's visual persona also made it difficult for him to fulfil certain

¹¹ See https://www.facebook.com/pg/POTUS/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1278192468916857

¹² See, for example, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/07/images/20060704_yg0k2546-515h.html

functions of the presidency, as when he visited El Paso, Texas in August 2019 to meet victims of a mass shooting. Unable to blend his political image with that of ‘Comforter-in-Chief’, Trump flashed a smile and gave a thumbs-up while the First Lady cradled a two-month-old baby whose parents had died protecting him.¹³ This photo, one of the most controversial of Trump’s presidency, was taken not by the press pool but by White House photographer, Andrea Hanks. Her images from that day show the president striking similar poses with hospital staff who scrambled to take selfies.¹⁴ One doctor even offered thumbs-up of her own in what looked, for all intents and purposes, like a whistle-stop.¹⁵

Trump’s re-election campaign doubled down on his strong man image. Nowhere was this clearer than in his response to the killing of George Floyd, a black man, by a white police officer in Minneapolis in May 2020. The 10 minutes and 8 seconds of unflinching video footage of Floyd’s killing captured by Darnella Frazier, a seventeen-year-old witness, led an estimated 26 million Americans to join what was probably the largest protest movement in US history (Buchanan, Bui and Patel 2020). Speaking in the White House Rose Garden in June 2020, Trump argued that ‘peaceful protesters’ had been ‘drowned out by an ‘angry mob’ and promised to be ‘the President of law and order’ (White House 2020). He then walked through Lafayette Park – which had been cleared of peaceful protestors using smoke and flash grenades – to pose with a bible for photographers before the fire-damaged parish house of St. John’s Episcopal Church (Baker et al. 2020). It was, as one commentator put it, a ‘made-for-TV embrace of authoritarianism’s imagery’ (Collinson 2020).

¹³ Image available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/48490970081/>

¹⁴ See for example: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/48482817687/>

¹⁵ Image available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/48482622046/>

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the 2020 presidential campaign, which Trump looked likely to win before the economic effects of the coronavirus hit, but they did not alter his visual politics. In April 2020, as the US death toll from the coronavirus passed 50,000, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance calling for people to wear face covers in public. While the Democratic nominee, Joseph Biden, complied, Trump was unwilling to follow his own administration's guidance, even as White House staffers caught the virus. Footage of the president wearing a mask finally emerged after his visit to a Ford plant in Michigan, but he still insisted that he 'didn't want to give the press the pleasure of seeing it' (Spocchia, 2020). The point was not whether the president wore a mask but whether he was photographed wearing one. Trump relented after he was infected with the virus, although he tried to use his recovery from COVID-19 to reclaim his image of invincibility. Standing on the Truman Balcony after a three-day stay in hospital, Trump removed his mask, and saluted the naval officers who had flown him home, even as he visibly struggled for breath.¹⁶

If Trump's visual politics were essentially unchanged in the 2020 presidential election campaign, then so too were responses to it. Bruce Gildea's unflattering portraits of open-mouthed Trump supporters in Louisiana and Florida for a *Vanity Fair* profile of 'the cult of Trump' are a case in point (Sharlet 2020). So too is the reaction to Joshua Bickel's photograph of Ohioans protesting against Governor Mike DeWine's COVID-19 lockdown.¹⁷ The image shows tightly packed, open-mouthed people, two wearing hats with Trump logos, voicing their objection to the state's social distancing measures. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Maura Judkis (2020)

¹⁶ Images available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1-6IKMy48A>

¹⁷ Image available at: <https://twitter.com/joshuabickel/status/1257671022452629505/photo/1>

argued that Bickel's image recalled the 'insatiable flesh-hunger of zombies', yet another example of Trump supporters being reduced to irrational groups running amok. Bickell insisted that this had not been his intention, but his eye-level shot showed the crowd looking at and potentially coming for the viewer (Onion 2020). Carlos Osorio's widely circulated photograph of Trump supporters pressed against the window of a Detroit vote counting centre, as the election tilted towards Biden, had a near-identical composition and evoked a similar sense of idolatry.¹⁸

Debunking

Attempts to deface Trump as a political idol had little impact, as image science predicts. What then of other strategies for sounding the idols, such as the power of images to debunk? Hours after his inauguration, Donald Trump invited the press pool to witness the signing of his first executive order. Zeke Miller, a member of the press pool that day, filed a report on this event in which he suggested that Charles Alston's bust of Martin Luther King had been removed from the Oval Office but the journalist quickly corrected this mistake and apologised. White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer initially accepted Miller's apology, but when his deputy posted a photo of the bust hours later,¹⁹ it was clear that the White House would not let the matter rest. The next day Spicer held an unscheduled press conference to berate the media for 'deliberately false reporting' (Politico Staff, 2017).

Although it was dismissed as a non-story, the furore over the MLK bust offered important insights into Trump's visual politics. This was, after all, no ordinary statue.

¹⁸ Image available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-05/us-election-results-protesters-take-to-the-streets/12851968>

¹⁹ See: <https://twitter.com/PressSec/status/822622287312617473>

In 1997, it became the first image of a black person displayed publicly in the White House. Initially located in the White House Library, Barack Obama moved the MLK bust to the Oval Office. When, in 2012, Mitt Romney promised to return the Churchill bust to the White House if he won the presidency, Obama's press secretary Dan Pfeiffer, dismissed as '100 per cent false' claims that it had been removed to make way for MLK (Baker, 2012). For good measure, Pfeiffer showed journalists a photograph of the Churchill bust outside the president's private study. In fact, this was a second Epstein bust, given to Lyndon Johnson in 1965 and under repair when Tony Blair loaned a second statue to Bush. When this came to light, Pfeiffer unreservedly apologised and the White House press corps moved on (Baker, 2012). That Spicer was unwilling to extend the same courtesy to the press corps showed the withering of trust between Trump and the media after a tense election campaign. And yet, the administration's appeal to photographic evidence to confront Miller's initial claim showed the power of images to confront endured, even for post-truth politicians.

Spicer soon learned that the power of photographs to debunk cut both ways. On the morning of the inauguration, Reuters photographer Lucas Jackson took a high angle photo of the National Mall from the Washington Monument's pyramidion. Reuters then released a side-by-side comparison of this image and a photograph taken by Stelios Varias from the same vantage point and roughly the same time during Barack Obama's first inauguration (Trotta, 2017).²⁰ Whereas Varias's photo showed a tightly packed crowd covering most of the Mall, Jackson's image showed large empty spaces. Although Reuters made no comment on crowd size, Jackson's image fuelled media claims that attendance at Trump's inauguration was comparatively low (Reilly,

²⁰ Image available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-inauguration-image/crowd-controversy-the-making-of-an-inauguration-day-photo-idUSKBN1572VU>

2017). Transport statistics and a surplus of inauguration tickets supported such claims even if no official estimates of crowd size were offered. Undeterred, the newly elected president insisted that the Mall, ‘all the way back to the Washington Monument, was packed’.²¹ ‘This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration -- period -- both in person and around the globe’, added Spicer hours later (Politico Staff, 2017). To support his claim, the Press Secretary displayed Scott Olson’s wide-angle photo of a dense inauguration crowd taken from the West Front of the United States Capitol.²²

This was, as Marco Bohr notes, an extraordinary spectacle. Not only did the Press Secretary devote his first appearance on behalf of President Trump to a discussion of truth and photography, he provided a visual analysis of a political event that would not have been out of place in a practical photography course (Bohr, 2018: 91). For Bohr, the episode suggests the limits of photography as a means of engaging with post-truth politics. Because photographs cannot tell the truth, because viewpoint, and other elements of composition draw our eye to particular aspects of an image, they are inherently subjective, he suggests; a controversy such as the one surrounding the inauguration will invariably be reduced to ‘optics, vantage points and subjective framing’ (Bohr, 2018: 93). Insightful though this perspective is, it downplays the power of images in such situations. Try as Spicer might have done to pivot from crowd numbers to viewership, his credibility was fatally compromised by claiming one thing while the Reuters photos indicated another. When the Press Secretary resigned after six months, he told the president that he had been damaged from day one (Spicer, 2018).

²¹See: <https://transcripts.factcheck.org/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-cia-headquarters/>

²² Image available at: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/event/donald-trump-is-sworn-in-as-45th-president-of-the-united-states-693551185#/president-donald-trump-takes-the-oath-of-office-as-his-wife-melania-picture-id632194366>

When, in an interview, White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus dissembled over crowd size, Fox News's Chris Wallace told his producers 'Put up the picture again' and defended its veracity (Tani, 2017). Presidential counsellor Kelly Anne Conway made matters worse by claiming that the White House Press Secretary had offered 'alternative facts', a slip of the tongue that came to define post-truth politics (Wolf, 2018: 48). Confronted with the inauguration photographs during his Senate hearing, Trump's nominee for Director of the Office for Management and Budget (and his future, acting Chief-of-Staff), Mick Mulvaney had little choice but to admit that the 2009 crowd looked bigger than in 2017 (Weyl, 2017). When Mulvaney asked why this question was relevant, he was told that alternative facts had no place when it came to providing information on government finances.

A post-truth politician to the last, Donald Trump remained steadfast about the size of his inauguration crowd, even displaying Olson's photo in the White House.²³ And yet, the president felt sufficiently uncomfortable with the Jackson/Varias photographs to put pressure on the National Park Service to release images that might corroborate his claims. The hundreds of photographs of the 2009 and 2017 inaugurations released by the National Park Service after a freedom of information request did nothing to bolster the president's case.

Trump's presidency ended, as it began, in a contest over images. On 6 January 2020, the president hosted a rally at the Ellipse in Washington D.C. in which he repeated his claims of electoral fraud and called for a show of 'strength' (Vallejo 2021). He also showed a video, which combined footage of earlier rallies with images of Congress, Biden, the military, the Hollywood sign, the United Nations General Assembly and the European Parliament. 'To a scholar of fascist propaganda, well-

²³ See: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/823937936056008704>

versed in the history of the National Socialist's pioneering use of videos in political propaganda, it was clear...what dangers it portended', concluded Jason Stanley (2021).

Shortly after this rally, a group of Trump supporters stormed the United States Capitol as the Senate prepared to confirm Biden's election victory, leaving five people dead and 170 injured. The incident was captured by the Associated Press, CCTV cameras, camera phones and footage taken by the rioters, who posed in the Senate floor and roamed the building in search of Vice President Mike Pence and others. Some rioters covered their faces but many didn't, allowing the FBI to publish hundreds of 'information wanted' photos.²⁴ Criminal charges swiftly followed against more than 300 people.

There was little prospect that the Senate would vote to impeach Trump for inciting insurrection: too few Republicans were prepared to risk their political careers by breaking ties with the former president. But the extensive photographs and video footage of events at the Capitol building presented by Democratic floor managers and broadcast live on television was no less damning for this. Trump's legal team countered with a video montage of Democrats using the word 'fight' 238 times in various speeches, interspliced with clips of the president using the phrase 'law and order' (McGraw and Orr 2021). But even the Republican leadership was unconvinced by this rebuttal. Trumps' supporters acted as they did because 'they had been fed wild falsehoods by the most powerful man on Earth', conceded US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, moments after he had voted against impeachment (Holpuch 2021).

²⁴ Images available at: <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/capitol-violence#Seeking-Info>

Documenting

Documenting policy-making can help to understand its effects, bear witness to entrenched political practices and, occasionally, create pressure for political change (Bleiker 2018). It is particularly important to document post-truth policy-making, given its inflated policy commitments and disregard for evidence-based decision-making. Trump's governing style, with its aversion to policy analysis and disruptive approach to political norms and past policy commitments (Shapiro 2019, Thrower 2018), makes it a crucial test for this strand of visual politics.

The power of images to document Trump's disruptive policies can be seen, for example, in foreign affairs, where images highlighted the strains placed on the United States' traditional foreign alliances. Trump spent much of presidency in one of his private properties. Overseas trips consequently provided an important opportunity to observe the president. Although photographers occasionally had their access restricted on such visits, the right of the protective pool (a rotating group of reporters, producers, camera operators and photographers) was generally respected (Symmonds, 2017), along with that of the foreign media. The result was some of the most striking images of the Trump presidency: the Saudi Press Agency's photo of a smiling Trump laying hands on a glowing orb with the leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia;²⁵ Sean Gallup's image of Donald Trump looking to his right while other NATO leaders look to their left;²⁶ and Jesco Denzel's shot of German Chancellor Angela Merkel seemingly confronting the US president at the G7 summit in Quebec.²⁷

²⁵ Image available here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/22/world/middleeast/trump-glowing-orb-saudi.html>

²⁶ Image available at: <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/07/donald-trump-nato-summit>

²⁷ Image available at: <http://time.com/5307314/donald-trump-angela-merkel-g-7-photograph/>

These images attracted widespread media attention not because they depicted the truth – all three were framed to varying degrees – but because they symbolised concerns held by Trump’s critics about his foreign policy. The orb embodied fears that the president would make common cause with the leaders of undemocratic regimes.²⁸ The NATO image reflected his contrary approach to the transatlantic alliance, encouraging its members to meet their defense spending commitments while questioning the logic of collective defence. The G7 photo hinted at US allies’ fears over Trump’s apparent disregard for the liberal international order. But can photographs do more than fan the flames of pre-existing fears? The answer is ‘yes’ in the case of the G7 photo, which was significant not only for what it purported to show but for what its production and transmission revealed about the international system. This image was taken by a German government photographer – rather than a photojournalist – and released by Steffen Seibert, chief spokesperson for Merkel (Barnes, 2018). The photograph merely showed summit deliberations, Siebert insisted, but the composition portrayed Merkel as a heroic and combative figure at the centre of the action – all other subjects look to her or look away meekly as she leans over the table towards Trump, who sits arms-crossed like a scolded child. By releasing the photo, the Merkel administration visually confronted Trump in a way that it did not dare do verbally or textually.

The German government was not alone in seeking to express such views through the medium of photography. The offices of the French president and Canadian prime minister released images of the same scene, which conveniently showed their leaders rather than Angela Merkel as the prime interlocutor with Donald Trump.²⁹ None of

²⁸ The image also summoned up all manner of science fiction and orientalist memes, fuelling further attempts to ridicule Trump and his allies (see Mettle and Hawkins 2017).

²⁹ Images available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/trump-merkel-g7-photo-meaning-germany-chancellor-steffen-seibert-jesco-denzel-a8393656.html>

these images were as powerful as Denzel's, however much they revealed its framing. Put on the defensive, the Trump administration eventually released photos of a smiling Merkel moments before or after Denzel took his image but the damage had been done. The G7 has become a glorified photo opportunity, John G. Ikenberry (1992) once argued, but this forum had never seen a photo opportunity quite like this.

Images also drew attention to entrenched practices in the Trump administration. A case in point is Ron Sach's photograph of the president signing an executive order in January 2017 to reinstate the so-called Mexico City Policy, which prevents organisations in receipt of global health assistance from the United States from performing or promoting abortion. Sitting at the Resolute desk, Trump gives effect to a policy with profound consequences for women in developing countries, as seven male advisors look on (Merelli 2017). A signing ceremony the next day projected greater gender balance among the president's team of advisors, but the first image had already fuelled widespread criticism about Trump's disregard, in the eyes of his critics, for women's health and rights (Irish Times 2017). A week later, Sweden's Deputy prime minister, Isabella Lövin, published a photograph of herself signing a climate change bill surrounded by seven female colleagues in what was widely interpreted as a rebuke to Trump's approach to policy and policy-making (Taylor 2017).

Images played a particularly impactful role in documenting Trump's harsh treatment of immigrants. In April 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the US government would adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to migration, prosecuting all people who crossed the Southwest border illegally and promising to separate parents in such cases from children. In the first six months of this new policy, nearly 2,000 children were separated from their parents (Reilly 2018). 'The Obama

administration, the Bush administration all separated families. ... Their rate was less than ours, but they absolutely did do this' replied Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen in June 2018 even though no data on family separation under these administrations had been published.³⁰

Several factors spurred popular opposition to 'zero tolerance', including the investigative journalism of ProPublica (Thomson, 2018). Images had an impact too. When a Congressman visiting a detention centre in McAllen, Texas reported seeing children in 'wire-mesh, chain linked cages' (BBC News, 2018), the US Customs and Border Protection released images of the centre that unintentionally recalled US internment camps for Japanese-Americans during World War II (Waxman, 2018). There was, to be sure, an element of hypocrisy about the timing of such outrage. 'This is happening right now', said Jon Favreau, Obama's former speechwriter, in a Tweet accompanied by a photograph of caged children in a detention centre.³¹ The image, in fact, depicted practices from the Obama era.

The most influential image circulated during this period was John Moore's photograph of Yanela Sanchez, a two-year old Honduran girl crying as her mother was body searched by US Border Patrol agents.³² Shot from a low angle, the photograph captures Sanchez's vulnerability as she stands next to the wheel of a car but also her confused and angry challenge to the agent confronting her mother. Both Sanchez and her mother have had the laces of their shoes removed, a standard security measure by US Border Patrol, but a symbol here of incarceration. The colours of their clothes against the background of the vehicle recall those of the American flag. The photograph was taken up by the US and international press and became a focal point

³⁰ See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/press-briefing-press-secretary-sarah-sanders-department-homeland-security-secretary-kirstjen-nielsen-061818/>

³¹ Image available at: <https://twitchy.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/favs.jpg>

³² Image available at: <http://time.com/longform/john-moore-getty-photo-separation/>

for protest against ‘zero tolerance’, with *Time* magazine superimposing the image of Yanela Sanchez at the feet of Donald Trump against a red background under the headline ‘Welcome to America’ (Time Staff, 2018). When *Time* published a correction stating that the girl and her mother had been taken away together, Trump’s supporters pushed back (Time Staff, 2018). ‘She was not separated from her mom. The separation here is from the facts’, argued White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.³³ ‘Does the *Time* cover falsely depicting the young girl as victim count as FAKE NEWS?’ asked Newt Gingrich.³⁴ Such arguments gained traction in some sections of the media, but they missed the point. The text accompanying the photo may have been inaccurate but neither the photograph nor the policy issues that it symbolised were. Sanchez’s distress at being separated from her mother, if only for a few moments, was real. So was the heavy-handed treatment of the girl and her mother. The same goes for the fact that the Trump administration was separating children from parents at a rate of nearly 50 a day (Beauchamp, 2018).

Media and public pressure mounted until Donald Trump issued an executive order to end family separations. Moore’s photograph, it would seem, played a role in this policy reversal. Two days before he signed an executive order to enact this decision, the president reportedly told members of his party: ‘crying babies doesn’t look good politically’ (Bash, 2018). After signing, he told the assembled press that he ‘didn’t like the sight or the feeling of families being separated’, the image of Yanela Sanchez, perhaps, still playing on his mind (Gambino and Laughland, 2018).

Not all policy upheavals can be photographed and those that can be will not necessarily provoke a public backlash. There were other areas where Trump’s policies

³³ See: <https://twitter.com/pressec/status/1010158215068340229>

³⁴ See: <https://twitter.com/newtingrich/status/1010218311794249728>

went unseen. A case in point concerns the Trump administration's disregard for evidence about climate change, with its real but not immediately discernible impact in the United States and elsewhere. And yet, even here, images found a way. In 1972, the US environmental protection agency initiated *Documerica*, one of the last great US-government sponsored projects of documentary photography, to record issues of environmental concern. Although *Documerica* succumbed to budget cuts in 1977, the US media began to re-circulate its images in 2017 to illustrate environmental conditions in the United States before the kind of regulation the Trump administration had in its sights took hold (Langston, 2017).

Conclusion

In August 2017, David Horsey published a cartoon in the *Los Angeles Times*, depicting Donald Trump as a golden calf surrounded by cheering evangelical Christians. Bearing tablets engraved with 'Beware of false prophets' and 'The Truth Shall Set You Free', a startled Moses is greeted by one onlooker with a cry of 'Fake News!' (Horsey, 2017). Horsey's image captures well the belief that American voters turned aside from conventional politics in 2016 to worship a television personality who crossed the line from icon to idol. Even Michael Steel, a former Republican National Committee Chairman, bore witness to this image. 'What's happened...is a new form of idolatry', Steel told MSNBC in 2019, 'Trump is the Golden Calf, he is the thing that they come and bow before' (Marcin, 2019).

This article has conceptualised Trump's presidency as being at the centre of a pictorial turn, a term used in W.J.T. Mitchell's image science to describe historic moments in which the power of images becomes apparent. Thinking about Trump in

this way helps us to understand the importance of images for his leadership and governing style. The 45th president cultivated a charismatic strong man image from the 1980s onwards through magazine covers, photo spreads and, later, television appearances, it was shown, helping him to portray himself in 2016 as a successful, decisive businessman who alone could shake up Washington politics. This image bore little resemblance to Trump's chequered business career, but it was vital in sustaining his outlandish claims in the campaign and during his four years in office. Trump's image helped him to maintain high levels of identification with his supporters, but it also hindered some aspects of his presidency, as in his ill-judged photo opportunities following the El Paso shootings and the killing of George Floyd.

Thinking about Trump's presidency in this way also draws attention to the anxiety he provoked over the power of images. Although it is difficult to understand Trump's rise without reference to his visual politics, there is a danger, image science warns, of reducing his supporters to idolaters seduced by the power of imagery rather than rational actors driven by material concerns about their standard of living and economic security. Such thinking also invites iconoclasm. Attempts to smash Trump's image marked his presidency, but they made little difference to most of his supporters, who voted in even greater numbers for him in 2020.

A key lesson for understanding governance, policy and politics in the light of Trump is that images can play a more productive role in confronting post-truth politics by debunking falsehoods and documenting its disruptive approach to policy-making. Images, it was shown, helped to confront Trump by challenging his falsehoods, as in the president's misleading claims over the size of his inauguration crowd or his influence on supporters who stormed the United States Capitol. Photographs also helped to show and symbolise his disruptive approach to policy-

making, whether it was the strains placed on foreign alliances or the human toll of his migration policy. Images also contributed to policy change, as in Trump's reluctant decision to end family separations at the US-Mexico border following the outcry over John Moore's photograph of Yanela Sanchez. Images played a role in these struggles not because they confronted Trump's lies with *the* truth. Like all images, those discussed in this article drew attention to particular points, whether intentionally or not. But even if these images did not tell the whole truth, they helped to confront Trump's post-truth politics in a way that the written and spoken word often struggled to.

These findings matter not only because Trump might run again in 2024 – after four years of monetising and honing his political image – but because the emergence of a post-truth society is not limited to the United States. Political scientists need all the methods, concepts and theories at their disposal to understand how post-truth politicians govern, to defend evidence-based policy-making and to call out abuses of power. Visual studies and the emerging field of global visual politics have vital contributions to make to this endeavour.

In France, Marine Le Pen has faced charges for inciting violence and hatred through images (Hawkins, 2018). In the UK, Boris Johnson's 'dishevelled image', 'curious mannerisms', 'studied buffoonery and a slight, but noticeable, imitation of Churchill' are considered key to his 'anti-politician' persona (Baker, 2016). Although these politicians do not project identical images, there is a commonality in their perceived use of the image for nefarious ends and their critics and opponents' struggles to counter their post-truth politics. Pictorial turns occur periodically, W.J.T. Mitchell (2015) reminds us; it seems as if their time has come again.

Acknowledgements

An early version of this article was presented at the Photography in Academic Research: Images in the Post-Truth Era Conference at Birkbeck College in September 2018. The author would like to thank Marco Bohr, Justin Carville, Steve Edwards, Toby James, Carlos Reyes-Manzo and anonymous referees for helpful comments. The usual disclaimer applies.

References

- Abramovitch, S. 2015. 'Donald Trump Viral Baby Photo: The Photographer Speaks.' *Hollywood Reporter* 25 August.
- Appadurai, A 2021. 'Trump and the death of the Image.' *Anthropology Today* 37(1): 1-3.
- Baker, P. 2012. 'After Dustup Over Churchill Bust, an Apology From the White House.' *New York Times*, 1 August.
- Baker, P. 2016. 'Populism Personified: The Rise and Fall of Boris Johnson.' *Backbench Blog*, 6 December.
- Baker, P., Haberman, M., Rogers, K., Kanno-Youngs, Z. and Benner, K. 2020. 'How Trump's Idea for a Photo Op Led to Havoc in a Park.' *New York Times*, 2 June.
- Ball, J. 2017. *Post-truth: How bullshit conquered the world*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Barnes, T. 2018. 'Trump G7 photo: Merkel's spokesman reveals German chancellor's thoughts on iconic image of president and world leaders.' *The Guardian*, 11 June.
- Bash, D. 2018. 'GOP member: Trump told lawmakers "the crying babies doesn't look good politically."' *CNN International Edition*, 22 June.
- Baumgartner, J.C. and Morris, J.S. 2008. 'One "nation," under Stephen? The effects of the Colbert Report on American youth.' *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 52(4), 622-43.

- BBC News 2018. 'Trump migrant separation policy: Children "in cages" in Texas.' *BBC News*, 18 June.
- Braun, K. 2019. 'Unpacking post-truth.' *Critical Policy Studies* 13(4): 432-436.
- Beauchamp, J. 2018. 'The Trump administration separated 2,000 kids from their parents in just 6 weeks.' *Vox*, 15 June.
- Beaumont-Thomas, B. and Gilchrist, A. 2016. 'Photographers on their best Trump shot: 'I think he's a damaged person.' *The Guardian*, 10 November.
- Bleiker, R. (ed.). 2018. 'Mapping Visual Global Politics' in R. Bleiker (eds) *Visual Global Politics (Interventions)*: 1-29. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bleiker, R., and Kay, A. 2007. 'Representing HIV/AIDS in Africa: Pluralist photography and local empowerment'. *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 139-163.
- Blinder, A. 2015. 'Donald Trump Fails to Fill Alabama Stadium, but Fans' Zeal Is Undiminished.' *New York Times*, 21 August.
- Bluemle, S.R. 2018. 'Post-Facts: Information Literacy and Authority after the 2016 Election'. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 18(2): 265-82.
- Bohr, M. 2018. 'Photographs, Politics and Digital Networks in a Post-Truth Era'. In Bohr, M. and Sliwinska, B (eds) *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self*: 89-99. (Abingdon: Routledge).
- Buchanan, L. Bui, Q. and Patel, J.K. 2020. 'Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History.' *New York Times*, 3 July.
- Burleigh, N. 2018. 'Trump Speaks At Fourth-Grade Level, Lowest Of Last 15 U.S. Presidents, New Analysis Finds'. *News Week*, 1 August.
- Carter, B. 2013. 'The Bible' Producers Deny Suggested Obama Link.' *New York Times*, 18 March.
- Chou, M., Bleiker, R. and Premaratna, N. 2016. 'Elections as Theatre.' *PS: Political Science*

& *Politics* 49(1): 43-47.

Collinson, S. 2020. 'Trump responds to protests with a strongman act.' *CNN*, 2 June.

Cramer Brownell, K. 2017. 'The Making of the Celebrity Presidency' In B. Balogh and B.J. Schulman (eds) *Recapturing the Oval Office: New Historical Approaches to the American Presidency* (Charlottesville, VA: Miller Centre): 162-174.

Dunn, A. 2020. 'Trump's approval ratings so far are unusually stable – and deeply partisan.' Pew Research Centre, 24 August.

Engelmann, L. 2018. *Mapping AIDS: visual histories of an enduring epidemic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farhi, P. 2021. 'Trump predicted news ratings would 'tank if I'm not there.' He wasn't wrong'. *Washington Post*, 22 March.

Feder, A. 2009. 'Idolatry by any other name.' *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 August.

Flock, E. 2017. 'What it's like to be President Trump's White House photographer'. *PBS News Hour*, 7 August.

Flood, A. 2016. "'Post-truth" named word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries.' *The Guardian*, 16 November.

Friedrich, O. 1989. 'Flashy Symbol of an Acquisitive Age: Donald Trump.' *Time*, 16 January.

Gabriel, S., Paravati, E., Green, M.C. and Flomsbee, J. 2018. 'From Apprentice to President: The role of parasocial connection in the election of Donald Trump.' *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 9(3): 299-307.

Gambino, L. and Laughland, O. 2018. 'Donald Trump signs executive order to end family separations.' *The Guardian*, 20 June.

Grim, N. and Shea, D. 2016. 'A Note About Our Coverage Of Donald Trump's "Campaign."' *Huffington Post*, 17 July.

- Hall, K., Goldstein, D.M. and Ingram, M.B. 2016. 'The hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, gesture, spectacle.' *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6(2): 71-100.
- Halupka, M. 2014. Clicktivism: A systematic heuristic. *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), 115-32.
- Hawkins, D. 2018. 'French far-right leader Marine Le Pen charged for tweeting gruesome ISIS images' *Washington Post*, 16 March.
- Hodson, D. 2021. 'The politics of documentary photography: three theoretical perspectives', *Government and Opposition* 56(1): 20-38.
- Holpuch, A. 2021. 'Mitch McConnell savages Trump – minutes after voting to acquit', *The Guardian* 14 February.
- Horse, D. 2017. 'Worldly politics, not heavenly powers, inspire evangelicals to stick with Trump' *Los Angeles Times* 30 April.
- Ikenberry, G.J. 1992. 'Salvaging the G-7' *Foreign Affairs*, 72(Spring), 132-9.
- Irish Times 2017. 'Spot the difference: Trump photo op finds place for a woman'. *Irish Times* 25 January.
- Judkis, M. 2020. 'That Ohio protest photo looked like a zombie movie. Zombie movie directors think so, too' *Washington Post*, 17 April.
- Jennings, W. and Lodge, M. 2016. 'The Failures of Political Science: Trump, Brexit and Beyond' *Political Insight blog*, 11 November.
- Johnson, H.L. 2011. 'Click to Donate: visual images, constructing victims and imagining the female refugee' *Third World Quarterly*, 32(6), 1015-37.
- Kellner, D. 2016. *American nightmare: Donald Trump, media spectacle, and authoritarian populism*. New York: Springer.
- Kessler, G., Rizzo, S. and Kelly, M. 2021. 'Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years.' *Washington Post*, 24 January.

- Keyes, R. 2004. *The post-truth era: Dishonesty and deception in contemporary life*.
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Klemesrud, J. 1976. 'Donald Trump, Real Estate Promoter, Builds Image as He Buys Buildings.' *New York Times*, 1 November.
- LaFrance, A. 2018. "'Mission Accomplished" and the Meme Presidency.' *The Atlantic*, 14 April.
- Langston, N. 2017. 'DOCUMERICA and the Power of Environmental History.' *Environmental History*, 23(1): 106-16.
- Leitch, W. 2015. 'Trumpus Maximus Goes to Mobile.' *Bloomberg*, 25 August.
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U.K. and Cook, J. 2017. 'Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the "post-truth" era.' *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* 6(4): 353-69.
- Marcin, T. 2019. 'Donald Trump Is the "Golden Calf," the Thing Republicans "Come Down and Bow Before," Says Ex-RNC Chairman.' *Newsweek*, 3 April.
- McGee, C. 2016. 'Harry Benson, an Early Photographer of Trump, Looks Back and Forward.' *New York Times*, 6 December.
- McGraw, M. and Orr, G. 2021. 'Trump's lawyers turned impeachment into a MAGA video release. He "loved" it.' *Politico*, 12 February.
- Merelli, A. 2017. 'There actually was one woman in the room when Trump reinstated abortion-funding restrictions'. *Quartz*, 24 January.
- Mettle, K. and Hawkins, D 2017. *Behold! Donald Trump and the mysterious glowing orb*.
Washington Post, 22 May.
- Miller, Z. 2015. 'Jeb Bush Transcript: Read Full Text of Former Gov. Jeb Bush's Campaign Launch.' *Time*, 15 June.
- Mitchell, W.J. 1994. *The reconfigured eye: Visual truth in the post-photographic era*.

- Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2005. *What do pictures want?: The lives and loves of images*. IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. 2009. 'Obama as icon.' *Journal of Visual Culture* 8(2): 125-129.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2011. *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2015. *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2017. 'American Psychosis: Trumpism and the Nightmare of History' *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February.
- Nyhan, B. and Reifler, J., 2019. 'The roles of information deficits and identity threat in the prevalence of misperceptions'. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*: 29(2): 222-244.
- O'Kane, S. 2017. 'The photography of Trump's presidency is a huge break from Obama's.' *The Verge*, 2 April.
- Politico Staff 2017. 'Transcript of White House press secretary statement to the media.' *Politico*, 21 January.
- Onion, R. 2020 'These People Aren't Zombies. They're People.' *Slate*, 16 April.
- Pfiffner, J.P. 2020. 'The Lies of Donald Trump: A Taxonomy.' in C. M. Lamb and J.R. Neiheisel (eds) *Presidential Leadership and the Trump Presidency*: 17-40. Basingstoke: Pgrave Macmillan.
- Reilly, K. 2018. 'Nearly 2,000 Children Have Been Separated From Their Families During Trump Border Crackdown.' *Time*, 16 June.
- Reilly, M. 2017. 'The National Mall Looked Relatively Empty For Donald Trump's Inauguration.' *HuffPost US*, 20 January.

- Rutter Pooley, C. 2018. 'Trump Labels CNN "enemy of the people".' *Financial Times* 29 August.
- Sarfati, L. and Chung, B., 2018. 'Affective protest symbols: Public dissent in the mass commemoration of the Sewöl ferry's victims in Seoul.' *Asian Studies Review* 42(4): 565-585.
- Scott Chun, R. 2018. 'Visual rhetoric of the presidency: An analysis of the Trump and Obama White House messaging in their first 100 days in Flickr images.' *Journal of Visual Literacy* 37(1): 18-39.
- Shapiro, S. 2019. 'The White House is upending decades of protocol for policy-making'. *The Conversation*, 2 August.
- Sharlet, J. 2020. 'He's The Chosen One To Run America": Inside The Cult Of Trump, His Rallies Are Church And He Is The Gospel.' *Vanity Fair*, 18 June.
- Shockley-Zalabak, P.S., Morreale, S.P. and Stavrositu, C. 2019. 'Voters' perceptions of trust in 2016 presidential candidates, Clinton and Trump: Exploring the election's outcome.' *American Behavioral Scientist* 63: 856-887.
- Snopes 2017. 'Donald Trump's Parents Wore Ku Klux Klan Attire?' *Snopes*, 13 August.
- Spicer, S. 2018. *The Briefing: Politics, the Press and the President*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Spocchia', G. 2020. 'Trump pictured wearing face mask despite not wanting to give press "pleasure" of seeing him in it.' *The Independent*, 22 May.
- Spodak, C. 2017. 'How the Trump hat became an icon.' *CNN International Edition*, 17 February.
- Stanley, J. 2021. 'Movie at the Ellipse: A Study in Fascist Propaganda.' *Just Security*, 4 February. Strand, R.T. and Schill, D. 2019. 'The Visual Presidency of Donald Trump's First Hundred Days: Political Image-Making and Digital Media'. In A.

- Veneti, D. Jackson and D. G Lilleker (eds) *Visual Political Communication*: 167-186.
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Suiter, J. 2016. 'Post-truth politics.' *Political Insight* 7(3): 25-27.
- Symonds, A. 2017. 'When the President Travels, Who's Allowed to Join Him?' *New York Times*, 17 July.
- Tani, M. 2017. 'Put up the picture again': Chris Wallace uses photos to confront Trump chief of staff over false crowd-size claims.' *UK Business Insider*, 22 January.
- Taylor, A. 2017. 'Some people seem to think this photo of Sweden's deputy leader is trolling Trump'. *Washington Post*, 3 February.
- Thomas, M.M. 1988. 'Them as Has.' *New York Times*, 21 February.
- Thompson, G. 2018. 'Listen to Children Who've Just Been Separated From Their Parents at the Border.' *ProPublica*, 18 June.
- Thrower, S. 2018. 'Policy disruption through regulatory delay in the Trump administration.' *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 48(3): 517-536.
- Time 2018. "'All I Wanted to Do Was Pick Her Up": How a Photographer at the U.S.-Mexico Border Made an Image America Could Not Ignore.' *Time*, 18 June.
- Time Staff 2015. 'Here's Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech.' *Time*, 16 June.
- Time Staff 2018. 'The Story Behind TIME's Trump 'Welcome to America' Cover.' *Time*, 21 June.
- Trotta, D. 2017. 'Crowd controversy: The making of an Inauguration Day photo.' *Reuters*, 23 January.
- Vallejo, J. 2021. 'Trump "Save America Rally" speech transcript from 6 January: The words that got the president impeached.' *The Independent*, 13 January.
- Wahl-Jorgensen, K. 2018. 'Media coverage of shifting emotional regimes: Donald Trump's

angry populism.' *Media, Culture & Society* 40(5): 766-778.

Waxman, O. 2018. 'Family Separation Is Being Compared to Japanese Internment. It Took Decades for the U.S. to Admit That Policy Was Wrong.' *Time*, 18 June.

Weyl, B. 2017. 'Trump nominee says Obama's inauguration crowd was bigger.' *Politico*, 24 January.

White House 2020. 'Statement by the President – Law and Justice', White House, 1 June.

Wolff, M. 2018. *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*. London: Hachette UK.