In This Issue (Fall 2008)

Welcome to the Fall 2008 issue of Mediascape. In this year of heated political debate, campaigning, and election, we are pleased to present our political issue. In the hypermediated present day, it is an understatement to say that more than ever media plays an integral role in the life of politics. In a presidential election year, the relationship between politics and media, and the discussions that revolved around it, have ballooned from the candidates' media personae, to their multi-media savvy; things are much more complicated than just issues of individual telegenic prowess, provocative campaign ads and 24-hour television news coverage. Nowadays the blogosphere has the power to suggest a party's vice presidential candidate; user-generated YouTube videos function as the most effective campaign ads; and a candidate's ability to text message have legitimate sway over how citizens consider electing their public office officials.

In response to the hypermediated reality in which we find ourselves, the "Reviews" section investigates the relationship between contemporary media and politics. Douglas Kellner's "Media Spectacle and the 2008 Presidential Election: Some Pre-Election Reflections," deconstructs, play-by-play, the Obama-McCain presidential race and considers the importance of the media spectacle in present day campaigning. In "Low and Behold: Using Fiction/Documentary Hybridity to See the Real Damage of Hurricane Katrina," David O'Grady considers the impact of combining non-fiction documentation with narrative fiction in his review of the film "Low and Behold."

"Features" takes a slightly different tack and approaches political subject matter through a historiographic lens. In "By, For, and About: The 'Real' Problem in the Feminist Film Movement," Shilyh Warren considers the Feminist documentaries of the 1970s, made by, for and about women, as works directly inspired and reflective of the socio-political climate of the era, in addition to their contested legacy in Film Studies. Heather Heckman's essay, "Gray or Black? Howard Koch and the Elusive Architecture of the Hollywood 'Lists'" constructs a detailed profile of "graylisted" screenwriter Howard Koch as a way to investigate the nuances of the Hollywood blacklist.

"Columns" approaches the political by addressing the impolitic and "politically incorrect" in media. Brett McCracken surveys both the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates' social networking websites in "New Media as Election Strategy: How Obama and McCain Court the New Generation." Venturing deeper into the on-line social structure, Aubrey Anable considers the politics of on-line manners (or lack thereof) in "Bad Techno-Subjects: Griefing is Serious Business." Finally, Phil Scepanski looks at the refusal of political correctness and the comedy that results in animated shows such as South Park and Family Guy in "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Animated Sitcoms and Political Incorrectness."

But politics as a subject is only one way to consider its relationship with media. The other side tends to be more personal: how do we as practitioners of media scholarship integrate our own political views into our work and the classroom? How do we manage, present and engage with political content and current events in the formation of our own pedagogy?

From screen, to page, to lecture hall, "Meta" creates a virtual roundtable where a diverse selection of media scholars take a reflexive look at politics and media scholarship. Professors Allyson Field, Toby Miller, Bill Nichols and Chuck Tryon tackle many topics including their thoughts on film canons, the presences of "liberal" and "conservative" media scholarship and how they position their political views both in the classroom and in their own work.

It is our goal at Mediascape to not only consider all mediums—film, television, new media, print media, etc.—but also their interconnectedness. We hope that the journal's current issue not only reflects the up-to-the-minute evolving relationship between media and politics and the historicized link between the two, but also encourages critical thinking about the politics of media and how these topics materialize and are debated within the academic community, in our work as media scholars, as well as in the classroom with our students.

-- Maya Montañez Smukler, Jennifer Porst