



This Is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the American Political Imaginary

Diane Rubenstein

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In *This Is Not a President*, Diane Rubenstein looks at the postmodern presidency—from Reagan and George H. W. Bush, through the current administration, and including Hillary. Focusing on those seemingly inexplicable gaps or blind spots in recent American presidential politics, Rubenstein interrogates symptomatic moments in political rhetoric, popular culture, and presidential behavior to elucidate profound and disturbing changes in the American presidency and the way it embodies a national imaginary.

In a series of essays written in real time over the past four presidential administrations, Rubenstein traces the vernacular use of the American presidency (as currency, as grist for popular biography, as fictional TV material) to explore the ways in which the American presidency functions as a “transitional object” that allows the American citizen to meet or discover the president while going about her everyday life. The book argues that it is French theory—primarily Lacanian psychoanalysis and the radical semiotic theories of Jean Baudrillard—that best accounts for American political life today. Through episodes as diverse as Iran Contra, George H. W. Bush vomiting in Japan, the 1992 Republican convention, the failed nomination of Lani Guinier, and the Iraq War, *This Is Not a President* brilliantly situates our collective investment in American political culture.

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