



The Politics of Grievance: Ruptures in Modernism's Rationality and Ethical Modalities

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Introduction

I take Honig's portrayal of Antigone's anti-establishment actions as the lens through which to view the disruption of liberal politics under populist leaders. This rupture is more in plain sight as of recent with the ascendancy of the politics of Trumpism and the veneration of the personality of the executive. The events of January 6th on Capitol Hill are emblematic of the novel elements of the politics of rupture which present themselves through grievances, emotive reaggregations of the polity, physical enactments of otherness, and effacement of liberal forms of recognition and merit distribution.

Scholars have for some time commented on the steady retreat of important aspects of liberal internationalism. Noticeable among them is America's shedding of its international leadership role with the election in 2016 and 2024 of a president who is critical of NATO, multilateralism, security alliances, and open trade. However, proponents of liberal internationalism see these disruptions as primarily self-adjusting maneuvers of some otherwise deep-seated organizational principles, norms, and expectations within an international system largely receptive to liberalism [1]. This paper argues that such understandings of liberal internationalism better reflect an international system that pits states against the permanence of anarchy, an ontology whose abstractions defy the complexity of a post-Cold war era. Moreover, one can talk about the longevity of liberal internationalism's ideals since the 19th only if, first, we suspend its mixed record in practice, and, secondly, if one separates the many domestic political orders that have historically emerged, like imperialism, nationalism, capitalism, from the international realm, a separation that can be strongly debated. What if liberalism's permanence or imminent demise cannot be explored through such binary epistemologies? We argue that instead of focusing extensively on comparing past and current liberalisms, i.e. degrees of liberalism, it is more fruitful to describe domestic liberalism as being in a state of 'disruption'. The latter ontology avails us to observing novel configurations of power, new forms of relatedness between the polity

and the political establishment, singular moral standards, and novel aggregations of the social. The question we ask is what if liberalism's descending popularity is not a matter of degree anymore, when compared to past eras, but instead a matter of its eclipse by other political configurations? This article investigates the new boundaries of politics both in terms of the politics of representation and the characteristics of a potentially new polity.

Taking inspiration from Honig's interpretation of Sophocles' Antigone [2], we transpose some of the mechanisms and effects of Antigone's actions as a rebel and a disruptor to the analysis of current day American politics. Antigone's political and ethical interventions in Sophocles' play were unanticipated and forceful, in ways that remind one of the unanticipated and forceful politics of Trump. We now know that the first Trump term was not an interlude to politics as usual. How can we, then, best analyze the recurrence and road to permanency of the politics of Trump? We argue that we can use aspects of Sophocles' play to infuse a different perspective in the analysis of current power dynamics and political order. Following Honig's intellectual innovations, we elevate the manner and content of Antigone's interventions to a script for analyzing current disruptive trends in American domestic politics best exemplified by Trump's resurgence as well as to the steady diffusion of his politics from 2016 onward.

Why do his speeches resonate instead of being relegated to a series of muddled utterances of an egoistic individual? In other words, what is it about our "collective life" [2] that his speeches expose that other forms of political rhetoric are missing? Here, we turn to the transgressive nature of Antigone's politics and the claims about sovereign power that her speech acts and actions promote. Once again, following Honig, we see Antigone as emblematic of a different governing logic to the one advanced by Creon (bypassing for this project here the solidary and heroic persona with which we have come to recognize her). According to this reading, Antigone's lamentations over her unburied brother, Polynices, do not connote a universalistic morality encompassing mortals. Instead, her grief and

lamentations “stand for certain forms of life, social orders, ontologies, and histories” [2]. Not only is Antigone a dissident, but also a human vector whose lamentations reinvent social order. Her lamentations do not as much demand inclusion, equality, recognition, as they demand disruption for the sake of disruption. Thus, her hesitant, incomplete speech acts do not specify who can be included in the new social. Rather, she leaves this to all the others to figure out. What she elevates is the affective, emotive connectivity of the kin, which is non-universalistic, exclusive and circumscribed. Eventually, those who follow her do so because of kinship ties, longing, emotional attachment, loss and pain, as Ismene herself eventually does.

Transposing this reading to the politics of Trump, we argue that his politics of grievance and affect stand for a novel governing logic, one that represents a re-aggregated social along non-liberal vectors of signification. If we see Antigone’s lamentations not as “... ‘human,’ ethical, or material – tethered to the fact of finitude – but as an essentially contested practice, part of an agon among fractious and divided systems of signification and power,” [2] we can, then, envision the elevated grievances at the Trump rallies as actions meant to contest the rationality of the politics of liberalism. And when Honig writes about Antigone’s actions: “... she whispers, nudges, and puns her way through to communicate things on stage and to her audience that go right over Creon’s head [.]” we cannot but wonder if this is not an apt analogy for how Trump’s mannerisms and ‘language’ at his rallies go over the heads of the liberal crowds. At these rallies, it is not so much about what is uttered or said, but rather, who is physically positioned to be an audience, a hearer, a receptor. This way of bundling people together is neither fixed nor predetermined. We do not know if the orator’s performance will persuade and succeed as a conveyor of content. At best, one can argue that it is circumstantial; however, what this form of communication between politicians and people enacts is a politics of dissent that coalesces around closeness to the aggrieved, the wronged, the dispossessed. Here we have as the basis of relatedness the substitution of physical proximity and emotional affinity for the identity-bound forms of aggregating the social within liberal assumptions and hypotheses. Antigone elevates familial kinship as the dominant factor for suffering, and thus as a dominant form of relatability. And Ismene follows not after an argument with Antigone but because of the shared emotional affinity with her.

We argue that the politics of grievance signal a new ontology for politics in present day America, echoing the way Antigone’s lamentations signaled different parameters for political inclusion/exclusion to those promoted by Creon. But why are the politics of grievance emblematic of a rearranged polity? Emerging literature in IR and populism, and the populism of Trump in particular, brings attention to the synergistic relationship between populist politics and emotive appeals to the ‘people.’ For example, Homolar and Löffmann show that “populist security rhetoric has traction because of the emotion-inducing repertoires ...” embedded in populist utterances [3]. In other words, when populist rhetoric is fortified with emotional themes, it can more easily facilitate the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ analogy, thus enabling the rearrangement of the polity along populist logic. The contribution of this literature is noteworthy, and we agree with its premise and findings; however, its focus on what is mostly the European-style right wing populism, which blends populism, authoritarianism, and nativism together, cannot account for emotive populist discursive formations that are inclusive [3]. Affective politics can, at least theoretically, inform exclusive populist politics as well as inclusive ones. In other words, we want to liberate affective politics, of which the politics of grievance are part, from the notion that they are connected to a form of pre-arranged exclusionary politics. While it is paradigmatic of populism to advertise the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality, the ‘us’ here is yet to be constructed discursively.

If, instead, “... emotionality is an integral part of decision-making and is vital to any type of political engagement, the question we should rather ask is what is peculiar about the relationship between emotions and populism” [4]. We posit that it is not merely that emotions have the capacity to agitate and excite. They can do both these things, but what is emblematic of the relationship between populism and emotions is that the latter help transcend the previously accepted demarcations of the social, of the polity and of their adjoining moral codes. Emotions can perform these tasks for two reasons: first, affect is a successful, and available, mechanism of political representation in lieu of the effaced representational practices of liberal identity, deliberative democracy, and pluralism [5, 6]. Second, by eroding liberal representational politics they can now help reconstitute the ‘people’ who “aspire[s] to be conceived as the only legitimate authority” [7]. So, what do the politics of grievance signal? Above all, we argue, they usher in affect as the medium through which leader and audience connect and communicate and, eventually, the audience gets reconstituted. As argued already, it is not that affect and emotive politics cajole an ‘irrational’ multitude into actions not planned by them. Rather, political agency initially gets tailored to the aggrieved and underappreciated until such a moment in the future where it is possible, but not certain, that the inchoate totality of the displeased coalesces around a particular difference that assumes the mantle of representing the whole of the angry and displeased. For example, based on what we can glean from the Trump talks so far, one can hypothesize that a reconfigured/resurrected nation as well as newly established domestic practices of power politics, clientelism, red versus blue, loyalty and subservience, and political favoritism can all be candidates for the possible signification of this disgruntled ‘whole.’

Next, we clarify the conceptual pivot from the grief-stricken Antigone to Trump’s grievances. One can object to this analogy, and rightly so, arguing that there is a certain scalar imbalance between Antigone’s kinship-generated grief and Trump’s nation-based grievances. How, in other words, can Antigone’s disruption inform our reading of Trump’s nationwide, and beyond, political disruption? We argue that grief and grievance are the connection between these two historically distant political spaces. Antigone augments her personal grief over the unburied Polynices to an attack on the state and on Creon’s sovereign authority. Thus, Antigone’s admonitions cease to be solely about the familial and personally felt injustice and, instead, they become all about Creon’s laws and state institutions; the personal loss becomes an attack on Creon’s illegitimate political rule, the personal mourning becomes political revolt. In a similar fashion, Trump’s grievance about the “lost” nation, the debased and cheated country, is the nodal point where the different personal grievances of the everyday individual get scaled up to a generalized, yet opaque, all-encompassing grievance about the nation’s lost glorious past; the personal grievance gets channeled into resentment and anger over a dilapidated country in search of its true power and meaning. Here, the personal misgivings and bothers of diverse people find unity of voice in the overarching injustice over the misguided and abused nation. Similarly with Antigone, personal mistrust and anger become generalized political attacks on the established political order.

Laclau’s empty signifier and equivalential chains further illuminate this passage from personal grievance to political revolt. In the case of Trump, grievance operates as Laclau’s empty signifier that pulls in a polychromatic multitude of disaffected and aggrieved people and transforms it into a more-or-less coherent and vocal political disruptor. Mentions of the “lost” nation, which means different things to different people, is the grievance that acts as the empty signifier pulling in a whole host of different, or even incompatible complaints. Once these grievances get lined up on the equivalential chain, they lose their specificity and particularity. Instead, they are submerged

and flattened within the evolving rubric of the empty signifier. The emptiness felt separately by the disaffected individuals can be projected onto the emptiness connoted now by the empty signifier, the nation that has lost its bearing. The emptiness and anxiety that American citizens feel for a variety of reasons, for example economic dislocation, loss of social status, stories about immigration, culture wars, distrust of the elites, inability for social ascendance, become liquefied on the equivalential chain into an amorphous search and desire for the nation's lost glorious past. The particularity of the individual demand loses its agency; political agency now accumulates in the empty signifier until, and if, the latter produces one hegemonic demand over all others.

On pretext and vengeance

In both *Antigone* and Trump, the object of grievability and grievance are a pretext for political disruption. As Honig argues, the grievability of Polynices is a "pretext" for *Antigone's* polemic against democratic politics [8]. Similarly, Trump's public grievances over the lost glorious national past can be seen as ploy for undermining liberalism's belief in infinite progress, or in liberal criteria for success, like inclusivity and diversity. When *Antigone* mourns her brother, she "memorializes the family's dead in Homeric terms" which entail mourning Polynices' individuality and irreplaceability, against Creon's democratic polis mourning the replaceable 'unknown soldier.' Similarly, Trump's grievances over the cheated nation depict the irreplaceability of a certain American past and negate its evolutionary potential. In both cases, grief and grievance memorialize the past in a certain way, as unjustified irreplicable loss. While *Antigone's* grief derives from familial obligations and affections, Trump's evocation of the nation through emotive lenses and injustice does not appear from scratch either. Rather, it generates from recent practices of national memorialization in the U.S. that detach past national traumas and experiences from their historical and political significance. Instead, they project them through emotional time, creating an "affective heritage" rather than storytelling-heritage and historical teaching-type national memories. Similarly, the recent national trauma of 9/11 has been memorialized through the "us" versus "them" narrative [9], further allowing Trump's grievances over a victimized nation to gain traction from a recent national trauma. This practiced national memory can, therefore, resemble Laclau's empty signifier on which Americans can read, once prompted, loss and anger, insecurity and desire for vengeance over national traumas. Additionally, grief and grievance seem to license a particular method of anti-establishment politics, one that both agitators deploy, that of vengeance. In the 6th century B.C., Solon "set out to take charge of practices of remembrance in order to end cycles of vengeful violence ..." during funerals, especially in the "case of a murdered relative" [8]. *Antigone* herself signs up for vengeance, not once but twice [8]. In her two burial speeches, one for Polynices and the other for herself, she "... calls down withering curses on the heads of all those who did the work [vengeance] ..." And when she is guided to her own burial site "[s]he does call for vengeance ..." [8]. The politics of Trump also invite, either explicitly or implicitly, retribution against those who demeaned the nation, either foreign or domestic foes, thus stacking up on methods for making the empty signifier of the memorialized wronged nation actionable. Possibly, then, this form of national memorialization can make someone wonder whether Trumpian politics benefitted from, rather than created, the brewing sense of discontent and resentment that have arisen in current day American domestic politics. If so, then it is more understandable why DeSantis' attack on 'woke' did not produce an heir to the throne of American populist politics. The latter's narrative engineered a reason for the "us" versus "them" analogy, while Trump's narrative capitalized on a kind of resentment with deeper roots in politics than his.

Empirical Analysis

We now turn to a selection of Trump's speeches for a better understanding of how the politics of grievance and populist utterances intersect to create a new ontological topography in American politics. We borrow Honig's innovation of looking at the text/speeches through a dramaturgical lens, an approach that renders the text as "performance that may succeed or fail rather than as an argument that may be true or false, right or wrong" [2]. Most scholars disregard the dramaturgical elements in Trump's speeches and, instead, focus on the ideas and policy proposals therein (for a notable exception) [10]. Building on Honig, Hall, & all, we argue that Trump's verbalization of grievances, his affective delivery and narrative, together with his gestures and mannerisms dethrone liberal politics along at least 5 dimensions. First, his speeches essentialize identities and undercut identity politics by reducing these categories to either bodily parts and/or highly biased negative behavioral attributes. Second, he sidesteps representational politics by creating an affective link between himself and the audience as the necessary and sufficient medium for representing the rights of his audience. Here, these rights, experienced by the audience as loss of status, socioeconomic dislocation, and estrangement from the existing political system, or simply boredom with the existing status quo, get repackaged through the alleged lost honor of the nation, an honor that only the 'rightful' citizens through Trump can restore. His speeches promote the remembrance of a glorious and successful national past that he and the audience alone can resurrect and then preserve. The diverse, and divergent, grievances of the audience find commonality in this repackaging of grievances as grief and anger over the loss of the nation's celebrated past that got stolen from them by the thieving lying elites and the undeserving 'other' [3]. Third, his exaggerated verbal statements and gestural actions create a politics of 'excess' that invite the logic and process of equivalence to take hold. And lastly, Trump's speeches at his rallies disaggregate the public away from liberal categorizations and moral codes of appropriateness and towards a reaggregation based on experiential and emotive relatability. Here, we have the elevation of experience and affective connections to the new form of participating in the commons, a condition where self-involvement and emotional relatability vie for dominance and legitimacy over the sovereign authority of the state and its representatives. Moreover, Trump undermines the potency of check and balances for the continuity of the existing political system when berating the 'corrupt' media and the Washington corruption.

1) The Essentialization of Identities and the Flattening of Liberal Categories

How did Trump talk about his opponents, race, disabilities, and women? Hall and all [10] remark on how some of the dramaturgical elements in his speeches transmit discursively resonant signals to his audience. For example, when Trump uses bodily enactments and gestures to 'talk' about his opponents he reduces them to laughable matter, and when he imitates them by "assuming their alleged subjectivity" he robs them of the latter and distills them to the essentialized infirmities for which he ridicules them [10]. Here we have the dual effects of mimicry and parody fermenting a tangible rapport between the audience and the speaker through entertainment. Both mimicry and parody allow the speaker to represent the audience's grievances about political correctness, and for identities in general, while simultaneously transforming these grievances into emotive enmity towards established moral codes. Laughing at opponents, and laughter in general, allow for such moral transgressions to 'pass,' while also acting as a "social equalizer" that empowers Trump's supporters vis a vis the 'establishment,' and, at the same time, equalize the social differences among them such that

their social and economic antitheses melt [10]. Moreover, parodying laughter paves the way for the acceptance of inequalities based on gender, disabilities, and race, leading to a massive “rearticulations of power hierarchies” established under liberalism [10, 11]. For example, when talking about Hillary Clinton’s campaigning during 2016 and preparation for the presidential debate, Trump essentialized her by portraying her tiredness as her most representative characteristic, an attribute that made her unfit for the office of presidency. At his speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5th, he said: “Look, I’m here -- I’m doing five or six of these a day. And Hillary goes home, she goes to sleep. If she wanted to do it, which she doesn’t. She doesn’t have the energy to do it, believe me” (Speech in Tampa, FL, November 5, 2016). And at his speech in St. Augustine, FL, on October 24, 2016, he said: “And that’s I think during the debates it was very interesting and I did win the debates, in all fairness. Did you see where she said, all the time, I’m in debate prep. Hillary Clinton is debating, I mean, she’s in debate prep. She is in debate prep. She was in there for weeks. You know what is was, it was really an excuse for her to go sleep and rest. - She was in debate prep. And I kept hearing and I felt guilty. She’d slept like a week and half before and she was in debate prep, she wasn’t in debate prep. And the truth is if you don’t know the subjects so well that you have to prep for two weeks you’re the wrong person anyway. But it was really an excuse for her to sleep and to rest, okay” (Speech at St. Augustine, FL, October 24, 2016).

And when it is not her gender-related infirmity that disqualifies as a potential president, it is her corruption through and through that makes her unfit for office. In his speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016, he said: “Hillary created an illegal server to shield her criminal activity. [S]he figured she was above it, because she figured the Department of Justice will never do anything to get in her way, OK? It’s a rigged system. The Department of Justice, if that happened to anybody else, they would have been in jail two years ago, folks, OK? What she did. Then she illegally destroyed -- and this is -- this is -- forget about what happened last Friday. I’m talking about the past. Forget about that -- that’s all gravy, whatever happened. What she did in the past is so bad. She destroyed 30,000 -- remember this -- 33,000 e-mails after receiving a congressional subpoena -- the key word being after” -- and made 13 phones disappear (Speech in Tampa, FL, Nov. 5, 2016). In his speech in St. Augustine, FL, on October 24, 2016, he reiterated: “The best evidence that our system is rigged is the fact that Hillary Clinton, despite her many crimes, was even allowed to run for president in the first place. [Applause] True. [Applause] Lock her up! Lock her up! Lock her up! Hillary bleached and deleted 33,000 e-mails, lied to Congress under oath, made 13 telephones disappear, some with a hammer, and then told the FBI she couldn’t remember 39 different times (Speech in St. Augustine, FL, October 24, 2016). And later on, he says: “Just today, there are shocking new revelations -- which you’ve seen -- front page of the Wall Street Journal, about how the Clinton campaign has corrupted our government. It was just learned that one of the closest people to Hillary Clinton, with long-standing ties to her husband and herself, gave more -- this just came out -- gave more than \$675,000 to the campaign of the spouse, the wife of the top FBI official who helped oversee the investigation into Mrs. Clinton’s illegal email server (Speech in St. Augustine, FL, October 24, 2016).

Racial stereotypes also had a recurrent appearance in his speeches. Whether it was President Obama, Mexican or Latino immigrants, or the people in the inner cities, they all featured in his speeches as loud, thieving, involved in criminal activities, and incompetent. For example, in his speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016, he said: “By the way, did you see -- before I get to Texas, did you see yesterday Obama screaming and screaming... [Booing] ... and screaming? Just like the way he runs the country. Nobody listens to him. Screaming, OK?” (Speech in Tampa, FL, November 5, 2016). And later in the same speech he adds: “President Obama is incompetent, OK.

He’s incompetent. Remember that. He’s incompetent. Now. Yeah, we have a president who doesn’t -- just doesn’t have it. He doesn’t have it” (Speech in Tampa, FL, November 5, 2016). In his speech at Moon Twp, PA, on June 11, 2016, he said: “... we put a tax on the products that come in. By the way, we’ll make a fortune if we do that. But Obama doesn’t do it because he’s not smart enough. He doesn’t understand business. He believes, oh, we shouldn’t tax” (Speech in Moon Twp, PA, June 11, 2016).

These racial stereotypes also extend to societal groups. For example, when referring to either the African American or Hispanic communities, he did so with vivid references to crime and lawlessness. In his speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016, he said: “But the African American community, the Hispanic community, folks living in the inner cities, crime-ridden -- you can’t walk to the store and buy a loaf of bread, you get shot. The education is the worst. And there’s no jobs. We’re going to fix the education, we’re going to bring back jobs, and we’re going to bring back safety. And I say to the Hispanic community, living in the inner-city, to the African American community, I say: What the hell do you have to lose? I’m going to fix it. I’m going to fix it. I am going to fix it. [Applause].” (Speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016).

And then he continues with his customary references to immigrants: “Wilkerson, whose mother I’ve gotten to know during this campaign. Josh was a student in a high school, great student. He was murdered at the age of 17. He was tortured, strangled, and beaten to death by an illegal immigrant who should have never been in our country, and then his body was set on fire. You ought to look at the Remembrance Project. These people are amazing people. These are people that suffered so much. Last year, right here in Florida, 17-year-old Starlette Pitts, her boyfriend and her mother were viciously stabbed to death in their Lehigh Acres home by an illegal immigrant. The killer had been convicted of assaulting a police officer and was wanted for double murder and robbery, but he was released from custody, enabling him to commit these and other horrible crimes. And the people that knew him begged that he be incarcerated or begged that he be thrown the hell out of our country. And the Obama administration with their weak policies refused to listen. Death. A Trump administration will end this nightmare of violence. We will protect American lives. We will cancel all federal funding of sanctuary cities. [Applause] Very quickly. We will stop illegal immigration, deport every last criminal alien, and dismantle every criminal gang and cartel threatening our great citizens. [Applause]: We are fighting for every parent who lost their child to drugs and crime and gang violence” (Speech in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016).

Turning again to immigrants, and illegal immigrants, Trump veered into stereotypes and inaccurate generalizations. At his Moon Twp, PA, speech on June 11, 2016, he said: “It’s in one of the papers, that cashing in. Illegal immigrants get \$1,261 more welfare than American families. They got five -- think of this. This is illegals. \$ 5,692 versus \$4,431. So they get more money than American families get. And then he continued: “Which by the way, allows Syrian refugees in. We have no idea where they are, who they are, where they come from. Excuse me folks. They’re coming to Pittsburgh. You just don’t know it. OK. They’re coming to Pittsburgh. You don’t know. They’re being put all over the country just like they want to be. And who knows? You know we talk about Trojan horse. We talk about Trojan horse. And maybe it’s a Trojan horse. And maybe it’s not” (Speech in Moon Twp, PA, June 11, 2016). In Washington, DC, on June 10, 2016, he proposed a solution: “We have to temporarily stop this whole thing with what’s going on with refugees where we don’t know where they come from.” “...over and above the thousands and thousands and thousands that are already coming in. Do you want to see a problem? This will be the great Trojan horse modern day version. Her plan will import generations of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism into your schools and throughout your communities. When I’m elected

president, we will suspend immediately the Syrian refugee program... [Applause] Not a certain group, everyone, the whole country will lift up. We will make America great again for all Americans" (Speech in Washington, DC, June 10, 2016).

In his speech at Wilmington, OH, on November 4, 2016, he reiterated his position of illegal immigrants. There he said: 'End Illegal Immigration Act. Thousands of Americans have been killed by illegal immigrants, including Americans like Josh Wilkerson, whose mother I've gotten to know during the campaign. An incredible woman who suffers every day. Josh, a student in high school, was tortured, strangled and beaten to death by an illegal immigrant and then his body was set on fire.' "So we have many illegal immigrants in our country who are criminals, convicted criminals, murderers, drug lords, gang members. And what happened during Hillary Clinton's stay during the -- her secretary of State days, people would take them out -- because I tell you what, these border patrol agents and ICE agents, they're great people. They want to do the job but they're told, Stand back." "o we have ma." "I've also met and gotten to really like Julie Goldlock whose son Spencer was shot in the head by the illegal immigrants. Spencer had just dropped his girlfriend off and was driving innocently home. One more life stolen. This person should never have been allowed in our country, should have been removed from our country. They knew he was trouble. He stayed. This crime wave ends, believe me, quickly when I am president. Believe me. It ends quickly. [Applause]" (Speech in Wilmington, OH, November 4, 2016).

Discussion

These essentialized caricatures of his opponents and his exaggerated insults towards them add layers of exasperation, disbelief, anger, and possibly comedic disquiet on the audience's existing negative views of them. Only that their grievances now get catalyzed into even more forcefully emotive expressions given the absence in these speeches of a "... formal structure of a politico-symbolic space ..." that can act as a stabilizer to the many diverse demands of the audience's 'people' [12]. Here, Trump and Trumpism can potentially anchor the content of the empty signifier. He certainly has an advantage since in all this entertaining spectacle, where power dynamics get rearranged and identities essentialized, Trump emerges as the audience's most loved representative. His speech, style and mannerisms, can represent the 'people' because his litany of insults affirms their, as of now, diffused grievances. From a theoretical and empirical standpoint, Trump is a good candidate for representation since he centers people's grievances on an emotive revolt which, while valorizing these grievances, does not guide them towards a politically specific end. In the words of Laclau: "the primacy of affect in cementing this [political] articulation" is present since "... no a priori rationality pushes those demands [of the audience at Trump's rallies] to coalesce around a center" [12]. In the words of Trump, those championing identity politics: "[They] have no clue. Everything's politically correct. I mean, you watch what you say. You say something a little bit off, you end up with the headlines. It's like a bunch of babies. Like a bunch of dumb babies. And believe me, folks, the world is laughing at us. They can't believe what's happening (Speech in Moon Twp, PA, June 11, 2016). What will replace identity politics is still an empty signifier in search of a political articulation.

2) A Nation Robbed

We argue that the politics of grievance spearhead affective politics into a new, and perhaps the new, form of political representation. In the case at hand, we argue that the politics of affect get birthed in the form of Trump's narratives of national disgrace and the loss of national pride. Homolar and Löffmann similarly, and persuasively, argue that the "affective politics of humiliation narratives" create popular mobilization both in the US and the UK [3]. However, we

differ in that our theoretical investment in Laclau's theory on populism cannot presuppose an already formed and delineated distressed public. On the contrary, the logic of Laclau's equivalential chain necessitates that the plural, diverse, and often antithetical, demands of Trump's audience remain different enough, but not supremely antagonistic, that they do not revert into irreconcilable group demands and a breakdown of the generalized 'us' versus 'them' framing, a process that would lead to "... a pure logic of difference ..." [12]. We argue, therefore, that Trump's speeches provide the umbrella narrative of national disgrace in which the various grievances of his audiences can be housed. It is, therefore, the affective turn towards national degradation and national victimhood at the center of his speeches that coalesces the various grievances of his audiences into a seemingly unifying, but never unified, whole. Trump's generalized language of national humiliation offers an alternative view of politics. A politics which, mediated through comedic relief, allows for the affective messaging of national humiliation to open up the space for subversive language and radical new policies. As a result, Trump's speeches aggregate the public away from liberal categorizations, like identities, and liberal forms of representation, based on actual policies, and towards an experiential and emotive form of inclusiveness. We now turn to a selection of his speeches in order to see how the affective turn to national humiliation narratives operates in practice.

At his Tampa, FL, speech on November 5, 2016, Trump talked about the effects of trade on American prosperity, job creation and wealth: "[Mexico] It takes our jobs, takes our money, takes our wealth, takes everything. We get unemployment and we get drugs. Not going to happen anymore, folks." And he continued: "The theft of American prosperity will end quickly and effectively. If a company wants to fire their workers, leave Florida, move to another country, and then shift their product back into the United States, we will make them pay a tax of 35 percent. [Applause]" And its terms of the Trans-Pacific Trade agreement he announced that: "We will immediately stop the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership, another disaster in the making that Hillary Clinton said is the gold standard. Yeah, it's the gold standard for other countries, not for us" (Speech in Tampa, FL, November 5, 2016). Of interest here to note is that the personal worries, to some of his audience, about jobs lost and economic dislocation are framed in terms of enemies abroad and the lost greatness of the U.S., a distinctive nationalistic take on what are bread and butter issues of jobs and economic performance usually dealt with economic policies.

He first established the theme of national downturn compared to other nations successes over the U.S. in his speech in New York, on June 16, 2015, when he announced his candidacy. He said at the time: "When did we beat Japan at anything? They send their cars over by the millions, and what do we do? When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Tokyo? It doesn't exist, folks. They beat us all the time." And he continued: "When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they're killing us economically. The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems. [applause]. And he added: " They are ripping us. We are rebuilding China. We're rebuilding many countries" (Speech announcing his candidacy, New York, June 16, 2015). Similarly, the framing of the disadvantages from international trade are not put in economic terms but, rather, in an opaque memorialization of a lost national past when the U.S. was at the top and winning. Consequently, the sources of domestic distress and grievances are to be found abroad among the other antagonistic nations.

Turning to the enemies at home, Trump explained in his St. Augustine, FL, speech on October 24, 2016, that the past governing elites in the U.S.: "They've dragged us into foreign wars that have

made us less safe, shipped our goods and our wealth and our companies to other countries. And they've left our borders wide open. So we have no borders. And yet we're over fighting for countries that a lot of people in this room have never heard of. And we want a border. We're fighting so they have a border, but we don't protect our own border (Speech at St. Augustine, FL, October 24, 2016). In this populist framing of the 'other,' Trump finds the culprits behind failed U.S. foreign and trade policies among those who have governed in the past. If then the framing is that of 'un-American' policies, it can logically mark the previous governing elites as being 'un-American' as well.

Continuing with the theme of 'enemies within' Trump argued that the previous immigration policies have been detrimental and dangerous to the nation. Regarding refugees and immigration, he presented the influx of wrongly admitted people as the "Trojan horse" of current day U.S. When speaking in Tampa, FL, on November 5, 2016, he said: "... over and above the thousands and thousands and thousands that are already coming in. Do you want to see a problem? This will be the great Trojan horse modern day version. Her [Clinton] plan will import generations of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism into your schools and throughout your communities. When I'm elected president, we will suspend immediately the Syrian refugee program... [Applause]." And regarding his opponent he said: "Hillary supports total, open borders -- that means the end of your country (Speech in Tampa, FL, November 5, 2016).

In suggesting solutions to the problems of national embarrassment and backsliding Trump argued that resurrecting the future greatness of the nation will take care of the 'inside' and 'outside' enemies. In his speech in St. Augustine, FL - October 24, 2016, when he suggested that: "Change has to come from the outside or we're never really going to understand it. And I will tell you, I've been on the inside. And the day I announced, June 16th of last year, I became a person on the outside. But we have to fix our country. We have to fix our country. The fact that the Washington establishment has tried so hard to stop our campaign, is only more proof that our campaign represents the kind of change that only arrives once in a lifetime. And it's true. [Applause]" ... "But we're gonna take our nation back, remember it. We're gonna bring it back.[Applause] It's enough. [Applause]It's enough. (Speech in St. Augustine, FL - October 24, 2016).

Trump painted his supporters as comprising a large part of the U.S. electorate when he said in the same speech that: "Seventy-five percent of the American people, based on all polls, think our country is headed on the wrong track. And we're going to fix it. [Applause]. Common sense. Our country is going to be put back on the right track and very, very quickly. And you're gonna be very proud of your country again. You're gonna be happy. [Applause]. Together, we're going to fix our rigged system and deliver real change that once again puts America first. [Applause]" (Speech in St. Augustine, FL - October 24, 2016). Here, Trump once more enlarges the logic behind the audience's grievances by making them be all about the nation and not about the specificities of group demands. Using Laclau's arguments to decipher the potential of such framing, we can argue that situating group grievances within the frame of the robbed nation establishes more firmly the mode of articulation as that of the equivalential and not the differential logic [12].

His themes at his rallies came to resemble the start of his candidacy in New York, on June 16, 2015, where he declared: "Our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. - Our enemies are getting stronger and stronger by the way, and we as a country are getting weaker. Even our nuclear arsenal doesn't work. ... "We need somebody that can take the brand of the United States and make it great again. It's not great again" (Speech in New York, June 16, 2015).

Trump, through his speeches on national disgrace, can theoretically play the role of the empty signifier [12]. He can represent the aggrieved and disaffected given that his campaigns offer both the affective dimension and the overarching narrative, both needed for a tied connection between the speaker and the 'people.' First, the affective dimension, conveyed in his speeches through the national dishonor narratives, makes the audience feel that their outrage and disquiet is being felt by the orator because he, like them, is being shamed and affected by the nation's betrayal. Here, the personal feelings of being less than -resulting from unfulfilled goals, or from being left behind, or by been overtaken by the 'woke' culture- become national, the personal trauma resonates as national trauma. Trump can represent the aggrieved because he himself is one. Audience and speaker are both equally robbed of the lost greatness of the nation. Second, his demand for national renewal and resurgence can be elevated to an umbrella call onto which the diverse groups in his audience can project their specific needs [12]. As the above speeches show, Trump ties a multitude of grievances, from free trade to job losses, to immigration, to mistrust in government, to the overarching call for national renewal and national empowerment. His speeches argue that most, if not all, of what is ailing the people can be remedied if the nation found its purpose and dynamism again.

3) The politics of 'excess' and the stretching of the equivalential chain

His exaggerated verbal statements and gestural actions create a politics of 'excess' that invite the logic and process of equivalence to take hold. What we bring to the fore here is the process of 'totalizing' either the identity of the enemy, or of the 'people,' in other words, the stretching the equivalential chain.

Trump stretches the equivalential chain by populating it with the diverse demands of varied groups, from laid off manufacturing workers to aggrieved professionals. As a result, the sectional demands of different groups cease to be that and, instead, amalgamate into the general grievances that unite them all in an inchoate whole. Consequently, "his is not a sectional discourse of the [in the case here] of the working class but a popular discourse addressed, in principle, ..." [12] to all the the "hardworking American patriots," the "incredible patriots," (speech at a Campaign Rally in Reading, Pennsylvania - October 9, 2024). So, despite all his talk about bringing manufacturing back, he does not set manufacturing workers aside from the rest aggrieved people, nor does his audience, for that matter. So while he says: "[a]t the core of my contract is my plan to bring back our jobs. [Audience calls out "Yeah"] The great state of Pennsylvania has lost almost 40% of its manufacturing jobs since NAFTA, a deal signed by Bill Clinton and supported by crooked Hillary Clinton," he inscribes the economically stranded manufacturing workers on the totality of the "hardworking American patriots," the "incredible patriots," which is the totalizing identity of the equivalential chain['s], 'the people' (speech at a Campaign Rally in Reading, Pennsylvania - October 9, 2024). His populist discourse creates an 'internal frontier' between the hardworking American patriots and the corrupt Washington elite. Laclau specifies the workings of the equivalential chain: once he "divid[es] society" along this logic, "workers' demands could only be one more link in the equivalential chain, ..." and part of the popular demands voiced by the totality of the aggrieved against the power center in Washington [12]. As a result, this populist discourse does not construct the economically excluded "in an economic sense," but bundles them together with the rest of the 'brave hardworking Americans' in one totality [12]. These definitions in 'excess' of what the aggrieved groups represent allow Trump's rhetoric to become all encompassing, totalizing, and unrepresentative since the differentially impacted groups of Americans cannot hear their specific voices of concern in this equivalential articulatory process [12].

For example, the ‘excess’ verbal utterances in 2016 regarding the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by far misrepresented the factual reality on the ground, ushering in the way for the particularistic demand for health care to get linked to the totalizing demand for turnover in Washington. Once the particularistic interest in inexpensive health becomes dependent on the equivalential articulation of incompetent and corrupt politics in Washington, it loses its ability to be voiced as a distinct request worthy of specialized redress. The way Trump portrayed the situation: “[r]eal change begins with immediately repealing and replacing Obamacare. It's just been announced that the residents of Pennsylvania are going to experience a massive double-digit premium hike. [Audience Boos] No good. In the great state of Arizona where I just left, premiums are going up more than 116%. [Audience Boos] All 67 counties in Pennsylvania are losing Obamacare insurers next year. Lots of luck negotiating, folks. But it won't matter because it'll be terminated. You won't have to bother” We'll have great healthcare at much less expense, much lower price. You'll be paying a fraction of what you're paying and you're going to get really good stuff. I can tell you. Premiums are surging on Obamacare. Companies are leaving. Insurers are fleeing. Doctors are quitting and deductibles are through the roof” (Donald Trump Delivers a Campaign Speech in Hershey, PA - November 4, 2016). The factual excesses here were established by the press at the time. NPR reported that “... the expected rise on insurance cost would be an average of 22 percent in 2017, according to the Obama administration.” It further added that any rate increases would be offset by increases in federal subsidies, with “few people ... likely to have to pay the full cost after the rate increases to get insurance coverage” (NPR, Rates Up 22 Percent For Obamacare Plans, But Subsidies Rise, Too, October 24, 2016). This is an apt example of the launch of a “... totali[z]ing critique ...” where the corrupt and incompetent entity called the ‘state’ is the cause, thus portrayed as the ‘enemy,’ in lieu of framing this problem/concern as the result of a particular faulty law or legislation, or inflated pharmaceutical and hospital prices, that could as easily have been criticized for the high premiums. If Trump had aimed his critique at the faults in ACA legislation, it would have amounted to him admitting that the ‘state’ or the ‘swamp’ do have the best interest of Americans in mind, only that they did not manage to legislate a good enough law for dealing with high insurance premiums. If, in other words, the need for affordable health care featured in Trump’s speeches clearly and independently of other grievances, and it was punctuated as a need, and demand, by the clearly recognizable and differentiated group of underinsured Americans, that demand would constitute a bona fide democratic, and not populist, demand in need of a specific policy to be announced by the speaker. However, as long as the “political frontier,” that of the ‘internal enemy’ holds, populism’s ‘destiny’ is secure. “If this frontier collapses, the ‘people’ as a historical actor disintegrates” [12]. But if the speaker, in this case Trump, continues to frame everything in terms of the ‘people’ against the ‘elite,’ any probable democratic demands get dissolved into populist wants, there to be voiced but never to be addressed.

4) Nudging the ‘people’ towards dissent and, in the process, reaggregating them

Trump’s grievances disrupt the socialization of people into liberal sensibilities which, we will argue, carries political consequences akin to a political rupture from American liberal politics as we know them. To begin, a cursory look at Trump’s speeches reveals an absence of the usual liberal tropes of rights, equality, freedom, progress, and tolerance. Instead, his speeches showcase themes that nudge people into antagonistic yet superficial and underdetermined social categories, the ‘people,’ on the one hand, and the ‘elite,’ on the other. To be fair, scholars of populism expect the concept of the ‘people’ to be underspecified. After all, as Mudde rightly argues, generic populism “merely defines the people as pure” [13] versus

some corrupt other -usually the elites. So, it is within the parameters of populist discourses that the under-specification of social groups occurs. However, as Mudde goes on to mention, because populism is a “thin ideology” [13, 14] there is usually an “... accompanying ‘host’ ideology” that can provide “... an additional dimension ...” for example, nation in “national populism” [15] all in [13]. Mudde explains that the specificity of both the ‘people’ and the ‘elites’ rests on this accompanying host ideology to give them meaning and demarcate the moral line between them [13]. Such additional “host” ideology is missing from Trump’s speeches, while other currently successful right-wing populisms, for example in Western Europe, embed theirs in the host ideology of nationalism. In Trump’s speeches, however, there is no overlap between the ‘nation’ and the ‘people.’

For example, when delivering the commencement address at the US Coast Guard Academy, the country’s maritime branch of the U.S. Air Force, he did not frame his speech in nationalistic terms, nor did he address the cadets with nationalistic exclamations. Instead, he used the occasion to boast about the recent prominence of the U.S. on the international stage following the events in Venezuela and the war in Iran. And when addressing the cadets, he focused on their physical prowess and exalted their physiological characteristics, while commenting on the technical aspects of their mission. “We’re respected all over the world. You saw that with China just recently. You saw that in Venezuela. You saw that right now in Iran. Everything’s gone. Their Navy’s gone. Their Air Force is gone. Just about everything. You know, the only question is, do we go and finish it up or are they gonna be signing a document? Let’s see what happens. But we’re a hot country. We’re the hottest country. Hottest country anywhere in the world with the strongest, most powerful military anywhere in the world, and there’s nobody close.” And when addressing the cadets, he effused over the technical aspects of their mission and their braveness, without connecting the latter to the ‘nation.’ Specifically, he said: “For decades, the men and women, if this noble service have repeated an unofficial motto of pure unyielding courage. It says, “You have to go out, but you don’t have to come back.” That’s a statement. “You have to go.” I think of that, “You have to go out, but you don’t have to go back.” And you know what that means? That means danger and it’s a statement that you live by. This is the unbelievable heroism and exceptional selflessness that lives in the soul of every single cadet on this field, every single one of you. And you’ve all been tested. You’ll be tested further, and probably at higher levels, as your career goes on, but you’ve been very strongly tested and you have what it takes.” And he continued his remarks by focusing on their physical abilities: “... Today, this field is full of some of the smartest minds, the toughest athletes and the most tenacious leaders our nation has to offer...” and he continued by saying: “But I think it’s great. And at the top of your class with the highest score in both military and academic achievements is Distinguished Graduate Matthew Lanzilotta. Where is he? Where is he? Come here. Uh, get up here. Come on. Come on. Get up. Get up. I wanna see this guy.” “I hate good-looking men. [Laughter] There you go. Matthew, that’s great...” to then turn to the theme of fitness: “We also have the only cadet who earned a perfect score on every single fitness test. Now we’re talking fitness. Do you know who this is already? Wow, this guy must be something. I think we’ll have to invite him up, I wanna check it out.” “For the last four straight years, which they think may be an all-time record, uh, congratulations to Thomas Rhodes. Thomas, get up here, please? Wanna see. I wanna check him out. Whoa. Wow. [Laughs] Uh, he’s, we’re not gonna fight with him. I’m not fighting him. I’m not, this is not UFC. Please understand that, Thomas. [Laughs] Look at this guy. Look at the muscles on this guy.” “Just hit him on the shoulder I hurt my hand. It’s like hitting a rock.” And then moving on to another high achieving cadet he comments: “... Well, this class has also been

blessed with many tremendous athletes, including the academy's all-time leader in receptions, yards, touchdowns, wide receiver. Brooke Dester. Where's Brooke? Wow. That's a pretty good record, Brooke. I -- I'll let you come up if you want. You wanna come up? Come on up here, Brooke. [Laughs] Come on. You can see they want you up here, Brooke." And, following these remarks, he introduces the athletic accomplishments of a female cadet: "We also have your all-time leader in points in the assists for women lacrosse, Abby McAllister. Abby? Abby? Where are you, Abby? Stand up, Abby. Oh. Are you that good, Abby? Do you want to come up, Abby? Come on, Abby. Come on up, Abby. See, we throw them a little off on timing when I do this, but what the hell?" (Speech: Donald Trump Delivers the Commencement Address at the US Coast Guard Academy - May 20, 2026). Overall, the above comments illustrate the decoupling of the 'nation' from the 'people' in Trump's speeches. Even more noteworthy is that this decoupling occurs whilst the 'people' addressed, as in this instance, are members of the social group on which the nation is often inscribed, the military.

If nationalism – like class in historically left-wing populisms – is not the supportive ideology to populism's "thin ideology," if it does not provide the most recognizable grounding for the 'people' in Trump's speeches, what does? In other words, against what entity or narrative do the Trump anti-globalization, anti-gender, anti-migrant, anti-Muslim, anti-liberalism, anti-black, anti-checks and balances and post-truth narratives coalesce? Who is the moral culprit that positions the 'people' vis a vis the above detrimental for them policies? The answer to that in the U.S. context is the corrupt political system, which is "too big to rig." The 'enemy' of the 'people,' or the "... tremendous number of American patriots ...," as Trump describes the 'people' (President Trump Addresses a Turning Point USA Political Rally, Phoenix, Arizona, December 22, 2024), is the corrupt political system, a metonymy for the state, and particularly state laws and state institutions (for similar views see Linker, 2025 ECPS interview). This is not to deny the nativist elements that figure prominently in Trump's narratives, quite the opposite. But the impetus for our line of interrogation comes from comparing Trumpian populism to popular right-wing populisms in Europe. There, we see that the latter are successful at the polls when the supportive ideology of their "thin populisms" is nationalism, coalescing as all these populist demands do around the issue of immigration. A look at the popular right-wing populisms in Europe show that "only the appeal on the immigration issue unites all successful populist right parties". When examining the types of grievances advanced by populist right parties in Western Europe, Ivarsflaten finds that "no populist right party performed well in elections around 2002 without mobilizing grievances over immigration," the other two grievances being "grievances arising from economic changes, political elitism and corruption".

Compare this to one of the prominent ways the aggrieved present themselves in the U.S.: as the "heartland," a metaphor that carries racist connotations but also points to industriousness, mainstream political values, agrarian ethos, and common sense as the attributes that hold the people together; in other words a form of civic culture that signifies the nation, rather than the reverse. As Laclau has argued, populism's equivalential chain becomes actionable when "... the equivalential relations ... crystallize in a certain discursive identity ..." He elaborates further by saying: "[i]t is only that moment of crystallization that constitutes the 'people' of populism." [12]. We argue, that in this instance of populism's evolution in the U.S., the 'nation' plays only an ancillary role in the determination of 'people's' discursive identity. We go even further to argue another point of distinction between European and American populisms. It appears that the European populist discursive identities have crystallized on many parts of the European continent on the prevalence of ethno-nationalist populisms, while the populist discursive identity in the U.S. is still evolving. Specifically, Trump's speeches position his

voters in a liminality of space and time where his base remains suspended. Viktor Orban, to use as an example, creates the parameters for the discursive identity of his base by promoting the Eurosceptic Hungarians as an important element of true Hungarian citizenry [17]. Here the Hungarian 'people' are constituted as the "national people" thus becoming the "main political actor" in Hungarian politics. (...). We argue that these differing timelines in the evolution of a discursive identity produce transformative political effects. Liminality in the U.S. perpetuates the kind of instability that allows for the reaggregation of the social away from liberal signifiers and the established parties and towards an equivalential link yet to be settled [12]. The in-between status of the aggrieved can create the conditions for erasing some of the institutional landmarks of the American liberal state, for long a target of the Republican party, but, certainly, an existential enemy of Trump's grievances. What does this mean for the populist realities on the American and European continents respectively? Possibly, liminality versus top-down populism means that liberal institutions are being destabilized in the U.S. Contrary to that, the recent electoral ousting of Viktor Orban in Hungary implies that the "corporatization" of party politics in the populist inflicted country is still functioning despite the "democratic backsliding by law", an eventuality that might becoming scarce in the U.S.

Concluding Remarks

Bringing everything together in the concluding remarks means connecting, once more, Antigone's grievance antipolitics, Trumpian grievances, and Laclau's oeuvre on populism before moving on to the political implications of this undertaking. What is it about grievances that lends an analytical lens to our understanding of populism? We argue that all three protagonists in this article explore the politics of representation [17]. What is more, their respective interrogations add an explanatory layer to our understanding of current forms of representation under populism. Specifically, Antigone's antipolitics question the state's authority, in the figure of Creon, to represent the sacred and insist on setting limits to the state's remit. With the help of Honig's analysis we take this to mean that Antigone is disrupting the logic of governing. We then suggest that as Antigone's grievances and affect stand for a different governing logic, so do the Trumpian politics of grievance and affect. Taking our cue from this observation, we deploy Laclau's populist reasoning to further understand how a new governing logic might emerge in the U.S. Laclau alerts us to the performative aspect of representation, meaning that representation is "... not just limited to formal political institutions ... like elections." Instead, he "takes representation to be performative: in that it also brings about [constructs] what is represented". Our point of departure is that the 'people' are differently constructed in the U.S. than in Europe.

How can the above argument help us make sense of current populism? Looking at the discursive political environment since the 2010s, we see increased representation based on the coupling of populist and nationalistic stances both in Europe and in the U.S. At first glance, one would be tempted to focus more on the similarities between these cross-continent developments. However, when deploying the theoretical lens summarized above, we can more easily detect the differences among these developments, and not just the more easily observable similarities. In general, this interweaving of the 'people' and the nation seems to "... take[s] place against the backdrop of a series of crisis of representation which pave the way for political reconfigurations, ..." developments that "... threaten liberal democratic and multicultural coexistence. Here, we posit that these cross-continental "political configurations" that Rueda mentions are neither of the same magnitude nor quality. The U.S. is marching towards a post-liberal organization of the polity, whereas European parties, in general, reconfigure the coupling of nationalism and the 'people' primarily by changing their political agendas and veering towards the right. So, we have two distinct crises of representation:

in the U.S. we have the unsettling of the way ‘the people’ are represented moving, as we seem to be, from one person one vote to engineered majorities that negate minority representation. We know that the latter also happens under European populism, but the governing logic is different between the U.S. and Europe. In the latter case, minority representation is effaced through the representation of the ‘people’ as the nation, meaning through “exclusionary nationalisms”. In the U.S., it is happening through the revamping of the liberal system of representation. So, while the slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ would allude to nationalist-populist impulses, the discussion here finds the slogan to be more indeterminate than a nationalist-inflected ideology would have us expect. Secondly, in the U.S. we witness the weakening of representation via political parties and the concomitant concentration of political representation in the hands of individuals. The latter might echo Orban-like authoritarianism. Yet, this concentration of power takes place while the American state bureaucracies, and the state, are dejecting their role of social care and social administration, thus creating a vacuum of need to be filled with newly created non-state structures. In Europe, on the other hand, the “intersection of populism and nationalism [...] tend[s] to ... see them as two forms of identity-building In the U.S., however, whatever level of minimum intersection occurs between the nation and the ‘people’ leads to the usurping of identity politics and the cultivation of post-identity representations. This article hopes to have cultivated the conditions for further research on the issue of post-liberal representation under the politics of grievance.

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