While democratic politics has always been populist (Laclau 2002), the 2008 economic crisis animated a range of global publics that have subsequently organized through the Internet. The enmeshing of the Internet with political systems has enabled left-wing, right-wing, and non-partisan populist movements to outflank traditional party elites, launching successful (or nearly successful) takeovers of parties and governments (e.g., *Podemos* in Spain, *Syriza* in Greece, the Hong Kong National Party, Corbyn and the Brexit referendum in the U.K., and Duterte in Philippines).

This is also true in the United States. Since the 2000 election, American government has become increasingly dysfunctional, with compromise nearly impossible (Mellow and Trubowitz 2005). This is (in part) because each party – driven by gerrymandering and social media logics – has territorialized new voters into their assemblage through an intensification of affective animus vis-à-vis their partisan opponents (Iyengar et al. 2012). Consequently, compromise has become less imaginable over time. Indeed, the excess, inchoate, and self-organizing political energies existing in everyday life outside of hierarchical party structures have increasingly become the object of political campaigns' desire (e.g., viral memes on Facebook and Twitter) and party elites have cultivated commercial technologies to trace and harness the forces of everyday life for their own purposes (Issenberg 2012).

In the United States, populist candidates campaigned for both parties' nominations, with Donald Trump taking over the Republican Party in a Twitter-saturated primary campaign. While many lament Trump's rise (and we do not underestimate the damage he has done to communities whom he has abused), we argue that this may enable a more hopeful politics rejecting the partisan

sclerosis latterly afflicting American government. We now turn to Connolly's 'capitalist-evangelical resonance machine' (2008) and update it to consider what we have termed Donald Trump's 'white-male dissonance machine'. We draw on Moffitt's (2016: 3) assertion that populism is not a thing but a style 'that is performed, embodied, and enacted'. We therefore turn to Trump's embodied performance and how it has undone the Bush-era resonance machine, creating new possibilities. We conclude with a plea for a rejuvenated electoral geography, capable of engaging with new lines of flight emergent despite – or because of – the rise of a global populist style.

Bush and the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine

Connolly (2008: x) conceptualized the Bush coalition as a convergence of affective fields he dubbed 'the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine'. His analysis looked beyond a liberal politics manifested in argument and reason, arguing that the Bush coalition rested not on a common ideology, but rather an 'ethos of existential revenge' (*ibid*, 4) found in 'the conjunctions between white migration, menial work, segregated neighborhoods, union priorities, evangelical hope and church and cooperative images of the self-made individual' (*ibid*, x). This was not an assertion of affect as a new force in a previously rationalist, democratic politics; rather, democratic politics has always been affective, as the ancient Greek art of rhetoric demonstrates. It was, however, a reminder that politics is both embodied and exists in the spaces of mediation that constitute the contemporary political field. This loose assemblage emerged from 'the connection […] between evangelical Christianity, cowboy capitalism, the electronic news media and the Republican Party' (*ibid*, 39).

A politician's affective power rests in the ability to embody at least some of their audience's desires. For instance, the desired affect of a technocrat is of neutrality and stability, a style that instills comfort among the audience. Contrarily, populist leaders must (whether consciously or subconsciously) simultaneously embody ordinariness *and* extraordinariness, thus imbuing the former with the latter. For instance, President Andrew Jackson was a wealthy plantation-owner from the frontier, thereby performing both as a man of the people (ordinary) and as someone who had risen to the top of the socio-economic system (extraordinary). His performance could be particularly ambivalent: he opened the White House to everyone who attended his inauguration for a whiskey-fuelled party (ordinary) and yet he was a highly decorated war hero (extraordinary, if today understood as genocidal).

Bush's body too served as a central, performative element allowing this assemblage to cohere. First, there was his (ordinary) elocution and 'cowboy' stance, which resonated with Middle America, making him the candidate 'most voters would like to have a beer with.' Then there were the (extraordinary) things he did with his body. For instance, in 2004 Bush's

> entourage sped around a NASCAR track in front of 100,000 fans. Bush emerged from the only SUV in the entourage to an incredible roar of approval. The crowd responded to the SUV as a symbol of disdain for woman ecologists, safety advocates, supporters of fuel economy, worrywarts about global warming, weak-willed pluralists, and supporters of international accords such as the Kyoto Treaty'. (Connolly 2008: 54)

Bush performed as a political entrepreneur, channeling the affective forces of multiple unfolding processes (e.g., neo-liberalism, climate change, the changing

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news media ecology, social and demographic change) into the electoral system to achieve a governing majority without a common ideology. Yet, every reterritorialization is also a deterritorialization, and his resonance machine was also a dissonance machine, as evidenced by laughter at his elocution and accusations of Fascism. The forces that Bush was able to temporarily bring into resonance have only grown in intensity. Whereas the Bush resonance machine produced an electoral majority, the Trump machine threatens to alienate elements of the Bush capitalist-evangelical coalition and reduce it to a rump of its former self.

From the resonance machine…

The evangelical-capitalist resonance machine did not disappear with the election of Obama; rather, it reterritorialized in new forms. For instance, the Tea Party crystalized around racial and economic resentments, with Sarah Palin as a particularly vibrant symbol. Her performance drew on a 'folksy' (white) commonsense. As with the subsequent emergence of Trump, she embodies the ability to 'tell it like it is.' This is notably less about *what* is spoken, than *how* it is spoken: a question of (white) authenticity (ordinariness) and a willingness to break 'politically correct' taboos (extraordinariness).

Like Andrew Jackson and George W. Bush, Trump's swaggering white capitalist presence asserts a masculine authority that Palin was never able to achieve. Trump's power is simultaneously located in his embodied performance of (extraordinary) masculinity (e.g., asserting his penis size in a debate), that body's connections to the broader world of capital (his veneer of financial success locates him outside of political party machines), and its explicit

(ordinary) lack of political mannerisms. Connolly noted even in pre-Trump America that:

> [A]nxious white males in the working and middle classes seek models of masculinity with whom to identify in a world of uncertainty. Corporate elites, sports heroes, financial wizards, and military leaders project images of independence, mastery, and virility that can make them attractive models of identification, whereas state welfare programs, market regulations, retirement schemes, and health care, while essential to life, may remind too many of the very fragilities, vulnerabilities, susceptibilities, and dependencies they strive to deny or forget (Connolly 2013: 23-4).

Trump is therefore not entirely new; he is the most recent and vehement mutation for this resonance machine's racist ethos of existential revenge.

What Trump actually says or does matters less than *what is felt*. His endless contradictions are popular with critics, but it is primarily his way-of-being in the world, and not policy, that draws supporters to him. His is an embodiment of the brash capitalist style to which the ethos of revenge is so attached. However, it is the relatively narrow territorialization, and increasing intensity, of his resonance machine that is ironically the biggest potential boon to a new politics born of moderation and compromise.

…To the dissonance machine

While Connolly's thesis emphasized the coming together of the Bush coalition around a common *Ressentiment*, left relatively unaddressed in his work are the relations of dissonance that simultaneously amplified the partisan divide in the

United States. We emphasize that it is the very qualities that allow Trump to resonate with his supporters – his apparent financial success, iconoclasm, white authoritarianism, and forceful masculinity – that simultaneously repels others, including some fellow Republicans. Just as Trump's affect can make the content of his policy redundant, here it renders apparent the flaws of broader Republican policies (e.g., his original insistence that women who receive abortions should be prosecuted). Indeed, Trump's policy proposals are often not very different from those of other Republican candidates; rather, it is his affective performance in the public sphere that both heightens his own unacceptability and renders those policies objectionable to a majority of Americans.

One manifestation of this dissonance machine – a direct counterpoint to Trump's own mastery of Twitter as a medium – is the rise of #NeverTrump. As with all hashtags, #NeverTrump organizes otherwise disparate communicative acts into a loose, heterogeneous assemblage. What makes the #NeverTrump phenomenon notable is that – like Connolly's original resonance machine – it brings together disparate groups with few obvious policy overlaps, but instead a common affective relation to Trump. Some of this opposition is the anti-racist Left, but significant portions come from Republicans repelled by his unique performance of the misogyny and racism with which the Party has flirted for decades. As a microcosm of larger societal dynamics, #NeverTrump offers up a digital space in which – perhaps for the first time in decades – being 'moderate' or 'compromising' in American political life can be seen as a virtue. While populism can bring together the far left and the far right, equally it can bring together the forces of moderation and compromise.

We argue that Trump has pushed the affective politics of confrontation and division to a limit point in the U.S., potentially recalibrating electoral system dynamics and enabling new political subjectivities to form (Page and Dittmer 2015). Of course, history may prove us wrong. It may be that the unfolding processes driving the increasing partisanship of recent years will prove too strong an attractor for the overarching assemblage. But we hope not.

Renewing electoral geography and examining global populism
Implicit in our argument is a further claim, beyond the existence of a Trump dissonance machine. Trump's campaign and the wider rise of non-partisan movements around the world illustrate the failure of traditional electoral models to appreciate the vital and novel within elections. The concept of assemblage, however, emphasizes exactly this vitality and novelty of social life. Further, it directs attention to the empirical contexts that have proven central to the 2016 election and other populist movements: social media, raced and gendered performance on the campaign trail, and mass-mediated anxieties about processes of neoliberalism, climate change, and socio-demographic change. These contexts largely escape academic analysis even as they have become fixtures of punditry.

It is time for us to return to the field of electoral geography with the theoretical insights into embodiment, media, and socio-materiality that have been forged over the past decade. The stakes are higher than ever. A range of macro-scaled issues threatens to tip electorates in the USA, Europe, and beyond into new configurations marked by racism, sexism, and xenophobia: refugee flows, crisis in the EU, climate change, economic inequality, etc. Close

observation of Trump's defeat and the various lines of flight that emerge

afterwards can offer insights into more progressive paths forward in Europe and

elsewhere.

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