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20 April 2024

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Abstract

This paper discusses the discursive strategies employed by Donald Trump, the newly-elected President of the USA, in his prolific activity on Twitter, and localizes them in the context of populism. Trump made extensive use of Twitter to articulate his narrative as a presidential candidate and develop his own populist "style" (Moffitt 2016). This paper therefore analyses Trump's communication strategy by addressing the political and the linguistic dimensions of his activity on Twitter: it specifically analyses some of the thematic and the lexico-grammatical features employed by Trump in the construction of his policies. Trump's tweets of the thirty days leading to his election on 8 November 2016 have been compared with the dataset of tweets of the same period by Trump's main opponent, Hillary Clinton. It has been argued that Trump's use of hashtags, a function of Twitter based on topic which is fundamental for the "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna 2011, 2012) typical of Twitter, is a defining element of his populist style and played to his advantage in his competition with Clinton.

1. Introduction

In an interview on Fox News channel aired on March 15, 2017, US President Donald J. Trump commented on his compulsive use of Twitter:

Well, let me tell you about Twitter. I think that maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Twitter, because I get such a fake press, such a dishonest press. (…) So the news is not honest. Much of the news. It's not honest. And when I have close to 100 million people watching me on Twitter, including Facebook, including all of the Instagram, including POTUS, including lots of things -- but we have -- I guess pretty close to 100 million people. I have my own form of media (Schwartz 2017).

While these remarks might sound somehow outlandish – would a presidential candidate *really* be elected thanks to Twitter? – Trump was highlighting the growing importance of social media in election campaigns, and he did so by juxtaposing them to traditional mass media – what he calls "the fake press" or, on many other occasions, the "fake media", even though, ironically, he is using a traditional TV interview to do that. His masterful use of the microblogging platform certainly played all in his favour in the 2016 Presidential campaign by both allowing him to communicate with his own supporters in a very direct and "honest" way and by obliging mass media to discuss his tweets, thus creating an echo chamber in which his messages reverberated through the whole media environment and the public at large. The frequently outrageous contents of Trump's tweets strongly contributed to bestowing an aura of authenticity and spontaneity to his language which appealed to a large part of the US electorate. Indeed, Trump's political discourse on Twitter encourages direct communication between him and "the people" and communicates the idea that it is Trump in person who is speaking to his "followers".

    This paper analyses Trump's tweets by employing an interdisciplinary approach, addressing Trump's tweets within the framework provided by Linguistics (specifically Computer-Mediated Communication and Systemic Functional Linguistics) and Political Science. The first section of the paper will assess the growing importance of Twitter in American politics, including Trump's Twitter strategy in the 2016 presidential campaign. The second section will discuss Trump's populism, which, following Bernard Moffitt's (2016) recent formulation, is interpreted here mainly as a "political style" rather than an ideology in itself. The final section will be dedicated to the analysis of the discourse of Trump's tweets in the thirty days before election day, a crucial period in shaping the tone of the electoral campaign. The analysis will focus on hashtags, a function of Twitter based on topic which is fundamental for the "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna 2011) of users typical of Twitter, and which has now become widely used in other social media too. It will be argued that Trump's use of hashtags is a defining element of his populist "style". To give further evidence of that, Trump's tweets will be compared with the dataset of tweets of the same period by Trump's main opponent, Hillary Clinton. Connected to the analysis of the hashtags, a shorter discussion is also devoted to the differences in writing style between the two candidates, especially in

the tone and persona adopted in their tweets, shedding further light on how certain discourse features characterising Trump's activity on Twitter are distinctively populist in the communicative context of today's social media.

2. Twitter and American politics

The use of Twitter as an instrument of political information and propaganda is a relatively new development of the information structure at the basis of a modern democracy. In the last two decades or so, social media have deeply altered the way political information is controlled, distributed and consumed. Twitter, an internet service based on microblogging, that is, "a form of length-limited (hence 'micro') communication using a social networking service" (Zappavigna 2012: 27), has been at the centre of this evolution in the context of today's media culture. As a social networking service, Twitter is based on the active interaction between users, who publish short posts, or "tweets", which are limited to a maximum of 140 characters and are visible to those users who have subscribed to their feeds. Twitter fosters collaboration and conversation through its functions (Honeycutt and Herring 2009), such as "@username", by which a tweet can be notified to other users, or the "retweet" (RT), and its popularity, along with that of Facebook and other social media, has been rising during the current decade. Indeed, according to the Pew Research Center, seven out of ten US citizens in 2016 used social media in its various configurations and for many different reasons. The percentage was 5% in 2001 and 50% in 2011 (Pew Research Center 2017a). The popularity of social media impact on how people learn about news and politics: as of May 2016, 62% of American adults got news from social media (up from 49% in 2012), a staggering figure that gives a measure of how a new media paradigm has been gradually shaping the political sphere. Twitter itself seems to have a slight edge in news consumption over Facebook, the other popular social platform: while 38% of people who seek out news online on Facebook get it when they are actively looking for it (as opposed to 62% who get news while they do other things online), the percentage of active news seekers on Twitter is 54%, as opposed to 45% of non-seekers (Gottfried and Shearer 2016).

The rise of social media has witnessed a shift from a set of media based on a one-way communication (from the producer, usually a media conglomerate with strong financial and technological means, to the consumer-citizen, who receives information) to an environment, popularly known as Web 2.0, characterised by user-generated content and interactive communication, in which citizens are also producers themselves, with contents of various kinds shared collectively and with a potentially global audience (Herring 2013). This shift has deeply influenced the practice of politics: in Web 2.0, citizens can be reached much more easily and quickly, and seem to participate much more actively than in the past in the political life because of the interactive features of social media, which, at least ostensibly, lack "gatekeepers" in charge of managing the flux of information produced by, and exchanged between, users. Citizens, politicians and opinion leaders can engage with each other in social media in a way that is thoroughly changing the political framework in the USA and in the Western world (Gainous and Wagner 2014: 3-15). Indeed, because of the "personal" relationships that can potentially be developed through social media, politicians may be perceived as being more approachable than in the past: nowadays there is virtually no politician without a personal profile on Twitter and Facebook, and more and more activities – from fundraising to information on policy issues, rallies and other events – take place primarily on social media, with a strong impact on the electorate.

The growing influence of social media is taking place at the gradual expense of traditional mass media. While in their analysis of the 2000 US Presidential elections, Bimber and Davis (2003) found that the candidates' use of the internet was likely to strengthen people's opinions rather than change them, in 2008, Barack Obama was widely celebrated as "the Facebook President" for his ability to gain consensus at the grassroots level through social media such as Facebook and YouTube, especially among young voters. However, in the current political panorama, social media and mass media still have a degree of mutual influence: for example, in the US presidential primaries of 2012, Twitter and the top newspapers acted in an "intermedia agenda-setting framework," whereby mass media and social media would "feed" each other by bouncing news stories between them (Conway, Kenski, Wang 2015). During the 2012 presidential campaign, the teams of Barack Obama and

Mitt Romney realised that social media could play well in an interconnected media environment: the contents of single tweets would be picked up by traditional media and would become a news story, and this in turn induced user-generated contents from the electorate, which would then push up fundraising (Stromer-Galley 2014: 159). Twitter was also used to get messages out quickly and to measure the public's reaction to them, thus helping candidates to hone their media strategy.

Social media have proved to have a distinct advantage over mass media: voters can be reached very easily through "tweets" or Facebook "updates", which are more accessible, for example through computers or cell phones, than TV or newspaper ads. In particular, Twitter has quickly become a very convenient instrument with which politicians running for office can engage directly and quickly with citizens: candidates can personally control the flux of information coming from their campaigns, bypassing traditional media outlets and effectively "creating" news, thus often obliging traditional media to catch up with their online activities, all the while reaching people directly and allowing them to self-select and engage with their preferred political news items (Gainous and Wagner 2014: 10-15). Through Twitter, candidates can get the information out quickly and can tweet as many times as they want; they, and especially those candidates who tweet personally, can "create a sense of intimacy with voters" (Just and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 2), and electors can become more actively involved with their activities (Gainous and Wagner 2014; Evans and Sipole 2017: 73-74). The interactive functions of Twitter are an effective means of spreading political information: through "retweeting", a message can be repeated and spread to numerous users, helping candidates to popularize their agenda among their followers (Kenski and Conway 2017: 115-17).

Larger citizen participation in political campaigns is fostered by the interactive nature of Web 2.0, which promotes the exchange of information and erodes the classical hierarchy of traditional mass media (Herring 2013), for example through the "@username" function in Twitter. However, the interactive functions of this new communication environment have not led to a democratization in the relationship between candidates and people as candidates rarely, if ever, use Twitter and the other social media to discuss and deliberate policies with their electors (Kenski and Conway 2017: 114-115). While citizen participation in the political process is often promoted, the interactive features of social media only amount to what Stromer-Galley calls "a spectacle of interactivity" (Stromer-Galley 2014: 5), as actual involvement of citizens in policy making and "real", two-way conversations with politicians almost never take place. Political campaigns on social media are mainly operated through "controlled interactivity" (Stromer-Galley 2014:2): citizens can certainly promote a given candidate's campaign by forwarding or "retweeting" messages and helping with fundraising, and interaction between electors has increased to a stage which is incommensurable compared to past campaigns, but dialogue between electors and their representatives or staff is minimal. Beyond the perception that Twitter allows direct communication between "ordinary" citizens and politicians and other celebrities, the reality is that these connections are asymmetrical and are always regulated by certain features of Twitter by which users can decide what streams of information they receive or send (Page 2012: 184; Squires 2016: 245). This is particularly true for the hashtag (#), a typographic convention which defines topics in the Twittersphere, and which is used, especially by celebrities, much more often than conversational functions such as retweets and addressed messages (Page 2012: 186-188). The activities of public personalities on Twitter show that the potentially interactive features of the microblogging service are not conducive to public conversations but instead lead to "calls to action" directed to their followers, making use of imperatives with a much greater frequency than ordinary users (Page 2012).

Donald Trump has fully exploited the potential of the new media environment, an environment in which "a new information flow […] is no longer being structured and limited by the popular media" (Gainous and Wagner 2014: 20). What is new is that Twitter, like other social media, allows for a seemingly unmediated relationship between the leader and "the people" which is the foundation of populism: Twitter performs a "meta-function", bypassing traditional media and delivering the leader's unfiltered messages to his audience (Krämer 2017: 1303). It therefore becomes the means by which the populist leader can develop his form of "techno-plebiscitarianism" (Krämer 2017: 1299) whereby, behind the apparent inclusiveness and reciprocity typical of the microblogging platform, he can build up consensus by inviting the community to share, like or retweet his stances.

3. Trump's "authenticity" and populism

During his campaign, Trump used Twitter in an addictive manner, sending out tweets many times a day and giving the impression that he was using the social network site himself, which in fact was largely true. Indeed, Twitter seems the ideal means to communicate Trump's own language: while a limitation to many, the 140-character limit is perfectly suited to Trump's own simple messages. In his tweets, Trump always gave an impression of spontaneity and matter-of-factness that other candidates seemed to lack. This perceived sincerity is also strengthened by Trump's username on Twitter, @realDonaldTrump, as if, by putting "real", he emphasized the authenticity of his messages. This special relationship between Trump and his electorate has become a familiar refrain among Trump-friendly media and fellow Republicans: Fox News' Bill O'Reilly argued that "[Trump] must have a rapid defense mechanism *in his own words* and Twitter provides that" (O'Reilly 2017, emphasis mine), while Representative Lamar Smith declared: "Better to get your news *directly from the president*. In fact, it might be *the only way to get the unvarnished truth*" (Schleifer 2017, emphasis mine). Trump's Twitter campaign had the effect of showing him as a candidate who told the truth, speaking in a simple language which was distant from the complex and seemingly artificial rhetoric of professional politicians. Trump's simple, often violent, and sometimes even childish language was continually mocked by liberal commentators but it became his most effective asset: given the people's growing distrust in standard news media (Swift 2016) and government (Pew Research Center 2017b), Trump could easily play to people's emotional attraction to his language, which sounded more sincere and less artificial than the language of "conventional" politics.

In his policies as well as in his relationship with his voters, Trump has been considered a typical example of populist leader. His explicitness and (apparent) sincerity in attacking immigrants and the elites is part of a populist trend which is on the rise in both Europe and the United States (Wodak 2015a, 2015b). While there are many (and often conflicting) definitions of populism, there are certain features defining populism that most scholars agree upon: populism is connected with the idea that "the people" should exercise direct political power; the populist leader embodies the people's (supposedly) unitary will as he appears as "one of us", while paradoxically at the same time he presents himself as extraordinary; populism finds very fertile soil at times of economic crisis, rampant corruption and widespread uncertainty about the future, all factors that generate general distrust of the political elites as well as of those minorities which are seen as a threat to the people (Canovan 1981, 1984; Taggart 2000: Laclau 2005).

However, the political versatility of populism and its different recent declinations raise questions on the ideological essence of populism itself: more than an ideology, populism should be thought of as a "*political style that is performed, embodied and enacted across a variety of political and cultural contexts*" (Moffitt 2016: 3, emphasis in original). Populism as a "political style" consists in the way politics is done, that is, not just in terms of language and rhetoric, but also in the performative and affective dimensions of politics (Moffitt 2016: 31). According to Moffitt, the three key features of populism in terms of political style are: "*appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite'; 'bad manners'; and crisis, breakdown or threat*" (Moffitt 2016: 29; emphasis in original). These three aspects constitute the core of the performance of the populist leader in the public arena and highlight his/her distance from the elite's discourse. In particular, through "bad manners", the leader uses a low and highly informal register, including swearing, insults to his/her opponents and slang, as he/she rejects formal and appropriate modes of expressions as well as the intellectualism and rationality of the "elites" (Moffitt 2016: 44, 57-63). Thus, the populist offers seemingly common sense solutions in simple language, displaying his/her own nature as a political outsider as well as personal ordinariness in both manners and mindset: as argued by Canovan, "Populist appeals to the people are characteristically couched in a *style* that is 'democratic' in the sense of being aimed at ordinary people", a style that Canovan herself calls "tabloid style" (Canovan 1999: 5, emphasis in original). Indeed, one of the key factors in determining the success of the populist leader is his/her capacity of using a language which, in its form and content, strikes an emotional and sympathetic note among the electorate: the "bad manners" of the populist leader are successful only if his/her dramatization of some (supposed) national

crisis or his/her attacks on the elites or minority groups such as immigrants are couched in a language which is resonant for its crudity and sincerity.

The populist leader places simple language, "bad manners" and "political style" at the center of his/her campaign. These features place the leader outside the stereotypical image of the mainstream or "elite" politicians and make him/her appear as sincere, as "the populist's lack of decorum contributes to the followers' perceptions of authenticity, distinguishing the populist from the usual "typical politician."" (Oliver and Rahn 2016: 191). The leader's perceived authenticity may also be explained by Mark Thompson's notion of "authenticism", that is, "the single-minded belief that all that really matters in public language is the supposed authenticity of a given speaker" (Thompson 2016: 152). What is really important is not whether a politician's claim is true or not, but that it *appears* true, and that the speaker shows himself or herself as telling the truth. Authenticism is not a new tendency, but it surfaces every time that trust in politicians reaches a low: the public is attracted not so much by the radical policies of an "authenticist" but by *how* the radicalism of his or her policies constitutes a break from the status quo and, to many, perceived authenticity may override all other considerations – personal, ideological, etc. The language of authenticism opposes rationality and appeals to the emotions: "the authenticist prizes simplicity of language… because he associates simple expressions with honesty of emotion and at least the appearance of being willing to engage with the lowliest members of the chosen community" (Thompson 2016: 155).

Moffitt's conception of populism as a "political style" and Thompson's argument on "authenticism" raise questions on how leaders communicate to the public in contemporary society. Trump's authenticism and populist style were seen as very credible, and this was nowhere more apparent than in his use of Twitter.

4. The language of Trump's tweets

The language used in Trump's tweets will be analysed on the basis of a data set of the tweets published in the month before the elections (8 October- 8 November 2016) and will be compared with Hillary Clinton's tweets of the same period. Trump's and Clinton's tweets have been collected through twlets.com, an online platform by which large numbers of tweets can be exported and downloaded directly into Excel. The resulting Excel spreadsheets also indicate the number of likes and retweets for each tweet. For the linguistic analysis, the data have been converted into text (txt.) files and then analysed through Wordsmith Tools (version 7.0). This has made the study of concordances very easy. Part of the linguistic analysis of the corpus has been done with LIWC (version 2015), a text analysis software program which measures words according to their semantic category. During the period under examination, Clinton published nearly twice the number of tweets as Trump (1044 vs 529), but that did not translate into greater diffusion. On the contrary, political conversation on Twitter in the weeks before election day was overwhelmingly dominated by Trump: his hashtags constituted the driving force of a very intense activity, also aided by bots, or automated Twitter accounts, which dominated public discussion on Twitter: by election day, the diffusion of Trump's tweet based on hashtags outstripped Clinton's by a ratio of five to one (Kollanyi, Howard, Woolley 2016).

Hashtags are key multifunctional discourse practices in Twitter and are used as a means of organizing contents within Twitter. They act as metadata, providing the tweet with a topic or topics, that is, as optional, but extremely frequent, keywords of the tweet that can be used by other users to find and generate tweets of the same topic. For this reason, rather than having a merely organizational and categorizing function, hashtags are also a form of conversational and discourse tagging allowing "searchable talk, that is, online discourse where the primary function appears to be affiliation via 'findability'" (Zappavigna 2011: 789), potentially aligning users along a commonly shared topic and establishing the user's social identity within the Twitter community as well as his or her personal feelings (Wikstrom 2014: 149). By marking discourse, hashtags can be used to develop interaction between users and can help promote a specific topic or term. Hashtags can in this sense be considered "social metadata" (Zappavigna 2015: 276-79): they are descriptive annotations made by users to describe their tweets, which can therefore be found by other users and act as an instrument of social identification and affiliation

shared by communities who use the same tag, thus realising what Zappavigna calls "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna 2012). Hashtags are often placed at the end of the tweet, constituting a "conversational aside" (Zappavigna 2015), but can also be part of the discourse and linguistic structure of the tweet, as they are often incorporated in the clausal structure, for example as a subject, a verb, or both.

Trump was much more active than Clinton in the publication of hashtags, and the number of his hashtags was almost three times that of his rival (529 vs 173), even if, as seen above, the total number of his tweets was about half of Clinton's. The top ten hashtags of each camp clearly indicate the key differences between Trump and Clinton.

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TABLE 1
Top ten hashtags for @realDonaldTrump and @HillaryClinton, 8 October-8 November 2016

@realDonaldTrump   @HillaryClinton
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@realDonaldTrump		@HillaryClinton	
#DrainTheSwamp	78	#Debate, #Debates	49
#Debate, #Debates	76	#DebateNight	36
#BigLeagueTruth	53	#ImWithHer, #IMWITHHER	9
#MAGA	36	#AlSmithDinner	8
#CrookedHillary	16	#Strongertogether	8
#ICYMI	16	#OHVotesEarly	7
#MakeAmericaGreatAgain	13	#SheWon	6
#ObamacareFailed	8	#Dayofthegirl	2
#VoteTrumpPence16	7	#LoveTrumpsHate	2
#AmericaFirst	6	#VoteLove	2

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Clinton and Trump share their second most recurrent hashtag, namely #Debate and its plural #Debates, drawing the attention of their respective supporters to one of the campaign's most important events: the second and third presidential debates took place on 9 and 19 October 2016, and the occurrence of the hashtags #Debate and #Debates was quite predictable. Trump's #ICYMI (In Case You Missed It) also draws attention to some upcoming event on the campaign trail. All other hashtags denote very different strategies. Both Trump and Clinton use their main campaign slogans ("Make America Great Again" and "Stronger Together") in their tweets, but Trump uses his much more often: #MakeAmericaGreatAgain, together with its acronym #MAGA, appears 49 times in total, while Clinton's #Strongertogether appears eight times only. While Clinton did not publish any hashtag directly attacking Trump, with the partial exception of #LoveTrumpsHate, three of Trump's hashtags are attacks on his opponents: #CrookedHillary and #ObamacareFailed are personal attacks, while #DrainTheSwamp, Trump's most used hashtag, is more generic. #DrainTheSwamp and #MakeAmericaGreatAgain (or #MAGA) are also imperatives and "calls for action", not dissimilar to the general tendency to use imperatives on Twitter showed by celebrities (Page 2012), while Clinton did not use any imperatives in her hashtags. The hashtag #ObamacareFailed refers to Obamacare, that is, the Affordable Care Act, the federal program signed by President Barack Obama redesigning the health care system, a program strongly opposed by Republicans. "Drain the swamp" is a metaphor with a very interesting history. The "swamp" originally referred to the fact that the city of Washington, DC was built on a swamp on the Potomac river. Draining a swamp was therefore a necessary action to fight malaria and mosquitos. In modern times, former US President Ronald Reagan was the first to exploit the semantic potential of the phrase and to use it as a metaphor: he did so by associating the swamp with Washington bureaucracy and advocating the need to "drain" it, that is, to eliminate bureaucracy and bad administration from federal government. Trump's call to "drain the swamp" highlights the need to eradicate the influence of career politicians, lobbyists, or, generally, the elite, who are identified as the cause of all evils in US government. The metaphor was introduced by Trump in a speech on 17 October 2016 and became one of his key electoral slogans during the last three weeks of campaign, stressing his populist call to get rid of corruption

from government (Harrington 2016, Sanchez 2016). It is also a striking example of how creative figurative language could be used to promote a successful rhetorical agenda, as both politicians and media observers often discussed Trump's policies by using innovative conceptual blends between the source domain (the swamp) and the target domain (Washington politics) of the metaphor (Berberović and Delibegović Džanić 2017).

Trump's third most frequent hashtag, #BigLeagueTruth, refers to the activities of the so-called "Big League Truth Team", an army of volunteer supporters who Trump launched in early October 2016 to fact-check Clinton during the live debates (Jamieson 2016). Trump's strategy required members who had signed to the Big League Truth Team to retweet or post on Facebook certain messages sent by Trump's team during the debates. The aim was to reach as many people as possible bypassing official media. On the other hand, Clinton's hashtags pointed to inclusiveness and cohesion between the candidate and her supporters (#ImWithHer, #Strongertogether), raised attention on some campaign events (#AlSmithDinner, which refers to the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner, a major annual fundraising event for Catholic charities), or aimed at mobilizing voters in those states, such as Ohio, a key battleground state, where it was possible to cast an absentee ballot before the actual election day (#OHVotesEarly). The relatively small number of Trump's hashtags had the effect of framing the debate much more pointedly and precisely than Clinton's sparse hashtags.

A key aspect of Trump's use of hashtags is their frequent integration within the clausal structure of the post. A very good example is #Draintheswamp, which appears as part of a clause twenty-seven times, and as an isolated hashtag without any role in a clause fifty-one times. It collocates with "time to" fourteen times, stressing the urgency of Trump's appeal to the electors in the upcoming election (see table 2), and is often followed by other hashtags such as #MAGA and #MakeAmericaGreatAgain.

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TABLE 2
Concordance lines for #Draintheswamp as part of clausal structure
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Join me live in Toledo, Ohio. Time to	#DrainTheSwamp	& #MAGA! https://t.co/NU39Mmlh
It is time to	#DrainTheSwamp	https://t.co/U2XeM2vDJK
mp https://t.co/wqqPjxfBoJ Time to	#DrainTheSwamp	in Washington, D.C. and VOTE #Trum
Thank you Minnesota! It is time to	#DrainTheSwamp	& #MAGA! #ICYMI- watch: https://t.co/fVThC7yIL6
RT @TeamTrump: It is time to	#DrainTheSwamp	in Washington, D.C! Vote Nov. 8th to take down the #RIGGED system! https://t.co/Ox9hH13Q9I
.@HillaryClinton- you have failed, failed, and failed. #BigLeagueTruth Time to	#DrainTheSwamp!	https://t.co/c2EiyU8XKK
WikiLeaks emails reveal Podesta urging Clinton camp to 'dump' emails. Time to	#DrainTheSwamp!	
Join me in Wilmington, Ohio tomorrow at 4:00pm! It is time to	#DrainTheSwamp!	Tickets: https://t.co/eCLECM3nmW
Thank you for your incredible support Wisconsin and Governor @ScottWalker! It is time to	#DrainTheSwamp	& #MAGA!… https://t.co/gKBkKmTudn
Pay-to-play. Collusion. Cover-ups. And now bribery? So CROOKED. I will	#DrainTheSwamp	https://t.co/FNzMit7mD8

Landing in Pennsylvania now. Great new poll this morning, thank you. Lets	#DrainTheSwamp	and #MakeAmericaGreatAgain… https://t.co/BV2RFavG84
Join me LIVE on my Facebook page in St. Augustine, Florida! Lets	#DrainTheSwamp	& MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!… https://t.co/mPzVrcaR9L
I will Make Our Government Honest Again -- believe me. But first, I'm going to have to	#DrainTheSwamp	in DC. https://t.co/m1lMAQPnIb

By placing #DrainTheSwamp together with his official slogan, #MAGA or #MakeAmericaGreatAgain, Trump combined his call for the return to a supposedly lost "greatness" of the USA with the moral imperative of cleaning up the corruption of the elite. This rhetorical strategy was also used other times in his campaign, for example in his "Immigration Reform that Will Make America Great Again" (Trump 2016), which was a key part of his manifesto. The parallel structure of these slogans bear the typical sign of the populist simplification of the political space, a simplification which Twitter made even more evident. The inclusion of #Draintheswamp in the syntax of the tweet has the double effect of having a full sentence "calling to action" and, at the same time, of spreading the hashtag at large in Twitter's "searchable talk", thus working very well to define Trump's populist style.

When it is not a grammatical part of a sentence, #Draintheswamp often appears at the end of some attack on Clinton, for example for her use of private emails, functioning as a sort of final, moral commentary on her actions, or to advertise some speech during his campaign trail (Table 3).

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TABLE 3
Examples of concordances of #DrainTheSwamp as a "comment"
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Hillary Clinton wants to create the most liberal Supreme Court in history #debate	#DrainTheSwamp	https://t.co/fKJBNXvluh
Join me in Delaware, Ohio tomorrow at 12:30pm!	#DrainTheSwamp	

In terms of systemic functional linguistics, #DrainTheSwamp can be viewed in its experiential function: literally, it is a material process, with "drain" as a process and "the swamp" as a goal. The agent is Trump himself (e.g. "Pay-to-play. Collusion. Cover-ups. And now bribery? So CROOKED. I will #DrainTheSwamp") or, through a "inclusive we", Trump and his supporters (e.g. "Landing in Pennsylvania now. Great new poll this morning, thank you. Lets #DrainTheSwamp and #MakeAmericaGreatAgain"). By expressing a material process, #DrainTheSwamp is a very concrete and tangible action but, as seen above, it is also a metaphor through which Trump associates his policies with the disposal of harmful animals carrying diseases, such as mosquitos. Animal metaphors usually have the effect of dehumanizing its targets (in Trump's case, Washington's professional politicians and insiders), and of making certain political actions morally acceptable (Musolff 2014). As a material action constituting a metaphor, #Draintheswamp makes Trump's ideational target a very effective part of Trump's discourse against the supposed corruption of Clinton and the political establishment.

Another hashtag which was very effective in defining Trump's populist style was #CrookedHillary (Table 4), an insult and personal attack which was also often used as part of the grammar structure of Trump's tweets, namely as a noun group acting as a participant. The association of Clinton with her supposedly criminal activities was a constant refrain of Trump's last month of campaign, and the word appeared 58 times (including 16 in the hashtag #CrookedHillary) in the data set under exam.

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TABLE 4
Examples of concordances of #CrookedHillary
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	#CrookedHillary	is unfit to serve. https://t.co/bSuGvInNF1
	#CrookedHillary	sending U.S. intelligence info. to Podesta's hacked email is 'unquestionably an OPSEC violation' https://t.co/z58aeo4CO7
	#CrookedHillary	"was at center of negotiating $12M commitment from King Mohammed VI of Morocco" to Clinton Fdn. https://t.co/HWOQ7jQWY2
	#CrookedHillary	is nothing more than a Wall Street PUPPET! #BigLeagueTruth #Debate https://t.co/skhBWG6AQ3
This is what we can expect from	#CrookedHillary	More Taxes. More Spending. #BigLeageTruth #DrainTheSwamp #Debates https://t.co/5yxnt0gNUF
Basically nothing Hillary has said about her secret server has been true.	#CrookedHillary	

Clinton's hashtags, unlike Trump's, rarely enter clausal structures in her tweets (Table 5). Rather, they are often used to index particular events, acting as "searchable talk", for example when debates or other events in her campaign trail are taking place (e.g. #debate, #Debatenight). The high number of hashtags relating to presidential debates (#Debate, #Debates and #DebateNight, for a total of 85 out of 173 hashtags) indicates that the primary function of Twitter for Clinton was that of providing an intermedia framework in support of the events of her campaign rather than setting the media agenda. Rarely do her hashtags hint at specific policy issues, and when they do, they are used only once, as in #EndLeadPoisoningNow or #LatinaEqualPay, the first being a retweet.

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TABLE 5
Examples of concordances in @HillaryClinton
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A	#debate	preview that says it all. https://t.co/vnn4VMByLB
Hillary won tonight. Chip in to help her win on November 8th: https://t.co/b8lLNPWUiM	#debate	
"It's not just about women—[Trump] never apologizes or says he's sorry for anything." —Hillary	#DebateNight	https://t.co/b1FuQDuBrO
It's pretty clear that Vladimir Putin would rather have a puppet in the White House than a president.	#DebateNight	
RT @mayaharris: Hillary is committed to	#EndLeadPoisoningNow	with a bold goal to eliminate lead as a public health threat. #LPPW2016 https…
On average, Latinas make only $0.54 for each $1 white men earn. Time to close that gap.	#LatinaEqualPay	https://t.co/Qk77Lp3GPK

Another aspect of the tweets of @realDonaldTrump which made Trump a much more "authentic" Twitter user is the way he constantly projects his own persona in his tweets. Whether or not he was writing his own tweets – and it is a well-known fact that most of the times he actually did write them, especially the "angry" ones (Oborne and Roberts 2017: xi; Robinson 2016) – Trump almost always used the first person singular pronoun and, for this reason, strengthened the impression of authenticity and immediacy in his communication with his supporters. In the dataset under examination, "thank you", a conversational address, is used by Trump 76 times, and they were all addressed by him personally to various entities, mainly as a metonymy, for example to cities or states where he had just given a speech. On the other hand, Clinton uses "thank you" eight times only, and of these only four are actually written on her behalf, the other four being retweets. The different degree of informality can also be seen by how Trump and Clinton present themselves in the tweets. From the analysis of the data set done with LIWC, it emerges that Trump uses first person singular pronouns much more often than Clinton (1.65% Trump vs 1.08% Clinton), who instead seem to favour first personal plural pronouns, which denote inclusiveness (2.25% Clinton vs 1.52% Trump). Trump's use of first person singular pronouns is also evidence of the typical populist communication, which is centred on the person of the leader (Krämer 2017: 1298). Clinton's voice can instead be heard mainly through quotations from her own speeches included in her tweets. Of the 1044 tweets during the last month before the elections, 144 consisted of quotes from Clinton's own speeches, interviews or statements. She generally uses quotations very often: in her tweets there are 171 quotes from other people such as Barack and Michelle Obama, fellow Democrats (e.g. Elizabeth Warren) or stars (e. g. Beyoncé) endorsing Clinton, while 206 tweets were retweets from other people, in themselves a form of quotation. By quoting her own or other people's words in inverted commas, tweets acted as permutations of previously produced texts without any new content. In other words, Clinton's tweets looked like an exercise in self-validation and a secondary textual arena, used to reference Clinton's own speeches and debates by recontextualizing them, and not as a place in which "original" texts were produced. Indeed, Twitter acted as a sort of online bulletin of what Clinton was saying during her campaign (Table 6). It did not create text; it "recycled" whatever texts had already been produced, as if it had a secondary status compared to traditional media, where the important statements were made. Tweets often seem to be a running commentary on Clinton's or some of her supporter's speeches (Table 7).

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TABLE 6
Examples of quotations from Hillary Clinton's speeches in @HillaryClinton
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"More than 3 million people have already voted, including many of you right here in Ohio."	—Hillary Join them: https://t.co/FGde4kwoHv
"I will defend women's rights to make their own health care decisions."	—Hillary https://t.co/BAbTwyL97U
"Dignity and respect for women and girls is also on the ballot this election."	—Hillary https://t.co/tTgeqxNqYm

_____

TABLE 7
Examples of quotations from external sources in @HillaryClinton
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"Would my son have a place in your America?"	—Khizr Khan, father of a fallen American hero, to Donald Trump https://t.co/TRmSe4qfRr
"Hillary Clinton is a distinctly capable candidate: experienced, serious, schooled, resilient."	—The @NewYorker… https://t.co/QSFiCVsefo

Clearly, Clinton was using Twitter's functions well below their potentialities and, even more important, she did not present her own voice. The quotations from her speeches, published in inverted commas, give the impression of an impersonal style, and they communicated the idea that she was not writing her own tweets. On the other hand, Trump uses quotations only 49 times, or 9,26% of his tweets, and only two of them are indirect quotes from Trump, presented as retweets from the @TeamTrump account. He never quotes from his own speeches or statements as his tweets appear to be written directly by him. Most quotations in Trump's tweets are followed by their source, that is, a URL link to some newspaper article, website or YouTube video which talk about him or against Clinton.

5. Conclusions

In an age dominated by the so-called "TL;DR" (Too long; didn't read), Trump found in Twitter the perfect instrument to spread his populist and anti-elitist message: because of its character limit, Twitter cannot be used to analyse issues at depth, but demands thought and language compression, while its dialogic features and "ambient affiliation" can guarantee maximum resonance. In this sense, Trump's use of Twitter can be seen as part of this contemporary drive to authenticism: politicians present themselves as more sincere than their opponents, and this goes beyond the details or the feasibility of their policies.

Trump's populist narrative on Twitter is evident in certain choices within discourse, especially in his use of hashtags, which are instrumental in embedding political action mainly in terms of attacks upon his opponents. On the other hand, Clinton used Twitter as a sort of bulletin board of her activities on the campaign trail, hardly producing any original text, and thus not developing any strategy to counteract Trump's online rhetoric. Furthermore, Trump's advantage was also due to the specific environment of Twitter as an arena for political communication: as several studies (e. g. Hong and Kim 2016) have proved, on Twitter extreme views and populist language find a more fertile environment than moderate ideas, and political polarization is particularly frequent. In this sense, if "by 'performing' populism, the psychological distance between populist leaders and their followers is reduced and the bonds among followers solidified" (Oliver and Rahn 2016: 192), Twitter was the perfect instrument for Trump to share his language and ideas with an audience which found in the microblogging service the ideal platform to perform their (and Trump's) extreme views.

The analysis of the hashtags used by Trump reveals the apparent paradoxes of both Twitter itself and online populism: as argued by Page (2012) in her discussion of celebrities' hashtags, a social microblogging platform which potentially fosters interactivity and equal communication opportunities is often used asymmetrically and as an instrument to set the agenda. Furthermore, as argued by Moffitt (2016: 55-68), the populist leader has to appear both *of* the people and *beyond* the people, and needs to balance ordinariness and extraordinariness – and Twitter is the perfect instrument for him to do it. Twitter makes the leader's "authenticity" very credible because of its interactivity, accessibility and kind of language used; yet, at the same time, it allows the leader to exercise asymmetric power relations also due to the technical features themselves of the microblogging platform. The language and use of hashtags in Trump's tweets perfectly enact the leader's double nature: because of his language he appears as "one of us", yet at the same time he has the power to set the scene for the "ambient affiliation" in which his followers are called to (political) action.

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