

The “Tiny Hand” of Donald Trump and the Metapragmatics of Typographic Parody

Aurora Donzelli, *Sarah Lawrence College*

Alexandra Powell Bugden, *Independent Scholar*

ABSTRACT

Since his rise to the political stage in 2015, Donald Trump’s heterodox style of self-presentation has stirred heated metapragmatic debates within the American and international public: Was that “locker-room talk,” or abusive speech? Is his verbal irreverence an unacceptable defiance of fundamental principles of interactional ethics, or a brave attempt at reforming contemporary American speech by dismissing the epistemic inaccuracy and moral hypocrisy of political correctness? This article engages these debates by analyzing an ingenious form of typographic parody that recently appeared on digital social media. Modeled on Trump’s handwriting, the font “Tiny Hand” operates on multiple metapragmatic levels. First, the font’s childlike shapes establish an iconic connection between Trump’s hand(writing) and his brain, which, incapable of adult reasoning, generates dangerously infantile political decisions. Second, as a replica of Trump’s handwriting, the font parodies the president’s habit of correcting journalists with handwritten marginalia, thus speaking back to his attempts at silencing the press. Third, Tiny Hand works as a counter-meta-parody of the president’s political incorrectness. Finally, by evoking the parodies of Trump’s allegedly diminutive hands (and implicitly small penis) that circulated during the electoral race, the font operates as an inside joke addressed at and indexical of Trump’s counterpublic.

Contemporary political discourse (and electoral politics in particular) in the United States and elsewhere appears saturated by explicit commentaries on and implicit allusions to how language should be used. This

Contact the primary author, Aurora Donzelli, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Lawrence College, 1 Mead Way, Bronxville, NY 10708 (adonzelli@sarahlawrence.edu).

An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 117th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Jose, CA, as part of the panel “The Metapragmatics of Political Talk.” We thank the organizers—Dana Osborne and Katherine Martineau—for the opportunity to participate in this event. We are

Signs and Society, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 2019). © 2019 by Semiosis Research Center at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. All rights reserved. 2326-4489/2019/0702-0004\$10.00

reflexive preoccupation with the appropriate use of language and the related use of language “to referentially objectify language use” (Errington 1998, 118) is what linguistic anthropologists—following Silverstein (1976, 1993)—call metapragmatics. Far from being the exclusive prerogative of spin doctors (and linguistic anthropological scholars), metapragmatic debates pervade the contemporary public sphere.¹ Political candidates’ linguistic and semiotic conduct is in fact often under laypersons’ scrutiny. The attention to style, form, and manner—what Lempert and Silverstein (2012, xii) call “the *how* . . . of politicians’ communicative behavior”—often overshadows the “substance” of political debate or what candidates have to say about unemployment, foreign politics, health-care reform, and so on.

The long-standing metapragmatic inclination of American public discourse has been enhanced by Donald Trump’s largely unexpected appearance in the nation’s presidential race. Since his rise to the political stage in 2015, Trump has stirred moral panics and mass-mediated controversies concerning his heterodox style of self-presentation, and, accordingly, he has received remarkable attention from linguistic and cultural anthropologists.² Trump’s language has triggered heated metapragmatic debates that have polarized the American and the international public: Was that “locker-room talk,” a benign joke, or abusive speech? Is his verbal irreverence an unacceptable defiance of fundamental principles of interactional ethics, or a brave attempt at reforming contemporary American speech by dismissing the epistemic inaccuracy and moral hypocrisy underlying the discourse of political correctness?

This article approaches these questions—together with the larger question of why Trump is popular—through the somewhat tangential perspective of a new typeface. Tiny Hand, as the innovative font has been named, was invented to expose and scorn Trump’s “message,”³ criticize his treatment of the press, and mobilize political opposition against him. Modeled on Trump’s handwriting

grateful to Tiny Hand designer Mark Davis for providing us with further insight on the font and for allowing us to use the images in figs. 1, 5, and 8. A special acknowledgment goes to Asif Agha for the comments he provided as panel discussant.

1. See, e.g., Duranti (2006); Boyer and Yurchak (2010); Hill (2000); Fleming and Lempert (2011); Alim and Smitherman (2012); Lempert and Silverstein (2012); Hall et al. (2016); McGranahan (2017); Silverstein (2017).

2. See, among the others, Hall et al. (2016); Lempert and Silverstein (2016); Lempert (2018); McIntosh (2017); Mendoza-Denton (2017); Rosa and Bonilla (2017); Silverstein (2017); Stolee and Caton (2018); and Adam Hodges’s “Trumped Up Words” columns in *Anthropology News*.

3. Within the technical lexicon of political media advisors and spin doctors, the term *message* is used to refer to “the politician’s publicly imaginable ‘character’ presented to an electorate, with a biography and a moral profile crafted out of issues rendered of interest in the public sphere” (Lempert and Silverstein 2012, 1).

(see fig. 1), Tiny Hand offers a form of mimetic parody of the president's moral and linguistic style of self-presentation.

By graphically "enregistering" Donald Trump's "voice" (Agha 2003, 2005), Tiny Hand produces a visual impression of Trump's political persona and a metapragmatic cross-modal critique of his semiotic and political behavior, specifically targeting the president's hyperbolic style, his antagonism to the basic norms of political correctness, and his censorial attitudes vis-à-vis the free press. As we will argue, through the use of specific typographic signifiers—namely, letterforms replicating Trump's own calligraphy—the creators of Tiny Hand aim at producing a mimetic parody of Trump's handwriting and politics, while at the same time enhancing the visibility of his detractors through a typographic technology (i.e., a freely downloadable font) that, once used on digital social media to compose virtual catchphrases and slogans for protest signs to display at real-life demonstrations, could give material salience to Trump's counterpublic within the visually oriented arenas that constitute the contemporary hypermediatized public sphere.

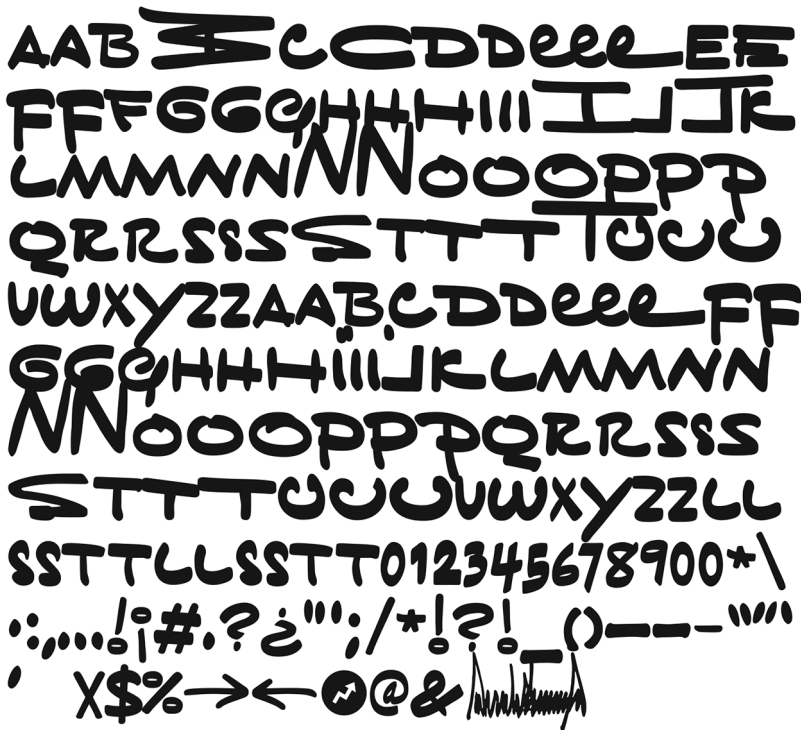


Figure 1. Sample of Tiny Hand font. Courtesy of Mark Davis.

Conceived as a “physiognomic typeface,” that is, a font whose graphic properties are external traces of their author’s inner consciousness, the font’s child-like shapes establish an iconic connection between Trump’s hand(writing) and brain, which is represented as incapable of adult reasoning and, thus, responsible for dangerously infantile political decisions. At the same time, as a mimetic reproduction of Trump’s handwriting and as a diluted version of his ignominious jokes about physical deformities (as in his personal attacks of reporter Serge Kovaleski),⁴ Tiny Hand is evocative both of the president’s politically incorrect comments about disability and of his repressive use of handwritten marginalia to openly criticize journalists’ articles (see fig. 5). Thus, similar to “Mock Spanish” (Hill 1999), Tiny Hand operates through a “dual indexicality,” at once denigrating its imaginary author/source (Trump) and elevating his counterpublic. But before developing our analysis, a brief (and by no means exhaustive) account of the main features of Trump’s discursive style is in order.⁵

Trump’s Language in Its Metapragmatic Context

Between the spring and the winter of 2016, a few different meme artists created—through an independent and yet coordinated process, as is often the case with viral Internet content—what came to be known as “the increasingly verbose meme.”⁶ This meme template consists of a multiframe image, in which the same referent is replicated three or four times with poorer graphical fidelity but increasingly verbose textual captions.

What is interesting about this meme is that it enacts a relationship of inverse proportionality between the referential clarity of the image, the lexical density of the accompanying text, and the progressively diluted illocutionary force of the textual utterance. For example, in one of its most emblematic instantiations—the overly verbose “Are ya ready kids?” meme (see fig. 2)—we see a picture of a children’s cartoon captain accompanied by the phrase “Are ya ready kids?”

Next, we see a hand-drawn, blurry picture of the captain and the text: “Are you all prepared, children?” Finally, an almost unrecognizable and poorly drawn captain image is juxtaposed with the caption: “Are you, a group of young people

4. See Hall et al. (2016, 86–88) for a description of this ill-famed episode.

5. Hall et al. (2016, 79) suggest that one of the key elements of Trump’s success is that he “makes people laugh, even if they are not laughing at the same thing.” Trump’s stern antipolitical correct discursive style is—according to Hall et al. (2016, 79)—produced through an ingenious blend of “strong image projection . . . comedic gestures . . . histrionic facial expressions . . . sarcasm . . . packaged comedic routines.”

6. An account of how the meme came into being is available at <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/increasingly-verbose-memes>. We thank Leo Rochicchioli for drawing our attention to this meme.



"Are ya ready kids?"



"Are you all prepared, children?"



"Are you, a group of young people both male and female who are too young to be considered adults, prepared for the following unspecified actions?"

Figure 2. "Are ya ready kids?" meme (<https://knowyourmeme.com/>)

both male and female who are too young to be considered adults, prepared for the following unspecified actions?" The more elaborate the text, the less clear the image, and the weaker the illocutionary force of the statement. This meme gestures toward larger concerns about language and politics, providing an implicit metapragmatic commentary on the risks of epistemic inaccuracy and moral hypocrisy that allegedly stem from the discursive imperatives of political correctness. "We live in a generation of emotionally weak people"—declaims another meme belonging to the different (and yet related) "fuck your feelings" thread—everything has to be watered down because it's offensive, including the truth." The increasingly verbose meme exists as part of the recent trend of mockery and criticism against "delicate liberal snowflakes" and "whiny, thin-skinned cry-babies" (McIntosh 2017, 1).⁷ More specifically, this meme thread offers a metapragmatic and metasemiotic parody of the growing tendency of speaking with

7. As Janet McIntosh (2017) convincingly illustrates, the "regime of linguistic insensitivity" that provides the metapragmatic context for these memes has largely originated from the United States Military. Drawing on the notion of "semiotic callousing" (5), McIntosh provides a fascinating account of the intertextual links between a subgenre of military talk (verbal drills) and Trump supporters' speech. Like the boot camps' linguistic drills, aimed at training recruits to "man up" and prepare for combat (4), the anti-PC rhetoric of Trump's supporters is aimed at "schooling liberals to harden up for the nation" (7).

periphrastic circumlocutions and through an overly indirect language. Put differently, in line with the recent upsurge against politically correct rhetoric as the enactment of a liberal regime of linguistic-cum-emotional hypersensitivity, the “increasingly verbose meme” materializes the metapragmatic anxiety concerning the weakening of language’s illocutionary force—an anxiety that constituted the discursive backdrop of Donald Trump’s candidacy and election.

Unsurprisingly, several memes in the thread—which probably deserve to be the subject of an essay themselves—are explicitly about Trump.⁸ The meme below (see fig. 3), for example, produces a graphic-cum-textual enregisterment of Trump’s talk. The first frame shows a picture of the presidential candidate accompanied by his signature adjectival expletive “Wrong!” The next image is a well-drawn portrait of Donald Trump, complemented by a longer and more elaborate utterance: “The statement is incorrect!” The third and last portion of the meme shows how the efficacy of the negative qualifier “Wrong!” has extended itself into four lines of text, which are accordingly associated with a poorly drawn image of Donald.

If, as Agha (2003, 231) explains, enregisterment consists of “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms,” the increasingly verbose meme operates as a potent technology for the enregisterment of a public figure’s individual voice. By syntagmatically—in a Saussurean sense—juxtaposing what became one of Trump’s signature utterances during presidential debates (“Wrong!”) with diluted versions of the same speech act, which instead conform to the principles of politically correct discourse, the meme effectively conveys both Trump’s discursive style and the larger metalinguistic preoccupations crisscrossing American public discourse (see Fleming and Lempert 2011). Aside from rendering Trump’s register clearly identifiable and recognizable, the meme expresses concerns about the referential function of language and its capacity to convey a transparent representation of the world and of the speaker’s intentions.

Aside from his highly controversial policies and equally controversial uses of executive powers, Trump has attracted a fair share of attention for his dis-

8. See, e.g., the “Make America Great Again” meme at <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1204105-increasingly-verbose-memes>; the “Grab them by the pussy” meme at <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1223385-increasingly-verbose-memes>; and the “We need to build a wall” meme at <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1204566-increasingly-verbose-memes>.



Wrong!



The statement is
incorrect!



I am responding in a
condescending and swift manner
by forcefully telling you that your
assertion is fallacious!

Figure 3. Wrong! meme (<https://knowyourmeme.com/>)

tinctive discursive style and for his capacity to make it recognizable, through the recurrent use of clusters of discursive features, such as:

1. A marked use of overt performative verbs and, in particular, the deployment of commissives (i.e., "I promise," "I swear," "I assure") not so much to convey a self-directed obligation to a future course of action (as commissives normally do; see Searle [1965] 2000; Hill 2000) but rather as illocutionary markers (i.e., performative epistemic modals) to express epistemic commitment to the truth of propositional content of the sentence.⁹ Used in conjunction with mental-state verbs in the imperative form (i.e., "believe me"), these pragmatic features produce a speaking subject who

9. See Halliday (1970); Lyons (1977); Verstraete (2001).

has both cognitive and pragmatic control of the world (i.e., I know how things are and act accordingly).

2. A distinctive use of adjectival elliptical phrases (i.e., “Sad!”; “Wrong!”) or hyperbolic statements, both aimed at suggesting a straightforward and candid personality, capable of assertive stance-taking acts.
3. A recurrent deployment of copular clauses, that is, predicate nominal constructions made of two nominal elements joined by the copular verb *be*. When he utters statements such as “ISIS are terrorists,” or “Mexican are rapists,” that is, when he uses copular structures to convey ideological representations of certain entities,¹⁰ Trump at once manages to conceal the ideological coefficient of his statements and to present himself as a matter-of-fact/trenchant speaking subject firmly against “the ineptitude wrought by political correctness, which in his view keeps politicians from speaking the truth and doing the right thing” (Hall et al. 2016, 86).

These three major clusters of discursive features have contributed to Trump’s success as a populist presidential candidate in that they seem to respond to sweeping metalinguistic preoccupations traversing the American public discourse, promising to offer a “solution” to the diffuse sense that words have departed from their referents. In contrast to the overly cautionary approach embraced by advocates of political correctness, Trump’s performatives convey a clear indication of his intentions, establishing him as a highly agentive politician with strong claims to the truth value of his utterances. At the same time, contrary to the allegedly unassertive rhetoric of American liberals, his adjectival phrases, hyperbolic statements, and copular predicational clauses seem to contain the promise of a linguistic reform toward new standards of transparency and straightforwardness and against the “hypocritical” and “useless” circumlocutions demanded by the moral and epistemic standards of political correctness. It is against this larger metapragmatic context that we need to situate the invention of the Tiny Hand font.

10. In her taxonomy of copular clauses, Higgins (1979), distinguished two major categories of equative and predicational clauses, which differ from identification and specificational clauses. Equative (which linguists also call equational) clauses establish an equivalence between two entities. In standard English, such constructions are formed through the copular verb *be*, which combines a referential nominal element and a predicative expression. Equative clauses form a minimal predicational unit aimed at asserting “that a particular entity (the subject of the clause) is identical to the entity specified in the predicate nominal, for example, *He is my father*” (Payne 1997, 114). Predicational clauses are sometimes distinguished from equative clauses (see Higgins 1979, 204–93), in that they provide additional information by indicating that an entity (generally a referential noun phrase) is included in a class, such as in *John is a teacher*.

Tiny Hand: A Reflexively Politically Incorrect Slur Turned Typeface

It is January 21, 2017, and a crowd of 1.3 million people has joined the Women's March on Washington to protest the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the forty-fifth president of the United States. At the intersection of Independence Avenue and 7th Street the crowd is becoming restless, after hours of waiting for the march to commence. The street is so densely packed that some protesters have fled the crowd to climb trees, telephone poles, portable toilets, and buildings, while others have been carted off in ambulances. The main stage is far away. The speeches delivered by the march's founders are almost inaudible and so are the songs performed by the pop stars—including Alicia Keys and Madonna—who joined the protest. The crowd can hear only the faint reverberation of amplifiers in the distance. Against this blurry sonic backdrop, stark graphics on homemade posters, signs, and banners stand out.

Bright, expletive-laden, and carefully crafted, the protest signs address a seemingly impossible range of political issues, from birth control to terrorism. Interestingly, a number of posters have been printed in Comic Sans. What's more, some feature explicitly metapragmatic statements such as "Donald Trump Uses Comic Sans" and "Comic Sans President." Other protest signs display a visually distinctive typeface. Somewhat similar to, yet clearly distinguishable from, Comic Sans, the font is characterized by an odd mixture of capital and lowercase letters and by outlandish and looping shapes. As with Comic Sans, this new font is endowed with a calligraphic feel. However, contrary to the generic handwritten quality typical of Comic Sans, the signatures and superimposed images that appear on the posters clearly suggest that the unidentified font—which as we later discovered goes by the name Tiny Hand—aims at representing the handwriting of a specific individual: Donald Trump.

In a recent piece on graphic ideologies, Murphy (2017) discussed the moral panics triggered by the use of a Comic Sans PowerPoint presentation to convey the results on the Higgs boson discovery. Aside from being reminiscent of "low-prestige comic strips" (70)—a genre that is clearly at odds with the serious register and the adult audience presupposed by the presentation of an important scientific discovery—Comic Sans's iconic connection with handwriting, mediated by the font's soft edges and rounded lines, is generally understood as indicating "silliness, childish naiveté, irreverence" (71).

The Tiny Hand font mobilizes a similar network of semiotic associations. Indeed, handwritten memos signed with Trump's name constitute a sort of metatypographic critique of both Donald Trump's politics and his discursive style. Tiny Hand realizes a form of mimetic parody, mimicking Trump's own

voice and calligraphy, while giving typographic voice to his counterpublic (Warner 2002). In fact, this highly reflexive font operates through a somewhat politically incorrect mockery on Trump's own political incorrectness. Originating from the now famous (within American public discourse) mockery of Trump's allegedly diminutive hand size, the font lives through a series of intertextual references to the highly stratified repertoire of jokes, puns, and pranks that developed out of the humorous criticism of Trump's allegedly tiny hands.

Since 2015, the hands of Donald Trump have received a fair share of attention from the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, *TIME*, the *New Yorker*, *Al Jazeera*, *CNN*, the *Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, the *Daily Mail*, *VICE*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.¹¹ Trump's hands have also been featured, in dedicated segments, on *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, *Ellen*, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, and *Saturday Night Live*.¹² Trump's hands also became the focus of anthropological analysis. In an article explaining Trump's success as stemming from his ability to blur the boundaries between politics and the entertainment industry, Hall et al. (2016, 77–79) analyzed how Trump's bodily displays created intertextual connections between his celebrity businessman persona and his political self in order to enhance his coefficient of likability, with comedic outcomes, as in the case of the pistol/"you're fired" gesture.

The tiny hand trope and font seem to have originated from Trump's habit of bullying his opponents by criticizing their bodies and physical appearances. In this sense, Tiny Hand's (the font's) comic effect presupposes some knowledge of the pranks through which Trump has mocked his targets, be they Hillary Clinton, reporter Serge Kovaleski, his Republican competitor Jeb Bush, or whomever. In a sense, the discourse on Trump's small hands works as a counter-

11. See, e.g., <https://nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/03/04/donald-trump-on-why-he-defended-the-size-of-his-hands-and-more/>; <https://theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/06/trumps-hands-are-weapons-of-war/487652/>; http://time.com/4539487/donald-trump-small-hands/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+time%2Ftopstories+%28TIME%3A+Top+Stories%29; <https://aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/01/small-hands-big-missiles-trump-dangerous-adolescence-170109061803090.html>; <https://cnn.com/2016/03/08/health/trump-small-hands-penis/index.html>; <https://theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/03/donald-trump-hand-display-madame-tussaud-wax-museum>; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3722336/The-Donald-s-actual-hand-size-revealed.html>; https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-handprint-size_us_57a23518e4b0104052a0cf68; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/are-donald-trumps-teeny-tiny-hands-harming-his-presidential-chan/>; <https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/yes-donald-trumps-hands-are-smaller-than-those-of-85-per-cent-of-american-men-20160808-gqnj0a.html>.

12. See, e.g., https://youtu.be/DnpO_RTSNmQ; <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2016/03/08/donald-trump-baby-hands-ellen-degeneres-video/81479826/>; <http://digg.com/video/stephen-colbert-charlotte>; and <https://youtu.be/fY2jTTPZFnc>.

metaparody of his political incorrectness; by picking a relatively unusual body part and physical target, Trump's critics have developed a parallel (and relatively harmless) version of Trump's indecent bullying tactics. At the same time, by producing a mildly politically incorrect parody of Trump's blatantly incorrect behavior, the references to Trump's small hands (see fig. 4) become an inside joke understandable by, and indexical of, Trump's counterpublic.

The origin of this reflexively politically incorrect and somewhat benevolent slur-turned-typeface can be traced back to the late 1980s, when Graydon Carter—then editor of the New York satirical magazine *Spy*—published the first critique of the size, shape, and proportionality of Donald Trump's hands. More than twenty-five years later, this seemingly arbitrary line of critique resurfaced to feature prominently in the Republican primaries. In 2016, Senator Marco Rubio made a comment that linked the (allegedly diminutive) size of Trump's hands to both the size of his phallus and the deficiencies of his character (see also Hall et al. 2016, 76). During an early campaign speech, Rubio attempted to rile up a crowd with an innuendo: "And you know what they say about men with small hands [meaningful pause], you can't trust them!" Trump responded in kind, dedicating several minutes of a campaign rally to a refutation of the accusation. As he did during his first press conference as president-elect, theatrically pointing to a stack of manila folders placed on the table next to the podium as a way to give physical evidence of his commitment to distancing himself from his business interests (see Hodges 2017a, 2017b), Trump responded to the allegations



Figure 4. Trump small hands caricature. Courtesy of Isaac Woodbury High.

concerning his supposedly small hands through an appeal to an evidential regime of visible proofs: “Look at these hands, aren’t they beautiful? I have very powerful hands, very large hands [. . .] and a politician said I didn’t have large hands. That’s the first time anyone’s ever said that one” (CNN).¹³

But the tiny hands myth has posed a threat to Trump’s public image for some time. In a written statement for the *New York Post* in 2011, Trump claimed, “My fingers are long and beautiful, as, it has been well documented, are other parts of my body.”¹⁴ By making explicit the link between the hands and the penis, a connection his opponents had only implicitly hinted at, Trump made clear that he was comfortable with fraternity-like humor and with the raunchy “small hands” attacks on his masculine public persona. But Graydon Carter, now editor of *Vanity Fair*, insisted on recasting the discourse on Trump’s hands to reflect the politician’s infantile nature. After Trump announced his presidential bid, Carter (2015) published this reflection:

Like so many bullies, Trump has skin of gossamer. He thinks nothing of saying the most hurtful thing about someone else, but when he hears a whisper that runs counter to his own vainglorious self-image, he coils like a caged ferret. Just to drive him a little bit crazy, I took to referring to him as a “short-fingered vulgarian” in the pages of *Spy* magazine. That was more than a quarter of a century ago. To this day, I receive the occasional envelope from Trump. There is always a photo of him—generally a tear sheet from a magazine. On all of them he has circled his hand in gold Sharpie in a valiant effort to highlight the length of his fingers. I almost feel sorry for the poor fellow because, to me, the fingers still look abnormally stubby. The most recent offering arrived earlier this year, before his decision to go after the Republican presidential nomination. Like the other packages, this one included a circled hand and the words, also written in gold Sharpie: “See, not so short!” I sent the picture back by return mail with a note attached, saying, “Actually, quite short.”

Once Trump’s campaign had begun to gain momentum, Carter, appealing once again to the evidential regime of visible and tangible proofs, published samples of these handwritten notes on the *Vanity Fair* website in an attempt to undermine the candidate (see fig. 5).

These documents serve as evidence of Trump’s attempts to silence, intimidate, and correct the press. They also highlight Carter’s characterization of

13. See, e.g., <https://youtu.be/ccxH6nQRqEI>.

14. Donald Trump, quoted in Maureen Callahan, “Trump Card,” *New York Post*, April 3, 2011.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar: This is the difference between Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders

Watch how they conduct their campaigns.



By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar September 2 at 7:45 AM

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the NBA's all-time leading scorer, is a former culture ambassador for the United States and the author of several bestselling books. His latest novel, "Mycroft Holmes," comes out this month.

Ernest Hemingway once said that courage was "grace under pressure." Two presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, have recently tested this proposition. And how each man responded revealed the type of person he is and the type of president he would make: Trump ignored his own dignity and Sanders opened himself up to new possibilities as a compassionate, peaceloving and serious candidate for president.

Here's where it went fatally wrong for Trump. During the GOP caucus on Feb. 16, when Megyn Kelly famously queried him about his attitude toward women (whom he has called "the pigs," "bitches," and "wild animals") he hit back by threatening the questioner: "I've been very nice to you, although I could probably make a lot of things not be, based on the way you have treated me. But I wouldn't do that."

Bad enough to threaten women in this way, but the especially insidious political crime here: attacking the First Amendment's protection of a free press by menacing journalists. "I wouldn't do that," he said coyly. If you wouldn't do it, why bring up the question? For a better reason than to vilify other journalists who might want to ask tough but reasonable questions. In 2011, when I learned that a leader in another country was threatening reporters, we would be outraged. Not here. Not right here. Right now.

Later, after Trump had blamed her attitude on her menstrual cycle, Kelly went on what was supposed to be a planned vacation. Nevertheless, Trump suggested she may have been in the cause. What kind of excuse does he take credit for bullying the media? And last week, Trump allowed a television reporter Jorge Rivas to be ejected from a press conference for asking questions about immigration without being called upon. Rivas was later readmitted and permitted to ask about immigration, during which he said Trump could do more to support immigrants compassionately. "I have a bigger heart than you do," Trump replied. Trump's non-spectacular answer to the question ended with a personal insult directed at the reporter.

Trump's vendetta against the press extended to the Des Moines Register. When the paper issued an editorial calling

Figure 5. A handwritten note from Donald Trump to journalist Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Ben King and Mark Davis used samples like this one to create Tiny Hand. Courtesy of Mark Davis.

Trump as a "a bully" with "skin of gossamer," who reacts emotionally, and with childlike cruelty, when journalists attempt to undermine his "vainglorious self-image." By publishing and critiquing these documents, Carter drew a connection between the childishness of Trump's handwriting and the dangerously infantile nature of his political decisions. And, perhaps most importantly, by publishing these documents, Carter set in motion a chain of events that led to the creation of the Tiny Hand font, which was designed by Mark Davis using handwriting samples that had been made public by Carter and other disgruntled journalists.

On October 18, 2016, *BuzzFeed*—a New York online media company that specializes in viral content—announced the release of its first independently developed typeface: Tiny Hand. In an article titled “Tiny Hand Will Be Your New Comic Sans,” Ben King, deputy design director of *BuzzFeed News*, explained the origins of the typographic project. While editing a satirical piece on Donald Trump’s notes from the second presidential debate, King searched for “cues” that might “provide a visual identity for the story” and stumbled upon several examples of Donald Trump’s “eccentric handwriting style.” Enthralled, King began to hunt for more digital evidence of Trump’s idiosyncratic script. In the process, he cataloged its material properties: cartoonish, with strangely proportioned letters, inconsistent capitalization and a strange slant. “I was struck by the way [he] writes the alphabet,” wrote King. “At that moment it was clear to me . . . I *had* to make a font based on Donald Trump’s handwriting” (King 2016).

With the help of typographer and designer Mark Davis, *BuzzFeed News* produced King’s brainchild. Thus, three weeks before Election Day, a nearly exact replica of Donald J. Trump’s handwriting was digitized and made available for free download across the globe. Tiny Hand was childlike, with bold, looping lines reminiscent of Walt Disney merchandise and comic book covers. Immediately, the font established an iconic connection between Trump’s hand(writing) and brain; the naive letterforms emphasized the infantile nature of his thought processes.

Like much of *BuzzFeed*’s viral content, Tiny Hand circulated rapidly and widely in the digital sphere. As design websites and political blogs picked up the story of the unlikely typeface, they reproduced Davis’s original samples of the Tiny Hand alphabet. One of Davis’s graphics featured the words *I Have The Best Words* in white text over a red background, iconic of the Make America Great Again baseball cap. Another parody took the form of a fictitious memo, penned on the gold-embossed stationery of the Trump Organization, calling for “a galactic stop and frisk.”

Thus, upon its release, Tiny Hand gave (typographic) voice to the outraged liberal public, whose indignation at Trump’s bullying behavior and open defiance of interactional fair play had left it nearly speechless—as evidenced by the reluctance of journalists to even quote the infamous “Grab ’em by the pussy” statement.¹⁵ Instead of articulating their disapproval of Trump’s words and con-

15. See, e.g., <https://youtu.be/urFwrG-8Mwc> and <https://youtu.be/VKMGRPVXdT0>. For an analysis of the political sociality of moral outrage, see McGranahan (2017).

duct through explicit discourse, Trump’s detractors could now avail themselves of Tiny Hand as a multidimensional semiotic resource to develop creative forms of visual satire and implicit metapragmatic commentary. Tiny Hand, in a sense, offered American liberals the opportunity to confront Trump on an equal discursive battleground. Its deployment as a weapon of political dissent is in a way similar to the Baby Trump balloon that was flown in London in July 2018, during the president’s visit,¹⁶ and to the large naked statues made to depict “Trump’s grotesque body” that appeared, after the Republican primaries, in a number of public places around the country, which Hall and colleagues (2016, 93) interpreted as “an attempt to confront Trump with his own comedic weaponry.” But let’s now look more closely at how Tiny Hand has been used and at the semiotic ideologies in which the font is embedded.

The Graphic Enregisterment of a Physiognomic Typeface

In his analysis of code-switching in Java, Joseph Errington (1998, 119) discusses a form of “unframed direct reported speech,” characteristic of (but not limited to) Javanese conversational life, which he called “speech modeling” or “thought modeling.” Speech (or thought) modeling—explains Errington (117)—occurs “when speakers voice or model words which are somehow ‘not their own.’” Similar to the phenomenon of “double voicing” discussed by Russian literary critics Voloshinov (1986) and Bakhtin (1981) in relation to the language of novels,¹⁷ speech modeling sits in between the binary opposition of “indirect reported speech” and “direct reported speech,” and, in fact, double voicing is often compared to the narrative mechanism called free indirect speech or, in French, *style libre indirect* (Bally 1912). As Errington (1998, 119) points out, “speech modelings differ crucially from indirect and direct reported speech in that they commonly lack overt, framing metapragmatic material, and so are not obligatorily bipartite in structure.” We argue that as a faithful replica of Trump’s handwriting, Tiny Hand operates like a markedly inconspicuous quotative device—one that enables its users to ventriloquize Trump’s words and thoughts, while simultaneously distancing themselves from them. As a free downloadable font, Tiny Hand thus provides a voicing structure, which enables its users to link anything that one writes in it to Trump’s own speech.

Tiny Hand in fact so closely resembled Donald Trump’s handwriting that it seems to possess or embody certain qualities of his persona; thus, social actors

16. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out to us this detail.

17. According to Bakhtin (1981, 324) *double-voiced discourse* is a discourse that “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions.”

view every use of the typeface as an opportunity to briefly inhabit Trump's consciousness, or, put differently, to animate his thoughts and expose the absurdity of his attitudes. As Asif Agha (2018) points out, any text printed in Tiny Hand can now be linked to speech "whose mock author and mock principal is Donald Trump."

Once the font was made available for free download, people used Tiny Hand to transcribe real, exaggerated, and imagined quotations from the 2016 campaign cycle and thus attempted to undermine Trump's words in his own handwriting. In this sense, the kind of mimetic parody realized through this implicitly subversive typeface is reminiscent of a late Soviet era genre called *stiob*, which—as Boyer and Yurchak (2010) point out—has recently gained traction in the late capitalist media sphere in America. Ranging from newspaper articles to propagandistic posters that could almost mistakenly pass for genuine, the ironic aesthetics of late socialist *stiob* operated through a form of hyperrealistic imitation, which lacked any overt metapragmatic indication of its ironic procedure. In a similar way to the "straight," "deep caricatures" that emerged in the socialist public culture of the 1970s and 1980s (2010, 181), Tiny Hand usually does not openly signal its own parodic purpose. The journalists and meme artists who use the font often simply reproduce Trump's statements without commentary. Tiny Hand thus shares many features characteristic of *stiob* aesthetics both in the late socialist world and in contemporary late liberal public discourse. Like the examples of American *stiob* provided by Boyer and Yurchak (2010)—Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*, Stephen Colbert's *The Colbert Report*, as well as Sacha Baron Cohen's characters Ali G, Borat, and Brüno, alongside his new repertoire of pranks in his 2018 series *Who Is America?*—Tiny Hand operates through the quasi-paradoxical combination of overidentification and disalignment, or, more precisely, through the achievement of distance through mimetic reanimation.

Figure 6, for example, shows how an actual claim that Trump made in 2011 for the *New York Post* was reproduced stylistically in Tiny Hand and superimposed on a photograph of Trump to highlight the childishness of the comment and, more generally, to underscore the metapragmatic inappropriateness of Trump's linguistic behavior. Through a multimodal quote of Trump's words and calligraphy, the image implicitly undermines the comment and Trump himself. Instead of reflexively distancing themselves from Donald Trump's heterodox linguistic behavior through discursive critique, Tiny Hand users engage what Errington (1998) calls speech and thought modeling to disalign themselves from it. Working as a stance-taking device, the font produces a minimally cued



Figure 6. Tiny Hand as American Stioib, targeting the inappropriateness of Trump's comments through the silent materiality of the typeface. Courtesy of Gage Skidmore.

semiquote of Trump's words and thoughts and enables its users to highlight Trump's deviant metapragmatic behavior and the absurdity of his political positions and thought processes. In alignment with a regime of visual evidentiality where information acquired through seeing (the manila folders, the large hands, etc.) is made ideologically salient, Tiny Hand users deploy the font to provide physical evidence of Trump's stylistic and semantic inappropriateness and thus make the incredible tangible. As a mediatized graphic artifact circulating in a potentially endless variety of contexts, the font thus becomes a semiotic framework for articulating multidimensional and cross-modal commentaries on Trump's political message and persona.

As discussed in recent analyses of graphic ideologies (Murphy 2017 and n.d.; Donzelli n.d.), besides being imbued with social, moral, and cultural meanings, fonts, logos, and graphic artifacts are always embedded within larger semiotic ideologies (Keane 2003) that regiment how users conceive the relations between signs and their referents. We argue that the semiotic ideology underlying Tiny Hand is reminiscent of the principles of folk graphology. Contrary to the view—shared by several graphic designers (see Donzelli n.d.)—that postulates an arbitrary connection between the typographic signifier and the immaterial signified, this perspective considers the graphic sign as determined by the subject/writer's consciousness and personality. According to this perspective, the font's childlike shapes become iconic of Trump's immature mind, which, incapable of adult reasoning, generates dangerously infantile political decisions. For example, by drawing attention to Trump's potentially dangerous environmental pol-

icy agenda, the use of Tiny Hand in the image below (see fig. 7) iconizes (Irvine and Gal 2000) an imaginary connection between Trump's small hands, his childish handwriting, and his (tiny) brain. Produced by Union of Concerned Scientists, a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based environmental nonprofit organization, the image uses Tiny Hand (as well as comedic visual allusions to Trump's characteristic Coca Cola habit and Twitter addiction) as evidence of the president's immaturity and incompetence.

Typeface choices are never neutral but are inevitably "complicit in a range of cultural projects along various affective, ideological, and even political dimensions" (Murphy 2017, 66). Tiny Hand is no exception. However, unlike the



Figure 7. Trump's dangerous agenda, as imagined by Union of Concerned Scientists. Courtesy of Union of Concerned Scientists (design by Allison Slattery/House 9 Design).

more conventional typefaces that have been gradually endowed with an “anthropomorphized material identity” (Murphy 2017, 72), Tiny Hand is characterized by a physiognomic quality that construes it as a font that at once contains, reveals, and projects features of Trump’s personality and consciousness. Common typefaces are in fact generally perceived as associated with a certain “voice” (Childers and Jass 2002) or “personality” (Mackiewicz 2005), or, to reference Agha (2003, 38), through their social and material use, typefaces become enregistered as indexical of socially constructed stereotypical personalities or “social types.” Times New Roman is academic, Arial is unassuming, and so on. By contrast, Tiny Hand was designed to be, from the outset, an extension of Donald Trump’s persona and personality. While it may be argued that the difference between the social types associated with conventional fonts and the stylized individual personality projected through Tiny Hand is negligible, the process of enregisterment of conventional fonts substantially differs from that of Tiny Hand. The formers undergo a process of stereotypic association of “particular forms of speech [or typeface] with commonplace value distinctions (e.g., good vs. bad speech, upper-class vs. lower-class speech), which are known to a large number of speakers” (Agha 2007, 15); the latter entails becoming embedded in an “emergent” order of co-occurring signs and references (Agha 2007, 16). In the case of standard fonts, stereotypical emblems and typified cultural, social, and political meanings have become gradually associated with the formal features of the font in question, which, much like Velcro, have become progressively imbued with socially meaningful tones and cultural connotations. Tiny Hand, instead, has been conceived from the outset to be a metonymic anthropomorphic figuration of Trump. Originally conceived to be a loud, cartoonish, unrefined, and even crass typographic icon of Trump’s (loud, cartoonish, unrefined, and crass) personality, Tiny Hand was preemptively designed to perform the transformation of Trump’s individuality and singular discursive persona into a social type. Put differently, Tiny Hand’s “social effects are mediated by emergent features of current semiotic activity” (Agha 2007, 16).

Graphic designers and other metasemiotic experts such as Brownlee (2016)—who first reviewed the font in an article for *Design.Co*—have helped construct Tiny Hand’s indexical spectrum, with reflexive statements like “Tiny Hand could be the huckster’s Helvetica. . . . Imagine a sociopathic, sexually ravenous Walt Disney with hands the size of a GI Joe action figure, frantically etching away with a Sharpie Magnum, and you’ll have something of the feel of the font.” Of course, there is nothing inherently “sociopathic” or “sexually ravenous” about Tiny Hand; these are qualities that Brownlee associates with Donald

Trump himself, transposing them onto the material properties of the typeface, for Tiny Hand was designed to reflect the “ugliness” of Trump’s real-world persona.

As previously mentioned, Tiny Hand bears a physical resemblance to Comic Sans, a widely ridiculed typeface, generally understood to be too childlike and unrefined for “high-prestige” texts. Before Tiny Hand was created, Trump’s critics used Comic Sans to parody his campaign slogans. This set a precedent for the strategic usage of typeface to parody the oversimplified, anti-intellectual qualities of Trump’s political style. For example, although they do not actively critique or deconstruct Trump’s slogan, the dissemination of images of Trump accompanied by his electoral catchphrase (“Make America Great Again”) printed in Comic Sans were aimed at a parodic effect. By reproducing Trump’s signature motto in Comic Sans (or “uttering” it in Comic Sans’s “voice”), these images sought to undermine Trump as childish and foolish. Unlike Trump’s use of Comic Sans on the landing page of his website in the early months of his presidential campaign, this usage is intentionally and parodically intertextual; it refers back to Trump’s unironic usage of Comic Sans and it mobilizes Comic Sans’s socially established indexicality to undermine the semantic content of Trump’s campaign slogan.

Vincent Connare, a Microsoft employee, designed Comic Sans in earnest in the 1990s for children and computer novices. In the 2000s, the social opinion of the typeface shifted organically as it came to be associated with low-prestige texts (Murphy 2017, 70). In contrast, it could be argued that in order to function as a tool of political dissent, Tiny Hand was specifically designed to “degrade the integrity of the forms and values mediated by the typeface” (Murphy 2017, 72). The fact that the font was developed three weeks before Election Day suggests that it was conceived of as a mechanism to enact political and discursive resistance by highlighting the absurd foolishness of Trump’s metapragmatic phrases, such as his famous “I have the best words.”

The goal of expressing disalignment and disapproval of Donald Trump was at the heart of the typographic project launched by *BuzzFeed*—the online media company behind the creation of the Tiny Hand font. When *BuzzFeed* published the typeface, it released several graphics that sampled the Tiny Hand alphabet. These graphics (see fig. 8) did not merely reproduce Tiny Hand’s letterforms but featured them in the form of Trump’s signature utterances (including “Bigly,” “Huge,” “No one loves women more than me,” and “Mexicans love me”).

Thus, the font not only stylized Donald Trump’s handwriting through an iconically faithful replica but also reproduced his speech style and established



Figure 8. BuzzFeed's Tiny Hand graphics did not only stylize Trump's handwriting, but also stylized his voice through the reproduction of his signature utterances. Courtesy of Mark Davis.

itself as a way to evoke his voice. The creation of Tiny Hand presumes the recognition of Trump's handwriting. To aid this recognition, designers used formulas typical of Trump's linguistic style. Within the American liberal public, the use of these utterances instantly renders the graphic artifacts (and, thereby, the font) indexical of Trump.

"The *dissemination* or spread of a register"—explains Agha (2007, 203)—depends on the circulation of messages typifying speech. Such messages—continues Agha (203–4)—"are borne by physical artifacts: in the case of face-to-

face communication, by acoustical artifacts, that is, ‘utterances’; in the mass mediated cases by more perduring text-artifacts—books, magazines, cartoons, musical scores, and the like—that are physical objects conveying information about cultural forms.” Like other registers and speech forms, the enregisterment of Tiny Hand entails the work of metasemiotic experts and other cultural producers (journalists, graphic designers, cartoonists, etc.) who operate “as *producers or senders* of metadiscursive messages about speech” (Agha 2007, 203). Textual artifacts crafted with Tiny Hand are circulated widely in the public sphere and consumed by the “members of the public” who get recruited as “hearers” and “receivers” of graphic messages circulating through digital social media, often becoming themselves, through their own semiotic activities, message producers and active agents within the semiotic chain (203).

After *BuzzFeed*’s stylized Tiny Hand graphics were distributed on the Internet, in his review of the font, graphic designer Brownlee (2016) made metapragmatic comments that linked the use of the Tiny Hand typeface to political protest, to performances of Donald Trump’s stylized voice, and to the representation of Trump’s persona through embodied behavior:

So what’s Tiny Hand good for, as a font? Where to even start.

You could use it as part of an internet meme generator, pairing any one of the candidate’s eccentric tweets with this photograph of Trump overpronouncing a fricative. Passive-aggressive Post-Its left all around the house, accusing your roommates of not having the stamina to do dishes, or criticizing the way they vacuumed the living room: “Sad!” Heck, if you really want to be like the Donald, you could use Tiny Hand to design coupons to distribute to the young girls in your neighbourhood, redeemable on the holder’s 18th birthday for an overnight stay at any state route hotel room.

Predictably, “receivers” quickly began to make their own metapragmatic statements that echoed the *BuzzFeed* graphics and Brownlee’s metapragmatic insights, thus linking Tiny Hand’s material properties to Trump’s persona and speech patterns. Indeed, as a zipped Dropbox file containing Tiny Hand letterforms spread across social media channels, users began to express comments that mimicked Trump’s discursive style:

This font is terrific. I mean really great. Terrific things will be written with this font, about me, of course. (Jim Keplinger, October 2016)

Will (ab)use this font Muchly, Believe me. Comic Sans. sad. (Mike Rhodes, October 2016)

I am going to use this typeface bigly. (Susan Macmurchy, October 2016)

The best font in the history of typography, believe me. (Paul Tichenor, October 2016)

This is great! It's the best! Really terrific. No font in the world is better than this. (Annie Vaccaro, October 2016)¹⁸

As indicated by their hyperbolic tone (typical of Trump's style) and by the use of other Trump's signature utterances ("Sad!"; "Great!"; "Huge!"; "Bigly"), these posts reveal Tiny Hand's successful uptake among the digital public of receivers-turned-producers (Agha 2003, 2007). In a similar way, in the context of the early 2017 Women's March on Washington, protesters used Tiny Hand to index particular moral and political alignments and thus produce implicit metapragmatic criticism of Trump.

As a font deliberately designed for metapragmatic commentary, Tiny Hand is political in more than one way. It criticizes Trump, it generates in-/out-groups based on political distinctions, and it reflexively refers back to the anti-Trump movement, potentially enhancing the political base of dissent. Since parody works only within social groups with a shared system of references, the use of the Tiny Hand font to parody Trump indexes alignment with a social group that understands the in-joke, but also produces disalignment from the object of the parody: Donald Trump. Indeed, Trump's counterpublic does not necessarily need to march on Washington to demonstrate its power and scope. The existence of a digital public means that, wherever Tiny Hand is available, protesters can use it to articulate their moral and political alignments. In this sense, Tiny Hand functions in a way similar to the multitude of anti-Trump gadgets that have become popular commodities in a number of gift shops in Northern American cities (see fig. 9).

The new forms of political participation afforded by digital social media are the object of a growing body of cross-disciplinary literature (see, e.g., Davis 2013; Clarke 2017; Hodges 2017b, 2018; Stolee and Caton 2018). Our analysis

18. See Tiny Hand's user reviews: <https://dropbox.com/s/irvgp4813izfbo/BFTinyHand-Regular.zip?dl=0>.



Figure 9. Anti-Trump gadgets for sale in a NYC gift shop: “Trump’s Small Hand Soap for Dirty Politics,” Tiny Hand pencil toppers, Trump poop key chain, “National Embarrassmints” and “Impeachmints.” Courtesy of Aurora Donzelli.

suggests that the intersection between metapragmatic discourse and graphic ideologies may offer an interesting domain of investigation—one that blurs the boundaries between the linguistic and the material.

Conclusion

Throughout the 2015–16 US election cycle, Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump enjoyed a historically unprecedented amount of media attention. His heterodox linguistic performances—at campaign rallies and on his Twitter feed—generated countless articles, memes, blog posts, think pieces, and polemics. This article tackled the puzzle of Trump’s success and the innovative ways in which the American public is critically reacting to it.

We argue that Trump’s political success stems in large part from his discursive style, which in turn responds to larger metalinguistic concerns underlying American public discourse. The interactional standards of political correctness have prompted, among large segments of the American public, a widespread anxiety regarding the weakening of language’s referential accuracy and the alleged loss of words’ illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Contrary to the

growing preoccupation—epitomized by the “increasingly verbose meme” discussed at the beginning—that words may have become empty signifiers, which hide (instead of revealing) our intentions and conceal the actual objects of our discussions, Trump’s antagonism to political correctness and disalignment from the “restrained style of old school politics” (Hall et al. 2016, 75) may be interpreted by some as a capacity to convey a transparent representation of the world and of the speaker’s intentions.

Tiny Hand, by contrast, reframes Trump’s rhetoric of straight talk as childish and moronic.¹⁹ In this sense, Tiny Hand offers an implicit commentary on the contemporary metapragmatic debates crisscrossing American public discourse. Tiny Hand, in fact, can be seen as an indirect response to Trump’s supporters’ criticism of political correctness as symptomatic of the alleged hypersensitivity and immaturity of liberal snowflakes (see also McIntosh 2017). Contrary to the positive representation of Trump’s straight talk as a hypermasculine attempt at reforming the hypocritical language of hypereducated liberals and delicate college students who need to man up and grow up, the parody that Tiny Hand enacts is in fact based on an evolutionary and teleological ideology of political talk. According to this (liberal) teleological framework, straight talk pertains to an age of metapragmatic immaturity, which will be replaced by the roundabout interactional protocols of politically correct and culturally sophisticated speakers. In this teleological view, Trump’s (childish and boorish) supporters are the ones who are in need to grow up and become civilized political actors.

In this article, we explored a specific tactic of metapragmatic parody of Trump’s discursive style. Drawing on the tools of semiotic analysis (Agha 2003, 2005, 2007) and literary criticism (Bakhtin 1981) and combining the ethnographic observation of the 2017 Women’s March on Washington with the examination of contemporary (2016 presidential election–driven) American metapragmatic debates, we discussed the emergence of new forms of metapragmatic parody/protest developed by Trump’s critics and digital counterpublics. We examined the origin and the circulation of the typeface Tiny Hand—a near replica of Trump’s handwriting—as an emergent form of (primarily) graphic enregisterment of Trump’s voice. Through a multistage intertextual process, the series of alphanumeric symbols and punctuation marks composing Tiny Hand character set has become iconically associated with Donald Trump’s persona and indexical of a segment of American society, which, through the act of deploying the font, can present itself as Trump’s counterpublic.

19. We thank an anonymous reviewer for helping us flesh out this this important point.

Based on a physiognomic graphic ideology (i.e., handwriting is a window on the writer's soul), Tiny Hand's mimetic parody (of Trump's voice and handwriting) in part resembles the ironic procedures underlying late Socialist and late liberal *stiob* (Boyer and Yurchak 2010). Aside from enacting a form of meta-pragmatic disalignment from its critical target through the almost verbatim and graphic citation of Trump's words, Tiny Hand also parodies Trump's habit of correcting journalists with handwritten comments in the margins of their articles and thus speaks back—through the silent materiality of the typeface—to his attempts at silencing the press. Through its very name, Tiny Hand also realizes a counterparody of Trump's political incorrectness. As a mildly politically incorrect font, Tiny Hand offers an intentionally diluted version (and an intertextual commentary) on Trump's flagrant stance against political correctness. In this way, Tiny Hand speaks back to the cross-modal impersonations and gestural stylizations (Hall et al. 2016) through which Trump would ridicule the bodies and physical appearances of his political opponents. Operating through a dual indexicality system—similar to that of Mock Spanish (Hill 1999)—Tiny Hand at once points to its imaginary author/source (Trump) and to his counterpublic, projecting a negative representation of the former and a positive image of the latter.

References

- Agha, Agha. 2003. "The Social Life of Cultural Value." *Language & Communication* 23 (3–4): 231–73.
- . 2005. "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1): 38–59.
- . 2007. *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2018. Discussant's remarks for the panel "The Metapragmatics of Political Talk" organized by Dana Osborne and Katherine Martineau. American Anthropological Association meetings, San Jose, CA, November 15.
- Alim, H. Samy, and Geneva Smitherman. 2012. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. "Discourse in the Novel." In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. M. Holquist, 259–422. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bally, Charles. 1912. "Le style indirect libre en français moderne I et II." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 4:549–56, 597–606.
- Boyer, Dominic, and Alexei Yurchak. 2010. "American Stio: Or, What Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody Reveal about Contemporary Political Culture in the West." *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 179–221.
- Brownlee, John. 2016. "Donald Trump's Crazy Handwriting Is Now a Free Font Called Tiny Hand." *Fast Company*. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3064790/donald-trumps-crazy-handwriting-is-now-a-free-font-called-tiny-hand>.

- Carter, Graydon. 2015. "Steel Traps and Short Fingers." *Vanity Fair*, November 2015. www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/10/graydon-carter-donald-trump.
- Childers, Terry L., and Jeffrey Jass. 2002. "All Dressed Up with Something to Say: Effects of Typeface Semantic Associations on Brand Perceptions and Consumer Memory." *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 12 (2): 93–106.
- Clarke, Kamari Maxine. 2017. "Rethinking Sovereignty through Hashtag Publics: The New Body Politics." *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (3): 359–66.
- Davis, Bud. 2013. "Hashtag Politics: The Polyphonic Revolution of #Twitter." *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research* 1 (1): 4.
- Donzelli, Aurora. n.d. "Conspicuous Transparencies: Graphic Design and the Moral Aesthetics of the Italian Culture Industry." Unpublished manuscript.
- Duranti, Alessandro. 2006. "Narrating the Political Self in a Campaign for US Congress." *Language in Society* 35 (4): 467–97.
- Errington, Joseph J. 1998. *Shifting Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fleming, Luke, and Michael Lempert. 2011. "Introduction: Beyond Bad Words." *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (1): 5–14.
- Hall, Kira, Donna M. Goldstein, and Matthew Bruce Ingram. 2016. "The Hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, Gesture, Spectacle." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (2): 71–100.
- Irvine, Judith T., and Susan Gal. 2000. "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation." In *Regimes of Language. Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity, 35–83. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Halliday, Michael Alexander K., 1970. "Functional Diversity in Language as Seen from a Consideration of Modality and Mood in English." *Foundations of Language* 6:322–61.
- Higgins, Roger Francis 1979. *The Pseudo-Cleft Construction in English*. New York: Garland.
- Hill, Jane H. 1999. "Language, Race, and White Public Space." *American Anthropologist* 100 (3): 680–89.
- . 2000. "Read My Article: Ideological Complexity and the Overdetermination of Promising in American Presidential Politics." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V Kroskrity, 259–92. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Hodges, Adam. 2017a. "Responsibility and Evidence in Trumpian Discourse." *Anthropology News* 58 (6): e239–e243. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/AN.676>.
- . 2017b. "Trump's Formulaic Twitter Insults." *Anthropology News* 58 (1): e206–e210. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/AN.308>.
- . 2018. "A Theory of Propaganda for the Social Media Age." *Anthropology News* 59 (2): e149–e152. <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2018/04/09/a-theory-of-propaganda-for-the-social-media-age/>.
- Keane, Webb. 2003. "Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things." *Language & Communication* 23 (3–4): 409–25.
- King, Ben. 2016. "Tiny Hand Will Be Your New Comic Sans." *BuzzFeed News*, October 2016. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/benking/tiny-hand-will-be-your-new-comic-sans>.
- Lempert, Michael. 2018. "On the Pragmatic Poetry of Pose: Gesture, Parallelism, Politics." *Signs and Society* 6 (1): 120–46.

- Lempert, Michael, and Michael Silverstein. 2012. *Creatures of Politics: Media, Message, and the American Presidency*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 2016. "Unusual Politics as Usual?" *Anthropology News* 57 (10): e1–e3. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/AN.174>.
- Lyons, John. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacKiewicz, Jo. 2005. "How to Use Five Letterforms to Gauge a Typeface's Personal-ity: A Research-Driven Method." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 35 (3): 291–315.
- McGranahan, Carole. 2017. "An Anthropology of Lying: Trump and the Political Sociality of Moral Outrage." *American Ethnologist*. 44 (2): 243–48.
- McIntosh, Janet. 2017. "Crybabies and Their Critics: On Drill Instructors, Trump Supporters, and Semiotic Callousing." Part of the panel "Language in the Era of Donald Trump," organized by Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton. American Anthropological Association meetings, Washington, DC, December 1.
- Mendoza-Denton, Norma. 2017. "Bad Hombres: Images of Masculinity and the Historical Consciousness of US-Mexico Relations in the Age of Trump." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (1): 423–32.
- Murphy, Keith M. 2017. "Fontroversy! Or, How to Care about the Shape of Language." In *Language and Materiality: Ethnographic and Theoretical Explorations*, ed. R. Jillian Cavanaugh and Shalini Shankar, 63–86. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . n.d. "Sweden Sans, Qualicraft, and the Semiotics of Typographic Nationalism." Unpublished manuscript.
- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosa, Jonathan, and Yarimar Bonilla. 2017. "Deprovincializing Trump, Decolonizing Diversity, and Unsettling Anthropology." *American Ethnologist* 44 (2): 201–8.
- Searle, John R. (1965) 2000. "What Is a Speech Act?" In *Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language: A Concise Anthology*, ed. R. J. Stainton, 253–68. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description." In *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. Keith. H. Basso and Henry A. Selby, 11–56. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico.
- . 1993. "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function." In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. John A. Lucy, 33–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2017. "Message, Myopia, Dystopia." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (1): 407–13.
- Stolee, Galen, and Steve Caton. 2018. "Twitter, Trump, and the Base: A Shift to a New Form of Presidential Talk?" *Signs and Society* 6 (1): 147–65.
- Verstraete, Jean-Christophe. 2001. "Subjective and Objective Modality: Interpersonal and Ideational Functions in the English Modal Auxiliary System." *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (10): 1505–28.
- Volosinov, Valentin N. 1986. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Warner, Michael. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 49–90.