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WANTED: Hillary Clinton, Suspect Citizen

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"Lock her up! Lock her up! Lock her up!" This battle cry erupted at one Donald Trump rally after another throughout the 2016 presidential campaign. Trump even threatened to jail Hillary Rodham Clinton (HRC) if he won the election. "Crooked Hillary" emerged as Trump's disparaging nickname for his Democratic opponent. Taking a further moralistic step, Trump equated HRC with pure evil, calling her the "devil" at an August 2016 campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

Such vitriolic rhetoric can certainly be attributed to an overheated war of words in an extremely contentious election. Yet, President Trump still regularly tweets about Crooked Hillary, claiming in November 2017 that HRC stole the Democratic primary from Bernie Sanders. Online "WANTED" posters feature HRC's picture alongside her alleged crimes. These include using a private email server when she was secretary of state, allowing the Benghazi terrorist attack to occur, and being an accessory to rape and murder. Such memes undoubtedly capture how Trump and his electoral base, the alt-right, many in the Republican Party, and probably some Bernie Sanders supporters view HRC. The HRC WANTED memes, however, signal something deeply embedded in the American political script and surprisingly absent from Clinton's book *What Happened*: the ascribed role of women as suspect citizens

whose legitimate membership in the political community always remains in doubt.

In fairness, the story of women as suspect citizens is not the one HRC sets out to tell, but it is one that I tried to in my book *Suspect Citizens: Women, Virtue, and Vice in Backlash Politics* (Boryczka 2012). Can we read *What Happened* through the lens of suspect citizenship that I outlined in my book? *Suspect Citizens* tracks a gendered moral logic deeply embedded in the American political script to expose a paradox that women play a critical part in determining the nation's fate while they lack the political power to do so. This paradox undermines trust in women and their legitimacy as citizens, making them suspicious and readily available targets in backlash politics. Reading HRC's *What Happened* in terms of *Suspect Citizens* helps us understand American women's political status today and democracy's future. Doing so, I think, identifies analysis outside the scope of HRC's book and points in a direction for future work on HRC and the 2016 election involving closely examining how the American political script places structural constraints on American women and, ultimately, all citizens.

Suspect citizenship emerges from a conceptual history of virtue and vice at key junctures in American political history when women fought for full citizenship. Since the Puritans, American society has assigned white upper- and middle-class women the role of moral guardianship as keepers of the family and female virtues of modesty, chastity, and purity. HRC taps into this construction of women when emphasizing throughout *What Happened* her religious beliefs; her roles as daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother; and her advocacy for women and children globally. Moral guardianship extends beyond the family to the nation, holding women to a double burden of moral responsibility for binding its civic and political fabric together while denying them full access to the power necessary to do so. HRC, unlike any other American woman, cracks the veneer of female virtue as one of the world's most politically powerful women. This unique position has granted HRC the capacity to shape the nation's future, making her particularly suspicious.

HRC knows this only too well. Trust, unsurprisingly, drives the storyline of *What Happened* as HRC rebuts her detractors' accusations that manifest in calls to "lock her up!" These demands echo a more general distrust of HRC that has dogged her entire political career as former first lady, U.S. senator, secretary of state, and Democratic Party presidential nominee. As a woman who excels in the male-dominated political arena, HRC

broke with moral guardianship, which led to unrelenting skepticism about her authenticity and, ultimately, her unlikability.

Suspicion of HRC, I would add, arises from the perception of female vice. This default moral category draws the past into our current culture, in which female vice encompasses any real or perceived deviation by women from the standards of virtue. All women, whether or not as unruly as HRC, then are perceived as posing an ever-present threat to the political order. This threat always places the nation's trust in women's ability to uphold their moral and, thus, civic obligation to democracy as its moral guardians in question.

Suspect citizenship captures how the malleability of female virtue and vice undermines women's legitimacy and, therefore, their ability to be full members of the political community. This precarious position exposes a paradox in American women's role as moral guardians *and* suspect citizens that seriously impedes the possibility of their full citizenship and makes them vulnerable targets in backlash politics. HRC, a suspect citizen with an unparalleled political status, intensifies the distrust already integral to the American political script to the degree that she transforms from a target into a force powerful enough to mobilize backlash politics.

HRC as America's most wanted suspect citizen also puts her in a unique position to address the implications of eroding trust among citizens and between them and their government. Clinton engages this issue by trying to set the record straight about her trustworthiness as she answers the question many of us have pondered every day since November 9, 2016: what happened? HRC responds by going into the details of her 2016 campaign. Offering her own election postmortem, HRC systematically addresses many of the things for which she gets blamed, such as a poor ground game in key battleground states; not campaigning enough in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin; ignoring white working-class voters; failing to mobilize African American voters; and being unlikeable. In the process, she defends her campaign staff, to whom she dedicates the book, with a deep loyalty while expressing serious regrets and accepting much blame.

HRC engages with the 2016 election's broader political implications throughout her book. She casts Julian Assange, Vladimir Putin, and James Comey as nefarious characters who contributed to her demise by dumping 33,000 emails on WikiLeaks, engineering the spread of fake news on Facebook, and delivering the "October Surprise." The Trump campaign's alleged collusion with Russia's interference in the election,

as HRC concludes in her book, underscores the critical need to determine what happened since nothing less than our democracy's future hangs in the balance. "I'm worried about our democracy at home, with lies and corruption threatening our bedrock values, institutions, and the rule of law," Clinton continues, "And, I'm worried about the future of democracy around the world" (Clinton 2017, 375). Establishing trust in our voting process and electoral system, Clinton accurately asserts, is fundamental to securing the bond of consent necessary for the social contract to hold.

HRC attempts a precarious balancing act in this book. She integrates descriptions of the days after November 8 when she could not get out of bed and chasing her granddaughter around the hotel room as she awaited election results with detailed accounts of her policy positions, campaign platform, and problems with former FBI director James Comey. Humanizing personal life stories interjected into formal political discussions give readers of *What Happened* the HRC experience, allowing us to connect with her as a person struggling with defeat while somehow feeling duped by a masterful politician attempting to improve her "favorables." HRC expresses her ongoing struggles with distrust, often blaming the press for applying the "Clinton rules" that attribute a "mysterious dark energy" to "any relatively commonplace political occurrence or activity" "when any Clinton is involved" (320). Despite her attempts throughout the book to answer "What is she hiding?," I still questioned her authenticity and generally remained suspicious of her motives and version of the campaign. This is partly because HRC is a politician, and a very good one. It is also partly, though, because she is an American woman and, therefore, a suspect citizen. As a result, I fell into the suspect citizen trap myself while reading HRC's account.

Suspicion remained as I turned page after page, waiting for HRC to leverage her keen intellect, lifelong experience in politics, and commitment to women's issues at home and abroad into a deeper story about why American women, whether as candidates, elected representatives, or citizens, remain so marginalized in our political life when compared to many other nations. HRC does engage her version of the "woman question," particularly speaking to the intense pressures on female candidates to perform femininity on the campaign trail. I learned a lot about HRC's makeup, hair, and wardrobe regimen, which certainly holds some interest, and, as early radical feminists remind us, "the personal is political." Yet I wondered if the logic of suspect citizenship deflected HRC's attention away from a structural analysis of gender

inequality as it manifested in the campaign of the first woman ever in U.S. history to win one of our two major party's nominations for president. Asking so much of HRC in this memoir reflects suspect citizenship, whereby we demand that American women assume a double burden of moral responsibility not only for themselves and their families, but for the entire nation's fate.

Trump's reference to HRC as the devil reveals a deeper story tied to America's Puritanism-rooted biblical tradition. HRC recognizes this connection in her chapter "On Being a Woman in Politics," stating "The Puritan witch hunts may be long over, but something fanatical about unruly women still lurks in our national subconscious" (127). The infamous witch trials in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, feminist historians such as Mary Beth Norton (2003) inform us, deflected attention away from the structural issues of a rising mercantilist class and wars with Native Americans that threatened to dismantle the Puritan theocracy. Focusing on the "evil" of a few women is easier and more politically expedient to drawing some people together than identifying difficult structural problems requiring ongoing diligent work to resolve. HRC as the devil taps into this apocalyptic biblical language and intensifies it given the fact that HRC actually wields real political power. As a result, Trump successfully blames HRC for nearly every problem facing America, from immigration and ISIS to Obamacare, although she lost the election and his party controls all three branches of government. Here, Trump unknowingly redeploys suspect citizenship to deflect away from real structural issues, legislation, and policies by focusing narrowly on HRC's moral character to hold her personally responsible for all of the nation's challenges.

What Happened exposes trust as a factor determining American democracy's future in the age of Trumpism, when suspect citizenship extends from women to nearly all categories of citizens as we distrust each other, our representatives, and our governing system. White men, Michael Kimmel explains in *Angry White Men* (2013), express anger because of their "aggrieved entitlement" to the American dream, which they can no longer easily achieve despite all the political, economic, and social advantages granted to them. Trump, in alliance with Steve Bannon and the alt-right, which shapes his base, capitalizes on this anger with the establishment, including the Republican party, and a feeling of being "strangers in their own land," a phrase HRC references (431) and the main title of Arlie Hochschild's study of white Tea Party voters in the South. Chanting "Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!" and "Lock Her

Up!” certainly rallies Trump’s base and keeps attention on an easy target: HRC as suspect citizen. A jeopardized voting system, failure to fill vacancies in the Department of State and Department of Justice, and abandonment of international treaties and agreements move to the margins of citizens’ concerns. Character assassination is much easier than considering what this dismantling of the federal government means for the nation’s future as trust shifts from Washington, DC, to Wall Street.

So where do we go from here? HRC tells us to “Keep going” (464), to move “Onward Together,” and to practice “radical empathy” that will enable us to do more than “trying to reach across divides of race, class, and politics, and building bridges *between* communities . . . to fill the emotional and spiritual voids that have opened up *within* communities, within families, and within ourselves as individuals” (444). Hochschild similarly recommends building “empathy bridges” to climb over the “empathy walls” dividing Americans by telling our “deep story,” “a *feels-as-if* story — it’s the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols. It removes judgment. It removes facts. It tells us how things feel,” as opposed to focusing on partisanship (Hochschild 2016, 135).

HRC in *What Happened* tells something of a deep story by sharing her feelings about the election, a process that humanizes her in a context in which one of the most significant female figures in American political history is reduced to a meme and tweets at #CrookedHillary. Empathy, I agree, connects us with others as humans with feelings and shared life experiences, and perhaps on this ground, Americans can rebuild trust. Yet, I fear that this approach remains a bit optimistic and fails to engage us with the *deeper* story, the one largely missing from *What Happened* — the way in which we belong to an American political script in which most of us play roles antithetical to full citizenship as suspects. This script’s narrative structure demands that American citizens focus their energy either on their families or on their jobs, raising suspicion of those who engage in political life, particularly politicians. Addressing this deep-seeded suspicion embedded within our moral framework and national narrative that become personified by figures such as HRC is critical to valuing active political participation and any way onward together.

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I Feel Your Pain: A Reckoning

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Hillary Clinton's memoir of the 2016 election and her life in politics, *What Happened*, is an affective rollercoaster. Wrath, frustration, regret, and sorrow, among other intensified emotions, saturate the book's pages. This range of affect is surprising for a political autobiography. Books in this genre typically present their subject-selves as stalwart and emotionally controlled actors whose range of feeling is limited to the proper amount of righteous irritation or vague empathy necessary to justify a policy proposal. None has the rawness of Clinton's book, a rawness that is, I would argue, made possible by her gender. This is one of the few vectors of political expression that is expanded, not contracted, for Clinton in her role as the first woman to become a major-party presidential candidate.

Differently from her campaign, however, Clinton's memoir embraces gendered affects rather than skirting them. She showcases her pain, struggling with "a wave of sadness that threatened to swallow me whole," and she describes her failed candidacy using emotions often disparaged as "hysterics," "melodrama," and "bitterness" — indeed, she normalizes them as responses to the 2016 election and its aftermath, and to the experiences of women as political subjects more broadly. Her affective range breaks new ground, and it does important work both for Clinton and for readers of her memoir.

One could condemn Clinton's book in this regard, to say that she is painting a picture of herself as more emotive, and thus more relatable, in order to manipulate her public image yet again. It is partly why reviews of the book have been negative — her emotions are interpreted as