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Flinders, M. orcid.org/0000-0003-3585-9010 (2020) Why feelings trump facts : anti-politics, citizenship and emotion. Emotions and Society, 2 (1). pp. 21-40. ISSN 2631-6897

https://doi.org/10.1332/263168919x15761256384386

WHY FEELINGS TRUMP FACTS:
ANTI-POLITICS, CITIZENSHIP AND EMOTION

This article is a revised version of the 2018 Mackenzie Lecture that the author delivered at the University of Glasgow in association with the Stevenson Trust. It was therefore written for a broad public audience in an attempt to inform, entertain, stimulate and provoke in equal measure. At the time the author was Special Adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement but since then evidence of both increasing anti-political sentiment and the emergence of an increasingly populist political environment has increased. The emotional foundations of these phenomena, and particularly why feelings so often appear to trump facts, remains an arguably overlooked dimension of contemporary social and political science. This underlines the contemporary relevance of the thesis concerning 'emotional disconnection' that is developed and examined from a number of perspectives in this article.

The more I look around the world and the challenges we face the more I think that *students of politics* (professors included) and *practitioners of politics* really need to understand why feelings matter and to engage at an emotional level. Simply put, I think it is an emotional disconnection that exists at the root of what Claudia Chwalisz (2015) describes as 'the populist signal'. So in this lecture I want to explore anti-politics, citizenship and emotion and I want to do this through a focus on: imagination and anchorage; hope and sacrifice; and a bus and a tree. This is not quite the focus that I had originally intended to place at the centre of this lecture. I was planning to – and, to some extent, still will – discuss what I term 'the citizenship journey' but in considering how to approach that topic I was struck by a strong sense that I was scratching at the surface of a far deeper and more profound issue. In many ways what might be termed 'the citizenship challenge' or 'the democratic challenge' revolves around increasing evidence of public disaffection with representative politics, on the one hand, and evidence of increasing social isolation and social segregation on the other. The Prime Minister's decision to appoint a new Minister for Loneliness at the beginning of 2017 charged with developing a strategy to counter an 'epidemic of loneliness' was an inauspicious start to a year that ended with the government publishing a new democratic engagement strategy– *Every Voice Matters: Building a Democracy That Works for Everyone*.

I'm not sure whatever happened to 'every voice matters' strategy but increasing evidence of political frustration and democratic dissatisfaction suggests that it failed (see Hansard Society, 2019). Vast sections of society *feel* that their voice *does not matter*. In this regard it is arguably the review undertaken by Dame Louise Casey in 2016 that examined social integration and equality of opportunity that shed most light on the increasingly threadbare emotional fabric of British society. It uncovered

a divided society in which black boys were still not getting jobs, white working class kids were, if anything, going backwards in the educational system and Muslim girls were often excelling at school but would then face poor employment opportunities. There were high levels of social and economic isolation in some places and cultural and religious practices in others that were holding people back, particularly women. Overall what the Casey Report identified was the 'fraying fabric of our nation' but there was also something deeper within the report in the form of an almost hidden dimension that existed between the lines of each and every page: an awareness of the emotional dynamics of contemporary citizenship and *why feelings matter*. Established populations in poorer areas felt a sense of unfairness, anger and frustration about how local council decisions were made over issues such as housing and school places; immigrant populations felt that their presence in these communities was resented; and British Muslims felt particularly under siege and suspicion. But what was particularly important about the Casey Report was its critique of the existing research that had been undertaken by both academics and the government. Too much research had been conducted that either sought to highlight positive trends or which focused on specific more quantifiable issues and which led to a focus on survey-style research. '[V]ery little research seemed to capture *the mood of communities* we met and listened to' [emphasis added] the report concluded,

> [T[oo often the data analysis seems to be conducted at a level that is so high or general that no meaningful conclusions or policy decisions can be reached. This risks creating further disengagement by the general public and may increase perceptions that their views and opinions are being ignored and difficult issues swept under the carpet (p.64).

This point resonated with me due to a long-running concern that my own research and writing was to some extent flawed due to a methodological approach that was generally institutionally focused and facts based. Where was my grasp of the emotional content of politics? To what extent was a focus on institution reform, democratic innovation and public policy seeking to respond to the symptoms of a major social challenge but not its underlying roots? As a social scientist I have been trained to operate with a currency of facts, but what if *feelings trump facts*? The initial source for this question lay in title of Paula Ionide's brilliant book - *The Emotional Politics of Racism: How feelings trump facts in an era of colorblindness* – but this rather haunting thought preoccupied my mind throughout the UKIP surge in 2014 and 2015, it gripped me as I witnessed the rise of populist nationalism across Western Europe and the UK's Brexit referendum in 2016, and it really haunted me as I watched the election of Donald Trump and to a lesser extent the Corbyn-mania surrounding the leader of the Labour Party in 2017 (see Flinders, 2018).

My concern was not just that the emotional basis of politics seemed to be changing – politics has always been driven by emotions – but that the nature, intensity and basic incompatibility of those emotions was increasing. Maybe 'why we hate politics' – to use the title of Colin Hay's 2007 book – was due to the existence of an emotional disconnection that demanded a very different political response if the

growing gap between the governors and the governed that surveys revealed was to be addressed. Indeed, populists were proving to be far more adept at forging an emotional connection with the public and through this were funnelling frustration and converting it into political support. At the same time my sense was that the social and political sciences had little to offer in terms of measuring, gauging or understanding *why feelings mattered* or what might be done.

This is why I want to focus on why feelings and emotions matter when it comes to understanding contemporary debates concerning both citizenship and disengagement in this lecture. Although this is a lecture I have put off writing and presenting for several years (because examining emotions and feelings is methodologically tricky and politically perilous) the kick came in November 2006 and it was a big kick and it came from an unlikely source: the Turner Prize winning, Reith Lecturer Grayson Perry when he collected the Political Studies Association's 'Art and Culture' Award'. During his acceptance speech he made this rather pointed but brilliant observation:

> I'm so honoured to be given this award by a room full of experts…. I'm not an expert. I'm an artist and I always feel like the academics are hovering behind me when I pontificate on anything … like they are going to catch me out. But I think the word "truth" is really interesting as we often talk about truth in terms of academic truth, statistical truth, empirical truth, scientific truth but very little do we actually talk about emotional truth. And I think that if the one thing that all the experts need to [improve] is their emotional literacy because what the liberal academic elite has done is let us down because they are not emotionally literate enough to understand what 52% of the electorate was thinking – or feeling, should I say [when they voted to leave the EU]. There is a whole world out there that we need to have more empathy with even if we don't like the results of what those kinds of feelings bring about. But I thank you for this award … from the experts…[!]

This focus on emotions and feelings, on the relationship between feelings and behaviour, on empathy and – critically – on *why feelings matter* and may prove resistant to rational arguments based on the 'facts', 'data' or 'research' produced by experts stayed with me. The argument that Grayson was making, with his typical combination of flair and precision, was that feelings matter more than many experts (academics included) seem to understand. Feelings remain 'real' to the individual irrespective of how irrational or difficult to understand they might seem to external observers who do not feel the same way. And yet it is possible to suggest that political science, in general, and the analysis of political disaffection and anti-political sentiment, in particular, has - with only a few notable exceptions – generally failed to acknowledge *why* feelings matter, let alone explore *how* certain positive emotional dispositions might be cultivated.

So in this lecture I want to do *three things*, in *three parts*, for *three reasons*.

The first thing I want to do is explore Grayson Perry's argument about a lack of emotional literacy within the 'the liberal academic elite' and I want to do this

through an argument that focuses on the concepts of *imagination* and *anchorage*. In this regard my argument is broadly that academe has lost the former while the public craves the latter. With this in mind the second aim of this lecture is to explore the thin seam of scholarship that not only demonstrates intellectual vibrancy and imagination but that can also be used to engage with the emotional foundations of anti-political, anti-establishment, anti-expert sentiment. I do this by focusing on two more concepts – *hope* and *sacrifice*. And then I want to end with a very brief look at a bus and a tree. Or, more specifically, one bus route in a large post-industrial city and 5,732 street trees because I think talking about these fairly mundane elements of everyday life really does allow us to get to the emotional roots of contemporary concerns regarding citizenship and political disenchantment. Some might think this focus on a bus and a tree is a little odd but I really hope that at the end of the lecture you'll be able to relate this focus to the core theme within this lecture of why feeling matter and emotional literacy.

But why I have I made this decision to shift from a safe and very tangible focus on 'the citizenship journey' for a far riskier expedition into the realm of emotions and feelings, frustration and fear?

The first reason is that I am remaining true to the intellectual heritage and vision of William James Millar Mackenzie (Bill Mackenzie to his friends and colleagues) in whose name this annual lecture was established. Bill liked puzzles. He understood that politics, like life, was rarely tidy and as a result was best studied in conjunction with other subjects and that other subjects should always be aware of the political dimension. Originally schooled in the classics, he was a polymath – a generalist in the best sense - with the capacity to trespass across traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries and who promoted a culture of intellectual risk-taking and excitement that (as I will suggest in the first part of my lecture) has now to some extent been lost.

'The job (of political science) is to talk in an orderly manner, paying regard to consistency and verifiability, about a unique situation which is extremely complex and changes rapidly" he wrote in *Politics and Social Science*, his best-selling Penguin (1967). He did not believe that lectures or even articles should be too worked out. They should stimulate, suggest and leave students and readers to work things out for themselves. I couldn't' help but reflect on how times had changed when I read Dennis Kavanagh's obituary of Bill Mackenzie in *The Independent* (26 August 1996), 'A young colleague commented that a number of students did not fully understand [Prof. Mackenzie's] lectures, but did not doubt that they were listening to a great man.' It is doubtful that the emergence of the Teaching Excellence Framework will allow such creative pedagogic flexibility but the point is really that Bill's intellectual talent rested on being able to see connections and to synthesise research that would otherwise have remained disconnected, and to suggest new areas for research. In this lecture I want to suggest a new way of looking at the familiar. The *new way* is through a lens or prism that emphasises the role of feelings and emotions, *the familiar* is the debate concerning the crisis of democracy and the changing nature of citizenship.

The second reason I want to focus on feelings and emotions is for a more prosaic but no less important reason that stems from my role as special adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Participation (see HL 118, 2018). During the course of its inquiry the committee received over 259 submissions of evidence, it questioned 58 witnesses during 21 oral evidence sessions and it undertook a number of visits to towns and cities afflicted by high levels of economic and social inequality. But throughout the inquiry I was wracked by a certain sense that despite the committee's best efforts it has struggled to reveal or dissect exactly what role emotions or feelings play within debates concerning citizenship or civic engagement. There were, however, glimpses of rich insight when individuals spoke of their inner beliefs, their emotions and why they felt the way they did about their place in the world. A common insight, especially from younger people, was that the notion of citizenship – both as a concept and word – meant very little to them; it appeared quaint, out-dated, legalistic, formal, threatening and was often replaced with a focus on *belonging*. But exploring how and why these feelings matter proved incredibly difficult within the structures of a parliamentary inquiry and there is a need to reflect upon the broader implications of this challenge and how it might be addressed.

The third and final reason I want to focus on emotions and feelings is that I want to use this lecture to test myself and to push me out of the intellectual comfort zone that I have worked within for almost a quarter of a century. However, when it comes to thinking about why *feelings trump facts* (if, indeed, they always do) within just one lecture I have no choice but to paint on a wide intellectual canvas with a fairly broad brush. But I hope that by doing so I will encourage other scholars to engage with the topic and through this fill in the fine detail and counter-points that cannot be made this evening. With this caveat in place we can begin this process through a focus on imagination and anchorage.

I. IMAGINATION & ANCHORAGE

When it comes to thinking about creativity, ambition, imagination and the social sciences it is difficult not to reach for a copy of C Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* (2000 [1959]). Mills was a radical figure, both in relation to the nature of his research and in his critique of what he saw as 'the drift' of modern social science. His focus on what he termed 'the promise' and 'the trap' have much to offer anyone interested in understanding why feelings matter 'Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps' Mills noted in the opening line of *The Sociological Imagination* 'They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this *feeling*, they are often quite correct…In what period have so many men been so totally exposed at so fast a pace to such earthquakes of change? [emphasis added]' What Mills' labelled 'the trap' was therefore the risk that social change was outpacing the public's capacity to make sense of the world; 'the promise', by contrast, related to the capacity of the social sciences to promote public understanding and to help individuals and communities understand their position in society and through this to assume some sense of control (i.e. to free them from

the trap). The role of the scholar was, through this interpretation, concerned with far more than the accumulation of knowledge but in helping individuals make sense of the changing world and their capacity for action within it.

But this would only be achieved if academics could demonstrate the sociological imagination - 'I hope my colleagues will accept the term 'sociological imagination'… political scientists who have read my manuscript suggest 'the political imagination'; anthropologists, 'the anthropological imagination' – and so on. The term matters less than the idea' (pp.18-19 fn.2) – in the sense of displaying an ability to pivot. That is, to shift from one perspective to another, from one discipline to another, from one topic to another and to 'range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self – and see the relations between the two' (p.7). Most of all, the most central element of the sociological imagination revolved around being able to see the relationship between personal troubles and public issues.

Mills was a large, brusque, Texan cowboy – a 'radical nomad' (Hayden, 2006; see also Horowitz, 1983). He believed in 'taking it big' (Aronowitz, 2012) and that social scientists had a professional responsibility to the public. The sociological imagination is less a theory and more of a 'quality of mind' that understands the interplay of the individual and society. I would suggest that Bill Mackenzie possessed this quality of mind; this capacity to pivot and shift; range and dive; across and between traditions, disciplines and perspectives but in highlighting Mills' *Sociological Imagination* my aim is simply to highlight how his work revolved around an awareness of emotional change *and* a critique of academe. 'The trap' that Mills placed at the centre of his analysis revolved around an explicit focus on feelings and emotions in the context of rapid social change. 'The very shaping of history now outpaces the ability of men to orientate themselves in accordance with cherished values. And which values? Even when they do not panic, men often sense that *older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed* and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of moral stasis (1959 [2000], p.4)[emphasis added]' To read Mills is therefore to come away with a clear sense of how large sections of the American working class felt 'the misery of vague uneasiness'; how easy it is to read across to contemporary debates concerning 'the cultural backlash' (Norris and Inglehart, 2019), 'the left behind' (Wuthnow, 2018) or 'le peripherique' (Guilluy, 2019)? To be trapped was therefore to feel confused, fearful, anxious and adrift.

But Mills was also keen to highlight a dimension of modern scholarship that could also arguably be interpreted as a trap - the professionalization of disciplines in ways that narrowed their focus and disconnected then from the public. In a precursor to contemporary debates concerning the 'tyranny of impact' and the demonstration of 'relevance' (see Flinders, 2013a; 2013b; Flinders and Peters, 2013; Flinders and Pal, 2019). Mills sought to critique the bureaucratic techniques that had come to dominate the social sciences through methodological pretensions, theoretical fetishes, obscurantist conceptions, the 'cult of the laboratory' and a common focus on the trivial or minor instead of the serious or major. At a time when society most needed scholars with the sociological imagination Mills argued that the social and political sciences were least able to fulfil this role and were instead unwilling or unable to 'admit the pretentious mediocrity of much current effort'. Moreover, many practitioners of social science seemed curiously reluctant to take up the challenges posed by the complexity of modern life; 'Many, in fact, abdicate the intellectual and the political tasks of social analysis; others no doubt are simply not up to the role for which they are nevertheless cast' (1959 [2000], p.21).

It would at this point be possible to use Mills' stunning critique (a critique for which he was professionally never forgiven) as the reference point from which to trace the broad socio-political perception that political science has for one reason or another become disconnected from broader society. This could move to proceed to Bernard Crick's 'A Rallying Cry to the University Professor of Politics' (inspired as it was by his *The American Science of Politics* (1959) and feeding in to his classic *In Defence of Politics* (1964)). It might then change tack to focus on the creation of the Caucus for a New Political Science in the late 1960s and then make a leap forward to David Ricci's brilliant but under-acknowledged *The Tragedy of Political Science* (1984). From here a talented disciplinary topographer might move to the 'Perestroika' debate in the United States and the quite different but not unrelated 'Perestroika-lite' debate across Europe before entering the twenty-first century and a veritable outpouring of literature on how as the social and political sciences became more 'professional' and 'scientific', so it became weaker in terms of both its social relevance and public accessibility. Key stepping-stones would have to include Bent Flyvbjerg's *Making Social Science Matter* (2001), Stephen Toulmin's *Return to Reason* (2003), Ian Shapiro's *Flight from Reality* (2005), Sanford Schram and Brian Caterino's *Making Political Science Matter* (2006), B. Guy Peters et al.'s *The Relevance of Political Science* (2013), Mats Alvesson, Yannis Gabriel and Roland Paulsen's *Return to Meaning: A Social Science with Something to Say* (2017) and Rainer Eisfeld's *Empowering Citizens, Engaging the Public: Political Science for the 21st Century*.

But all I'm really trying to underline is that Mills' *Sociological Imagination* sought to highlight the need to understand emotions and feelings; for Mills modern life brought with it alienating social forces that cut the individual off from the conscious conduct of his behavior, thought and ultimately *emotions*. The promise of the social sciences lay in its capacity to help individuals make sense of the world and their place within it and, as such, Mills warned against a scientific model that prized what was quantifiable, easily measurable, objective, detached, neutral, value-free or that imposed false assumptions regarding rationality. (I cannot help but think about the Casey Report and its criticism of the existing research base for focusing on what is easily measurable rather than what is actually important.) And yet I would argue that Mills' warnings largely went unheeded, many social sciences embarked along 'a road to irrelevance' and one casualty was arguably a clear focus on exactly why feelings and emotions matter (i.e. why feelings trump facts).

Which leads me to a central pivot point and the need for us to use a little imagination. My argument here is that at the roots of Mills' work was an implicit focus on the concept of *anchorage* in the sense of a clear and robust sense of connection between an individual and the broader social milieu – a sense of feeling adrift in the world. Which leads me to shift my focus from Mills to one of his intellectual disciples – Zygmunt Bauman. Frail, small and quietly spoken – the only thing that Zygmunt shared with Mills apart from their intellectual overlap was a love of smoking pipes – my argument exists in three parts. First, Bauman's focus on the concept of 'liquid modernity' (2000) provided a searing focus on the loss of anchorage amongst increasing large publics. At the heart of this focus on liquidity, on the rupturing of traditional social bonds, was an awareness of its emotional dimensions and this is reflected in his books *Liquid Love* (2003), *Liquid Fear* (2006), *Liquid Evil* (2016) and many others. What does this focus on *liquidity* or 'liquid modernity' actually mean? Put simply, it relates to change within society and how change is occurring more and more rapidly in the (late) 'modern' world and in ways that are eroding traditional social relationships and setting people adrift (or as Mills might say 'feeling trapped'). Different types of change across each and every dimension of modern life – work, relationships, communities, religion, war…even elements of life that once appeared relatively simple and straightforward, such as gender

definition, are suddenly more complex and fluid - 'but what unites them all is precisely their fragility, temporariness, vulnerability and inclination to constant change. To 'be modern' means to modernize – compulsively, obsessively; not so much just 'to be', let alone to keep its identity intact, but forever 'becoming', avoiding completion, staying under-defined. Each new structure which replaces the previous one as soon as it is declared old-fashioned and past its use-by date is only another momentary settlement – acknowledged as temporary and 'until further notice'…. change is the only permanence, and uncertainty the only certainty'. This uncertainty and ambiguity, I want to argue, comes at an emotional price and manifests itself in a yearning for stability or anchorage.

Anyone who has worked in a British university in recent years may well agree with this focus on constant reform and change (think REF, TEF, KEF) but there are two points to tease out of this point – one political, one academic. The political is something we will examine later but revolves around how political structures (political parties, bureaucracies, etc.) that were born and designed in much simpler, more solid, times must now somehow adapt to cope with fluidity but too often appear like dinosaurs wandering aimlessly across the political savannah like prehistoric sleepwalkers who don't really understand where they are going and why. (In fact, the leaner, meaner more flexible parties tend to be the smaller more aggressive populist insurgent parties.) But there is an underlying argument about the role of scholars and the role of scholarship in society and a critique concerning a lack of emotional intelligence arising from a certain brand of professionalization. Bauman's sociology is above all a sociology of imagination, of feelings, of human relations – love, fear, despair indifference, insecurity, insensitivity – and of intimate lived experience. Bauman was an admitted methodological eclecticist: empathy and sensitivity were much more important to him than methodological or theoretical purity (on this point see Donskis, 2013).

It would at this point be possible to 'pivot' into a discussion of the work of Michael Burawoy and the debate concerning 'public sociology' (see, for example, 2004); or to engage in a discussion concerning the growth of 'the precariat' (Standing, 2014) and the changing nature of work; or Danny Dorling's arguments concerning *The Equality Effect* (2017)*;* but all I want to do from this focus on the work of Mills and Bauman is to suggest that their focus on *imagination*, in terms of intellectual empathy, and *anchorage*, in terms of the emotional impact of social change, provides significant leverage and insight in terms of understanding why *feelings (might) trump facts* and why this matters to contemporary debates concerning citizenship and political disaffection. Put very simply, if you live in a pit village without a pit, a fishing port without fish, a steel city without steel, a railway town without a railway, a seaside resort without tourists or a shipbuilding city without many ships to build - to paraphrase Ruth Davidson (2017) - then *how you feel* as dictated by your lived-everyday-experience ('the world as they see it from the window of their favourite café or pub' as Grayson Perry put it) is unlikely to be changed by the research-based data-driven opinion of 'the experts'. Which leads me to focus on the work of two more scholars and two emotions – *hope* and *sacrifice*.

II. HOPE & SACRIFICE

The previous section strode across quite a wide analytical terrain. It argued that the concepts of *imagination* and *anchorage*, drawing from the work of Mills and Bauman (respectively) offered a double-benefit in the sense that they highlighted the role of emotions and feelings in politics while also offering a critique of the social and political sciences for drifting away from a deeper social connection. In relation to politics and

emotions I would generally argue that despite the existence of an 'affective turn' within the social sciences, in general, and particularly within citizenship studies, *the study of why and how feelings about politics matter* remains under-developed. I'm not saying that the link between emotions and politics has not been the focus of sustained analysis – to do so would be to overlook the major contributions of scholars including Sara Ahmed, Ernst Bloch, Martha Nussbaum, Raia Provhovnik, Paul Hoggett and Emma Hutchinson – but I am suggesting that the link between emotions and politics, or more specifically why feelings matter, has not been thoroughly interrogated when it comes to understanding the rise of political dis-affection and anti-political sentiment (and especially so within political science). Fortunately this is an argument that has recently been made with great precision, insight and – dare I say it 'imagination' - by Laura Jenkins (2018) and my aim here is simply to highlight and develop three features of her position.

The first point is that it would be wrong to suggest the burgeoning literature on 'disaffected democrats' is feeling*less* or that is lacks an emotional foundation. It generally charts a rather barren political landscape that is defined by feelings of distrust and contempt for politicians, political institutions and political processes. Negative, pessimistic and cynical feelings seem to define the modern condition and this is reflected in the title of recent books –*The Life and Death of Democracy?* (Keane, 2011), *Saving Democracy from Suicide* (Lee, 2012), *Ruling the Void* (Mair, 2013), *Hatred of Democracy* (Ranciere, 2014), *Democracy Against Itself* (Chou, 2014), *The End of Representative Politics* (Tormey, 2015), *Against Democracy* (Brennan, 2016), *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), *How Democracy Ends* (Runciman, 2018), *Can Government Do Anything Right?* (Roberts, 2018), *Democracy and its Crisis* (Grayling, 2018), *Crises of Democracy* (Przeworski, 2019) – but what tends to be missing is analyses that get beneath the skin of why these feelings are actually so endemic. Put slightly differently, survey research is usually the primary methodology with case studies, focus groups and interviews sometimes deployed to add qualitative texture and tone. What are too often missing are any deep immersive observational analyses that place the scholar at the heart of the disengaged communities they seek to understand. Nearly three decades ago, Richard Fenno (1990, p.128) commented that 'not enough political scientists are presently engaged in observation'. Little, I would suggest, has changed. A recent review by Kaposzewski et al. concluded that 'political science has yet to embrace ethnography and participant observation wholeheartedly' (2015, p.234). There is – Auyero and Joseph (2007, p.9; See also Boxswell *et al*. 2018) suggest - a '*double absence*: of politics in ethnographic literature and of ethnography in the study of politics'. I don't know enough about ethnography to discern if the former point it true but I am confident enough to support the latter argument about the lack of ethnography in the study of politics.

But if the existing research base highlights 'a problem' in the sense of the existence of negative emotions and *disenchantment* towards politics then it also – in Jenkins' analysis – tends to highlight 'a solution' in the sense of increasing the public understanding of politics and, through this, seeking to temper, deflate or, at the very least, manage the public expectations so that a sense of disappointment or failure does not become almost inevitable. 'Many citizens fail to appreciate that politics in the end involves the collective imposition of decisions, demands a complex communication process and generally produces messy compromise' Gerry Stoker (2006, p.10) argues 'Politics is designed to disappoint – that is the way that the process of compromise and reconciliation works.' This is a mode of response that can be traced back at least to Bernard Crick's classic *In Defence of Politics* ('politics cannot make all sad hearts glad') and then through a celebrated seam of scholarship that includes Andrew Gamble's *Politics and Fate* (2000), Colin Hay's *Why We Hate Politics* (2007), Matthew Flinders *Defending Politics* (2013), Roslyn Fuller's, *In Defence*

of Democracy (2019), and in many ways chimes with Arlie Russell Hochschild's *The Managed Heart* (2003) in the sense that by reducing our expectations we may protect ourselves from later disappointment. (The smart politician adopting this logic might reverse the common chain of events by promising very little in their campaign but then over-achieve when in office....). The risk, however, that Jenkins places at the heart of her critique is that tempering expectations may perversely undermine some emotions which motivate the more positive engagement and behaviour that scholars seek to inspire. Lowering expectations may lead to states of pessimism and that strong emotional inspiration for political action - 'Yes we can!' - could be lost. Moreover, seeking to lower expectations, Jenkins suggests, is 'a somewhat unemotional, rationalised solution to a public emotional problem'.

> Without the bold imagination, hopeful rhetoric, raw emotions, high expectations and passionate struggle of prominent campaigners facing significant risks, obstacles and suffering, is it likely that the suffrage would have been extended, slavery abolished, national independence achieved for colonised states, apartheid defeated in South Africa and so on?

The third and final insight that I want to harvest from Jenkins' work is therefore a focus not on the hope*less* but on hope itself – and the cultivation of hope – as a response to political disengagement and disenchantment. Hope is not seen as romantic or dreamy but as simultaneously 'self-soothing and sustaining' and (critically): 'practising hope invites us to shed emotions: to lose fear and despair'. There is a link between this theoretical point and the more practical focus on 'the civic journey' which the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement sought to explore in 2018 (mentioned above). The committee, and many other participants in the debate, were concerned with promoting citizenship and embedding civic values in ways that promoted social integration and militated against division. As a result, it explored issues including citizenship education in schools, the responsibility of faith schools to promote multi-cultural understanding, how to ensure that home educated children possessed a rounded worldview, and the role of the National Citizen Service (See HL 118, 2018). But what Jenkins asks is whether we need to spend more time cultivating positive emotions in the manner that Martha Nussbaum (2001) has suggested through her focus on how love, sympathy and compassion incite justice and enlarge an individual's imagination and 'circle of concern'. To some extent I think that this was at the core of Bernard Crick's ambitious report on citizenship education that was published exactly twenty years ago - 'We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally' – but was never really implemented with the vim and vigour that was required (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Crick's vision was concerned with recognising ugly and negative feelings and cultivating positive collective belief, even hope. So I'm intuitively drawn to Jenkin's arguments not only about the need for a better understanding of why feelings matter but also about the public cultivation of positive emotions but I cannot help but think that these good intentions risk crashing down upon the procrustean realities of contemporary politics if we fail to acknowledge the existence of embedded barriers and it is this focus on barriers, walls and obstacles that leads me to pivot again from 'hope' to 'sacrifice'.

The buckle I want to use is Pankaj Mishra's wonderful book *The Age of Anger* (2018) because it reveals not only how history tends to rhyme but also how the contemporary condition is driven by the manner in which social, political, and technological shifts have cast many millions of people adrift, uprooted from tradition in a manner that resonates with the arguments of Mills and Bauman regarding 'the trap' and 'liquidity'. The promise of freedom, stability and prosperity is delivered to a chosen few but not the masses. The ranks of the disaffected understandably feel angry, disillusioned and 'left behind', susceptible to demagogues and populists. Those who seem to have sacrificed the most in terms of

anchorage, stability and risk seem to have gained the least in an increasingly precarious upside-down world.

But when I think of Brexit and Trump I cannot help but think 'How can so many people get it so wrong?' But maybe this knee-jerk question reveals more about my lack of emotional intelligence…my emotional illiteracy… and the need for me to try and understand emotional truths. One way of doing this is to explore the findings of those rare studies that have (generally beyond political science and generally beyond the UK) begun to generate a fuller understanding of emotion in politics through thick, immersive, observational research. This is a relatively new kind of political literature inspired by Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?* (2004) and would include texts such as Joe Bageant's *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War* (2007), Kate Zernike's *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America* (2010), and Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson's *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (2012). These are intricate and intimate studies of political groups with an emphasis on feelings, beliefs and emotions and if Vytautas Kavolis was correct when he held sociology, and the social sciences in general, to be 'a field bereft of melody' (quoted in Donskis, 2013, p.2) then this genre of writing represents a melodious counter-example. Stylistically they are not written as academic tracts but as accessible journeys of discovery in the manner of Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) or Clifford Geertz's *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight* (1973). Our present-day investigators – and here I owe a huge debt to the American novelist and essayist Nathanial Rich - file intimate reports from exotic locales like Flagstaff, Arizona, and Middletown, Ohio, where they embed themselves among the natives. Amongst this body of work Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in their own Land* (2016) provides arguably the most insightful account of why feelings matter. Hochschild is a left-leaning, grey-haired, mild-mannered sociologist from Berkeley (another big fan of C Wright Mills) who travels to southwestern Louisiana to observe the tea party in the geographical core of its misery and anti-establishment hellfire rage. Hochschild's aim was to develop exactly that emotionally literacy, to expose those emotional truths that Grayson Perry had encouraged scholars to grasp in the UK in the wake of the Brexit referendum. In preparation she rereads Ayn Rand, author of the classic right-leaning and libertarian works *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) but fails to encounter anyone who shows the slightest interest in literature (but at a bookstore in Lake Charles [Pop. 70,000, main industry – petrochemical plants and oil refineries] she finds that three aisles are reserved for Bibles).

And yet the critical element I want to take from Hochschild in order to develop our focus on why feelings matter - and particularly in light of Jenkins' focus on how more *hope-full* positive feelings might be cultivated – is her awareness of three emotional drivers or dynamics: what she calls the 'Empathy Wall'; 'the Great Paradox'; and the 'deep story'.

The Empathy Wall separates political groups, preventing deep understanding of the other side. 'Is it possible,' she asks, 'without changing our beliefs, to know others from the inside, to see reality through their eyes, to understand *the links between life, feeling, and politics*; that is, to cross the empathy wall? I thought it was.' But while Hochschild tries to tear down her empathy wall, the Tea Partiers speak fervidly of trying to erect a great wall on the Mexican border. And yet at the same time there appears to be a major paradox – 'a Great Paradox' – that reveals around the mismatch between the evidence or facts, on the one hand, and how the white working class in Southwest Louisiana feel about what's in their best interests.

> Across the country, red states [Republican] are poorer and have more teen mothers, more divorce, worse health, more obesity, more trauma-related deaths, more low-birth-weight

> babies, and lower school enrollment. On average, people in red states die five years earlier than people in blue states. Indeed, the gap in life expectancy between Louisiana (75.7) and Connecticut (80.8) is the same as that between the United States and Nicaragua (p.9).

The poorer and more conservative you are, the worse off you are likely to be and the sooner you are likely to die. This holds even on the county level. Yet the very people most damaged by conservative policies in the United States are most likely to vote for them. In recent years comparative studies of the rise of right-wing populist nationalism have generally offered two explanations. The first is the *economic inequality perspective* that highlights overwhelming evidence of powerful trends toward greater income and wealth inequality in the West, an increasingly precarious economic existence and concern about inflows of migrants and refugees. If you are older, less educated or live beyond thriving cities then securing well-paid or long-term employment is increasingly difficult; and *if you feel you have little to lose* why not take a chance on those who seem to offer simple solutions to complex problems? This argument flows into a second and related explanation for deviant voting the *cultural backlash theory*. This sees the rise of populism and anti-political sentiment as in large part a reaction *against* progressive cultural change. Public support for progressive values such as cosmopolitanism, feminism, environmentalism, etc., were to some extent based on the security delivered through post-war economic growth. In a period of global economic austerity the 'cultural escalator' appears to have stopped or even to have gone into reverse in some countries as public commitment to progressive values has waned. 'The silent revolution of the 1970s' Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2016, p.5) conclude 'appears to have spawned an angry and resentful counter-revolutionary backlash today.' The cultural backlash theory would therefore dovetail with Jonathan Haidt's argument in *The Righteous Mind* (2013) that Tea Party voters are not misled but instead care more deeply about cultural values than economic principles.

But back to the bayou and Hochschild in Louisiana and her view that although both of these theories – the economic and the cultural - have merit 'I found one thing missing in them all—a full understanding of emotion in politics. What, I wanted to know, did people *want to feel*, think they *should or shouldn't feel*, and what *do they feel* about a range of issues?'

How, then, do Tea Party voters feel? They're angry, bitter, resentful—that much is obvious. Hochschild goes further, however. She develops for them what in brand marketing is referred to as the "back story," a story that provides a unifying emotional logic to a set of beliefs. She calls it the "deep story." The deep story that Hochschild creates for the Tea Party is a parable of the white American Dream. It begins with an image of a long line of people marching across a vast landscape. The Tea Partiers—white, older, Christian, predominantly male, many lacking college degrees—are somewhere in the middle of the line. They trudge wearily, but with resolve, up a hill. Ahead, beyond the ridge, lies wealth, success, dignity. Far behind them the line is composed of people of color, women, immigrants, refugees. As pensions are reduced and layoffs absorbed, the line slows, then stalls.

An even greater indignity follows: people begin jumping the queue. Many are those who had long stood behind them—blacks, women, immigrants, refugees – are allowed to cut in, aided by the federal government. Next an even more astonishing figure jumps ahead of them: a brown pelican, the Louisiana state bird, 'fluttering its long, oil-drenched wings.' Thanks to environmental protections, it is granted higher social status than, say, an oil-rig worker. The pelican, writes Hochschild, needs clean fish to eat, clean water to dive in, oil-free marshes, and protection from coastal erosion. That's why it's in line ahead of you. But really, it's just an animal and you're a human being. Meanwhile the Tea Partiers are made to feel less than human. They find themselves reviled for their Christian morality and the

"traditional" values they have been taught to honor from birth. Many speak of "sympathy fatigue," the sense that every demographic group but theirs receives sympathy from liberals. "People think we're not good people if we don't feel sorry for blacks and immigrants and Syrian refugees," one Tea Partier tells Hochschild. "But I am a good person and I *don't* feel sorry for them." Hochschild is explaining that people with whom she has little in common, and whose political outlook she objects, have logical, rational reasons for engaging in the way they do. Her version of the deep story goes like this:

> You are a stranger in your own land. You do not recognise yourself in how others see you. It is a struggle to feel seen and honoured. And to feel honoured you have to feel – and [be] seen as – moving forward. But through no fault of your own, and in ways that are hidden, you are slipping backward.

When Hochschild tells her deep story to some of the people she's come to know, they greet it rapturously. "You've read my mind," says one. She concludes that they do not vote in their economic interest but in their 'emotional self-interest.' What other choice do they have? Hochschild reveals the emotional soul of those that feel 'left behind', who yearn for a sense of belonging, for anchorage and acceptance…who feel strangers, not citizens, in their own land. This is why feelings matter – because they provide a foundation for a worldview that can prove incredibly resistant to arguments based on facts, science or expert-opinion.

The critical element and in many ways the whole point of this lecture is to emphasise that when viewed in the context of these people's lives the politics of Trump and of the Tea Party has come to make rational sense – it is an emotional truth. What drives people's views on specific topics – like immigration, environmental regulations, healthcare – is unlikely to be any rational weighing-up of the evidence but how a particular argument or view of the world connects with people's sense of themselves, where they are heading and their way of life. Feelings trump facts and at play here are specific 'feeling rules', to paraphrase Hochschild. The right seeks release from post-war liberal notions of what they *should feel* – happy for the gay newlyweds, sad at the plight of refugees, worried about the environment, etc. A counter-revolutionary backlash, especially among the older generations, white men and less educated sectors has rejected the displacement of traditional family values by post-industrial values (see Inglehart 1997; 1990). The left, however, dismiss the rejection of orthodox progressive 'feeling rules' as mere prejudice and intolerance that, in itself, arguably displays a lack of empathy with those in insecure employment, low wages and little social protection. They just don't seem able to understand the mood of communities or the existence of specific feelings. Those on the left seem (bizarrely) unable to scale the empathy wall. This brings me to conclude my lecture with an attempt to ground this rather wide-ranging discussion with a very quick focus on, amongst other things, a bus and a tree.

III. A BUS & A TREE

The aim of this lecture has been to explore the relationship(s) between anti-politics, citizenship and emotions. It has attempted to understand *why feelings matter* and this led us through a focus on imagination and anchorage and then hope and sacrifice before coming to a focus on the existence of 'empathy walls' and the rejection of dominant 'feeling rules' by sections of the public. In this regard I think Hochschild's concept of 'deep stories' provides a valuable lens into feelings of social discontent that must be acknowledged if the challenges of social fragmentation, inequality and political disaffection are truly to be addressed. In many ways these 'deep stories' provide a sense of emotional anchorage and a frame through which to understand a changing world. But in this final section I want to return to

my focus on Mills' sociological imagination in order to move from the macro to the micro and to ground this analysis back in the UK and to bring it down to a very basic 'everyday' level. What's interesting about this focus on feelings and emotions is that it adds a new dimension to contemporary debates concerning social change and social division. More specifically, the emergence of a major new fault-line within British politics that emphasises education, age and location as the dominant explanatory variables behind behaviour and attitudes (see Table 1).

>>>Insert Table 1 here <<<

What's interesting about this 'two tribes' thesis is the manner in which each of the tribes tends to operate from a very different 'deep story'. One looks forward for inspiration, the other looks back. The feelings of both tribes therefore stems from arguably incompatible positions and offer very different 'feeling rules'. This is exactly why Emily Thornberry's photo-linked tweet during the Rochester and Strood by-election in November 2014 caused such a controversy. To many working classes communities it epitomised a broader feeling that the Labour Party had become a cosmopolitan elite that no longer understood - and even mocked – tradition, pride and patriotism.

With the benefit of hindsight what was particularly noteworthy about the 'Leave' campaign was the manner in which relatively simplistic and emotionally charged statements could forge a powerful and ultimately successful connection with both longstanding British cultural idiosyncrasies *vis-à-vis* the EU and also more recent economic and cultural social anxieties, notably concerning immigration. Put slightly differently, the 'Leave' campaign managed to tap into a 'deep story' that many people still believed in. Nostalgia, once initially defined as an illness, now became a chronically under-estimated political force. As Alan Finlayson (2017) noted, Brexit became a campaign of 'anti-political politics organised around resentment at past losses and scepticism about promised futures'. The sense of a loss of tradition, a mythical integrity, an eviscerated global status, a romanticised past plus a nativist and nationalist anxiety were all set against the perceived excesses of a distant European elite. Afua Hirsch's *Brit(ish)* (2018) has developed this theme and is to some extent supported by the drift of British popular culture with its promotion of a dominant 'deep story' from which powerful feelings and emotions still emanate. Think about the most successful recent films (*Dunkirk*, *Darkest Hour*), think about *The Crown* on Netflix, the popularity of *Poldark* or *Downton Abbey* or even *Horrible Histories*. And yet the role of nostalgia as an emotional safety blanket is largely dismissed by many mainstream parties on the left while populists flick powerful emotive triggers that play to the 'deep story' of a glorious (immigrant free) past. Take, for example, the hometown of my father (before he moved south to Swindon in search of work) – Doncaster.

Doncaster is a railway town that has had to cope with de-industrialisation and where people have had to cope with and give meaning to the changes affecting their lives. In the space left by the dissolution of industrialism, as Cathrine Thorleifsson (2016) has revealed, communities nostalgically invoked the industrial past to cope with existential insecurity. Some called upon the lost empire while others turned to exclusionary Englishness as the solution to current hardship and grievances. In 2015 UKIP strategically located their annual conference in the white-majority working-class town and tapped into local anxieties and local history by promising to secure a prosperous future for British nationals in the extractive industries. What Thorleifsson calls 'the UKIP code' was carefully designed to tap into the town's 'deep story', in this case through 'coal nationalism' that was linked to industry and feelings of stability and belonging. Feeling nostalgic is therefore powerful emotion that can act as a meaning-making resource (see Routledge, et al. 2012; Baldwin and Landau, 2014).

I quite like nostalgia. I can still remember spending my summer holidays in Doncaster during the late 1980s. Fishing at Cusworth Hall and riding around on the Brown and Cream buses that were heavily subsidized as part of the Social Republic of South Yorkshire to a maximum fare of two pence. And yet even here there is a link between my own rosy memories and Hochschild's research in the Deep South of United States. The 'Tea Party Code' was carefully designed to tap into the American dream, as was the rhetoric of Donald Trump. It was a shrill performance of emotion*alism* that is in itself very different to the empathy and emotional intelligence that Grayson Perry warmly promotes. I cannot help but wonder if the Corbyn-surge of 2017 was based upon an emotional connection or populist emotion*alism* but it's interesting that Theresa May and Hillary Clinton were both portrayed as lacking emotional warmth and criticized for promoting facts not feelings (for a discussion see Flinders, 2018). And yet with C Wright Mills' Texan drawl ringing in my ears and telling me to conclude I want to make the jump from the Deep South to South Yorkshire in one step: Hochschild tells us that life inequalities remain rife from state to state with people in red states dying on average *five years earlier* than people in blue states; but in Sheffield we have a bus - the No. 83 - which runs from the suburb of Ecclesfield and then through Southey Green, Shirecliffe, Pitsmoor, city centre, Hunters Bar and ends in either Bents Green or Fulwood. The trip takes about forty minutes and will cost £1.80. But the average life expectancy for those that live around the beginning of your trip, as Dany Dorling (2017) has shown, is *ten years less* than those who live at the end. The bus trip really does tell a tale of two cities or two tribes – one rich, one poor; the 'anywheres' and the 'somewheres' - differing 'deep stories' but all feeling angry about politics for different reasons. But similar bus routes that track inequality can be found all over the country. Many people feel strangers in their own land.

That's it. My story about a tree, with its focus on feelings and felling, emotional roots and empathy walls, will have to wait (but see Flinders and Wood, 2018). But I cannot help but remember that in his long essay about the life of Bill Mackenzie Richard Rose notes how Bill closed his memoirs with a quote from T. S. Elliot's *Little Gidding* - the fourth and final poem of Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) – '…To arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time'. And we have at least come full circle and back where we started with a focus on the need to better understand why feelings matter. As Nussbaum argues in *Political Emotions* (2014, p.10), we are not automatons who will be persuaded by the most rational political arguments and principles, we are enthused, touched, affected and moved by things to which we establish significance; thus, we need to care about our visions and our goals. The question I want to leave you with is this: Where are those with the capacity to scale the empathy wall, who can understand the concerns of those they may not agree with, who can transcend competing narratives of victimhood, anger and rage and who – most of all – understands the difference between being popular rather than populist.

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