

Emotion, Affect and Contemporary Politics

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The emotive, polarised nature of contemporary politics is now widely recognised and reflects what is called the ‘affective turn’ in political studies (Demertzis, 2013; Lilleker, 2014; Richards, 2007, 2017; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012; Yates, 2015).

Psychoanalytic theory has much to contribute to this emerging field of study. Whether one is discussing the UK decision to leave European Union or the love or loathing of politicians such as Donald Trump, psychoanalytic accounts of affect and emotion are especially useful because they can shed light on the powerful and seemingly irrational feelings that are experienced in such political contexts.

The emotionalisation of contemporary politics is linked to a number of factors that include the mediatisation of politics and the rise of new methods of political communication that stir up the emotions and enable their expression through social media and interactive media platforms. Such developments tap into the socio-economic forces of globalisation, war, the displacement of people and the emotional experience of precarity that has emerged as a consequence of such developments (Standing, 2011). The loss of faith in the political narratives that once shaped collective identities within national and global contexts has created fear and uncertainty and a distrust of the other. In Western democracies, the growth of emotive single-issue identity politics has also contributed to the emotionalisation of the contemporary political scene and coincides with what some refer to as ‘therapy’

culture' (Richards, 2007), where the erosion of the boundaries between personal and public experience has led to an increasingly personalised, emotive style and content of political culture today. The growth of a celebrity orientated, promotional style of political culture has also played a role in this process, contributing to the personalisation of politics and its leaders, helping to shape the experience of political citizenship in affective terms (Yates, 2015).

The emotional dynamics of Western political culture are present in the populist style and content of party politics and its related campaigns, as for example in the UK Referendum on membership of the EU in 2016 (referred to as 'Brexit'), or during the 2016 US Presidential election Donald Trump's emotional rallying call to 'Make America great again'. The emotive nationalist-populism¹ of those two campaigns and their aftermath echo a wider shift in democratic political systems in Europe that were evident in election campaigns in the Netherlands and Hungary in 2016 and France in 2017, where populist right-wing candidates mobilised support through highly emotive campaigns that fed fears about immigration and the loss of national identity.²

This chapter explores the complexity of the relationship between politics, affect and emotion through an analysis that draws on different psychoanalytic perspectives in order to examine the affective dynamics of Brexit in the UK and the rise of Donald Trump and his appeal in the US, where the emotive language of love,

¹ Populism is a contested term (Canovan, 1999), but historian Michael Kazin (1998: 1) defines populism as 'a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilise the former against the latter'. The emotional dimensions of populism and its relationship to processes of affect and unconscious fantasy are discussed in this chapter.

² The leaders of these right wing campaigns included the Dutch politician Geert Wilders of the Party for Freedom, Norbert Hofer of the Hungarian Freedom Party and Marine Le Pen of the French National Front party.

hate and desire was, in various ways, used to court the electorate. Whilst political sociology (Salmela and Von Scheve, 2014) and political cognitive psychology (Lilleker, 2014) address the significance of emotion in political campaigns and in the political field more widely, a psychoanalytic reading of affect and politics allows for a nuanced understanding of the hidden psychological forces that drive the mobilisation of affect in campaigns such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump. It enables the researcher to explore the layers of feeling that may influence the support for a political position or politician such as Donald Trump, by providing a lens through which to examine the context of that support through the analysis of unconscious desires, fantasies and affects that emerge as a response to the losses of identity in the late modern world.

In order to clarify the terms of the discussion, the chapter begins by introducing the meanings of emotion and affect when applied to the field of politics, and it then applies the ideas of Jacques Lacan to the affective political terrain of nationalism and the 2016 UK referendum to leave Europe. The chapter then turns to object relations theory by applying the ideas of Melanie Klein to examine the affective, gendered dynamics of Hillary Clinton's 2016 US Presidential election campaign; the ideas of Donald Woods Winnicott (1971) and Christopher Bollas (1987) are then discussed in relation to the appeal of Donald Trump as a psychosocial object of attachment for his followers.

Psychoanalytic understandings of emotion and affect

The relationship between politics, affect and emotion is both complex and contested and the two terms 'affect' and 'emotion' are sometimes used interchangeably to denote conscious and unconscious states of feeling. Nonetheless, from a

psychoanalytic perspective, it is generally agreed that whilst emotions are rooted in social and historical discourse and ideas, it always carries with it traces of conflict that are shaped by the dynamic forces of the unconscious (Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2008; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012). Freud (1915) linked the concept of 'affect' to his notion of repression, which he argued was also bound up with the hidden desires and conflicts of the Oedipus complex. It is sometimes said that people experience 'unconscious emotions', and yet from a psychoanalytic perspective, it is the forbidden *idea* (as in the desire to murder one's father), which is repressed and not the experience of affect itself. Thus the anger or rivalrous feeling once connected with a wish to murder one's father becomes displaced and linked to the experience of anger towards something or someone else - such as the anger felt towards one's boss or to a political leader. So whilst emotions are linked to unconscious processes, it is the idea and not the feeling of affect that is repressed. As Lacan (2007: 189) argued: 'affect through the fact of displacement is effectively displaced, unidentified, broken off from its roots - it eludes us'.

In this chapter then, the unconscious aspects of emotional experience are defined as *affect* which for Lacan (1977) is bound up with the workings of desire and the law of the father, for Melanie Klein (1957) in the powerful ambivalent feelings and fantasies that are stirred up in relation to early infantile fantasies of the mother, and for Winnicott (1971) who also foregrounded the significance of the mother, the experience of love and sometimes hate that creates a potential space for hope, trust and meaningful communication with others. Whilst these three psychoanalytic perspectives on affect draw on different traditions,³ they nonetheless share a

³ Klein and Winnicott both belong to the British school of object relations psychoanalysis and yet there are differences of emphasis between the two, as Winnicott focuses less on innate

psychoanalytic concern with unconscious affective processes that find symbolic expression through the subject's relationship to real and imagined others.

Freud (1921, 1930) and subsequent psychoanalytic writers remind us that the psychodynamics of affect extend beyond the experience of the individual to that of the group and society, so that the processes of affect play a role in shaping the ideas, norms and discourses of politics, culture and society at different moments in history. As Freud (1921: 95) argued: 'the contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology, which at a first glance may seem to be full of significance, loses a great deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely'. Thus, a key aspect of the approach taken here is that psychoanalytic understandings of politics interweave with those from the sphere of culture, politics and society. With that psychosocial orientation in mind, it is important to pay attention to the social, cultural and unconscious levels of affective politics throughout the course of the discussion.

Politics, affect and desire in the UK referendum campaign

Fuelled by the forces of social media and late modern methods of political communication, emotions play a significant important role in shaping the dynamics of late modern political culture (Demertzis, 2013; Lilleker, 2014). Freud (1921) argued that such emotional group processes are bound up with the experience of narcissistic identification both with other members of the group and through the idealisation of the leader as the symbolic father. Freud traced these desires and identifications back

drives and instincts and more on the subject's psychosocial relationship with the environment. Both Klein and Lacan emphasise the importance of the drive (see: Borossa, Bronstein and Pajaczkowska, 2015).

to the Oedipus complex and the fantasy father is key to Freud's thinking in this respect. Freud's emphasis on the significance of narcissism and also the father in shaping subjectivity and group experience is also foregrounded in Lacan's theory of the affective subject - albeit in symbolic form through language and systems of representation. Derek Hook (2011) deploys Lacanian theory in order to examine the relationship between affect and identification in nationalist political contexts.⁴ Hook's methodology is useful for a political analysis of affect because he escapes the potential a-historic universalism of a psychoanalytic approach that essentialises it as a libidinal force divorced from the realm of ideas and discourse in which it operates. Instead, he mobilizes a psychosocial reading of affect that sees it as functioning within and across different levels of political experience that include excessive libidinal affect on the one hand and on the other-the inherited symbolic structures of history, culture and society.

Lacan identified three registers of the psyche and experience that include firstly, the libidinal level of the 'Real', secondly, the level of the 'Imaginary' that is associated with the narcissistic identifications of the mirror phase, and thirdly, the 'Symbolic' mode of identification that is linked to the patriarchal structures of history, culture and society and one's place in the social order (Lacan, 1997, 1977). Like Lacan, Hook emphasises the interaction of these three registers and applies them to affective modes of political identification, using nationalism as a focus to examine ways in which these identifications operate. A good example of such affective processes at work in a nationalist context could be seen in the 2016 UK Brexit campaign, when the day after the vote to leave the European Union in June of that

⁴ In psychoanalysis, identification' refers to the formation of the subject through the process of 'taking in' the other.

year, the former UK Independence Party (UKIP) Leader, Nigel Farage announced portentously to the assembled press that ‘The dawn is breaking on an independent United Kingdom’ (Williams, 2016). In that speech, Nigel Farage mobilised the emotional discourse of populism to say that this was a ‘victory’ for ‘the real people, for the ordinary people, for the decent people’ (Ibid.). Here, the affective dimensions of Nigel Farage’s speech intersect with socio-cultural discourses and historical prejudices about Europe that are condensed through the trope of the ‘plucky Englishmen’ rising up against the mythical foe of Europe. One can see the processes of the unconscious at work in this instance because whilst Nigel Farage’s words express a desire for national unity *against* the other of Europe, that desire also resonates unconsciously with an imaginary desire for unity *with* the other (which paradoxically, could be the same other as Europe) – a desire that is linked to the identification with the ego ideal of the mirror phase (Lacan, 1977: 1-8). In other words, the imaginary desire *for* the other (which could be the imagined community of the UK or, as indicated - Europe) is also bound up with feelings of rivalry and aggression *towards* the other who threatens to disturb the fantasy of unity with the ego ideal (Ibid).

Robert Samuels (2016) argues that the ‘duality’ between self and other that operates unconsciously in the register of the imaginary is often powerfully present in the current forces of right wing nationalist politics. He says that against a contemporary political backdrop of fear, risk and economic uncertainty, the unpredictable and aggressive forces of the imaginary operate and shape group identity. As we have seen, these unconscious forces were present in UKIP’s campaign to leave the EU and Nigel Farage’s disavowal of the anger and symbolic violence of his own campaign to leave Europe provide a further instance of the ways in which

affect shapes the language of political culture and the fantasies that circulate within it. For example, in Nigel Farage's 2016 speech following the UK Referendum, he said that they had won the vote to leave the European Union without 'a single bullet being fired' (Williams, 2016). This claim ignored the fact that Jo Cox, the pro-remain Labour MP for the constituency, Bately and Spennymoor, was murdered by a member of an extreme right-wing nationalist party called 'Britain First' and that this murder occurred on the day that Farage unveiled a UKIP campaign poster that was widely condemned by MPs and by the public as inciting racial hatred (Stone, 2016). The poster, which some have likened to images of Nazi propaganda, depicts a long, winding queue of what seems to be mainly non-white migrants and refugees with the words: 'Breaking point: the EU has failed us all' (Stewart and Mason, 2016). The affective dynamics of politics that I have discussed were manifest in that UKIP poster and were acted out through the murder of Jo Cox. The patriotic platitudes of UKIP and its flag-waving calls for national unity combined with an aggressive and rivalrous renunciation of difference as symbolised in the image of the foreign asylum seeker who is represented in that poster and in other promotional material as the 'other' and as threatening the identity of Britain and its citizens. In such imagery, the implied collapse of state boundaries elide with anxieties about the loss of psychic boundaries through the merging of the self with an omnipotent other.

The UKIP discourse of Brexit was also gendered in its emotional appeal, tapping into the identification with the fantasy of the father and a return to a traditional order of paternal inheritance. As with other UK male politicians such as Boris Johnson who campaigned to leave Europe, Nigel Farage's seductive brand of traditional, retro-sexual English masculinity was for some a significant factor in appealing to voters and getting his message across. As a progressive, pro-European

female MP and mother, Jo Cox represented the very opposite, and her femininity was a marked cultural signifier of difference in that respect. For many of her constituents and colleagues, she was widely admired as applying an empathic approach to her work as a Member of Parliament (BBC News, 2016). Her public persona foregrounded her cultural and political identity as a woman and politician whose passionate advocacy of vulnerable groups both in her constituency and in Syria, marked her out as different to what Irigaray called the 'same' of a masculinized public political sphere that remains patriarchal in terms of its tone, attitude and gender balance (Irigaray and Guynn, 1995).

Politics and affect; object relations perspectives

The affective forces of right-wing nationalist politics with its deployment of emotive populist tropes (as in the UKIP Brexit campaign) are often driven by the dynamics of envy, rivalry and narcissism, and object relations psychoanalysis provides a useful analytical framework to explore such processes. From an object relations perspective, the development of subjectivity is bound up with the emotional experience of relating to objects, and its theories have been applied to the sphere of politics and emotion in the UK and the US (Hoggett, 2015; Layton, 2006; Richards, 2007, 2015; Yates, 2015; 2018). From this standpoint, the ego is shaped from birth by the excesses of unconscious fantasy and the experience of affect is always bound up with relationships to real and imagined objects of both the mind and the environment. As the name implies, object relations theory is concerned with the relational dynamics of subjectivity and whilst those such as Melanie Klein (1946) focus on the instinctual roots of fantasy and its relationship to the embodied experience of affect, others such

as Winnicott (1971), foreground the interactive nature of relating to the object and the mother as the first psychosocial object. As I discuss, the ideas of both Klein and Winnicott can be used to examine the affective dynamics of politics in the 21st Century.

Fantasies of the phallic mother in political culture

The conscious and unconscious envy of women in the public political sphere can be explored using the ideas of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1946, 1957). Her theories of affect and the unconscious emphasise the embodied and often destructive nature of emotional experience and fantasy that are present from birth. For Klein and others influenced by her work (Segal, 1988), affective experience has its roots in the fantasies⁵ of the mother in the first months of life. Klein argued that infants are born into the world with a capacity for envy, which is linked to life and death drives. The feelings of envy that she describes are related to the helpless dependency of the infant who begins life in what she called ‘the paranoid schizoid’ position where the world is viewed through a split world of idealised good and bad objects. The infant protects itself by developing defence mechanisms that include splitting, projection and projective identification (expelling unwanted anxieties onto the other and then responding to those projections), and envious attacks on the maternal object who is the source of life and food (but who also has the power to take it away). Gradually, however, the paranoid schizoid mode of processing experience gives way to the depressive position, where the child learns to manage paranoid anxiety and cope with the loss of omnipotence and manage the complexity of emotional ambivalence.

However, the states of mind associated with the paranoid schizoid and depressive

⁵ Klein (1957) referred to unconscious fantasy as ‘phantasy’. However, for purposes of consistency, this chapter uses the term ‘fantasy’ throughout.

positions continue to influence the ways in which the subject relates to the world (Klein, 1957).

Klein's ideas are evocative when applied to the discourse and culture of politics in an era of right wing populism where, for example, anxieties about the boundaries of the nation state also resonate with mental states of citizens and the boundaries of the mind (Richards, 2017). One can develop the application of these ideas in order to examine the unwanted feelings that are projected onto the despised and abject other and also the splitting of countries and ethnic groups into categories of 'good' and 'bad'. There are numerous examples where one can arguably see such processes at work that are not exclusive to the phenomena of right-wing nationalism and the exploitation of populist sentiment and expression. Nonetheless, one can argue that the concept of projection as discussed by Klein and others resonates powerfully when applied to images of the UKIP Brexit campaign and the paranoid schizoid mood that surfaced and which continued to find expression subsequently in Brexit negotiations and in related media commentary. In that media environment, opposing views about the exit from Europe were split into 'hard' versus 'soft' positions and the sections press labelled opponents of the government stance as 'traitors' (Morris, 2017).

The psychoanalytic conceptual framework of Klein, with its emphasis on the fantasy of the omnipotent mother, is highly evocative when applied to the affective, gendered identifications that are mobilised in relation to political leaders in different contexts. Just as Lacan's theory of the symbolic father can be used to examine the unconscious phallic appeal of male leaders such as Donald Trump, a Kleinian perspective can be helpful when exploring fantasies of the female leader as an

overbearing, persecutory or withholding mother. To escape charges of essentialism, such an approach needs to be interwoven with an attention to the historical and socio-political specificities of time and place. Nonetheless, this mode of analysis is useful when discussing cultural anxieties about female politicians who are demonised as risky, over-emotional or somehow unnatural because they are not emotional enough – as in the case of Hillary Clinton, who has been variously criticised for being hard, ‘nasty’, calculating, ‘inhuman’ and cold (Bordo, 2016). As is well documented, whilst male politicians such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Vladimir Putin can shed tears in public and also show a so-called ‘softer’ or ‘human’ side by identifying themselves as fathers and family men (Yates, 2012), women have a different psycho-political and cultural settlement with the public and must be wary of using those strategies in case they appear too vulnerable and prone to risk (Evans, 2009).

The 2016 US election provided a good example of the gendered division of emotion within the public arena of political culture. As Thompson and Yates (2016) argue, there was a marked contrast in the ‘embodied attributes and emotions’ that were ascribed to each candidate. In particular, they note that whilst Donald Trump was in fact the older candidate with respiratory problems (for example, wheezing in his public debates) and showing a poor recall for facts (Graham, 2016), it was Clinton’s age and physical frailty that dominated press reports of her throughout the election. Against a well-documented backdrop of social uncertainty and risk (Beck, 1992, Bauman, 2000), it was as if the political body of the electorate managed their fears of fragmentation by projecting them onto ‘the image of corrupt and abject political body’ of Clinton herself whose body became a focus for cultural anxieties about late modernity and social change (Thompson and Yates, 2016).

The construction of Clinton as cold and devoid of human warmth and emotion reinforced an impression of her as being untrustworthy and false - as in Trump's ugly name for her - 'crooked Hillary'. The representation of Clinton as an unfeeling political 'crook' who merely reproduced the old neoliberal order, contrasted both with the apparent authenticity of fellow Democrat politician Bernie Sanders' un-spun, left-of-centre populist appeal and also with the image of Donald Trump's emotionally charged address to the so-called 'left behind' voters who looked to him to save them from a bleak future of social and economic precarity. The notion of the 'left behind' voter was a term coined by the political scientists, Ford and Goodwin (2014) to describe the demographic grouping who supported UKIP and other right-wing parties, who felt ignored by the government, resented globalisation and whose cultural values were deemed old fashioned and even distasteful by those in power. The debate about the left behinds can be framed economically in terms of those who have not benefited from neoliberalism (Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Inglehart and Norris, 2016) and in the US the debate is often framed in terms of race (Coates, 2017). Some have also noted the significance of the cultural and educational divide between these groups and the power and privilege of those who in popular discourse are referred to in pejorative terms as the 'metropolitan elite' (Goodhart, 2017).⁶

There is a close analogy between the UK 'left-behind' group of citizens and those in the US. Both groups helped to fuel the populist protest that in the UK swayed the Brexit vote and which in the US helped to bring Donald Trump in to power (Hochschild, 2016). Donald Trump used the term 'left behind' in his campaigns and

⁶ In the UK, the concept of the 'metropolitan elite' was widely used to discredit the government backed pro-remain campaigners. See, for example, this article in the pro-Brexit UK Newspaper, *The Daily Mail*: 'Metropolitan elite out of touch with ordinary "ghastly" Britons' (Drury, 2016).

in his inauguration speech in relation to what he said were ‘the millions and millions of workers left behind’ (The Telegraph, 2017). The concept of being ‘left behind’ is an affectively powerful one that connotes being ‘left out’,⁷ unloved, dropped and ignored by those political leaders who are meant to take care of you. The perception by large groups of people in the UK in relation to Brexit and by Donald Trump supporters in the US of being ignored by mainstream parties and governments was and is not without foundation, and it rests on a complex mix of factors related to material inequality and anxieties about cultural difference. And yet, the excessive affective force of hatred and vitriol that was and continues to be directed toward Hillary Clinton as a member of the elite also brings to mind the affective fantasies of the monstrous maternal body discussed by Klein with reference to the paranoid schizoid position. Here, one can argue that Clinton’s positioning as a member of the elite taps into an envious fantasy of the corrupt political body reproducing itself at the expense of the electorate and keeping all the political goodness to itself. Clinton’s femininity seems to reinforce this perverse image of mechanical reproduction in an age of promotional politics, a fantasy image that is represented as both unnatural (as discussed above) and yet somehow inevitable. From this perspective, one could say that Clinton’s status as the wife of the former President, Bill Clinton contributes to an envious fantasy of exclusion from the all-powerful Oedipal couple who are both preoccupied with themselves ‘and their kind’ and who seem to care little for those economically and culturally left behind (Hochschild, 2016). The widespread rumour that Hillary Clinton sanctioned and therefore ‘enabled’ her husband’s sexual infidelity (Twohey, 2016) not only reinforces a fantasy of her ruthless, phallic femininity but it

⁷ Obama referred to this group as ‘folks who feel left out’ (King, 2016).

also evokes the unconscious scenario of the omnipotent ‘combined parent’ discussed by Klein in her exploration of infantile helplessness and paranoid schizoid states of mind (Segal, 1988: 108-9).

Shame, the good parent and fantasies of attachment

In contrast to Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump was able to project a political persona that for his followers that was both exiting and affirming. As a glamorous, high - profile entrepreneur in the US who has been in the public eye since the 1980s, he consolidated his status as a celebrity businessman on the US version of the reality show, *The Apprentice* (2014-15). His identity as an icon of popular television indicates the extent to which celebrity culture and politics are now closely imbricated and the myth of his competence stemmed from his performance as the strong and decisive leader on that show (Yates, 2018). Richard Sennett (1976) argued that the development of personality-driven politics is also linked to the emergence of ‘secular charisma’, where the residual envy or *ressentiment* of voters in relation to powerful politicians in social democratic societies is warded off by focussing on the personality and image of politicians rather than substantial political issues and policies.⁸ This description is pertinent when applied to the affective appeal of Donald Trump at a time when in the lead-up to his election victory in 2016, the dynamics of nationalist populism and *ressentiment* converged with that of celebrity politics. Donald Trump showed his dexterity as a politician by deflecting onto Clinton the populist anger that was felt towards the establishment of which he (given his wealth and connections) was and is also part. Using the playful words that are reminiscent of 1950s Hollywood

⁸ *Ressentiment* is a contested term and its different uses are related to different philosophical traditions. From a psychoanalytic perspective, *ressentiment* can be used in a similar way to Melanie Klein’s concepts of envy and projective identification. For further discussion see: Clark (2006).

B movies, Donald Trump deflected voters' anger onto what he likes to call 'The Swamp' of 'Washington insiders' – a phrase which, like 'build the wall' or with reference to Hilary Clinton, 'lock her up!', he and his followers like to chant in the manner of a school playground game, where the anger is used as a form of bonding as any potential *ressentiment* aimed at him and his privilege is, in effect gathered up and projected elsewhere.

During his election campaign, Donald Trump's appeal as a leader was achieved in part through his glamour as a television personality, and also through a form of *faux* intimacy that he created as he offered himself up as an object of attachment for his supporters. Alongside the ritual chanting games at his rallies, his success was also linked to the passionate declarations of love and empathy that he seemed to have for those citizens who normally feel despised and unloved by establishment politicians such as Hillary Clinton who referred to them as 'a basket of deplorables'.⁹ As Donald Trump said in his 2016 inauguration speech: '..Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength. I will fight for you with every breath in my body. And I will never ever let you down' (The Telegraph, 2016).

Donald Trump's skill has arguably been to tap into a vein of shame amongst those citizens who cannot provide for their families and who reject or feel left behind by the forces of modernity, globalisation and the values of social liberalism. The discourse of shame and the fantasies that circulate in relation to it have been a recurrent motif in late modern politics in a number of contexts,¹⁰ and they have also

⁹ Clinton apologized for her comments the next day, see: CNN politics [online] 9 September 2016. <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/09/09/politics/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-basket-of-deplorables/> [accessed 28 April 2017].

¹⁰ Including, for example, the unacknowledged debts of postcolonialism (Venn, 2006), of gender and sexuality (Munt, 2012) and the repressed shame of slavery upon which the

been articulated in relation to both Brexit and to the rise of Donald Trump. In both contexts, shame has played a role in stigmatising groups such as welfare and benefit claimants and refugees who are defined as abject, and who are made to carry that shame on behalf of others.

Object relations psychoanalysis traces feelings of shame back to an early infantile stage of development when the very young child fails to be mirrored by its parent and this failure creates a narcissistic wound that provides the basis for the ontology of shame in later life (Mollon, 2002). This experience, which is linked to a failure of attachment, also resonates when applied to those citizens who feel rejected and misrecognised by the governing classes (Yates, 2018). Such a scenario provides a context for the appeal of Donald Trump for his supporters because despite his macho authoritarian persona, he nonetheless presents himself as an object for those seeking to identify with the image of the leader as a strong, caring and empathic provider.

The idea of nation as a 'transitional object' is apt in this context. For Winnicott (1971), the latter is the infant's first 'not-me' object, and its use helps the infant to move from his or her primary identification with the maternal object into a world of external objects. In so doing, it helps to bridge the divide that opens up when the infant perceives and begins to understand the outside world. One can argue that Donald Trump uses a nostalgic idea of nation in the form of a consoling transitional object that functions in a regressive fashion to manage the losses of identity that are also bound up with the object of the American Dream that cannot be mourned or let go (Yates, 2018). This argument can be extended through the application of Christopher Bollas's (1987) theory of the transformational object. Bollas develops

American Dream was constructed (Schneiderman, 1996) and Refugees and Benefit claimants (Tyler, 2013).

Winnicott's theory of the transitional object in order to explore the world of object relating and its role in shaping subjectivity. Bollas describes an earlier, more primary object relation for the infant, which he calls the 'transformational object'. In pre-verbal experience, the adaptation of the maternal figure to the infant's needs transforms the infant's experience from pain or anxiety to comfort and safety. This experience of the infant that is provided by the mother becomes unconsciously internalised as a transformational object.

Winnicott (1960) said that at times of uncertainty and change, the outside world is experienced as an 'impingement'. For many, Donald Trump seems to offer a secondary shield against that sense of impingement which, to extend further the language of Winnicott, contributes to a national 'false self' (1971) that functions as a defence against the imagined enemy that Trump himself creates. The avoidance of vulnerability through a public rhetoric of power is a recurring theme of contemporary politics more generally. When Donald Trump promises to restore the nation to some notion of its former glory, he seems to offer himself as a transformational object and yet this would be a distortion of the process that Bollas (1987) described (albeit in the context of child development). In the case of the latter, the experience of transformation is brought about by the mother's *adaptation* to the needs and anxieties of her infant. Donald Trump's version is not adaptation, but rather it is a defensive triumph over vulnerability and also the fantasies of dangerous femininity associated with the risk of the unreliable mother – as indicated above in the discussion of Hillary Clinton. In this way, his promise of transformation is essentially underpinned by control, and at the level of fantasy, its collective appeal seems to operate culturally as a form of manic defence against the unknown.

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Conclusion: The affective ties of political culture and its structures of feeling

This chapter has used the psychoanalytic theories of Lacan, Klein, Winnicott and others such as Bollas to examine the affective processes of two nationalist-populist political campaigns that used the language of emotion to appeal to those sections of the public who feel alienated and left behind by the social, cultural and economic forces of globalisation in the late modern age. As we have seen, the emotions that are galvanised in those contexts also tap into deeper psychic structures and drivers of affect that are related to the dynamics of desire, rivalry, envy, love and loss.

As discussed in the introduction, a significant factor in the affective dynamics of contemporary political culture is the mediatisation of politics and the role played by popular culture in helping to shape the emotional dynamics of political citizenship today. One can argue that the structures of subjectivity, popular culture and politics are closely interwoven and the cultural ‘glue’ or cement that links them are the feelings and emotions that shape subjectivity at any one time (Yates, 2015). The political events that I have discussed (of Brexit in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US) provide good examples of that process at work, because they were both shaped by the cultural forces of political culture in a media age. Citizens invest emotionally in political formations and also in the forms of common sense that emerge at different historical periods, which is an idea that draws on Raymond Williams’ (1977: 132) notion of a ‘structure of feeling’ as ‘thought as felt, and feeling as thought’. Thus, political culture provides the spaces in which cultural, political and emotional aspects of experience come together, and are continually shaped and symbolised. The symbols and signs that are created in that domain become a focus in the struggle for power, meaning and identity. In this way, the affective structures of

culture and identity are not external to the political sphere, but are very much part of it.

As this chapter has shown, psychoanalysis provides a rich, conceptual and theoretical apparatus that allows us to capture the psychosocial and cultural mechanisms that produce the structures of feeling that shape the affective dynamics of political culture and its campaigns in the contemporary, late modern era. Applying theories of the unconscious allows one to go beyond the socio-economic and cultural accounts of the emotionalisation of politics and instead it enables us to confront the powerful psychodynamic currents and investments that underpin that process. Such an approach contributes to the emerging field of psycho-political studies, which is a timely move, given the complex and emotive nature of political culture today.

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