The post-Brexit and post-Trump climate has been overwhelmingly characterized as 'troubling', 'startling' and a 'time of crisis' by journalists and academics alike (Forte 2016). Analysts, American as well as foreign, and scholars display their bewildered shock, distress and disappointment in light of the results. *How could this have happened?* they ask. Brexit and Trump opponents' faith in humanity and hopes for the future, it seems, have been shattered into a fracture simultaneously constituting a personal and public crisis of global magnitude. In an effort to understand why supporters voted the way they did, some analysts resort to an essentializing of 'the other', a discourse of 'alterity' in which the differences in the identities of the individuals are reduced and bound to the demographics of the communities in which they reside (Schiller 2012: 521). It is in these efforts that we see painted a monochromic picture of the supporters as rural, uneducated, predominantly white working-class individuals. Not only are supporters who are located within disparate demographics (such as immigrants, ethnic minorities and the wealthy) conveniently neglected in this exercise, but the portrayed individuals' 'relationalities are obscured through the presumption of given (racialized, cultural, gendered, or religious) differences' (Eckert 2016: 245). Categorical classifications like 'working class' impute assumed attributes to the individuals assigned as such, and citizenship within one such category thus becomes identity; magically and immediately, all individuals within a given category are assumed to share the same interests, values, and behaviours (Somers 1994). In opposition to this reductionist portrayal, the narrative approach seeks to understand people as guided by 'the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities' (ibid.: 624), rather than by the interests that analysts ascribe to them. Somers eloquently captures the importance of relationality in the narrative approach:

> The 'narrative' dimension of identity there and elsewhere thus presumes that action can only be intelligible if we recognize the various ontological and public narratives in which actors are emplotted. Narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable place in culturally constructed stories composed of (break-able) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life. Most important, however, narratives are not incorporated into the self in any direct way; rather they are mediated through the enormous spectrum of social and political institutions and practices that constitute our social world. People's experiences as workers, for example, are inextricably interconnected with the larger matrix of relations that shaped their lives – their regional location, the practical workings of the legal system, family patterns – as well as the

particular stories (of honor, of ethnicity, of gender, of local community, of greed, etc.) used to account for the events happening to them. (Somers 1994: 625)

An excellent example of the narrative approach is found in Arlie Hochschild's (2016) book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, which ethnographically documents how Tea Partiers in Louisiana form shared narratives that embody and situate their identity, values and perceived role in society, all things which may affect political views and behaviour. Journalist Nathaniel Rich recounts the 'deep story' that Hochschild uncovers:

> 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 cutting them in line. Many are those who had long stood behind them—blacks, women, immigrants, even Syrian refugees, all now 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 […] 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. (Rich 2016)

While the book's subject community is not representative of all Trump supporters, the narrative it espouses is heavily exploited by Trump (Rich 2016). It is useful in understanding how people perceive their individual role and their community's role in society through narratives of relationality that contextualize the local within the global. We can begin to understand how economic despair largely fuels people's fears, anger, disdain and victimhood in a time of crisis. We can begin to offer more nuanced and accurate theories of identity and its influence on political behaviour. We can refuse to accept generalized, reductionist media narratives that vilify 'the other' as a homogenous, monolithic entity and as inherently representative of everything repulsive contained in the person or policy they voted for. For instance, in the case of Trump voters, an astonishing degree of personalization occurs in which '…Trump is magnified to the point where he stands in for all those who supported him' (Forte 2016). Yet, Forte argues, it is wholly possible and indeed happens that

individuals can find a politician personally and politically vile in their behaviour but agree on a central issue of importance (ibid.). Most crucially, Forte argues that we can ask which crisis in particular the media, analysts, academics and laypeople should be focused on: the political and cultural crisis of not seeing Brexit and Trump as formidable, substantial possibilities, or the raging economic and social crisis faced by local communities most impacted by the 'brutalities of neoliberal globalization'? (ibid.).

The two essays that follow, authored by Cathryn Klusmeier and Derek Soled, elucidate the ways in which illness narratives both construct identity and reveal social values by transforming meaningless suffering into meaningful stories. Klusmeier explores how seemingly individual stories actually operate on the collective level to transform events into congruent meaning. She further illuminates how shared authorship erodes the boundary between the individual self and the societal self, and how an individual narrator's experience can be constructed as meaningful collective knowledge that shapes a group's identity. Soled looks at how illness cannot be represented from a single vantage point, but rather must be contextualized in a network of perspectives; he further explicates what narratives reveal about an individual's social relations and cultural values. Most significantly, Soled delineates how illness narratives divulge an individual's emplotment, or how the individual perceives their role and level of control in a relational context with those around them, as well as with respect to what the future holds. In these relational ways, the study of illness narratives by anthropology offers a useful parallel to understanding the experiences and motives of supporting voters – voters who construct, contest and negotiate with deeply embedded sociocultural narratives just as powerful and complex as those of their opponent counterparts.

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