Giuseppe Balirano and Bronwen Hughes, eds., *Homing in on Hate: Critical Discourse Studies of Hate Speech, Discrimination and Inequality in the Digital Age* (Napoli: Paolo Loffredo Editore, 2020), 300 pp., ISBN 978-88-32193-59-6

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"It is a matter of infinite difficulty […] to determine what a man's *motive* may have been for this or that particular action", English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote about more than 200 years ago in his *Contributions to Southey's Omniana* (in Heather J. Jackson and James R. de J. Jackson, eds., *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1 [Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 2019], 310).

Some years after the publication of this collection, Coleridge delivered a series of lectures in which he discussed Iago's misogynous and racist verbal behaviour in Shakespeare's *Othello* by describing his actions and personal conduct as "*motiveless malignity* [emphasis added]" (in *Lectures 1818-1819 on Literature*, vol. 1, ed. by Reginald A. Foakes [Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 1987], 315). As a matter of fact, through this statement, the poet wanted to underline how the Bard's most sinister villain had no real reason or even physiological need to pronounce discriminatory sentences towards Othello like "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" or, talking to Desdemona, women in general, as "You are pictures out of doors, bells / In your parlors, wild-cats in your kitchens, saints in / Your injuries, devils being offended, players in your / Housewifery, and housewives in your beds". Coleridge instead underlined how Iago's desire to show intellectual superiority or power cannot be attributed to a progressive health decay but the "inconsistency of the character itself" (*The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1, 310).

Thus, Iago seems to adopt this behaviour simply for the fun of it and because he is driven by a completely irrational hatred against Othello. This type of unreasonable, extreme delivery of hostility language (that more often also turns into acts of physical violence) is something people deal with every day and that goes under the label of 'hate speech'.

Hate speech lies in that invisible suspended space that connects the "freedom of expression" to the "freedom from discrimination" (Giuseppe Balirano and Bronwen Hughes, "Introduction", v). In the recent publication *Homing in on Hate: Critical Discourse Studies of Hate Speech, Discrimination and Inequality in the Digital Age*, edited by Giuseppe Balirano and Bronwen Hughes, these "two conflicting principles" (v) are comprehensively investigated and profoundly analysed by looking, in particular, at how "specific forms of harassments […] possess [their] own set of ever-evolving rules and codes" (ibid.) that especially manifest themselves in online environments.

In fact, today's digital communication represents a double-edged sword since if on one hand it allows connecting different groups, cultures, and societies on a large scale, thus positively affecting fields like economy and education, on the other hand, the anonymity given by the screen may lead to derogatory negative behaviours. As the editors point out, the concept of 'freedom' lies at the foundation of democratic societies and "the idea of restricting free speech stands as a threat to an open exchange of thoughts, opinions and views" (vi). Nevertheless, due to the growing prevalence of diverse hate speech behaviors (e.g., trolling, cyberbullying, revenge porn, etc.), not only governments and internet providers are increasingly trying to understand how to prevent, limit, and punish such forms of activity, but also research on the theme has intensified, providing a great impact on the study of the phenomenon.

As a result, the book edited by Balirano and Hughes provides a consistent analysis of different kinds of discriminatory discourses, specifically focusing on hate speech both in the context of mass media and from a legal and institutional point of view. Starting from a theoretical framework mainly founded on Corpus-based Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Linguistics, the volume aims to unveil the linguistic strategies employed by haters to perpetrate their negative behaviors.

Much has been and continues to be written around the 'war against Others', and many approaches have been taken to display the wide-ranging features of this phenomenon. Nonetheless, the authors' choice of (Digital) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) lies in the fact that the framework developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Michael Halliday allows to analyse the key functions played by language in communication: "the experiential function of enacting experience, the interpersonal function of negotiating relationships, and the textual function of organizing information" (15).

The book is divided into two main strongly inter-related sections respectively entitled "Hate Speech and the Media" and "Hate Speech, Institutions, and the Law", both describing – from multimodal perspectives – how hate speech occurring in virtual environments does not vanish like a soap bubble but rather has tremendous real effects on the individuals experiencing it.

Online fat-shaming is the core of Chapter 1, entitled "Fat Chance! Digital Critical Discourse Studies on Discrimination against Fat People", in which Balirano and Hughes – by building up two inter-related and multilingual corpora (i.e., FAT and GROSSE, respectively in English and French) through the extrapolation of trending hashtags connected to the English and French terms 'fat-shaming' and 'grassophobie' – identify and analyse what they define as "'self-deprecatory' and/or 'other-deprecatory' macrocategories" (16), strictly interconnected with gender, ethnicity, and social class. As a result, they demonstrate how fat-shaming discourses are linked to previously established hate-based beliefs against minority groups, especially regarding women and race.

Radio Stations can also be vehicles of discriminatory speeches as shown by Angela Pitassi's analysis in Chapter 2, entitled "Discriminatory Speech in Ethnic Radio Talk Shows: The Case of the Spanish-Language Radio Station WKKB FM Latina 100.3", in which she investigates gender ideologies regarding heteronormative discourses by building up and examining what she has defined the 'Dj Gato' (named after his host, a Latino male in his 50s) and 'El Mañanero' corpus (the former collected between 2018-2019, the latter between 2020-2021). Pitassi's research demonstrates that despite the presence of isolated cases in which the conversation appears to show some instances of social change, still the discourses seem to be "in a need to maintain a status quo of hegemonic masculinity" (70).

Disability is the theme of Chapter 3 by Maria Cristina Nisco, entitled "Online Abuse and Disability Hate Speech: A Discursive Analysis of Newspaper Comment Boards on Harvey's Law", which takes into account Katie Price's petition "to make trolling a crime" (81). Price's battle resulted in a series of attacks perpetrated towards her disabled son Harvey that Nisco collected in her 'Harvey-law Corpus' over a time-span ranging from 2017 to 2019. By identifying three macro-categories of comments (i.e., 'against Katie Price', 'on quitting social media,' 'supporting Katie Price's petition and condemning HSO against Harvey'), Nisco shows that "hate speech is more than harsh words as it is embedded in customs and actions intended to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred, and as such, it can occur both online and offline" (90).

Hate-based right-wing populism is the foundation of Chapter 4 by Angela Zottola, entitled "When Freedom of Speech Turns into Freedom of Hate: Hateful Speech and 'Othering' in Conservative Political Propaganda in the USA", in which she investigates eight live-streamed lecture-videos of the

conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro held between 2016-2019. According to Zottola's analysis, Shapiro uses both verbal and non-verbal cues "to construct the dichotomy of 'us' vs. 'them'" (109) in which "'we' are good and 'they' are bad", thus turning free speeches into hateful discourses.

The COVID-19 outbreak has eventually changed people's lives from several points of view. Katherine E. Russo's "Hate Speech and Covid-19 Risk Communication: A Critical Corpus-based Analysis of Risk and Xenophobia in Twitter" in Chapter 5 investigates how epidemics could turn in potential places for intolerance discourses in Twitter's micro-blogging world. In particular, Russo's work starts from the assumption that media communication of Covid-19 risks often recourses to eco-social insecurity feelings that may result in hate speech discourses towards the affected population. Through an in-depth analysis of a specialized twitter corpus collected from March 1 to March 15, 2020, Russo shows that hate speech especially occurred in connection to established "specific strategies of representation" (137) of the groups affected, in particular Chinese people and migrants so that "hate speech [was] based on preservation of the in-group, [while] closure and discrimination towards the out-groups".

Terrorism and hate crime are at the base of Margaret Rasulo's "'To the Streets': Deploying the City as the Object of Hate Crimes in Terrorist Discourse" in Chapter 6. Rasulo combines Multimodal Analysis and the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor to show how Jidahists construct their hate-based narratives through the metaphor of the city. In doing so, she investigates a corpus of 300 images and 260 freely accessible articles released in the final year of publication of their magazines (i.e., *Dubiq* and *Rumiyah*), between 2016-2017. Both the verbal and visual resources contain a great number of elements connected to the city plus "religious quotations, profiles of fighters depicted as glorious heroes, and real battlefield success stories that give the magazines and the militant group a sense of credibility and existence" (163), thus depicting the city "as a space *to conquer* and a space *to destroy* [emphasis in the original]".

The militarization of digital political language in the post-Brexit era is the core of Massimiliano Demata and Marianna Zummo's "'The war is over': Militarising the Language and Framing the Nation in Post-Brexit Discourse" in Chapter 7. According to the authors, "Brexit also represented a surge in intolerance and hatred, which is particularly evident in social media, where opposing groups delegitimize political dissenters by using abusive language" (169). By starting from Nigel Farage's tweet 'The war is over' on December 20, 2020 – showing how he employs the metaphor of the war "to emphasize the idea of power, strength and group membership" (170) – Demata and Zummo investigate a corpus of 158 comments and 1375 replies to Farage's tweet collected between December 24-26, 2020. The study reports that the digital exchanges following Farage's tweet are not "instances of political communication" (183), but they find their existence in political notions "one being the concept of nation" so that "discursive strategies […] include continuity in history, cultural values, and differentiation from opposing groups, the EU or other British citizens".

A study on the impact of anti-hate legislation is provided by Mariavita Cambria's "'BOOM HATE SPEEEEEEEEEECH': Languaging anti hate speech legislation in Ireland" in Chapter 8 in which she studies comments-on-the-article section of a series of Irish online newspapers on the people's attitude towards the publication of a document attempting to create a basis for hate crime legislation in the Republic. The investigation shows that if on one side the term 'hate' is treated with a sarcastic and ironic viewpoint, on the other hand, a legislation for hate crime is perceived "as an act of censorship" (203).

Chapter 9 opens with Raffaele Pizzo's "When Hate Reaches its Peak. The Italian Case: Hate Comments Against the Anti-discrimination 'Zan' Draft Law" in which he investigates how Italian

Facebook users comment the new anti-discrimination Zan Law. Pizzo analyses two corpora (i.e., Zan I and Zan II) by looking at the linguistic patterns of the comments and posts by both right-wing and left-wing politicians underlying "the power of hate speech to create […] and destroy online communities of belonging" (225).

Maria Grazia Sindoni's "Resisting Hate Speech: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Stop Funding hate Boycott Campaign in UK" in Chapter 10 aims at analysing how the platform launched in the UK in 2016 countered discriminatory discourses created by British media outlets to increase their sales. Through a multimodal investigation, she underlines the powerful strategies adopted by the 'Stop Funding Hate' website aiming at "making hate unprofitable" (228).

Finally, in Chapter 11, Stefania Taviano's "The Migrant Invasion: Love Speech Against Hate Speech and the Violation of Language Rights" takes into account how Italian and British politicians hate-based discourses in online newspaper articles contribute to affecting the representation of migrants' identities and language rights. At the same time, the chapter also underlines the need for 'love speech' to conceptualize "migration and the world we live in" (248).

What emerges from the authors' analyses on the different modalities of perpetrating hate speech is that – whether online or offline – discriminatory discourses may cause serious psychological effects and their ability of spreading faster and faster finds its *raison d'être* in previously established and embedded representation of peoples, cultures and societies. Moreover, as Balirano and Hughes state, the growing availability of emerging technologies (together with the instant communication provided by today's social networks) has not simply transported discriminatory discourses in a diverse environment but "has honed the very nature of hate speech through specific forms of harassment" (v).

As a result, by accounting the most distinct social, cultural, and political contexts and investigating them from multifaceted perspectives, the volume represents, on one hand, a powerful tool to raise awareness among people around hate-based discourses and the way they are constructed – especially if contextualized and used for educational purposes – and, on the other hand, it sheds light on the need of national and supranational legislation to contrast all forms of online abuse.