

‘Negative solidarities’. The age of anger and hate speech in the Anglophone globalized public sphere.

International Conference, November 9-10, palazzo Du Mesnil, University of Naples L’Orientale

When in 2017 Pankaj Mishra published *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, he devised an iconic title for a shared contemporary condition. In articulating a widespread sense of general angst and resentment, Mishra reconsidered notions of traditional political theory to compare the “unprecedented political, economic and social disorder that accompanied the rise of the industrial capitalist economy” to the perplexing present of new holy wars and ideological crusades which have left few democracies untouched. Rejuvenated forms of nihilistic political violence and parochial chauvinism are arguably infecting much vaster geopolitical realities and wider strata of the population, thereby propelling local and global waves of loathing and fear, shaping national and international forms of right-wing extremism and/or religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

Although they travel transnationally, all over the world, forms of ‘negative solidarity’ (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 1968) manifest themselves in local adaptations. They prosper due to the weakening and severe limits of the impoverished welfare state which is unable to dispel a generalized perception of insecurity and disposability and produces systemic mistrust in personal agency and a correlated thirst for ‘problem-solving’ authoritarianism. Such insecurity and sense of disposability makes some individuals more prone to inventing scapegoats (e.g., intellectuals, elites, minorities such as Muslims, women, Blacks, Jews, and even mainstream politicians) for their real or imagined problems. Even the threat of global climate change tends to generate blind forms of social anxiety, pessimism and anti-scientific conspiracy theories instead of inspiring cooperative action. Moreover, neoliberal schemes of ruthless economic competition and free enterprise rhetoric create exasperated expectancies of individual self-distinction and economic realization fostering bitter feelings of resentment, disappointment, and frustration. The universalization of the culture of individualism has led to a frenetic pace of ever-accelerating rugged competition, and a clamorous, vociferous public sphere where social media accentuate social hierarchies thus catalyzing a toxic mix of anomie and sectarianism.

In this scenario, negative affects and solidarities become key terms to capture the fluid dynamics of communication and everyday human behaviour. The vernacular and pervasive circulation of negative affects such as anger, loathing and fear is perhaps most visible in hate speech, fiercely expressed from a protected and sometimes anonymous position in digitally networked communication technologies. Overt or covert hate speech towards specific social groups who are viewed as minorities and/or vulnerable based on their religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation have seeped in everyday online and offline conversation yet hate speech should also be analysed in terms of a wider and new understanding of the politics and culture of anger and hate. In this light, the interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary literary and artistic expression, media and social media communication may illuminate the logics by which new forms of expression emerge, for example, in moments of crisis and *conflict* in search for solidarity or joint action.

The present call for papers invites proposals focusing on the socio-political and cultural significance of manifestations of negative solidarities in the ‘Age of Anger’ and ‘Hate Speech’ and their

representations in literature, film, tv, the performing and visual arts, as well as in news media and social media communication, and historical and political discourse.

We invite proposals on topics including, but not limited to:

Religion and anger

Gender and anger

Ethnicity, marginalization and anger

Communalism Vs Community

Isolation and competition

Entrepreneurialism, social greed

Geo-political fields of tension

Post-imperial melancholies, global fears

Hate speech, xenophobia and racism

Hate speech and disability

Hate speech and sexism

Visualizing terror, representing angst

Storytelling and trauma

Narration as antidote against poisonous socialization

Literary/artistic forms of activism

Please, send an abstract (either in English or Italian) **of about 300 words**, including title and bibliography, and a short bio with affiliation to dvitolo@unior.it and gscottodicarlo@unior.it (in cc to reiocca@unior.it)

Deadline for abstracts 15 May 2023

Notification of acceptance 5 June 2023