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Massimiliano Demata, *Discourses of Borders and the Nation in the USA: A Discourse-Historical Analysis* (Routledge, 2023)

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Massimiliano Demata's *Discourses of Borders and the Nation in the USA: A Discourse-Historical Analysis* presents a meticulously researched and theoretically grounded examination of the evolving role of the border in contemporary American political discourse. The three chapters of the book delve into the way issues of national identity and security are constructed and contested in the US, particularly in the polarised socio-political climate of the Trump era and its aftermath. Specifically, the author aims to examine the main content, discursive strategies and linguistic means employed in the conceptualisation of borders across a wide range of discourses of the US nation, ranging from speeches and interviews to campaign websites and social media posts by prominent political figures like Trump and more progressive ones including Biden, Sanders and Clinton. The application of Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA), providing a strong methodological framework to the study, allows for a deep exploration of the intertextual and interdiscursive connections in the discourses under observation, revealing how global historical events and underlying ideologies have significantly influenced the formation of contemporary US political rhetoric.

Chapter 1 establishes a clear timeline for the elevation of the border as a central concern in US political discourse, identifying Brexit and Trump's 2016 presidential victory as the pivotal moments. The author argues that these events catalysed a significant shift,

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transforming the border from a mere geographical demarcation into a potent symbol of national sovereignty and security. Functioning to "institutionalise and legitimise the existence of the nation" (Demata 2023, 9), borders are presented as both physical and rhetorical tools for asserting national authority. Moreover, the chapter underscores how nationalist and populist ideologies have strategically employed the discourse of the nation and the rhetoric and linguistic devices associated with it to normalise and legitimise border fortification. The shift towards both the physical and rhetorical fortification of the nation reflects a global response to perceived threats and vulnerabilities, with tangible barriers like walls serving as potent symbols of social exclusion and security management. Ultimately, the dichotomic construction of 'us' versus 'them', typical of nationalist and populist narratives, finds its most visible manifestation in these physical and discursive representations of the border, highlighting its role in institutionalising separation and discrimination.

The analysis of Donald Trump's discourse, presented in Chapter 2, is particularly compelling. The book effectively demonstrates how Trump's rhetoric transformed the border from a geographical boundary into a potent symbol of national security and identity. The author expertly unpacks Trump's use of fearmongering, the construction of an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy and the strategic deployment of terms like 'illegal' and 'criminal' to dehumanise and demonise immigrants. The detailed analysis of linguistic devices, such as the use of third-person plural pronouns to create distance, the 'flood' metaphor and the merging of Mexican immigrants and Syrian refugees into a single, threatening 'other' reveals the manipulative and dangerous power of Trump's language. Moreover, the insightful analysis of the aestheticisation and branding of the so-called 'Trump Wall' as a luxury good adds how Trump successfully commodified and politicised the border, turning it into a tangible representation of his political agenda and personal brand. By presenting the wall as a symbol of national identity and difference and employing aesthetic language like "great" and 'beautiful', Trump's rhetoric, as the author points out, successfully

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positioned the border as an embodiment of the exclusive "privilege of being American and of living on the right side of the wall" (Demata 2023, 46).

However, the book's value extends beyond a mere critique of Trump's rhetoric. As Chapter 3 shows, it also critically examines the responses and adaptations of the concept of border from Democratic and Liberal politicians. The author observes the surprising convergence between Trump and his political opponents in certain areas, such as the acknowledgment of the necessity for border control and national security, even among those advocating for more humane immigration policies. Despite the deployment of a more emotional language evoking rage and sadness for the inefficacy of Trump's policies, the book's analysis reveals how Democrats like Clinton and Biden reconceptualised and appropriated discourses traditionally associated to the Republican ideology, notably family rights, to critique his lack of humanity. Additionally, the Democratic response to Trump's wall project, exemplified in the book by Biden's emphasis on technological border modernisation, indicated a shift in the engagement of Democrats with border security. These examples strongly support the author's thesis: the enduring impact of Trump's border narrative has forced even his political adversaries to engage with the discourse of borders, albeit through different linguistic and strategic means.

In conclusion, *Discourses of Borders and the Nation in the USA: A Discourse-Historical Analysis* provides a significant contribution to the fields of discourse analysis, political communication and American Studies. It offers a sophisticated and critical examination of how the border has been transformed into a central component of national identity and political rhetoric in the contemporary United States, in both Republican and Democratic discourses. The book's rigorous methodology, insightful analysis and clear prose make it an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complex dynamics of political discourse in the modern era. Undoubtedly, Trump's re-election in 2024 certainly necessitates further research to determine how the border might be discursively recontextualised and reshaped within his second mandate as US President.

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Bio-bibliographical note

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