

commend this book to anyone interested in autobiography, life writing, and literature. Marcus's "short introduction" is best read alongside works the author suggests in her list of further readings and Hermione Lee's *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* in the same series (Oxford University Press, 2009), as this growing and fascinating field becomes ever more challenging and difficult to survey.

Notes

- 1 Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice in the 1990s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
- 2 Philippe Lejeune, *Moi aussi* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986).
- 3 Marion Montgomery, *The Reflective Journey Toward Order: Essays on Dante, Wordsworth, Eliot, and Others* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 285.

***Power and Truth in Political Discourse: Language and Ideological Narratives.* By Vassil Hristov Anastassov (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 107pp.**

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The title of Anastassov's book evokes two concepts that are key to this study: language is power and it is political. And where there is power, there is a dominant speaker who, by using certain strategies, gains and maintains that power over others.

The major claim of this book is that speakers engaged in any kind of discourse impose political power on each other. An agent manipulates a target by concealing the "(political) truth" (1). Anastassov investigates the role of "actors-manipulators" and the language used between "the state" and the average citizen (xiv). As a result, political discourse is neither equal nor mutual since speakers and hearers are in binary opposition.

The author uses this framework to create a linguistic model of the power of political discourse in relation to the philosophy of politics and the philosophy of language. He claims that the manipulative force of language itself, when applied in political rhetoric, steers the average citizen away from real knowledge of the political truth by creating the "myths-narratives" that suit the narratives of the rulers (1).

Anastassov determines that the imposition of political power is a linguistic capacity of humans and applies this idea to the political governance of communal life. The author describes the state of an institution in relation to how it maintains governmental power and imposes it on average members of the community. The conclusion posits that power imbalance in the linguistic interaction of humans is historically inseparable from the imbalance of power in their communal life. Communal life

is defined as a complex model of dynamic relationships and it uses as a base the linguistic capacity to impose and maintain political power by generating new ideological narratives.

In the book, the analysis begins with an introduction to the linguistic basis of political discourse. Anastassov argues that due to the “balanced role-shifting” of speakers and listeners, there is always a stronger side that dominates communication with its will to power (1). Barthes’s concept of myth and his discussion of cultural manifestations through modes of speech laden with meaning (i.e., the polysemy of the linguistic message) contributes to the creation of ideological narratives that maintain the power of political discourse. Anastassov assumes that in human social interaction, imbalances in communication result in the stronger part exercising power over the weaker one. This results in a superiority of “my” narrative over “your” narrative (10). Narratives are accordingly used to impose and maintain social order, which invariably affects the political status of a community (14).

The author further uses classical rhetorics to explore ideological narratives. Aristotle’s basic components of rhetoric in drama performances are shown to play a significant role in political governance. Human language used in communal life can be modified with the result that discourse itself takes on a different code and becomes something else by means of combining “logos” with “ethos” and “pathos” (15). However, the use of emotion to artificially manipulate “political truth” suggests the power of language, which can be used to create a discourse that plays a central role in the formation of communal order (25). The concept of language as political power is further explored by highlighting the correlation between “language” and “thinking” (27). Anastassov applies the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and language relativity theory as he investigates the issue of “political truth.” Two questions are central to this section: What comes first, language or thought? And: If language reflects reality, whose reality is it? The author concludes that neither the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis nor language relativity theory can claim dominance over the other. However, he admits that there can be more than one reality since politicians can use language to manipulate thinking. This concept is illustrated in the context of George Orwell’s *1984* (1948) and the invention of “Newspeak” (32). This creation of “reality” is also applied in Turkey, as those in power shape the vocabulary of the country’s official language (33).

Continuing that thought, the author moves on to illustrate how language conceals “political truth.” Anastassov explains how constructed realities reflect a constructed worldview, just one “truth.” This concept relies on the arbitrariness of language. The author relates the idea of “concealing the truth” to Michel Foucault’s definition of “discursive relations” and his observations on madness (35). Madness signifies non-reason, which leads to the “freedom of language.” The author delves into the lit-

erary madness and identifies three types of characters and their attitudes toward political “truth.” This section concludes with the idea that since language is arbitrary, many versions of “truth” exist. However, humans tend to choose which “truth” to accept because people often reject “truths” that are inconvenient, which, in turn, sometimes leads to “the fear from freedom” (44). The tactics that political leaders employ to create ideological narratives in order to impose and maintain power depend on the individual who will further their agenda by influencing social behavior. This is possible by indoctrinating the average citizen because political leaders take the role of “authors” in order to impose their narratives on the weaker members of the community (56).

This construction of “truth” is evident in the discourse surrounding Brexit and globalization as a “disguised form of imperialism” (58). The author thus challenges the idea of democracy in Western communities, as the majority, which stands for public opinion, is by no means a reliable source of democratic “equality.” Anastassov claims that when there is a majority, minorities exist whose position is unequal compared to that of the holders of public opinion. The author goes on to discuss power imbalance from a structural and post-structural social semiotic perspective. He considers Derrida’s political deconstruction in opposition to Saussurean binarism and concludes that power imbalance is inseparable from political governance. The last section of the book points toward a post-structural reading of social media as an instrument of mass communication and its role in political interaction. Anastassov argues that social media are not reliable sources of political information and therefore support the concept of “my narrative” vs. “your narrative” (95). The author’s concluding remarks state that language creates ideological narratives in the political community. The democratic principle of equality is unattainable in politics, since the community is divided into “majority” and “minority” (99). Finally, the author reiterates that language participates in the construction of alternate worldviews and contributes to the formation of ideological narratives in the process of power imposition.

This book presents an informed and productive discussion of the linguistic base of political discourse. It is not only representative of the consideration given to the importance of language in creating ideological narratives, but also provides a dynamic account of communal interaction. Anastassov creates a solid framework in his assessment of the manipulative force in political rhetoric. These concepts are explained well and supported by illustrative examples. Furthermore, Anastassov demonstrates that the imposition of power creates an imbalance whereby equality as a democratic principle is impossible. Overall, this book offers a promising direction for the study of political discourse from a linguistic perspective and is valuable for those working in the fields of political science and linguistics. It is a great resource for students and educators alike.