Gendered Violence Online: Hate Speech as an Intersection of Misogyny and Racism

Tuija Saresma orcid.org/0000-0003-0635-4902

Sanna Karkulehto orcid.org/0000-0001-7267-9612

Piia Varis orcid.org/0000-0002-2699-6163

In this chapter, we focus on digitally mediated violence. We analyse social media posts by two contemporary right-wing populist male politicians: Jussi Halla-aho, the leader of the Finns Party in Finland, and Donald Trump, the president of the United States. We demonstrate the ways in which these influential and powerful male politicians express misogyny and racism, twining them in blog posts and tweets that target especially women. We focus on the affective meaning-making processes of specific hatred-inciting texts and suggest that the texts are not anomalous. Rather, similar texts are issued from around the world, forming and maintaining a transnational affective community based on misogyny and racism that manifest as hate speech, hate mail, online hate, and online violence (e.g. Jane 2017; Sundén and Paasonen 2018; Särmä 2020).

In the following, we argue that the type of gender-specific online hate and hostility perpetuated by Halla-aho and Trump is a new, digitally mediated form of violence and a new, affective form of misogyny in which women, LGBTQI people, people of colour, ethnic and indigenous minorities, and gender non-conforming people are targeted. As Saara Särmä (2020, p. 130) posits in her article on gendered online hate: "the more these categories intersect in any single individual, the more likely any public appearance or visible activism on their part will result in targeted hate toward that individual". We suggest that digitally mediated violence, although a relatively new phenomenon, is an integral part of the chain of violence from intimate violence to violent societal structures. Online violence needs to be analysed as a form of violent practice that travels from the most intimate relationships to ideological and political violence. We claim that discursive expressions of hatred spread through social media and are performative acts that shape our understanding of reality; they must thus be taken seriously, as they are not only violent themselves but also pave the way for an ideological readiness to use other types of violence.

In our readings of the aforementioned politicians' select social media texts, we emphasise two distinct elements. Along with analysing the way targeted women are assaulted and threatened, we focus on how the two politicians use a dual strategy of denying racism while circulating racist messages and thus enhancing the visibility, circulation, and normalisation of othering and hostile rhetoric. We start by outlining the political and ideological breeding ground of gendered and racialised online violence. We then briefly explain our take on violence as a discursive practice and discuss digitalisation and the rise of social media as significant factors in the current promotion of misogynist and racist politics; we also address the upheaval caused by the radical populist right as a backdrop for online hate speech. We interpret the texts as affective violent practices that aim to harm and control women and people of colour, and we suggest that the ultimate purpose of these texts is to threaten and silence their targets. We suggest that these texts should be analysed as a form of stochastic violence that positions their creators as innocent and restrains any criticism while intentionally violating their targets, which in this case are gendered and racialised others.

The Context of Online Violence

Questions of equality and identity politics, especially those related to gender, have had a huge impact on the formation of social and power structures in 'Western' societies since the 19th century. Currently, however, these societies are experiencing a backlash: we have been witnessing a global surge of neo-conservatism and neo-nationalism that aim to diminish democracy, diversity, and equality. A radical right populist upheaval across Europe and the United States has had negative effects on, for example, policies regarding immigration and asylum seeking as well as ethnic and gender equality.

The current affective intolerance of difference is unfolding in the context of global political developments and economic tensions and fractures. After the societal turn to neo-liberalism, beginning in the 1960s, and in the aftermath of economic recessions in the 1990s and 2000s, the idea of equal and inclusive welfare states open to diversity has been consistently challenged by various voices promoting right-wing extremism and racist opinions presented as critiques. This anti-progressivism is often shaped by radical right ideologies and is aggressively propagated online. The same goes for a stereotypical, traditionalist, and even misogynistic understanding of the social gender order. These notions are drawn from the alt-right and anti-feminist undercurrents of the transnational 'manosphere' (Ging, 2017, p. 638) and often materialise as hostile content that meets the criteria of hate speech. With an affective, aggressive tone, such content is often targeted against women and other marginalised groups, such as racialised and non-gender normative people or those who in some way challenge or do not embody societal norms. This also applies to digital media as a whole, and women bear the brunt of its aggressive and offensive language in the form of exclusion and online harassment. (Jane 2017; Sundén and Paasonen 2018; Knuutila et al. 2019; Nurminen 2019; Särmä 2020.)

Furthermore, it has become increasingly difficult – and futile – to make distinctions between life's online and offline dimensions; they are integrated, and the virtual is, thanks in large part to social media, not a separate sphere of life (e.g. Varis and Hou, 2020). Our analysis of hostile rhetoric and strategies used in the online circulation of texts seeking to arouse affective responses also points to the inseparability of online and offline contexts: what happens on social media does not stay there; online speech is not contained to a distinct online sphere but leads to offline speech trajectories and repercussions.

Violent Affects: Meaning Making, Misogyny, and Populist Hate Speech

Aimed at broadening the understanding of violence as a multifaceted phenomenon, this chapter regards certain verbal expressions as violence. The relationship between violence and meaning can be approached, as Silva (2017, p. 7) suggested, from at least three perspectives: first, "violence affects meaning by either making people temporarily silent and flustered or by disrupting an entire framework of signification"; second, racist, misogynist, and homophobic comments are examples of how "meaning itself can be violent"; third, meaning making produces effects: that is, the circulation, repetition, reiteration, and appropriation of violent expressions make the rhetoric recognisable, and "the circulation of stories about crime or the circulation of hate in stories make violence proliferate".

Drawing from Silva's theorisation of the relationship between meaning and violence and Butler's (1997) influential analysis of performativity and 'excitable speech', we emphasise both the violence of meaning making on a discursive level and the emotional and embodied affectivity caused by violent speech (Särmä 2020). Although the victim is not physically touched, the violence may have severe mental, emotional, and physical consequences (Knuutila et al. 2019; Särmä 2020), and the threat and fear of becoming a victim of physical violence is always present when encountering verbal violence. In this context, the concept of hate speech is useful. When talking about hate speech, we refer to demeaning, threatening, or stigmatising expressions often based on intolerance and hatred and targeted at a certain person or group of people based on their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background or race (Knuutila et al. 2019). Hate speech is a gendered phenomenon: it is mostly produced by men and received by women (Pöyhtäri et al. 2013; Knuutila et al, 2019).

Hate speech has become more frequent with digitalisation and the growing popularity of social media. It also coincides with the rise of right-wing populist upheaval. Hate speech often utilises the affective rhetoric and binary logic of populism, which constructs an 'us' and a 'them' as hierarchic and adversarial groups. Depending on the definition, populism is a thin-centred ideology (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017) or, indeed, has no core message (Laclau 2005); however, it draws from and builds on the us—them division, often with us referring to the 'people' and them to the 'elite' (Palonen and Saresma 2017). In national populist ideology, the opposition is constructed between the people of 'our' nation and an enemy as a threat to that nation, be it immigrants, the European Union, or green, leftist liberals (Kovala et al. 2018; Palonen and Saresma 2019).

In right-wing populist rhetoric, the others become the targets of hate speech against whom violence is justified. In justifying violence, mobilising affects such as fear and hatred is vital. In our analysis of affective populist rhetoric, we understand emotions as discursively constructed, circulated social and cultural practices, and affects as precognitive bodily sensations. Emotions and affects are not distinct but relational, and they complement each other in the shaping of feelings (Ahmed 2004 pp. 6–9, pp. 44–45; Ngai 2005, p. 26.) We are particularly interested in how the affective mobilisation of hate targeted against others is performed and circulated on social media. Digitalisation has profoundly changed both the media and how we communicate by, for example, extending content's reach beyond the locality of its creation, including beyond national borders and cultural contexts (Valaskivi 2018, p. 3). It is exactly this affective circulation of misogynist and racist online content that is of interest here.

When analysing online violence, we define 'misogyny' as interpersonal, institutional, and ideological hatred and violence against women and girls, as "feelings of hating women, or the

belief that men are much better than women" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*), and as the hostile, demeaning, shaming, and punitive treatment of women. In practice, misogyny can be regarded as controlling women who challenge male dominance. Misogyny is a cultural system and not just a matter of individual zealotry (Manne 2018.) It parallels populist rhetoric in that the homogenous us is placed against the other. In the mindset of the populist radical right, which aims to create enemies in order to strengthen the 'us', women are the allies of the threatening 'others' and deserve to be punished. It has also been argued that misogynist online hostility is often intertwined with racism (Walton 2012; Horsti and Saresma, forthcoming.) We define 'racism' as "prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). We argue that the two ideologies – misogyny and racism – intersect in the transnational flows and circulations of alt-right discourses and practices.

In violence studies, digitally mediated violence often refers to "technology-facilitated abuse between current and former intimate partners ('cyber-violence')" (Al-Alosi 2017, p. 1573), such as harassment on social media and location tracking via smartphones. In this chapter, gendered digitally mediated violence is approached as a broader phenomenon than that of violence that only occurs in an intimate relationship: we ask how it is ideologically used to promote the reactionary thinking of the radical right, including its demurring of multiculturalism, gender and sexual equality, and other progressive values. By doing so, we emphasise that online hate speech is a form of verbal digital violence that is harmful in itself and simultaneously facilitates an ideological preparedness to use physical violence against those constructed as enemies.

Stochastic violence is another central concept in our analysis. The term refers to the simultaneously predictable and unpredictable nature of violent speech and its consequences. This relationship was first conceptualised in the context of stochastic terrorism: "the use of mass communications to stir up random lone wolves to carry out violent or terrorist acts that are *statistically predictable but individually unpredictable*" (Daily Kos 2011; emphasis original). We are not limiting its meaning to terrorism; rather, we emphasise that violent, hate-inciting online speech naturalises others and the understanding of them as threats, objects of grievance, and targets of hostility, aggression, and violence. Similarly to Mulinari and Neergaard (2012, p. 15), "we are not arguing for a direct link between racist ideas, right-wing parties in parliament, and acts of terrorism" but maintain that the "normalization of societal discourses opens the door for, and legitimizes the ideas behind, acts of violence". Stochastic violence also complicates questions of culpability; it relies on rhetoric that "inspires small cells or individuals ('lone wolves') to commit acts of violence, while retaining deniability for 'respectable' leaders and groups" (Biondi and Curtis 2019, p. 48). While the severity and consequences of violent online speech are often dismissed due to their virtual nature and, as such, are supposed to be taken less seriously or seen as separate from offline life, our conceptualisation of stochastic violence further highlights the fact that digital practices, such as blogging and tweeting, are nevertheless violent and cause violence.

We use this notion of stochastic violence in our analysis of texts by Halla-aho and Trump. Halla-aho is the chair of the Finns Party, the leading opposition party in Finland, which was formerly a moderate or even left-wing populist party but is currently an explicitly anti-immigration party (Palonen and Saresma 2017). Trump's 2016 victory was very much bolstered by alt-right online mobilisation (Love 2017, p. 263); indeed, according to Gillespie (2018, p. 9),

the alt-right pursued "coordinated tactics of online harassment" against Trump's critics both before and after the elections. Despite coming from very different contexts – one from a small Nordic country, the other from one of the most influential countries in the world – one the chairperson of the leading Finnish opposition party, the other president of one of the world's largest democracies – their rhetorical strategies are notably similar in their communication of misogynist and racist messages.

In what follows, we present our analyses of social media texts by these two right-wing populists known for their shared interest in and utilisation of social media. In analysing their rhetoric and tactics, we demonstrate that right-wing ideologies are transnational and utilise the same techniques, themes, and tools in persuading readers to join in affective misogynist and racist mobilisations. Our analysis also shows how violent nationalist discourses that have been circulating on social media for more than a decade have now become mainstream and how they gradually affect public opinion, even gradually justifying direct physical violence.

Halla-aho and the Green, Leftist, Do-Gooder Women Who 'Deserve To Be Raped'

Halla-aho is well known for his critical attitudes towards immigration, particularly humanitarian immigration, and since 2003, he has been promoting his views in his blog, *Scripta: Kirjoituksia uppoavasta lännestä* (*Scripta: Writings about/from the Sinking West*). His blog posts are argumentatively tenacious and rhetorically effective in their persistent and repetitive proclamation of a specific message.[1] Both the message and the types of argumentation that Halla-aho utilises can be regarded as ethically and politically questionable. One characteristic is his relentless confronting of the boundaries of free speech.

In 2006, he wrote that attitudes towards immigration have become gendered:

> Men are more or less the only ones who talk about the real problem. (…) The real problem is that European women have become game for the barbaric invaders. This problem is solved only by a removal of the invaders. The majority of men would have done this a long time ago, but the European women à la Mervi Virtanen, Eva Biaudet, and Tarja Filatov, caressing their delusional nursing drive, have firmly stood as shields of these barbaric invaders (Halla-aho 2006; all translations from Finnish to English are ours).

The women that Halla-aho refers to were all public figures in Finland at the time of the posting. Virtanen was a leading immigration official. Biaudet was a special representative and coordinator in the fight against human trafficking. Filatov was a Social Democrat member of parliament and minister of labour at the time. The latter two were active participants in public discussion and known for their liberal values and support of humanitarian aid and gender equality.

In his blog, Halla-aho pits men and women against each other. In his performative *Scripta* discourse, he constructs a certain type of woman by naming those who defended immigrants, which he refers to as 'barbaric invaders'. The quote above is not only binary in terms of gender but also race as it pits also European men and 'barbaric invaders' against each other. His confrontational post continues:

> However, it is hard for me not to feel collective resentment of women (…) for blaming *me*, a Finnish man, for Finnish women's feeling of insecurity after every gang rape and other violent acts against women (Halla-aho 2006).

He constructs a collective, imaginary category of Finnish men and positions himself as their representative. These imaginary men are offended by the way 'certain women' blame him and fail to be grateful for the protection he offers. The idea of a man protecting his woman is part of a patriarchal logic analysed by feminist scholar Young (2003, p. 3), who views the logic as positing that a state protects its citizens the same way a man protects a woman, expecting so-calling subordinates' unquestioned obedience and loyalty as a reward. Young argues that it is characteristic of this type of masculinist logic that the leaders of family and nation "mobilize fear and present themselves as protectors".

Following the misogynist logic of punishing bad women, Halla-aho then writes: "it is hard for me to feel true sympathy for the victims of these crimes. I am tempted to think that the women get what they ask for". The text creates a threat of violence and implies that the author wants to resign his duty of protecting unruly women. The author is still hesitant, however, because the emancipation of women could also lead to the dismantling of an unequal gender system, which would make men lose their authoritative position. He continues:

> However, I try not to think this way, since not all women are like Virtanen, Biaudet, and Filatov. Nevertheless, the amount of rape will increase. Since more and more women will be raped, I earnestly hope that the predators who randomly pick their victims pick the *right* females; the green, leftist ones and their voters. (Halla-aho 2006.)

The fantasised sexual violence turns out to be almost a promise for those who are against multiculturalism and cultural diversity. As theorised by Wodak (2015), violent fantasies are essential to the politics of fear; a threat of violence is evoked and targeted at, for example,

disobedient women who espouse the wrong opinions. It is imagined that through violent fantasies, men can regain their lost status as heads of the nation and protectors of women.

This violent fantasy in which the 'right' women are raped by a foreigner is also important in terms of xenophobic argumentation and the mobilisation of anti-immigration politics. In Halla-aho's text, violence is not only the topic of fear but also a device with which 'multiculturalism' and 'disturbing differences' (Liljeström and Paasonen 2010) are eradicated from an imaginary white and culturally unified Finland; the rape images are a means of attack against cultural diversity, removing disturbing (human) material from the nation, and intensifying the atmosphere of fear. The text creates an image of an external threat, the 'barbaric invaders' and 'predators who randomly pick their victims' whom the green, leftist women naively allowed to enter – or invade – the country. The intention is to teach the explicitly named and politically active women a lesson that, in Halla-aho's fantasy, is taught by foreign men and simultaneously acknowledged if not blessed by the protectors of a 'pure' nation.[2]

In Young's (2003) analysis, the patriarchal logic of masculine protection requires the conjuring of an external threat, an evil man of colour who wishes to invade the white lord's property and sexually conquer his white women. In *Scripta*, the racist stereotype of a Muslim rapist as an enemy, which is circulated widely in right-wing nationalist imaginaries (Horsti 2017; Saresma 2018), is utilised particularly often. This is no surprise, as Halla-aho is a renowned Islamophobe facing an official investigation for ethnic agitation and blasphemy after publishing derisive anti-Islamic remarks on his blog in 2008 (Supreme Court of Finland 2012). Although he was convicted of both, he has not changed his style of communication. On the contrary, by deliberately confronting the boundaries of freedom of speech, he has gained media coverage and popularity among far-right nationalists. In continuing to blog and spread his controversial

message, he repeatedly attacks the mainstream media and claims that they are disparaging the people while advocating the cause of the elite and 'withholding information' about rape and other crimes committed by immigrants (Saresma and Tulonen forthcoming).

Because Finland has been at the top of international domestic violence statistics for years and the perpetrators are white Finnish men (Human Rights Centre of Finland 2014; Violence Against Women 2014), intimidating and threatening women with sexual violence committed by racialised foreign men can be interpreted as deliberate misogynist verbal violence. Halla-aho has managed to circulate his message in such a manner that the phrase 'I wish you were raped by a bunch of immigrants' is common in hate mail addressed to women in Finland (Särmä 2020, p. 129). Halla-aho's anti-Muslim opinions are also exemplary of a dual rhetorical strategy in which the speaker spreads an explicitly racist message while simultaneously denying racism (e.g. Halla-aho 2007; Halla-aho 2009). A similar strategy has been used in homophobic discourses motivated by ideologically revealing interconnections between gender, race, violence, and the 'pure' nation (Karkulehto 2010, pp. 188–190).

Drawing on an analysis of Nordic populist radical right politicians' blogs, including Halla-aho's, Katarina Pettersson (2017, p. 6) suggested that platforms are ideal environments for circulating racist messages, as it is possible to simultaneously convey powerful affective messages and remain allegedly neutral. According to Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard (2012, p. 15), successful extreme right-wing parties "actively distance themselves from the use of violence while systematically and powerfully emphasizing the Muslim threat—a threat that Social Democrats, the left, feminists, multiculturalists, etc. (according to these parties) reinforce". The strategy of creating "clear enemies (the Muslims), clear traitors (those who support them), and a clear danger of extinction for the national culture and the true people" that

Mulinari and Neergaard (2012, p. 15) itemise is invariably performed by Halla-aho. The strategy produces "a world-view that makes violence a viable solution" and offers a stage to stochastic violence that does not explicitly exhort people to take direct action but nevertheless identifies the alleged perpetrator (the archetype of the Muslim rapist) and justifies sexual violence against women.

In the following section, we analyse how Trump utilises stochastic violence as a device in his rhetoric.

Trump, The Squad, and Ilhan Omar

Trump is a prolific tweeter, and one prominent object of his Twitter discourse has been a group of four Democratic congresswomen of colour who rose to fame in the United States in 2018 as first-term representatives: Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – also known as 'The Squad'. Tlaib and Omar also gained considerable attention as the first Muslim women elected to the U.S. Congress. Trump has called The Squad 'a Nightmare for America' (July 23, 2019). Omar is, however, perhaps the one to have attracted the most attention from Trump; her vocal criticism of Israeli treatment of Palestinians has been framed in Trump's tweets and retweets as 'assaulting Jews' (April 9, 2019) and making 'terrible comments' (March 5, 2019) about Israel. In a retweet, he (July 10, 2019) framed Omar as a 'rabid anti-Semite'. Trump has also, in no uncertain terms, called her 'America hating' (July 23, 2019) and 'anti-Semitic…[and] anti-Israel' (April 15, 2019). He blamed her for 'ungrateful U.S. HATE statements' and described her as 'out of control' (April 15, 2019). He has also made similar

claims about Tlaib, stating that “She obviously has tremendous hatred of Israel and the Jewish people” (May 13, 2019).

The tweet in which Trump called Omar ‘ungrateful’ (note the similarity to Halla-aho’s grievances regarding ungrateful women) and ‘out of control’ came only a couple of days after Trump tweeted a video including statements by Omar taken out of context, making it seem as if she was downplaying 9/11 (April 12, 2019). In all capitals, Trump wrote, ‘WE WILL NEVER FORGET’ to frame the video. This could be read as circulating the familiar ‘never forget’ refrain related to dramatic and traumatic national events; however, it can also be seen as invoking a different ‘we’ and a comment on the position Omar appeared to take because of decontextualisation of her statements. Trump even pinned the tweet to the top of his Twitter feed, making it immediately visible to everyone visiting his account.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi demanded that Trump take the video down and stated that she was taking steps to ensure Omar’s safety. Trump refused to yield: the tweet was no longer pinned, but nor was it deleted. Omar then published a statement noting that she had received an increased number of death threats, many of them directly referencing Trump’s tweet. “Violent rhetoric and all forms of hate speech have no place in our society, much less from our country’s Commander in Chief” she wrote, concluding that “We are all Americans. This is endangering lives. It has to stop.” (April 15, 2019)

It did not stop, however – quite the contrary. In July 2019, Trump attacked The Squad again:

> So interesting to see 'Progressive' Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all), now loudly……
>
> ….and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run. Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how…. (July 14, 2019)

Three of the women Trump told to 'go back' – Tlaib, Pressley, and Ocasio-Cortez – were born in the United States, and Omar came to the country at the age of eight as a refugee from Somalia. Apart from framing them as fake Americans, what is also worth noting is the language of 'infestation' that Trump has used several times, though not without drawing ire. He has tweeted, for instance, about "Ebola infested areas of Africa" (September 20, 2014) and about black Democrat Elijah Cummings' Baltimore district as "a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess" (July 27, 2019).

The tweet attracted a lot of media attention and other circulation. From the perspective of this chapter, what is most relevant is what happened next. Three days later, on July 17, 2019, at a rally in North Carolina, Trump accused Omar of having "a history of launching vicious anti-Semitic screeds" (Parker and Itkowit, 2019). The crowd booed and, in an apparent offline re-enactment of his tweet, started chanting "Send her back! Send her back!" Trump did not ask the crowd to stop, nor did he provide any verbal response – he simply withdrew from the microphone and remained silent. His active silence effectively encouraged his supporters to

make (violent) demands that someone be deported; Trump's was a performative act that condoned violent demands. In this case, the silence was violent: as Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 47) point out: "Silences are not an absence of speech, they are the production of silence, they are very much part of speech".

The day before his performance of violent silence, Trump (July 16, 2019) doubled down on his rhetoric after accusations of racism regarding his go-back tweet, stating that "Those tweets were NOT Racist. I don't have a Racist bone in my body!" He also tried to use whataboutism to deflect criticism, referring to the Democratic congresswomen's "filthy language, statements and lies", saying he "truly believe[s], based on their actions, [they] hate our Country. Get a list of the HORRIBLE things they have said" (July 16, 2019). He frames the women as foreign entities, enemies of the country, and as people who hate the United States. He also resorted to whataboutism to deflect criticism after a rally, tweeting the following on July 19, 2019:

> It is amazing how the Fake News Media became 'crazed' over the chant 'send her back' by a packed Arena (a record) crowd in the Great State of North Carolina, but is totally calm & accepting of the most vile and disgusting statements made by the three Radical Left Congresswomen…

Trump went on to propose that the mainstream media was in cahoots with 'the Radical Left Democrat Party', called Omar 'Foul Mouthed', and stated that he will win the 2020 elections in her state of Minnesota because "they can't stand her and her hatred of our Country" (July 19, 2019).

Despite widespread and loud criticism, Trump's Twitter tirades did not end. In August 2019, he circulated a right-wing rumour that Omar supposedly married her brother to evade

immigration laws (August 9, 2019; August 25, 2019), and he tweeted about Omar's and Tlaib's 'hating Israel' and 'all Jewish people' (August 15, 2019), again calling Tlaib an 'anti-Semite' (August 20, 2019). He also stated that "I have watched her violence, craziness and, most importantly, WORDS, for far too long" (August 20, 2019).

Trump has not spared The Squad as a whole from attacks, but he has heavily focused on Omar and Tlaib, the two Muslims, which does not appear to be a coincidence. His framing of them, which is reliant on misogyny and racism, serves several rhetorical purposes. As Muslims and women of colour, they do not only become the other who should 'go back to where they came from', but they are also framed as dangerous enemies because they are 'radical' and hate not only America but also Jews. Phrases such as 'violent' and 'out of control' added to the danger these women of colour supposedly represent, and Trump has further merged his attacks on them with his framing of the media as fake. He has also presented the women as having infiltrated and taken control of the Democratic Party. Ever concerned with polls and ratings, his statement that the send-her-back crowd was of record size implied the populist voice of a man who stands for the people, whereas Omar is represented as an unpopular, unwelcome, and dangerous source of violence. Similar to Halla-aho's logic, women are to blame for a threat of imminent violence.

In her statement regarding the 9/11 tweet referenced above, Omar (April 15, 2019) also mentioned that

> Violent crimes and other acts of hate by right-wing extremists and white nationalists are on the rise in this country and around the world. We can no longer ignore that they are being encouraged by the occupant of the highest office in the land. Counties that hosted a

> 2016 Trump rally saw a 226 percent increase in hate crimes in the months following the rally. And assaults increase when cities host Trump rallies.

The quote draws a clear link between Trump's rallies and incidences of hate crimes. What the examples presented above also speak to, however, is the creation of digital text trajectories. Trump's Twitter rhetoric has made his tweets an object of requests for deletion and sometimes for Twitter to suspend his account (Varis 2020). This suggests a quality of transience to online rhetoric, as if deleting it will make it go away. What happens, rather, is Trump's supporters pick up the rhetoric and recirculate it not only online but also in offline contexts. In the offline world, deleting is impossible, and silence remains a useful strategy, as the case of the North Carolina rally proved. Trump silently condones affective and violent rhetoric, and he later doubles down on Twitter with similar attacks on women who he others and a cast of people to whom he can assign many of the archetypes that appeal to and rile up his base (such as the ungrateful immigrant and radical leftist).

Conclusion: Transnational Online Circulation of Misogynous and Racist Violence

The two cases of digitally mediated discursive violence introduced in this chapter are from different continents and times. Halla-aho's blog texts were written 15 years ago, when right-wing populism was a very marginal phenomenon. Halla-aho was, however, able to smuggle his anti-Islam, misogynist, and racist ideas into Finnish political discussion through his *Scripta* and its spinoff, *Hommaforum*, an online discussion forum. These social media platforms were key factors in the rise of radical right populism and misogynist, xenophobic nationalism in Finland (Horsti and Nikunen, 2013; Horsti and Saresma, forthcoming). Trump's tweets, similarly, have

been recognised as very influential since the beginning of his presidency, and misogyny and racist comments were part and parcel of his electoral success.

Both Halla-aho and Trump, both renowned for their skilful use of social media, utilise the rhetorical strategies and tactics of the transnational alt-right community. Nevertheless, their popularity may have come as a surprise to many. Nancy S. Love (2017, p. 264) argues that "what many political experts and ordinary citizens may have overlooked are the new tactics of white supremacy today". She cites Kathleen Blee (2002), who suggests that these tactics include "apocalyptic images of a global race war; alliances between KKK, Neo-Nazi, and Christian Identity groups; sophisticated use of new technologies, including the Internet; and recruitment strategies focused on so-called vulnerable populations". In the cases of Halla-aho and Trump, these groups include mainly young and middle-aged working-class men with a history of unemployment and frustration with contemporary multicultural society (Kimmel 2017). In mobilising them, affective rhetoric becomes central. Biondi and Curtis (2019) discuss the centrality of rhetoric for white nationalists, including the conscious employment of stochastic violence, which may inspire small cells or individuals to commit acts of violence.

For Halla-aho and Trump, deniability functions through the three-pronged strategy of using silence and simultaneously evoking and denying racism. In their commissions of stochastic violence, they typically naturalise others, in this case gendered and racialised people, as threats and targets of hostility and aggression in their violent, hate-inciting speech, and yet, thanks to their rhetorical strategies, they maintain their innocence in the event they inspire further acts of violence. This type of digitally mediated violence thus further complicates addressing issues such as misogyny and racism. At the same time, by heightening an atmosphere of fear and aggression and creating and solidifying certain groups as others, it contributes to the maintenance

of structural inequalities and forms of violence. As Biondi and Curtis (2019, p. 49) point out, it is important to keep in mind that an intersection of structural and stochastic violence is pivotal in the rise of authoritarian political movements.Radical right populism and authoritarianism also overlap in the social media appearances of Halla-aho and Trump. Both have authoritarian traits as politicians, and they utilise the above-mentioned tactics in their populist performances. They build alliances with far-right extremist groups; Halla-aho is a former member of Suomen Sisu, a nationalist organisation with fascist sympathies, and Trump is sympathetic to white supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan (Osnos 2016).

As we have shown, Halla-aho and Trump rely on similar tactics to circulate similar messages. In this chapter, we have presented two of the strategies that both of them are accustomed to using. First, they target, name, and blame women. Through affective rhetorical strategies, women are framed as both the causes and objects of violence. If women fail to display appropriate behaviour, they are violently shown their place – the punishment being either sexual violence or being sent back to 'where they came from'. Second, Halla-aho and Trump use the rhetorical dual strategy of simultaneously denying racism and evoking it by spreading explicitly racist messages and leaving the existence and justification of racism in the air (cf. Karkulehto 2010).

These strategies are efficient in inciting affects and emotions in readers. Emotions – particularly fear and hatred – have a dual role: they are used as tools to frighten adversaries and stir up anxiety and distrust among supporters. The effectiveness of a politics of fear is based on this dual role of emotions. Fear is used to sow suspicion towards others and destabilise one's well-being by inciting unpleasant and disturbing affective states.

Typically, in populist radical right rhetoric, women and the racialised others are targets of affective hate speech. The online intersection of misogyny and racism is an attempt to both silence unruly and disobedient women and, slowly, justify violence against them while simultaneously creating a favourable atmosphere for racial violence by justifying attacks against the racialised other as a potential perpetrator. In justifying violence, inciting and mobilising affects such as fear and hatred are vital.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Academy of Finland under grants Mainstreaming Populism (decision number 309550) and Crossing Borders (decision number 308521) as well as Academy of Finland Profiling area Crises Redefined (decision number SA311877.)

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). *Cultural politics of emotion*. London: Routledge.

Al-Alosi, H. (2017). Cyber-violence: Digital abuse in the context of domestic violence.

UNSW Law Journal, 40(4), 1573–1603.

Biondi, K., & Curtis, J. (2019). From structural to stochastic violence. In K. Biondi, J. Curtis, R. Irwin (Eds.), *Authoritarianism and confinement in the Americas* (pp. 46–53). São Luís, MA: Editora UEMA.

Blee, K. (2002). *Inside organized racism: Women in the hate movement.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Blommaert, J., & Dong, J. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: A beginner's guide*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech. A politics of the performative.* New York: Routledge.

Daily Kos. (2011, January 11). *Stochastic terrorism: Triggering the shooters*. Daily Kos. https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2011/1/10/934890/-.

Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Ging, D. (2017). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, first published May 10, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17706401

Halla-aho, J. (2006, December 12). Monikulttuurisus ja nainen. *Scripta*. https://www.halla-aho.com/scripta/monikulttuurisuus_ja_nainen.html

Halla-aho, J. (2007, February 28). Suvaitsevaisia nyrjähdyksiä. *Scripta*. https://www.halla-aho.com/scripta/suvaitsevaisia_nyrjahdyksia.html

Halla-aho, J. (2009). Tammikuista tajunnanvirtaa. *Scripta*. https://www.halla-aho.com/scripta/tammikuista_tajunnanvirtaa.html

Hatakka, N. (2019). *Populism in the hybrid media system. Populist radical right online counterpublics interacting with journalism: party politics and citizen activism.* Turku: Turun yliopisto.

Horsti, K. (2017). Digital Islamophobia: The Swedish woman as a figure of pure and dangerous whiteness. *New Media & Society, 19*(9), 1440–1457.

Horsti, K., & Nikunen, K. (2013). The ethics of hospitality in changing journalism: The response to the rise of the anti-immigrant movement in Finnish media publicity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 16*(4), 480–504 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413491718.

Horsti, K., & Saresma, T. (forthcoming). The role of social media in the rise of right-wing populism in Finland. In H. Tumber, & S. Waisbord (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to media misinformation and populism.* Accepted for publication.

Human Rights Centre [Ihmisoikeuskeskus] (2014). Naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta laajamittaisinta – Suomen ratifioitava Istanbulin sopimus. http://www.ihmisoikeuskeskus.fi/?x177247=287926. Accessed 11 June 2020.

Jane, E. A. (2017). *Misogyny online: A short (and brutish) history*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Karkulehto, S. (2010). The 'Greatest Finn' meets the 'Gay Marshal': Foucault's cycle, national narratives and The Butterfly of the Urals. *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema,* 1(2), 177–197 (2010). https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca.1.2.177_1.

Kimmel, M. (2017). Preface. In the second edition of *Angry White Men. American masculinity at the end of an era.* New York: Bold Type Books.

Knuutila, A., Kosonen, H., Saresma, T., Haara, P., Pöyhtäri, R. (2019). *Viha vallassa. Vihapuheen vaikutukset yhteiskunnalliseen päätöksentekoon.* Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kanslia.

Kovala, U., Palonen, E., Ruotsalainen, M. Saresma, T. (2018). *Populism on the Loose.* Jyväskylä: Nykykulttuuri. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7401-5

Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason.* London: Verso.

Liljeström, M., & Paasonen, S. (Eds.) (2010). *Working with affect in feminist readings: disturbing differences*. London: Routledge.

Love, N. S. (2017). Back to the future: Trendy fascism, the Trump effect, and the alt-right. *New Political Science, 39*(2), 263–268 (2017). http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2017.1301321

Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly feelings*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press.

Nikunen, K. (2015). Politics of Irony as the Emerging Sensibility of the Anti-Immigrant Debate." In R. Andreassen & K. Vitus (Eds.), *Affectivity and Race: Studies from Nordic Contexts* (pp. 21–42). Farnham: Ashgate.

Nurminen, M. (2019). Narrative warfare. The 'careless' reinterpretation of literary canon in online antifeminism. *Narrative Inquiry, 29*(2), 313–332 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.19019.nur

Manne, Kate (2017). *Down, girl. The logic of misogyny.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C.R. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mulinari, D., & Neergaard, A. (2012). Violence, racism, and the political arena: A Scandinavian dilemma. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 20*(1), 12–18.

Omar, I. [@Ilhan] (2019, April 15) https://twitter.com/Ilhan/status/1117611712679694336

Osnos, E. (2016, February 29). Donald Trump and the Ku Klux Klan: A history. *The New Yorker.*

Palonen, E. & Saresma, T. (2017). *Jätkät ja jytkyt. Perussuomalaiset ja populistinen retoriikka*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Palonen, E. & Saresma, T. (2019). Kansallinen ja ylirajainen populismi: eliitinvastaisuutta, anti-intellektuellismia, EU-kriittisyyttä ja naisvihaa. In A. Ronkainen & J. Mykkänen (Eds.), *Vapiseva Eurooppa. Mitä seuraa eurooppalaisen politiikan kaaoksesta?* (pp. 111–126). Tampere: Vastapaino.

Parker, A., & Itkowitz, C. (2019, July 18). At rally, crowd responds to Trump's criticism of Somali-born congresswoman Ilhan Omar with chants of 'Send her back!'. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-says-hes-enjoying-fight-with-democrats-over-his-racist-tweets/2019/07/17/3c315510-a8ad-11e9-86dd-d7f0e60391e9_story.html. Accessed 11 June 2020.

Pettersson, K. (2017). *Save the nation! A social psychological study of political blogs as a medium for nationalist communication and persuasion.* Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.

Pöyhtäri, R., Haara, P., Raittila, P. (2013). *Vihapuhe sananvapautta kaventamassa*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Saresma, T. (2017). Väkivaltafantasiat ja pelon politiikka. Sukupuolitetun ja sukupuolittavan verkkovihapuheen luentaa. In S. Karkulehto & L.-M. Rossi (Eds.), *Sukupuoli ja väkivalta. Lukemisen etiikkaa ja politiikkaa* (pp. 221–246). Helsinki: SKS.

Saresma, T. (2018). Politics of fear and racialized rape: Intersectional reading of the Kempele rape case. In P. Hervik (Ed.), *Racialization, racism, and anti-racism in the Nordic countries* (pp. 63–91). London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74630-2_3.

Saresma, T., & Tulonen, U. (forthcoming). Halla-ahon ahdistus ja ironia: Ulossulkeva suomalaisuus ja ahdas nationalismi *Scripta*-blogissa. In E. Nykänen, & R. Rossi (Eds.), *Suomalaiset ahdistukset*. *Kielteiset tunteet ja kansallinen omakuva*. *Joutsen / Svanen,* erikoisjulkaisuja. Suomalainen klassikkokirjasto, Helsingin yliopisto. Accepted for publication.

Silva, D. (2017). Investigating violence in language. An introduction. In D. Silva (Ed.), *Language and violence: Pragmatic perspectives* (pp. 1–29). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Sundén, J., & Paasonen, S. (2018). Shameless hags and tolerance whores: Feminist resistance and the affective circuits of online hate. *Feminist Media Studies, 18*(4), 643–656 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447427

Supreme Court of Finland [Korkein oikeus] (2012). Tiedote 8.6.2012 – Poliitikolle tuomio islaminuskoa ja somaleja loukanneista kirjoituksista. https://korkeinoikeus.fi/fi/index/ajankohtaista/tiedotteet/2012/06/tiedote8.6.2012-poliitikolletu.html. Accessed 11 June 2020.

Särmä, S. (2020). Underbelly: Making online hate visible. *New Perspectives, 28*, 128–141 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X20906316.

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2014, September 20).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/513141602064543744

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, March 5).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1102789320707108864

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, April 9).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1115648055603343360

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, April 12).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1116817144006750209

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, April 15).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1117782316557000704

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, May 13).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1127938873630367744

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 10).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1148951566243848193

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 14).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1150381395078000643

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 16).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1151129281919102976

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 19).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1152190436825604096

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 23).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1153648770883706880

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, July 27).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1155073965880172544

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, August 9).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1159790228170858497

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, August 15).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1162000480681287683

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, August 20).

https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1163838736213393408

Trump, D. [@realDonaldTrump] (2019, August 25).

https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1165760409443262466

Valaskivi, K. (2018). Beyond fake news: Content confusion and understanding the dynamics of the contemporary media environment. *Strategic Analysis February 2018,* https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Strategic-Analysis-2018-2-February-Valaskivi.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2020.

Varis, P. (2020). Trump tweets the truth: Metric populism and media conspiracy. *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada, 59*(1), 428–443 (2020). http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/010318136834116202004 06

Varis, P., & Hou, M. (2020). Digital approaches in linguistic ethnography. In K. Tusting (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of linguistic ethnography* (pp. 229–240). Abingdon: Routledge.

Violence Against Women (2014). *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Results at a glance*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_en.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2020.

Walton, S.J. (2012). Anti-feminism and misogyny in Breivik's "Manifesto". *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research,* 20(1), 4–11.

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Young, I.M. (2003). The logic of masculinist protection: Reflections on the current security

state. *Signs,* 29(1), 1–25.

[1] The connection of Halla-aho's blog to the transnational radical right-wing ideologies circulating on social media and, more broadly, the transnational networking of national populist mobilisation connecting misogyny and racism is already well documented (Horsti & Nikunen 2013; Nikunen 2015; Saresma 2017; Hatakka 2019; Saresma & Tulonen, forthcoming).
[2]See Walton (2012) on similar type of argumentation used in a 'manifesto' by Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian man who blew up the office of the prime minister and government buildings in the centre of Oslo and murdered 69 people at the island of Utøya on July 22, 2011. Breivik "denied guilt for these crimes, claiming that they were a political action necessitated by the real possibility of a Muslim take-over of Europe, assisted by the 'cultural Marxists' of the Norwegian Labour Party, and by the party's lax immigration policies".