

War of the Words: Dialectics and discourse on the “migrant crisis” and “Islamic terrorists” in British and Italian newspapers

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1. Introduction

According to political philosopher, Thomas Nail, “The twenty-first century will be the century of the migrant” (2015, 1). In 2015 alone over one million human beings, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, risked their lives in unseaworthy vessels to reach the shores of Europe.¹ An unparalleled humanitarian phenomenon in terms of scale - migration itself is part of the human condition (cf. Jayawardena, 1995: vii; Nyers, 2013) – the so-called “migrant crisis” has fuelled extreme xenophobic tendencies in popular political discourse throughout the European continent, reflected in equally inflammatory media coverage. Many British newspapers, for instance, have been roundly condemned by global humanitarian agencies, particularly for “the language used”² to narrate events ensuing from the migratory flow. Italian newspapers have also come under criticism from national human rights organisations, while journalists from both countries have been sued for the lexical choices employed to denote migrants.³ A selected sample of these discursive representations

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¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid>.

² The UNHCR (2016) report on press coverage of immigration in five European Countries including Italy and the UK is discussed in section 1. and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein’s comments on the *Sun*’s opinion piece by Katie Hopkins is discussed in section 1.3.

³ No term denoting people who migrate is neutral; some terms have very spe-

produced by British and Italian news media constructed through the language of conflict are the focus of this contribution. Two mini-case studies analyse small but significant datasets around two key texts that generated meta-linguistic debate in media discourse chains (Fairclough, 1995). The study is divided into two parts. The first offers the theoretical rationale for the qualitative critical approaches adopted and explains the methods used. The second part focuses on the analysis. Considering news as narrative (Baker, 2006; Lopocaro, 2006), the contribution analyses the following discursive events that took place in 2015. The first occurred in the midst of the “Calais Crisis”, as *The Sun* stirred heated debate with the editorial “migrants are like cockroaches” (Hopkins 17 April 2015). The second was the consequence of the Paris bombings; the then editor of the Italian newspaper *Liberio* (Belpietro 14 November 2015), published a front page editorial under the headline “Bastardi Islamici”, generating discussions as to the legality and ethics of such a title. The contribution concludes with some tentative indications of audience response via readers’ below the line comments to these particularly provocative news texts and a reflection on the status quo of racism in the news after nearly thirty-five years of CDA.

2. Mediated migrants – research context

The negative portrayal of the culturally “Other” in news discourse is not new; nor is its critical analysis (Baker, *et al.* 2008, 2013; van Dijk, 1989, 1992, 1993, 2009, 2014; Teo, 2000; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Corpus-aided studies, such as Baker *et al.* (2008) seminal work, combine corpus linguistics with qualitative approaches found in critical discourse analysis in order to examine the discourses on migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees (RASIM) in the UK press during the period 1996 to 2006. The research aimed to understand the ways in which these categories of people are linguistically defined and discursively constructed across the spectrum of British newspapers and also provided a comparative analysis of tabloids and broadsheets. The texts analysed using CDA

cific legal meanings (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers, permanent residents, etc.). For expediency, we opted to use the term ‘migrant’ to cover all categories of people landing in the ports of Italy after having moved from their place of origin, and immigration for legally specific policies dealing with people movement in the Italian juridical system. A further note in section 2.1 explains the dilemma.

techniques were selected from a pool of articles published in periods of increased references to RASIM, indicated by the quantitative analysis. Through collocation and concordance analysis their findings revealed that the terms MIGRANT, IMMIGRANT, ASYLUM SEEKER, and REFUGEE were frequently used as synonyms. Providing an incredibly useful methodology for future research, the project also offers a broad picture of the use of these terms both in *official* sources and in the news media. However, the aims were not to investigate the news narratives surrounding specific critical phenomena such as the migrant emergencies, nor did the authors delve into reader response. Blinder and Allen's (2016: 31) corpus-driven examination of the representation of migrants in the UK press between the years 2010-2012, on the other hand, suggests that media coverage is "a plausible contributor to public opinion toward immigration". The authors posit that the news media construct the notion of immigration in selective and incomplete ways, and that public understandings of immigration then draw upon these partial constructions, which are inaccurate if not blatantly biased.

While these corpus-driven studies can provide numerical data on the frequency and patterns of linguistic phenomena, Binder and Allen (2016: 15) admit their "automated approach had important limitations", for example it cannot "detect broader narratives, whether these emerge from a single text or require knowledge of a broader cultural context" (*ibid.*). Yet, it is precisely the "narratives" that tell the story and in which lexical items take on meaning: "the broader cultural context" is in fact essential to understanding how language is used with reference to migration, and it is those narratives in the news that are the core of this study.

Some of the news texts under analysis contain translated quotes woven into the discourse. Translation is viewed here as a fluid phenomenon embracing concepts of cultural translation and cross-cultural communication. In the first case study, we see how news narratives are transferred from one lingua-culture to another and are manipulated for the aims of the target culture news provider. News translation as intercultural communication provides a pivotal perspective to the study. Its instrumental use is crucial to creating journalistic discourse that transcends linguistic difference. In the second case study the concept of translation is located in a looser framework within a single lingua-culture where the message is 'translated' intralingually: from 'terrorist' to 'migrant' via news narratives.

3. Methodological and theoretical approaches

Until very recently most scholarship has examined the representation of migrants in news outlets from a specific national perspective; less research has attempted comparative approaches across linguistic-cultural boundaries.⁴ The pan European moral panic over the ongoing “migrant crisis” offers a lens through which power structures linked to media discourse and audience reception can be observed in a transcultural frame. This sample study therefore adopts perspectives and methodologies of critical discourse analysis viewed as “an academic movement, a way of doing discourse analysis from a critical perspective, which often focuses on theoretical concepts such as power, ideology and domination” (Baker *et al.*, 2008). Two datasets were constructed around two time windows, April and November 2015, comprise Italian and English news texts sourced through newspaper databases (*NexusUK*) and individual online newspaper search engines. They were then manually refined in order to gather the most relevant material. For the aims of this research, the selection and fine grain analysis of a small number texts is necessary in order to observe the ways in which two lingua cultures dialogue with each other through news discourse on a shared issue – immigration. The following section outlines some key facts regarding the respective cultural contexts in which the production and consumption of news takes place, which is essential to understanding the data.

4. The Press – power and knowledge

Bourdieu (1992: 142) has posited that “*Linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power*” (italics in original). For Bourdieu, linguistic exchanges are conditioned by the power dynamics that exist in the social world, whereby:

meaning is negotiated through a web of historical power relations between the speaker, endowed with a specific social authority, and an audience, which recognizes this authority to varying degrees, as well as between the groups to which they respectively belong’ (*ibid.*: 143).

This quotation can be aptly applied to the article by Katie Hopkins examined in section 9. Hopkins, in theory, should wield no such

⁴ Notable exceptions in the language pair Italian/English are Partington, Duguid, and Taylor, 2013: 187-206; Morley and Taylor, 2012; Taylor 2014).

symbolic power; she is not a journalist, nor an expert on the subject at hand, i.e. the migrant crisis, but an ex-contestant of a television reality show. Yet the popular tabloid, the *Sun* conferred on her the role of columnist and “outspoken commentator”, thus making hers a voice of authority and one to be heard. The *Sun* had a daily readership of 3,694,000 including PC and paper formats in the last quarter of 2017. With mobile apps and tablets the estimated monthly figure rises to a staggering 28,772,000.⁵ These figures have been taken from the National Readership Survey, although here the definition of “reader” would need further clarification. It is likely that articles such as Hopkins’ are the ones that are “read” on mobile apps. Italy has no daily publications that can really be compared to the British tabloid. With only approximately 32%⁶ per cent of the Italian population reading online or traditional newspapers compared to 90% of British adults 70% of whom choose quality newsbrands,⁷ the two lingua/cultural contexts are very different in terms of reach and therefore power. Conboy (2010: 103) has asserted that “the future of journalism is linked to ‘brand trust’ that is, the public’s confidence in the reliability of the source”. In other words, the name of the newspaper and even the individual journalist become a guarantee of the reliability of the news.

Walter Lippmann (1922) observed nearly a century ago that newspapers have enormous sway in forming public consensus. As he succinctly put it: “Editorials reinforce” (1921/2007). However, editorials are not the only genre of article that “reinforce”. Comment, opinion pieces and the attitudes of correspondents that colour the supposed objectivity of news reporting simultaneously influence, create and reproduce public opinion. Journalists have the power to form public opinion through the use of stereotypes, values, beliefs and prejudices that the editor retains will reflect the views and taste of her audience (cf. Filmer, 2014). Thus the worldview of news producers can simultaneously mould and reproduce public attitudes and ideas. In Kress’s (2010: 27) words, “Makers of representations are shapers of knowledge”. More recently it has been argued that through gatekeeping processes journalists might not tell us exactly what to think

⁵ <https://www.newsworks.org.uk/The-Sun>.

⁶ <https://infogram.com/readership-quotidiani-italiani-2017ii-vs-2016ii-fonte-audipress-elaborazione-.datamediahub-1gqo2qnqo03y278>.

⁷ <http://www.nrs.co.uk/latest-results/facts-and-figures/newspapers-factsand-figures/>.

but they influence what we think about (Valdeón, 2012: 69). In other words, news providers select the agenda but ultimately audiences will make up their own minds on the issues at stake and not be influenced by editorial slanting. Similarly, Kress affirms that the audience's role in the meaning making process is a fundamental one, whereby "knowledge is produced rather than acquired, and is a process in which individual receiver of information participates in order to make meaning". However, where there is an asymmetrical power balance, van Dijk (2014: 4) less optimistically observes, "The capacity to spread negative information about specific outgroups among hundreds and thousands of readers is a very important power resource of the mass media". While we cannot establish to what extent the media influences public opinion, we can agree with McQuail (2005) that undeniably the media *has* effects (my emphasis).

5. Methods and discussion on CDA

The data for this study was drawn from a cross-section of British national newspapers. Texts selected from online resources and newspaper databases were sourced via key word searches, i.e. Katie Hopkins + cockroaches, Katie Hopkins + scaraffagi, Islamici Bastardi, Islamic Bastards. The data collection system was then further refined by choosing individual texts following the criteria of relevancy and presentation of translated quotations embedded in the texts. Online articles were the main font of primary materials for two important reasons; firstly for practicality, ease of access, and the possibility of doing word searches and secondly because of their increasing popularity compared to traditional papers. What were once newspapers, in marketing terms, are now referred to as "newsbrands".⁸ It is necessary at this point to make a short methodological aside regarding the instability of online archive news data. It is not unknown for articles, even after they have been published online, to be (re)edited, censored, or even directly removed. For the researcher this means that where there is a doubt, it is necessary to check that the digital version corresponds to the content of the original (newspaper) text. In the case in point, Hopkins' article was removed from the *Sun* website following

⁸ We collaborate with all parts of the industry, including advertisers, agencies and other media to promote understanding of national newspapers, and their role as newsbrands in the multi-platform world" (Newsworks website <https://www.newsworks.org.uk/about>).

the scandal it caused and as such it is now impossible to verify what comments were made by *Sun* readers on its publication. Surely for students of Brunel University, London, their dissent was made clear when they got up and walked out of a debate to which Hopkins had been invited as a guest speaker but the *Sun* reader's online comments will remain unknown. As the first analysis focuses on the dialogic relationship between Italian and British press, the following section gives an overview of the ways in which newspapers function in the respective socio-cultural environments.

6. *British and Italian press – a brief comparison*

There is a widely held belief that the British press is the guardian of truth and beacon of objectivity, even in academic literature (see Filmer, 2018). For example, Caimotto (2010: 102) refers to “a more reliable Anglo-American journalistic practice”. She remarks that Italian newspapers quote the Anglophone press via translation “as one more tool for gossip and storytelling”, rather than benefitting from their so-called objectivity as a font of information that Italian readers might not otherwise have access to. Lumley (1996: 204) on the other hand eschews “the assumption that somehow a truly independent national press exists elsewhere”, and argues that too much credit is given to the authoritative status of newspapers like *The Times*, while “the merits of the Italian press are overlooked”. Croci and Lucarelli (2010: 252) note that Italian national dailies such as *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica* frequently quote reports about Italy and Italian politics from articles in European and American newspapers attributing this to “the preoccupation that Italians have with what others think of them”. On the contrary Lumley (1996: 204) interprets the Italian journalists' habit of comparing their press with foreign newspapers as a sign of critical open mindedness and a “non-nationalist approach”. Bonomi *et al.* (2003: 129) for their part, note the subtle way in which quoted material is introduced into Italian news discourse; a practice that occurs particularly with translated text (Orengo 2005), evidence of which we will see in section 9.1. Unlike Italian newspapers, the British press has traditionally been divided into quality and tabloid press. In theory, the former provide in-depth comment and analysis from home and abroad, presenting news in a relatively unbiased way using a neutral or formal register. This is, however, a generalisation that has long been problematized, as the stances one expects to find in editorials now also emerge through more subtle ideological

skewing in news reports. As Conboy (2006: preface) comments there is a “narrowing divide between the once-broadsheet press and the tabloids”. This convergence between quality and popular newspaper becomes more than evident in the present research.

Lumley (1996: 204) observed that the quality/tabloid division of British newspapers is unlikely to develop in Italy where the press is structured differently. The presence of a strong regional press that “cuts across the divisions of social class”, the differing approach to covering popular themes such as crime and sports and the dominance of popular weekly magazines are all factors which would impede the circulation of a tabloid-style daily. Lopocaro (2006: 61-71) notes, however, there has been a recent ‘svecchiamento’ [rejuvenation] of linguistic and rhetorical style in Italian papers, which renders it more akin to the language of British tabloids. He argues, however, that infotainment, a phenomenon affecting all Western democracies, has reached unprecedented levels in Italy (*ibid.*: 15-16). This might well be the case, but to bring the topic back onto our main focus, the British press is far from immune to subjectivity and distortion of reality. Political and ideological biases are often freely expressed within editorial column inches with no pretention to objectivity as we will see here, but as van Dijk (1989: 232) reminds us their persuasive functions have an important cognitive dimension, both in their production, and in their reception by the public.

7. War of the words – media debates on the ‘migrant’

Recent research commissioned by the UNHCR (Berry *et al.*, 2016) on media coverage in five different European countries, Spain, Italy, Germany, the UK and Sweden, has found that British newspaper coverage of the humanitarian immigration crisis has been the most negative of the European nations:

Despite the presence of newspapers such as the *Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*, both of which were sympathetic to refugees, the right-wing press in the United Kingdom expressed a hostility towards refugees and migrants which was unique. Whilst newspapers in all countries featured anti-refugee and anti-migrant perspectives, what distinguished the right of centre press in the UK was the degree to which that section of the press campaigned aggressively against refugees and migrants. This could be seen in the preponderance of negative frames and the editorialising in favour of Fortress Europe approaches.

Starting from the very term ‘migrant’, there have been numerous meta-linguistic media debates in both Italian and Anglophobe contexts that

discuss the semantic shifts that have taken place surrounding its use. For space constraints, a full discussion on them cannot be made here. Suffice it to say that the dialectics and discourse chains in the journalistic discourse provide some interesting data on the subject.⁹ What follows, instead, is the analyses of two discursive events involving journalistic discourse on the migrant crisis and their legal repercussions.

8. *The “Calais Crisis” – the situation*

Subsequently dismissed as yet another media myth (Greenslade, 2015), the “Calais Crisis” erupted during the spring of 2015 when “numbers” (see van Dijk, 1993 on the use of numbers in reporting on immigration) of migrants ranging from scores to hundreds, to thousands, depending on which newspaper was reporting, were discovered attempting to cross the Channel from France into England via the Eurostar tunnel. Their efforts to climb on board freight lorries, stowaway on trains or even walk through the tunnel caused delays and disruption to train services and considerable problems for the lorry drivers. Soon on the news agenda of most of the daily news producers, British newspapers across the political and social spectrum reported on events with headlines such as “Calais Chaos” (the *Mirror* 29 July 2015) “Bring in the Army” (the *Mailonline* 30 July 2015), “We’re too soft. Bring in the army and ID cards” (*The Times* 13 August 2015). The *Guardian* on the other hand denounced the heavily slanted reporting of events in “The only ‘migrant madness’ is the tabloid pretence about events in Calais” (Travis 30 July 2015).

The press coverage of the events aroused moral panic regarding Britain’s borders and was denounced as a cause of national anxiety. The situation peaked during the summer months of July and August (possibly due to news agendas, less politics during that period). The cost to “The taxpayer” is often underlined, as in the BBC news report below, and also in following texts under analysis in this section:

⁹ The *Washington Post* (24 August 2015) asks ‘Is it time to ditch the word ‘migrant?’’, as *Al Jazeera* declares it will not use the term (Malone 2015). The BBC (Ruz 28 August 2015) defends the use of the lexeme quoting the *OED* dictionary definition. Salvini defends the right to use the noun “migranti” in spite of Bono’s warning at Expo 2015 that “migrant” should not be used (Corriere della Sera Video 10 September 2015 <http://video.corriere.it/salvini-bono-non-si-puo-dire-migranti-ma-canta-non-romper-b/66514e58-57ef-11e5-b3ee-d3a21f4c8bbb>). The word that Italy’s judges decreed.

Extra security, including fencing, paid for by the UK, started to be put in place in the summer. It is aimed at making it harder for migrants to get onto the platforms and trains heading into the Channel Tunnel (“BBC News”, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34432386>).

The situation was further exacerbated by the then Prime Minister David Cameron’s assertion that “swarms of migrants” were coming across the Mediterranean “seeking a better life”. His choice of language was criticised as “dehumanising”, and “not befitting of a Prime Minister” (Taylor, Wintour, Elgot, 2015). However, Cameron’s ill-chosen words paled in comparison to the symbolic violence of Hopkins’ (14 April 2015) hate speech published in the *Sun*.

9. Gunboats and cockroaches – freedom of speech or offence?

On the 14th April 2015, The *Sun* published an opinion piece entitled: “Rescue boats? I’d use gunships to stop migrants” written by former television reality show contestant, Katie Hopkins. The article censures rescue operations such as the then active *Mare Nostrum*, and argues for “gunships sending these boats back to their own country”. This line of rhetoric is one held also by right-wing politicians in Italy (see section 9.3). The writer (erroneously) claims that *Mare Nostrum* was partly paid for by the “British taxpayers”, tabloid rhetoric that creates communality (Conboy, 2006) in the “us” versus “them” dialectic adopted throughout the text. The “British taxpayer” is also metonym and tabloid shorthand for the law-abiding, and above all financially contributing citizen of Europe, which fuelled the “leave” discourse on Brexit. It is beyond the scope of this work to point out that the article is based on factually inaccurate data, as only a fraction of migrants crossing the Mediterranean aim to reach the UK. Our interest here is in the language and imagery used in the article and the discourse chains (Fairclough, 1995) triggered by its exceptionally vitriolic and aggressive attitude to the current migratory phenomenon. There is very little “hidden” in the author’s discourse that needs to be “revealed” in CDA terms. It is more of interest as a tour de force of tabloid rhetoric, and for the fact, as will be discussed below, that neither the author nor the newspaper were found guilty of infringing any legislation. Van Dijk (1993) has claimed that nowadays race talk in news discourse is implicit rather than explicit:

Present norms and laws prohibit explicit racism and that even among the radical new right public discourse of race is often (but not always) veiled

(van Dijk, 1987a). Explicit racial slurs are rare, and even in the tabloids we therefore may expect euphemisms, implicit derogation, and the usual tactical disclaimers.

More significantly, he points out that there are legal consequences for those who do not adhere to current sociolinguistic norms of usage, presumably enforced by some form of penalty or even punishment. These rather optimistic assertions made over 25 years ago are difficult to reconcile with the content of Hopkins' short article. In 543 words she alludes to Italians as espresso-drinking opera-singing fashionistas and Australians as tough lager drinkers with "tiny hearts" and "balls of steel" but these are mere details. Italians and Australians are not the target of Hopkins' wrath. The generic, and as El Jazeera points out, "dehumanising" label (see above), "migrants" denotes the focus of the author's ire. The article opens with the exclamation: "No, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care". We have no doubt, then, of the author's attitude to the plight of those attempting to arrive in the UK. Referred to in various ways throughout the article, from "feral humans" to "vagrants", migrants are above all construed as symbols of damnation and disaster. The Biblical ten plagues of Egypt are evoked through imagery that describes some towns in the UK as "festering sores" that are "plagued by swarms of migrants and asylum seekers". The simile that generated the most criticism, however, was the following:

Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches. They might look a bit Bob Geldof's Ethiopia circa 1984, but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb. They are survivors...Once gunships have driven them back to their shores, boats need to be confiscated and burned on a huge bonfire (Hopkins, 2015: 11).

The text resonates with the hate speech produced by Rwanda's *Kangura* newspaper and *Radio Mille Collines* in 1994 which broadcast propaganda urging people to "weed out the cockroaches", which was coded speech for "kill the Tutsis". Leading figures in both Rwandan media organizations were later convicted by an international tribunal of public incitement to commit genocide (the *Independent* 2015). In response to Hopkins' article, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein commented:

The Nazi media described people their masters wanted to eliminate as rats and cockroaches. This type of language is clearly inflammatory and unacceptable,

especially in a national newspaper. The Sun's editors took an editorial decision to publish this article, and – if it is found in breach of the law – should be held responsible along with the author.” (qtd. in the *Independent* 24 April 2015).

Following the publication of the article and a meta-media debate on Hopkins' words, more than 200, 000 people signed a petition calling on the *Sun*'s owner, Rupert Murdoch, to “remove Katie Hopkins as a columnist”. By Monday evening it had passed its initial target of 200,000 signatures. On the 20 April 2015 the Society of Black Lawyers reported Hopkins to the police who was then questioned over allegations of inciting racial hatred. Later she was formally released and told that she would not be charged with any offences. “Cops get attack of common sense at last: Katie Hopkins will NOT face charges over allegations that she incited racial hatred in migrant article” (Duell 3 November 2015). This article published in the *Mailonline* received 272 comments, the first two getting the most likes and therefore indicative of the general trend, reading:

1. Justice has been done.....common sense finally prevails..... Hats off to Katie and the CPS..... Shame on Scotland Yard for wasting tax payers money in the first place.
2. Society of Black Layers, and what does the Society of White Lawyers think of it?
3. I do not agree with what she says I have even been angered by it on more than one occasion but I believe in her right to say it.

Following more than 400 complaints, Matt Tee the Chief Executive of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), the UK's largest press regulator, overseeing 2,500 publications said migrants could not be viewed as victims of discrimination even when they were compared to cockroaches. Furthermore, the regulator does not have the power to pursue complaints about discrimination against groups of people if no individual is specified. Tee stated, “Migrants as such are not a group that can be discriminated against”. Tee continued, “I felt that the phrase was in very bad taste ... Taste and decency is not something covered by the editor's code”.¹⁰ Considering the unequivocal condemnation the article received within its sociolinguistic context, from all corners, it is quite inexplicable how the either the *Sun* or Hopkins failed to be charged with inciting racial hatred. The media debates surrounding the discursive event went viral and also made headlines in Italian newspapers.

¹⁰ <http://www.mediamasters.fm/matt-tee/>.

9.1. Reverberations across national newspaper discourse

Caimotto (2016: 241) observes that Italian newspapers quote foreign ones to perpetuate “ongoing debates about local issues often through a distortion of the original meaning of the foreign article” and “to avoid legal prosecutions by quoting foreign journalists’ reports rather than stating facts”. A combination of these two reasons might also give voice to foreign journalists, through translation, who express opinions that Italian news producers share but who also seek the authority of a British news brand to validate them. The contents of Hopkins article were reported and commented on in two Italian newspapers, unsurprisingly both with strong right-wing tendencies. Translation here plays a key role in transferring information. In the first, *Libero* (21 April 2015), the headline reads: “Katie Hopkins sugli immigrati: ‘Sono scarafaggi, bruciamoli’”. The use of quotation marks should indicate that these should be the very words that Hopkins said or wrote. Instead, her words are “migrants are *like* cockroaches” and that “the *boats* should be burnt”, not “let’s burn *them*”, meaning the migrants, as the back translation of the Italian would read. Through an inaccurate translation the horror of Hopkins’ words is amplified. The article continues by quoting (accurately – so why not in the headline?) passages from the text and concludes by observing that although the chorus of criticism was loud and strong there were also those who “non punta il dito (solo) contro la Hopkins” [those who do not (only) accuse Hopkins]. The article paraphrases, through a very free interpretation and translation, the content of an article published in the *Guardian* claiming that the article Hopkins is just the tip of the iceberg, the uncomfortable truth is that “It is our antipathy towards migrants that kills in the Mediterranean”, as the *Guardian* headline affirms. The journalist, Rice-Oxley (20 April 2015) however, does not mention the *Sun* or Hopkins anywhere in his editorial. Yet he does critique the British public for their indifference to the tragedies at sea. The same article is quoted in *Il Giornale* (21 April 2015), possibly aiming to legitimise Hopkins’ comments and suggesting that Britain as a whole has a racist attitude to migrants, not only Hopkins. By quoting a quality left-wing paper the Italian right wing publications are providing “supporting evidence” from the British left establishment thus attempting to demonstrate that Hopkins’ views are not anomalous. A glance at the Italian newspaper’s reader’s comments confirms this. There are 12 comments in total. Eleven totally support Hopkins, with comments like “Ha detto quello che molti pensano [she

said what many people think]”, “Ha ragione ed ha avuto il coraggio di dire ciò che la maggior parte della gente pensa..[She’s right and had the courage to say what the majority think] and “Come darle torto? Sono marci, malati, portatori di virus [...] filoterroristi islamici, pushers, violentatori, assassini etc” [How could we say she’s wrong? They are putrid, sick, virus carriers, Islamic terrorist supporters, pushers, rapists, murderers, etc.].

British news brands generate newsworthiness (Bednarek and Caple, 2012) in themselves, as the headline for *Il Giornale* (Masini 21 April 2015) illustrates: “I migranti sono come ‘scarafaggi’: la gaffe della giornalista divide la Gran Bretagna” correctly quotes Hopkins’ words but shifts the focus from the offensive language itself to the impact the article would have on its audience. Masini reminds Italian readers that the Sun is the most popular British newspaper and that the article would be “read by millions across the world”. The words, he says “punch hard” and have provoked fierce political debate but no condemnation of their content and meaning is given. Similarly to *Libero*, Hopkins’ stance is legitimised through the use of quotations from the left-wing *Guardian*, which in turn blames the indifference of the British public and ultimately the British political class. From *Il Giornale*’s point of view this is all ammunition against Great Britain. The article generated 53 below the line comments, 47 of which supported Hopkins with the same message that she had the courage to say what others did not. This echo through the comments seems to uphold the thesis that the Italian newspaper published the story also to say what they believed but were unable to say for legal reasons.

9.1.1. The Paris Attacks – the situation

The attacks in Paris on the night of Friday 13 November 2015 were orchestrated by suicide bombers and gunmen striking a concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants and bars almost simultaneously. A total of 130 people died and hundreds were wounded. The terrorist militant group Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks, which were described by President Francois Hollande as an “act of war”.

9.2. Islamic Bastards

On the 14 November 2015 The Italian right-wing newspaper, *Libero*, ran the front page headline “Bastardi Islamici” above an editorial written by the then editor Maurizio Belpietro. The same title was

carried over the three-page spread that reported on the catastrophic events. The spread included a mix of editorial, opinion pieces and news reporting, blurring lines between fact and subjective opinion. On the same day of publication journalist and blogger for the left-wing newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* Tommas Notarianni Nogara filed a lawsuit against Maurizio Belpietro as Editor and person responsible for the publication of the headline. The plaintiff requested that Belpietro pay compensation for material and non-material damages. Subsequently, in May 2017, a Muslim Association, Caim (Coordinamento delle associazioni islamiche di Milano e Monza [Coordination of Muslim associations of Milan and Monza]), sued Belpietro for damages of 350,000 euro. The Prosecution claimed that the former editor of *Liberò* had insulted 1.5 billion faithful Muslims around the world with the aim of incitement to racial hatred. The defence sustained instead that there was no case to answer: in the headline “Bastardi islamici”, the term “islamici” functions as an adjective to define the noun “bastards” and was employed to specify the Islamic matrix of the attacks. On the other hand, according to the defence, if the word order had been “Islamici bastardi”, the meaning would have been an insult to all Muslims. Therefore, the defence stressed, the only interpretation that could be given to the headline is that those subjects, i.e., the terrorists are bastards (Messina 2017). On the 18 December 2017 Belpietro was acquitted with the verdict “no case to answer”.

As with the Hopkins case, the court’s decision seems to be miscarried justice. Belpietro’s defence rests on the supposition that the word order of “Islamici Bastardi” absolves the noun phrase of any negative connotations for members of the Islamic faith. Yet it is clear, adopting corpus linguistics terminology, that the mere proximity of the two lexemes forms negative semantic prosody. It is also naïve at best, dishonest at worst, for the court to imagine that the right wing paper had no intention to offend or cause scandal with such a title. The decision marks once again the power dynamics within the world of news production in favour of the elites (van Dijk, 1993) and to the detriment of outsiders.

9.3. How “terrorists” translates as “migrants” in news discourse

The suggestion that migrants and terrorism are linked is an insidious one that the popular press and populist politicians have perpetuated through discourse chains across the media, conflating the two phenomena or implying that one is the consequence of the other, or

that indeed that migration translates into terrorism. The assumption is implicit and made to appear a natural consequence, for example in the editorial under the title “Bastardi Islamici”

E allora, di fronte a una guerra che non abbiamo dichiarato ma che stiamo subendo è ora di reagire. *Altro che porte aperte all’immigrazione clandestina*¹¹ anche a quella che non sappiamo con quali intenzioni arrivi da noi. Basta con la tolleranza nei confronti di un mondo che non vuole integrarsi ma che professa solo integralismo [faced with a war that we have not declared but that we are being subjected to, it is time to retaliate. *Enough open doors to illegal immigration* (see note 11) and to that which arrives on our doorstep but we don’t know with what intention. Stop tolerance towards a world that does not want to integrate but professes only integralism] (Belpietro, 2015).

The journalist begins by telling his readers that “we” (presumably “we” refers to white non-Muslim northern Europeans) are being subjected to a war, a war we did not want. The narrative reads that in order to strike back, we should close the borders to immigration and become intolerant to “a world”, presumably a Muslim one, which according to the writer refuses to accept multicultural societies in which integration plays a crucial role.

In another front page editorial, “Integrazione impossibile: La Francia multiculturale colpita al cuore” [Integration impossible: Multicultural France is (Cavadini 2015), integration is the theme and the multicultural societal model adopted in France becomes at one the target and cause of the terrorist strikes:

Ancora una volta il modello francese è stato colpito al cuore. La convivenza basata sul multiculturalismo temperato dal trittico *liberté-égalité-fraternité* è finita soffocata dal fiotto di sangue di vittime innocenti [One again a massive blow to the French model. Cohabitation based on multiculturalism tempered by the triptych *liberté-égalité-fraternité* has been suffocated by the torrents of blood of innocent victims.

¹¹ This is another war of the words that for space constraints cannot be enlarged upon here. The use of the term “clandestine” as a noun to describe migrants was officially banned in 2014 by the Italian order of Journalists <https://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/LOrdine-dei-giornalisti-censura-anche-le-parole.pdf>. However, The right-wing press along with populist far-right politicians such as Giorgia Meloni and Matteo Salvini continue to (ab)use the term to refer to anyone entering Italy without documents regardless of political status. In 2017 a Milanese judge ruled that the use of the term has “una valenza denigratoria e viene utilizzato come emblema di negatività” [a denigratorial evaluation and is used as an emblem of negativity], <http://www.ilgiornaleditalia.org/news/cronaca/885726/Migranti--ora-e-vietato-anche.html>.

The journalist's intention to highlight a nexus between multiculturalism and terrorism is made clear, although what is not clear is why one leads to the other. The imagery evoked by the expression "torrents of blood" could be an intertextual reference to the (in)famous "Rivers of Blood" speech made by Enoch Powell in Birmingham in 1968 at an anti-immigration rally.¹² Cavadini then states: "Nel Paese colonizzato dai seguaci di Allah la legge dello Stato di Montesquieu è stata soppiantata dalla sharia" [In the country colonised by Allah's followers, the law of the State of Montesquieu has been supplanted by Sharia law]. The use of the term "colonised" is an interesting one, implying that the colonised victims of French imperialism have become the "colonisers": the majority of the Muslim immigrants referred to (35% of the population of Marseille is Muslim, according to the newspaper, although no source for the data is provided) are from former French colonies, such as Algiers. The claim that Sharia law rules in France is alarmist not to say false and aimed at whipping up further antipathy towards immigration. These sentiments reverberate in the political discourse of Italy's right. In the wake of the Paris Attack, politician Giorgia Meloni is quoted in *Libero*, stating "Siamo in Guerra. Chiudiamo le frontiere agli islamici":

Basta con l'immigrazione musulmana almeno fino a quando l'Islam non avrà risolto i problemi di violenza interni alla sua cultura.

Basta con l'immigrazione irregolare e clandestina: gli immigrati clandestini devono tornare a casa loro. Basta con gli sbarchi. Vogliamo controlli serrati sui centri culturali islamici aperti in Italia.

A syllogism whereby terrorists are Muslim, Muslims are migrants, therefore all migrants are terrorists. The Commissioner for Europe, Jean Claude Juncker warned (15 November 2015) "We should not mix the different categories of people coming to Europe. Those who organised these attacks and those that perpetrated them are exactly those that the refugees are fleeing from and not the opposite". His words suggest that the translation migrant > terrorist is trans-European and not linked to a particular language or culture. Rather it is an ideological issue of political persuasion.

¹² Powell's peroration of the speech gave rise to its popular title. He quotes Sibyl's prophecy in the epic poem *Aeneid*, 6, 86–87, of "wars, terrible wars, / and the Tiber foaming with much blood".

On the 16 novembre 2015, Salvini moves to an extreme position according to the left-wing magazine, *Espresso*, declaring “blocco degli sbarchi ed espulsione dei clandestini, verifica a tappeto di tutte le occupazioni abusive nei nostri quartieri popolari, da Milano a Palermo. Ci hanno dichiarato Guerra” [A block on all disembarkations, expulsion of all illegal immigrants, controls on all squats in our urban areas, from Milan to Palermo. They have declared war on us]. Once again the equation migrant = terrorist is apparently logical. Salvini’s tones have not changed. Following the Northern League’s success in the 2018 National elections, the candidate for Italian Prime Minister recently tweeted his solutions to terrorism: “Blindare i confini, controllare le presenze islamiche organizzate, rimpatriare i detenuti stranieri, espellere i clandestini: volere è potere” [Block the borders, controls on the presence of Islamic organisations, repatriate foreign prisoners, expel illegal immigrants: Where there is a will there’s a way] (*La Repubblica* 30 March 2018).

10. Conclusions

This contribution has aimed to show how the power of the press and the power of words reverberate across English and Italian lingua-cultures within the context of journalistic discourse on the migrant crisis. The analysis has focused on two particularly striking discursive events in which news producers have wielded absolute power of the concept of “the freedom of speech” to publish what can only be described by others as hate speech. Cockroaches, the final solution, festering sores, gunning down, Islamic bastards; while I do not deny the fact that the two case studies under analysis here emanate from right wing news producers working for right wing publications, the question to be asked is how can such offensive xenophobic and ethnocentric discourse be reconciled with and waived by the watchdogs and associations set up to safeguard against such abuse of power, let alone by the powers of justice? In the aftermath of the polemics surrounding in the *Mailonline* (5 August 2015) Hopkins, who prided herself on never having apologised for her language, is quoted as saying “there are some words which in hindsight you’d probably pull out of there”. This is a disclaimer that comes too late. Power remains firmly in the hands of the elite – “migrants” – the generic term so disparaged by *Al Jazeera* but still used for want of a better expression simply highlights the plight of the people without a voice. A lost voice because in the UK, the newspaper watchdog does not account for offences that are

not against the individual – and as “migrants” are neither an ethnic group nor a religious one they “cannot be discriminated against”. In Italy, Muslim appears to equate terrorist in political news discourse generated by the influential right and even when taken to court the said newspapers have the final word – yes word – in a futile war of semantics. It is a lose situation for the voiceless populations that we generically refer to as “migrants” who travel across unknown territories and face countless crimes against humanity in their fight for a better life.

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