

Panel 25: **The invention of migration: discourses, representations and practices SECTION A**

Friday 17, 9-10.45, Aula A7

Convenors: **Lorenzo Casini** (University of Messina), **Maria Grazia Sindoni** (University of Messina)

Discussant: **Mirella Cassarino** (University of Catania)

Chair: **Mariavita Cambria** (University of Messina)

In its broad meaning, migration describes a physical movement of peoples and/or individuals across different geographical areas, but not everyone who is moving across places is classified as being a “migrant”. Following Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), migration should not be interpreted as a referential and neutral movement, but, conversely, as a social, political and ideologically loaded discourse that implies a conscious manipulation of mainstream representations of people involved in migration. In contemporary debates, migration has brought to the fore another seminal and closely related notion, that of “border” and both have been regarded as key categories for cultural studies. Walls and fences are proliferating across the Mediterranean regions, but practices of bordering are pervasive and often lack a specific material embodiment. Borders “function to allow passage as much as they do to deny it” (De Genova et al. 2014) and are implemented today by European countries both inside and outside their national confines. Outside the territory of the state, bordering is instantiated through surveillance of migratory routes, agreements with countries of transit, or policies of sea rescue. Inside the national space, it is enacted through the exclusion or differentiation of access to rights between different typologies of migrants: legal migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, illegal and deportable migrants. This panel sets out to investigate migration and the transformation of bordering practices, and to explore how they are reproduced in and through discourse. It will articulate and discuss processes of description, comment, critique, rejection and spectacularisation of discourses on and by migrants through a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspective, with the aim of uncovering mainstream and dominant ideologies that may be found across a wide repertoire of discourses and practices, for example in printed, digital and broadcast media, literature, popularizing discourses, cinema, social networking platforms, to name but the most prominent. Our collective endeavour brings together different theoretical approaches to develop forms of possible and alternative counterdiscourses, which will be of help to uncover and unpack highly codified and statically postulated migrant identities and borders in mainstream discourse. The panel will be divided in two sections: the papers of Section 1 will focus on the analysis of discourses on migration mainly by non migrants whereas the papers of Section 2 will deal with the cultural and intellectual production of migrants.

Paper givers:

- 1) **Maria Grazia Sindoni** (University of Messina), *“Migrants are like cockroaches”. The language of othering in the British media*

Following UN human rights chief denouncing Sun over Katie Hopkins “cockroach” column mentioned in the title of this paper (Jones 2015; Hopkins 2015), I will explore how the boundaries of the language of racism and xenophobia are currently being pushed into discourses of migration in the British media. Although public outcry led to petitions and a general backlash against (overtly expressed) racism, the current crossings of the Mediterranean sea, generally described as migration by media, have been developing a whole linguistic and multimodal repertoire of othering, underpinned by neoliberalism and post-capitalism ideologies, in turn cropped by neo-Nazi and far right political discourses. However, this is nothing new, as such discourses are nourished by wide-spread and purposely-fed fears translated in the language of being invaded or “swamped” of Thatcherian rhetoric, following the 1978 new Commonwealth and the prospect of four million Pakistani migrating to Britain. The swamping of migrants is resurfacing in British political discourse today, for example when Defence Secretary Michael Fallon claimed that “communities are swamped by immigrants” (Martin 2014), backtracking soon afterwards, but at the same time construing a dyad between two differently hierarchized levels of groups, i.e. communities vs. immigrants. The language of othering is a crucial weapon in the armoury of nationalist rhetoric and is also part of strategies of consent building in societies framed by convergent cultures. Media strategies manipulate individual responses to printed and broadcast news, ultimately hinting at how consent is built (cf. Chomsky 1997; 2002). Such strategies, including diversion, distraction, deferring, (self-)blaming, belittling, etc. have been documented in research literature in linguistics, media and communication studies (cf. Mehrabian 1987; Herman & Chomsky 2002; Akopova 2013). This paper adopts a multimodal critical discourse analysis approach (Machin and Mayr 2012) to shed light on a range of linguistic strategies of othering, from more to less overt, illustrating cases of lexical choices (e.g. overlexicalisation, suppression, structural opposition, use of quoting verbs), visual semiotic choices (e.g. iconography, attributes, settings, salience), representational and ideational choices (e.g. classification of social actors, personalisation vs. impersonalisation, specification vs. genericisation, nomination vs. functionalisation), transitivity and verb processes, nominalisations and presuppositions. The above mentioned strategies will be analysed in context by drawing on systemic-functional theories of language and semiosis of communication to unearth the functions they play in discourse, for example showing how they conceal or take for granted through and via language and visual design in contemporary corporate media outlets. In the conclusive remarks, some reflections will be presented to point out how verbal and visual resources are exploited in discourse of othering with reference to migration. The combination of verbal and visual strategies points to rapid and relatively unpredictable social and cultural changes. The stage of acceleration and intensification in globalization processes raises fundamental challenges for the ways in which we imagine societies, human beings and their activities (cf. Eriksen 2001; Arnaut & Spotti 2015).

2) **Mariavita Cambria** (University of Messina), *Bordering Europe: the case of linguistic and visual collocations*

In the past decade, a new epistemic community working on migration and borders in many parts of the world has emerged. In their recent essay on migration and borders De Genova et

al emphasize the need to expose the public debate around those two issues for all the “unsettling dynamism that they intrinsically ought to convey” (2015: 56). This has pushed a wealth of interventions and concerns around key concepts such as “border regime”, “border spectacle”, or “border as method” raising several issues on the multifarious implications that those categories put into question (Mezzadra & Ricciardi 2013). “Soglia”, the Italian noun for “threshold”, carries two contrasting meanings: it is at the same time the point that welcomes into a place and the limit of the place itself. It is very often related to the same semantic field of “limit” and “border” and it often collocates accordingly. The outrageous slaughter of men and women that is taking place in the Mediterranean sea and the reactions of several EU countries to this, compels us to further investigate the semantic load that an imaginary linked to the reinforcement of border/s and its related meanings is putting forward. In this context, EU borders can metaphorically be seen and perceived as the battlefield of the two opposing meaning of “soglia”. They have somehow become thresholds, physical spaces but, more than this, in a contrasting semantic game between the concept of space and that of place (Bonesio 2007), metaphorical social constructed places where a supposed “European identity” is built often in contrast with that of the migrants who, paradoxically, achieve the status of outlaws only because they exist, only because they are alive. It is on these thresholds that the state and security border and the “humanitarian border” (Walters 2011) meet and collapse. Moving from the assumption that the construction of an alleged European identity is reinforced by the construction of “borders” and “barriers” and by new practices of bordering filtering “acceptable” and “unacceptable” forms of movement (Sossi 2006), the paper aims at investigating the collocation of some keywords and key collocates in the representation of migrants in a corpus of Italian and English online newspaper articles gathered in May-June 2015. The multi-layered composition of news in online newspapers entails the combined use of several tools when investigating the different semiotic resources used. Drawing from Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics, the paper will thus first analyse key collocates in their linguistic context. Via the adoption of a multimodal approach (Baldry, Thibault 2008; Kress 2010), the paper will then look at how a semantic field related to “border” visually and metaphorically collocates in the photos linked to the articles.

3) **Milena Meo** (University of Messina), *Immagini di barbari. Rappresentazioni di corpi altri e immaginari della contemporaneità*

La parola barbaro nasce per definire colui che parla una lingua incomprensibile per chi l’ascolta, perché radicalmente diversa dalla propria. In breve tempo, in una società come quella greca che sanciva il primato del logos, il suo significato diventerà sinonimo di inferiorità ed da lì in poi, andrà a descrivere tutti coloro che, in quanto tali, saranno privati della possibilità di parola e parlati attraverso narrazioni eteronome (Meo 2007). Concepire il migrante nei termini di barbaro rende possibile spiegare la disciplina costante e sistematica attraverso la quale, in Europa, è stata prodotta la questione della migrazione. In questo contesto, il migrante, usato, ridotto a corpo altro e mercificato, non ha voce, non parla, come i barbari di un tempo. Su di lui, ma in sua assenza, viene ininterrottamente generata una narrazione corale e mai plurale che lo soggettivizza. Le immagini dei migranti prodotte dalla società spettacolare europea non fanno altro che sostanziare i discorsi di quella stessa

Europa che basa la sua identità politica sulla creazione, sulla proliferazione, sulla difesa e sulla militarizzazione dei suoi confini (Bauman 2012) e si impongono come le uniche rappresentazioni legittimate a produrre senso sulla questione. Veicolate dai media, si fanno discorso quotidiano e divengono “effettive”: i loro riflessi danno forma alla realtà, colonizzano l’immaginario, de-componendolo lo compongono. In questo quadro, obiettivo della relazione sarà quello di portare alla luce i meccanismi di costruzione sociale della migrazione e le sue pratiche di produzione di senso, evidenziandone le caratteristiche coloniali e il suo portato politico costituente. Attraverso questa prospettiva di analisi sarà, più in generale, fatta luce sull’immaginario politico della contemporaneità (Meo 2011) e le sue le pratiche governamentali (Foucault 1978) neoliberiste che, in nome di strategie allo stesso tempo umanitarie e securitarie, creano confini determinandone aperture e chiusure, producendo nuove soggettività, definendo irregolarità e clandestinità, gerarchizzando l’accesso ai moderni diritti di cittadinanza. Il campo di indagine sarà quello visuale e l’analisi sarà condotta sulle rappresentazioni iconiche delle notizie, a partire dalle immagini fotografiche che ogni giorno, in Italia, a corredo di testi giornalistici, hanno narrato e continuano a raccontare questa storia costruendone una trama di senso. Tale scelta appare motivata da due questioni. Innanzitutto si assume come centrale, oggi, confrontarsi con la grammatica delle immagini per coglierne l’imponente capacità comunicativa in un momento in cui la loro diffusione è diventata pervasiva. Nella società della trasparenza (Byung-Chul 2014), infatti, la rappresentazione iconica della notizia diventa fondamentale per riprodurre l’immagine di una realtà sociale che sempre di più travalica i limiti dell’esperienza diretta e diviene dunque un prezioso spazio di potere capace di produrre regolazione sociale che merita di essere indagato per la sua inedita centralità. In secondo luogo il racconto per immagini, più di ogni altro tipo di narrazione, si rivela essere maggiormente adatto per evidenziare l’ambivalenza dell’immaginario dominante sul tema delle migrazioni che può assumere, allo stesso tempo, le forme più estreme di multiculturalismo “estetico” o intolleranza radicale, riproducendone le stesse retoriche.

4) **Fabio Ruggiano** (University of Messina), *La rappresentazione dello straniero in Twitter. Un’analisi corpus driven*

Il contributo si basa su due corpus di tweet ricavati dall’archivio di Twitter attraverso la ricerca di parole chiave. Le parole chiave scelte sono: per il primo corpus (che sarà chiamato -migra-) migrante, migranti, migrato, migrati, immigrante, immigranti, immigrato, immigrati, emigrante, emigranti, emigrato, emigrati; per il secondo corpus (che sarà chiamato clandestin-) clandestino, clandestini. Per entrambi i corpus, la ricerca è stata limitata ai tweet scritti in italiano nel periodo dal 3 al 17 giugno 2015 (2 settimane). Non sono state fatte ulteriori scremature, per esempio tra interventi giornalistici e di utenti privati; né sono state escluse le citazioni (mentre sono stati esclusi i retweet). I corpus risultano, così, composti, rispettivamente, da 3435 e 2196 tweet. I corpus sono stati analizzati in modo “artigianale”, con gli strumenti offerti dal programma di videoscrittura word di office. L’interrogazione dei corpus ha avuto come scopo l’individuazione del semantic preference e del semantic prosody dei due gruppi di parole prescelti. I concetti di semantic preference e semantic prosody sono assunti così come descritti, ad esempio, da Begagić (2013: 405): Partington (2004) states that the relationship between the two terms

can be described in two ways. On the one hand, semantic prosody can be described as a subcategory or special case of semantic preference i.e. it is “reserved for instances where an item shows a preference to co-occur with items that can be described as bad, unfavourable or unpleasant, or as good, favourable or pleasant” (2004:149). I dati relativi alla presenza quantitativa di alcuni termini chiave (oltre ai gruppi -migra- e clandestin-, profug-, confin- e altri) nei due corpus sono stati confrontati per ricavarne considerazioni sulle diverse percezioni del concetto di “straniero” diffuse tra gli utenti di Twitter, così come emergono dagli usi lessicali. I primi dati hanno mostrato che i tweet contenenti parole del gruppo clandestin- sono sensibilmente meno numerosi di quelli con parole del gruppo -migra-. Chi usa parole del gruppo -migra- è, inoltre, decisamente poco incline ad usare anche parole del gruppo clandestin-; chi usa le parole clandestin-, al contrario, accoglie con facilità parole -migra-. L’interrogazione ha riguardato anche il gruppo confin-. Riguardo al semantic preference per le parole di questo gruppo, in entrambi i corpus si nota la co-occorrenza preferenziale di parole come chiudere, recludere, blindare, bloccare, blocco, bloccata, impedire, indietro, difendere, respingere, fermare, intercettare, predominanti su parole semanticamente opposte: passare, oltre, introdurre, entrare, libera, aperte. Dal punto di vista del semantic prosody, dunque, quando -migra- e clandestin- co-occorrono con confin-, il concetto di chiudere è prevalente, mentre quello di passare è recessivo.