

*“Journey into hell [...where] migrants
froze to death”;*

A critical stylistic analysis of European newspapers’ first response to the 2019 Essex Lorry Deaths

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Research Goal and Material

- By qualitatively examining the first responses of newspapers to the event at Grays, we uncover the 'go-to' narrative, thereby illuminating the stereotypes that underlie such reporting.
- We settled on a manageable collection of 78 big national daily newspaper articles published in the 48-hour period after the story broke so as to qualitatively explore texts representative of the relevant national newspaper (and related political) landscape.
- We explored the case's early coverage in Cyprus, Greece, UK, Serbia, Croatia, Flanders and Brussels, and the Netherlands.

Newspapers overview (and method brief)

Country: Newspaper (no of articles, political orientation)	No
Belgium: <i>De Morgen</i> (2, centre-left), <i>Het Nieuwsblad</i> (1, centrist), <i>Metro</i> (1, independent), <i>Het Laatste Nieuws</i> (1, centrist), <i>De Tijd</i> (1, economically liberal), and <i>De Standaard</i> (1, centre-right)	7
Croatia: <i>Večernji</i> (centre-right), <i>Dnevnik</i> (centre-right), <i>Slobodna Dalmacija</i> (independent), <i>Nacional</i> (nationalist, tabloid), <i>Telegram</i> (nationalist, tabloid), <i>24 sata</i> (nationalist, tabloid) and <i>Jutarnji</i> (nationalist, tabloid)	7
Cyprus: <i>Phileleftheros</i> (3, centre), <i>Politis</i> (1, centre), <i>Simerini</i> (2, centre-right), and <i>Alithia</i> (1, right).	7
Greece: <i>Rizospastis</i> (1 article, communist), <i>Efimerida Sintakton</i> (2, left), <i>Ta Nea</i> (2, centre-left), <i>To Vima</i> (2, centre-left), <i>Ethnos</i> (2, centre-left), <i>Kathimerini</i> (1, centre-right), and <i>Eleftheros Typos</i> (2, centre-right),	12
Netherlands: <i>Het NRC Handelsblad</i> (2, centre-left), <i>Trouw</i> (1, centre-left), <i>De Volkskrant</i> (2, centre-left), <i>Het Algemeen Dagblad (AD)</i> (3, centre-right), <i>Het Financieele Dagblad</i> (1, economically liberal), <i>Metro</i> (1, independent), <i>De Telegraaf</i> (1, right-wing populist), <i>Het Nederlands Dagblad</i> (2, orthodox Calvinist), and <i>Het Reformatorisch Dagblad</i> (1, orthodox Calvinist)	14
Serbia: <i>Dnevnik</i> (2, centre-right), <i>Politika</i> (1, centre-right), <i>Danas</i> (2, independent), <i>Blic</i> (1, nationalist, tabloid), <i>Kurir</i> (1, nationalist, tabloid), <i>Alo</i> (1, nationalist, tabloid), <i>Informer</i> (2, nationalist, tabloid), <i>Jutarnji glasnik</i> (1, independent), <i>Novi magazin</i> (1, independent), <i>Novosti</i> (2, centre-right) and <i>Telegraf</i> (1, nationalist, tabloid).	15
UK: <i>The Guardian</i> (2, left); <i>The Independent</i> (3, left), <i>The Daily Mirror</i> (2, left), <i>i</i> (1, centre-left), <i>Metro</i> (1, independent), <i>The London Evening Standard</i> (1, centre-right), <i>The Financial Times</i> (1, economically liberal), <i>The Daily Star</i> (1, centre-right), <i>The MailOnline</i> (1, right), <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> (1, right), <i>The Times</i> (1, right), <i>The Sun</i> (1, right).	16
<i>total</i>	78

Our Findings

- language portrays what happened in dramatic, fictionalising and sensationalistic terms
- overfocusing on the event's effects backgrounds doers and helps writers avoid the ascription of responsibility
- metaphors of fighting, war and violence used to oversimplify responding mechanisms and divert attention away from dealing with trafficking's underlying causes
- where reporting is more matter-of-fact and unemotive, it remains mostly uncritical of the actions of law enforcement and customs agencies
- there's a concern as to the extent to which the victims can be held responsible for their own misfortune
- there's confusion as to whether the driver was arrested for murder or for manslaughter
- through these linguistic choices, the newspapers (perhaps unintentionally) help to justify draconic law enforcement and border security policies.

The full paper was published in the *Trends in Organised Crime* June 2021 edition, and is available via Open Access here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-021-09418-x>