



The Construction of Gender-based Violence in the British Printed and Broadcast Media

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Abstract

This study is part of an ongoing investigation into the portrayal of violence against women in the British media and it draws on Fairclough's model of CDA and Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of multimodality.

The aim of this analysis is to compare the representation of victims and perpetrators of rape in the printed and broadcast media. By bringing to light the intertextual and interdiscursive elements which come out of the comparative linguistic and/or semiotic investigation, this study explores how an incident of rape is recontextualised in two different media and across genres through the use of different verbal and visual strategies.

In addition, this research aims at showing how media discourse, regardless of the genre, may contribute to creating a stereotyped construction of gender-based violence by, for example, shifting the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim's mother, thus minimising the rapist's foul play and leading to his almost total invisibility.

Key words: gender-based violence, social actors, intertextuality, CDA, multimodality

1. Introduction¹

In this work, we present a model for the analysis of the representation of gender-based violence in the printed and broadcast media which integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and multimodal analysis. This choice is motivated by the need of paying attention not only to the verbal aspects of discourse but also to other semiotic dimensions of communicative events such as images, photos, gestures, etc.

The articles and videos we analysed concern an incident of rape and murder of a British teenager (Scarlett Keeling) which took place in India in 2008; the articles were published in the UK in 2008 in two newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*) and two tabloids (*The Sun*, *Daily Mail*), whereas the

videos were broadcast on the BBC website in the same year. In total we have analysed 65 articles from the tabloids, 50 articles from the broadsheets and 11 videos.

In order to put the story in context, we provide the main stages of the police investigation into the death of Scarlett Keeling:

- **18th February 2008** – the body of British teenager Scarlett Keeling is found on Anjuna beach in Goa, India. First autopsy reveals Scarlett drowned.
- **25th February 2008** – Scarlett’s mother, Fiona MacKeown, accuses Indian police of cover up and believes her daughter was killed (and possibly raped). Second autopsy reveals Scarlett was raped and murdered.
- **10th March 2008** – two men are arrested over the killing of Scarlett Keeling.
- **12th May 2008** – Fiona MacKeown is accused of neglect by Indian police.

Against this backdrop, the current work tries to answer the following research questions: How is an incident of rape recontextualised in two different media and across genres? How are the various actors represented through the use of different verbal and visual strategies? Are there differences/similarities in the way tabloids, broadsheets and broadcast media represent a case of gender-based violence? And to what extent can media discourse contribute to creating a stereotyped construction of gender-based violence?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Emerging from critical linguistics and critical semiotics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the many approaches to the study of language. The emphasis is on the relationship between language and society. Language is a part of society and linguistic phenomena are determined socially and have social effects. The term discourse is preferred since language is seen as a form of social practice.

CDA is a form of critical social research. The aim of critical social research is to better understand how societies produce beneficial and detrimental effects and how the detrimental effects can be mitigated or eliminated. The focus is on contemporary social changes and their effects are crucial to improving human conditions. These changes are transforming language too. Discourse and social structures are linked by a ‘dialectical relationship’ (Fairclough 1989: 37). A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship and it implies that the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but at the same time the discursive event shapes them. In other words, ‘discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and

relationships between people and groups of people' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258).

Since discourse is so socially influential it is inevitably related to issues of power. CDA focuses on the discursive strategies and consequences of power abuse by dominant groups and institutions and how forms of social inequality are represented, reproduced or legitimated in discourse.

2.2 Multimodality

Multimodality is the study of different semiotic modes in a communicative event. A multimodal approach considers text as just one of the possible modes available for social interaction. Iedema explains the difference between the traditional approaches and the new multimodal approach to discourse analysis.

In general terms, the trend towards a multimodal appreciation of meaning making centres around two issues: first, the de-centring of language as favoured meaning making; and second, the re-visiting and blurring of the traditional boundaries between and roles allocated to language, image, page layout, document design, and so on. (Iedema 2003: 33)

There are different approaches to multimodality but we will take into account the social semiotics approach (Kress 2009; van Leeuwen 2005; Jewitt 2009) since it focuses on discourse and its context, in fact the focus is on '[...] the way people use semiotic 'resources' both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them – which is also a form of semiotic – in the context of specific social situations and practices' (van Leeuwen 2005: xi).

2.3 Media Power

The constant dose of news which most people receive each day is a potential factor of social control, since it accounts for a significant proportion of a person's average daily source of involvement in public discourse. In modern societies, social control is increasingly achieved through consent, rather than through coercion. In Gramsci's (1971) words it is a hegemonic power through which the dominant class has the power of defining commonsensical practices. What comes to be common sense is indeed in large measure determined by the dominant bloc in society. The media are part and parcel of this dominant bloc and have, therefore, the power of determining common sense. At the same time, they have the power of reinforcing the existing commonsensical ideologies, for instance by *choosing* news sources mostly among dominant voices or by *selecting* the news according to criteria of newsworthiness which, as Meyers (1997: 22) has put it, represent a 'framework that supports the dominant ideology while marginalizing, trivializing and constructing as deviant or dangerous any challenge to it'. It is important to underline that this process is not the product of a conspiracy; it is rather the outcome of the institutionalised professional imperatives and commercial interests of the media as social organisation. Finally, it is worth highlighting that a great amount of media power derives from the cumulative effect they have on their audience and not from a single news article that has no power *per se*; it is the repetition of a particular way of handling things, of

particular ways of positioning readers that gives the media a pervasive and powerful influence (Fairclough 1989).

2.4 Gender Studies

In addition to the linguistic and media frameworks, this study also draws on the work of feminist social theorists such as Soothill and Walby (1991) Benedict (1992), Bingham (1994), van Zoonen (1994), Meyers (1997), Carter et al. (1998). Considering the emancipatory agenda of CDA and its social engagement on the side of oppressed groups, the analysis carried out by these scholars in the field of sexist violence and myths and stereotypes surrounding violence against women is fundamental in order to complement the linguistic and discursive analysis of media texts with an investigation of the roots of the social practice of rape in terms of its relation to social structures and struggles over power and domination.

3. Social Actor Representation

This critical analysis of the portrayal of violence against women in the British media aims at describing the linguistic and visual features of texts used to represent social actors. Our analysis will focus on three phases based on how the investigation on this case evolved: the accusation of a cover-up against the police by Scarlett's mother, the accusation of neglect against Scarlett's mother by the police and the arrest of a man suspected of having committed the crime.

The first articles reporting on Scarlett Keeling's case appeared a few weeks after her death, when a second post mortem examination revealed that she had been raped and murdered. The first information peak was in February 2008 when Scarlett's mother, Fiona MacKeown, accused the police of covering-up her daughter's death. We may argue that this is the point when the story became newsworthy, that is when the story turned into news. The second information peak happened in mid-March 2008, when the Indian authorities accused Fiona MacKeown of neglect and when a man, Samson D'Souza was arrested for Scarlett's rape and murder.

Van Leeuwen (1996) proposes a list of relevant categories for the study of the representation of social actors in discourse. This model bridges content and linguistic analysis at the text level and includes a 'sociosemantic inventory' of ways in which social actors can be represented. Van Leeuwen affirms:

The point is important for Critical Discourse Analysis, for, with the increasing use of visual representation in a wide range of contexts, it becomes more and more pressing to be able to ask the same critical questions with regard to both verbal and visual representations, indeed, with regard to representations in all the 'media' that form part of contemporary 'multimedia' texts. (van Leeuwen 1996: 34)

In this study we have applied van Leeuwen's categories to establish how the three main social actors – the victim, the perpetrator and the mother – are represented in the British media.

3.1 The Victim

In both tabloids and broadsheets, the representation of the victim, Scarlett Keeling, changes when the focus shifts from the police cover-up to the mother's neglect.

3.1.1 Role allocation: Activation and passivation

As van Leeuwen explains, social actors can be included in a text either through *activation* or through *passivation*, that is they can be represented as active forces or as agentless patients in the pursuit of a given activity. This distinction is not limited to the traditional grammatical definition of activation and passivation, a social actor can have an active role in the social practice, but s/he can be given a passive role in a given text and vice versa (van Leeuwen 1996).

As far as the victim is concerned, she is activated in relation to the actions she pursued that may have put her at risk of being assaulted. She is activated by *participation* rather than *circumstantialisation*, i.e. she is represented as the dynamic force in an activity, in particular as an agent in relational and material processes, especially in terms of her actions and behaviours on the night a man spiked her drinks, raped and killed her. Despite a post-mortem examination declaring that she had been drugged, when represented as having an active role in these actions, we may argue that the focus shifts from what had been done to her to what she had been doing.

- (1) Scarlett Keeling **had been drinking** on the night she died – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (2) Scarlett Keeling **had taken a cocktail of drugs** on the night she was raped and murdered – *Daily Mail*
- (3) The night she died, Scarlett **had taken LSD, ecstasy and cocaine** – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (4) He had seen Miss Keeling arriving at Lui's bar at about 3.30am on Feb 18 - the night she was killed - **in a state of 'total inebriation'** – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (5) On the night she died, Scarlett **fell out of a bar** at 3am mumbling **she had taken cocaine and ecstasy** – *The Sun*
- (6) Scarlett later told him **she had taken three drops of LSD, two Ecstasy pills and cocaine** – *Daily Mail*
- (7) Scarlett **went bar-hopping** with a girl friend, **took a cocktail of drugs and ended up 'wasted, talking gibberish'** – *Daily Mail*

We may want to question the relevance of these details in a report on a rape and murder case and we may argue that the reporting of these details may suggest that the victim was partly to blame for what occurred to her. As a matter of fact, rape victims' abuse of drugs and alcohol *before* the attack has often been used as an aggravating circumstance in the victim blaming rhetoric, thus partly shifting the responsibility for the attack from the perpetrator to the victim (Benedict 1992).

When the focus of the story starts to move from the rape and murder and the police cover-up to the victim's mother and her 'negligence', the representation of the victim seems to become more oriented towards her *passivation*. More precisely, she is *subjected*, i.e. represented as the subject of passive constructions. The victim is represented in the passive voice as the recipient of the attack or at the receiving end of her mother's negligence.

- (8) A second postmortem examination showed **she had been attacked** – *The Guardian*
- (9) [Scarlett] **was left in the care of** Lobo and his two aunts by her mother, 43-year-old Fiona MacKeown, who went travelling with her other children – *The Guardian*
- (10) **Scarlett was raped and murdered** on a beach in Goa – *The Sun*
- (11) **This 15-year-old was left alone** by her mother in Goa – *Daily Mail*

Additionally, the victim is passivated through *possessivation*, where agency is changed into the 'possession' of a process, rather than the performing of an action (e.g. *her murder*, *her killing* or *her rape*). The action is transformed into a 'thing'. In this case, the crime she was victim of becomes something she possesses, void of human agency, rather than something someone did to her.

Even when the victim appears as the grammatical subject of the active construction, she is actually subjected because the verb represents a process which is inherently passive, although grammatically passive.

- (12) A second postmortem, carried out at the request of her mother, Fiona MacKeown, recorded that she [Scarlett MacKewen] **had more than 50 bruises** – *The Guardian*

In the videos the victim is never included through activation, yet she is included through passivation and subjection.

- (a) Fifteen year old Scarlett **was raped and killed** (*BBC News* – 23 March 2008)²
- (b) She **was raped and murdered** (*BBC News* – 24 September 2008)
- (c) She **was assaulted** (*BBC News* – 7 May 2008)

3.1.2 Categorisation: Identification and appraisal

The victim is categorised and, more precisely, she is *identified* and *appraised*. She is identified in terms of her age, gender, and provenance (*classification*). We found that, especially in the tabloids the victim was also identified in terms of her physical characteristics. While one might think that the description of physical attributes is an empirically innocent information provided by the press, we may argue that certain physical characteristics may have a certain (positive or negative) connotation. Finally, the victim is identified in terms of her personal relations to other human beings and

appraised, i.e. referred to in terms which evaluate her as pitied for what happened to her.

- (13) **The 15-year-old** had been on a six-month holiday with her family – *The Guardian*
- (14) It revealed **the teen, of Bideford, Devon**, was raped and killed – *The Sun*
- (15) [...] **the blonde teenager**, as tempting as a ripe peach, [...] – *Daily Mail*
- (16) Mrs MacKeown said she believed **her daughter** had been attacked by more than one person – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (17) **Poor** Scarlett paid with her life – *The Sun*

Scarlett is also categorised in the videos, in particular she is identified in terms of her kinship (daughter) and she is also classified as a 15 year-old girl.

- (d) Not a day goes by when Fiona MacKeown doesn't think of **her daughter** (*BBC News* – 1 October 2008)
- (e) **The 15 year-old** was raped and murdered and her body left on Anjuna beach in Goa (*BBC News* – 1 October 2008)

3.1.3 Overdetermination: Inversion

Overdetermination occurs in tabloids, where the victim was represented as simultaneously participating in more than one social practice. In the specific case of *inversion*, the victim was represented as participating in two practices that are each other's opposites: on the one hand, she is represented as a vulnerable girl who should not have been 'left alone' by her mother and on the other hand she is portrayed as a young girl 'out of control', engaged in activities (drinking, taking drugs, being sexually active) that may be regarded as inappropriate to her age.

- (18) **Impressionable** girl – *The Sun*
- (19) **Inexperienced** girl – *The Sun*
- (20) **Vulnerable** daughter – *The Sun*
- (21) A girl who **needed guidance** – *The Sun*
- (22) **Lovely** girl – *Daily Mail*
- (23) **Desperate** girl – *Daily Mail*
- (24) A girl who **could not defend herself** – *Daily Mail*
- (24) **She'd smoked cannabis** back home – *The Sun*
- (26) She **did what she wanted** – *The Sun and Daily Mail*

- (27) Scarlett **had a boyfriend** in Britain and **was sexually active** – *The Sun and Daily Mail*
- (28) Scarlett **had a drinking habit**. She used to drink vodka, beer and tequila, sometimes in large amounts, and her mother knew this – *Daily Mail*
- (29) **Making the most of the circumstances** she found herself in was nothing new for Scarlett – *Daily Mail*
- (30) Scarlett **had gone on her own to a family planning clinic to get contraceptives** – *Daily Mail*
- (31) It was impossible to know exactly **what Scarlett was getting up to** – *Daily Mail*

This dichotomy recalls the tendency of news media to polarize the representation of women in sexist crimes into either ‘virgins’ or ‘whores’ (Benedict 1992). Here, the contradictory binary representation may be due to the age of the victim, who was too young to be considered a ‘fallen’ woman and too old to be considered an ‘ideal’ victim. This stereotyped discourse surrounding rape victims is not necessarily the result of individual journalistic malevolence. Rather it arises from the prevailing patriarchal ideology concerning femininity, masculinity and ‘appropriate’ female sexuality (Meyers 1997).

Conversely, in the videos analysed we have not found any examples of overdetermination. Scarlett is always represented as a naïve and lovely teenager particularly visually (see Figures 1 and 2). This image of a lovely girl who was happy all the time is supported by the words of her family, for example when her mother says: ‘She was very bouncy and used to sing at the top of her voice all the time. [...] She was a really affectionate, loving girl and a brilliant big sister’ (*BBC News* - 9 March 2008). Or she is described as a girl who still needed guidance, for example, when her mother, referring to the local guide with whom Scarlett was staying says: ‘He made her go to bed on time [...]. He made sure she ate healthy food, drank orange juice instead of coca cola’ (*BBC News* - 14 March 2008).



Figure 1: Scarlett Keeling



Figure 2: Scarlett Keeling

3.2 The Perpetrator

The story of Scarlett Keeling starts appearing in the newspapers when the person who raped and killed her had not been found and arrested yet; although his actions are included in the articles, he is absent in the first reports. When a man, Samson D'Souza, is accused of and arrested for the rape, he is either *included* through *participation* and *subjection* or he is still *excluded* through *suppression* and *backgrounding*.

3.2.1 Exclusion: Suppression and backgrounding

When some or all the actors are not included in the text but the relevant actions are (e.g. rape and murder of Scarlett Keeling), the exclusion is not radical. This is the case of suppression, where there is no reference to the social actor (the rapist in this case) anywhere in the text, but there are traces of his presence because his actions are included. So, we learn that Scarlett Keeling was raped and murdered, but we do not find out who committed the crime or was suspected of having committed it. In the articles we analysed, this is achieved mostly through passive agent deletion. In many cases, his actions are de-agentilised, more specifically eventuated. Actions that are de-agentilised present the victim as the goal or recipient of the attack without making any reference to the perpetrator as social actor, although his actions are included. In the specific case of *eventuation*, the action is represented as something that just 'happens' without someone actively carrying out the action. Nominalisation is a common way of realising eventuation, portraying the action as something involuntary, not brought about by human agency. Through nominalisation, i.e. representing actions as nouns rather than as activities, agency is obfuscated and it may result in suppressing the responsibility of the agent by representing the crime as an involuntary event rather than as a voluntary action.

- (32) Lui's shack was where 15-year-old Scarlett Keeling from Devon spent her last night before **her rape and murder** – *Daily Mail*
- (33) Miss MacKeown has been criticised for having left her daughter with friends at the time of **her murder** – *The Daily Telegraph*

In the case of *backgrounding*, the perpetrator is not mentioned in relation to the crime he has committed, but he is mentioned elsewhere in the text (or in the same clause or clause complex) and it is possible to infer that those actions have been committed by that social actor. The exclusion is not radical, but there is a lack of emphasis on the fact that those actions have been committed by him, he is pushed in the background and other actors' actions may be foregrounded. Again, we may argue, that by backgrounding the perpetrator, journalists may obfuscate his responsibility or shift the attentions to other social actors and their actions.

- (34) Scarlett Keeling was drugged, beaten, raped and left for dead, one of the men linked to the horrific attack **is said to have confessed** – *Daily Mail*
- (35) Placido Carvalho, 36, **appeared in court** yesterday on suspicion of drugging, raping and killing Miss Keeling – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (36) She was allegedly given two ecstasy tablets, LSD and cocaine, drugged and repeatedly sexually assaulted before her body was dumped in the sea – *The Daily Telegraph* (The perpetrator is mentioned in the headline 'Suspect 'has confessed' to killing Goa teenager' and at the end of the article).

The main consequence of this transformation (from active into passive) is that, even when the perpetrator is known to the police, he is deleted. We may argue that this omission may have a manipulative nature especially in the allocation of blame and responsibility for the crime. As a matter of fact, one of the effects of transformation is *thematization* (Fowler et al. 1979: 208). Through the use of the passive voice, the affected (the victim in this case) is positioned as subject or theme (what comes in the initial position in a clause, Halliday 1985: 38). By putting emphasis on the non-agent rather than on the agent, the semantically subordinate role of the victim becomes the main focus of the clause, whereas the agent disappears; in this way our perception of the syntactic relations in sentences shifts from the victimiser to the victim.

The use of nominalisation (e.g. wounds, injuries, bruises, cuts, rape, murder, killing, attack) is another way of de-agentilising the actions committed by the perpetrator, reproducing them as mere entities and products, not processes.

In most videos the perpetrator is absent. This effect is created by the way he is linguistically represented. He is suppressed because he is not mentioned in the videos at all. There is no reference to him as social actor but only his action is included. From a linguistic point of view he is excluded through passive agent deletion:

- (f) 15 year old Scarlett **was raped and killed** (*BBC News* – 23 March 2008)
- (g) My daughter **has been murdered** (*BBC News* – 5 March 2008)
- (h) She was **forcibly held under water** (*BBC News* – 24 September 2008)

These actions are represented as events. Surprisingly, sometimes in some reports not only is he invisible but also the action is excluded. For instance, if we take into account one of the interviews with the victim's mother, we realise that the interviewer never refers to the murder. He asks different open questions but he focuses on Fiona's feelings and the relationship between Fiona and the Indian Police.

(i) How are you feeling?

Why didn't they (hold) back certain organs of your daughter at the time?
What's the background to this?

As Scarlett's mother what does it really mean for you? Are you able to deal with losing your daughter in this situation which is quite remarkable, isn't it?

Are you happy with the way the authority is dealing with everything now?

What about the authority say? What kind of support are you having?

Have you heard about this? Have you got any talks with them? Would you want the film?

What happens now? Do you know, go back to Goa, continue with this fight?

(*BBC News* – 5 March 2008)

3.2.2 Role allocation: Activation and passivation

In a few instances, the victimiser is represented as participant engaged in material processes such as 'murdering', 'killing', 'beating', 'drugging', and 'raping'. This happens in particular when the journalists report the facts through the words of external sources, such as the police or witnesses. Activation through *participation* is the clearest way of foregrounding agency and the role of the perpetrator in the event (van Leeuwen 2008: 33).

(37) D'Souza **dumped** Scarlett into shallow water where she died – *The Guardian*

(38) 'It was clear this man **was raping her**' – *The Daily Telegraph*

(39) He said: '**Carvalho forced** two ecstasy pills, LSD and cocaine on her. At 4.45am **D'Souza was seen sexually assaulting her** near the car park. She was unconscious. **He later dumped her** in shallow water and **ran off**' – *The Sun*

In most cases, though, activation of the alleged perpetrator through participation happens in relation to his arrest and his relation with the authorities.

- (40) An Indian barman, Samson D'Souza, 29, **appeared in court** on Monday – *The Sun*
- (41) D'Souza **told police** he left her at 5.15am – *Daily Mail*

When related to the police or other authorities, though, the perpetrator is often represented as *subjected* to actions of the police and other authorities. The subjection is realised through passive constructions and active constructions with verbs denoting processes where the man is the goal of the action.

- (42) A man allegedly seen raping British teenager Scarlett Keeling hours before her death **was being quizzed** last night as police began a murder probe – *The Sun*
- (43) Local man Samson D'Souza, 28, **has been charged with rape**. Another man is **still being quizzed** – *The Sun*
- (44) The first man **arrested**, Samson D'Souza, 28, **was remanded in custody** on suspicion of rape – *The Guardian*

3.3 The Victim's Mother

The victim's mother, Fiona MacKeowen, is represented as a main actor in the rape and murder case. This way of representing the victim's mother is expressed through several linguistic and visual strategies.

3.3.1 Role allocation: Activation and passivation

Scarlett's mother, Fiona MacKeown, is *activated* in relation to several processes that portray her as a combating and unconventional person. Her role as active agent is foregrounded in several processes and actions. Initially, she is almost exclusively represented as the actor in actions which portray her as a fighter against the corruption of the Indian police.

- (45) **Fiona fought** for her daughter's body to be re-examined – *The Sun*
- (46) **Pressure from her mother** forced a second postmortem examination that indicated she had been raped and murdered – *Daily Mail*
- (47) **Fiona MacKeown has consistently maintained** that her daughter was raped – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (48) After MacKeown **complained of a cover-up**, investigators said she had been drugged and raped before being left for dead, and launched a murder investigation – *The Guardian*

After the Indian authorities accuse her of 'neglecting' her daughter, she starts being portrayed as responsible for having 'left' her 15-year-old daughter with strangers in a foreign country, while she went travelling across India. Unlike the perpetrator, her actions tend to be agentilised, rather than being represented as mere agentless events.

- (49) **She left a minor girl** in someone else's custody – *Daily Mail*
- (50) **A mother who failed to say no** to her – *The Sun*
- (51) **Fiona MacKeown left Scarlett Keeling** in the care of a tour guide's family while she went travelling in neighbouring Karnataka state last month – *The Guardian*
- (52) **Fiona left her** for up to three weeks without money while she went off touring other resorts – *The Sun*

Finally, she is activated in relation to her past and her private life. In particular, her sexual history is brought up (having had several children from several men), her unconventional lifestyle (living on benefits, living 'like a gypsy') and her criminal history (having stabbed a man who tried to rape her friend).

- (53) **The 43-year-old had spent a year in prison after stabbing a man** in the neck and leaving him for dead – *Daily Mail*
- (54) **She served a prison sentence for knifing a man** who was allegedly sexually assaulting her friend – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (55) **Despite being on benefits**, she managed to pay for her and seven of her children to fly to Goa and remain for more than two months. Nice shirk if you can get it – *The Sun*
- (56) But Mrs MacKeown, 43, is well used to being viewed as unusual, **with her brood of children by at least four fathers leading an alternative New Age lifestyle**, with the help of her partner, Rob Clarke, 47 – *Daily Mail*

The victim's mother is also *passivated*, in particular in relation to the threats received by the Indian authorities (in particular by the Indian police) and the local mafia. We may argue that in these cases, the focus shifts from the mother to the authorities and their corruption, thus possibly reinforcing a representation of India as 'other,' (non-Westerner, corrupted, incapable), as opposite to the mother, representing 'us' (Westerner, uncorrupted, efficient).

- (57) Now **Fiona has been granted protection** in an undisclosed location, amid fears for her safety – *Daily Mail*
- (58) The mother of murdered Briton Scarlett Keeling **was snubbed by Indian doctors** yesterday when she tried to retrieve her daughter's organs – *The Sun*
- (59) **Police were harassing Miss MacKeown** for exposing corruption in the force – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (60) Scarlett Keeling's **terrified mum** was in hiding last night – *The Sun*

In the BBC the mother is mostly included through activation. She is active in the role of an irresponsible mother who left her daughter alone in the care of a stranger.

- (j) **You left your daughter** on her own while you went travelling (*BBC News* – 14 March 2008)
- (k) Why did **you leave her** on her own? (*BBC News* – 23 March 2008)

She is also active in the role of a brave mother who fights to discover the truth about her daughter's death.

- (l) **She is preparing to appeal** to the Indian Prime Minister (*BBC News* – 14 March 2008)
- (m) **You made the appeal** directly to the Prime Minister of India (*BBC News* – 14 March 2008)
- (n) **Fiona MacKeown accused** the Indian authority (*BBC News* – 14 March 2008)

3.3.2 Categorisation: Identification and appraisal

Finally, the victim's mother is also *categorised*, more specifically *identified* in terms of age, marital status, provenance (classification) and in terms of her kinship relations to other social actors. She is also physically identified and negatively *appraised* in negative terms.

- (61) **Unmarried mum** Fiona, 43 - who has NINE children - is under fire for leaving her in the 'care' of a local man while she went away – *The Sun*
- (62) Extracts from Scarlett's diary [...] showed how she [...] was left in the care of Lobo and his two aunts by her mother, **43-year-old** Fiona MacKeown – *The Guardian*
- (63) **MacKeown's long, grey hair** and New-Age lifestyle – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (64) Put bluntly, **this mother-of-nine from Devon** is convinced that Scarlett was first drugged, then raped, then murdered – *Daily Mail*
- (65) **Hippy drippy** Fiona MacKeown says she fears for her life as anger grows in Goa over the murder of her daughter, Scarlett – *The Sun*

Fiona is not categorised through lexical choices but images which help constructing her role as 'the other'. In Figure 3, in Kress and van Leeuwen's words (1996), we have a long-shot and Fiona is portrayed turning her back on the viewer and walking away from him/her. This long-shot may be seen as standing for the social distance between the mother and the audience. Even if in Figure 4 we have a short-shot the angle is oblique, possibly creating detachment. This may be seen as another visual strategy conveying her status of 'other'. She is presented as someone who belongs, or feels she belongs, to a different world.



Figure 3: Fiona MacKeowen long-shot



Figure 4: Fiona MacKeowen short-shot

We may argue that, because of her unconventional lifestyle, the victim's mother is seen as a stranger, not a member of the British community. At the same time, she considers herself different from Indian people. The Indian police, 'them' for both the victim's mother and for the British media, are most typically portrayed in terms of incompetence, backwardness and negativity. The interview below shows how the journalist reinforces the Western stereotypical portrayal of India.

[Extract]:

Interviewer: are you happy with the way the authority is dealing with everything now?

Fiona: in India?

Interviewer: yes

Fiona: not really (.) No

Interviewer: what about the authority here? What kind of support have you had?

Fiona: with the forensics here is completely different (..) the Coroner here phoned me the day after the autopsy (..) told me exactly what she had taken and why (..) and gave me the option of what I wanted to do with the bits afterwards (..) so that's hugely embarrassing (..) they don't even talk to you in India

(BBC News – 5 May 2008)

4. Intertextuality

A critical analysis is always the analysis of language in context. It is the text-context relation that creates meaning. The concept of context cannot be restricted to what happens in specific communicative events since people always recontextualise parts of text produced in a different context by different people and for different purposes. Bakhtin (1986: 91) states that every text or utterance is dialogical, in the sense that it gains its meaning in relation to other texts. So contexts become necessary to understand discourses and recontextualisation is defined by Linell (1998: 144-145) as 'the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another'.

Intertextuality is one of the levels of recontextualisation. It relates different texts, discourses and conversations and its meaning emerges from the relations that texts have with other texts.

We have already seen above (section 3.2.2.) how, in this specific case, journalists report what external sources said, thus incorporating other texts into their articles through direct intertextual references (see Fairclough 2003). The selection of what voices will be included and which one will be excluded and the way they will be organised within the text may be ideologically significant. Intertextuality can contribute to reinforcing ideas and beliefs and it can also reveal traces of the dominant ideology, in fact Bauman and Briggs (1990: 76) remark that to 'decontextualize and recontextualize a text is thus an act of control'.

In some cases, the boundary between the speech (or writing) that is reported and the text in which they are reported is strong, when, for instance, the dialogicality present in the text is signalled through the use of direct reporting. This kind of attributed intertextuality can be used to convey authority and legitimation to what is being said or written, or to challenge (or even ridicule) the external *voice* when this is challenged by the journalist (or by another external *voice*) in his/her text.

The excerpt below shows how one of the articles analysed in our study reports the voice of an authoritative source, the police, telling foreign women how to behave in order to avoid rape and be safe when in India. The police statement is challenged by the words of the victim's mother, who claims that it should be a government's duty to make Goa and India a safe place.

- (66) In a separate statement, Mrs Chaudhary said any cover-up would be exposed. 'If the police are trying to cover up, those involved should be brought to book,' she said. However, **Digambar Kamat, the chief minister of Goa, was reported as saying that foreign women**

who visited the state should take more responsibility for their own safety. [...] **Mrs MacKeown**, who was due to meet Mr Kamat, **said it was the responsibility of the government to ensure the safety of visitors.** – *The Daily Telegraph*

Here a common rape myth is the object of the debate, that is the assumption that men have sexual needs that cannot be controlled and that women, being aware of this, need to take care of themselves in order to avoid being assaulted (Benedict 1992). Additionally, by stressing that it is in particular ‘foreign women’ who have to be careful, two more assumptions are brought into the text, i.e. that foreign (possibly Western) women’s sexual mores are different from those of Indian women and that this may ‘provoke’ men, in particular non-Western men. Although the chief Minister, as an authoritative source, may be used to support this stereotypical idea of rape, here seems to be more ridiculed than supported. The Minister’s statement is included in a context where authorities have been criticised for being corrupted and having covered a murder case, whereas the mother is being portrayed as a fighter, a person who embodies the ‘Western’ values of justice and integrity. We may argue that, by constructing this article on an imaginary debate between the authorities and the victim’s mother, the journalist strengthens the image of the Indian authorities as ‘other’ and of the victim’s mother as ‘other’ who is the carrier of ‘our’ values. We may further argue that this challenge of a rape myth contradicts the focus on the victim’s behaviour that ‘put her at risk’ and the invisibility of the perpetrator that are found in other articles in the same newspaper.

Intertextuality is not always so explicit, in some cases it can be non-specifically attributed (Fairclough 2003: 47), as in the excerpt below.

- (67) **Hippy** Goa’s sun-soaked beaches **are known** for a laid-back attitude to sex and drugs, but the death of the Devon teenager has exposed a darker side to paradise. [...] **Described** as headstrong and independent, Scarlett had been staying with a 25-year-old local guide Julio while the rest of her family travelled in the nearby state of Karnataka. [...] **One account of Scarlett’s last hours** has her seen there drinking at Lui’s bar in the early hours of February 19 in the company of three men. [...] **She apparently left** with an unidentified man – *The Guardian*

Here there are several references to other sources, but they are vaguely referred to. Expressions such as ‘are known’, ‘described’, ‘one account’, ‘she apparently left’ do not tell us *who* ‘knows’, ‘describes’, ‘gives the account’, ‘saw her leaving’. This vagueness allows the journalist to portray opinions, assumptions, interpretations of events as if they were facts. Although other voices are vaguely brought into the text, there are no discordant voices in the article which express a *different* version of facts, there is no tension, nor conflict between the reported text and the reporting text. This kind of intertextuality leaves less space for debate, it is closer to a form of assumption, that is taken for granted, than to a form of open dialogue between contrasting voices, an intertextuality that does not bring difference to the text.

According to Connell (1980) news does not distort ‘objective reality’; rather, the reality represented in news is socially, politically, and ideologically built.

In the videos analysed we are concerned with one form of recontextualisation, that of reported speech.

Coulmas makes a distinction between direct and indirect quotation:

Direct speech, in a manner of speaking, is not the reporter's speech, but remains the reported speaker's speech whose role is played by the reporter. [...] In indirect speech, on the other hand, the reporter comes to the fore. He relates a speech event as he would relate any other event from his point of view. (Coulmas 1986: 2)

Tannen (1989), by contrast, states that there is not a neat distinction between direct and indirect discourse since direct quotation is a dialogue' constructed by the speaker.

Indirect speech and direct speech often alternate in the BBC reports.

[Extract]:

The speaker: [...] at the end of the meeting Fiona told the BBC she hadn't been charged with any crime but she said this interrogation is part of the police's scare tactics to pressure her and to drop the case

Fiona: [...] I would have been happy to come down and done this without the summons. (.) I think it's an intimidation (.) to be honest

The speaker: but Goa's police say that it is not true

Police: we are not investigating (.) please (.) that's to be clear (.) Ms Fiona MacKeown (..) we are not investigating her (.) we are right now investigating this case of Scarlett and whatever (.) assistance (.) helps we can get we are trying to seek.

The speaker: [...] police officials said and told us that there won't be any investigation into Fiona MacKeown's involvement into her daughter's death. (..) but Fiona says she is not satisfied and this case won't be resolved until she sees some justice.

(*BBC News* – 15 March 2008)

Interviews are often used as inserted fragments in other elements such as reports. This report, for example, includes two fragments of speech from Fiona and a police officer. They are in a form of direct quotation. The principal discourse is that of the reporter but embedded within it are utterances from Fiona and the police officer. These speakers are not introduced by the reporter by a reporting clause or a caption but are presented directly by video-clip extracts. We see each speaker saying their fragments of speech and in this process, the news interview itself becomes the 'primary mechanism for dramatising or making palpable the news as an interactional, dialogic discourse' (Montgomery 2007: 179).

5. Hybridisation

Investigating the links between the texts, genres and discourses appropriated by different discourse communities may shed light on other aspects of the

discursive practice. In particular, at this stage our analysis is aimed at investigating the role of language in producing the effects of promotional and strategic discourse in news discourse. In line with what Fairclough defines as the *marketization* of discourse (1995: 11), the promotional and entertaining features that can be considered typical of the private sector or of the entertainment industry are appropriated by media professionals. In Fairclough's (1995: 51) words 'changes in media discourse also reflect, and help to diffuse, contemporary 'promotional' [...] or 'consumer' culture', particularly through the process of *conversationalization* (ibid.: 9) of media discourse, that is a mixture of discursive practices typical of the private and the public sector for specific consensus-building purpose. This combination of features gives birth to new genres, or hybrids that articulate together a variety of genres and discourses (Fairclough 2010). An example of this kind of hybridisation is the tabloidisation of some quality paper articles and BBC videos. In particular, together with the informative element, some news articles contain an element of gossip and a focus on particularly sensationalistic and 'newsworthy' events.

The excerpts below show this kind of hybrid journalism in two quality papers.

- (68) But amid the sand dunes and beach shacks, **the gossip** is that Scarlett had been taking drugs, which are readily available in Anjuna – *The Guardian*
- (69) Miss MacKeown, 43, **a mother of nine children by four fathers**, has been vilified on internet websites for her "irresponsible" decision to leave Scarlett behind during the six-month holiday, which began last November. She insisted last night that she was not negligent, and had just been 'naive'. However, **details began to emerge yesterday about the 'gipsy' lifestyle** that Miss MacKeown and her family lived in a nine-and-a-half acre field, two miles outside the village of Bradworthy in Devon. **She bought the land with the proceeds of an army surplus store she ran in Camden market**, north London and some financial assistance from the fathers of her children – *The Daily Telegraph*
- (70) Extracts from Scarlett's diary, **published by the Mail on Sunday**, showed how she met 25-year-old local tour guide, Julio Lobo, and was left in the care of Lobo and his two aunts by her mother, 43-year-old Fiona MacKeown, who went travelling with her other children – *The Guardian*

We may argue that certain details (the victim's mother lifestyle, the victim's sexual history and her substance abuse) included in the reports above are hardly relevant in a murder case. In excerpt 68 there is a clear reference to the gossipy nature of the information, whereas in excerpt 70, the source of the news is explicitly quoted as the Mail on Sunday. The addition of irrelevant or unnecessary details may be a trait of a kind of journalism that is more entertainment-oriented and responding to the commercial imperative to constantly entertain and sensationalise stories.

The BBC videos also show a tendency to sensationalise Scarlett's story in order to entertain rather than inform. In the extract below we notice that the interviewer adopts a sort of gossipy style asking Fiona personal questions.

Furthermore, during the interview the camera often films Fiona from the back focusing on her way of clothing or tattoos, thus arguably sensationalising the news (see figure 4). In addition, in other videos (see figures 5 and 6) there is more attention to Fiona's lifestyle, in fact we see images of her caravan and poor surroundings.

[Extract]:

Interviewer: As Scarlett's mother (.) what does it really mean for you? Are you able to deal with losing your daughter in this situation which is quite remarkable (.) isn't it?

[...]

Interviewer: Also (.) I mean (.) as well as you wanted to go back for the (missing part) of your daughter there's all the emotional journey and I'm sure it had an impact on you in the last few days (..) to go back (.) to go back where it happened (..) (by looking back) what could it be done differently or how could it have been differently at the time?

[...]

Interviewer: There is a hearing that a Bollywood director is trying to make a film based on Scarlett's death and they want to call it 'Rave party'. Have you heard about it? Have you had any talks with him to know anything?

[...]

Interviewer: Would you want the film?

(*BBC News* – 05 May 2008)



Figure 5: MacKeowen's house



Figure 6: MacKeowen's house

These questions, which are short and simple in construction, are directed to the personal beliefs, thoughts and feelings of the mother rather than to Scarlett's murder investigation. The prevalence of the news interviews to Scarlett's mother in this story can be seen as an aspect of the personalisation, informalisation or conversationalisation of public discourse (Fairclough 1992) contributing to the hybridisation and tabloidisation of news discourse.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigated the way the three main protagonists of a case of murder, the female victim, the male perpetrator and the victim's mother, and their actions are represented in the British press and broadcast news. The linguistic analysis has been complemented with a multimodal analysis of the BBC videos.

In both the tabloids and broadsheets, the victim is first represented as an active agent, partially to blame for her rape because she did not take good care of herself. When the mother is accused of neglect she becomes a more passive actor, victim of both her perpetrator's violence and her mother's negligence. The several examples of overdetermination in the tabloids seem to support a common stereotype surrounding women and female sexuality: women seen as virgins or whores. In the BBC videos, on the contrary, the victim is always a passive actor, an innocent victim of either her perpetrator or her mother. As for the perpetrator's representation, while in the press he is backgrounded and partially excluded, in the videos he is invisible and his violent act is projected as an individual incident and not as an act of control and male domination.

The mother is mostly represented as an active agent in the double role of a mother who fights against the Indian police corruption and of responsible of her daughter's death. In all media we noticed a shift of responsibility from the perpetrator to the mother. She is also seen as 'the other', a person belonging to another world, because of her unconventional and hippy lifestyle. Finally, both in the broadsheets and the BBC videos we found a tendency to the tabloidisation of news discourse.

Notes

¹ The authors discussed and conceived the article together and sections 1 and 6 are co-authored. Alessia Tranchese is responsible for subsections 2.3. and 2.4. in section 2 and for the analysis of the printed media in sections 3, 4 and 5 and relevant subsections; Sole Alba Zollo is responsible for subsections 2.1. and 2.2. in section 2 and for the analysis of the broadcast media in sections 3, 4 and 5 and relevant subsections.

² The level of transcription is rather basic and this is partly justified in light of the analytic focus here on how the three main actors are represented in two different media.

The following transcription conventions are used:

(.) (..) (...) micropause/pauses up to one second/pause exceeding one second

(text in round brackets) transcriber's guess

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