

**CAN THERE BE A ‘SAFE HAVEN’ FOR TRAUMA SURVIVORS
IN THIS SOCIAL MEDIA DOMINATED WORLD?**

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Hell is the other.

Jean Paul Sartre

Abstract. The 20th and 21st centuries have been marked by a number of traumatic events: with the two World Wars, Korean War and, especially in the last twenty-five years, with conflicts in the Middle East and in Africa, as well as others, vast numbers of people have been displaced and have had to journey far and wide to find not only a new home but *a safe haven* from the atrocities of war. While discrimination against newcomers to a country, prejudice, racism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and authoritarian dictatorships are not new phenomena, what makes the recent reactions to the current worldwide human influxes different is the use of language manipulation, propaganda and hate speech via social media to re-stigmatize and re-traumatize the new refugees, asylum-seekers, immigrants and migrants. Social media platforms give everyone the opportunity to express their views, whether positive or negative, about anyone who could be considered *the other*. Both right-wing and left-wing parties and governments also see the usefulness of using the manipulation of the labels given to newcomers and inciting fear of them for their own agendas. In this paper we will investigate how the use of linguistic labels and stereotyping about *the other* contribute to the rise of hate speech worldwide and how the presence of hate speech about the newcomers has re-traumatized many refugees who had thought they had reached a *safe haven* after fleeing the source of their original trauma. For the purpose of this study, we will be using data that primarily refers to Italy and Poland, as well as some other examples.

Keywords: refugees, migrants, hate speech, social media, populist rhetoric, re-traumatization

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1. Introduction: what is in a label?

The 20th century was referred to as the century of the refugee or exile (from both World Wars and the conflicts in Europe and central Africa), and the present century as that of migration – immigrant/ emigrant, migrant or refugee. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] (UNHCR, 2018), in 2017 the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide amounted to 68.6 million, of which 25.4 million were refugees and 3.1 million were asylum-seekers, all fleeing from persecution, war or violence mainly in the countries of the Middle East and Africa: Syria (the largest refugee group), Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Eritrea. To the above worldwide totals the approximately 150.3 million economic migrants – or *migrant workers* as the United Nations refer to them (Migration, 2017) can also be added.¹

The meanings of the different terms used to describe persons forcibly displaced from their country have changed and continue to change according to the connotations and associations they produce in different countries and situations. A *refugee* – in the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Living Dictionary, n.d.), or in Merriam Webster (Merriam Webster English Dictionary, n.d.), is “[a] person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster”; while the Cambridge English Dictionary (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.) is the only one to add for ‘economic reasons’ to the definition. Sometimes confused with refugee is the term *exile* – “1. The state of being barred from one’s native country, typically for political or punitive reasons. 1.1 A person who lives away from their native country, either from choice or compulsion” (Oxford Dictionary). The *migrant* has been defined as “[a] person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions” (Oxford), or “a worker who moves from place to place to do seasonal work” (Google Dictionary). According to the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, *asylum seeker* is the term used to define persons who have “left their country of origin seeking safety, who have applied to another country, and are awaiting a decision on their application.” Under this Convention, member nations have a legal and moral duty to provide international protection to both refugees and asylum seekers.

But the distinction between refugees, asylum seekers and other people migrating is often ignored by countries (e.g. the current crisis of South American nationals seeking asylum in the US; some European leaders in Italy, Austria and Hungary; the United States where ‘undocumented immigrants’ have now become ‘illegal aliens’ with all the connotations that this WWII designation resurrects). French sociologist and blogger Eric Fassin (Lehn 2018) perhaps explains this best:

¹ Although the report refers to data as of June 2017, the most recent data reporting worldwide migrant workers, from the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2015 Report is from 2013. Migration 2017: 28.

“The emigrant is the one who has left, the immigrant is the one who has arrived, the migrant is the one who has no ‘purpose’ to be here, nor anywhere: he’s just moving about”. We will show how the populist and nativist associations and parties use labelling as a destructive weapon against the *other*, and as J. K. Rowling’s character says “Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.”

Regardless of the name, designation or label given to these vast numbers of forcibly displaced persons, they have all suffered from persecution, war, ethnic cleansing or other forms of violence, in some cases for many years, before their decision to leave their native country in order to seek a *safe haven*. Adults and children alike brought with them memories of their traumatic experiences, and, unfortunately, in most cases, more and new trauma was added during their long and arduous journey to a final safe place, sometimes halfway around the world from their home country. Once arrived and settled in their safe haven, they had to start dealing with their traumatic memories in order to heal and continue with their lives. But given the current rise of xenophobic populism, hate speech and hate crimes, this healing process may become difficult to sustain because these recent immigrants are systematically *re-traumatized* by the actions of others in their new country.

2. The rise of populism, hate speech and hate crimes

The rise within nations of xenophobic populism, with the subsequent impact of discrimination, prejudice, racism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and authoritarian dictatorships on affected peoples is not a new phenomenon: there have been instances recorded and commented on across the ages. Simultaneously with the rise of populism, the world has seen an ever-increasing surge in *hate speech* with alarming consequences for the ‘discriminated against’ – whether traditional subjects of discrimination (e.g.: marginalized populations such as Jews, Roma peoples or other ethnic and/ or cultural minorities), or the most recent ones such as refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in general. This surge has been encouraged, protected, aided and abetted by the actions and rhetoric of certain populist governments and leaders – one only has to mention the name of Donald Trump for people everywhere to give examples of his inflammatory, discriminatory and humiliating speech regarding the subjects of his vitriol. As Victor Klemperer (1946/2000:15–16) remarked in his study of the language of the Third Reich, “Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic effect sets in after all.”

What constitutes *hate speech*? According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (Merriam Webster English Dictionary, n.d.), the legal definition of hate speech is language use (in any form – oral or visual) “that is intended to insult, offend, or intimidate a person because of some trait (such as race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability)”, while the Cambridge Online Dictionary

(Cambridge Online Dictionary, n.d.) adds the important consequence of hate speech, “public speech that expresses hate or *encourages violence* [italics added by authors]”. In formulating a hateful message, the speaker purposely intends that the subject of the hate speech shall suffer some form of economic consequence (e.g.: loss of job, reduction in pay, prohibition from applying for a job, housing or other benefits) and/ or social harm (e.g.: by posting and sharing tweets, videos of violent confrontations or shaming subjects on social media platforms). In extreme cases, violence against the subject of the hate speech is purposely intended by the speaker. Donald Trump during a March 2016 Presidential campaign rally in Kentucky encouraged his supporters to use physical violence to deal with some protesters (Did Donald Trump Encourage Violence at His Rallies? 2019): “[k]nock the crap out of them, would you? Just knock the hell [---] I promise you I will pay for the legal fees. I promise.”

3. Social media: tool for the dissemination of hate speech / hate crimes or instrument to combat hate speech/hate crimes?

The widespread use and accessibility to diverse social media platforms (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) and the potential instantaneous worldwide reach of any posted items (such as blogs, pictures, videos, news and ‘fake news’) makes the current crisis affecting war survivors, refugees and migrants different. These platforms allow anyone with access the opportunity to express their views – whether positive and encouraging or negative and hateful – about those different from themselves (refugees, migrants, legal or illegal immigrants, in other words, anyone who could be seen as the *other*) and work to keep them from coming into their (or any closely associated) country.

Social media platforms also allow for ‘anonymous’ tribal affiliation and instantaneous exposure so that the inflamed rhetoric has a much larger reach. In addition, it can be spread to different countries since language is no longer a barrier, given that English is now an established global *lingua franca*. Where English is not known, online translation apps can be used to ‘get the message’, sometimes unfortunately with misinterpretations that can be even more sinister. Online sites can be ‘camouflaged’ to seem like legitimate government sites until one reads the message. Populist sites operate with impunity since they rely on the conventions allowing for free speech and the free exchange of ideas which are a hallmark of social media platforms to spread their message, or allow party members to be contacted when a ‘mob’ is needed at an event.

Psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists have described the natural tendency all humans have to gather together into ‘groups’ based on norms, values, beliefs and an understanding of the roles of group members within the group that unite them and give them a guide to acceptable behaviour. This group adhesion provides many benefits to the members, such as social, psychological support (e.g.: from religious groups, political parties, athletic clubs, ethnic groups or

communities in a geographic area) and perhaps even economic stability (e.g.: trade unions or associations, word-of-mouth help in finding employment or housing or even medical doctors), giving rise to feelings of better self-esteem, and the possibility of their flourishing and surviving within the group. Belonging to a group also motivates its members to favour, trust and protect the interests not only of their own group, but also of similar or like-minded and like-structured groups – *us*; and to disapprove of, mistrust, oppose or even fear groups and/ or group members we see as different – *them/ the other*, leading to prejudice, discrimination and potentially to hate speech and hate crimes against the *other* (see Twose, Henderson 2018, Resnick 2017, Barth 2016).

Increasingly, refugees and immigrants/ migrants escaping the trauma associated with war, ethnic cleansing, famine, poverty or economic hardship are finding that it is difficult to feel safe in the country or community that once welcomed them. The economic and political upheavals in the past two decades (the economic crash of 2008, the rise of right-wing parties and governments, the ISIS takeover of geographic areas in the Middle East, to name just a few) have seen an increased movement of refugees and migrants towards Europe and North America.

Because of incidents (e.g.: the Toronto attack; the Bataclan and Nice attacks²) that have occurred in some of the countries that had previously accepted the refugees and migrants, many people feel that it is now acceptable to consider the new immigrants and refugees as targets of racism, discrimination and hate, since they *seem to* belong to the same group as those who perpetrated these acts (e.g.: ISIS affiliated terrorists, right-wing sympathizers), based on the assumption that they share the same ethnicity, religion or citizenship. Given the international impact of the 2008 crash of the financial markets or the effects of globalization, many people who have lost their economic security – decreased income or loss of their job or even homelessness – attribute this to the ‘invasion of immigrants’ and they fear that with an increase in the number of refugees and migrants coming into their country, they, the citizens, are being short changed. They are also becoming increasingly angry with the ‘benefits’ from the governments in the accepting nations that they see given to the refugees and migrants, and consequently taken away from them (in their minds), such as monthly support, housing and health assistance.

² The Toronto attack occurred on the night of July 22, 2018 in the Greektown neighbourhood of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Faisal Hussain killed two people and wounded thirteen others using a semiautomatic pistol. He committed suicide later the same night after engaging in a shootout with Toronto Police. The Bataclan attack, where 90 people were killed, was one of a series of attacks claimed by ISIL carried out on November 13, 2015 in Paris. In total, 130 people were killed and 413 people injured, almost 100 seriously. In Nice, France, on the evening of July 14, 2016, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel deliberately drove his 19-tonne cargo truck into crowds of people celebrating Bastille Day along the Promenade killing 86 people and injuring 458 others.

A campaign sign for Matteo Salvini in the 2018 election in Italy asserts that Italian citizens suffer poverty while illegal migrants waste food that they receive for free from the government:

Pozzallo [Sicilian town with migrant centre]

Al Centro di Accoglienza per migranti il cibo finisce nella spazzatura.

Con gli italiani che non hanno soldi per fare la spesa...

Vergogna! Basta soldi per questa gente.

[‘At the migrant reception centre food ends up in the garbage. And Italians without money to buy food...Shame! No more money for such people’ – Translations by the authors] (Quattrone 2017).

As a result, we have a marked trend to more right-wing governments who promise to ‘protect’ *us* from *them* (e.g.: the right-wing governments in Italy, Poland, the United States, and the Brexit vote in the UK). With this shift, we are witnessing in many countries a shocking rise of hate speech – an essential element of propaganda based on prejudice –, and we know from history that hateful rhetoric is a prelude to violence. As Barth says:

One of my favorite psychoanalytical writers, Heinz Kohut, says [---]. Anger [---] is often a reaction to feeling injured, either physically or emotionally. It is a way of repairing damaged self-esteem, which makes us feel weak and vulnerable. “See”, our rage tells us and the world around us, “I’m not weak, I’m strong!” (Barth 2016).

The concept of an enemy, *someone to blame*, is needed: the *other*, someone who is not one of us, who can be a *scapegoat* for all of a country’s ills, someone who is vulnerable, recognizably distinct from the *us* and cannot speak against or retaliate for the aggression perpetrated upon them (Burton 2017, Psychology Research and Reference, n.d., Girard 1987). Graciela Chichilnisky explains that “[p]olitical parties often take advantage of denial and fear in a moment of change. This is a well understood phenomenon that often leads to *scapegoatism*: blaming outsiders, such as immigrants, or racial and religious minorities. The phenomenon is behind Brexit and the violence in the political cycles in the US and EU” (Chichilnisky 2016).

In addition, this unease has led to a shift away from the concept of *nation* – an entity that forged different peoples single-mindedly dedicated to the protection of and service to their country or state into a citizenry, and a return to the idea of *tribe* – an entity united by language, religion, blood and belief (Reich 2014). This *new tribalism* is not an ethnic cohesion but one predicated on like-minded people who share the same world views and values, sometimes bringing together ‘traditional enemies’, such as the Black Women for Trump groups during the 2016 campaign, or the Nigerian immigrant Toni Iwobi, elected as a senator from Salvini’s Lega Nord Party (an anti-immigration party) with responsibility for immigration (L’Espresso 2018, RAINews, Eletto il primo senatore di colore della Repubblica Italiana: è nigeriano e della Lega 2018). Many already settled immigrants now find themselves sharing the views of right-wing populist parties

since they have the fear of losing their established status because of the influx of new immigrants (e.g. support for Brexit; anti-immigrant feelings in Canada). With this shift have also come political parties or associations that promote *nativism*—“the intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign [---] connections” (Perea 1997:167) or *populism* understood as an ideology which contrasts the moral good of the people (usually middle class or poor) against the corrupt and self-serving (wealthy) elite – with both right-wing and left-wing political parties transforming this ideology for their own ends.

4. Why we fear the *other*: the role of anti-immigrant discourse

Edmund Burke (1834) recognized that “no passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as does fear”. More recently, Rick Wilson, a Republican political strategist observed in an interview: “Fear is the simplest emotion to tweak in a campaign ad. You associate your opponent with terror, with fear, with crime, with causing pain and uncertainty” (Ball 2016). Especially in the last two decades, nativist/ populist parties have gained power or at least a major foothold in many Western democracies, Italy, Poland, Hungary, France, Britain and the United States, to name just a few. The political discourse of these parties has subsequently been employed to highlight the correlation between times of relative economic unease and/ or despair and increases in migration patterns towards these countries, stoking the latent racism and discrimination against the other, resulting in an anti-immigrant backlash and sometimes violence. We know from history that hateful rhetoric is a necessary prelude to violence.

The political right also blames the rise of political correctness for what they perceive as a prohibition to talk about the problems associated with the influx of immigrants. They maintain that political correctness represents a new cultural Marxism that has many elements of past communist regimes, which is committing the very evils it claims to correct, in effect causing reverse discrimination (Andary-Brophy 2015, Carroll 2015). After a Muslim gunman killed 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Donald Trump declared about his political opponents: “They have put political correctness above common sense, above your safety, and above all else [---] I refuse to be politically correct.” (Weigel 2016) As Robert Folsom (2016) indicates: “Today’s negative mood involves *unformalizing* the norms of the previous positive trend. Political correctness, and the collective tendencies it epitomizes, have given way to a new normal of exclusion, polarization, impenitence and more wide-open speech.” Populist parties have essentially transformed this artificial problem and misrepresentation of political correctness into a powerful discourse tool, through the use of social media platforms, for galvanizing their base and spreading hate speech, racism, bigotry and ultimately (veiled) calls to violence against the *other* – mainly visible minorities, migrants and refugees (Jakubowicz 2017, Trindade 2018).

5. The language used by populist parties in social media and its impact

As J. A. C. Brown (1963) reminds us that (1) most people want to feel that issues are simple rather than complex, (2) want to have their prejudices confirmed, (3) want to feel that they ‘belong’ with the implication that others do not, and (4) need to pinpoint an enemy to blame for their frustrations. Modern political parties have taken these persuasion techniques to heart, especially on social media platforms (even those that do not restrict the character or word count) to the detriment of the groups being targeted. According to the 2017 Annual Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance “[t]he populist rhetoric has blended into a hatred of non-nationals or minorities; migration and multiculturalism have continued to be presented as a threat to social cohesion and security [---]” (ECRI 2017).

Sophisticated propaganda and media manipulation techniques are being used across social media platforms and in political party rallies, party meetings and roundtables to “galvanize the base” of both the right-wing and left-wing populist parties. Left-wing leaning media seem to use graphic and dramatic prose, pictures or video that describe the horror encountered by the refugees and migrants in their dangerous journey across the Mediterranean or Aegean Seas, or across nations in their quest for safety: the world opinion was moved by the 2015 photograph of the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, the 3 year old Syrian boy, on the Turkish beach at the resort of Bodrum; or by the reports of the many children separated from their parents who were detained in the US as illegal migrants in 2018. Right-wing leaning media instead focusses on the safety, security and economic issues raised by the ‘invasion’ of migrants: we remember Trump’s warning that all Mexican migrants are terrorists; or the fear of losing national identity expressed in slogans such as Singapore for Singaporeans or Poland for Poles. A similar sentiment was more explicitly formulated by Marine LePen: “Immigration is an organized replacement of our population. This threatens our very survival” (Washington, 2015). It has also been shown that, particularly in polls and surveys, the language used is important and can be manipulated to sway responses: “Of the 11 polls to gauge public opinion since the immigration order was issued [Trump’s 2017 Travel Ban], each uses different verbiage to describe Trump’s order – choices that impact the ultimate results” (Shepard 2017).

Coded language that is understood only by the adherents of a particular party, group or association is used to inform and communicate with members without fear of the general public being able to understand the true meaning behind a post or slogan (Magu, Joshi, and Luo 2017), or to circumvent new restrictions placed on media platforms by some governments, e.g. the European Union. In the campaign ads, posts on Facebook, Twitter and on their own website, the language used by the Lega Nord, and Forza Nuova is strongly racist, anti-immigrant and violent:

Secondo il leader della Lega Nord bisogna effettuare una pulizia ‘via per via, quartiere per quartiere e con le maniere forti se serve, perché ci sono interi pezzi d’Italia fuori controllo...Non vedo l’ora una volta al governo di controllare i confini come si faceva una volta e usare le navi della Marina Militare per soccorre e riportare indietro i finti profughi’ (F.Q., 2017).

[‘According to the leader of the Lega Nord, a purge has to be effected ‘street by street’, district by district and with heavy handed methods if needed, because there are parts of Italy that are out of control... I can’t wait to be in government so that I can control the borders as was done in the past and to use the ships of the Navy to help and then to repatriate the false refugees.’ *Translation by the authors*].

This passage echos the words of the former Fascist government and underlines the safety and security hardline of the new parties. Buzz words and slogans such as “Italia per gli italiani” [‘Italy for the Italians’], “Contro Rom e stranieri, le case agli italiani” [‘Against Roma and foreigners, houses to Italians’], “L’Italia ha bisogno di figli non di omosessuali” [‘Italy needs children not homosexuals’] or “Proteggiamo le nostre donne. No alla cittadinanza per gli immigrati” [‘Let’s protect our women. No to citizenship for immigrants’] emphasize the racism, disdain and hate these parties engender for those they consider the *other*.

Today’s Poland is the most ethnically homogenous country in Europe: 96.9% declare their ethnicity as Polish. This rather simple situation, especially in the context of the increasingly globalized world and multicultural Europe, may be misleading if considered in isolation from a more colourful and multilingual past. For centuries, Poland was a linguistic and cultural melting pot of Europe with many languages spoken throughout its territory. Poles used to find pride in their tradition of tolerance that made Poland a safe haven for people fleeing religious persecution in Europe, from the 16th century onwards. Granting equal rights and state protection to nobility of all religions in Poland goes back to the 14th century and became an official policy in 1573, known as the Warsaw Confederation. Until WW II, Poland or Polish territories partitioned by the occupying neighbours were a multicultural mosaic. After regaining independence in 1918, while not free from ethnic conflicts, in particular antisemitism, Poland was a true mixture of nationalities and tongues with ethnic Poles making up only 65% of the population. The war brought total destruction, the death of millions of people and completely changed the ethnic and linguistic landscape of Poland. The most tragic was the planned and meticulously executed extermination of Polish and European Jews in Nazi concentration camps.

One could expect that the trauma of war, mass deportations and random executions would have made Poles particularly sensitive to the suffering of people fleeing war and persecution in other countries. With a centuries-long tradition of emigration from Poland, the country is now prosperous enough to attract immigrants from less fortunate parts of the world. And indeed, there were waves of refugees from Vietnam or Greece who found a home in Poland in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Up until 2015 and the change of government, Poland was ready to participate in the EU plans of distributing refugees from the Middle East

with ca. 20% of the population against accepting any refugees. Within 18 months, i.e. at the end of 2016, the percentage of those opposed rose to over 60 (Stosunek Polaków do przyjmowania uchodźców. Komunikat z Badań NR 1/2017, 2019). The main reason for this dramatic change is the rhetoric of fear and the language of hate used by the official propaganda. The most dramatic illustration of the changing climate is the rising number of hate crimes: in 2016 there were 1632 hate crimes reported; in 2015 – 1548; in 2014 – 1365, and in 2013 – 835. In three years, the numbers doubled.

In her 2018 paper reflecting on the 14 thousand immigrants from Greece warmly welcomed in Poland in the 1950s, Magdalena Ochwat recalls refugee-hostile slogans from the more recent anti-immigration mass demonstrations in Poland:

Witajcie w piekle, zabłąkane owieczki ['Welcome to hell, lost sheep']

Narodowy solidaryzm zamiast Multikulti ['National solidarity instead of Multikulti']

Placzą Niemcy, płacze Francja, tak się kończy tolerancja [[Germany is crying and so is France, that's how the tolerance ends']

To nie uchodźcy, to najeźdźcy ['They are not refugees, they are invaders']

Imigranci do domu ['Immigrants go home']

Polska to kraj dla Polaków ['Poland is the country for Poles']

Chcemy repatrianta, nie imigranta ['We want repatriates, not immigrants']

Nie islamska, nie laicka, wielka Polska katolicka ['Not Islamic, not lay but great Catholic Poland']

Dzisiaj imigranci, jutro terroryści ['Today immigrants, tomorrow terrorists'].
(Ochwat 2018:207) [Translations by the authors].

Ochwat labels these sentiments in post-2015 Poland using the Bakhtinian term *cosmic fear*, a fear that feeds off the insecurity and vulnerability of people. Cap (2018) argues that this fear is used by the government to legitimize anti-immigration policies, coercing its supporters to see refugees “as ‘different’, ‘alien’ and ‘unbelonging’” (Cap 2018:380), i.e. as an imminent threat to the safety and to the traditional way of life of Polish citizens. Cap uses his Proximity Theory to demonstrate that government discourse manipulates societal attitudes towards refugees from non-Christian countries and encourages anti-European Union sentiments. Anti-immigration discourse in Poland gives fuel to nationalistic and xenophobic demonstrations and the tacit approval of such movements by both the government and the Catholic Church hierarchy gives their supporters access to state and church sponsored mass media.

The language used by the government representatives to refer to refugees uses *ad hominem* argumentation and often demonstrates features of hate speech. History teaches how this dangerous strategy was used in the past, in particular in both communist Russian and Nazi German propaganda. One common technique was the use of medical and scientific language to create metaphors that described

those who were deemed undesirable as parasites, pests, virulent bacteria, diseases, etc. Dehumanising language was also an important factor in the Kosovo war (Stroinska and Popovic 1999). When people of a certain ethnicity or political persuasion are perceived as vermin, dangerous parasites, a threat to health and life of the nation, destroying the enemy becomes an action of cleansing; elimination of a health risk. Killing such undesirable elements is no longer a question of morality, but of hygiene (Stroinska and Drzazga 2017).

The first to use such language in modern Polish political discourse was Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the now ruling party (Law and Justice). On October 12, 2015 (at an election meeting in Maków Mazowiecki, reported by *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Jarosław Kaczyński boi się, że uchodźcy sprowadzą zarazę? Tak mówił na wyborczym wiecu., 2015) on 13 October 2015), he said that refugees may bring parasites and diseases with them that had not been seen in Europe in a long time. He suggested that there have already been cases of cholera on the Greek islands and dysentery in Vienna. He then added that refugees may be the carriers of “various kinds of parasites, protozoans, which may not be dangerous in the organisms of those people, but may be dangerous here. This is not intended to discriminate against anyone, but it must be checked out.” For anyone aware of the mechanisms of hate propaganda, this is a very dangerous development. Atrocities usually start with words used to strip the enemy of their humanity. Once this happens, people will stand by and observe the elimination of the enemy with the indifference of someone watching the extermination of bedbugs.

6. Conclusions: quo vadis mundi?

In many countries all over the globe, we observe a tendency towards stereotyping and scapegoating and a dramatic turn towards language that is markedly rude and offensive. This may not be a new phenomenon, but the intensity and spread through multiple social media platforms requires that attention be paid to all aspects of this wave of hate speech. As hatred and fear of the other are among the strongest of emotions, they play an important role in the creation of media stories that capture the attention of the audience. We all naturally need to impose some kind of order on the surrounding chaos of social and political reality. We all need a narrative and, unfortunately, online haters, trolls, and propagandists provide that narrative for many. With some governments’ tacit approval of hate speech against the refugees, the immigrants and all those seeking a refuge and safe haven from war, poverty, and violence, the spread of verbal aggression is getting out of control. This is the case particularly online where anonymity allows people to write what they would hesitate to say in face to face conversation, but, increasingly, even public figures feel at liberty to make hateful and offensive comments and are praised for their outrageous views by their online fans.

Hate speech is a prelude necessary to incite violence. Hateful propaganda dehumanizes the enemies so that it becomes easier to attack them. Where there is hate speech, violence will follow. In the USA, anti-immigrant rhetoric, promoted by some Republican Party supporters and encouraged by President Trump himself, contributed to violence during demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. A peaceful protest against the Unite the Right rally ended with one of the white supremacists driving a car into the crowd, killing one young woman and injuring 28 people.

Whether it is in Poland, Italy or other countries under right-wing governments, the government-controlled mass media and even some members of parliament regularly spread lies, hate speech, and all kinds of hostile comments about anyone and anything that is not following the official party line. In Italy, Forza Nuova, a neofascist party, regularly attacks migrants whether alone or in groups, or even groups of visible minorities (i.e.: Roma, Asians), or gays throughout the country. In Poland, the nationalistic youth organization, Młodzież Wszechpolska ('All-Polish Youth'), went as far as sending fake death certificates to mayors of some Polish cities who openly supported the opposition in Poland. A popular charity collecting money for medical equipment for children's hospitals also became a regular target of hate speech. Its organizer was portrayed in a racist way, as a corrupt fraudster, trying to gather money for himself. In January 2019, at the closing event for this year's money collection in Gdańsk, in front of hundreds of celebrating people, the mayor of Gdańsk was fatally stabbed by someone who blamed his personal failures on the Polish opposition party that the mayor supported. Even if mental illness was a factor, hatred needs to be channelled and this assassin's negative emotions were likely focussed on whom the media were telling him to hate. These examples of violence would have been impossible if there was no approval of hate and aggression. Jarosław Kurski, an opposition journalist commented on this tragedy: "The seed of hatred, once sown, will sooner or later produce its harvest" (Kurski 2019). People in Poland are already reaping the harvest of the last three years of government sponsored hate speech. The same will be the case in other countries that encourage this kind of rhetoric. It is easy to start but it cannot easily be stopped.

The primary cause of evil in the world is hatred, and hatred is generated from a fear of the other, the unknown. Fear can easily lead to hatred, especially in times of scarcity and economic insecurity. The other, no matter how peaceful and willing to assimilate, can be portrayed as threatening and becomes the scapegoat, the target, and if there is enough fear and hatred, the victim. We know that in the past, such societal attitudes led to violent conflicts. All of those conflicts started with verbal aggression. As linguists, we believe that it is our duty to point to those dangers today. We must not turn away or be indifferent to the danger of hate because hate destroys both its target and the hater. We need to be a part of the solution or we risk becoming a part of the problem.

In a Cherokee tale popular in Canada, a grandfather is teaching his grandson about life. He tells the little boy that a fight is going on inside him. It is a terrible

fight between two wolves. One is evil and represents negative emotions such as anger, envy, greed, arrogance, superiority, and ego. The other wolf is good – he represents joy, peace, love, hope, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside every other person, too. The grandson thinks about it for a while and then asks his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The powerful answer usually quoted in internet sources is "the one you feed". However, the original Cherokee version of this tale said that one has to feed both wolves. If we try to starve the evil wolf, it will only make it angrier and more dangerous. People who are full of hatred towards others, especially the immigrants and refugees need reassurance that the newcomers are not posing a threat and that diversity is a positive force. It may be easier in Canada, a big country with a relatively small population than in some European nations that struggle to accommodate thousands of refugees. But there is no moral excuse for countries that deny safe haven to traumatized women and children fleeing war, poverty, and starvation. It is particularly hypocritical when their leaders invoke the need to protect their countries' Christian traditions from people of other faiths to cover up their fears.

The use of the term *migrant* instead of *refugee*, *exile* or *immigrant* removes from the set of associations the reasons why the affected people leave their country: war, violence, poverty, famine or natural disasters. Thus, by promoting this particular terminology, the politicians and the media who accept their language rob the traumatized refugees of the main reason why people in potential accepting countries would want to show them the compassion that comes naturally when we see someone in need. This simple linguistic operation, removing the prefix from the term *immigrant*, may be a truly nefarious propaganda strategy. The words we use change our perception of the world and need to be handled with care.

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