Constructing the Eastern European Other

Horsemeat Scandal and the Migrant Other

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Introduction

The horsemeat controversy began with Food Standards Authority (FSA) in Ireland discovering 'undeclared' horse DNA in beef burgers sold in Irish and British supermarkets in January 2013 (Hull 2013). With British supermarkets withdrawing millions of burgers from their shelves, the FSA UK undertook its own investigations (Food Standards Agency 2013a). Investigations by both the Irish and British FSA revealed that beef trimmings imported possibly from Poland via Spain to Ireland, comprised 75 per cent horsemeat. Further investigations ascertained 100 per cent horsemeat in Findus lasagne produced by the French company Comigel, 80-100 per cent in Aldi's lasagne and spaghetti bolognese, and 60 per cent in Tesco's spaghetti bolognese (Food Standards Agency 2013c; Food Standards Agency 2013b). The FSA in UK concluded that while the adulteration had not posed any health risk to consumers, this was a 'gross negligence or deliberate contamination' of the food chain (Food Standards Agency 2013c).

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The revelation of horsemeat in processed food produced by renowned manufacturers and suppliers such as Comigel and Findus meant that the scandal implicated a wider European context. With Comigel and Findus present in 15 European Union countries, the announcement led to the withdrawal of contaminated ready meals in Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The Europeanisation of the scandal not only mooted a 'horse meat summit' of food ministers but also the involvement of Interpol to investigate criminal activity in the meat supply chain in Europe. Amidst this intense scrutiny, Spanish and Polish governments denied being sources of contamination in the Irish market. Romanians became implicated in the scandal when a French minister subsequently blamed them as the source of contamination for Findus products. (Lawrence 2013). A chain of blame unfolded from this accusation with Comigel, the supplier for Findus, pointing its finger at its meat supplier, French firm, Spanghero and the latter asserting it would sue its Romanian suppliers.

The Romanian government and suppliers exonerated blame by providing documentation to confirm that the meat had left their abattoirs explicitly labelled as 'horse meat', and that the deception had occurred outside their borders. The French minister conceded that Romanians had acted in good faith and the French company Spanghero may have substituted horsemeat (Lawrence 2013). The completion of the FSA audit in the UK showed further evidence of sizeable quantities of beef substituted with horsemeat in local markets and this led to the police making a number of arrests at various processing plants in Wales and England. A report prepared by a select committee of MPs published two and half months after the scandal concluded that the scale of fraud on British consumers was 'breath taking' and the present control mechanisms across the European food industry had failed consumers (House of Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee 2013). Two men were

convicted in the UK in 2013 for failing to keep adequate records which could trace the provenance of the meat in their sale of horsemeat (CPS 2015) required under the traceability regulations where the source of meat must be traceable from field to fork (Mullins 2014). There are ongoing investigations into this scandal. A review of the integrity of the UK food network was commissioned in 2013 and the Elliot report published in 2014 made numerous observations and recommendations including the setting up of a food crime unit. It also observed that the evidence from other European countries highlights that there is a substantial problem with organised crime in the food sector and that the UK is not immune (Lawrence 2014).

Despite a wider European context to organised food crimes, the horsemeat scandal which had prominent media coverage from Jan till March 2013 enmeshed the Eastern Europeans, particularly Romanians, with the controversy in complex ways. Temporally it conjoined public anger over the deception of horsemeat labelling with the anticipated mass migration of Romanians into the UK from the 1st of January 2014. When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, the British Government imposed transitional controls intended to limit the access of low-skilled migrants from these countries to the labour market, restricting them to specific types of jobs in agriculture and food processing and limiting their access to benefits (Migration Observatory 2014). These controls were set to expire on the 1st of January 2014 while the horsemeat scandal was still an issue of public debate and anxiety. Our analysis of the scandal revealed that many of the debates on horsemeat were intertextual. While both stories were unrelated, the migration issue configured in the horsemeat scandal through direct references and through associations built through dominant discourses. With the temporal convergence of media narratives of the food scandal and an impending influx of Romanians in 2014 with the relaxation of transitional controls, sustained associations were built between

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the two news stories through resonant themes of British victimhood and vulnerability juxtaposed with the Romanians as the antagonist through the threats they presented to the British nation. Recurring themes of deviance and criminality accorded to Romanians in these discourses constructed discernible associations between the two media stories (see Adams, 2013b; Collins, 2013). The double articulation of contamination (i.e. both of borders and transgressions of the body through food) enmeshed much of the horsemeat scandal coverage in media discourses. In the process, these discourses whether on immigration, the deception of the British consumers or their bodily violations hinged on discursive constructions of the Eastern European 'Other'. These essentialist discourses of the 'Other' were further mediated by a degree of irrationality which food scandals ignite; from patriotism to disbelief in science to threats to our fundamental belief systems.

Food and Food Scandals in our Sociological Imagination

There is a proliferation of research which discusses food as a form of communication and its symbolic importance in meaning making in our everyday lives through rituals, consumption practices, and discursive formations (Cramer, et al., 2011; Appadurai, 1981, p. 494). Food can denote belief systems influencing our negotiations and constructions of identities and nationhood (LeBesco and Naccarato 2008, p.1). Food as an emotive and affective entity is capable of mobilising strong emotions and can demarcate the 'systematic generation of difference and the separation of self from the other' (Ashley et al. 2004, p.9). It can thus be a site of 'tension and disruption' food defining our identities through our consumption patterns (Cramer et al. 2011, p. 16)

Cultural studies on food have explored food, identity and representations from a national level as well as the perspective of the everyday. Roland Barthes (1972) explored how steak is

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a 'deeply nationalised foodstuff' in France, where the cultural significance of steak was understood through the historic context of France in the 1950s withdrawing from the empire. DeSoucey's (2010, p. 432) case study of foie gras explored how nationalist sentiments can shape the production of food, particularly when our historic identities are threatened or at risk. Food is undoubtedly political, enmeshed with everyday life, lifestyle choices, as well as popular culture (Parasecoli, 2013, p. 421).

A related topic of discussion is the topic of food taboos where cultural contexts impose 'proscriptions on behaviour' such that what may be reviled in one culture may be sacred in another (see Allan and Burridge 2006, p. 1). Mary Douglas' extensive work on food taboos discerns the social and power relations, particularly the 'different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries' embedded in food (Douglas 1972, p.144). Taboos can also say much about the 'casting of blame' but also about differentiation around food and between groups (Douglas 1966, p. 81). Classifications or separation imposed through food provide a means to not distinguish between 'us and them', 'insiders and outsiders' but also sustain power relations (Ashley et al. 2004, p. 2). Taboos can bring cohesion to societies and a sense of belonging to groups (Douglas, 1966) as well as a 'feeling of control over situations where ordinary mortals have little or none' (Allan and Burridge 2006, p.9). Furthermore, when there is a risk of encroachment and danger, 'dietary rules controlling what goes into the body serve as an analogy of the corpus of their cultural categories of risk' (Douglas, 2008, p. 79).

Douglas notes that the notions of contamination and taboo often emerge out of a particular mythology around the animal. These myths may be based on a perceived affinity between humans and the animal where the animal in earlier times may have been 'a strong or talented

being' that 'rendered a service to the god, or in some prehistoric exchange a human and ancestor incurred a debt of gratitude' (Douglas 1999, p. 143). This 'pact of everlasting friendship' meant that it would be 'an act of gross ingratitude and impiety,' or a taboo to consume that animal (Douglas 1999, p. 158).

Food scandals like food taboos mirror the complexity of our relationship with food, the other imagined through the migrant or through diasporic communities. Migrants have 'always provided a gateway to new food' (Tarulevicz 2012) in multiple ways. For example, with the Polish migration into the UK saw the opening of Polish shops to sell Polish food to the diaspora living in the UK (Rabikowska and Burrell 2009). This has been something that has happened with the arrival of other communities of diaspora into the island. As Jon May (1996) observes the 'exotification of food' amongst the new cultural class of young professionals became a means to impose distinctions of class and race. While food can provide a platform to imagine the other as exotic but it can be used to create social distinctions and categories of the other through consumption. Cosmopolitan cities full of exotic offering in terms of food and eateries may present a veneer of acceptance without completely eradicating the our distrust or anxieties about the other.

Food scandals can exhibit our irrational fears including the crude stereotypes we hold of the other (see Jackson 2010) by framing these through risk discourses. The UK has a long history with national food scandals particularly with relevance to meat and its potential threats to the corporeal body. The BSE/CjD scandal emerging from British farming and food production practices and dubbed the 'mad cow disease' in the media thrust the UK into a pandemonium of fear and paranoia. In re-casting meat as a source of disease and degeneration, the scandal laid a potent threat to British historical imagination where meat played a centric role as a

source of communion and pride. In comparison, the 2001 foot-and-mouth epidemic attributed to contaminated import meat did not name the place of origin and remained undisclosed (Nerlich, Hamilton, and Rowe 2002). The horsemeat scandal in contrast was constructed primarily in relation to imported food thus implicating the foreigner as a figure of blame.

Eastern European as the non-European

The notion of the horsemeat as taboo needs to be contextualised against the history of Europe, formation of the EU as well as the polar constructions of 'Western Europe versus Eastern Europe' in history and popular imagination. Edward Said's (1978) concept of 'Orientalism' as a critical category surveyed how the West perceived the East through a set of discursive practices. Said's thesis inspired a panoply of writing which addresses Eastern Europe and the Balkans as the Eastern Other – situated in Europe but not quite European (see, Bakic-Hayden & Hayden, 1992; Bakić-Hayden, 1995; Buchowski, 2006; Hayden, 1992; Todorova, 1997; Woolff, 1994). This strand of literature discusses the consumption and production of Eastern Europe as the stigmatized Other by Western Europe. Larry Wolff (1994) directly drawing on Said argued that Eastern Europe was produced as the Other in the period of Enlightenment by Western intellectuals as well as writers similar to the Western gaze of the Middle East. Maria Todorova (1997, p. 17) in writing on the Balkans argues that the West perceives this region in terms of an 'imputed ambiguity'; trapped in an ambivalent state as 'neither fish, nor fowl, semi-oriental, not fully European but semi-developed, and semi-civilized.'

Instead of a binary opposition, Todorova's Balkanism conveyed the region in terms of retardation in terms of humanity and civilization from the vantage point of the West. Both Wolff and Todorova emphasise the alterity of Eastern Europe and the ways it is

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conceptualised as the 'Other' by the West. For example, the Cold War was shaped by the semiotics of American foreign policy, the positioning of the USSR and communism as Europe's external other and the precursor of the EU (EEC) was identified as Western Europe in contrast to Eastern Europe (Delanty, 1995). Michal Buchowski (2006, p. 465) in drawing on Said, Wolff and Todorova points out that Orientalism and the process of creation of the Other were contiguous with the modernist condition of the world where the Berlin Wall signified emblematic completion in terms of the incarceration of the Other within a space. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Western Europe's main threatening other disappeared and the "identity spaces of Europe became much more blurred" but what did emerge was a differentiation of Eastern Europe between the good (i.e. those nations becoming part of European 'in-group') and bad (i.e. backwards, violent, extremely nationalistic) (see also Haldrup, Koefoed, & Simonsen, 2006).

Post 1990, the fluidity of space does not eradicate the topography of power nor the mind set to construct social distinctions or to retain the other (Buchowski, 2006, p. 466). The west and its 'civilization values' have become the undisputed norm and the relationship between Europe and its Others is 'monitored and regulated through a system of disciplinary discourses and techniques invoking the oriental East as Europe's threatening external' (Haldrup et al., 2006, p. 174). What has also emerged is a 'resurgent Orientalism' present in Europe's relations to its external Others and in a 'growing hostility towards its internal others'. The re-emergence of an identity struggle based on the notions of Europe and the 'Orient' have given way to both a new orientalism in the politics of the Europe towards its external Others and a re-emergence of aggressive nationalism directed against Muslim, internal Others at the national levels.

In redirecting these debates towards the politics of food, Haldrup et al. (2006: 173) argue that cultural and national identities are constituted and renegotiated through concrete bodily encounters in everyday life where food can play a significant role as a material artefact. In terms of the horsemeat scandal in the UK, media framings of the episode associated horsemeat with Orientalist perspectives of Eastern Europeans. Often the scandal was built through certain essentialist connotations of Eastern Europeans encompassing crude cultural stereotypes and the Other as not possessing the genteel qualities of the British in treating the horse as a noble creature which should not be destined for our dinner tables. The construction of the East European as a cultural other bound them with a pattern of differentiation which

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cast them as anything else but European. The discourses about horsemeat as a bodily transgression was captured and mirrored in Eastern Europeans entering the UK with the expansion of the EU and as such the violation was both of the spatial territory as well as the corporeal body. Both British identity via its food cultures and its mythic imaginations of the horse were both at risk through the contamination of its food supply chain as well as its borders through uncontrolled immigration. The binding of the contentious political debate of immigration with orientalist construction of Eastern Europe contemporised and renewed the differentiation of this European Other.

The horsemeat scandal also needs to be understood through Britain's conflicted and problematic relationship with the concept of EU. On the one hand it stood for free movement of people, trade and hospitality of the Western European world and on the other hand it ignited deep-seated fears about the loss of sovereignty and identity (see Sellar, Staddon, and Young 2009, 292, Wall 2012). Historically, the decision to join was justified through an economic rationale that perceived Britain as in danger of being marginalized in a globalizing world and the need to create new markets to compensate for the loss of the empire. The public discourse on 'Europe' has also been shaped by a strong Eurosceptic tradition of thought that is hostile to closer ties to Europe, presenting these as threats to British sovereignty and an identity rooted in the notion 'of the spatial separation of an island, psychologically distant from the European integration movement' and of a historical and racial distinctiveness (Daddow 2013 pp. 212-213). This Eurosceptic view which tends to be emotive, patriotic and at time xenophobic (Wall 2012). In the past 50 years an increasingly hostile imagining of Europe has been evident in the newspaper discourses (Sparke 2000; Burrell 2012).

With the expansion of EU in 2004 and 2007 to include 10 Central and Eastern European states, the British government under-estimated how many Poles would enter after restrictions on their movements were lifted in 2004. When Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, media scare stories warned of an 'invasion' and based their predictions on the combined populations of both countries (Light and Young, 2009). Research on the 2007 accession by Light and Young (2009) found considerable variations in media treatment of Eastern Europeans with Romanians being singled out for particularly hostile coverage and being

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categorized as a 'recognizable and identifiable menace' (2009, p 288). In essence, The arrival of new member states into the EU in 2004 and 2007 raised questions about the notion of 'Europe' and about who has the right to speak ''about what Europe is and should be'' (Feakins and Bialasiewicz 2006, p. 658).

Othering, Alterity and the Horsemeat Scandal

With the horsemeat scandal in the UK spanning from January to March 2013, we analysed the distinct discourses and techniques employed by the media to differentiate the Other. Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) we discerned how social power, dominance and inequalities were enacted in media discourse. By undertaking CDA there is an acknowledgement that media, as part of the social structures and social interaction can reproduce ideological positions and equally notions of inequality. Our analyses focused on how discourse can enact, confirm, legitimate or reproduce relations of power and dominance in a society (Van Dijk 1993, 250). The construction of Eastern Europe through an overarching Orientalist paradigm during the horsemeat scandal became the primary conceptual framework from which we examined media texts. Our discourse analysis focused on the discourses of alterity of Eastern Europe (particularly of Roma and Romanians) and development of binaries between depictions of 'us and them' in media discourses. We also looked at what Jensen (2011) calls a third space in which we examined discourses which could be located between the two (i.e. alterity and binaries). For instance, the French may be portrayed as having different customs but are presented to be socially evolved like the British in their attitudes to the horse. Our selection of media for analysis included the public service broadcasters, BBC and ITV, and the national newspapers[i]. Local newspapers were excluded from the sample as we are concerned with a national 'imagined community' and constructions of identity (or claims to this identity). In addition, the aim was to discern the

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media's social imaginary of British-ness in comparison to the Eastern Other and how the discourses as a corpus yielded this imagination. The emphasis here was not to extrapolate media's ideological position of being left, right or centre but what these totality of discourses yielded in terms of a sociological imagination of nationhood through the horsemeat scandal. While there is invariably a degree of difference between media in terms of ideological doctrines, our analysis focused on the thematic resonance which emerged from the corpus of text in binding the horsemeat scandal with immigration debates or an impending crime wave in the UK due to the influx of the Other. Our reference to media henceforth refers to the sample under scrutiny.

We identified relevant online articles through key term searches (i.e. 'horsemeat + scandal' and 'horsemeat') between January 2013 (when the story emerged) and the end of March 2013 (when the horsemeat scandal had waned). Our media corpus included a variety of articles including news, features and analysis, video news clips, documentaries and information-graphics as well as op-eds and editorial leaders. These generated a preliminary corpus of 192 items over the three-month period of study. Our focus was on texts as opposed to images. While images were not analysed, we nevertheless included the text captions in the images as these served to direct the reader's gaze to a preferred interpretation of the image.

Preliminary readings highlighted an association between the horsemeat scandal and Romanians from mid-February. Additional key term search of 'Romania + migrants' was undertaken, generating an additional 71 texts which yielded a combined total of 263 texts. Recurring discourses were discerned through an open reading of the texts and a secondary reading through CDA which highlighted distinctive techniques employed by the media to represent the Other. These included the recurrence of essentialist frames which tended to

consign negative attributes to the Other while generalising and interpreting their cultural customs, practices and values through these stereotypes. The media also used distant-proximity framing to create resonance with British shared values and morality. On the one hand, and dissonance with the Other by portraying them as culturally backwards and retarded, on the other. The horse became a cultural signifier to showcase the advanced morality and superiority of the British as animal lovers juxtaposed with the Eastern Europeans as a nation of mafia gangs which abuse and butcher their horses. In addition, the parallel discourse of associating the horsemeat scandal with the imminent relaxing of the borders fused the events, suggesting and attributing blame through cultural stereotypes and discourses of risk to the body and the nation. The opening up of UK's labour market to Romanians and Bulgarians in January 2014 often became an intertextual discourse which revealed fear and anxiety over the Other in complex ways.

Discourse of Essentialism and Construction of Cultural Stereotypes

Despite the expansion of the European Union and the fluidity of borders for several decades, essentialist discourses produce static frames which can manifest in our discursive practices. There has been much interest in the notion of psychological essentialism where perceptions of the Other are anchored in the fixedness of traits and categories. As such, 'people understand some attributes and social categories in terms fixed underlying and identity determining attributes which may then have implications for the formation of stereotypes and prejudices (Bastian and Haslam 2005, p. 229). Such essentialist perceptions can lead to an erroneous premise that these traits and attributes are deeply rooted and natural, contributing to prejudice and a schism between social groups (See Rothbart and Taylor 1992; Haslam et al. 2000). Haslam et al. (2000) argue that assuming something as naturally occurring or

immutable combined with the reification of these traits produce uniformity in categorising groups but also in the social processing of information about Others. Hence racial, ethnic gender and other social categories are naturalised and stigmatised through this misapprehension. Leyens et al. (2001) argue that essentialist perceptions can equally entail the denial of human attributes to out groups. Such conceptualisations can make the Other less human, denoting the imagined retardation of their biological and cultural development.

The context of the horsemeat scandal revealed resonant essentialist discourses in our analysis. Negative essential traits were attributed to Eastern Europeans while juxtaposing British identity to be in contrast to these. One recurrent discourse that the media utilised to construct British identity was to invoke the mythic imagination of the horse in British history and folklores. This mythic imagination appropriated a moral tone in repudiating the horsemeat as a contaminant in British culture. The horse was portrayed as having made 'huge sacrifices alongside riders in historic battles' thereby creating a sense of loyalty which set them apart from other working animals (BBC News Magazine 2013a). Hence British-ness was epitomised in imaginaries of a historically and culturally rooted relationship to the horse. The attribution of anthropomorphic qualities to the horse became the basis to argue for a British exceptionalism about eating horsemeat. This exceptionalism was cast through a moral position, where the British would eschew horsemeat as a food source other than in times of acute hardship and shortage such as rationing during World War Two (see Lichfield, 2013). The visceral recoil towards horsemeat and the absence of a similar reaction among European and Asian counterparts was framed as a statement about British-ness and their moral superiority (Johnson 2013).

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Media discourses repeatedly invoked historical memory to sustain the horsemeat taboo. The taboo was traced to a period before the Norman invasion, when Anglo-Saxons viewed horses as mythical warriors or legendary figures linked to royal dynasties (Prigg 2013). The re-introduction of Christianity to Britain by the 8th century had relegated horse eating to a pagan tradition (Prigg 2013). This cultural and theological evolution differentiated the civilised, moral Briton who recognised the nobility of the horse from others who were not evolved enough to make this discernment. The horse was seen akin to domesticated pets such as dogs or cats which are named and ascribed 'extra' anthropomorphic qualities and values (BBC News Magazine 2013a). The association of the horse with sports of nobility such as horse racing imbued it with regal qualities. As such, the horse was evoked through elevated descriptions of being 'majestic' and 'beautiful, magnificent and noble' (BBC News Magazine 2013a; Rao 2013).

While the media invoked British historical memory, sports, literary classics and popular culture to sustain an aversion to horsemeat, they depicted the French penchant for horsemeat in romantic and contrastingly less pejorative terms. The French Other as a civilised society known for its gastronomical innovations was constructed as an entity closer to the British. Horsemeat consumption dating back to the 1700s emerged as a working class food in France characterised by periodic resurgences during times of famine (BBC News Magazine 2013a). French consumption of horsemeat was not portrayed as morally backward, but in fact fashionable and acceptable in terms of their culinary and historic traditions. The French were constructed as having a tradition of artistry and craftsmanship in the form of the specialist horse butchery (Chrisafis 2013). Media reported how prior to the scandal there had been a steady closure of shops as horse butchers retired in France. Running through media coverage of this was a sense of nostalgia at a dying craft that was peculiarly French and seemed to

epitomise an appreciation of gastronomical excellence and with it, ironically, a respect for the horse. Moral judgment was suspended on the French and often this was justified through positive stereotypes of Gallic pragmatism and gastronomic pursuits. If 'banquets of horse flesh were all the rage' in Paris then these were naturally in sync with the innovative and eccentric streak of the French and Parisians (BBC News Magazine 2013a).

The British media, despite its population's aversion to horsemeat, presented the French as being closer to the British. It argued that the British experimentation with exotic foods properly sourced and clearly labelled brought them relatively closer to the French with their artisan horse butchers and appreciation of quality food. Both countries valued the importance of consumer choice and equally the outrage at the denial of consumer sovereignty through fraudulent labelling.

The Uncouth Other

When the horsemeat scandal unfolded with the discovery of horsemeat in beef and beef-related products, the initial reaction of French ministers and companies was to deflect attention away from themselves and 'point the finger of blame' at Romanian abattoirs, suggesting that changes to Romanian law 'may be responsible' for the food fraud (Kelly 2013; Charter and Sage 2013). As detailed investigations got under way, suspicion turned to French companies who it seemed had 'at least' failed to apply strict traceability rules imposed

in France during the BSE crisis in the 1990s (Lichfield, Randall, and Sanchez 2013). Prime Minister Victor Ponta claimed that a French 'cover-up was responsible for the horsemeat scandal' and that accusers had 'viewed his country as a soft target' (Charter and Sage 2013). When it became clear that the Romanians had been exonerated of food fraud, the British media sought other ways of blaming and distancing the Romanians culturally instead of targetting the French, whom they portrayed as closer to them as a civilised nation.

The instinctive reaction in some of the media to the news that the horsemeat may have originated in Romania and Poland (Kelly 2013) was that 'of course it had to be Romania' and a 'sense of relief' that the blame could be placed on the Eastern Europeans rather than someone closer to home (BBC News Magazine 2013b). Embedded in these taken-for-granted assumptions of culpability were deeply held stereotypes and a predisposition to ignore cultural similarities between the British and the Romanians, where there was a shared aversion to consume horsemeat. The long supply chains in meat production and processing equally made it possible to insert the Romanians as culpable in the deception scandal.

The media reports had identified three main sources of the horsemeat in burgers and ready-meals available on supermarket shelves in Britain; abattoirs in Romania and in Poland and local slaughterhouses. Although some attention was paid to the latter, most media reports focused on the Eastern European sources, particularly Romania. This enabled media to associate the deception with Eastern Europe, particularly Romania and Poland. These defrauding discourses were often reported along with the imminent influx of low-skilled migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, thus entwining the deception with the British anxiety over the imminent immigration. Both events were constructed as potential threats and risk to the British corporeal body and nationhood.

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While the media presented the British as a moral and civilised society, they drew on historical-cultural stereotypes of Romania as economically backward to juxtapose it as the undeveloped and uncivilised Other. The discourse sought to portray Romania as backward in a multitude of ways. The articulations drew attention to a 2011 EU ban on the export of live horses from Romania to curb the spread of equine AIDs. This ban, media claimed, had resulted in farmers 'exporting slaughtered' ones instead (Collins 2013). Equally the ban on horse-drawn carts on roads in Romania (which has been a form of transport for centuries) was also put forth as a plausible link with the horsemeat scandal, as millions of animals were now surplus to requirements in Romania (Lichfield 2013; BBC News Magazine 2013b). In sharp contrast to the British romanticising of the horse, the discourses portrayed the Romanian psyche as having 'no room for sentimentality' and this 'harsh reality' meant horses were destined to abattoirs for slaughter (Fagge 2013).

The harsh economic conditions of Romania became a backdrop to argue that horses were not looked after and were vulnerable to gypsy gangs offering paltry sums of cash for them or making huge profits by selling them on to industrial-scale abattoirs. In comparison to the more evolved British and French, the Romanians had reduced the animal to the level of utility or a cut-price commodity and meat profiteering. Discourses of the economic backwardness of the country thus converged with a constructed cultural backwardness epitomised in cruel treatments of the horse.

The discourse of criminality was another resonant strand in the depiction of Romania, where it was portrayed as a 'violent mafia state' despite UN statistics which put violent crime in Bucharest at the lowest of any capital city in Europe (BBC News Magazine 2013b). Media

interwove claims of 'industrial-scale' fraud with 'organised crime', 'international criminal networks' and 'industrial' scale abattoirs (Lawrence 2013; Kelly 2013; Fagge and Robinson 2013). Media discourses also linked 'mafia gangs' and 'mobsters' in Italy, Poland, Russia and Romania in an arch of criminality across Eastern Europe, through the Netherlands and Spain into Britain. This route of criminality was linked with the global supply chains to invoke the unforeseen threats modern Britain faced (Lawrence, 2013; Collins, 2013; Crampton, 2013). The discourses claimed that 'previous convictions' and 'intelligence' suggested a link between the 'horse trade, meat laundering and various forms of trafficking' including drugs, people and arms (Lawrence 2013). The Romanian gangs were nicknamed the 'horse mafia' and implicated in exploiting not just vulnerable poor framers, but equally wild horses in the Danube delta which had been culled and sold as meat by bribing and intimidating professionals to provide documentation for legitimate produce (Collins, 2013; Lichfield, 2013; Kelly 2013). The discourse of the gangs and unbreakable chains of criminality in Europe situated the horsemeat scandal through the cultural norms and practices of the Romanians, constructing it as a risk not containable within its own boundaries.

The pejorative constructions of a backward and violent nation of Romania often coalesced with discourses about the mistreatment of horses. While the British and French elevated these animals to the status of nobility or artistry, the Eastern Europeans had reduced them to beasts of burden, carrying out 'demanding work' as draught horses hauling heavy equipment (Fagge 2013; Lucas and Buckley 2013). On their one day off a week, the horses were left untended and neglected, 'caked in mud' and tethered in a yard full of pigs and poultry (Fagge 2013). When worn out and 'too old to work', they joined the ranks of other farm animals under the 'butcher's knife' (Fagge 2013) ending up ultimately as Italian salami or fraudulent ready-meals (Lucas and Buckley 2013). Media depicted them as suffering 'appalling cruelty'; often

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'beaten, whipped and transported' in overcrowded and illegal lorries on their way to the abattoir (Collins 2013). Such accounts of animal cruelty and abuse contrasted powerfully with the mythic imagination of the horse in British culture and society. In so doing, the media constructed the Romanian as the uncouth, barbaric and savage Other.

The scene setting of Romania as a backward nation in the media also focused on the Roma community in the country. The Roma or gypsy community was presented as untouched by modernisation, with a scarcity of paved roads and electricity, 'virtually non-existent' sewage system and where the 'whiff of raw sewage hangs' in the air (Adams, 2013a; Taylor, 2013) Gypsy neighbourhoods were depicted as not fit for human habitation, overrun by crime, drug dealers, prostitutes and gangs. Saddled with poverty, families with 10-12 children struggle to survive on money sent back from family working in Britain or Germany, or through begging (Charter 2013). Thus, much as horses had been untended and neglected by their owners, so too were the population by the Romanian government.

Media capitalised on a powerful trope of communism, abandonment or neglect of gypsies to suggest that government's policies towards them were driving the push to migrate to Britain. The 'dismantling of Communist era industries', the closure of the factories and the failure to provide alternative sources of work meant there was 'no employment' for many of the Roma (Charter 2013). The associations of decay and dereliction were resonant in the depictions of Romania as an ex-Communist state where everyday life is a struggle without proper accommodation or heating. The 'Communist era' evoked the sense of a time warp and the Roma locked into a brutish, un-modernised past. Romania's Communist past provided a means to imagine the nation as the backward Other; uncivilised politically, socially and economically (Gaddis, 2013; Adams, 2013)). For example, 'images of children abandoned in

Soviet-era orphanages are the first thing they associate with Romania' (BBC News Magazine 2013b).

Influx of the Eastern Europeans – Risk and Threat to the British Nation

The discourses about meat contamination overlapped with the media narratives of the UK being flooded with Eastern European migrants. Discourses about '"deep pockets" of poverty' in Romania's gypsy communities (Adams 2013c)were reported along with accounts of large number of young men from these communities who were 'already career beggars' in Britain (Charter 2013) or 'mafia bosses who can't wait to flood Britain with beggars' (Kelly 2013). Reports warned that Romanian and Bulgarian 'immigrants could flood into Britain' once restrictions on the right to live and work here were lifted on the 1st of January 2014 and a major broadcaster ran a documentary entitled 'The Romanians are coming' (Channel 4 2014). The media cautioned that just like the horsemeat fraud was unknown, so would be the scale of immigration into the UK.

Britain and British borders were depicted as being at the cusp of a multitude of threats with an influx of Romanians. The horsemeat scandal symbolised the imminence of weightier social threats to its environment, including a Romanian crime wave where gangs of criminals would 'terrorise our streets' (Giannangelli, 2013; Dawar 2013). Previously begging gangs and cashpoint scams were presented as typically Romanian (BBC News 2012; BBC News Magazine 2013b). The horsemeat scandal converged with discourses of an imminent Romanian crime epidemic to include murder, rape, sexual assault and armed robbery, citing police figures often backed by statistics. Media reports ranked Romanians second only to the Poles in the list of perpetrators of such crimes (O'Neill 2013; Hartley-Parkinson 2013) and

the Metropolitan police described Romanian crime as a 'matter of concern' (O'Neill 2013). The discourses about the violation of the body through eating processed horsemeat were paralleled with violations of British borders and streets, where the latter invoked an imminent danger and violence to British identity and nationhood.

The horsemeat scandal revealed many of the xenophobic stereotypes about Romanians. Stereotypes of criminality and anxiety over mass migration and drains on the benefit system were particularly heightened with the looming deadline to relax restrictions for employment for the Romanians in 2014. The discourse of the politicians about Romanians and the associations with criminality entrapped the Romanian identity with an essentialist discourse of overtly negative portrayals. With immigration being an emotional and controversial issue in the British public sphere, the political discourses equally tapped into this anxiety, often resonating the typical stereotypes about Romanian migration into the UK. Euro MP Gerard Batten was quoted as saying that '"what an open-door immigration policy delivers. … [is] complete inability to protect ourselves from foreign criminals"' (Dawar 2013). Similarly, during the Eastleigh by-election in mid February 2013, UK Independence Party's candidate, Diane James, suggested that areas with large numbers of Romanian immigrants have high crime rates (Kember 2013). She subsequently apologised for presenting all Romanians as criminals but reiterated claims of 'evidence' that 'where high numbers of Romanians have settled, there has been an increase in crime'.

The leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage, warned that the relaxation of rules in January 2014 will mean 'the floodgates will open' for Eastern European immigrants and this would not only put 'pressure on services' such as schools but also police because of 'the crime associated with Romanians' (Kember, 2013). He added that one of the issues with the Olympics in 2012 was

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the Metropolitan Police having to deal with Romanian criminal gangs pick-pocketing. The comments were condemned by Dr Ion Jinga, the Romanian ambassador to the UK, as 'extremist,' who warned this sort kind of rhetoric can incite racist behaviour. He also branded Diane James's remarks as 'aggressive, rude and unfounded' and he insisted that there were 'no particular crime issues involving Romanian nationals during the Olympics and Paralympics' (Kember, 2013). Cameron's response to this shift in immigration discourses was to pledge to tighten residency tests for migrants from the EU in order to prevent 'benefit tourism'.

The coalescing of immigration discourses with horsemeat scandal in the newspapers renewed through politician's negative remarks about Romanian migration into the UK entrapped the Eastern European Other into a narrow essentialist frame; the Romanian became a figure of social deviance, construed as an opportunist in the expanding EU. Despite the exoneration of the Romanians in the horsemeat scandal, the media portrayals about the horse as a mythic symbol of history, its mistreatment in Romania and the objectification of the Gypsy community through popular culture and TV programmes such as My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding foregrounded an alterity where they were social and economic pariahs in civilised Europe. The horsemeat became a metaphor for imagining Eastern Europeans contaminants of the food supply chain and other physical and geographical boundaries.

Our findings concur with Migration Observatory's (Vicol and Allen's 2014: 2) study of Romanians and Bulgarians in 19 main national newspapers in 2013 which concluded that while the horsemeat scandal was unrelated to migration, the focus of these media stories was on migration and the migrant. As our analysis they denote a strong association of Romanians with criminality and anti-social behaviour. The study confirms the 'link with criminality'

(2014:13), with 'crime and settlement' (2014: 20) or with 'gangs, crime and economic hardship' (2014: 20) and that Romanians in comparison to Bulgarians as a group tended to 'appear more in connection with criminality and economic poverty (2014: 15). The period leading up to the removal of transitional controls for Bulgarian and Romanians is crucial as it provides a temporal context for the horsemeat scandal as part of the body politic with reference to post-accession after 2004-2007. The media discourses capture the anxieties over mass migration with the lifting of these controls and the need to curb migration hereafter. As such the migration issue became a gravitational pull that created connections between the two events when they were unrelated. The converging of the two event lead to claims, 'just as our social fabric has been torn apart by uncontrolled immigration and our economy has been undermined by the EU, so our food supplies are hit by foreign groups that are indifferent to the needs of the British public' (McKinstry, 2013). The alleged victimhood of the British people through the expansion of the EU became a palimpsest to inscribe stories on Romanian no matter how unrelated.

The Migration Observatory's study (Vicol and Allen 2014) like the Light and Young (2009) confirms that the Romanians are ranked lower than the Bulgarians in media discourses in terms of negative portrayals. The Balkanist framings discerned in the Light and Young (2009) were also evident in our analysis and also confirmed in the Migration Observatory study. The lack of sophistication in newspaper discourses where news coverage tended to lapse into crude cultural stereotypes is located within the temporal frames of post-accession. With relevance to the horsemeat scandal, our analysis shows how the food scandal functioned to accentuate these anxieties enabling a proximity food, the body and through consumption or ingesting a 'foreign substance'. The threat of the Romanians could be imagined as an intimate and urgent issue which threatening their food security and by violating their cultural

sensitivities through their body and geography. Horsemeat made the Romanian threat urgent and intimate, entering households where previously their streets were under attack from gangs and criminals. Their cultural sanctity and sensitivity constructed around the mythical qualities of the horse was under siege as was their meat on their dinner tables. Despite such relentless invasion the British was seen as vulnerable victims through the loss of control over their borders.

Conclusion

The horsemeat scandal in initially implicating the Romanians was foregrounded in wider political context of the expansion of EU, the porousness of its borders and the anxiety over the imminent migration of the Romanians and Bulgarians with the lifting of their restrictions to work on the 1st of Jan 2014. The constructions of alterity of the Romanians were discerned through a multitude of strategies from the mythic imagination of the horse, the proscription of noble qualities to the horse, the association of Romanians with animal abuse and Romania's impoverished conditions rendering it as an uncouth Other and not civilised to be accepted as European. Horsemeat provided both the cultural taboo as well as the violations presented by the Eastern European Other. Our analyses of the horsemeat scandal is contextualised through the temporal frames of the expansion of EU and UK's anxiety over Romanian and Bulgarian migration. The media frames through recurrent and resonant discourses of the other portrayed not only crude stereotypes of the other but also exhibited their anxieties by seeking to rationalise these through 'valid discourses of criminality, violation and risk. The expected Romanian 'invasion' on 01 January 2014 never materialised happened but the rancour over Britain being forced to allow the free movement of Eastern Europeans has continued encapsulated in David Cameron's claim ahead of new referendum on membership of the EU

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that 'we'll quit … over migrants' and that Britain 'never signed up for ever closer union' (Bennett 2014).

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