Crisis, Conspiracy and Rights: Imaginaries of Terrorism in Documentary Film

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Abstract

The dispersed character of terrorism as a practice became more coherent to the Western realm through the operationalisation of counter terrorist discourses. The media played a major role in that in the sense that they provided public 'visibility' upon the potentiality of terrorist threat. What this essay would like to discuss is the way such representations of threat negotiate a number of issues evolving around 'civil rights'; discrimination, intensification of surveillance or militarization legitimacy of a state of emergency; and how public discourses of broader issues of 'rights' are contextualized in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. The case study is a documentary produced shortly after a terrorist event that embraces the question 'why bomb London?' regarding the London public transport attacks of 7/7/2005. The analytical paradigm used is based on Critical Discourse Analysis which provides a structure that can respond to different questions of 'how' the signification of emergency is constructed.

Keywords: mediation, social change, legitimacy, war, emergency

1. A limited present: History as a bombshell

1.1 Introduction: Making sense of crises

This paper is part of a broader project that casts a critical look in the context of modern crises. Other than existing realities, those crises are communicated, comprehended and understood as discursive contexts, organised by different and often conflicting social groups, networks and interests.

Giddens (1990) defines the conceptualisation of 'crisis' as modern; according to his description, crises do not have the form of an 'interruption', but of a rather continuous state of affairs. Giddens identifies four crises of modernity that Critical Theory should be engaged with; these include issues of human and civil rights, war, the impact of the industry upon ecosystems and global poverty.

The meaning making construction of a crisis defines the processes of resolution of a crisis, which relates to broader political processes of 'change'. The concept of 'change' itself is a definite characteristic of modernity (Bauman 2003); the context given then is important as not only does it define the actions but also the popular consent that will legitimise the policy or counter actions towards crises, or structure the scope of 'change'. Historically, points of shift or social change have become 'real' primarily by discursive practices through which the appropriate imaginary around each change was mediated.

'Change' has the form of an imaginary restoration or order. Meaning construction is therefore crucial in the clashes of interest that occur within the spectrum of political conduct; meanings suggest their 'ideal' publics, upon

which they can become reality. Meaning construction however, is usually never complete; there are clashes of meaning or 'truths' over the veracity of different claims. In this sense, it is the imaginative assertion of 'truth' - what Foucault calls 'truth constructions' - that organises legitimacy for meanings to become publicly 'true', upon issues and events so dispersed as terrorist acts and so distant and complicated as centralised political conduct.

This paper focuses on of different representational 'moments' of crisis. Extending the 'effects' of these constructions, the term 'social imaginary' is deployed, borrowed from Taylor (2002), so as to respond to questions over: a) the contradictory character and the elusiveness of 'truth'; b) the spaces under which truth becomes 'real' and 'appealing' to publics. The concept of the social imaginary of crises is understood as a dynamic process organised around fundamental Western principles of restoration and institutional order; the social imaginary therefore bears a moral claim upon the spectator that becomes central in situations of emergency.

By referring to the case study as a 'moment', Harvey's (1996) terminology is deployed to describe two distinct features in this dimension: a) moment as one expression of an event which is part of the history of broader a chain of events (for instance, the London bombings as a moment in the conduct of the war on terror); b) moment as representation - a reflexive composition of different elements of social resources (discourses, beliefs, dispositions) to define an argument upon an issue, built within specific historic barriers. The term 'moment' then is appropriate to engage with issues that characterise broader events, flexibly developed in a state of continuous flow and change. When dealing with issues that are part of current history, which practically means they have not 'ended' yet, to study a 'moment' of a particular event is to study the way the event took place in one point of its broader course; its discursive representation is one of the ways this moment was expressed. And in this respect, the media play a profound role in popularising patterns for understanding present history.

1.2 Contextualising terror: Towards an analytical framework

As implied earlier, the role of text is morally productive for publics. The multiple and often controversial informational choices offered today by a variety of mediums and genres can produce fragments of knowledge or disposition (Chouliaraki 2006). As several scholars have noted, media texts are susceptible of creating 'moral panics' (Cottle 2005) to publics that cannot make full sense of the often contradictory character of informational flow. Without intending to reduce the public reception of information into deterministic conclusions, and without implying that the conclusions of text analysis conclude the audience's dispositions, the importance in studying the informational fragment itself lies in its presupposition of an ideal audience. As for the final choice (or not) in respect to the individual spectator is not discussed by the findings of this paper.

Discourse is the concept that connects the elements that constitute mediated texts. Discourse is understood as a social practice itself, taking place in a dialectical relation to other forms of the social:

> Language has a dual role in the socio-historical construct; it is socially shaped but it is also socially constitutive. Discourse, either reproduces or changes the social world, by reproducing or changing public representations of the social world and the classifications that underlie them (Fairclough 1995: 182).

Collective memory, identity formation and political consensus - or radicalisation - are based on shared imaginaries by different agents. Under a critical study of discourse, one can foreground the power relations upon which meaning is constructed as the power asymmetries - that in any case exist within competing social forces – which are reflected in the choices made upon the constitution of the argument.

The study of the discourse - according to which, a mediated context is constructed - responds to a question of 'how' this context was constructed. Instead of focusing strictly upon 'what' is being represented, or what is included and what is not, 'how' responds to more fundamental questions relating to the way 'what' is organised. A text is in any case constructed by its producers; they make the discursive choices applied and in that sense, the order of this discourse is then organised according to those affiliations and communicative strategies that guide the logic of each different text (Plantinga 1997).

According to Fairclough (2006), the official (that is, related to government, or authorities) discourses of the war on terror are characterised by a number of themes that suggest a 'new era' or 'new threats' that require 'new responses', due to the 'innumerable risks' the West is facing; it consists of polarised views of the world as separated between good and evil, Christian and Muslim, civilised and uncivilised. Fairclough suggests that such discourses collide with other discourses related to what is generally referred to as 'globalisation'.

Under a broad and acknowledged generalisation, there are two major theoretical departing discourses that widely attempt to offer explanations – each one for different and varied reasons among different groups or social forces - upon the 'war on terror'. The one related to Hudington's 'clash of civilisations' which is generally closer to the more conservative approaches upon the issue, and another that is related to a 'clash of fundamentalisms', a term attributed to Tarric Ali and which is related to more liberal voices.

How does the issue of human rights connect to terrorism and media representations then? Some of the major actual effects of the war on terror (or the points of its 'visibility' to the Western realm) is within the increased focus on surveillance, policing, military preparations or legislative restrictions that began taking place shortly after the 9/11 events; for instance, US policies have brought in emergency measures that vary from different cut backs in internal civil rights, liberties and freedoms, intensification of militarisation, loss of work places and labour rights, to disregard of international law (Kellner 2005).

Fairclough (2006) notes that, even though terrorism pre-existed as a social phenomenon, an important part of contemporary terrorism can be seen as produced by and as an effect of the war on terror. The dispersed character of terrorism as a practice became more coherent to the public opinion, through the operationalisation of counter terrorist discourses. And this is the point where the media play their role.

The broad research questions raised then are the following:

How are different discourses of terrorism organised as a solid argument?

How is their relation with issues of rights reflected upon those discourses?

How do they differentiate from other (conflicting) discourses?

How do they acquire legitimacy for their claims or arguments?

How is 'change' organised in relation to 'rights' in each context?

2. The empirical case: The London bombings of 7/7/2005 in Channel 4's 'Dispatches' series

2.1 Documentary and historical representation

The interest in this sort of cultural production lies primarily in the very nature of documentary as a genre; it has the purpose of representing the historical world and of responding to the audience's epistephilic concerns. A basic viewers' expectation is that the documentary bears a close relation to the historical world; this then leads to a common sensual understanding of a logic cause/effect linkage between sequences and events along with the gratification in the end of knowledge acquired from viewing of it. These two public anticipations are internally related, as they deal with an acquirement of a 'historic lesson'.

In Ellis' (2002: 53) words, documentary 'is based on a fallacy and exists due to a desire'. The fallacy is related to its claims upon truth and the desire is that of the public for 'complete' information on a particular issue; in contrast to fiction, documentary seeks to represent events as 'reality'. But how, or under which perspective is this 'reality' defined? The writing of history has been to a large extent a political construction and the contribution of documentary in this sense is crucial in terms of the political stance it deploys, even by often denying its political role. Van Leeuwen (2004) observes that a great deal of contemporary political discourse can be found more in the broader film industry than in newspapers or parliamentary debates. In that sense then, documentary reflects dominant discourses of society as claims for objectivity imply a belief in the evident nature of things; as such they may entrench political assumptions relating to the legitimacy of market economy, the confidence in experts, and the distrust in dissidents. In those cases 'objectivity then masks the institutional face of authority itself' (Nichols 2001: 142).

2.2 The genre

Dispatches is a weekly series of films produced and broadcasted by Channel 4, presenting one story in each episode. The themes are related to 'current' issues of popular political and social agendas, central to the UK.

Although self acknowledged as a documentary show, the program seems to balance between a documentary film, a television series, or an additional news program. As Ellis notes, television genres are flexible enough to mix and

provide new creative possibilities. This is a characteristic of the changing nature of television today and its continuous adaptation to new social, technological and public challenges. At the same time, the new creative hybrids are able to perform new roles other than their traditional generic one, which respond to further demands of either the industry or the public. Its antecedent genre, 'docusoaps' have been quite popular in the Anglo-American world in the 1990s as a hybrid of traditional observational documentaries and soap operas, focusing on 'light' or everyday subjects for entertaining purposes. The genre started losing its popularity by the end of that decade giving way to more 'serious' or committed documentary series instead. In this sense, the new genre has strong elements of the traditional foundations of documentary, enriched by new stylistic choices, performance, the filmmaker's presence and entertainment (Bruzzi 2000).

The solemnity that is aimed to be regained is obvious at the short web introduction of the series; this is not marketed as entertainment, but rather it aims to mobilise the passivity of spectators and turn them from 'couch potatoes' to active recipients. 'Activeness' though, does not escape the zone of spectatorship.

> Dispatches documentaries give you an in-depth look at news stories. The documentaries take you behind the scenes to give you an insight into people's lives or institutions. *You will see stories that will shock and disturb you.* If you are moved to take action and *promote change*, check out our *Get Active* sections or e-mail the Prime Minister.

The particular episode of *Dispatches* was produced immediately after the London bombing events and was broadcasted twice in the UK, on Monday 8 August at 8pm and on Friday 12 August, 4.10am on 2005. It was also broadcasted in other European countries with Denmark's TV2 among them. It lasts for approximately one hour.

In short, the film examines:

a) The tracking of movements of personal cases of Muslim clerics who arrived in the UK a decade prior to the bombings, under a conspicuous governmental tolerance. It explores the pre 7/7 plots outside the UK and the 'shift inwards', the plotting against Britain within a period of 10 years time, where according to the film's internal logic, is when 'everything started', due to the beginning of the influx of a diverse group of asylum seekers.

b) The impact and penetration of religious propaganda within the British Muslim community over that decade in relation to the bombings.

The particular event had taken place only a couple of weeks before the production of the film (or episode) and was still 'hot' when the documentary was broadcast.

2.3 The analytical paradigm

The analytical paradigm used is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) orientated to Fairclough and Chouliaraki (1999). CDA provides a well

organised paradigm that operates on the acknowledgment of the social dynamic of discourse, and reflects the actual social challenges that discourse represents, instead of retaining a more normative perspective that is limited only to semiotic or linguistic considerations.

Any reference to text in this case study includes both the visual and the verbal. Those different forms of signs compose the meaning regimes of the text. The meaning is always incomplete and controversial as those articulations of verbal and visual are constantly re-routed within different semantic locations. Combined, the visual and the verbal are primarily viewed as sophisticated constructs of technological and political – in a broad sense - choices, which weigh differently upon different issues the text deals with.

The CDA paradigm will be applied

a) To deconstruct the context in its grammatical, syntactic and semantic features, as a way to conceptualise the hybridity of the text, the different discourses that are articulated within it and the exclusions that those hybrid references disclose (Fairclough 2003). Texts are hybrid constructions of various references. They later become secondary attributes to the different meanings of different texts in order to support each text's broader claims. This procedure, though, usually prioritises particular meanings or truth effects that are closer to the interests or morals of the text producer. The semantic exclusions that a text entails relate to hegemonic concerns that occur while the 'closing' of a meaning is attempted.

b) With respect to the mediation of historicity as social explanation and as chronotopic study (Chouliaraki 2006); mediation is the parameter that activates the meanings of the text, and at the same time, organises the imaginative assertion of 'truth' while chronotopic examination organises the 'space' and 'time' where history is structured by representation. Those dimensions analytically define the way that legitimacy is proposed for the arguments explained.

3. Deconstructing the text

3.1 Categories of analysis

The analytical categories that will be examined are the stylistic choices, the generic structure, and the audiovisual resources deployed by the film's discourses. Those categories will sketch out the major discourses that organise the meanings of the film; the latter will be discussed in relation to the initial theoretical framework and research questions.

3.1.1 Style

The film unfolds in everyday language as a 'story'. The deployment of colloquial language in a storytelling manner points out the targeted public. This relates to a middle or a working class one; 'Stories for those who, because of their social status and education are denied the power of exposition, while

exposition is for those who have been given the right to participate in the debates that may change society' *(*van Leeuwen 1987: 199*)*.

The story is being narrated by journalist Deborah Davis and unfolded within a 10 year time flashback that – according to the film - took for the bombings to occur on British soil. This is done in a cinematic retrospective manner, where evidence is anchored around dates of events throughout that decade, supported by expert discourse, interviews of witnesses from various sorts of origin and visual documentation of past events of official and unofficial origin that relate to the time's present (2005) situation.

The entire mode of the documentary representation possesses the potential to have a conscious raising effect that carries on throughout the film's duration. This organises its claim for resolution of the crisis for the organisation of a better future after the conclusions of a historic lesson. This is further supported by the expository and uncompromising style of the text that additionally organises the roles of the agents in the film.

Commonsense is organised with narration, exposition and evaluation (Nichols 1991). These aim to establish a regime of truth over the ground of the very appealing notion of commonsense knowledge that relates to what the film organises as 'us'.

3.1.2 The verbal and the visual

Discourses are constituted by the visual and the verbal as semantic entities. They are formed by a variation of resources (historical, technical, political, expert, witness) articulated in response to the 'why' question initially addressed. This articulation is accomplished in an appealing way, while the film's own structure (the organisation of its rhetorical strategies and stylistic choices) linger unseen (Nichols 1991).

How is this response though constituted in terms of the agency of the events discussed? What a critical approach reveals is a number of semantic reductions done in terms of the actors and the processes expressed in those events. The use of passive voice, the use of nominal and possessive pronouns ('we', 'our') and adverbs of place ('here'), or generic and abstract references of social processes ('poverty') 'ground' participants in the static order (Kress and Leeuwen 1996) of social hierarchy, as common sense. Common sense though fails to respond adequately to the complexity of history. The film touches upon history but avoids getting further involved with it. As a consequence, the explanations offered provide hints for those issues they surpass. An example of semantic absences in text is the following extract of the film:

> O.B.Laden had already helped to kick the Russians out of Afghanistan. But the British authorities didn't change their policy because they still didn't consider the West is under threat.

Who did he help to 'kick out the Russians'? Wasn't it the US itself in the Cold War era, aiding the Taliban against the Soviet Union (instead of 'the Russians') in Afghanistan? The geopolitical map of interests though has changed since then. The absences are considered as semantic entities and

social processes that become subsumed within preferable ones, or exist in a marginal form within the text. This process underlies the exclusions by the very imaginary order of the events proposed by the film, and it provides an insight on the issues that order cannot deal with (Calhoun 2004).

Asymmetries also characterise the management of the visual resources. There are semantic entities hypermediated, where available representational resources are used in their plurality to create a greater impact, and therefore establish a rather 'immediate' connection to the public (Chouliaraki 2006) upon the proximity of the danger and the agency involved with the threat. Representations of emergency are intensified through particular camera and editing choices (blurred focus, poor sound quality, rough camera movements, and distant shots unable to provide informational or aesthetic grounds). Frustration in style augments a feeling of inability to foresee or intervene in the course of the historic events.

At the same time though, the visual support of the claims broadens the distance to 'other' sufferings introduced that relate to 'our' or better, to any Western responsibility to their causes. In a macro scale, those explanations term the political actions and social dispositions that make a claim on reality and introduce emotional and cognitive potential to the meanings of the text. The asymmetry between the representation of conflicting parties is covered by intellectual and complex professional montage that reduces any Western responsibility into a generalisation of *'what is happening in the world'*; whereas the visual representation of terrorists is accompanied with sound and video effects. Elements of the world from separate points of origin are organised together. This urges publics to follow the logic of the text, putting aside earlier assumptions or knowledge about the world.

3.1.3 The generic constitution

According to Bill Nichols, documentary is generically organised as narration, exposition, evaluation. Analytically deployed, this guideline may deconstruct the text as follows in an example on a sample of the body of the text:

Narration: 'During the '90s, waves of different nationalities found sanctuary here'.

Exposition: the visual; hypermediated images of intrusion; the face of a religious radical clergy dominating a dark background that is constituted by an image of the London Bridge and dots in the map of London that trace his physical settlement in the city.

Figure 1. Intrusion visually exposed

Narration: 'Political activists, many escaping from persecution from places like Algeria, Egypt and S. Arabia. They used London as a base to continue their struggle against their own governments'.

Evaluation: 'At the time, the British authorities probably thought that policy was quite smart. (the visual: footage of bureaucratic work) It was almost a mutual understanding. The Arab radicals were free to plot all they like, provided that they didn't threat us. And of course, Britain was not a target. London was far too useful as a hub for their activities. And you don't foul your own nest. Preachers, plotters, fighters were all allowed in'.

Those genres are later organised in chains of subgenres, consisting of interviews, personal and official statements and archival footage of diverse aspects of the war on terror. They propose a world view under the gravity of the terror events of the previous decade in a genealogy of offensives that resulted in the London bombings. London has a centripetal position as all those other attacks are exhibited to have been either plotted in London or related to the extremist activities based in London.

The generic constitution grounds the main focuses of the documentary's argument. Their point of departure is the historical moment under which the 'shift' of the Arab extremists took place 'inwards' against Britain, which was used as their operational centre for strikes against other parts of the world. That moment occurred after the British involvement in the war against Afghanistan. *Britain* is presupposed as having a conscious part in this conspiracy a 'deal' with the terrorists: '*It was almost a mutual understanding*'.   This implication signifies further the rationalisation of events into particular meanings.

3.2 Identifying the discourses: The layers of 'a problem'

Introduced by expert discourses, the crisis is explained in terms of a 'problem' a formulation broadly used in this film, describing particular aspects of terrorism:

The first sign of the problem erupted was in Paris, exactly 10 years ago. A July day, a crowded train with a bomb in the carriage seems dreadfully familiar. In the following months, there were more attacks in the Paris metro. Overall, 12 people killed, 300 were injured.

The term 'terrorism' itself is avoided and used in very few and secondary descriptions of details around the events (i.e. 'Algerian terrorists'). The 'problem' is then organised in different layers of meaning, departing from the historical semiotics of terrorist attacks, with their roots anchored and diffused in the everyday realm of the British capital city. Under this gravity, the problem is analytically identified in the following main themes.

3.2.1 The West is under threat

The physical setting of the 'problem' is located in London, presented as 'Al Qaeda's main communication hub', 'a nest' where 'the terrorists were allowed to settle so comfortably' or simply as 'Londonistan' - a term used in the film by French counter terror squads and authors mentioned (Dominique Thomas; Melanie Phillips) to describe the settlement of Arab dissidents in the city on the grounds of asylum seeking. The visual display of London is hypermediated through a variety of effects which suggest a 'making strange' effect on the familiar (Nichols 1991). London as a 'hub' or a 'nest' becomes visually disturbed by plotters that live and move among - yet on the side of - the ordinary.

Figure 2. The hypemediated iconicity of London as a hub, or 'Londonistan'

As an operational centre, London establishes a high sense of immediacy towards the viewer; it is a zone of risk.

What is targeted by London as an operational centre then? The reporter announces that 'The West is under threat' as a causal explanation of globally dispersed terror events that preceded the London bombings; though appearing only once in text, this reference is crucial as it relates to existing dominant discourses of the war on terror project, introducing the current historical phase marked by a 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington).

At the same time, no historical explanation behind 'the attack on the West' is being given. The absence of a causal actor described in nominal phrases as the above (by who is it under threat?), introduce a fatality of something self-existing, or self evident. This is explicitly used for the activity of the extremists, where explanations over 'plotting' are substituted by technical information on their movements, rather than, for instance, any serious attempt to discuss their motivations, or to relate to political discussions by

Western theorists over the structural causes of terrorism, the role of the West on the 'war on terror' and so forth (Chomsky among others). 'Anger' surfaces as a prime reason in the text behind the radicalisation of Muslims; it is hierarchically located in the top of a series of reduced social processes, such as poverty, or *problems*[1].

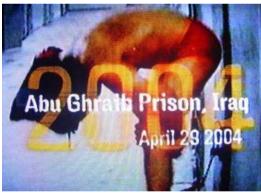## 3.2.2 'What is happening in the world'

'What is happening all over the world' is initially met in the text within a cautious statement of an expert in Islamic studies. The absence of an agent of 'what is happening' organises later the clause around Muslim youth which is introduced in the discussion of radicalism. What is happening in the world then is a secondary feature of the main semantic entity, which is the radicalisation of youth:

> … and then on the other side you have of course those who are more integrated and settled, but the political aspects of *what is going on in the world*, with foreign policy in particular, really *disturbs them*.

The clause is later picked up in the film by the reporter and deployed in the same abstract context of nominalisation that denies the relation of British policy to global politics[2].

Figure 3. Visual representation of 'what is going on in the world'

Due to their global impact, the issues of the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, the Guantanamo prison and the Abu Graib prison tortures could not remain unmentioned. In the films' economy, the gravity of those events is rather placed upon the insurgent video production, over the insurgents' propaganda usage of the impact of those events to humans. Such a management, though, displays the suffering images as means to promote religious fanaticism. The victims, although exhibited, remain colloquial figures of a marginal, insurgent material, unintegrated (van Leeuwen 1996) to the film's own aesthetic or ethics. The victims are part of a 'Muslim suffering'. As such, 'suffering', a process suffocated in a nominal, becomes textually void, subordinated as proof with no use of its own, to the factual coherence of the film's core argumentation.

Figure 4. Hypermediacy through anachronic and anatopic juxtapositions: mystification of suffering

3.2.3 Manifested outcry: 'The people' vs. 'the government'

Since 9/11, all major presidential speeches upon the war on terror emphasise the need to defend 'our values' or 'our lifestyle' (Fairclough 2004). The frequent use of nominal and possessive pronouns as well as adverbs of place focus upon a conscience-raising effort on the grounds of national unity. 'We' is emphasised to demonstrate unity of the British as sufferers of the attack. But which 'British' in particular out of all the different ethnical communities that inhabit Britain? This remains unclear, although a line that estranges the Muslim community is vaguely drowned from the start of the film, with the previous narrative and visual exhibition of 'images of horror and carnage cut to a religious chant'. The British nationality of this group is being reminded even though it appears at the margins of the national unity.

> 'The rules have changed' said T. Blair on Friday 'We are going to root out extremism'. But is it ten years too late?

The government is exposed in irony, as inefficient to activate itself in the face of threat and judge upon its perennial efforts in the aftermath of the events.

> At the time, the British authorities *probably* thought that policy was quite smart. Uncovering the plot to blow this place up *must have* given the British authorities a real shock.

The adverb 'probably' in line with the 'must have' of the next sample suggests presupposition, incorporating the distance between the people and the far away 'centres' that manufacture political decisions. The position of the reporter is also verified in those statements as one of 'us', *the people* that bear those decisions.

> It was *almost a mutual* understanding. The Arab radicals *were free* to plot all they like, provided that they didn't threat us. And of course, Britain was not a target. London was far too useful as a hub for their activities. And you don't foul your own nest. Suddenly the Arab radicals *they had allowed to nest* so comfortably in London weren't just plotting attacks to far off places, now they turned inwards.

'Britain' is conspicuous as having a conscious part in a 'deal' with the terrorists: 'It was almost a mutual understanding'. The film though does not go so far as to openly address such a deceit. But it sequences the events in a manner as 'to speak of themselves':

> Finally on Friday (5/8) T. Blair said he would take action. But there's been a decade of government policy which allowed extremists to pour out their message of hate. And we've witnessed the result.

3.3 Resolving the riddle: The internal connection of discourses and their meaning making affordances

A number of issues have been touched by the film. Through a critical glance then, how are they organised as a solid argument? And how does this respond to that big 'why' proposed and what does this suggest against the crisis? Or, how is this argument operationalised in relation to discourses that demand action or change? The interrelation of those questions can provide a better vision of the imaginary construction and resolution of 'the problem'.

To respond to such questions, it might be useful to attempt to reconstruct the argument as a whole. What is the reason behind the attacks? A great discussion relates the events to the broader historical and global context of the war on terror. But this responds only peripherally to the question of the bomber's motives that that 'why' proposes. Why did this occur then? No sufficient explanation is given upon that and as such, the argument serves the notion of conspiracy, as it contributes to the 'self explanatory' base of the motivation of the plotters as irrational fanatics, while minimizing alternative discourses to the interpretation of events. The 'monster', or the 'lunatic' are stressed as protagonists but never to the point where monstrosity can relate to structural (Cottle 2006) concerns to society as a whole.

Historicity is explained to a public that is imaginary, organised according to the social agents such an economy identifies; in that sense, the 'addressees' of the film are primarily the British people as a homogenous whole. The extensive use of 'we' affiliates the presenter as one of the audience. Homogeneity is defined by the common suffering and appears cracked by the British Muslim community, members of which provided the operational part of the attacks: 'In May these Britons chanted for their country to be bombed'. Nevertheless, the 'actual' perpetrators of the events (as identified by the film, the militants and the foreign clergy) are not addressed by the documentary as 'they are deemed beyond argument' (Billig 1998: 115).

By anchoring upon plotting, historical narration inevitably falls into particular events that are somewhat inconsistent with the linear structure plotting proposes. Inevitably due to their global impact, the events of the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, the Guantanamo camp or the Abu Graib prison tortures could not remain unmentioned. Their treatment though is somehow asymmetrical in relation to the previous descriptions of the terrorist offensives. A cinematic sublime then substitutes explanation of war, through a hypermediated representation of aesthetic audio visual performance. Different features, images and meanings mark a semantic linkage to the

breeding of terrorism within Britain. The review of such is reminiscent to a sort of 'tribute', while neither any comment is provided over the global opposition the same events provoked, nor the implications over the international law are being discussed after incidents like the trespass of the Security Council and the UN decisions against the intrusion of Iraq, or the Geneva conviction over the treatment of prisoners of war; there is no reference to existing alternative discourses over 'what is going on in the world'.

The British involvement in the war on terror - though initially suggested (even with a distance drawn) - is finally denied as a sufficient reason behind the attacks. 'But over one issue there was no argument: the suffering of the Muslims all over the world; *Ask about that and it doesn't matter if Britain is involved, the outrage just erupts*'. Instead, the film persists on the role of particular key figures of Islamic fundamentalist clergy; this suggestion anchors to conspiracy as a basic rational theme. This way, the events are sequenced 'to speak of themselves' and produce the particular form of governmental 'challenge' it poses.

This form of 'challenge' is related to civic issues that fundamentally recount to the historical provision of political asylum by Britain. Asylum seekers consist of a varying population ranging from torture victims, political and humanitarian refugees, artists, and activists among others. Yet, this institutional resort against oppressive and totalitarian regimes is being represented as a commodity of luxury or a free space for continuous plotting. The asylum seekers themselves are also darkened by the discursive dominance of extremists and are deprived of bearing different motivations than plotting[3]. Yet, even though appearing 'strict' towards the government, even suspicious towards the 'soft', 'indolent' body of the state (Kelner 1995), the filmmaker cannot avoid affiliating with the government's official line that the war had nothing to do with the bombings.

The suffering', 'the involvement of Britain', 'the outrage' that 'just erupts' all coexist reduced in a semantic hybridity of simplificisms. Such an accumulation of meanings evolve around the very, already morally reduced form of 'anger'; anger then, as a new entity is subsumed under the broader theme of 'the problem'. 'Anger' as a motive rises also, but has no substantial ground other than a fate and it appears as a psychopathology of such. 'Anger' over their situation surfaces as a prime reason in the text behind the radicalisation of Muslims hierarchically located in the top of a series of other nominalisations of processes, such as poverty, or problems.

A certain '*Muslim suffering*' is progressively introduced as a reason behind the attacks. This claim though, faces contradictions and provides a particular moment of tension in the film. The agents of the Muslim suffering can be located as victims, perpetrators and persecutors (Chouliaraki 2006). The victims exist in the non-space (Bauman 2000) of a distant place of action, part of a common fate of those who bear '*what is going on in the world*'. The perpetrators, who relate to the role of the coalition force of the war on terror, though implied, are not clarified and instead are put into the same fatalist distant activity that 'goes on in the world' in which the victims are placed too. The alleviators of the 'Muslim suffering' are: a) the extreme religious voices; b) the ordinary Muslims from the British community. The alleviators are the

closer ones to 'us' being spectators and therefore a great deal of the film's resources focus upon it. Experts, unofficial footage, background information, interviews with a broad range of both subcategories attempt to present a complex examination of potential alleviatory action upon that suffering, or their relation to what is being referred as 'the problem'.

The 'suffering of Muslims' has no persecutor. It rather bears an animistic character, of a physical response that belongs to the attributes of the physical world. This meaning is operationalised in a new context that proposes reflexives of fear over retaliation, other than sympathy and identification. Polarisation is suggested in the editing of the different texts; yet such is presented by its exposition as a characteristic of 'the other', the Muslim extremists and not of 'us'. They are the persecutors and the suffering images displayed only from the point of view of their usage as a means to promote religious fanaticism. The victims, although exhibited, remain colloquial figures of a marginal, insurgent material, unintegrated (Van Leeuwen 1996) to the film's own aesthetic or ethics. The victims are part of a 'Muslim suffering'; a process which emerges out of the translation, condensation and simplification (Harvey 1996) of those texts, that composes the course of 'radicalisation' of British Muslims and therefore adds a component to a particular rhetoric on the origins of what is promoted as the greatest modern threat: terrorism[4].

'The problem', initially met in text as a macroscopic description of terrorist activity, in the microcosm of the Muslim settings in the UK, here, is relocated in generalizations over insufficiently explained life conditions. The 'problem' is relocated, endorsing the same agent behind a different aspect of it (poverty). Poverty appears to be a constitutive element of a negative identity, as 'it took a terrorist attack to focus public opinion on what it is to be a Muslim'. In this way, the Muslims are being confronted as a whole, as part of a social pathology, for which they are primarily responsible (Kellner 1995). The dimensions of 'the problem' then constitute the rationale upon which the processes of 'change' will be built.

The management of Muslim community surfaces, with a primary focus on British Muslim youth; both the government and the very community officials bear responsibility over it. The radical shift of the documentary is towards the very youth of the Muslim community instead of more fundamental reasoning. And it is the community itself that bears the responsibility over its own lack of internal discipline[5] and the government for not being stricter in the first place. The Muslim community is invited to a national unification against those intruder voices that mislead youth and endanger the public safety.

The ending of the film provides a 'to be continued' suggestion, after a juxtaposition of the two main figures of Muslims[6]. In the way put, the second becomes the most powerful, as the first voice is emotional and outraged by a youth already pictured in the despair of Burnley. The end suggests an imaginary objectification of the potential terrorist attack target space. And in this way, it pre-empts the future (Dowd 2004).

5.4 Conclusions: A 'change' that challenges 'rights'

The film proposes a chronicle reconstruction of the course of events that lead to the London bombings, narrated from historical and factual evidence. Theoretically, it appears to adopt the explanations provided by the theorists of 'the clash of civilisations', or 'Londonistan' that attempt to interpret the post Cold War historic antagonisms. Their arguments are juxtaposed and intertextually located in the film, operationalised by its discourse; in this way the theories become dynamic and verified by the historical facts presented.

A number of issues can be critically raised over the exclusions that a non critical adoption of a theory poses. To begin with the initial questions raised, *legitimacy* is acquired primarily by the denunciation of the event; the discourses of national unity stress upon the threat over societal values and interests and demand transparency and drastic change, things that were not granted by the government. The government's 'inefficiency' becomes the base of the documentary's argumentation; everything happened due to a political deficit to act drastically against the known threats that were boiling within the country. This hypothesis, though, may further serve a legitimating process of new institutional law and order responses in the expense of civic and human rights and to various discrimination practices among targeted groups and populations (Cottle 2006).

Civil rights that have a profound historical place within the constitution of freedom of speech in Britain are being colloquially disputed and challenged as reasons behind the catastrophe. Anticipation upon governmental adequate action is evident. The state is still on the safe side and is expected to finally get to 'work' under the stress of national righteousness. This is a practice engaged in cinematic production in the US after the defeat in the Vietnam war, in order to promote a sense of national pride and a need of re-establishment of dominant societal forces of gender, race and class over subordinate ones in a manner related to an individualist ethic is proposed in the Thatcher-Reganite simulation of former counter-cultural non-conformity radicalism, into figures of individual entrepreneurialism, hostile to the dysfunctional conventions of the state (Kellner 1995). In this documentary then, civic rights are pictured under this morally diminished context. But if argumentatively, this stands poor, how is it actually put in effect?

Psychological realism - a traditional feature of documentary film - balances the familiar and the strange throughout the film. The familiar or proximal may lay in the exhibition of the poor suburbs of Burnley and the working class ethnic British youth at the takeaway restaurant. At the same time though, the familiar is also extended to reveal its darker and unknown sides; those are exhibited through the voyering glance of a hidden camera at the window of a car, that travels in the background of those locations where insurgency is breeding. Those images wrapped together with the samples of extremist preaching, maintain the distance towards what cannot be acknowledged and admitted within the culture that engenders it (Sartre); indeed insurgent acts appear to be 'boiling' there. Such anxiety might also be raising from class conflict worries of a society of commodity relations. All presidents conducting the war against terror stressed the necessity to keep consuming in order to maintain 'our way of living'. The semiotic of the car, as an individualist

possession and consumer value, becomes a safety getaway, a screen through which 'we' will escape. This sort of ride becomes reminiscent of Foucaultian descriptions of family visits to the exhibited insanity in the cages of 17th century asylums. The sublime though may be breeding moral panics that urge for 'biographic solutions on structural contradictions' (Bauman 2000: 38).

This economy also proposes the management of difference in the context of cultural homogeneity. The figure of Muslim primarily is pictured in mysteriocity; it embodies potential: primarily of evil and chaos and horror, of outraged 'eruption' in the British society. Secondarily the 'pragmatism' of a potential discipline and control of the Muslim community is projected, after an analysis of its dynamic and motivation; the second potential poses responsibility and alertness to prevent future threats Issues on 'management' of the community and most importantly, to effectively control it's youth. As Deleuze (1990) points out, control is short term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit, while discipline was of long duration, infinite and discontinuous. The film itself tries to establish such a communicative relation as insisting on its persistence in monitoring suspicious activities within the mosques for years.

Though exhibited, repression in the form of economic deprivation is subsumed within the discourses that expose the motives of the bombers. Under a series of exclusions, 'anger' as a physical state provides the reason behind the attacks. In that sense, the main picture focuses upon the suffering of the victims of the bombings, with the 'other' suffering as an attribute or a misunderstanding due to the very poor conditions of existence they are facing. In the same line, material deprivation within the UK is viewed rather as potentially offensive instead of a social and human problem. Repression of the human rights then, even if not negated, are presented within the distance of a war zone where not actors are involved, remains as fate or a physical attribute of 'some' people. In this sense, *'what is going on in the world'* becomes barely an area that is at stake, but rather marks an existing reality, that people have to learn to adjust to it. A sense of inevitability provides a fatalist suggestion, on something as distant and inexplicable as natural phenomena or generally forces that humans cannot overcome. Difference is drawn primarily through necessity; 'What goes on in the world' is too distant for people to be involved with and at the same time, 'we' need to protect ourselves from future threats. In relation then to any critique upon the anti terror legislation and civil rights circumvention, with the rights having been negated as a commodity the terrorist used stricter legislative changes are presented as necessary and long anticipated by the public. Which public? The public presupposed by the film, the imaginary public on behalf – or as a part of which, the filmmakers speak of.

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[1] i. 'This is Burnley.

(Shots from a car driving of empty poor narrow streets and small houses, abandoned and burned houses, miserable backyards –strange sound effects as well).

The people here say their problems have been ignored for years. *It's taken an act of terrorism to focus public opinion on what it is to be a Muslim.*

A similar phrase is met later though in the documentary, in a different discourse and with a different meaning. But particular semiotics of extract 1, paraphrase information taken from extract number 2, over what 'people here say'; what was stated in a different text by a representative of a moderate Muslim agency on youth, is recontextualised and adapted to a new setting, simplified, biased in a dubious generalisation (Fairclough 2003).

ii. *I think that the war against terror has sort of marginalised people and that does give fertile ground for terrorists to recruit others to their cause.* (3/4 face frontal shot).

So I think Western governments have made terrorism worst. People are really angry, their actual saying: 'why did it have to take a terrorist attack for everyone to want to know what Muslims are thinking?'

'Anger' is mentioned in both, but in a different context. Most of the themes mentioned in the second passage are taken up in the first's own regime of meanings (Chouliaraki 2006). But in a semantically altered way, even if the lexical semiotics appear similar.

² Sample of interview with moderate Imam:

-Why haven't you controlled the extremists within your own community?

-Nobody actually leads them, or tells them to do this barbaric act. It was the environment of what was going on in the world. They learned from them and reacted from them according to what they learned from them.

-I am sorry but that is actually not true. There have been very influential people within Britain, like Omar Bakri, Abu Qatada. And these speakers have operated within Britain for at least 10 years and no-one in the Muslim community has tried to stop them. Why not?

And later on:

-When Tony Blair says that Iraq has nothing to do with the London bombs, then what is your reaction?

-I think now, every average sensible person will say 'this is rubbish".

³ Some examples of expert discourse in the text upon the issue that discusses the reasons behind the existence of Islamist extremists in London include:

Alexis Debat (historian):

'People like Qatada are actually on the record saying 'no, no, we knew what the red line was, we were very careful not to cross it. And people were very happy. London is a major financial centre, it's a major transit point for a lot of money coming out of the Middle East. London was a major part of the infrastructure at the time.'

Jean Louis Bruglere, anti-terror service, France:

'A number of people fled to the UK. Why UK? Because UK was attractive. It was known to protect freedom of expression more than anything else and it was a pleasant country where to live. So for various reasons, Britain was a highly priced destination.'

Also:

During the '90s, waves of different nationalities found sanctuary here.

Political activists, many escaping from persecution from places like Algeria, Egypt and S. Arabia. They used London as a base to continue their struggle against their own governments.

At the time, the British authorities probably thought that policy was quite smart.

It was almost a mutual understanding. The Arab radicals were free to plot all they like, provided that they didn't threat us. And of course, Britain was not a target. London was far too useful as a hub for their activities.

And you don't foul your own nest.

Preachers, plotters, fighters were all allowed in.

Later on, the reporter continues:

Wildsten Green, North London. In the '90's Khalid Al Fawwaz set up an office for the advice and reformation committee, the ARC, which was founded by O.B.Laden.

A near neighbour in this quite suburb was another Saudi dissident who fled to London because of our long tradition of political Asylum.

4 'When channel 4 filmed under covered at the Mosque, propaganda videos were being showed for the GIA, one of the major terrorist groups of Algeria.

These kinds of videos are emotional and powerful. Stirring up a real anger for the Muslim suffer worldwide. A previous 'dispatches' revealed how widely they circulate around Britain. (- images of Mosque from outside; hidden shots of people watching videos; the videos themselves: Islamic chants, audiovisual tape noise, violence over people, women crying, funerals, dead, dismembered bodies, armed militants embracing each other).

Dr Sajad Rizvi, I*slamic* studies, Exeter university:

'One is looking at Muslims who've been killed, dismembered bodies, and on the other side you've got the pictures of victorious attacks, whether it is on Russian soldiers in Chechnya, Indian soldiers in Kashmir, or wherever.

They are giving you a view of what is really like to be in combat. And this is something you should be involved in'. (-him talking; collage of insurgent videos, mines, car explosions, battle sound, cannons, chants, martyrs, weapons –low quality production).

Abu Abdullah –preacher:

'For me to watch this is not a crime in watching this, this is just showing me, by the mercy of the prophet Allah, who my enemies actually are. And I have to stop it'.

Those enemies did not include Britain, who had no direct involvement in any of these conflicts.

5 'One local Imam is very aware of how genuine anger on what is happening all over the world could allow young people to be influenced by more dangerous groups. Several years ago, at least 2 men from Burnley were killed in Afghanistan. And the driving force is not social deprivation, is global politics'.

-Why haven't you controlled the extremists within your own community?

-Nobody actually leads them, or tells them to do this barbaric act. It was the environment of what was going on in the world. They learned from them and reacted from them according to what they learned from them.

-I am sorry but that is actually not true. There have been very influential people within Britain, like Omar Bakri, Abu Qatada. And these speakers have operated within Britain for at least 10 years and no-one in the Muslim community has tried to stop them. Why not?

-If the government knows that these scholars, these organisations, these groups are doing wrong, then it is the government's responsibility to stop them.

6 Bilal Ahmed, Muslim, Burnley:

'If you asked any Muslim around here over the London bombings, every single one of them would say, 'we are all against this' y' know, you can't kill innocent people, it's just wrong.

These people who have done these are just cowards who want to give Islam a bad name.

What do they know what Muslims are feeling everyday when fingers are getting pointed to Islam?'

Abu Izzaden, preacher:

'Islam is superior... if we live in a society where Islam is not in the ruling system we need to work to change that'.

-What does that mean in practical terms? If Britain...

'It means that if there is a contradiction to the Islamic law with a British law, the British law can go to hell'.

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