



DARREN KELSEY

Newcastle University

Darren.kelsey@newcastle.ac.uk

Abstract

The 'Blitz spirit' is a popular story of Britain during the Second World War, uniting together with defiance to overcome the threat of invasion from Nazi Germany. This paper reviews the Blitz spirit as a myth before a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how this myth was retold in British newspapers after the July 7th bombings. I firstly analyse Blitz spirit discourses that evoked unity between Britain and America in the war on terror. I then argue that evocations of this myth became more complex, often criticising Tony Blair for his moral incompatibility with Second World War or Churchillian analogies. Both discursive positions used a myth that remembers and forgets details in a popular story from the past. This paper argues that whilst the Blitz spirit was a problematic feature of post-July 7th media, it did not serve one ideological purpose. Through a nuanced approach to Roland Barthes' model of myth, I argue that an ideological battleground occurred when a myth from the 1940s recurred in 2005.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Blitz spirit; July 7th; myth; Second World War; terrorism

1. Introduction

On July 7th 2005 four British citizens carried out suicide bomb attacks on London's public transport system, killing 56 people. This was the most costly terrorist attack on British soil since the Lockerbie bombing in 1988 and the worst single bombing attack on London since the Second World War. Amongst other discourses, British newspapers defined London as a stoic city that would respond as it did—according to popular memory—during the Second World War (Kelsey 2011). This popular story is known as the 'Blitz spirit':

It has a great script: a small gang of fiercely independent people refuse to cave in to the bad guys. The bad guys decide to punish the wilful defiance in an appalling show of might. Despite the hardships, the small gang becomes more tightly bound, laughs in the face of terror, takes everything the forces of evil can dish out and sends them packing. A simple story, but full of drama, full of powerful images and, for the British, scripted a long time before 1940 (Connelly 2005: 131).

This simple but powerful script has proved successful since its wartime production when the Ministry of Information's propaganda campaign was designed to sustain civilian morale (McClain 1979: 1). This paper provides a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Blitz spirit discourses that appeared in British newspapers after the July 7th bombings; I examine how this myth was constructed and the ideological role it played after the attacks.

Previous work in the field of CDA has examined constructions of national identity (Wodak et al. 1999; Bishop and Jaworski 2003). Bishop and Jaworski (2003) analysed the press reporting of England's match against Germany in the Euro 2000 championships. As they argue, 'in constructing the "nation", the press resort to a number of discursive strategies constructing and reinforcing national unity by invoking stereotypes, generic references, shared sporting and military history, and the timelessness of the nation spanning mythical past and indefinite future' (ibid: 244). Wodak's discourse-historical work has also considered how 'national narration' (see Hall in Wodak et al. 1999) constructs identity by evoking national consensus through memories, stories, rituals and traditions from the past. Fowler has described consensus as 'the affirmation and the plea of all political parties, expressed in appeals for "one-nation", for people to "pull together" and so on' (Fowler 1991: 16).

In this paper I scrutinise the origins of this story as a myth and how it was evoked after the bombings. I firstly consider how Second World War and Blitz spirit discourses legitimised a transatlantic alliance and supported military responses in the war on terror, often through a shared victim status between London and New York. However, I also show that Second World War discourses became more complex than a monolithic support for retaliatory responses and transatlantic unity. Blitz spirit discourses often ostracised Tony Blair and rejected his status as a respectable figure of British identity; Western foreign policy and the Blair-Bush alliance was criticised for its immorality in contrast to Churchill's superior status. Both discursive positions used a myth that remembers and forgets particular details of a story from the past. Through this analysis I develop a nuanced perspective on how Roland Barthes' model of myth can be applied to the Blitz spirit when it is retold in different historical contexts. This paper argues that whilst the Blitz spirit was a problematic feature of post-July 7th media coverage, it did not serve one ideological purpose. Rather, an ideological battleground occurred when elements of myth and popular memory were reused to define events in 2005.

Whilst this paper uses CDA to analyse media coverage after July 7th my theoretical framework draws on Roland Barthes' model of myth (1993) to provide some historical context to the myth of the Blitz spirit. Barthesian myth is not commonly used or studied within the field of CDA. This is perhaps understandable since there are close similarities between myth and discourse, which I return to shortly. But this paper shows how a discourse-historical approach (Wodak et al. 1999) to CDA can be used to examine discursive constructions of a story that has previously been examined through Barthes framework by those scholars I consider below (Calder 1991, 1999; Manthorpe 2006; Heartfield 2005; Ponting 1990, 1994). My approach to CDA explores constructions of the Blitz spirit myth, showing how this story from Britain's past was reused by journalists and politicians after July 7th. In both past and present contexts it is the ideological impact of this myth that I am concerned

with in this paper. Thus I firstly explain why the Blitz spirit has previously been defined as a myth before exploring its construction after the bombings in 2005.

2. *Myth and the Blitz Spirit*

Historians have reviewed the Blitz spirit as a myth; not as a lie about Britain's past, but a simplified version of events that suppresses less popular memories of the situation in Britain at the time. Angus Calder's work (1991) adopted Roland Barthes' model in proposing that revisions of the Blitz spirit should not assert accusations of untruth. Rather, examining myth involves reading beyond simplicity; addressing untold complexities that transcend and often conflict with a preferred version of events. As Jack Lule explains, 'myth upholds some beliefs but degrades others. It celebrates but also excoriates. It affirms but it also denies' (Lule 2001: 119). So Barthes' approach sees myth as a simplified representation of events:

In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (1993: 143).

According to this model, the simplifying and suppressive role of myth functions ideologically in the preferred messages it delivers. Alternative accounts of London in 1940 provide versions of events that complicate and contradict those popular accounts of the Blitz spirit. For example, Ponting explains that during the Blitz crime rates increased 'by nearly sixty percent during the war (three times the rate of annual increase before the war)' (1990: 142). The Blitz itself provided a chance for opportunist thefts and the police had to set up an anti-looting squad to try and curb the problem (ibid: 142). Due to the social disruption caused by the war, juvenile crime increased by forty-one percent in the year after the war started (ibid: 143). According to Panayi, 'some of the most systematic persecution of racial and ethnic minorities in recent history took place during the two world wars' (1995: 204). Calder explains that anti-semitism inflamed during the war, especially when 'better off Jews bought their way out of London' (1999: 167). Fascists would display anti-semitic graffiti on walls, blaming them for the war and hostility towards Jews often occurred in the shelters (ibid: 167).

Ponting challenges the image of class unity that is evoked in this myth. He describes Britain as a 'deeply divided and unequal society' in which the pressures of the war had a heavy impact on the poorest classes (1990: 138). He argues that while the east end was enduring a German bombing raid and civilians had taken cover in the local underground stations, numerous ministers and senior officials were enjoying the luxurious catering and accommodation of the Dorchester Hotel. As Curran and Seaton explain, some people were as opposed to the bureaucratic British administration in 1940 as to the Nazi's themselves (1997: 134). Addison refers to troops returning from fighting and holding politicians responsible their appalling experiences (1994:

107). Churchill's own judgement as a military leader has often come under scrutiny (Calder 1991, 1999; Ponting 1990). However, the popular myth does not account for criticisms of social divisions or Churchill's administration. Hence, I am concerned with a shift in historical applications of this myth; whilst military responses and national unity in the war on terror was evoked in one discourse, Blair did not necessarily drop into a Churchillian role and was not protected by the myth of a wartime leader. Rather, this myth often had a reverse effect and discussed the political context of the attacks in a way that other, less critical Blitz spirit discourses failed to do.¹

This paper does not suggest that a 'Blitz spirit' has never occurred during times of national crises. As Calder acknowledges, shops that had their front windows blown out would often open with signs out saying, 'More open than usual' or 'Blast!'. One pub opened with a sign saying, 'Our windows are gone but our spirits are excellent. Come in and try them' (1999: 174). To say that Britain showed no spirit or ability to cope would favour one particular meaning and provide an equally simplistic account, arguably proposing a reversed-myth. Examining myth involves addressing complexity rather than proposing an alternative 'reality'. When language is used to reproduce discursive conditions suitable for the retelling of popular stories it is the role of myth that 'legitimises and justifies positions. Myth celebrates dominant beliefs and values. Myth degrades and demeans other beliefs that do not align with those of the storyteller' (Lule 2001: 184). However, the ideological role of language is something that CDA scholars usually explore without any consideration of Barthes' work. Therefore, this paper acknowledges the similarities in these terms – myth and discourse – by considering scholarly work that has previously critiqued this myth in historical contexts (above) before using CDA to examine its construction in 2005 (below).

3. Methodology

A Barthesian approach to myth is similar to discursive analytical frameworks that consider language from a functionalist perspective (Fowler 1991; Simpson 1993; Fairclough 1995; Mayr 2008; Richardson 2007). Like myth, it is argued that discourse can restrict and allow certain discussions of a topic: 'just as discourse "rules in" certain ways of talking about a topic ... it "rules out", limits and restricts other ways of talking ... in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it' (Foucault in Hall 2001: 72-73). Discourse is therefore seen as 'a culturally and socially organized way of speaking' (Mayr 2008:7). Reading through myth – like Calder and Ponting do above – actually serves a similar purpose to scholars of CDA: they challenge dominant power relations and attempt to tackle social inequality (Van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 1995; Richardson 2007; Wodak et al. 1999; Wodak 2001, 2008). Wodak also considers discourse-historical traits by 'tracing the historical (intertextual) history of phrases and arguments ... and centres on political issues such as racism, integrating all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the different layers of a text' (2008: 9).

Similarly, Barthes argued that 'mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the "nature" of things' (Barthes 1993: 110).

Clearly then, there are significant similarities between theories and analyses of myth and discourse. In this paper I show that the tools of CDA can be used to deconstruct myth when a popular story from the past is retold after current events. Since retrospective work on the Blitz spirit has reviewed its construction through Barthes' model, I continue to interpret the origins of this myth through the same framework. However, when I examine how this myth reappeared in 2005, I apply the tools that a discourse-historical approach to CDA offers: by examining lexical extracts in terms of their textual, discursive and social contexts, CDA allows me to reconsider the nuanced and often contradictory references to a myth of popular memory from 1940.

Whilst the popular approach of Fairclough (1995) in previous linguistic analysis focuses on broader concerns regarding discursive and social practices, the textual focus of this paper is more concerned with the way that texts cover particular lexical fields and the socio-cognitive role (van Dijk 1998) they play in constructions of popular memory. It is the components of the latter that map out intertextual elements, which function to construct and reproduce familiar messages, signs and symbols of the Blitz spirit. Hence, this paper is focused on the semiotic-analytical approach offered through Barthes' model of myth. Since I am concerned with the ideological impact of myth, I share those interests of other approaches to CDA, which challenge discourses that reinforce inequality in social, economic and class relations (van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 1995; Richardson 2007). My approach to discursive practices focuses on textual and cognitive functions in the sense that 'authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text and ... how receivers of texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of ... texts' (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 69). This is particularly relevant in my approach since my analysis is concerned with myth, popular memory, and national narration; these elements reflect what Blommaert (1999: 5-6) refers to in systems of reproduction, reception and remembering, which affect the way that texts are produced and consumed since socio-historical and cultural mechanisms form discourses and produce meaning. Again, this differs to other approaches concerned with the literal, physical processes and practices of journalism and how a text is developed in a practical sense. The level at which I am concerned with social practice addresses what a text reflects about society and the subsequent implications it can have on society – this being a similar concern shared by scholars across various disciplines of CDA (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 1999, 2001, 2008; van Dijk 1998; Richardson 2007; Mayr 2008).

Although my framework is fundamentally 'critical' in its approach to discourse and CDA it does not tackle one ideological perspective. I apply Gramsci's approach to power (1971) in my approach since he accounts for the complexities of ideological negotiation. For Gramsci, ideology is more than a set of ideas that should be assessed according to the truth or falsity of their content. He argued that ideology manages social unification, which combines the interests of social classes and a hegemonic class is one that successfully combines multiple social interests, but still maintains its power and control of the dominant order (Gramsci 1971). His theory of hegemony does not offer an account of a monolithic, political narrative or system; it addresses 'a site of ideological struggle' (Allan 1999: 85) that seeks to gain consent for the dominant values and ideals at stake. Hegemony, therefore, 'involves the

winning of consent to the social order and particular directions which that social order may take' (Wayne 2003: 177). Gramsci recognised a complex unity in an elite superstructure that enables a ruling class to maintain social domination (Gramsci 1971). He argued that the ruling bloc would always maintain power as well as consent via the cultural and social institutions whose interests would converge in this complex unity. It is the complex unity evoked through discourse that I address below.

I gathered my sample through Nexis using the following search terms: 'Blitz' OR 'Second World War' OR 'World War Two' OR 'WW2'. My sample consisted of 257 newspaper articles from sixteen national British newspapers between July 8th and August 8th, 2005.² This sample includes the popular broadsheet and tabloid newspapers across Britain's mainstream market, accounting for centre-left and centre-right wing orientations. From those articles in the sample, this paper focuses on two discursive fields: evocations of unity between Britain and America in the war on terror through memories of the Second World War and praise for London's Blitz spirit; and criticisms of Blair's leadership that were also mobilised by Blitz spirit and Second World War analogies. I show that whilst the Blitz spirit myth often remained intact, the way it was reused often caused problems for Blair's image. I also examine the discursive context of a George Galloway article, which challenged the origins of the Blitz myth in 1940 as well as its use in 2005, considering this text's production and the paradoxical interests of Galloway writing in the *Mail on Sunday*. My approach here does not challenge Barthes' model of myth but it does develop and refine it since I look at the negotiable, ideological role of myth across different historical contexts.

4. Findings and Analysis

Admiration for London's historic ability to endure suffering and Britain's allegiance with America during the Second World War featured as mechanisms for elite sources evoking unity between these nations. Second World War analogies connoted a sense of hereditary unity; they served as a reminder of the Second World War when Britain and America's alliance helped defeat Nazi Germany. The political complexities of public opinion and divided opinion on Western foreign policy in the war on terror were overlooked through emotional bonds between London and New York and a 'special relationship' between Britain and America.

4.1 London and New York United: '7/7' as London's '9/11'

Bush's response to July 7th made an immediate vow to continue and win the war on terror. On July 12th an Independent headline said: 'Terror in London, We'll take fight to the enemy, says Bush' (Cornwell 2005: 10). Bush praised Londoners for their resilience: 'They have faced brutal enemies before. The city that survived the Nazi blitz will not yield in the face of thugs and assassins' (ibid: 10). Bush's praise for Londoners through the historical context of the Second World War connotes a previous time of (justified) alliance against a genuine, global threat. The rhetoric that Bush's speech drew on implied a sense of loyalty that should be maintained in the current political climate. Bob Tuttle, a long-term associate of Bush, made similar efforts to

legitimise the war on terror by evoking unity between the British and American public: “The resilience of Londoners is amazing – all Americans stand by them resolutely’. The new US ambassador to Britain, in his first interview, tells Con Coughlin that the transatlantic alliance will prevail in the war on terror’ (Coughlin, *Sunday Telegraph*, 24/7/05:19). Rudolph Giuliani expressed his support for London and took the opportunity to express an allegiance with America: ‘Rudolph Giuliani, the former mayor of New York who was America's hero on September 11, was visiting London on Thursday and immediately evoked the spirit of Winston Churchill and the Blitz’ (Harnden, *Sunday Telegraph*, 10/07/05:19). In one quote Giuliani said: ‘In a strange way, a lot of our response to September 11 was modelling ourselves on the people of London during the Second World War’ (ibid:19). The Second World War was used as a common point of reference for binding the two cities together. This is not just signifying a shared victim status, but also suggested that Britain and America were united in their response, as they were in the Second World War.

The Times on July 8th printed a letter that Giuliani sent to London. Another quote added: ‘My heart goes out to the brave people of London affected by the terrorist bombings in the city. I cannot help but be reminded of the events in New York City on September 11, 2001’ (Giuliani 2005: 9). Implicitly, associations of political unity even occurred in discursive efforts to compare Livingstone with Giuliani during his response to the bombings. *The Mirror* on July 9th said: ‘And the Mayor, in a rallying call to Londoners reminiscent of New York's Rudolph Giuliani after 9/11, urged them to show they would not be cowed by the bombers’ (Roberts 2005: 9). This relied on the concept that Britain was enduring what New York had been through and that the two countries were ‘in it together’. Giuliani’s approach relies on the admiration of London’s Second World War generation to imply that the same response is needed from Britain and America in the present: ‘I’ve mentioned many times that in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, I viewed the people of London during the air attacks of the Second World War as a model for how to remain courageous and strong during times of great trouble’ (2005: 9). Giuliani spoke on behalf of New Yorkers, stating: ‘New Yorkers feel particular empathy, just as Londoners showed empathy to New York’ (2005: 9).

Praise for Londoner’s became discursively linked with the justification for retaliatory, militarist responses; Bush’s description of ‘thugs’ and ‘assassins’ accompanied his pledge to take the fight to the enemy. By relying on this notion of widespread resilience and unity Tuttle and Giuliani’s comments merged the interests and opinions of British and American publics. These were explicit attempts to legitimise the legislative interests of American and British governments by evoking unity between the two countries through connections with the Second World War and the myth of the Blitz spirit. This myth evoked popular memories of a complicit and united public despite the revisionist perspectives that contradict this concept of a monolithic public voice that was in unity with its government. Similarly, despite widespread, global opposition to the war on terror, American sources projected a monolithic voice of allegiance that supports both governments in the war on terror.

As Billig argues, when George Bush announced the start of the first Gulf War he addressed ‘the world’ (1995: 9). This discourse is voicing “the syntax of hegemony’, which claims an ‘identity of identities” (ibid: 10); the international construction of common suffering and common interests against the same common enemy. Scraton refers to the manipulation of identity that occurs ‘through a familiar vocabulary that slips easily and casually from the tongue, grabs headlines and captures – and imprisons – imagination’ (2002: 2). Drawing on powerful moments in history and myths from the past are effective cognitive processes that grab, capture and imprison imagination.

Western foreign policy might explain some reasons for contempt towards Britain and America. Millan Rai argues that the British government chose to publicly deny ‘any connection between the July attacks on the one hand, and the ongoing war in Iraq, or British foreign policy in general on the other’ (Rai 2006: 1). As Rai points out, it was eventually discovered (through leaked documents) that the government were fully aware and accepted this link but still failed to acknowledge it publicly (ibid: 1). But after the bombings, Blitz spirit discourses did not always suppress criticisms of Western foreign policy or the Blair-Bush alliance in the war on terror. In fact the same myth and historical analogies from the Second World War actually caused problems for the image of Blair and a transatlantic alliance.

4.2 Neglected by Nostalgia: Blair’s Immoral Status in Blitz Spirit Myth

Complexities in cross-generational discourses used the Blitz spirit to criticise Blair and his image as Prime Minister. This was mainly because the sense of pride that some memories evoked would claim a higher moral ground than Blair. The criticism that he (and sometimes George W. Bush) faced in this discourse reinforced the symbolic status of Blitz spirit iconography and figures like Churchill and the Queen. *The Sunday Mirror* questioned Blair’s messages of defiance after the bombings:

Interesting to see that while Tony Blair - who has told us all we must not be cowed by the bombers - drove down the Mall for last weekend’s World War Two tribute in a bullet- proof limo with blacked-out windows while the Queen made the journey in an open Range Rover. Nice to see that at least our 78-year-old monarch wasn’t cowed. Our PM, however, was taking no chances. (Malone, 17/09/05:29)

The delivery of Blair’s speeches was a central point of scrutiny; his response to the bombings was, at times, described as incomparable to Churchill: ‘It was throw up time when Blair was compared to Churchill by some commentators. What an insult!’ (Elder, *Express*, July 13th, 2005:16). Elder contrasted Churchill’s ‘fight them on the beaches’ speech with the view of a theatrics, dishonesty and deception from Blair: ‘Blair’s comments on the London outrage were his usual thespian display: the extended dramatic pauses, the exaggerated halting tones. Years of duplicity, deception and spin cannot be wiped out by using a hideous tragedy to reinvent liar Blair’ (Elder 2005: 16).

The Guardian also criticised the news media for what it saw as desperate attempts to feature Blair's moments of 'hammy trademark declaration' (Aitkenhead, 23/06/05:7). He was accused of providing performance over information in a media-soundbite culture:

News channels can't get enough of them: on the day of the bombings, they kept interrupting coverage to repeat his tremulous broadcast from Gleneagles, and a few hours later he was back again with a new one, possibly worried that Ken Livingstone had outdone him. Both men's performances were debated by pundits as though the primary importance of the bombs was the race they had triggered to coin the best soundbite. (ibid: 7)

The Independent on Sunday criticised the Churchillian symbolism that had appeared in political responses to the attacks:

Politicians have also sought comfort in ... means of avoiding reality, by subscribing to the nostalgic myth of the spirit of the Blitz ... In his latest incarnation as the Churchill of local government, Ken Livingstone ... has spoken of how London has endured bombs of various kinds before. (24/06/2005:26)

A *Guardian* article on July 26th criticised some newspapers for repeating Blair's rhetoric without fully engaging with political complexity: 'They have allowed a combination of hubris and naivety to get the better of rational judgment. And they have been reluctant to allow difficult truths to get in the way of simplistic explanations and invocations to the Blitz spirit' (Kampfner 2005: 21). It also criticised previous critics of Blair for now 'rallying behind our latter-day Churchill. A prime minister responsible for the biggest foreign policy calamity of the past 50 years is now being feted as a great "wartime" statesman' (ibid: 21). The latter was part of a recurring discursive trait that criticised Blair's foreign policies. The Bush-Blair alliance was another problematic element for Blair in Blitz spirit discourses.

Critical comparisons between Bush and Churchill demonstrate the discursive sensitivities around the reputation of a 'special relationship' between Britain and America. *The Times* on July 23rd examined the extent to which Churchillian rhetoric fuelled the oratory of responses to July 7th:

Churchill is embedded in Tony Blair's rhetoric, and behind every reference to the 'Blitz spirit'. A brooding, bulldog bust of Churchill is prominently displayed in the Oval Office by George W. Bush, while Eliot Cohen's stirring account of Churchill's wartime leadership is required reading in the White House. (Macintyre 2005: 25)

The 'brooding, bulldog bust' is not critiqued here; Churchill's myth itself is in full effect. However, the application of the myth in a present context is rejected. Including Bush in this account raises a question regarding the legitimacy of a Blair-Bush alliance and their moral position in relation to Iraq. It is the strength of Churchill's iconic status that harmed the image of this alliance. On July 24th *The Independent* challenged the legitimacy of Blair's words and the judgement. After scrutinising Blair's decisions on foreign policies – from an allegiance with America to the loss of life caused by an illegal war – the article concluded with the following statement: 'Mr Blair

wants to be a modern-day Churchill, but in reality he is another Chamberlain again – in denial and wrong’ (Whittam Smith 2005: 29). Blair becoming Chamberlain instead of Churchill is still a mythic analogy. It is reversing a discourse that is already based round archetypal conventions. Therefore, the myth is not being abolished here; it is maintained by the transition from one character role to another. Whilst the simplicity of one discourse is challenged, the fundamental myth remains through a Second World War analogy.

Nonetheless, this discourse did provide a more complex analogy for Blair’s role and responsibility. It followed a more critical narrative in which the past was used to interpret July 7th in a more complex way, which recognised a degree of British responsibility for the attacks. *The Times* on July 23rd raised the question, ‘How would Churchill have answered the Islamist threat?’ (Macintyre 2005: 25). Whilst arguing that Churchill would have supported the war in Afghanistan, Macintyre was not convinced that he would have supported the war in Iraq (ibid: 25). As an indirect criticism of Blair, he claimed: ‘Churchill also knew that the ‘highest moral value’ attaches to striking the second blow, to responding to provocation: he would not I believe have started a pre-emptive war’ (ibid: 25). Although Churchill’s military tactics and political integrity has been scrutinised and often criticised (Ponting 1990, 1994; Calder 1991, 1999; Jenkins 2006; Addison 1994), the popular memory of Churchill had a negative impact on Blair’s image.

However, George Galloway’s opinion piece in the *Mail on Sunday* was one of the rare articles in my sample that not only critiqued the application of a Blitz spirit myth to July 7th, but also discussed the origins of the myth that Calder, Ponting and others addressed above. Galloway took an explicitly critical stance against the memory of the Blitz spirit itself: ‘The spirit of the blitz is often evoked, the stoicism, the “London can take it” yells to Churchill as he toured the East End. This is a sepia-softened memory, of course’ (ibid: 27). Galloway then then addressed wartime class conflicts that were more divisive than unifying: ‘The people did not all act as one under Hitler's bombs. The rich booked into West End hotels. Some of them secretly treated - or wished to - with the Reich’ (ibid: 27). Meanwhile, according to Galloway, the working classes did not unite in the way that the myth itself suggests: ‘There was looting of bombedout homes and businesses and fighting over places on the floor of the Underground (having had to fight to be allowed into the stations in the first place)’ (ibid: 27).

Galloway also combined his criticism of Western foreign policy with the issue of a domestic threat, created by the resentment that has arisen from legislative responses during the war on terror:

After 9/11, I said in the Commons that the only test which mattered about what we did next was whether it made matters better or worse and, if we handled this the wrong way, we would create 10,000 new Bin Ladens. Now we have them, working in fish and chip shops, playing cricket and speaking in an “ee, by 'eck” accent similar to Geoffrey Boycott's. (ibid: 27)

Galloway was critical of the fact that mainstream politicians are the only ones given privileged access in the media and the inward looking sympathies evoked by mainstream voices:

But there is a self-delusion or worse at the heart of all the statements at these vigils from the mainstream politicians (who are, of course, the only ones given a microphone). They seek to explain all this trouble in the world as merely outbreaks of 'evil' terrorism, without cause and therefore without remedy except an endless, limitless 'war on terror'. Yet our dead are not the only ones. Not one mainstream political leader has yet had the heart or the guts to acknowledge the deaths of hundreds of innocent Iraqi civilians. (ibid: 27)

He insisted that the general public know how Britain has ended up in this position and Blair's intended affect would fail, addressing what he saw as dramaturgical and ritualistic political statements from Blair: 'And no amount of hoodwinking by Tony Blair in full 'Diana' mode will make [the public] think otherwise' (ibid: 27). Whilst Galloway's main intention was to criticise Blair, he did so within a context that deconstructed the way that Blair's rhetoric was designed to persuade or manipulate opinion. The latter enabled Galloway to critique contemporary Blitz spirit discourses and the origins of the myth itself.

It is ironic that Galloway was writing in the *Mail on Sunday*. In theory, there was an editorial dilemma here for the newspaper and a political dilemma for Galloway; Galloway's left wing political stance would usually be incompatible with the *Mail on Sunday's* conservative values. However, both parties in this instance had a shared interest in criticising Blair. Their motivations might have differed but their broader target of criticism was the same. I define this as a case of paradoxical persuasion in discursive practices: the *Daily Mail's* readership and editorial interests would not want to be associated with Galloway and neither would Galloway or his supporters want to be associated, or in alliance, with a conservative newspaper. However, a shared opposition against Blair played a unifying and persuasive role. This shared interest not only complicated the application of the Blitz spirit myth in a different historical context but it prompted a revision of the myth itself. As this analysis has shown, applications of myth are open to negotiation; there are wider ideological battles to consider when applying a popular myth from 1940 to a dissimilar set of circumstances in 2005.

5. Conclusion

Negotiated power relations occurred in the ideological complexities of Blitz spirit discourses, particularly in those analogies featuring Blair and Churchill. Although there were plenty of discourses that were entirely uncritical of any leading power in my sample (also see Kelsey 2011), critical discourses still occurred. This system of negotiated power was mobilised by a myth, a moment in history, and common ground of popular memory and identity: the Blitz spirit. As I have demonstrated thus far, myth and discourse-historical connections between past and present are under constant review. The ideological role of myth varies, even if the power and nostalgia of recurring traits in popular memory are difficult to break down. I have expanded on Barthes' model by showing that shifts in historical contexts and wider discursive time periods complicate the way that myth operates. This paper has contributed an understanding of the complex relationship between history, myth, popular memory and current conflict. My analysis of myth reflects the dynamics of ideology and power relations in the theoretical approaches

discussed in my methodology. I have considered the nuanced role of this myth and how Second World War analogies mobilised various discourses, which did not serve one, ideological interest. Since examining and scrutinising myth involves the exploration of complexities and contradictions that myth suppresses in its simplifying form, CDA has been used as more than a tool for proposing one ideological or prejudicially biased position. My work has explored the connections between discourse and historical context (Wodak et al. 1999, Wodak 2001, 2008) and how language is used to serve particular interests (Brown and Yule 1983). This paper has also shown that journalists, politicians and the public are caught up in complex fields of cultural rituals (Sanders 2008) and social practices (Fairclough 1995), which influence and are influenced by popular memory.

The ideological battleground between Blitz spirit discourses demonstrates negotiated forms of power (Gramsci 1971; Allan 1999; Jones 2006). Although Blitz spirit discourses reproduced the interests and attitudes of the elite (Hall et al. 1978; Fowler 1991) they also challenged them. Whilst myth and popular memory does act ideologically, who it benefits is a complex phenomenon. As Gramsci (1971) argues, the diverse interests of subaltern groups can still play an active role in negotiations of power, although the dominant order is still maintained. To reiterate Jones' point, when 'a hegemonic project is truly expansive, then this group will feel a strong bond of identification with the meanings and values of the leading group' (Jones, 2006: 58). The Blitz spirit is a myth that provides this sense of unity between subalterns and leading groups. The national narration that evokes this unity reflects Gramsci's notion of a 'material existence in the cultural practices, activities and rituals of individuals striving to make sense of the world around them' (Allan 1999:85).

Although I have argued that the myth of the Blitz spirit was problematic and complicated in the role that it played after July 7th, it is important to acknowledge that we need stories and myths to understand the world. As Lule argues:

Storytelling will never be in crisis (even if individual storytellers are) because storytelling is an essential part of what makes us human. We understand our lives and our world through story. Perhaps stories are so much part of us because human life itself has the structure of story. Each of us has a central character. ... We need stories because we are stories. (2001: 4)

Therefore, the scrutinising of storytellers and the roles of characters that they establish is an essential process. The way that discourses and popular memories construct representations of terrorism shows why media scholars should scrutinise the production and substance of storytelling. As Barthes argued, people want an image of passion rather than passion itself (1993: 18). The Blitz spirit offers this theatrical element, acting ideologically in the messages it delivers (and those it suppresses).

The national unity that Churchill invoked was fragile and widely contradicted by sections of British society. So was Blair's. Nonetheless, the impact that a myth has, and the naturalised appearance it carries, relies on a strength and capability that can survive speculation. The myth that Churchill depended on could 'readily ride over proofs that in extremity Churchill and others made errors of judgement or sanctioned morally suspect actions' (Calder 1991: 90).

As Calder argues, the ‘structure of myth depends on the leaving out of certain things’ (ibid: 90). Simplistic stories can be powerful; they strike us with a ‘common sense’ impact that can sometimes be difficult to breakdown. But the ideological effects of these stories have a significant impact on how we make sense of the world. As Ponting clarifies:

We must never forget those who died or suffered in the Second World War in order to defeat a vile and evil system. At the same time, there is no need to ignore some of the hard facts and less well-publicised lessons of that war. After fifty years it is time to face up to that reality. (Ponting 1990: 3)

Therefore, if the Second World War is to remain and common point of reference for understanding current events, it is important those lessons are learnt. As this paper has shown, by adopting critical approaches to discourse analysis, scholars can continue to examine how stories from the past are evoked to understand events in the present and the ideological impact that they have.

Notes

- ¹ See Kelsey (2011) for analysis of Blair’s Churchillian role in Blitz spirit discourses that did not question his leadership or foreign policy
- ² *Guardian, Observer, Independent, Independent on Sunday, Times, Sunday Times, Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, Daily Express, Sunday Express, Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph, Daily Star, Daily Mirror, News of the World, People, Sunday Mirror, The Sun, Sunday Star.*

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