



**Myths, Monarchs and Prime Ministers:
'Blitz Spirit' Discourses of Royalty and Tony Blair
in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings**

Darren Kelsey

*School of Arts and Cultures,
Newcastle University*
Email: Darren.kelsey@ncl.ac.uk

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Abstract

The 'Blitz spirit' is a popular story of Britain during the Second World War, uniting together with defiance and resilience to overcome the threat of invasion from Nazi Germany. However, this paper reviews the story of the Blitz spirit as a myth. A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) then examines some instances when this myth was retold in British newspapers after the July 7th bombings in London. In this article I analyse the role of the Queen and Royal family as symbols of national unity and defiance. Subsequently, I argue that such constructions of Britishness became more complex than a monolithic national narration; Blitz spirit discourses often criticised Tony Blair and rejected him as a figure of British identity in comparison to the Queen or Winston Churchill. Therefore, this paper argues that whilst the Blitz spirit was a problematic feature of post-July 7th discourses, it did not serve one ideological purpose. Rather, through a nuanced approach to Roland Barthes' model of myth, I argue that an ideological battleground occurred when a myth from 1940 was reused to define events in 2005.

Contributor Note

Darren Kelsey is a lecturer in journalism at Newcastle University. His research and teaching combines approaches from media and cultural studies with those of journalism studies and Critical Discourse Analysis. He is interested in mythology, discourse, ideology, and the relationship between politics, media and society. As well as other discursive analyses of July 7th media, he has published material on the future of journalism education and ethics, post-Leveson. His forthcoming publication in *Capital & Class* (Sage, 2014) analyses right wing newspaper responses to the 2011 England riots. Darren is co-convenor of the *Newcastle and Northumbria Critical Discourse Group*.

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. After the bombings, British newspapers defined London as a stoic city that would respond with resilience and unity as it did – according to popular memory – during the Second World War (Kelsey 2012a; 2012b; 2012c). 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. Previous work in the field of CDA has examined constructions of national identity (Wodak 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' (2003: 244). Wodak's discourse-historical work has also considered how 'national narration' (see Hall in Wodak 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).

This paper scrutinises the origins of the Blitz spirit story as a myth and how it was evoked after the bombings. I consider the Queen and other members of the Royal family evoking the Blitz spirit and their representation as symbols of national identity, signifying unity and defiance. I then argue that this construction of Britishness became more complex than a monolithic message of national unity. Discourses of national narration often ostracised Tony Blair and rejected him as a worthy figure of British identity in comparison to the Queen and Winston Churchill. Through this analysis I develop a nuanced perspective on how Roland Barthes' model of myth can be applied to the Blitz spirit story, 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 analyses discourses in media coverage after July 7th my theoretical framework draws on Roland Barthes' model of myth (1993) to provide some historical context to critical understandings 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, to which I will return shortly. But this paper shows how a discourse-historical approach (Wodak et al 1999) 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.

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 (Calder 1991, 2003; Manthorpe 2006; Heartfield 2005; Ponting 1990, 1994). Angus Calder's work (1991) adopted Roland Barthes' model in proposing that revisions of the Blitz spirit should not assert accusations of untruth. Rather, deconstructing 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 to curb the problem (142). Due to the social disruption caused by the war, juvenile crime increased by forty-one percent in the year after the war started (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 (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 for 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 the class inequality might be suppressed by discourses of unity evoked through Royalty after July 7th, 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'. As Ponting states, '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-publicized lessons of that war' (1990: 3).

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, it is the compatibility of these terms – *myth* and *discourse* – that I will now address in explaining my approach to CDA.

¹ See Kelsey (2012) for analysis of Blair's Churchillian role in Blitz spirit discourses that did not question his leadership or foreign policy.

Analytical Framework

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 1999, 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 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.

My analysis starts with the immediate text or linguistic elements before addressing 'the broader socio-political and historical contexts, to which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to [macro theories]' (Wodak 2008: 13). Wodak's discourse historical approach is significant to my research since it 'integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded' (2009 38). It is within this framework that I use a number of analytical tools. I do not explicitly refer back to these terms throughout my analysis. Rather, I define them here before I use them:

Historical memory is a concept that Wodak considers in her discourse-historical approach. Kolakowski (see Wodak 1999) sees this as an essential requirement of national identity. Similar to myth and collective/popular memory the accuracy or truth of historical memory is not important. What matters is that 'the further into the past the real or imaginary memories reach, the more securely the nation is supported' (Wodak 1999: 25).

Hyperbole involves the excessive exaggeration of aspects within texts. Van Dijk describes hyperbole as the 'description of an event or action in

strongly exaggerated terms' (1995: 154). For example, he analyses the way that the 1993 bomb attack on the World Trade Centre 'in which only a few people died, or other, possible terrorist attacks, are compared with a nuclear holocaust' (154).

Indexical meanings also play a referential role in texts. The way that they refer to, and label, certain characters in a story acts ideologically. For example, if a male character is blamed for an incident he might be referred to as 'a "maniac", a "monster", a "fiend", a "beast", and other terms which suggest sub-humanity, depravity and animalistic abandon' (Richardson 2001: 51). Equally, an innocent male will feature inferences to his domestic role as a 'family man' or 'hubby' (51).

Intertextuality refers to the interlinking of one text to other texts in both past and present contexts (Wodak 2008: 3). This might involve repeated references to the same events, or the transferring of 'main arguments from one text into the next' (3). This also applies for the recurrence and continued reference to main actors or topics within stories across texts (3). Events and symbols from the Second World War recurred across texts in my sample.

Intentionality considers the intentions of those producing texts and purpose the text is serving for what those producing want to do and what meaning they want to make (Wodak 2008: 9). This is a central concern when considering who is speaking and the purpose that their analysis or commentary actually serves.

Lexical choices can help reinforce the 'us and them' dichotomy in representations concerning conflict or terrorism. Van Dijk refers to lexical

choices for describing others such as 'the case of the well-known pair of freedom fighter and terrorist' (1995: 143). Other examples are 'more indirect or coded [like] the use of moderate (vs. radical) when describing groups, parties or countries that espouse our ideologies, that are our friends or that do not threaten our interests' (143). These signify the bias choices that occur in representations that are intended to shape the views of those interpreting them. For example, if an enemy 'destroys' something, we may 'suppress it'. When they 'kill', we, on the other hand, 'eliminate' or 'neutralise' (see Allan 2004: 162-163). Lexical choices can delegitimise one party or group and justify the actions of another.

Metaphors are words used as 'devices for simplifying and giving meaning to complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern' (Edelman 1971: 65). Metaphors have also been considered in a more cognitive sense: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are elements of human thought that help people to understand and structure thoughts via connections drawn between different experiences.

Recurrence accounts for the repetition and repeated use of linguistic and discursive elements and mechanisms across texts and throughout my sample. Wodak describes recurrence as a contributing factor towards cohesion and it involves the 'repetition of lexical elements, sentence components and other linguistic elements' (2008: 8).

Predication considers the 'words used to represent more directly the values and characteristics of social actors' (Richardson 2007: 52). As Reisigl and Wodak point out, predicational strategies provide 'the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning

qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena' (2001: 52).

These terms that I have listed above provide me with an appropriate set of tools for my textual analysis below. 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 from 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 considers 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 it does not tackle one ideological perspective. Rather, a broader discourse analytical framework is adopted for addressing discursive complexities and contradictions in negotiated power relations. I adopt Gramsci's approach to power (1971) 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 1999: 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.

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 positions. Through my analysis of articles from these newspapers I consider a range of sources across this political spectrum of publications; the Blitz spirit was not confined to any niche market or political orientation among the popular press. Whilst my other analyses (also developed from the sample below) often focus on Blitz spirit 'news' stories (Kelsey 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), most articles in this analysis are 'comment' and 'opinion' pieces. My sample did not eliminate any type of story since I studied the different contexts in which the Blitz spirit was discussed. As my previous work has demonstrated, the Blitz spirit is discussed in various different forms and discursive contexts. The material covered in this analysis consists of a particular discursive niche from my sample and provides further insights to the way in which the Blitz spirit functions as a discursive and ideological mechanism, especially in political opinion and argumentation.

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.*

I gathered my sample through Nexis using the following search terms: 'Blitz' OR 'Second World War' OR 'World War Two' OR 'WW2'. I then gathered all articles that mentioned the Second World War in relation to the bombings. This included the popular broadsheet and tabloid newspapers across Britain's mainstream market, accounting for centre-left and centre-right wing orientations. Whilst my sample caught a range of discourses, this paper focuses on two discursive fields: discourses of Royalty that evoked the Blitz spirit and drew on Britain's national narration; and a nostalgic discourse that rejected Tony Blair due to his inferiority and lack of moral compatibility within this national narration. I show that whilst Royalty and Churchill remained as proud symbols of defiance and national narration, the prominence of these characters was actually a problem for Blair. 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 role 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.

Findings and Analysis

Connelly's assertion that during the Second World War 'King and Queen came to know their people and their people them, as all did their bit without murmur' (Connelly 2005: 129) highlights the symbolic role of Royalty in the myth of the Blitz spirit. This story was played out again after July 7th. Royalty played a central role in cross-generational dis-

courses, providing symbols of national defiance and implying a sense of national, hereditary duty and spirit that runs throughout Britain's national narration.

Queen and country united (again): The symbolic role of Royalty

As Manthorpe (2006) points out, the Queen made explicit reference to her previous wartime experience in her appeal to a generation that has 'been here before'. For example, a *Times* article on July 9th quoted the Queen: 'Sadly, we in Britain have been all too familiar with acts of terror and members of my generation, especially at this end of London, know that we have been here before' (Hamilton 2005: 7). Other members of the Royal family praised the same level of spirit as the Queen. Prince Andrew said: 'The way that Londoners pulled together was quite extraordinary' (7). The Duchess of Cornwall summed up the calm response of victims at a hospital she visited: 'It was very sort of British, wasn't it?' (7). Similarly, Prince Phillip described his amazement at the resilience of the public: 'What I can never get over is the resilience of the British people who have set us all a fantastic example of how to recover' (7). These contributions increase the perception that Royalty can speak for the nation and implied that a typical British stiff upper lip attitude was upholding national morale. They reinforced the idea that the British never panic in their response to a crisis.

Largely due to the commemorations on 10th and the unveiling of a war memorial on 9th, the Queen featured as a central sign of defiance following the attacks. A *Daily Mail* headline on July 9th said: 'Queen sends a message of defiance to

the bombers' (Rayner 2005: 5). A *News of the World* headline on July 10th echoed this message of defiance: 'We are not afraid' (Goodman 2005). It continued: 'The Queen yesterday defied the terror threat to pay tribute to women of the Second World War. Her majesty shrugged off the heightened security situation to unveil a memorial to the seven million who joined up' (ibid). Her choice to ride down the Mall in an open-top Range Rover for the commemoration events the next day provided a metaphor for defiance. The *Daily Telegraph* on July 11th described the Queen's arrival down the Mall as an act of defiance: 'The Queen defied the threat of terrorist attack yesterday to ride down the Mall in an open top Range Rover at the head of veterans of the Second World War' (Tweedie and Davies 2005: 1).

The Queen was represented as a definer of defiance when it was suggested that the public had endorsed the resistance she voiced after the bombings. The *Sunday Times* on July 10th described people endorsing the Queen's message: 'Many echoed the spirit of resistance voiced by the Queen the previous day' (Wavell 2005: 5). Another *Times* article on July 11th described the unity between Royalty and the public, bound together by defiance: 'The Head of State took openly to the streets in an exuberant celebration of our finest hour, and was joined by many thousands of her subjects delivering the clearest possible message that London will not be cowed by the cowardly' (Bates 2005: 2). This article used memories of the Queen's appearance during the Second World War with her parents as a sign of cross-generational unity: 'As a climax, the Queen emerged on to the same palace balcony where she had stood 60 years ago with her parents to acknowledge the vast crowd' (2). A *Sunday Express*

headline on July 10th said: 'Queen leads our nation's defiance in face of terror' (2005: 22) and quoted the Queen: 'In her proud assertion that "They will not change our way of life", our Queen has spoken for the country. Like her parents before her, she is leading from the front' (22). This article acknowledged the general debate regarding the role of the Royal Family in contemporary society. But it sees their response in a time of crisis as a valuable justification for their status: 'To put it bluntly, this is what they are here for' (22). The same article continued to make an explicit statement of support for the monarchy by referring to Royalty as a symbol of Britain as a nation: 'And this, more than anything, highlights the importance of the monarchy today. Queen Elizabeth II is not just our sovereign, she is a figurehead for Britain. ... When she stands up and voices defiance against those who want to destroy us, she, and the other members of the Royal Family, symbolise Britain as a whole' (22).

Ideologically, this is further evidence of the legitimising power of the Blitz spirit, as part of a discourse that is complicit in accepting the taken for granted status of a monarchy. The concept of a united, utopian public, represented by one 'true voice', gains authority from the connotative symbolism of popular Blitz memories. The Queen's hospital visits after July 7th evoked memories of her Mother's visits to the East End during the Second World War. The *Sunday Express* article above added: 'The East End of London never forgot that the Queen Mother came to them in their hour of need during the Blitz; her daughter has now done the same for the whole of the UK' (22). The recurring tradition of Royalty making public appearances in support of victims upholds the notion of a hered-

itary spirit that binds British generations together.

However, royalty are not just icons of national narration, they hold the same popular memories in a discourse that they are caught up in. They are part of the social practices that construct popular discourses and they remember symbolic moments and signs from throughout history, like everyone else. Whilst the Queen's leading role is important, the repetition of the Royal Family's view through other family members helped maintain a message of defiance. These descriptions connote the defiance expressed by Royalty during the Blitz when they refused to leave Buckingham Palace, pledging to stay even if the Nazis managed to launch a successful invasion.

The Queen defiantly leading at the head of veterans connotes a battle theme in which an army is led to war. The concept of a current threat that the Queen was seen to defy supported the notion of war in a current, domestic context. Commemorating the end of the Second World War after the bombings became a means of implying a state of war at present. Ideologically, Second World War discourses were problematic since they not only connoted war, but they invoked memories of a different type of conflict; the threat London faced did not compare to traditional warfare or the threat of a foreign force. This was a domestic threat and British citizens had carried out the attacks on their own people. Thus a Blitz spirit analogy simplified constructions of a public voice and suggested a recurrence of military conflict.

The discursive elements considered above set the narrative tone of an easily understood and recognisable story. They confirm what Connelly means when he

describes the Second World War as a simple story that is full of drama and powerful images (2005: 131). The slogans, memories and cross-generational connections provided through the Royal family are symbolic elements of this story. As Ian McClaine explains: 'British civilian morale during the Second World War has subsequently assumed the quality of myth' (1979: 1). This myth is a story which 'encapsulates for its believers all the qualities they see themselves as possessing in circumstances of extreme adversity' (1). The Queen was an untouchable icon in critical and uncritical discourses in my sample. Of any critical articles that complicated Blitz spirit analogies (which I discuss below), none of them interrupted or critiqued the contributions of royalty. The sensitive and powerful poignancy of the Second World War commemorations provided a discursive shield against any challenges to the preferred message. But this was not always the case for Blair.

Neglected by nostalgia: Blair as inferior to the Queen and Churchill

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

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 2005: 16). Elder contrasted Churchill's 'fight them on the beaches' speech with the view of 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 (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' (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' (2005: 29). Blair becoming Chamberlain instead of Churchill is still a mythic analogy. It is reversing a discourse that is already based around 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, it does provide a more complex analogy to 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 is not convinced that he would have supported the war in Iraq (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' (25). Although Churchill's military tactics and political integrity has been scrutinised and often criticised (Ponting 1990, 1994; Calder 1991, 1999; Jenkins 2001; 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 few 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 address. 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' (27). Galloway then repeated Ponting's interpretations of class issues that proved 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' (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)' (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' (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. (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 dramatic and ritualistic political statements from Blair: 'And no amount of hoodwinking by Tony Blair in full "Diana" mode will make [the public] think otherwise' (27). Whilst Galloway's main point was critical of Blair, he did this within a context that deconstructed the way that Blair's rhetoric was designed to persuade or manipulate opinion. The

latter enabled Galloway to challenge Blitz spirit discourses and the origins of the myth itself.

However, it is ironic that Galloway was writing in the *Mail on Sunday*. There is an editorial dilemma here for the newspaper and, in theory, 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. This is what I refer to 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 to 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.

Conclusion

The negotiated power relations that occurred in the ideological complexities of Blitz spirit discourses were particularly significant in the complicated relationship between royalty, the public and Blair. Although there were plenty of discourses that were entirely uncritical of any leading power in my sample (Kelsey

2012a), critical discourses still occurred in some contexts. 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, 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 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, my analysis has not proposed one ideological or prejudicially biased position. Rather, this work has explored the connections between discourse and historical context (Wodak 1999, 2008, 2009) 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; Charteris-Black 2011) and social practices (Fairclough 1995), which influence and are influenced by myth.

The ideological battleground between Blitz spirit discourses demonstrates

negotiated forms of power (Gramsci 1971; Allan 1999; Jones 2006; Hall 1981). Although the Blitz spirit reproduced the interests and attitudes of the elite (Hall 1998; Fowler 1991) it also challenged them. Whilst myth and popular memory does act ideologically, whom it benefits is complex. 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 evoked 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' (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 myths from the past are to be invoked in the present, we should not avoid learning some less-popular lessons from either moment in time.

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