

Kan Prateepjinda

Terrorism in Popular Culture: A Discourse Analysis of the Portrayal of IRA Terrorism in Films

Abstract

The paper begins by asserting that —terrorism is a social construct based on discourse from a particular historical context, and that our understanding of terrorism is fashioned by that discourse. It goes on to argue that film, as a powerful medium of popular culture, generates meaning of social events and gives filmgoers a feeling of reality; film functions as a second view on the world, guiding audiences from reel to real. The study shows how the forty-year long (1968-2008) history of IRA terrorism is portrayed through a selection of eight films, and the —articulation and —interpellation are studied empirically through the portrayal of terrorism in these films. The discourse on terrorism is analyzed in terms of discourse productivity, and the study uses Foucault's genealogy to trace the —history of present-day IRA terrorism. The findings show that discursive formations are displayed as four different features of IRA terrorism constructed by film language and textual language. These different features reveal the discontinuity of the discourse that is framed by particular time periods. The paper concludes that IRA terrorism (and the acts of IRA terrorists), as portrayed in the eight films, cannot be seen as being representative of a single, unchanging discourse and that the films do not communicate a single meaning. Each of the discourses on IRA terrorism is formed separately in terms of both content and process; each discourse generates different images, or perceivable images, of IRA terrorism.