

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the notion of terrorism in relation to its forms of representation. Thus, we start from the assumption that, as far as terrorism is concerned, language and image, as well as reality and representation do not function as separate spheres, but as only seemingly borderline terrains that overlap, interact, and condition each other. In this thesis we use 9/11 as a singular event through which to unravel the narrative that surrounds the concept of terrorism; a narrative that has transformed image into its main discursive tool and fiction into its most effective propaganda strategy. In other words, one might say that the post-9/11 narrative of terrorism has been based on the unmitigated exploitation of its simplified representation, attributing previously stipulated meanings to its images and imposing an explanatory model that completely abandons empiricism and the rational study of the facts.

The concept of terrorism had traditionally already been defined, both historically and legally, through a pretended ambiguity; however, its indeterminacy became even more extreme after 9/11, expanding substantially and stressing its characteristic emotional charge. For all these reasons, in this doctoral thesis I offer three different approaches to the concept of terrorism, articulated on the basis of the intricate nexus that its violence establishes with representation techniques. In the first part, through a comparative analysis of 9/11, I define terrorism as a strategy of political violence with communicative and symbolic intentions. In the second part, I reflect on the confluence of different narrative styles, all created with the aim of deactivating the counter-narrative that terrorist action introduces, describing terrorism as a media construct and a narrative concept. Finally, in the third part, I deal with the notion of terrorism as a narrative of exteriority, generated to dissociate the violence inherent to the State itself from the political order.

It is worth noting that, although we take 9/11 as a starting point and case study, this research is not limited exclusively to this event, as it also addresses the specificity of terrorist violence through the analysis of its forms of representation with a view to drawing general conclusions. Thus, the methodology of this research is inductive and its perspective is transdisciplinary in nature, combining theoretical-practical research in the arts with philosophical or even legal investigations. The conclusions drawn throughout this doctoral thesis are consequently determined both by theoretical reflection and by the artistic practice itself.