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**Face to Face with the Muslim "Other": European Cinematic Responses to Al-Qaeda**

Elena Caoduro, University of Southampton

*Abstract: The bombings on March 11, 2004 in Madrid and on July 7, 2005 in London brought terror to the heart of Europe and amplified the feelings of fear, disbelief and suspicion developed as a consequence of 9/11 trauma. This article departs from Hollywood discourses on international terrorism to investigate how European cinema reflected upon these tragedies. Focusing on the films Fremder Freund (The Friend, Elmar Fischer, 2003)and London River (Rachid Bouchareb, 2009), it outlines the peculiarities of European cinema in dealing with international terrorism and thus analyses the representation of Islamic fundamentalism and more generally, Muslim communities. The films stimulate the public debate about contemporary society and the role of British and German institutions in developing "home-grown" terrorists. The article argues that these films avoid any explicit attempts of commemorating and memorialising these tragic events, but they contextualise the attacks engaging with issues of multiculturalism rather than commenting on the problem of international crime and terrorism.*

**Introduction**

During a meeting with young members of the Christian Democratic Union party on 16th October 2010, chancellor Angela Merkel claimed that Germany's attempts to create a multicultural society had "failed, utterly failed" (AFP "Kanzlerin Merkel erklärt"). Despite underlining the importance of skilled foreign workers for Germany's economy, she argued that the ideal of people from different traditions living happily "side by side" had not succeeded. The training of unemployed German citizens should now take priority over recruiting new *Gastarbeiter* (guestworkers). Through such statements, Merkel courted the more conservative members of her party who intend to halt the immigration of Turkish and Arab workers, currently estimated at around four millions, and take stricter measures towards those who refuse to learn German or integrate within society. Merkel's speech emerges in a climate of widespread anti-immigrant sentiments and concerns about home-grown terrorists and the radicalisation process.

Furthermore, her words echo the statement given soon after the terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001 by Lynne Cheney, wife of US Vice President Dick Cheney, who took a stance against the promotion of internationalism in schools. According to Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul, Cheney publicly attacked educators who promoted multicultural curricula in her role as Chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (7). She argued that, since teaching tolerance to other cultures had not prevented rising anti-Americanism, rather than studying diversity it would be more beneficial to learn the history of the founding fathers and the American nation within educational establishments (ibid). By fostering a more nationalist and isolationist approach to history, her opinions highlight and expand on the already present "them and us" dichotomy.

Drawing on current debates about multiculturalism and home-grown terrorism, this article engages with the cinematic representation of Muslims in Elmar Fischer's *Fremder Freund* (*The Friend*, 2003) and Rachid Bouchareb's *London River* (2009), two recent European films that counteract Hollywood's construction of the present socio-political reality and exemplify different approaches to represent diversity. Instead of developing apocalyptic, conspirational or dystopian scenarios—which have been dominating American films and TV series, for example *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004) and *24* (Fox, 2001-2010)—the case studies chosen use the backdrop of the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Centre on 11th September 2001 and the London bombings on 7th July 2005 to reflect on European multiculturalism and its changes post-Al-Qaeda. The decision to discuss a relatively mainstream film, *Fremder Freund*, by a young German director, and a diasporic film, *London River*, a French-British-Algerian coproduction by a Paris-born director of Algerian descent, is motivated by my attempt to explore a dominant discourse of anxiety regarding "the enemy within" and simultaneously the diverse sensibility and viewpoint of immigrants in "fortress Europe".[1]

*Fremder Freund* recounts in flashbacks and flashforwards the vicissitudes of two young men in their early twenties who move in together,[2] Chris (Antonio Wanneck), a university student in Berlin and Yunes (Navid Akhavan), a German-speaking student from Yemen. Exploring the deepening affection between the two and the relationship between Chris and his long-time sweetheart Julia (Mina Tander), and between Yunes and his on-off girlfriend Nora (Mavi Hörbiger), the film follows the pair, their parties, arguments and jokes up to a few days before 9/11, when Yunes suddenly disappears. Concurrently, the audience witnesses Yunes's transformation into a radical Islamist, joining a local study group, growing a beard and becoming prone to mood swings. After hearing the news of the horrid events in the US, the friends search for him in vain, discovering that the Islamic centre that Yunes was regularly visiting closed on 10th September and that the friends he mentioned turned out to be Palestinian terrorists. Shocked and puzzled, they come to terms with the realisation that their beloved friend might have something to do with the terrorist attacks.

While German film director Elmar Fischer connects the consequences of 9/11 anxiety to structures of friendship, French-Algerian director Rachid Bouchareb decides to narrate the tragedy of another terrorist attack, the bombings on the London transportation system, from the point of view of the victims' relatives. *London River* follows two parents as they search for their respective children who disappeared soon after the explosions: Elisabeth (Brenda Blethyn), a Christian widow from Guernsey, who leaves for the capital with only the address of her daughter Jane, and Ousmane (Sotigui Kouyate), a Muslim migrant from Africa who works as a forest labourer in France and has not been in contact with his son, Ali, since he was a child. As the parents get to know each other and explore multicultural London, it soon transpires that Jane and Ali were in love and had been living together whilst learning Arabic in a local Islamic culture centre. Thanks to help from the police and the Muslim community, the two parents realise the fate of their children and eventually come to terms with their death.

*Fremder Freund* and *London River* exemplify certain European trends to represent terrorism in a more personal and humane form, as their characters try to make sense of these tragedies and understand their context.[3] Anger and disappointment emerge from these films, which vividly present the emotional reactions to terrorist attacks rather than resorting to melodramatic forms, namely the construction of myths of heroes and survivors. In a similar fashion, small American productions, for example Danny Leiner's *The Great New Wonderful*

(2005), have been exploring to a certain degree the trauma and the personal coming to terms with the 9/11 disaster, but they represent more the exception to the rule. Whereas mainstream Hollywood productions have focused on the re-enactment and commemoration of those tragedies, as seen for example in *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006) and *World Trade Center* (Oliver Stone, 2006), European films have been predominantly commenting on the perception of diversity and assimilation within national contexts. As this article considers European cinematic reactions to global terrorism, I will first propose a historical overview on multiculturalist discourse before examining in detail the Muslim images in my case studies, which I believe are key to an understanding of Europe's thorny position towards Washington's response against Al-Qaeda. Whereas previous research (see Dixon and Melnick) has mainly focused on the impact of 9/11 on Hollywood and American media culture in general, this article finally proposes some lines of interpretation of its significance for Europe.

**Home-grown Terrorists: the Failure of Multiculturalism?**

Although it is arguable whether Al-Qaeda's attacks constituted a turning point in contemporary history (Chomsky 11), 9/11 has reopened the debate on multiculturalism. Subsequent events, in particular the "war on terror", have triggered a new discussion on the importance of civil liberties and the presence of Muslims in the USA. The attacks in Madrid on 11th March 2004, the London bombings and attempted attacks in Germany in July 2006 and September 2007 established an expanded network of radical Muslim organisations against western countries in general (Stock, Herz 16).[4] It is certainly true that in recent years radical Islamic terrorism has become central to the discourses over security and immigration policy in many European countries. Western nations are concerned primarily with new security laws that fight terrorism and at the same time preserve their citizens' freedom. Furthermore, fierce debates about new schemes that promote integration and pre-empt the radicalisation of parts of the Muslim population are taking place. In particular, the discovery that three out of four of the London terrorists were born in the UK, and that important members of the terrorist cells that attacked on US soil were studying in Germany and convened for some years in Hamburg urged a reflection on multiculturalism on this side of the Atlantic as well.[5]

According to David Goldberg, multiculturalism emerged as a commitment to diversity "against the monocultural grain" during the civil rights and countercultural movements in the United States in the 1960s, and, not unlike the postmodern condition, "cannot be reductively defined" (1). Historically, multiculturalism developed against the background of assimilationist approaches with their widely known notion of the "melting pot", which contrasts with the metaphor of the "salad bowl or the glorious mosaic in which each ethnic and racial element in the population maintained its distinctiveness" (Glazer 10). In the past decades it evolved into an established political theory, classified according to its different manifestations with a set of adjectives: liberal versus conservative, assimilationist versus radical, weak versus strong. This last binary opposition is of particular interest for the European context. In his pivotal work *Pluralism and the Politics of Difference*, Ralph Grillo identifies as opposing tendencies within multiculturalism the place where cultural diversity is exercised. In other words, "weak multiculturalism" takes place when cultural diversity is preserved only in the private sphere (family, home) and immigrants are required a high degree of assimilation in the public sphere (education, employment, government). Conversely, "strong multiculturalism" institutionally recognises diversity and the granting of

political representation. Due to the historical and political differences of the constituent countries, European multiculturalism takes different forms, which the British sociologist Tariq Modood groups as follows:

> If the French approach has been based on egalitarianism that is intolerant of cultural loyalties that may compete with loyalties due to the French republic, the British approach, based on a different colonial history and conception of nationhood, is more tolerant of cultural difference, more relaxed about the formation of ethnic minority communities but is more committed to equality of membership in the national community. ("Introduction: The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe" 5)

The German approach diverges because of the particular history of the country, which although having seen waves of immigration since the 1960s, only recognised itself recently as a country of immigration.[6] Incomers were not considered immigrants, but rather temporary "guestworkers"; therefore, to this day, second-generation Turks born in Germany acquire German citizenship only with much practical difficulty. Despite anti-discrimination measures, episodes of racism still persist and all three approaches to multiculturalism have reached a political impasse. Following Al-Qaeda's attacks, multicultural and assimilationist discourses have witnessed a resurgence in interest, but rather than promoting new interpretations and new policies, it soon became evident that a reductionist process was taking place; multiculturalism now only applies to the Muslim communities present in the western countries. One of the main issues remains how to prevent the development of British- or Spanish-born radical Islamists, for instance, and avoid the radicalisation of local imams and community centres.

The comments by Angela Merkel and Lynne Cheney cited at the beginning of this article are just some examples of a certain line of thought, which, if not directly regarding multiculturalism as the cause of the terrorist attacks, believes that a revision of the actual policies towards integration is essential. Moreover, in "Remaking multiculturalism after 7/7", Modood illustrates that the argument against multiculturalism and for integration has a long lineage in critiques since its development in the 1970s and that what is new in Britain in its post-9/11 manifestation is that its condemnation comes also from the pluralistic centre-left.[7] In their representation of the Muslim community and the terrorists within, *Fremder Freund* and *London River* focus on the duality inherent in multiculturalism, giving voice to contrasting feelings from their respective countries of origin.

### "We were friends, weren't we?": Muslim Representation in *Fremder Freund*

The title of this section originates from one of the first scenes of Fischer's *Fremder Freund*, when German student Chris reflects upon the disappearance of his former housemate Yunes, and his probable association with terrorism. Emerging from a completely empty backdrop, paranoid Chris rhetorically asks whether Yunes is still his friend ("*Wir waren Freunde. Waren wir das?*"), metaphorically giving voice to those western citizens that felt betrayed by Al-Qaeda's terrorists, who were previously living peacefully in Europe or in the US. Fischer's—and, broadly speaking, conservative Germany's—critical approach to multiculturalism contrasts with Bouchareb's vision, since in his low-key portrayal of the 7/7 mass murders the Muslim community emerges as a concurrent victim of terrorism. As a result of their different stance on integration, *Fremder Freund* and *London River* construct in

different ways the Muslim other, but similarly they both reveal underlying prejudices and widespread Islamophobia present within Europe.

Although it is unclear for the most part of *London River* whether the missing youngsters are victims or suicide bombers, narrative and stylistic devices immediately link one of the protagonists of *Fremder Freund* to terrorism as the opening scene described above shows. Chris's monologue on friendship is introduced by two minutes of 9/11 archival footage, which shows Manhattan's dust-filled skyline, rescue teams advancing towards the rubble and survivors leaving the island. By positioning these images at the beginning of the film and just before the betrayal allegation, a prejudiced association between Yunes and terrorism is suggested, which stigmatises him as a vile perpetrator. Gavin Hicks claims the guilty label applied to the foreign student begins even before the film *per se*, through the packaging of the DVD (132). On the front jacket of the DVD cover, Yunes's brown face and Chris's white shaved head are juxtaposed against the background of the Twin Towers in flames (ibid). From the very beginning of the film, therefore, a questionable portrayal of Muslim immigrants emerges, that conforms to traditional hegemonic Western images of Islam. As Edward W. Said argued in his article "Islam Through Western Eyes", Europe and the West in general have a long tradition of endemic prejudice and hatred towards Islam, which is uniformly revealed as a threat. According to Said, the media have become obsessed with the Muslim world, which is known today principally through the impoverishing and misleading forms given by films, TV, magazines and novels (ibid). Thus, *Fremder Freund* does not diverge so much from the stereotypical and essentialist images of Muslims or Arabs as oil suppliers or potential terrorists that characterise Western media. Although the director declared he wished to portray a terrorist with a human face (Hicks 131), he ultimately employs clichéd elements in his construction of the Muslim other.

Despite being set in Berlin, *Fremder Freund* makes explicit references to actual events involving the Hamburg cell, the base used by Al-Qaeda's terrorists for the radicalisation of Muslim migrants and the planning of the attacks on American soil. However, no visual landmarks of the German capital are shown and only an initial caption indicates the location of the story. Being filmed almost entirely in a regular student flat or in small cafés and anonymous corridors, the facts narrated in *Fremder Freund* could have occurred in any other city, making the home of the two friends *unheimlich* to use Sigmund Freud's term. Freud envisions *das Unheimliche*, the uncanny, as a space which can be both familiar and yet concealed and foreign ("The Uncanny" 218). The uncanny thus disquiets, creates uncertainties and ultimately disturbs (ibid). Yunes's room is exemplary in this respect as it is shown as comfortable, yet strange, because of its extremely meticulous order. The environment in *Fremder Freund* is therefore familiar, but it repulses at the same time because of uncanny elements. In an interview presented in the DVD extras, Fischer confirms his intention to create a universal story with a naturalist flavour thanks to the choice of adopting improvised dialogue for the majority of the film and letting the main actors live together in the flat for some time. Nevertheless, the film reminds audiences of episodes that later emerged during the investigations of terrorist sleeping cells by American and German authorities, especially in the depiction of Yunes changing from an average student to a fervent Islamist.

Yunes's character recalls Ziad Jarrah, a Lebanese student who after a secular upbringing moved to Germany and was then converted to radical Islam. Jarrah studied aeronautical engineering and German, and eventually trained to become a pilot in Florida after moving to the US. Following his recruitment by Osama Bin Laden, Jarrah became the

mastermind behind the hijacking of flight United 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania on 9/11. Yunes's transformation is therefore very similar to the fictional account of Jarrah's conversion to radical Islam as seen in the British TV film *The Hamburg Cell* (2004) by Antonia Bird, screened on Channel 4 in 2004.[8] Both dramas show two young Middle-eastern students initially enjoying a laic lifestyle: drinking alcohol, eating pork sausages and having sex with their girlfriends. Yunes in particular seems to be a well-integrated foreign student, who receives compliments for his accent from his flatmate's girlfriend and who does not care about *haraam* practices, forbidden by the Islam faith. The transformation takes place during Chris and Julia's trip to Yemen, a sign of their openness and curiosity towards their friend's culture, and is rapid and total. Yunes regularly prays at home, goes to the mosque and the Islamic centre at the university, changes his diet and grows a long beard. With his new white and beige clothes, which symbolise his rebirth as a new Muslim and his purification from the vices of the Western world, he is no longer able to enjoy watching television or hugging his infidel friends.

On the whole, *Fremder Freund* functions as a mirror of Germany's doubts for the future of multiculturalism since it portrays Berlin's periphery as a cradle for radical Muslims. Yunes does not seem to be the only one that has embraced *jihad* as the friends he mentioned in conversation with Chris turn out to be suicide bombers in Palestine. Apart from the figure of the assistant to the local imam, who underlines the peaceful nature of Islam, the film fails to produce successful and positive examples of Muslims in Germany: Raid struggles against his addiction to drugs and Muwan follows "a way which is not the right one", blowing himself up in Israel, but his picture with a black and white *keffiyeh* remains hung in the mosque's office. Concentrating uniquely on the male friendship between Chris and Yunes, the film conveys a narrow vision of Islam, preferring "to rely heavily upon various historical archetypes and contemporary stereotypes that are immediately understood from the Euro-centric perspective" (Allen 136). Fischer's film radically differs from the similar docufiction *The Hamburg Cell*, where student turned Al-Qaeda terrorist Ziad is continually challenged and confronted by integrated Muslims, as seen for instance during his fierce discussions with his successful restaurateur uncle and with the other foreign students of the German language evening course. Despite this, they both show some compassion towards the aspiring terrorists; the British TV film is unique for revealing that multiculturalism has a chance of survival also after Al-Qaeda's attacks, since as Modood argues it is the only form of integration that under the present circumstances has some chance of succeeding (*Multiculturalism* 14).

Fischer's film is, therefore, very conventional in its narrative and political content. For instance, it acknowledges only in part the difficulties of the Muslim community, presenting the prejudices that Yunes has to face every day in his neighbourhood. Two brief nocturnal scenes, where German bystanders insult the Yemenite student on his way home, illustrate very superficially the underlying xenophobia in Germany. Despite recognising the immediate difficult aftermath of 9/11 for Muslim immigrants—Chris soon realises he cannot go to the police as "in these times everybody being called Mohammed or Ali is to be considered guilty" (sic)—the film repeats and underlines the duality of "them and us" without developing the issue in more depth. In addition, *Fremder Freund* borrows stylistic devices of traditional popular genres that deal with terrorism (action, thriller and noir) to convey the anxiety of a nation for the other. The suspenseful music, which accompanies Chris in his journey through community centres and university rooms to discover Yunes's true identity, the claustrophobic mise-en-scène and the preference for close-ups and medium shots contribute further to the stigmatising gaze of the camera.

**United by Loss: Overcoming Prejudices in *London River***

Compared to *Fremder Freund*, *London River* explores the issue of Islamophobia in a more in-depth manner, revealing how ingrained casual prejudice can be. Actress Brenda Blethyn plays the "ordinary" white English widow Elisabeth, who leaves her lovely cottage on Guernsey for the unwelcoming neighbourhood of Finsbury Park, north London, where her daughter Jane lives. As soon as she alights from her taxi, she starts to wonder why her daughter belongs to such an alien place, a densely populated, multicultural neighbourhood. She is paranoid and suspicious of the people of different origins, shop signs in foreign languages and exotic-smelling food; this obsession makes her close the door firmly behind her at night and check it repeatedly. Little by little her prejudices emerge: firstly with the landlord, a Muslim man who owns a shop just below Jane's flat. Elisabeth does not feel at ease with him; she avoids his gaze and is not able to look at him, trying to be as far away from him as physically possible in the small alley by the entrance of the flat. When she visits the Islamic cultural centre at the mosque she naively asks the Arabic teacher, "Why would she want to learn Arabic? Who speaks Arabic? I don't!" The woman in her desperation calls her brother to announce her belated return to Guernsey, revealing, "This place is absolutely crawling with Muslims! I am scared". In these vignettes the hearty performance of Blethyn combines the underling naïve ignorance for the other with instinctive behaviours and impulsive bigoted utterances.

More importantly for the film's narrative development, Elisabeth does not hide her surprise and prejudice towards the other protagonist of the film. When the man withholding information on her daughter over the phone turns out to be Ousmane, an elderly African man with dreadlocks, she refuses to shake his hand and for most of the film she shows discomfort in his company. She even calls the police to have him questioned when she suspects his son Ali of brainwashing Jane and converting her to Islam. The construction of the Muslim other in *London River* does not follow pre-written formulae, but is built around the physicality and acting tone of Sotigui Kouyate, winner of the Silver Bear Award for Best Actor at the 59th Berlin International Film Festival, where the film premiered. The audience feels largely sympathetic for this old man with a walking stick, as Elisabeth's attitude appears obviously biased. Jay Wesseberg wrote in *Variety.com*, "Kouyate, his thin, rigid posture like the elm trees his character protects, radiates an irresistible, wordless solidity". In particular, the close-up on his moist eyes, his long silences and the calm tone he adopts present a peaceful figure with whom one can empathise.

The film shows two equal characters on a painful journey from ignorance to knowledge: for Elisabeth this involves the better awareness of Islam, and for Ousmane it is about complete understanding of his son's life. Both characters are therefore united by a sense of loss, which according to Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden is a constant presence in transnational cinema (7). Moreover, the long shots that frame them surrounded by wilderness, in Guernsey and in France, further enhance their loneliness; the cold infrastructures and buildings in London, conveyed during moments of physical mobility in the metropolis, contribute to the emotional engagement of the characters. Hamid Naficy, writing about "accented cinema", claims that "loneliness is an inevitable outcome of transnationality, and it finds its way into the desolate structures of feeling and lonely diegetic characters" (55). For different reasons Elisabeth and Ousmane feel like aliens in a foreign land and their deterritorialisation as displaced persons grounds *London River* in the transnational, both thematically and in terms of global awareness. This sense of loss will bring the two characters together, at first sharing the difficult pilgrimage to the capital's hospitals, then

longing for the arrival of some good news from the police. Elisabeth says towards the end of the film, "Our lives aren't all that different". In fact, the opening sequence establishes a parallel between the two protagonists. On the one hand, Falklands War-widow Elisabeth hears a sermon about loving one's neighbour in her local Protestant church; on the other hand, African forester, Ousmane, kneels in prayer towards Mecca (Weisseberg "London River Review"). Similarly, the ending of the film metaphorically reunites these characters, since they both accept nature's course of events. Elisabeth gives up on her efforts to dig a rocky piece of garden, acknowledging the impossibility of using that land; Ousmane allows the cutting down of a sick elm, alluding perhaps to his will to move forward. When Elisabeth reveals that the elms that Ousmane is trying to protect survive in Guernsey, she leaves the audience with a tender augury of hope for the future, which cannot be enveloped by the anxiety for the unknown (Bradshaw "London River").

*London River* is also a film about communication; a linguistic journey between English and French but also Arabic. Ousmane cannot speak English and Elisabeth must use the French she learnt in school to speak with him. According to Yosefa Loshitzky, "the shift from one language to another is typical of exilic cinema" (8), and thus it demonstrates the transnational dimension of the migratory process as well as the transnational aspect of Europe itself. As a result of this fluid yet timid interaction, the film completely differs from *Fremder Freund* where language becomes another tool to convey anxiety. While German is spoken for the most part of the film, the few dialogues in Arabic between Yunes and his friends are not subtitled, reinforcing again the incomprehension of the Western viewer toward Muslim culture.

French-Algerian Rachid Bouchareb, director of epic films such as *Indigènes* (*Days of Glory, 2006)* and the Academy-Award nominated *Hors-la-loi* (*Outside the Law*, 2010), has always been interested in the subject of discriminatory treatment, whether in colonial North Africa during World War II or in 1950s France during the Algerian War. In *London River* he highlights the persistent xenophobia within certain segments of the British population. However, his portrait of North London also reflects the strong sense of community and solidarity that emerges among minorities. The multicultural neighbourhood is highly functional and supportive as clearly seen in the efforts of the imam and the butcher to locate Ali. Multiculturalism appears therefore through a new prism; it contemplates the acquisition of a new civic and collaborative identity or, using Tariq Modood's words, it "means a new way of being French, a new way of being German, a new way of being British—and perhaps also a new way of being European" ("Introduction" 24).

**Conclusion**

Whereas *Fremder Freund* presents the Muslim protagonist as a failure of multiculturalism, thus promoting a more assimilationist agenda, *London River* proposes a humble reflection on the consequences of terrorism, but through the shared suffering of its protagonists it gives hope for the future of multicultural communities. Despite being very European in their emotional reflection on personal relationships, both films share similar attributes with Hollywood cinema. Specifically, they demonstrate the powerful impact of mediated memories of those events. In other words the televisual images of the World Trade Center in flames and the exploded bus in Tavistock Square are unavoidable elements in a film about terrorism. Nevertheless, these films constitute, along with the British black

comedy *Four Lions* (Chris Morris, 2010),[9] illuminating investigations on the issue of multiculturalism and home-grown terrorists.

In this article, I have outlined how *Fremder Freund* and *London River* are emblematic of different tendencies in the working-through of trauma: an anxiety and outraged reaction to the attacks and an urgent need for a more humane and contextual reflection. Though very different stories, these films suggest that Europe should look internally to engage with the question of how and why it produced home-grown terrorists. However, while *Fremder Freund* frames the narrative of the friendship between Chris and Yunes within the duality of Christian/good versus Muslim/evil, *London River* conceives the issue of terrorism as being separate from religious belief. In this manner the film reflects the words of Homi Bhabha in reference to the war on terror, "once we see terrorism as an organised political action, rather than the expression of cultural or civilizational 'difference', we can both fight it and look towards the future" (98). The issues raised here in terms of the representation of Muslims in European cinema post-9/11, as either terrorist "others" or contingent victims, are clearly very extensive and, therefore, are envisaged as the starting point of a much broader discussion.

**Notes**

[1] I am using the term "fortress Europe" in its more recent connotation, namely the pejorative description of contemporary attitudes towards immigration in Europe. This interpretation is borrowed from Yosefa Loshitzky's book *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema*. However, the term originates from Nazi propaganda, *Festung Europa*, which indicated German plans to fortify and protect European borders in case of an attack from the British islands.

[2] The film was released in the USA in April 2005 as *The Friend*. The original title means literally "foreign friend", where the adjective *fremd* means also "alien" and "different".

[3] Most episodes of the collective film *11'09'01 September 11* (2002) work as personal reflections on the tragedy. In particular, the episodes by European directors Ken Loach and Danis Tanović reconsider the sufferance of American citizens in relation to other atrocities such as the military coup of Pinochet in Argentina and the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia. However, it is the segment by Indian director Mina Nair that bears more similarities in themes and narrative developments to my case studies. In her episode based on a true story, a Muslim mother investigates the disappearance of her son after 9/11. Despite the initial suspicion of his involvement in terrorist activities, the boy turns out to be a victim of the attack and an American hero for saving many lives.

[4] The so-called "Suitcase Bomb Case" deals with the failed detonation of two explosive suitcases activated by two Lebanese men on July 31st 2006 on a train to Koblenz. The second failed attack in Germany took place in Oberschlehdorn, North Rhine-Westphalia, where three people were arrested in possession of large quantities of explosive materials and plans to destroy popular attractions among Americans in the nearby area.

[5] Based in a flat in Marienstrasse, the "Hamburg Cell" was a group of radical Islamists active between 1998 until 2001, whose leader Mohamed Atta eventually organised the four flight-hijackings of 9/11.

[6] During the 1960s a series of agreements with the governments of Spain, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Morocco, Yugoslavia and Portugal were signed resulting in exchange between labour and raw material; migrants reached West Germany on short-term contracts, but ultimately decided to stay permanently.

[7] It is interesting to note that left-wing German politician Thilo Sarrazin (SPD) developed strong critical views on immigration policies and controversial ideas against Muslim migrants in his book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany annihilates itself).

[8] *The Hamburg Cell* focuses on Jarrah's relationship with his Turkish girlfriend, a unique feature among Islamist terrorists. Interestingly the actor who plays Yunes in *Fremder Freund*, Navid Akhavan, appears also in the British re-enactment, this time, however, playing a moderate young Muslim, Salim, who tries to confront Jarrah with his radical choices.

[9] Chris Morris's debut feature created strong controversy for its satire on terror. The film follows four Islamist radicals from Sheffield, who improvise suicide bombers with tragicomic consequences.

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**Elena Caoduro** holds a BA in Communication studies from the University of Padua, Italy and a research MA in Media Studies from the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is currently a PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. Her thesis is entitled "Do you Remember Terrorism? Memory and Representation of Left-wing Political Violence in Recent German and Italian cinema".