

How We Became Legion: Burke's Identification and Anonymous

by

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Abstract

This thesis presents a study of how identification, according to Kenneth Burke's theory, can be observed in the media-related practices promoted by the cyber-activist collective Anonymous. Identification is the capacity of community-building through the use of shared interests. Burke affirms that, as human beings are essentially social, identification is the very aim of any human interaction. Cyber-activism deeply relies on this capacity to promote and legitimise its campaigns. In the case of Anonymous, the collective became extremely popular and is now a frequent presence even in street protests, usually organised online, around the world. Here, I argue that this power was possible through the use of identification, which helped attract a large number of individuals to the collective. Anonymous was particularly skilled in its capacity to create an ideology for each campaign, which worked well to set up a perfect enemy who should be fought against by any people, despite their demographic or social status. Other forms of identification were also present and important. Although it is impossible to measure how many people or what kind of people Anonymous has been attracting, the presence of identification as a strong phenomenon is undeniable, since the collective is now one of the most famous cyber-activist organisations.

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Introduction

When the government of the United States seemed to have ended its battle against terrorism with the murderer of Osama Bin Laden, another battle had already begun, this time in cyberspace. By early 2008, a geek culture of hackers and online pranksters had associated itself with activism almost by accident and started to explore the potentialities of new media in order to promote free speech and criticise neo-liberal globalisation, whose underlying forces were trying to undermine people's voices. The activists' virtual weapons were mainly Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) and Structured Query Language (SQL) injections. The former could easily temporarily disrupt the service of any website around the world, while the latter could be more aggressive and steal virtual data from databases of no matter whom, as long as the code had a hole that hackers could use to gain access to the network. Things became even worse for governments when leaking also became a popular tool and even federal agents could release material to *Wikileaks*, a website created only to leak confidential information, mainly from governments, and that gained the sympathy of cyber-activists.

Although the first practice of cyber-activism dates back to 1994, when a group of hackers called the *Zippies* launched a DDoS attack against United Kingdom government websites and kept them down for about a week, only in 2008 did cyber-activism really become a strong phenomenon, not only in cyberspace, but also in the mainstream media. In January of that year, a group of young people, eventually called Anonymous, that used to hang out on *4chan /b/* board, a website for sharing images that had implemented an anonymous system, decided on a new prank against the Church of Scientology. The situation grew bigger than expected, however, and what started as a prank ended up being a massive act of cyber-activism, because Scientology was trying to impose its censorship on the Internet. In 21 January 2008, a video was published on

YouTube promoting a call to arms against Scientology; it was the first time that Anonymous went beyond the virtual walls of *4chan*. The short video, called "Message to Scientology", was narrated by a mechanical voice and talked mostly about how the church should be punished for its censorship, but also that the raid was for fun. The video presented Anonymous' infamous tagline that became known as the group's signature: "We are Anonymous / We are legion / We do not forgive / We do not forget / Expect us" (ChurchOfScientology). What came next was a massive group of users joining the cause and populating channels on the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) that were associated with the message. The legion was gaining form, a form that had nothing to do with the geek culture of *4chan* and the */b/tards*, a name that members of */b/* used to define themselves.

When the tagline was released in the video, Anonymous was not legion, but it became legion as time went by, and nowadays it is a rhizomatic collective with faceless members all over the world and no clear leadership. The first campaigns, such as the one against Scientology, were essential to Anonymous' gaining acceptance and consolidating itself as a cyber-activist collective and not only as a bunch of pranksters, geeks, and hackers, even though that was exactly how the collective started. The power of attracting people to participate in and legitimise its causes was probably the most powerful weapon that Anonymous had and it has been controlling since then. The hacking attacks caused some harm, but could still go unnoticed by the majority of people and, thus, could be used only as distractions by the members of */b/*. However, when the community popularity grew, people perceived a chance to do more and realised that they could be active participants on a worldwide scale, amplifying their voices as a dissent collective.

Over time, cyber-activism has become more important and its practices have been widely questioned by some people and governments. For instance, while I am typing this thesis, a few

people have been jailed or are facing trials for being cyber-activists. Bradley Manning, formerly of the US military is one of them. Manning is accused of aiding the enemy by the United States government and can be condemned to life imprisonment for leaking documents about the Afghan and Iraq wars. At the same time, Edward Snowden, also a former USA contractor, is seeking asylum as he can be arrested at any moment by United States for leaking documents of the National Security Agency (NSA), which, among other things, show how the USA is illegally monitoring citizens. However, not only high-profile figures are in the purview of prosecutors; Deric Lostutter, aka KYAnonymous, can face ten years in jail for publicising material against teenagers involved in a gang rape in Steubenville, Ohio. His possible punishments can be more serious than that of the rapists involved in the Steubenville case. The above whistleblowers are only three examples among the many people, mostly youngsters, who have been arrested for cyber-activist practices and/or leaking information. Perhaps the community-gathering aspect will be the one that will give cyber-activism enough strength to fight against governments and for the rights of free information, questioning censorship methods, guaranteeing people free access to information about their own government, and validating cyber-activism as a legitimate form of protesting.

Although cyber-activism's power is still questionable, it is undeniable that the formation of a huge community with no geographical limitations has made Anonymous one of the most discussed cyber-activist names. This thesis is motivated by the desire to understand this phenomenon. I want to argue that Anonymous was able to reach people and become a strong community through the use of identification patterns which could appeal to different groups of people. Kenneth Burke affirms that, as human beings, we are always seeking social interaction and means to identify ourselves with other people and groups. In such cases, identification can

put people together in a consubstantial manner at the same time as they preserve their own identities. The idea of identification can be associated with contemporary scholarship about the power of new media to create strong communities that can project their voices in order to use cyberspace as a public sphere for socio-political discussions, as is the case of cyber-activism.

In order to analyse how Anonymous promotes identification, I use the idea of media practices proposed by Nick Couldry. He affirms that any media-related subject can be seen as an "open set of practices relating to, or oriented around, media" ("Theorising" 117). Those practices can be organised according to their context and final aim, allowing the creation of a scheme in which a group of practices can have similar characteristics and also anchor other practices. In other words, I classify Anonymous campaigns as a set of practices and then explore them to determine the identification techniques used by the collective. However, it is not my intention to discuss whether those techniques are used consciously or not, but consider how they appear in Anonymous discourses.

As a way to facilitate the discussion, the first two chapters will provide the theoretical approach required to understand identification and cyber-activism. In the first chapter, I discuss not only identification, according to Burke and other contemporary scholars, but also how identity, and consequently identification, can be perceived in new media. The second chapter describes how activism was shaped by new media and became cyber-activism. In this chapter, I also present an overview of the collective Anonymous, although its practices will be better explored in the Chapter 3 and 4, which will concentrate the analytical research.

It is worth clarifying that I have no intention of covering all the campaigns promoted by the various rhizomes of Anonymous, which are spread around the world, but the main ones that are discussed by the core profiles in social media and websites. I cover the three campaigns that

presented Anonymous to the world and were essential in creating the image of the collective and consolidating its power of attraction: Chanology, Operation PayBack, and HBGary. These three campaigns were widely covered by Parmy Olson and mainstream media; thus, the material used by Anonymous at that time is easily found online. Moreover, I also analyse how the symbols used by Anonymous call for identification.

Before moving on to the theoretical chapters, I would like to note that, although a brief overview of Anonymous is given, it is not the aim of this thesis to go deep into the story of the collective. Anyone interested in such facts is directed to Parmy Olson's book *We are Anonymous*. In addition, the documentary film *We are Legion*, by Brian Knappenberger, is also recommended. While the movie focuses on Anonymous and cyber-activism, Olson's book tells the full story behind the collective. For academic analysis and perspectives about Anonymous, the work of Gabriella Coleman, a scholar who did ethnographic research about Anonymous and hacking culture, is suggested. Moreover, I do not deal with discussions about the legality of cyber-activists' practices, although I do think that the formation of a strong community has the power to pressure governments in order to legitimise cyber-activism.

In this thesis, again, I concentrate on some of the Anonymous campaigns and identification. This research is intended to clarify how Anonymous is organised and presented on the Internet, how this organisation helps to promote identification, and how the process of community-gathering and legitimisation empowers the collective. Although scholarship about cyber-activism has been growing in recent years, a rhetorical approach has not to date been considered; thus, I also intend to contribute with the development of the field by presenting a new way, through Burke's notion of identification and contemporary discussions about the theory, to understand Anonymous and, possibly, other practices of cyber-activism.

1. Identification and New Media

A wave of protests started with the Arab Spring, then moved to Egypt, and now has reached from Turkey to Brazil, passing through small European countries such as Bosnia and Bulgaria. Although these protests tend to be against governments, the causes are barely similar, and each one is determined by an ideological order of its own. However, there is one particular thing that appears among all of the manifestations of dissenting opinion: Guy Fawkes masks. It does not matter what country, people will inevitably come across those weird faces with their singular moustache and ironic smile.

Guy Fawkes masks are one of the main symbols of the cyber-activist collective Anonymous, and the appearance of the costume in protests all over the world is a representation of how the collective has an impressive power of community-gathering that goes beyond any geographical limits and even challenges language barriers. The question here is how the collective can attract so many people through its media-related practice. Although the interactions involving language are not exact subjects and the conclusions about its symbolic use are mainly based on predictability, we can affirm that identification strongly appears in Anonymous discourses and is responsible for the formation of the massive community that we have been seeing not only online, but also in the streets around the globe.

In order to analyse the formation of this huge community, I introduce the theories that will guide the analysis of how identification can be observed in Anonymous practices. First, I present identification as formulated by Kenneth Burke in his *Rhetoric of Motives* and also as discussed by contemporary scholars. Identification will be the main theoretical framework used to observe how Anonymous promotes community-gathering through its new media practices. Although it is not the aim of this research to go deeply into Burke's dramatism, the pentad will be

briefly discussed since this framework can offer a useful perspective for organising the elements that are involved in those practices, and understanding how activism has been affected by the appearance of new media. Subsequently, a brief overview of new media and their characteristics will be given since it is essential to understanding the scene that gives form to cyber-activism. Finally, the two aspects will be considered together to comprehend how identities are formed in new media. The theoretical approach will also be kept in the second chapter, which presents the characteristics of cyber-activism and also provides an overview of the internal logic of Anonymous.

1.1 Burke's Identification and the Pentad

The use of identification as a means to persuade has been present since Ancient Greece, when Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* proclaimed the importance of using commonplaces and of understanding the audience in order to promote persuasion. However, Aristotle concentrates his efforts in a rhetoric that is all about convincing and does not give particular attention to the term identification itself. It is Kenneth Burke who constructs a theoretical approach to rhetoric that has identification as the essential aspect of persuasion and, consequently, as the key term of his theory. Burke departs from a perspective based on drama that analyses the use of language as a symbolic system in order to induce cooperation among human beings.

In order to understand Burke's idea of identification, we should first look at his definition of human beings. Burke affirms that people are symbol-using animals whose experiences define the symbolic system used by them and who are in turn defined by it ("Man" 493). The author also differentiates identity from the self, defining identity as a social product that is created through the symbolic interaction between individuals, whereas the existence of the self is denied.

He affirms that "identity is an active process in which 'I' is merely a unique combination of potentially conflicting corporate 'we's'" (Burke, *Attitudes* 264). Thus, Burke situates people as a product of their social relations, ideologies, and contexts.

As a result of Burke's definition of man, we can see how the social aspect is important in his studies. It is this fact that sets identification as a key term in Burke's studies since he says that the function of rhetoric is to proclaim the unity of men who are by nature divided (*Rhetoric* 22). Consequently, identification is the only means of participation in collective acts, and is considered an essential part in the function of sociality (Burke, *Attitudes* 267). Furthermore, Jay Jordan explains that identification is important "to a wide range of Burkean preoccupations: sacrifice, scapegoating, organisational behaviour, political affiliations, transcendence" (267). Thus, identification works to bring people together and move them collectively towards the same ideal. However, though the origins of the term are in the word identity, identification is not about similarity, but joint interests.

Burke defines identification by saying: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so" (*Rhetoric* 20). Nevertheless, the identity of A or B is not excluded when they come together because of shared interest; thus, they are at the same time consubstantial and independent individuals. Gary Woodward summarises the concept by saying that identification "creates spikes of decisive recognition that can bind us to specific sources, while affirming the boundaries of our own recognised world" (5).

Burke also explains that as the natural division of human beings is the origin of the necessity of identification, both division and identification are constantly subordinate to each

other (*Rhetoric* 22). It is interesting to notice that even the associations formed through identification imply division since people organise themselves in groups that are usually distinguished from other groups, creating an antagonism between "them" and "us". As a consequence, identification offers an attempt to overcome division at the same time that it perpetuates it (Jordan 269). In other words, identification results simultaneously in sociality and rivalry since people tend to tie themselves to the perspective created by a group, at the same time that they ignore or reject other angles.

Keeping in mind the idea of what Burke's identification means, we can move on to the categories that can help to analyse how it appears in discourse. Here, I am going to develop three taxonomies related to the term: the kinds of identification, which implies how the symbolic system is used and perceived by human beings; the strategies that can be used to promote identification; and the forms that identification assumes in discourse. I develop each of these categories in this section, but they can be summarised in the following chart:

Identification		
Kinds	Mechanical	Unconscious association between symbols and ideas.
	Analogical	Use of different frameworks to discuss a category.
	Ideological	Creation of a symbolic system that will give meaning to other symbols.
Strategies	Similarity	Emphasizing resemblance (i.e., demographic).
	Commonality	Shared perspective (i.e. same enemy).
	Hidden Division	Discourse hides tokens that induce identification.
Forms	Syllogistic	Progressive and organised.
	Qualitative	Use of different qualities following each other.
	Repetitive	Reinforcement of one idea.
	Conventional	Based on specific genres.
	Incidental	Tropes used as minor forms.

Table 1: Identification Taxonomies

The first important aspect of identification relates to how symbols will be interpreted by human minds in order to promote identification. Through this process of interpretation, the symbols will be associated with certain elements according to the critical approach used by the ones taking part in the symbolic act. Departing from this idea of associations, Burke presents three kinds of identification: mechanical, analogical, and ideological. I explain these one by one while providing examples for each kind.

Mechanical: this kind of identification results from the simple association between an idea with a symbol or image. Woodward affirms that this kind of identification does not involve any critical thinking, being based on how previous experiences shape the way we interpret the world (29). Mechanical identification can be seen when a certain object is associated with a desired class status. For example, in Western culture brands of cars are preferred according to the image that one has of oneself and wants to project to others. Consequently, mechanical identification can also show how symbols can be used to confirm identity (Woodward 129).

Analogical: in this case, identification happens when "the principle of an order is transferred to another order" (Burke, *Rhetoric* 133). In other words, analogical identification uses a framework that does not belong to the category of the idea under discussion in order to re-contextualise the subject and give it a new meaning. For example, arguments are typically defined using a vocabulary of conflict (i.e., argument in a fight), which moves them from the realm of an exchange of ideas to a battle in which only one side can win.

Ideological: this is the most symbolic and abstract of the three kinds of identification. Burke defines rhetorical ideology as "a system of political or social ideas, framed and propounded for an ulterior purpose" (*Rhetoric* 88). Thus, the ideological identification happens when a complete system, or cluster of signs, is created to represent a large idea that is used to

order other signs. As an example, Christian conservative groups can attract people using an ideological form of identification; as soon as they begin sharing the membership of this group, people will start to judge based on the views that the group considers natural or abnormal, creating a new organisation for their worlds. Ideological systems are particularly good at giving meaning to signs that do not have a fixed position when it comes to good or bad per se, such as capitalism (Burke, *Rhetoric* 184). Here, it is important to notice that this form of identification can happen in a subliminal way since ideological systems are often interiorised by individuals in an unconscious manner. For instance, Tony Thwaites mentions that ideologies are keen to address people as if they already are part of that system, leaving no choice to the addressee other than to accept his/her role as part of the group (162).

Woodward affirms that the analogical identification reframes one's experience, while the ideological renames it (33). When either one is in action, it is able to modify one's idea, showing the association between identification and identity. A modification in mind calls for an identity adjustment and a change of attitude, which has the power to change the way people perceive themselves and the world (Woodward 36, Ambrester 205). A successful identification can be noticed, at a superficial level, through explicit connections to the group, such as the use of the same vocabulary, and, at a deeper level, in the impact on the symbolic organisation of one's mind.

The three kinds of identification discussed can appear in discourse according to three different strategies. These strategies take into consideration how the audience will be attracted to a specific idea. As with all rhetorical acts, identification occurs when an audience can be addressed and, consequently, convinced. Although Burke points out that one can be one's own audience as long as one "cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect [one] hopes they may

have upon [one]" (*Rhetoric* 38), rhetorical acts usually have external audiences that can be convinced. Burke affirms that different strategies can be used to create identification with the audience: 1) similarity — when points of resemblance are created among people; 2) commonality — when the audience shares a common ideal; and 3) terms that hide division — when a discourse implicitly moves the audience towards a sense of group (Woodward 26). These strategic appeals happen when a speaker is able to talk the same language as the audience "by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your way with his" (Burke, *Rhetoric* 55). By doing that, the speaker will identify his/her causes with the interests and opinions of the audience.

Burke summarise the three strategies in the following paragraph:

The first is quite dull. It flowers in such usages as that of a politician who, though rich, tells humble constituents of his humble origins. The second kind of identification involves the workings of antithesis, as when allies who would otherwise dispute among themselves join forces against a common enemy. This application also can serve to deflect criticism; a politician can call any criticism of his policies "unpatriotic", on the grounds that it reinforces the claims of the nation's enemies. But the major power of "identification" derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed. My prime example is the word "we", as when the statement that "we" are at war includes under the same head soldiers who are getting killed and spectators who hope to making a killing in war stocks (*Dramatism and Development* 28).

Here it is interesting to notice that the creation of enemies used in the commonality strategy is marked by the striving for perfection that defines human beings in the view of Burke.

The author exemplifies the construction of Jews in *Mein Kampf*, by Hitler, and also the traditional conflicts between East and West and the creation of villains (Burke, "Man" 509) such as Osama Bin Laden as the personification of terrorism. As a consequence of the perfect enemies, there is the presence of the perfect victims who can identify with each other because of the shared enemy. Regarding similarity, it is not only seen when an evident characteristic is shared among people, but also when people are invited to imagine themselves in a certain situation to build empathy with those actually in that situation; hence, an abstract representation of similarity is thereby created. Thus, the strategies can be broadened to encompass a wide range of sub-strategies. It is also important to notice that the three main strategies of identification can appear in different forms and be associated with each other.

Finally, besides the various kinds and strategies of identification, Burke categorises the forms that can be used to promote identification through discourse. David Blakesley explains that Burke's idea of form means the "way writers and readers shape experience symbolically for the purpose of communicating and shaping attitudes and emotions" (55). Moreover, Burke affirms that "form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (*Statement* 31). Thus, the Burkean form is not simply about structure and arrangement, but a factor that fuses subject matter with the act of communicating and is deeply connected with how the message will be received and interpreted by the audience. Consequently, understanding the forms as proposed by Burke can help to identify the strategies used to promote identification.

Burke describes three major types of forms: 1) progressive, which is divided into syllogistic and qualitative; 2) repetitive; and 3) conventional. In addition, he includes a category

of minor or incidental forms. These forms are not mutually exclusive, and can be used in conjunction with one another.

Syllogistic: this form is seen in progressive arguments that advance step by step in an organised and hierarchical manner. Burke mentions that in a syllogistic work, "the arrows of audience desire are turned in a certain direction, and the plot follows the direction of the arrows" (*Statement 124*).

Qualitative: qualitative form refers to the use of different emotions in a discourse. It operates when the presence of a quality sets the mood for another different quality. Thus, the anticipatory nature does not exist in qualitative form, but the audience's mood is progressively built by the speaker according to his/her final intention. Burke explains that qualitative form lacks "the pronounced anticipatory nature of the syllogistic progression. We are prepared less to demand a certain qualitative progression than to recognize its rightness after the event. We are put into a state of mind which another state of mind can appropriately follow" (*Statement 125*).

Repetitive: this form consists of the reinforcement of one idea through different guises. It does not mean a repetition in discourse per se, but a repetitive principle promoted through different practices.

Conventional: this occurs in action when form obeys the pattern of a specific genre that is familiar to the audience. For Burke, this kind of form creates a categorical expectation, which is defined as "an expectation formed prior to the process of reading, viewing, or interpretation" (Blakesley 59).

Incidental: this form is composed mainly by tropes that can be analysed as a separated formal events but whose effect depends on the whole discourse. Examples of incidental forms are metaphors and paradoxes.

As a rhetorical appeal presented through these forms, identification can fail or succeed at four different levels: associative, admiring, sympathetic, and cathartic. The levels were developed by P. David Marshall in his scholarship about film studies (Woodward 49). However, they are also useful in understanding social contexts since the three levels can define how people engage with a person or group. The terms are self-explicative and define the state of mind of the audience after receiving a message, implying diverse degrees of engagement with an idea. Though the final aim of identification as described by Burke is to move people towards some action, it only happens when associative identification is conquered. In this case, an individual not only identifies his/her views with the view of the group, but also becomes an active member of the organisation.

Burke elaborates on the concept of identification to work as the central idea of his pentad, which presents the fundamentals of the theatrical act that uses language as symbolic action. The author claims that the pentad is intended to answer the question: "What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (Burke, "Container" 56). Thus, the scheme provides the five elements that composes any rhetorical act: act — what happened?, scene — where it happened?, agent — who did it?, purpose — why was it done?, and agency—which medium was used? (Blakesley 08). The classification of the terms must be contextualised according to a determined perspective since they are mutable depending on the framework used to describe them. For instance, when talking about cyber-activism, Blakesley offers an example that Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) can be considered as a crime or activism, changing completely the definition of the act (129).

The terms of the pentad can relate to one another in what Burke calls ratios, which can define how one term modifies the other. For this research, I am particularly concerned with the

ratios that the scene imposes over the other elements since Burke affirms that "the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene" and that all rhetorical acts must be adjusted to the possibilities and limitations of their background ("Container" 57-58). For example, the scene-act ratio infers how a scene influences the act.

Scene is particularly important here because it defines the changes from activism to cyber-activism. Although both are basically directed to the same purposes (change, resistance, and critique), cyber-activism follows the affordances and limitations of new media in its practices. It is also worth noticing that, as I discuss in the next chapter, new media can operate as both a place/scene and a medium/agency, depending on the aim of the cyber-activism, whether it is just to promote an idea or create forms of online rebellion, such as cyber-attacks.

1.2 The Scene - The Democratic Turn of New Media

If there was once a day when the digital and the real worlds could be separated, it no longer exists. As media have become more ubiquitous, the integration of online and offline has become part of everyday life and has shaped how people interact with the world (Lister *et al.* 217). As a consequence of this junction, new media have been re-modelling traditional practices according to their affordances and limitations. Among those practices is cyber-activism, which came from the streets and was adapted to the online environment. Consequently, in order to understand how cyber-activism works, it is important to study the scene that contains this activity, in other words, the new media. Although the Internet has many facets that are worth studying, here I am mostly interested in how it can be used to promote community-gathering for democratic purposes since the aim of this thesis is to analyse a cyber-activist collective.

In his short essay about the democratic turn promoted by the new media, Jay Rosen emphasizes that a shift in power took place when mass media audiences were shifted to the virtual environment (13). By this affirmation, Rosen means that new media audiences are now able to overcome the one-to-many model of communication present in mass media through the many-to-many scheme offered by the new medium since the Internet "provides support for the more multidirectional forms of participation and for the heterogeneity of the communicational content and practices" (Carpentier, *Media* 111). Though Rosen does not deny that a passive form of consumption still coexists in new media environments, he points out that now people can decide whether they want to deal with information passively or actively (14).

Before moving on to the affordances of new media, it is important to clarify what I mean by democracy in this context since the term is widely used to describe new media, but the definition is not often clear. Here, I adopt Nico Carpentier's idea of maximalist democracy, which implies that democratic places are the ones that allow socio-political practices (Carpentier, *Media* 17). Departing from the same view as Carpentier, Mark Warren affirms that those democratic practices can be divided into the dispositional, deliberative, and representational. The first term refers to social interactions that are able to promote active citizenship; the second concerns to the creation of places that provide incentive for egalitarian debates; and the last one refers to the instrumental means by which citizens can participate in the public life (as qtd. in Song 59). In the case of new media, all three dimensions can be found since the media offer a public sphere that provides "access to information and opportunities for interaction", encouraging the exchange and debate of political issues (Gimmler as qtd. in Carpentier, *Media* 119).

Consequently, new media afford the creation of a democratic public sphere in which "collective opinions can be formed and voiced" (Song 04). With this idea in mind, we can now discuss the aspects of new media that will give form to online democratic practices. The characteristics that will define those practices are interactive, virtual, hypertextual, digital, simulated, and networked (Lister *et al.* 13). Each is next discussed, but it is important to remember that they are all associated with one another, though some emphasize different affordances of the new media.

Interactive: this occurs when media systems "incorporate the possibility of user-content and user-user interaction through the interaction between user and technology" (Carpentier, *Media* 116). In other words, it means that users not only interact with content and each other, but also become producers of content, usually called prosumers. Martin Lister *et al.* propose that interactivity is connected to the hypertextual aspect of new media since it gives users the chance of following different pathways when navigating (21-25). Interactivity can also be perceived through the tools options offered by the Internet to facilitate the exchange of information, such as search features, peer recommendations (tied to the networked aspect), and site-generated recommendations.

Hypertextual: this linking practice is an important characteristic of new media since it affords the presence of multiple perspectives through intertextuality and also defines the autonomy of the user. Andreas Kitzmann points out that while formal organisations restrict interaction between ideas, the hypertext broadens it and changes "the very nature of expression itself, especially in terms of the relationship between readers and writers" (19, 29). However, it is worth noticing that, though different paths can be followed through hypertexts, doing so does not

offer unlimited possibilities and is often associated with how the producer wants to have his/her content interpreted by the audience.

Digital: as opposed to analogical systems, digital formats allow the easy manipulation of content by users. Now, information can be created, stored, modified, and shared without the need of media specialists, reinforcing the idea of prosumers. Yochai Benkler affirms that the digital nature of online content "armed with the means of recording, rendering, and communicating their observations change their relationship to the events that surround them" since all the information gathered can be treated as input for public debate and used to challenge the perspectives offered by mainstream media organizations (219). In addition, the digital nature of new media eliminates the necessity of physical information, which means that knowledge can be circulated independent of geographic limits.

Virtual: although for a long time the virtual was considered as the opposite of real, Lister *et al.* affirms that it represents an embodied identity inserted in a technological imaginary context that is also part of the real world and, consequently, affects the way we perceive ourselves as human beings (36-37).

Simulated: computer simulation refers to the "visual presentation of artificial realities" (Lister *et al.* 43). As I am mostly interested in community-gathering for democratic purposes, I will not advance the concept of artificial realities, even though it offers a wide range of possibilities, mainly in the area of game studies.

Networked: the fact that the Internet is organised into nodes connected to each other at different levels is one of the most important characteristics when it comes to community-gathering and democracy. Thus, I pay particular attention to this aspect. The fact that online networks tend to be organised into communities, primarily implies that the audience is no longer

a uniform mass, but instead communities formed around shared interests or identities. Carpentier mentions that in the digital world people are linked by a "taste culture" and "grouped on the basis of their preference for a certain content" ("Audience" 196). Consequently, different from real communities in which individuals join together mostly by spatial coincidences, virtual communities choose their own groups. The formation of virtual communities is seen as a powerful democratic affordance of the Internet since it augments the voice of the collective in a world marked by a neo-liberal politic that is constantly denying the existence of citizen's voices (Couldry, *Voice* 135-136). Among the most important new media products when it comes to community formation are the social networking websites. Such platforms are "sites for performance and mutual engagement" in which the social centre is no longer based on mainstream media, but on "ourselves, our friends and family, and our horizontal social world" (Coultry, "Audience" 215).

Although not among the characteristics proposed by Lister *et al.* to define new media, three other concepts define how people deal with online content: audience autonomy, convergence, and fragmentation. Phillip Napoli explains audience autonomy as the ways users have taken control of certain aspects of the Internet, ranging "from interactivity to mobility to on-demand functionality to the increased capacity for user-generated content all serve to enhance the extent to which audiences have control over the process of media consumption" (Napoli 8). When it comes to convergence, Henry Jenkins defines the term as the "flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of [some] kinds of entertainment experiences", making the relations between audience and content more complex and providing more alternatives to participatory media. Meanwhile, Napoli identifies

fragmentation in two instances. Firstly, the Internet offers an increase in the array of content options available for the audience (55), which also leads to the fragmentation of the audience. Putting the three definitions together we can understand that new media allow the circulation of a wide range of content that can be accessed through multiple ways and different platforms according to individual interests of one's mind. The idea of convergence and fragmentation have caused some critics to believe that extreme fragmentation will lead to the loss of political power since the communities will be too small to have their voices heard by political agents. However, Benkler explains that, in fact, the Internet is "exhibiting concentration" because of the creation of similar patterns of attention that gather people together in significant communities (214).

All the characteristics discussed mark the affordances of cyberspace as both scene and agency, according to the Burkean pentad, in which social actors can engage in performatory symbolic acts with one another, constructing and reshaping their own identities while consuming and producing content. The level of engagement of each actor will depend on, first, the allowance of access to the web, and, second, his/her own abilities to interact with digital media. Although the range of possibilities in new media are enormous and will mostly rely on the individual, the two barriers, access and skills, mentioned create what scholars call the digital divide.

Carpentier argues that as access to computers becomes essential, people who have no or only limited access to this opportunity suffer from a "digibetism", or computer illiteracy, which can dichotomise society (*Media* 114). While Carpentier does not mention the role that the economy plays in the digital divide, Lister *et al.* illustrate that digital inclusion is spread with capitalism; thus, the wealthiest countries are the ones with ample access, while certain continents, such as poor areas of Africa and Latin America, suffer from the lack of connectivity

because of their form of poverty and the lack of infrastructure (183). As a consequence, many people are still excluded from the digital world, and its democratic power is hidden from them, which reinforces the inequalities between countries, since some cannot have access to information and knowledge. However, financial matters are not the only cause of digital exclusion; it can also happen as a result of dictatorial governments, like in China, which prevent their citizens from accessing different kinds of content and platform in order to keep the control. In such cases, we can say that an artificial divide is created with the clear intention of hurting democratic manifestations. In addition, the digital divide can also refer to the skills of an individual, which may impose limitations on whether content is consumed passively or actively. Another important element of the digital divide is that, even though geographical barriers are not present, the language can be still a limitation to worldwide access of information. Moreover, isolation of communities, even with shared interests, occurs, if they cannot communicate with each other, thus, reducing their power to voice collective opinions. Though the digital divide excludes people from the scene of rhetorical acts of interests to this thesis, these people must not be excluded from the general context of cyber-activism, since many practices of cyber-activism are aimed towards them.

Based on the premises discussed, we can see how new media change the way we face information in our everyday life and how it allows the creation of a networked public sphere that, though virtual, is capable of affecting the real world. However, it is still necessary to discuss the question of virtual identities and, consequently, how identification can operate in new media.

1.3 Identity and Identification in New Media

As the main theoretical approach of this thesis is the theory of identification proposed by Burke, the discussions about identity will also take into consideration his perspective of human beings as social creatures. Consequently, I am going to adopt a socio-cultural view of identity. From this perspective, "identity is seen as a discursive structure that endows meaning to objects and individual and collective agents" (Carpentier, *Media* 175). As social products, identities are constantly circulating, being contested, and changing according to the symbolic interactions among social actors and subjects. When it comes to new media, we can discuss identities in two spheres: individual and collective. I start by presenting a brief overview of the first kind in order to understand how it results in the second one.

Individual identities presented on new media are marked by two concepts described before as the characteristics of new media: fragmentation and anonymity. Regarding the former, Lister *et al.* use the term *bricolage* to define those identities (267). This term means that a digital identity is composed of multiple discourses, resulting in the different patterns of interests that will compose the subjectivity of a person. Those interests could result, as discussed, in an extreme fragmentation of virtual communities. However, once a person has a wide range of interests and holds them all in the virtual environment, it is easy to find patterns that attract large groups, although small communities are also present in the Internet. Meanwhile, the anonymous aspect raises a few issues since, on the one hand, people have affirmed that lack of a full identity challenges authenticity and honesty. On the other hand, some individuals believe that "the fluidity of identities made anonymous and stripping of nonverbal cues and physical presence from communication made for potential havens of trust and care", encouraging moral values that were absent in the real world (Song 19). Nevertheless, the Internet cannot be generalised in one

of the two categories, as both coexist in the digital world. Although anonymity is constantly referred to as a characteristic of online environments, it is important to remember that a great part of the information exchanged through online networks is not made anonymously, but through the use of pseudonyms. In such cases, people choose a nickname or avatar and construct their identities through virtual symbolic interactions. Despite the discussions raised, anonymity or pseudonymity can benefit the formation of communities since "anonymous persons are more likely to follow group norms or form a collective identity in place of an individual one" (Ginger 27). Of course anonymity also has problematic effects on online communications since people can hide themselves behind an avatar and do not feel the necessity of respecting the social rules of the real world. As a consequence, inflammatory speeches are common in social media, forums, and any other platforms that allow the exchange of information. Nonetheless, Jeff Ginger points out that the issue of hidden identities is becoming more infrequent since many social media websites are now worried about tying virtual identities to their real agents, such as Facebook.

However, even when real and online identities are tied, most manifestations of virtual identities are made through discourse since there is no physical body. Consequently, some of the elements that are responsible for real-world identity manifestations, such as appearance and clothes, disappear. Lister *et al.* affirm that as a result, users can play with discursive identities and, in such cases, traditional group distinctions such as social class and ethnicity are neglected, while knowledge and communicational skills are enhanced (270). Moreover, the authors affirm that "by stripping away 'superficial' corporeal markers of identity we approach something like a 'truthful' essential self constituted in ideal communication with other disembodied but authentic identities" (Lister *et al.* 279). Though there are various websites in which pictures can be

uploaded, doing so is often a personal choice and people can keep their images hidden if they so wish.

As one of the characteristics of new media is to be networked, those individual identities are always surrounded by others, who can affect and be affected by the interaction with each other. In the case of new media, those communities work as micro groups that shape and are shaped by the participation of each member, sharing the same discursive features and interests. As in the definition of human beings proposed by Burke, virtual individuals are also seeking group acceptance through identification, thus, the formation of discourse communities is a consequence of this process. These groups are the expression of the collective identities that can be found in the online environment. Although the collective identities can represent different interests, ranging from entertainment to political participation, I am going to focus only on the democratic manifestations of online communities, since this is the focus of this thesis.

In his extensive work about virtual collective identities and democracy, Manuel Castells mentions that the concept can be divided into three segments: legitimising identities, resistance identities, and project identities (06). The first is represented by the dominant institutions that perpetuate their ideology in order to make it more acceptable to citizens. Meanwhile, project identities appears when a stereotyped identity is challenged by the ones who should embody it. In such cases, a whole ideological system is questioned and people seek to redefine their position in society. Nevertheless, it is the second kind of identity that Castells describes as the most important in networked societies. The author defines resistance identities as the one created by social actors who do not agree with the dominant view imposed on them. Such people tend to group themselves around an idea that they want to criticise, in a kind of defensive reaction, appearing as important democratic agents in contemporary society and constructing "forms of

collective resistance against otherwise unbearable oppression" (Castells 09). In terms of identification strategies, commonality is the main one that can be seen when people gather around resistance identities, although the other strategies can also appear in the discursive practices of a group.

Furthermore, Castells agrees with Nick Couldry about the oppression of citizen voices in neo-liberal culture, and he sees the collective representations in resistance identities as a response to this domination (68). Castells also defines the three main characteristics of those groups: (1) "they appear as reactions to prevailing social trends"; (2) "they are, at the outset, defensive identities that function as refuge and solidarity, to protect against a hostile, outside world"; and (3) "they are culturally constituted; that is, organised around a specific set of values" (68). As a social response to the oppression caused by legitimising identities, the resistance identities try to create a new symbolic system that can be shared by their members in an attempt to promote social transformation. As a collective identity organised towards political aims, the resistance identities have the power of virtual communities. Thus, they can amplify the presence of individuals and promote significant actions in either the online or the offline world.

Cyber-activism appears as one of those representations of resistance identities described by Castells. As a virtual form of political participation, it deals with the affordances and characteristics of the web to attract people that will legitimise and voice its practices. In such cases, people will come together because of shared dissenting views. However, as online identities are fluid, cyber-activist groups tend to have a diffuse ideological perspective. As cyber-activists can make use of the affordances of new media, such as the use of digital content and convergence, the messages can be sent through a wide range of channels at the same time, creating an almost instantly repetitive form that can promote identification. Nevertheless,

understanding the practices conducted by cyber-activists go beyond the use of different platforms.

As Burke defines identification as the ultimate aim of social interaction, it is obviously present in virtual relationships. Thus, the taxonomies of identification can help to understand how the community-gathering process occurs when it comes to cyber-activism. Through an analysis of the media-related practices of Anonymous, it is possible to see the kinds, strategies, and forms of identification used by the collective to attract people. Meanwhile, the characteristics of new media are responsible for setting Anonymous cyber-activists practices, since the collective promotes its campaigns through new media. By analysing such practices and the way identification appears on them, we can understand how Anonymous turned itself into the legion that it claims to be and how the collective is now a strong presence in protests all over the world.

In the next chapter I discuss the peculiarities of cyber-activism and how it was shaped by new media affordances. Based on this discussion, I proceed to an overview of the practices that can be used by cyber-activist groups, along with a presentation of Anonymous and its internal culture.

2. Cyber-activism and Its Practices

The democratic turn of new media mentioned by Jay Rosen is undeniable; however, it is obvious that only one person has the power to be heard in cyberspace. Thus, the formation of communities is essential to reinforce the virtual democratic power offered by new media. Online communities are formed mainly through identification. As cyber-activism is also a virtual process which relies on the presence of a massive community, identification appears as one of its most important resources, since it will be responsible for the community-gathering that can strengthen people's voices, making cyber-activism an influential mechanism in the virtual and real worlds. However, before studying how identification is created in Anonymous practices, it is important to understand what cyber-activism is and what its practices are.

Marked by a mix of the affordances of new media and the characteristics of activism, cyber-activism is a relatively recent phenomenon that is gaining ground in contemporary society. Although sharing the same aims as offline activism, such as expressing dissenting opinions through different manifestations, cyber-activism was greatly changed by the affordances of new media. The term accommodates different practices that use new media as both a space and a medium. However, the potentialities are fully explored when new media present as a new space for socio-political protests, aggregating practices, such as cyber-attacks, that can only be realised on the Internet.

In order to understand the logic of cyber-activism, this chapter first focuses on the differences between activism and cyber-activism, seeking to understand the latter. Second, it presents the cyber-activist practices that are media-related. The discussions here, as well as the ones in the first chapter, will be used as the basis for the analysis in the next two sections.

2.1 Activism — From the Streets to the Internet

Although the first use of the Internet for political aims appears to have been in the early 1990s, when the Zapatista movement in Mexico exploited the new medium in order to spread its message all over the world, it is the Battle of Seattle that is recognised as the initial mark of cyber-activism (Kahn & Kellner 87). At that time, in December 1999, an international protest was organised through the Internet to oppose the neo-liberal globalisation policies of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The campaign aimed to mobilise the public through the Internet and also to spread information about the action in cyberspace; both of the goals achieved good results thanks to the digital nature of the web. It is estimated that the online mobilisation gathered over 40,000 protesters. Joss Hands affirms that this mobilisation is what made the Battle of Seattle so noticeable, since it put "traditionally disparate groups working together in loose affiliations to achieve maximum effect" (148-149). Since the Battle of Seattle, citizens have been using "new media to become informed, to inform others, and to construct new social and political relations" (Kahn & Kellner 88). However, understanding how it started is not enough to comprehend how cyber-activism acts in contemporary society as a response to neo-liberal globalisation issues.

Globalisation cannot be considered a recent phenomenon since its origins are in the mercantilist world that arose when European countries were looking for colonies in which they could exercise their supremacy. However, it gained force with the end of the Cold War and the growth of the free market. Moreover, the appearance of the Internet broke geographical barriers, allowing quick information flow and better contact between nations and people, giving the last piece needed to strengthen globalisation. Nowadays, globalisation is marked by the internationalisation of capital, strong presence of transnational enterprises, and a new order of power in which international organs, such as the World Trade Organisation and the International

Monetary Fund, have even more authority than countries do. In this new configuration, those organisms are constantly challenged by cyber-activism, because of their structure, decision-making procedures, and policies, such as the free market, deregulation of trade, and environmental degradation (Van Aelst and Walgrave 99). However, cyber-activism is not against globalisation per se, but against its negative side effects and neo-liberal deregulated politics and economics (Hands 142, Van Aelst and Walgrave 99); those problems transcend national boundaries and, consequently, can be addressed by any individual despite his/her geographical location. Paradoxically, cyber-activism uses the same tool, the Internet, that allowed the strengthening of globalisation in order to fight against its collateral effects.

A simple overview demonstrates that both activism and cyber-activism emerge when dissatisfaction is associated with people's understanding that they can be active participants in political decisions since democratic regimes are based on legitimacy that can be given or withdrawn at any time. However, the ways in which dissatisfaction is presented differ. One of the simplest definitions is given by Sandor Vegh, who defines cyber-activism as "a politically motivated movement relying on the Internet" (71). Although it is not wrong, the definition hides all the complexities of activism and only affirms its reliance on the Internet. However, as cyber-activism and activism share some features, it is necessary to consider how one morphed into the other.

Hands points out that activism, in general, is any movement that challenges the dominant power and its exploitation (5). He also adds that it can be expressed in three different ways: dissent, resistance, and rebellion (Hands 3). The three terms express the level of engagement that one person or one group can have in relation to an idea. Dissent suggests disagreement, but not necessarily a movement to action; the space for dissent is the minimum expected in democratic

regimes (Hands 4). Meanwhile, resistance and rebellion go beyond dissent's disagreement to more expressive manifestations. Thus, resistance appears when force is used implicitly or explicitly in order to demonstrate dissatisfaction, Hands exemplifies resistance with the following sentence: "Not only do I not believe in the war, but also I will refuse to pay my taxes until it's over" (5). Finally, rebellion goes a step further than resistance and recognises the roots of the problem, exercising its power of expression towards more transformative changes. Following the example above, rebellion can be seen when "not only do I not believe in the war, protest against the war and refuse to pay my taxes, but also I recognise the profound inequity of the system that supports it, caused it and profits from it, and will do all I can to organise against it and act to bring about a differed system" (Hands 5). The idea of rebellion proposed by Hands is more related to collectivism than the other two terms, although the other forms of cyber-activism can also be presented collectively, since they also depend on multiple voices effectively manifested. It is noteworthy that Hands even describes rebellion in similar terms to Burke's explaining identification; Hands says that the three forms of expressions comprising activism lie in "the mutual recognition of others", which entails "collective ends without overriding individual liberties" (Hands 17). Consequently, as in identification, the collective rebellion is also based on a union that, although consubstantial, preserves individual identities.

The forms of expression described by Hans can be seen in activism as well as in cyber-activism. However, the way in which they tend to be organised differs. For instance, Laura Illia argues that the dynamics of cyber-activism change the pressure on organisations since they have no time and geographical barriers, which modifies not only public participation, but also how issues are selected (327). In other words, offline activism had to rely on a communication form that was not time effective, and corporations had the power to control some issues, making it less

noticeable and difficult to reach the public at all times. Meanwhile, cyber-activism can produce and spread messages instantly, which makes it difficult for organisations to react. As to geographical limits, cyber-activism moves the focus from territorial to functional issues. Those issues are described by Lauren Langman as adversities that arise with globalisation, such as "greater inequality, growing hunger, exploited labour, the repression and exploitation of workers or women, undemocratic governance, and human rights abuses including torture" (Langman 45). Illia also raises other distinctions between activism and cyber-activism that are worth noticing; although some of them must be reconsidered, they can be summarised in Table 2 below:

Dynamic Changes from Activism to Cyber-activism ¹		
	Activism	Cyber-activism
1	Has its origins in society's pluralism and complexity.	Departs from society's complexities, but also originates from the loss of communication control.
2	Marked by heterogeneity.	Heterogeneity is even greater than in activism.
3	Grows from failing expectations regarding corporate social responsibilities.	Grows from the association between failing expectations and the raising of public opinion.
4	Focuses on an issue that is functionally limited by territorial boundaries.	Focuses on a functional issue that can go beyond barriers of time and space.
5	Requires community-gathering.	Community-gathering is not necessary.
6	Pressure is reached within the aggregation.	Every single individual can cause pressure.
7	Visibility is reached through mass media coverage.	Visibility is gained through the Internet and mass media, but the results are improved if there is mass media coverage.

Table 2: Dynamic Changes from Activism to Cyber-activism

Although the Table sets out how visibility requires the presence of media coverage, nowadays new media can challenge this power by producing its own forms of communication

¹ Adapted from: Laura Illia. "Passage to Cyberactivism: How Dynamics of Activism Change." *Journal of Public Affairs* 3.4 (2003): 326–337. Web. 22 May 2013. Retrieved from onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pa.161/pdf.

through extensive use of digital technology associated with the creation of blogs and websites for the dissemination of user generated content. For instance, Langman argues that one of the characteristics of networked movements is the fact that now information and communication can happen effectively outside mainstream media and be produced by the agents of changes themselves (44). Furthermore, Illia affirms that aggregation is not essential to cyber-activism since it can attract attention even through single manifestations. However, the discussions about networks proposed by Manuel Castells and Felicia Song call attention to the idea that a collective voice has much more power in cyberspace than a single person does. Langman also proposes that "collective identities are essential to contemporary social movements; they provide the individual with an agenic [*sic*] identity based on his or her group identity that disposes certain actions" (57). In addition, we should remember that, according to the concept of identification, people are often seeking to engage with others, which creates the necessity of community in activism as well as in cyber-activism.

According to Langman's proposition above, the question of community is directly associated with identity, a point not extensively discussed by Illia, even though she mentions the large heterogeneity of cyber movements. Nevertheless, identity also changes when we move from activism to cyber-activism, with cyber-activism responsible for the formation of a resistance identity as described by Castells. Apart from that, another significant difference is noticeable: activism tends to group people with a strong shared identity, whereas cyber-activism has a loosely collective identity, greatly influenced by the presence of fluid and *bricoleur* identities, as described by Lister *et al.* (267). For instance, Hands says that the union in cyberspace is redeemed by claims of validity, though "agreements are always crosscut with other discourses and values" (107). Lance Bennett agrees with this point and explains that the

openness of the networks represents a weakness and a strength for cyber-activism, since it makes it "difficult to control campaigns or to achieve coherent collective identity frames" (Bennett 124) at the same time that it allows the formation of massive virtual communities. Langman also points out that, as a result of the openness of cyber-activism, the ideological role is downplayed as well as the organisation of leadership, in such movements, with "leaders [acting] more like cheerleaders than directors" (47).

The characteristics of cyber-activism provide a good basis to understand how cyber-activist groups are represented online. However, it is still necessary to discuss the kind of practices that those groups use in order to promote their ideas, which will be the focus of the next section.

2.2 Media Practices and Cyber-activism Practices

As a media-related phenomenon, cyber-activism, and, consequently Anonymous, can be understood in light of a methodology proposed by Nick Couldry which says that any media-oriented subject can be treated as a conjunction of practices (Couldry, "Media as Practice" 117). His idea clarifies what people are doing when it comes to media and the different contexts that involve those practices. The context is particularly important because it has the power to modify the definition of a determined practice and also its consequences. In the case of cyber-activism, such modification is particularly noticeable in the acts involving hacktivism. This form of cyber-activism is considered a crime by governments, but it has been legitimatised by citizens as a valid form of protesting. Though Couldry's theory offers a much wider discussion than the one presented here, I am mostly interested in using it to schematise Anonymous' cyber-activist practices in its campaigns, taking into consideration the context in which those practices were

created. In order to give a background for the practices that will be discussed in the analysis, this section presents a range of media-related practices that comprise cyber-activism, although the list is not exhaustive.

Before moving to the practices, it is important to understand that cyber-activist communities usually promote specific campaigns that will encompass the practices connected to specific causes. Bennett points out that those campaigns tend to be long term, even though their focus can shift as time goes by (133). He further explains that long-term campaigns are marked by three factors:

Campaigns are likely to continue over time, and change in terms of networks and goals to the extent that: (a) the target is widely recognised and newsworthy; (b) the target can be connected to various lifestyle concerns (consumer protection, endangered species, environmental quality, human suffering, political corruption); (c) weblogs, lists, and networked campaign sites create an epistemic community that makes the campaign a source of knowledge about credible problems, while making the target an exemplar of both problems and solutions. (Bennett 133)

It is interesting to note that, as cyber-activist groups are heterogeneous, a large number of campaigns can be run at the same time by a single group. It is also common to see campaigns being shared by different groups in a kind of partnership or re-appropriation of causes. This re-appropriation can even occur from activism to cyber-activism or when cyber-activists decide to broadcast issues through their own campaigns and strategies.

Even though campaigns are used in the majority of cases, not all campaigns operate in the same way. Vegh explains that cyber-activism can have three different pairs of approaches according to the intention of a group: Awareness and Advocacy, Organisation and Mobilisation,

and Action and Reaction (72). These terms work as big umbrellas for cyber-activism practices, and I next explore each one separately while also discussing the practices that they encompass.

Awareness and Advocacy appear when cyber-activism aims to distribute information on a large scale in order to raise awareness about an issue. It can be associated with the behaviour of dissent, as described by Hands, since dialogue and the exchange of information are the main tools of this approach. People who practice this kind of cyber-activism benefit from the fact that the Internet is a "time- and cost-efficient communication channel" (Vegh 74). The efficiency is possible because of the digital aspect of the Internet, which allows the easy circulation of data. In such cases, the Internet is used as a medium to broadcast information and as a public sphere for dialogue. Awareness and Advocacy can be seen through the use of various media platforms such as discussion boards, forums, video channels, and websites, including cyber-squatting and website-spoofing. While most of the terms are common in quotidian vocabulary, the last two require further explanation. Cyber-squatting is the use of a domain for critical purposes or even to mock a person or institution, whereas website-spoofing is the creation of a fake domain that resembles an official website, though ultimately with the same purposes as cyber-squatting. Caroline Auty mentions that these two techniques are effective only when the websites are searchable by search engines that can divert traffic from official websites to alternative "spoofs" (215). In addition, Muir affirms that those strategies have "a propaganda function only, allowing groups and individuals to disseminate their message and discredit their opponents at the same time" (as qtd. in Auty 217). Although cyber-squatting and website-spoofing may have only the intention of mocking, the ones connected to cyber-activism are usually created for critical purposes. Moreover, various websites can incite the move from dissent to resistance and even

rebellion. For instance, Auty affirms that some websites carry sections about how to create chaos or refuse to obey disagreeable rules (214).

Regarding the second manifestation of cyber-activism, Mobilisation and Organisation, Vegh points out that it can be carried in three different ways: through calls for offline action, calls for an action that usually happens offline but can be better executed if online, and calls for online actions (Vegh 74-75). The first category is seen when new media are used to organise offline actions. In such cases, the same networks that are used for awareness can also serve the purpose of organisation. For instance, some social media websites, like Facebook, also allow the creation of specific pages to promote events. Those events range from protests to boycotts, but they will all share an offline component. As in the next category proposed by Vegh, Action and Reaction, Organisation can also result in acts of resistance or rebellion. However, the distinction made by Vegh takes into consideration whether more aggressive practices will be carried online or offline.

The second kind of Mobilisation is more related to dissent behaviour and is often seen in the form of online petitions or massive messages being sent to a public addressee, a practice usually called mail-bombing. Such forms of online manifestations are popular nowadays since they required less time and money than offline versions. In addition, the chance of attracting large numbers of people is greatly increased.

The third kind of organisation is strongly connected to Action and Reaction practices. It appears when the Internet is used as a medium to organise online actions, thus exploiting the potentialities of the Internet as a space. I discuss such practices in the next category, although it is worth remembering that they are also organised online, and this is why they appear under the tag of Organisation and Mobilisation as well as Action and Reaction.

This last category provided by Vegh, Action and Reaction, is the most complex since it involves hacktivism, which can embrace many practices that are exclusive to cyber-activism. Those practices explore the full potentialities of the web as a medium and place to promote rebellion. It is also here that the question of context matters the most since hacking practices are considered a crime in many countries. Although the context does not remove the status of crime before the law, it does make people either support or reject hacking. The practices under the tag of Action and Reaction can be classified into two categories: external and internal. Martin Libicki explains that internal actions can be carried out by rogue agents who steal and leak data or compromise the service of an institution (20). He tries to minimise the impact of such attacks by saying that good corporations usually have well-managed systems that make it difficult for an agent to steal information (Libicki 21). However, the two most discussed cases of leaked data involving the government of the United States were carried out by federal agents, Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden, who could easily access the database and decide whether the information should be made public or not. Consequently, the power of internal actions should also be considered as important when discussing Action and Reaction.

Meanwhile, the external practices are more extensive, although the aims are generally stealing data and disrupting or corrupting a network. The most popular way of stealing data through external attacks involves Structured Query Language (SQL) injections. Olson says that the "term refers to a method of gaining access to a vulnerable Web database by inserting special commands into that database" (480). SQL injections can also be used, along with other methods, to corrupt a system since data can be added to make a machine process wrong code and release false information. When it comes to disrupting a system, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) is the most common and easy method; it just requires a bunch of people acting together and

sending "such a high volume of packets destined for a particular network location that legitimate information does not get to the affected network, cutting it off from the rest of the world" (Libicki 17). A DDoS attack can be carried out by users who are willing to collaborate with an attack, but it can also make use of infected machines which will follow the command of an invader. In such cases, invaders usually control a large number of machines that are infected by a virus, grouping them in what is called a botnet. Apart from botnets, people who contribute to a DDoS are not required to have hacking skills since they operate by downloading a specific program and following the instructions given by someone else. Unlike SQL injections, DDoS are not aggressive and can only disrupt service for a certain amount of time, causing no damage to machines or to data, even though large corporations have alleged the loss of huge sums of money because of DDoS attacks.

Hackers, and consequently hacktivists, can also hack websites through different methods and change the content of a webpage to their own messages. Auty describes this technique as e-graffitti (215). It can be a useful form for protesting and sharing information with people who will try to access the original website, bringing together awareness and action. Moreover, hackers can also hijack social network accounts and spread messages according to their own will and in the name of another person, though commonly the hacker will take pride in the act by saying that the account was hacked and make it clear that the original owner is no longer in control of his/her profile. In addition, hackers can also invade websites silently, through cryptography, for example, and stay in command for a long time, controlling the traffic of information and stealing data.

Apart from the practices above, which are classified as internal and external, hacktivists are also involved in the creation of open-source software programs "that can be used freely to

circumvent the attempts by government and corporations to control the Internet experience" (Kahn & Keller 90). As opposed to the other techniques, the creation of open-source software is not illegal, and large online communities have been created to develop free programs.

Nevertheless, understanding the hacking culture, and consequently hacktivism, goes beyond learning about the practices used by them. It also involves finding out what they value. In her extensive work on hacker culture, Gabriella Coleman affirms that hackers value cleverness, humour, and craftiness (*Coding*, 95), which are used to create acceptance and identification among hackers. Here, it is interesting to notice that humour is mainly present in the form of irony and sarcasm, two forms of expression that are deeply rooted in the context and which cannot be easily caught by outsiders. Coleman affirms that "being good at hacking and valuing cleverness for its own sake exist in a tight and productive symbiosis, a mutually reinforcing relation that produces an abundance of humour among hackers. There is a close kinship between hacking and humour" (*Coding*, 104). Moreover, even though hacking can have political aims, as in some cases of hacktivism, it can also be done for the sake of pleasure and as a form of entertainment. When it comes to identification, the shared values and habits that exist in hacking culture play an important role in defining who will be accepted in a group and how a person will be accepted.

The elements discussed under the three different paired features of cyber-activism, Awareness and Advocacy, Mobilisation and Organisation, and Action and Reaction, can interact in the campaigns promoted by cyber-activists. For instance, Awareness and Organisation often precede massive practices related to Action, such as big DDoS attacks. Thus, though the two first categories can appear individually, the last one is often associated with the others in order to fully reach its aims. As a matter of simplification, I will use only one of the terms when talking about the pairs.

As a cyber-activist collective, Anonymous makes use of the practices described in order to fight for its ideals. Although the collective is mostly known by its hacking attacks, which cannot happen without organisation, most of its actual campaigns are in fact about awareness. In the next two chapters, I first give a brief overview of the collective as a way to facilitate the discussions of how identification can happen when it comes to Anonymous' symbols and the three main campaigns that established the collective in contemporary society. I do not intend to cover the full story of Anonymous, as this work has already been done by Parry Olson in her book *We Are Anonymous*, but rather to analyse how the specific phenomenon of identification can be related to Anonymous.

3. Burke's Identification and Anonymous' Symbols

The cyber-activist practices discussed in Chapter 2 have been present in a wide variety of Anonymous campaigns, and used to promote identification. In the next chapter I will discuss how those practices were enacted within each of the campaigns studied here. However, before moving to this point, the visual identity created by Anonymous is explored. This aspect, though not directly related to cyber-activist practices, also acts as an important carrier of identification, since it defines how the collective is recognised by people. Moreover, its visual identity is responsible for the first contact that a person establishes with Anonymous, since the Internet is mainly based on the visual sense.

Anonymous has created a powerful visual representation through the use of three key symbols: the mask, the headless suit logo, and its signature. Those images appear in almost all the campaigns launched by the collective and are part of Anonymous' visual identity, becoming important carriers of identification. In this section, after introducing Anonymous, I analyse these three symbols and observe how they operate to create identification with Anonymous. I argue that mechanical identification appears in all the symbols created by the collective, while the ideological only appears in the mask, which is stronger than the other symbols when it comes to promoting identification. Before moving to the analysis, I present what Anonymous is and how the group has consolidated its image as a cyber-activist collective.

3.1 The Agent - Anonymous as a Cyber-activist Collective

Although nowadays Anonymous is well recognised as a cyber-activist collective, its origins are far from being related to any form of socio-political dissent. The collective came from *4chan*, a website created to share images and a wide variety of content, particularly from the */b/*

board, the weird side of *4chan*. This place without limits is dominated by online pranksters, anonymous people who like to cause disturbances just for the sake of joy. Whitney Phillips states that /b/ was known as the Internet hate machine (thanks to a Fox News program recorded in 2007), populated by "tens of thousands of self-identifying trolls, users who revel in transgression and disruptiveness" (4). According to Parmy Olson, "trolling was like pranking, but ultimately it meant causing some sort of emotional distress to someone else, often through embarrassment or fear" (57). Those people self-styled themselves as Anonymous. The name was given because of the prevailing culture of anonymity on 4chan, and also to represent a faceless and chaotic organisation without a leader. The name Anonymous was seen on /b/ for the first time about 2006 (Phillips 7), although it was not connected to cyber-activism, but with general trolling activities. However, it was in 2007 that Anonymous gained mainstream media attention for the first time, when a Fox News report presented the collective as composed of domestic terrorists, who stalked and attacked innocent people, and whose members met through a secret website, even though *4chan* was not secret at all.

The trolling culture was the basis of Anonymous until 2008, when a video figuring Tom Cruise, weirdly talking about Scientology, appeared online, on January 15. At this time, the Church had no idea that they were about to face "the Internet hate machine". As the video did not please Scientology leaders, they tried to remove the content from all virtual channels and platforms by arguing that it violated copyrights as they had originally filmed the video as part of a documentary, but edited it out as problematic. However, the pranksters and geeks from /b/ had already put their hands on the material, and they did not want to see it removed from the web. Then, when people on /b/ realised that Scientology was censoring the video, they decided that

the church was trying to take the joke away from the group. From this point, they set Scientology as a target of their new prank.

Choosing a random target and starting a prank or a raid was not new on /b/; /b/tards, as members of /b/ called themselves, usually did that for the fun, but Scientology was a big target. The raid had no aim other than having fun; the pranksters said that the aim was for the *lulz*, an acronym that comes from another acronym, *lol*, which means laugh out loud. In this case, *lulz* was used as a superior *lol*. However, the joke lasted only until the group perceived its power. At this time, a discourse calling for freedom of speech appeared and was easily associated with the censorship imposed by Scientology. Thus, things grew bigger than the *lulz* when people on /b/ decided to promote a call to arms against Scientology beyond the users of *4chan*. On 21 January 2008, "Message to Scientology" was published on YouTube, and the name Anonymous exceeded the limits of /b/ and started to gain the form that it has today. Quinn Norton summarises what Chanology, the name given to the campaign against Scientology, represented by saying that:

In the beginning, Anonymous was just about self-amusement, the *lulz*, but somehow, over the course of the past few years, it grew up to become a sort of self-appointed immune system for the Internet, striking back at anyone the hive mind perceived as an enemy of freedom, online or offline. It started as a gang of nihilists but somehow evolved into a fervent group of believers (1).

One day after the video was released, a channel created on the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) to discuss Chanology received a large number of visits. People came from all over the Internet as a response to the call to arms promoted by Anonymous. They all wanted to help the collective in its very first campaign.

The cause seemed to be noble, but it was also for laughs, as stated in the video. Chanology resulted in a series of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks against Scientology websites and also in a wave of protests in the streets, all organised online. When the street protests were being organised, people felt the necessity to hide their faces, and the Guy Fawkes masks appeared as a symbol of Anonymous for the first time.

The practices organised against Scientology had the participation of many users who could go to the streets and also take part in DDoS attacks by following the instructions given by other members. However, it was clear that the collective was not so leaderless as it proclaimed. While the mass of people was contributing, a small group was coordinating the attacks and producing the documents and posts that would be released online. This group was formed mainly by hackers and pranksters from /b/. The discussions about Chanology are still going on, though the campaign force was stronger during the first half of 2008.

When the fight against Scientology lost its power, Anonymous was already a well-known cyber-activist collective, with practices ranging from awareness to online action. However, another two campaigns were essential to consolidate its fame in the cyber world: Operation Payback and HBGary. Both discussed in the next chapter, as is Chanology. At this point, I want to move from how Anonymous began to an analysis of how the collective operates.

As discussed later, much of the anonymity seen online is in fact pseudonymity, which can be traceable and lead to a person's real identity. However, in the case of Anonymous, the use of a pseudonym can also hide one's physical identity. As some of the practices carried out by the group in its campaigns are illegal, some of the Anons try to preserve their identity even when using a pseudonym. In such cases, the pseudonym is used to represent an entirely discursive identity created by the user, with no traces of real-life involved. Thus, even when the person can

be recognised by his/her nickname, s/he cannot be associated with a real-life figure. As an example, a publication of Anonymous says that people should create a nickname that will work as their new identity, making sure that all traces of their real identity are deleted; it also adds that even when someone ask for one's personal information, they do not expect a truthful answer, as the person should not expect that from any Anon (Anonymous, "Beginner's Guide").

The formation of one's identity through discourse and online actions puts a great importance on what one says and how one engages with the group, turning knowledge and communication skills into the central point of collective acceptance. It becomes even more important when we remember the core values of hacking culture. For instance, when discussing the presence of Anonymous on IRC, Gabriella Coleman mentions that a rhetorical power composed of "cleverness, cunning and playfulness" could "garner attention and sometimes, even respect" ("Am I Anonymous"). Consequently, it is not hard to imagine why social engineering was mentioned so many times in Parry Olson's book about the story of Anonymous, since the ones with great language abilities were also the ones who could promote themselves inside the collective through the use of persuasive speech.

David Auerbach affirms that the anonymity culture, which he calls A-culture and includes anonymity as well as pseudonymity, should be analysed according to its effects on people who choose to present themselves anonymously. In other words, those people are recognised purely through written discourse since there is no other evidence that would induce identification, such as physical appearance and fashion style, as previously discussed. Thus, it allows the interaction of people with different backgrounds who would be isolated from each other in the real world because of social constraints. Auerbach adds that since the requirements for a fixed identity are low, it results in the creation of a collective mentality that will replace the

individual. This phenomenon is easily seen in the case of Anonymous. Though it was said before that a leadership does exist in determined campaigns, it is often the voice of Anonymous as a collective, or brand, that appears, since the publications are not signed by anybody and no one claims the results of the actions. Moreover, Auerbach affirms that A-culture is usually related to Internet trolling and says cases like that of Anonymous represent a split of the A-culture into the realm of seriousness.

Another way to understand Anonymous is under the optic of resistance identity as proposed by Manuel Castells. In this case, the collective appears as a dissenting voice amplified through the power of an online community. Castells mentions that resistance identities are organised around a set of values (68), but it gets more complicated in the case of Anonymous. As a rhizomatic organisation, it is difficult to trace the specific ideologies behind the collective. Like other cyber dissent groups, Anonymous usually fights for freedom of speech and against the negative aspects of globalisation. However, the campaigns developed by Anons reach different areas. Moreover, the collective even affirms that it has no fixed ideology (Anonymous, "Beginners' Guide").

Talking about this diffused ideology, Josh Corman and Brian Martin affirm that Anonymous can be understood as a collective of ideas, which makes understanding the principles behind it difficult. The authors go further and affirm that Anonymous should have a statement of beliefs, a code of conduct, and a plan for success if it wants to improve its existence as a cyber-activist collective. However, though its lack of ideology can make the collective questionable as a movement without focus, it is also undeniable that by not having specific targets or aims, Anonymous can attract more and different people, who can easily identify themselves with at least one of the campaigns promoted by the collective.

Anonymous also fully operates under the logic of online identities, which are fluid and multiple. Coleman even emphasizes the diversity of Anonymous within saying that the name is employed by "various groups of hackers, technologists, activists, human rights advocates, and geeks", who can take part in the collective at any given moment, for a specific campaign or to support all actions ("Weirdness"). Despite Corman and Martin's criticisms about the chaotic nature of the collective, it seems that Anonymous is doing better than expected. Norton summarises the presence of the collective, its fluid identity, and its worldwide power in the following fragment:

Anonymous has broken the bounds of the digital and pushed its way out onto the streets, it has become a radical movement unlike any other. It doesn't have a founding philosopher or a manifesto; there's no pledge or creed. It's true that Anonymous does have a politics, but it's hardly a specific platform—just a support for online freedom and a rage at anyone who tries to curtail it. No, what Anonymous has become, in reality, is a *culture*, one with its own distinctive iconography (the Fawkes masks, the headless man in the business suit), its own self-referential memes, its own coarse sense of humour. And as Anonymous campaigns have spread around the world, so too has its culture, bringing its peculiar brand of cyber-rebellion to tech-savvy activists in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Like a plastic Fawkes mask, Anonymous is an identity that anyone can put on, whenever they want to join up with the invisible online horde. (5)

Consequently, it seems that the collective is taking more benefits than drawbacks from its loose identity. By making use of the cyber-activists practices described and having a culture of

its own, heavily marked by the characteristics of new media identities and affordances, Anonymous was able to create a massive community. As identification is the process used to bring people together, its importance to Anonymous is undeniable. In the next sections of this thesis, I analyse how the community-gathering through identification can be seen in Anonymous symbols. But first I discuss the remix culture, which was used by Anonymous to create its symbols and audio-visual materials.

3.2 The Remix Culture and Anonymous

As Anonymous has no fixed ideology, its name has become a kind of cyber-activist brand that can be used to give credibility to any idea promoted under its symbols. As with any brand, visual identity plays an important role since it will determine how the organisation will be recognised by others; and Anonymous has been doing a great job in this respect. The collective has been creating a wide range of audio-visual content by exploring the symbols that already exist, in what is called a remix culture. This creation and re-appropriation are possible because of the digital nature of the Internet, which permits user generated content, allowing an easy manipulation and re-configuration of images. Joss Hands characterises the remix possibilities as a culture which is known by "taking all kinds of texts already in the public domain, and - with the aid of cheap consumer electronics - cutting them up, sampling them and mixing together, so that new contexts generate new meanings" (73). Figure 1 shows two examples of how Anonymous makes use of remix in its materials:

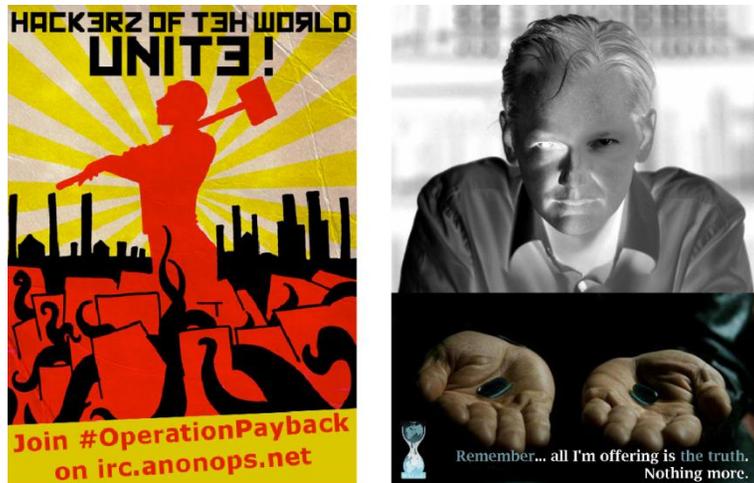


Figure 1 - Remix Culture as Used by Anonymous in OperationPayBack

Anonymous took the best of the possibilities afforded by the remix culture and the web in order to create powerful images and symbols that stand for the collective as well as its campaigns. For instance, Coleman affirms that Anonymous "would be far weaker as a phenomenon without the masks, without their fantastic art work, without those videos", and added that "Anonymous is a faceless phenomenon that is everywhere represented via their artistic output" (Coleman, "Aesthetic"). Thus, the importance of the visual identity created by the collective, through the use of its symbols, is part of its power.

As a result, the symbols are also important when it comes to identification, since they allow the transfer of one's energy from the image to the collective, reinforcing the process of community-gathering. Moreover, as those symbols are usually based on old forms, people can engage with the content in a critical manner, making associations and building meanings. Although the Anonymous' symbols cannot be analysed as structured texts and, consequently, do not have a precise identification form other than the visual representation itself, they can be analysed in terms of kinds of identification and strategies. In this section, I focus on three of the main symbols used by Anonymous: the Guy Fawkes mask, the headless suit in front of what

look like the United Nations logo, and Anonymous' signature. Those symbols pervade all the campaigns created by Anonymous.

3.3 The Guy Fawkes Mask

Although many ideologies are hidden behind the Guy Fawkes Mask, Gregg Housh, a not so anonymous Anon who was part of Chanology, affirms that the icon was picked almost randomly by Anonymous. It happened when people in the collective faced the necessity of omitting their personal identities when protesting against Scientology on the streets, since it "had been claimed that Scientologists harassed mercilessly their critics" (Anonymous, "Mask"). Though some people argue that since the beginning the mask was part of a political decision, Housh says there was not a consensus about it and other suggestions were given, such as superhero masks (as qtd. in Walker). However, when the Anons decided to check the general availability of the masks in shops, the Guy Fawkes mask won.

As the collective grew stronger, the meaning of the mask started to make sense as part of the Anonymous representation. Nowadays, the icon is used in many Anons' social media profiles and is also a common presence in street protests promoted and/or supported by the collective. Its power as a symbol is even challenged by governments, who have been banning masks in protest because of the massive appearance of Guy Fawkes masks. Such action was taken by the governments of Bahrain, Dubai, Canada, and even the United States, which used an old law to justify the banishment. As a matter of fact, the related charges can add up to ten years in prison in Canada (Fitzpatrick).

When it comes to identification, the Guy Fawkes mask can operate in two ways: mechanical and ideological. Moreover, it also makes use of similarity and commonality as

strategies. Among the operations, the ideological kind of identification is the most complex one, since it requires an understanding of the stories behind the mask, from the Gunpowder plot to the release of the movie *V for Vendetta*, that make the icon a symbol of fighting against oppression. Noticeably, as part of a product created by the remix culture, the mask can also be considered according to the analogical identification. However, the subversion of frameworks in the case of this symbol does not affect its main ideological meaning.



Figure 2 - Guy Fawkes Mask

The Guy Fawkes mask, represented in Figure 2, was created in memory of a catholic man, Guy Fawkes, who tried to blow up the English parliament in an attempt to kill King James I because of the religious intolerance that prevailed in England. However, Fawkes was betrayed by his fellows, arrested, and would have been executed if he had not committed suicide while waiting to be hanged. For many years, November 5th, the night intended for the Gun Powder Plot, the name given to the plan, has been celebrated in Great Britain. The festivities were not in honour of Fawkes, but to mock him and his attempt to kill the king. During those nights, an effigy of Guy Fawkes, using a mask to resemble his face, was burnt. However, history changed his fame and, as time passed, he became known as a figure who fought against the government, being considered by some as the last man with good intentions to walk through the British

parliament. Currently, the mask is no longer mocked, but used as a symbol of dissent. But Guy Fawkes' story was not well-known outside the British Isles until 1980.

From that year to 1990, two well-known graphic novelists, Alan Moore and David Lloyd, decided to use the icon in their graphic novel, *V for Vendetta*. Lloyd drew a version of the mask, the one that is seen on the streets nowadays, and the story reinforced the old ideology behind the symbol, the fight against oppression. In addition, the graphic novel embedded the mask in the question of how people can empower themselves and fight for their rights. *V for Vendetta* happens in a totalitarian Britain that uses minorities, such as homosexuals, in medical experiments and controls the lives of its citizens. In this scenario, V, the major character who uses the mask, appears as a dissenter who fights against the government and teaches people how they should rule themselves. When the graphic novel was released, V became a popular character among geeks and comic fans. However, it was the movie directed by James McTeigue and written by the Wachowski Brothers, released in 2005, that popularised the mask. The movie was based on the graphic novel, although some alterations were made. When it was released, the image of the mask and its ideology of fighting against oppressive governments were wide spread and those who could identify themselves with this ideology could also identify themselves with the Guy Fawkes mask, the major symbol of the movie and the graphic novel.

When Anonymous adopted the mask as its symbol through a random decision, the ideology worked well with their discourse in favour of freedom of speech. Though the context and framework were changed, which would count as an analogical identification, when an idea is removed from its original framework for another purpose, the ideology behind the symbol was still the same. As said by one Anon, the mask is no longer about blowing up governments, but it is still about giving the power back to people (Anonymous, "Mask"). In other words, the mask

represents the fight against any kind of oppression. By making use of a symbol with such a strong ideological appeal, Anonymous could also use the strategy of commonality. In this case, people who identified themselves with the mask's ideology could transfer this energy to Anonymous itself since they had a shared interest represented by the Guy Fawkes mask.

Moreover, the Guy Fawkes mask holds an ample ideological perspective, making it appealing to a wide range of people. As Lloyd proposes, the mask carries no political view other than fighting against tyranny. He even adds that:

The important thing about that mask is that it's used on a widespread level by many people who just want to use it as an all-purpose symbol of resistance to tyranny, even of perceived tyranny. That's the most important thing about that mask. That's why it's been used in so many disparate groups. It's been used in anti-Scientology demonstrations, also used by Occupy Wall Street Movement, also used by protesters in Egypt and in China. [...] It only means that you are somebody that doesn't want to be run by an authoritarian government. That is most of us, and that's why that's so fantastic a symbol (Lloyd).

Noticeably, the loose ideological appeal of the mask is similar to the appeal of Anonymous, which promotes a wide range of campaigns with multiples perspectives; although most of them are connected to oppression.

Though the mask carries a strong power of ideological identification, it can also result in dissociation from Anonymous. The symbol's copyright belongs to Time Warner, and the enterprise has been profiting from large sums of money due to the sales of the item. Moreover, the large scale production of the mask tends to exploit the vulnerabilities of third world countries. As an example, Figure 3 shows a recent picture of Guy Fawkes masks being mass

produced in slums in Rio de Janeiro and circulated on the web as a "somewhat ironic image" (Kelley).



Figure 3 - Assembly Line of Guy Fawkes Mask in São Gonçalo, Rio de Janeiro.

People who work in assembly lines in slums tend to be low paid, a result of the poor labour division of neo-liberal globalisation. As a consequence, some people see the icon as an inconsistency when it comes to activism, causing dissociation from the Guy Fawkes mask, which can be passed on to Anonymous. In order to overcome such criticisms, Anonymous has been incentivising Anons to produce their own masks.

Despite the problematic nature of its production, the mask has become a popular symbol of Anonymous, being shared by many mainstream media as well as by Anonymous' social media profiles. As a consequence of this massive use, it was able to promote a mechanical identification. In this case, no critical thinking is involved to associate the mask with Anonymous. Even if a person knows nothing about Guy Fawkes or *V for Vendetta* s/he can still associate the mask with Anonymous since it has become part of popular culture. The mechanical

association is possible because Anonymous has consolidated the message of the mask as its symbol. For instance, it is not difficult to see people calling it "the Anonymous mask" instead of referring back to Guy Fawkes or *V for Vendetta*. In such cases, the mechanical kind of identification is deeply connected to the strategy of similarity. By using the mask, even without critical thinking about it or its ideology, one can have the feeling of belonging to the collective and, as said by Burke, social ties are the ultimate main of human beings when interacting with each other.

Moreover, the sense of community created by the mask also has a political significance. When people deny their individual identities when protesting, they fully assume the role of citizens, forming a mass claiming for ideals. Thus, the mask does not represent an individual, but the full collective, and its presence can be summarised in one of the quotes from the movie: "beneath this mask there is more than flesh. Beneath this mask there is an idea, Mr. Creedy, and ideas are bullet-proof" (*V for Vendetta*). By becoming ideas, citizens are no longer targetable and subjected to repression, but act as a unison voice to express dissent, reinforcing the functions of sociality through identification and also strengthening Anonymous as a community. Of course the mass is not uniform and, as said before, identification also preserves one's individuality even when people become consubstantial, an idea discussed in the next chapter.

3.4 The Headless Suit

Although the mask became the most well-known symbol of Anonymous, the collective's logo is in fact a headless man wearing a suit with the United Nations (UN) logo as the background, and a question mark in the place where the head should be, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 - Anonymous Logo and United Nations logo

Though the logo is not so popular as the mask, it still stands for Anonymous, appearing in its widely followed Twitter account, @AnonOps, and used in some practices of e-graffiti. Thus, it deserves some consideration here. The logo was heavily marked by the remix culture since it re-appropriates the symbol of the UN in order to pass on Anonymous' message. As opposed to the mask, the logo is not widely discussed and does not have any historical background apart from the UN symbol. However, some interpretations can be found online.

Jason Huff, for example, presents a theory, a bit forced, about Greek references, though none of the Anonymous channels or profiles has ever discussed such presences. As a matter of explanation, Huff argues that the man in the picture has no arms and the olive branches work as wings, though it seems that his arms are crossed on his back in a typical position of a business man while the olive branches are originally part of the UN logo. By reaching this conclusion, Huff argues that the image resembles Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. Meanwhile, other people affirm that the man is in fact an adaptation of a René Magritte painting, *The Son of a Man* (OhInternet). As no explanation can be found in Anonymous channels, it is difficult to affirm from where the image of the man came or what it represents. However, in the remix culture, interpretation is free so people tend to interpret symbols according to their own knowledge of

world. What is clear about the faceless man is that it stands for anonymity and leaderlessness, two of the concepts defended by Anonymous.

It is also clear that the UN logo was used, and a few observations can be made about that without misinterpreting the image. The UN is an organisation that should promote cooperation among nations and stand for human rights in general. As discussed, in times of globalisation, such an organisation can be more powerful than countries. However, in recent times, the UN has been accused of corruption, support of dictatorships, lack of representation from some countries, and even omission in cases of genocide, such as in Rwanda. Consequently, when Anonymous creates its logo by using part of the UN logo, an analogical process occurs. That is, the ideals that the UN should fight for are now characterised as the dissenting voice of cyber-activism, while the UN involvement in scandals is interrogated. In such cases, identification may occur if an individual agrees with the new framework given to the logo of UN and accepts that the issues represented by UN, and consequently its logo, should be discussed by Anonymous. If this agreement is effective, analogical identification is seen through the use of a strategy of commonality, since people will share the same idea.

However, as with the mask, identification can also occur mechanically. In other words, people can recognise the logo as belonging to Anonymous and identify themselves with the group or with the idea behind the logo because they believe in what Anonymous proclaims. In the last case, Anonymous again works as a brand that gives credibility to causes using its name. Nevertheless, the appeal of the logo is much weaker than that created by the Guy Fawkes mask, which is able to represent a whole ideology. Even when it comes to the mechanical identification, the mask seems to be stronger than the logo since it is much more popular in

mainstream media and is seen with more frequency as associated with Anonymous. The identification power carried by the mask is also stronger than the one present in the signature.

3.5 Anonymous' Signature

As with everything related to the origins of Anonymous, the signature of the cyber-activist collective came from *Achan*, more specifically from a set of rules called the "Rules of the Internet". The rules were created mainly for the *lulz*, but when Anonymous made its first video as an embryonic cyber-activist collective, rules 3, 4, and 5 appeared as part of its signature. Those rules are: 3) we are Anonymous, 4) Anonymous is legion, and 5) Anonymous never forgives. When adapted to Anonymous' signature it appeared as: We are Anonymous / We are legion / We do not forgive / We do not forget / Expect us. When the collective reached its cyber-activist fame, its signature became its catchphrase and is now seen in all of Anonymous' videos and most of its visual material.

The appeal promoted by the signature is made through the strategy of hidden division. As the catchphrase uses the pronoun we, it is expected that there will be a "they", a group that should expect Anonymous' actions; since the signature gives no other option, people are expected to take part in one of those groups. The argument is even more compelling when presented by the "spectaclish orientation" (Coleman, "Aesthetic") that is often present in Anonymous' videos. Moreover, the signature can be reinforced by the lines: "The corrupt fear us / The honest support us / The heroic join us / We are Anonymous". By using this sequence, the distinction between "them" and "us" also becomes a question of good and bad, making it clear that if one wants to stand on the good side, s/he must be part of Anonymous. Of course, in real life individuals can also choose just to ignore the message, for example, though the speech per se

does not present that as an option. Consequently, the signature works as an ideological appeal in which a role is given as if the audience were already in this position; thus, denial is almost non-existent. Though the ideological appeal is present, the ideological identification is not held by the signature since it has no ideological power if disconnected from the collective; so, the ideological appeal is in Anonymous as a collective, not in the signature itself.

The creation of two distinct groups through the use of the pronoun "we" makes the signature an interesting piece when it comes to identification as well as of its counterpart, division. In this piece, we have a clear example of how identification is able to create sociality and rivalry at the same time: the ones who agreed with the tagline and feel that they are part of Anonymous exercise socialisation; meanwhile, the ones on the other side will be seen as the corrupted people that Anonymous should fight against, appearing as the rival faction.

Interestingly, the fragment which is sometimes used in association with the tagline, "The corrupt fear us / The honest support us / The heroic join us / We are Anonymous", offers the audience the possibility of engaging with Anonymous on different levels. Those levels can be compared to the ones proposed by Marshall: associative, admiring, sympathetic, and cathartic. However, the cathartic condition is not present since, as discussed, people have only two options, stay with Anonymous or be part of those who corrupt. In this case, the associative is represented by the "heroic" ones who will join Anonymous, while the admiring and sympathetic levels are seen in the "honest" ones who support the cyber-activist collective.

It is also important to notice that the signature operates as a mechanical kind of identification since it is automatically associated with Anonymous, and an individual can unconsciously accept it or not. The presence of a mechanical identification associated with the strategy of hidden division makes the signature quite strong when it is not considered critically,

since both terms operate in an unconscious manner. In addition, the implicit creation of two distinct groups also induces the strategies of commonality and similarity. Commonality occurs when a person agrees to share in the name of Anonymous, and also accepts the other group as an enemy. Meanwhile, similarity is present in the idea of group itself and the sense of belonging to this faceless organisation.

The signature, like the logo, is also not so strong as the mask, though it is present in most of Anonymous publications and also used as sign of protests in the streets. It happens because the visual impact of the mask is much more significant since it has a strong ideological factor and also works to preserve one of the main characteristics of Anonymous as a collective, its culture of anonymity. However, even if the symbols vary regarding their power of appealing, it is undeniable that they are important in creating the image of Anonymous. Nowadays, this image is even seen as a brand inside the cyber-activist world.

3.6 Branding: Considerations about Anonymous' Symbols

These symbols all relate to a question that may not appear directly correlated to cyber-activism: how willing are you to buy a new product sold by a brand that you already like? It may sound awkward to discuss branding when talking about cyber-activism and its fight against neo-liberal globalisation and the negative side-effects of capitalism, but branding is what best defines the power of the symbols created by Anonymous; the difference is that the collective does not sell products, but promotes ideas.

By making an impressive use of the remix culture, Anonymous has created a powerful visual image and style now recognised all over the world. The symbols that were re-appropriated by Anons are even losing their own name and being labelled as Anonymous properties. When

Anonymous consolidated its image and symbols, the collective created a strong brand image that can be associated with Anonymous' campaigns and messages.

When people come together under the name of Anonymous, the collective starts to form part of their identities, creating a kind of brand identification with the name. The term, brand identification, is defined "as the degree to which the brand expresses and enhances consumers' identity" (Golob, Tuškej, & Podnar 54). When it comes to cyberspace, the brand identification can define the way that a person will present him/herself through discourse. For sure, the influence exercised by Anonymous as a brand will vary according to the level of engagement, but it does exist as long as a person identifies him/herself with Anonymous.

It would be a simple question of brand identity if Anonymous were not a porous loose collective when it comes to participation. As everyone can write in the name of Anonymous and use its identity to promote his/her own ideas, branding allows a double process of identification: the symbols can make a person identify him/herself with Anonymous, but it also can make someone who is already engaged with Anonymous accept an idea promoted under the collective's visual identity. As those ideas are freely published and do not depend on the authorisation by a leader, they heavily rely on public acceptance to grow strong in cyberspace. This acceptance can be seen when a large number of people start to share an idea and it goes viral. Thus, being branded by Anonymous plays an important role in the legitimisation process that can decide if a cause will live or not on the Internet.

For instance, not all the campaigns that have been held by Anonymous were created by the collective. Some of those campaigns started with other organisations; however, when their names were associated with Anonymous, they could make use of the brand identity of the collective to produce identification for their own causes. An example is the recent campaign

against Monsanto. Though Anonymous had already initiated a campaign against Monsanto and genetically modified food in general, as a part of a movement called #OperationGreenRights, it was not the collective that created the March in 2013. In this case, the main website that organised the March Against Monsanto, which happened all over the world on 25 May, announced that Anonymous was a sponsor, but not the organiser. As a sponsor, Anonymous promoted the cause in its social media profiles, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube, calling the attention of Anons to the March. By doing that, the collective was using the organisational power of cyber-activism in order to transfer the energy from Anonymous to the March, trying to mobilise a large number of people to go to the streets and protest against Monsanto. One piece of evidence that this transfer works is that the March had a large number of people using Guy Fawkes mask.

Thus, as the symbols used by Anonymous are now able to stand by themselves and fully represent the collective, they have become powerful carriers and transfers of brand identification. By contrast, dissociation can also happen. When people do not feel compelled by the message carried by Anonymous or even condemn the actions taken by the collective, they tend to automatically reject an idea promoted under the name of Anonymous. The coexistence of the two possibilities, identification and dissociation, shows how the cyber-activist collective can really work as a brand, since the same phenomena can be seen in the market-place. In other words, people tend to buy new products released by brands that they like and reject new products whose brands are not part of their identities.

Despite the importance of the symbols as carriers of identification, they would be nothing if Anonymous had not consolidated its fame through its initial campaigns. Thus, the first campaigns launched by Anonymous also play an important role in promoting identification.

However, three of them were important to consolidate the image of the collective: Chanology, HbGary, and Operation PayBack. These were the three first operations released by Anonymous that created the fame of the collective. They were responsible for a large community-gathering process that made Anonymous a well-known cyber-activist collective and even empowered its symbols as kind of cyber-activist brand.

In the next chapter, I analyse each of these campaigns and observe the most successful patterns of identification used by Anonymous, which are still being applied to contemporary Anonymous campaigns. By doing that, I intend to argue that the community-gathering process was promoted mainly through the different taxonomies of identification discussed by Burke.

4. Anonymous Campaigns and Burke's Identification

Nowadays, Anonymous presents itself as a rhizomatic collective, organising campaigns in different parts of the world. Actually, it is almost impossible to follow everything discussed under the name of the collective. In order to become such an extensive network, the collective built its fame through three initial campaigns: Chanology, Operation PayBack, and HBGary. Of course other campaigns, such as the ones related to the Arab Spring, were also important in consolidating the image of Anonymous. However, the first ones were responsible for the large community-gathering process and also for attracting media attention to the collective. Thus, I intend to focus on those three campaigns promoted by Anonymous, not denying the importance of the others, but affirming that those three started the community-gathering, which gave the force to the collective and allowed the realisation of other powerful campaigns.

In this chapter, I discuss the main cyber-activist practices realised by Anonymous during the three first campaigns and how they were responsible for promoting identification, according to Burke's definition. Moreover, I point out the moments in which dissociation appeared. Noticeably, all the three campaigns discussed here are still going on; however, I focus on them at their height. Although some campaigns resulted in a series of street protests around the world that, obviously, attract attention to Anonymous, I will not analyse those protests per se, since I am mostly interested in the media-related practices. Thus, I focus on their organisation in the virtual world and their consequences to Anonymous when it comes to identification. This chapter is organised in the chronological order of the campaigns. Consequently, I start with Anonymous' first campaign: Chanology.

4.1 Chanology

As already mentioned, Chanology was the first raid promoted by Anonymous as an embryonic cyber-activist collective. Though the campaign was responsible for aggregating a large number of people to the collective through identification, it actually created dissociation in two instances: when the campaign gained the form of cyber-activism; and later on, when people were arrested for taking part in the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks against Scientology. In this section I analyse the different taxonomies of identification involved in Chanology, as well as the two cases of dissociation. As the origins of Chanology were already discussed in the section about Anonymous and also in the Introduction, here, I focus on the cyber-activist practices that were part of the campaign during the epicentre of Chanology, which happened in the first half of 2008. The table below provides a summary of how identification was present in Chanology and the different cyber-activist practices that were part of the campaign.

Chanology				
	Practices / Acts	Identification as a Campaign		
		Kind	Strategy	Form
Awareness	"Message to Scientology" - Video "Call to Action" - Video e-Flyers Discussion Boards / Blogs	Ideological Mechanical	Commonality Similarity Hidden Division	Repetitive
Organisation	Street Protests Pranks DDoS Attacks			
Action	DDoS Attacks			

Table 3 - Analysis of Chanology

Chanology was not the first raid organised by */b/tards*, as said before, but it was the first one that got serious, left the limits of *4chan*, and gave the basis to Anonymous as a cyber-activist collective. Although the seriousness with hints of *lulz* seen in Chanology was responsible for attracting a large number of people to Anonymous, it was also the cause of the first process of ideological dissociation inside the collective. When the raid against Scientology started, Anonymous was not a cyber-activist collective, but a designation used by */b/tards*. Initially, the raid was the biggest prank played by them; but, when it started to become serious, a battle initiated inside the embryonic Anonymous. On one side, people wanted to keep the *lulz* of */b/*, they did not want to become cyber-activists or anything similar. On the other side, individuals claimed that the raid was about rights and freedom of speech, in other words, not just for the *lulz*. Thus, it was a battle between trolls versus *morfags*, the name given to the last group. Regarding this episode, Pamy Olson affirms that "activism was not what Anonymous was about, some argued, and betrayed its origins in fun and *lulz*. Many of the original */b/tards* who had pushed for a Scientology raid were now criticizing the continuing campaign as being hijacked by *morfags*" (92).

As Anonymous consolidated its fame as a cyber-activist group, we could easily conclude that *morfags* won the battle, while trolls dissociated themselves from Anonymous. The problem is that it was not so easy; Anonymous was now serious, but it was still composed of */b/tards*, who usually coordinated the campaign, and they would not let the *lulz* die. As a consequence, people from both extremes, trolls and *morfags*, felt that they were no longer part of the collective. The first dissociation experienced by Anonymous happened at the same time that the collective was growing stronger, since people beyond */b/* were adhering to the campaign. Thus, the loss of some members, although a significant fact in the consolidation of Anonymous,

did not represent a rupture, but the sign that a moderate direction was being taken, representing the junction of cyber-activism with the irony of /b/ and hacking culture.

Despite the first wave of dissociation, Chanology had an incredible power of community-gathering. The first actions taken by the collective can be understood under the optic of an awareness that lead to organisation. At this point, Anons were trying to show why Scientology should not be trusted as a legitimate church by accusing them of censorship, human rights violations, harassment, fraudulent operations, and other illegal actions (Anonymous, "Scientology"). The release of information was made through videos, e-flyers, and discussion boards, but the two videos, "Message to Scientology" and "Call to Action", were the ones with the greatest impact. The messages in both videos, as well as the ones discussed through other virtual channels, were mainly based on the concept of human rights and justice. Using those ideas, Anonymous tailored a strong set of values and ideas that could work well with the campaign.

At first sight, it might seem contradictory to have such ideological appeal since Anonymous defines itself as a collective without a fixed ideology; however, what happens is that each campaign has an ideology of its own. Those ideologies are usually, though not necessarily, connected by the big umbrella of cyber-activism and its fight for freedom of speech and against the negative effects of neoliberal globalisation. As a result, Chanology, as well as other Anonymous campaigns, presented a specific cluster of ideas that could attract people to the cause through commonality. In other words, Chanology was able to create an ideology that could be shared among many individuals despite their demographic and class status.

Although the first video, "Message to Scientology", was responsible for the first wave of attraction, it was the second, "Call to Action", that actually explained the awareness that

Anonymous would like to raise with Chanology, giving all the points that justified the attack on Scientology. Moreover, it offered the public the first definition of the collective as an entity fighting for rights. The video says that "Anonymous is a collective of individuals united by an awareness that someone must do the right thing, that someone must bring light to the darkness, that someone must open the eyes of a public that has slumbered for far too long" (ChurchOfScientology, "Action"). When providing a good definition to Anonymous and reinforcing the badness of Scientology, Anonymous was, again, making use of commonality.

As discussed, one of the most powerful ways of promoting commonality is through the creation of a shared enemy. It was exactly what Anonymous did when casting Scientology in such a bad light. The Church, as presented by the collective, could be seen as a common enemy worth fighting against, since its actions, from censorship to violation of human rights, could be despised by any single human with a sense of justice. Moreover, the set of values created by Chanology gave the ideological background to discuss Scientology and define the Church as an evil organisation; thus, the perfect enemy was born.

Additionally, the discourse created by Anonymous for Chanology, like its signature, contained hidden tokens that could promote identification. Though "Call to Actions" seems to address neutral people who are not part of Anonymous, nor an enemy; "Message to Scientology" divides the world between the ones against Anonymous and the ones with Anonymous. In addition, the ideological appeal per se, as proposed by Tony Thwaites, is already subliminal, promoting identification through hidden tokens.

All the awareness raised by the videos and discussion boards was first channelled into a series of DDoS attacks against Scientology websites. On 24 January 2008, four days after "Message to Scientology" was released, the first big attack happened and took Scientology.org

offline, though other minor Scientology websites were attacked before that. Robert McMillan states that the DDoS organised by Anonymous was not done by just a bunch of geeks, but showed some organisation and planning, which could give credibility to the collective. The power of the attacks reinforced the sense of belonging that was created inside Anonymous; people realised that their voices could be heard while they were together. Although they might not be similar to each other in any physical, demographic, or social sense, they were all faceless, all Anons. This community-power can be summarised in Figure5, a meme frequently used by Anonymous:



Figure 5 - Anonymous' Meme

The world cruel in the meme seems quite incoherent with cyber-activism, but we must remember that the culture of *lulz* is still part of Anonymous, and being cruel to its targets is part of what "the Internet hate machine" enjoys. In the case of Scientology, the moderate trolls that were part of the collective also had their stakes since a series of pranks was organised online. Those acts involved asking for pizza deliveries in the name of Scientology institutions and

keeping their phone lines occupied by calling and asking nonsense questions or *rickrolling* them. *Rickrolling* has been a common practice among */b/tards* in their raids; it consists of calling someone and playing the song "Never Gonna Give You Up", by Rick Astley. This song, along with "Smells Like Teen Spirit", by Nirvana, became one of the Anonymous hymns. Though Astley's song was a kind of mocking practice, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was easily able to promote mechanical identification, mainly with the young demographic that used to hang out on *4chan* and IRC.

The trolling practices had an ideology of their own. People involved in those actions were seeking the *lulz*; it was their ideology. They might agree or not with the ideological appeal promoted by the activist side, but they are an important presence inside the collective since they can keep the youth spirit of Anonymous alive. And, as Chanology was the very first campaign that gained the form of activism, the pranks were essential to keep */b/tards* motivated. In addition, the trolling activities could promote mechanical identification, since people could join the attacks only thinking about the joy of doing so, without analysing what was behind the campaign. Thus, the association between *lulz* and Chanology was simple. It is difficult to state whether it was good or not for the collective, but it certainly could be used to amplify the voice of Anonymous. The coexistence of people with different intentions could even be seen in how the awareness about Scientology was cast, from highly informative discourse to satirical images and texts.

Apart from pranks and DDoS attacks, cyberspace was also used to organise street protests. In fact, "Call to Action" was released with this intention. The final message of the video is: "Be very wary of the 10th of February. Anonymous invites you to join us in an act of solidarity. Anonymous invites you to take up the banner of free speech, of human rights, of

family and freedom. Join us in protest outside of Scientology centres worldwide" (ChurchOfScientology, "Action"). The message was also widespread around all different platforms and channels that Anonymous could use online, such as IRC and social media. Though I do not consider the offline events as part of the analysis, it is important to remember that the street protests gave a physical presence to Anonymous, which expanded the sense of belonging shared by Anons. Moreover, it was also responsible for the consolidation of the Guy Fawkes Mask, and its strong ideological appeal as a symbol of the collective.

Finally, it is important to discuss the form of identification that appear in Chanology as a campaign. As noted in Table 3, the fight against Scientology made use of a repetitive form. It was possible because of the online convergence, which means that the same message could be published through different channels and platforms. Although Chanology used a variety of practices, the message behind the campaign was always the same. It was ideologically against how the Church behaved, and this message was stated in the very first video released by Anonymous. Moreover, there was not a progressive argument being made, nor a fixed genre, since various platforms were used, such as videos, message boards, and e-flyers. Thus, Anonymous made use of an Internet's affordance, convergence, in order to repetitively promote its message and make it accessible. It is worth remembering that the repetitive form does not mean that the same texts were used in all the materials created, but that the same message was passed.

The success of Chanology as identification was visible, since one can consider from what Anonymous came and how it consolidated itself from this campaign. Dibbell affirms that, after Chanology, Anonymous started "looking less like a swarm and more like a network." However, the consequences of the campaign could also have led to mechanical and ideological

dissociation. As mentioned before, the context in which actions are taken modifies how the act is characterised. Thus, the cyber-activist practices, even if illegal, were justified since Scientology was an enemy that should be combated. But it did not change the definition of DDoS as a crime, and some people would not agree with this practice, even if they did not agree with the behaviour of Scientology. The disagreement was even more noticeable when people were arrested for taking part in the DDoS attacks against Scientology websites. If, in the first moment, a different ideology would justify the dissociation from Scientology because of its illegal practices; when Anons were being arrested, the process moved to mechanical. It was a simple matter of seeing someone being arrested because of his/her relations to Anonymous and associating it with the fact that Anonymous was involved in illegal activities and, consequently, was not a credible organisation. At this time, the heads of Anonymous were smart enough to hide their Internet Protocols (IPs), a unique number assigned to a computer connected to the Internet that can give the details of one's physical address, while attacking, but people who were only following the instructions and were not so Internet savvy could easily be caught by the police.

As the first cyber-activist campaign organised by Anonymous, Chanology brought visibility not only to the dubious practices of Scientology, but also to the collective itself. Marked by a mixture of seriousness and trolling culture, Chanology was responsible for initiating the creation of the face that Anonymous has today. The process of identification and dissociation connected to the campaign was largely responsible for deciding who would stay in Anonymous and, consequently, what the group was going to be. However, as the group did not stop, other campaigns have also been responsible for defining the group. One of them, which was also realised at the beginning of Anonymous as a cyber-activist collective, was Operation PayBack.

4.2 Operation PayBack

As opposed to Chanology, which had only the single target of Scientology, Operation PayBack can be divided into two distinct moments with different targets. The first half of this Operation started on 17 September 2010, when Anonymous launched a series of DDoS attacks against Aiplex, an Indian software company which was attacking, ironically through DDoS, the website The Pirate Bay. Meanwhile, the second part of PayBack was created to support WikiLeaks when PayPal, and other financial institutions, decided to cut off funding services to the whistleblowing website.

Although Operation PayBack can be divided into two distinct parts, the aspects regarding identification were the same in both, and they can be summarised according to Table 4:

Operation PayBack				
	Practices / Acts	Identification as a Campaign		
		Kind	Strategy	Form
Awareness	Videos e-Flyers Discussion Boards/ Blogs	Ideological Mechanical Analogical	Commonality Similarity	Repetitive
Organisation	DDoS Attacks			
Action	DDoS Attacks			

Table 4 - Analysis of Operation PayBack

As said before, the first act taken by Operation PayBack was retaliation against a DDoS attack of The Pirate Bay, the favourite place of Anonymous for downloading online piracy. The site hosted numerous gigabytes of illegal content that could be easily downloaded via torrent. The reason for Aiplex's attacks was simple: the company was acting "on behalf of movie studios to attack websites that allowed people to download pirated copies of their films" (Olson 101). As a response, Anonymous went to the defence of The Pirate Bay and Internet piracy in general.

Anonymous justified the Operation in a press-release published on 09 September 2010. The document said: "Anonymous is tired of corporate interests controlling the internet and silencing the people's rights to spread information, but more importantly, the right to share with one another" (as qtd. in Crawley). In addition, it set the three main targets of the Operation: the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA), and Aiplex, which was accused of launching the attacks under the orders of the two other organisations. Nevertheless, not just the three organisations were targeted when the attacks started. What was a retaliation against Aiplex, became a fight against copyrights, and any legal firm or trade organisation involved in the field could be attacked.

The first half of Operation PayBack had no representative video as Chanology. Anonymous again used the convergence of the web to promote its message through different platforms. Thus, the repetitive form was also noticed in this campaign. Although the targets were constantly changing, the discourse behind the attacks was still the same one divulged in the press-release, and it was repeated in the form of videos and e-flyers: Anonymous affirmed that copyrights regulations were going against freedom of speech. Figure 6 shows examples of some e-flyers used by the collective during Operation PayBack, all legitimising online piracy through the use of the remix culture.



Figure 6 - e-Flyers of Operation PayBack: The Pirate Bay

The ideological framework used to attract people was supported by the premises of freedom of speech and against online censorship promoted by Anonymous. Thus, it was simple based on the broad ideology of the collective. However, an analogical turn was required in order to make it acceptable. By opposing freedom of speech to copyrighting, Anonymous was clearly going against the law and also ignoring the rights of people involved in the culture industry, as if they had no rights over their own work. Of course it was easily argued that most of the money made through copyrights goes to corporations, and not to artists, but even so, those people were also harmed by the idea behind Operation PayBack. Thus, the ideology could not be discussed in terms of law and legality; it was necessary to move the topic to the rules of cyberspace and its affordance of free circulation of information. As a consequence, people who would accept the ideology sustained by Operation PayBack would consider the change of framework valid, as if the same laws did not apply to real life and the Internet. In such cases, the strategy of commonality was used and people had the same ideal to share. However, as an analogical inversion was required, the ideology held by Operation PayBack could promote dissociation at the same time as identification, since not all individuals accepted this inversion of frameworks.

Moreover, the random selection of targets could also cause dissociation. As stated by Olson, it "soon it looked like Anonymous was hitting benign targets - for instance, the U.S.

Copyright Office - and the public support they'd been getting on blogs and Twitter was waning" (Olson 105). In other words, the collective was attacking institutions which were supported by the public and, consequently, Anonymous was being rejected by those people. In addition, as said before, DDoS practices were illegal and not supported by many individuals. Noticeably, the DDoS attacks in this part of Operation PayBack made Anonymous a target of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the first time, consolidating its fame not only as a cyber-activist group, but also as criminal.

Despite the presence of dissociation, Operation PayBack could also attract people based on a mechanical identification through commonality. Although people can agree with the enforcement of the law, it is quite difficult to find a single person who has never downloaded illegal content from the Internet. Usually people do that without even thinking about legality or copyrights. Thus, if critical thinking were not involved, some people would just defend Operation PayBack for the sake of their own pleasure of having content freely available.

As with those on Chanology, the discussions regarding Operation PayBack and copyrights are also still going on and even gained force at the beginning of 2012, when the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), and the Protect IP Act (PIPA) were being discussed by governments around the world. In addition, Anonymous keeps targeting companies that threaten Internet piracy. Nevertheless, the second half of Operation PayBack gained more attention than the one related to Pirate Bay. That was the point when Anonymous went to the defence of WikiLeaks, fighting against powerful financial corporations, such as Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal.

On December 2010, WikiLeaks suffered intense pressure to stop leaking data related to the government of the United States. As a way to enforce this regulation, PayPal, a website

which provides forms of online payment, cut off its funding services to WikiLeaks on 03 December of that year. Following the same path, other financial institutions also stopped working with WikiLeaks, among them Visa and MasterCard. In addition, servers, such as Amazon, also declined to host the whistleblowing website.

As the censorship did not appeal to Anonymous, the response of the collective began almost immediately. On 04 December, Operation PayBack: Avenge Assange, the name given to the second part of Operation PayBack, was already set to support WikiLeaks and its creator, Julian Assange. The main aims of this operation were to promote DDoS attacks against the organisations that were trying to censor WikiLeaks, raise awareness about what was going on and emphasize the importance of the website, and vote for Julian Assange for the Times 2012 Person of the Year (Dagdelen 3). Of course this last was just an Anonymous prank.

The first case of identification worth noticing in this part of the operation is the mechanical one. When Anonymous went to the defence of WikiLeaks, the supporters of the website could be automatically attracted to Anonymous, since they now had a common point of view. Moreover, the campaign also had an ideological appeal. Again, the collective argued that governments were trying to impose their censorship on the Internet by destroying WikiLeaks, and consequently, going against freedom of speech. Anonymous even cast the victim/hero and the villain of the story, giving people enemies to combat and a person to admire, in a clear strategy of commonality. An e-flyer published by the collective at that time says:

Julian Assange defies everything we hold dear. He despises and fights censorship constantly, is possibly the most successful international troll of all time, and doesn't afraid [sic] of fucking anything (not even the US government). Now Julian is the prime focus of a global manhunt, in both the physical and

virtual realms. [...] Paypal is the enemy. DDoS'es will be planned, but in the meantime, boycott everything. Encourage friends and family to do so as well.

(Anonymous, "Avenge")

Although PayPal was the initial target, other financial institutions were also attacked during this operation. On 08 December 2010, PayPal.com, MasterCard.com, and Visa.com were all taken offline for about half a day because of Anonymous' attacks. The strategy used by Anonymous was the DDoS attacks; but, at this time, it was not only Anons who were attacking the websites. In fact, even with all the community-gathering power of Anonymous, it had no chance to take down websites of such powerful corporations. For instance, Parmy Olson states that around 4500 people attacked PayPal, while more than 7800 volunteers joined the attacks against MasterCard and Visa (424). However, they did not make the DDoS attacks effective; in fact, the mass sent only 10% of the data used to flood the websites. The other 90%, enough to take down the companies' websites without the help of anybody else, were composed of botnets, a network of zombie computers infected by a virus, controlled by only two people.

At the time of the attacks, Anonymous did not tell people about the use of those botnets, since saying to the mass of supporters that they were not necessary would damage the reputation of Anonymous and, as a result, its power of attraction. As one Anon said, "people who fought for what they believe in shouldn't be told what they did was in vain" (as qtd. in Olson 122). Thus, Anonymous kept the discourse of the power of people, reinforcing the sense of belonging, power, and identification with the collective.

Nevertheless, the fact that information was being omitted shows one of the most interesting things regarding Operation PayBack: the division of Anonymous between a group of commanders and the mass. As the groups did not operate on the same level, they had different

processes of identification. While the masses were attracted by the discourse of Anonymous, the commanders had a culture of their own, similar to the hacking culture studied by Coleman, which values expertise, cleverness, and humour. Thus, a person could easily join the porous Anonymous if s/he identified with the discourse repetitively promoted by the collective through different platforms. However, the same person could not easily be one of the commanders if s/he had not the necessary values and expertise to create a sense of similarity with the group, even if all shared the same ideology. Although the people who commanded the attacks did not claim ownership of their actions, letting the mass think that Anonymous was completely leaderless, it was clear that the division created a hierarchy inside the collective and the revelation of this fact may have caused dissociation.

Apart from the facts discussed, the second part of Operation PayBack followed the same processes as the first half, involving the same patterns of dissociation and identification. In addition, numerous Anons who were involved in the DDoS attacks against financial institutions were arrested, reinforcing, again, the image of criminality that Anonymous already carried in Chanology. Nevertheless, as opposed to the copyrights discussion or even Chanology, Anons no longer have a consensus about supporting WikiLeaks since 2012.

On 10 October 2012, WikiLeaks implemented a kind of paywall on its website, that is, the system created a virtual barrier that asked for a monetary contribution to allow users to access the website. Although the system could be disabled through Java Script and appeared only once a day, these facts were not evident. Anonymous argued that, by adding this paywall, WikiLeaks was "prostituting" information and insulting the collective (as qtd. in Bright), which had been defending the website for a long time. Thus, though not all members of Anonymous acted against WikiLeaks, the collective no longer held a consensual opinion about the

whistleblowing website. This fact represents an episode of dissociation for both sides, Anonymous and WikiLeaks, since neither of the entities can completely rely on the mechanical attraction that one could pass on to the other.

As a full campaign, Operation PayBack was responsible for giving origins to numerous other campaigns promoted by Anonymous, such as Operation Leakspin, which was about looking for useful information on WikiLeaks and trying to simplify and release it through other platforms, and Operation Titstorm, an arm of PayBack in Australia, which was mainly against the censorship of pornographic websites. Hence, Operation PayBack has kept the collective in motion, which is an important tool for maintaining the power of community-gathering that is essential for the existence of Anonymous, since its campaigns must be legitimised by people to grow strong.

The last campaign discussed here is Operation HBGary. Although many of the practices used in this campaign were similar to the ones already mentioned, Operation HBGary was the first one in which hacking practices beyond the DDoS were primarily used. As a consequence, the cyber-attacks were more aggressive than only temporarily disrupting the service of a website. This operation marked the consolidation of Anonymous, on one hand, as a hacktivist and cyber-activist collective, and on the other hand, as a cyber-criminal organisation.

4.3 Operation HBGary

HBGary is a security firm divided into two companies: HBGary Federal and HBGary Inc. The first one, which was Anonymous' target, is known for working with the government of the United States and was directed by Aaron Barr, while the other has many civil clients. Although Anti-Security (Antisec) movements, which put hackers against formal security firms, have been

popular in hacking culture since the early 2000, Anonymous had not targeted any company of this kind until HBGary. In fact, the attack was, again, retaliation.

On 04 February 2011, Aaron Barr was mentioned in an article published by the *Financial Times*: "Mr Barr said he had collected information on the core [Anonymous] leaders, including many of their real names, and that they could be arrested if law enforcement had the same data" (Meen). Barr was well-known for his abilities to use social media to monitor people, and it was those abilities that he used to compile information about Anonymous' core members. At the same day, Anonymous initiates what would be the big hacking attack of the collective. When Barr decided to investigate Anonymous, he was conscious that he should expect a reaction from Anons. His mistake was thinking that "the worst they could do was take down the website of HBGary Federal for a few hours" (Olson 08).

On 07 February 2011, only a few days after Barr's declaration appeared on the *Financial Times*, Anonymous published a press release not to announce an attack, as the collective did when it declared war against Scientology, but to say that:

Within hours of learning this [that Barr had the names of some Anons], Anonymous infiltrated HBGary Federal's network and websites. Anonymous acquired the document with supposed personal details of Anons, along with 50,000 company e-mails (~4.71GB) - all of which have now been distributed on the internet. Additionally, his associated websites and social media accounts were hijacked and manipulated to stress how poorly this 'security expert' handles matters of his own security. Woe to his clients and others who invested in his confidence. (Anonymous, "HBGary")

On this same day, a document describing all the investigations made by HBGary Federal about Anonymous was also published by the collective, these investigations being classified as "woefully inaccurate" (Anonymous, "HBGary"). The information was stolen because HBGary's website had a hole that could be accessed through Structured Query Language (SQL) Injection, which allowed Anons to gain access to the firm's database, as well as other personal information. Moreover, the collective used cryptography to discover Barr's password and hacked all of his accounts, from personal e-mails to World of Warcraft, since Barr used the same password for all of them, an irony when we think that he was the head of a security agency. When Anonymous had done what they wanted with the database, HBGary's website was replaced by an e-graffiti with a message from Anonymous and the logo of the collective.

The cyber-activist practices and identification patterns found in Operation HBGary are summarised in Table 5:

Operation HBGary				
	Practices / Acts	Identification as a Campaign		
		Kind	Strategy	Form
Awareness	Press Release - Video and Texts Leaking Message Boards - Discussions	Mechanical	Commonality	Repetitive Syllogistic
Organisation	Attacks were organised only among the core members of Anonymous.			
Action	DDoS Attacks SQL Injection Attacks e-Graffiti Hacking Websites and Accounts Doxing			

Table 5 - Analysis of Operation HBGary

As we can see, Operation HBGary had no call to arms; the awareness was only used after the actions had been carried out and the organisation was restricted to the core members of

Anonymous, the ones who shared the values of the hacking culture. Thus, the identification process, in this case, was seen before the development of the campaign and was deeply connected to the powerful image that Anonymous was passing at that time, since the collective was able to attack and mock a powerful security firm which had contracts with the government of the United States.

The first differential of Operation HBGary and the other campaigns was the presence of a syllogistic form of identification. It happened because the information stolen from HBGary's database was used progressively. Olson says that the e-mails, for example, were being published "bit by bit" in torrent websites (191). Moreover, Anons had no time to read everything in just a couple of days. Consequently, they were releasing more condensed pieces of information progressively. For instance, they would announce that a specific category of information would be leaked on the next day and then gather many followers who were interested in knowing about the contacts between Aaron Barr and the government of the United States. Nevertheless, not all the information released was as interesting as the hype promoting it, which may have led to some disappointments and consequent dissociation. Apart from that, the repetitive form was also seen, operating in the same way as in the other cases, that is, making use of convergence to promote a message through different platforms.

Another great difference was that, while the other two operations had an ideological appeal, Operation HBGary was more a kind of defence of the hive. HBGary had threatened Anonymous; Anonymous retaliated by showing all the vulnerabilities of the firm. Thus, the only appeal of this campaign was the mechanical. For instance, some of the e-mails leaked had information that connected HBGary to the boycott to WikiLeaks incentivised by the government of the United States, which would have made WikiLeaks supporters go against HBGary Federal.

As a result, this feeling could be converted to support for Anonymous. The same transfer could happen with every target that HBGary had set in its e-mails. However, the most important mechanical attraction was a result of the hacking practices used by the collective.

By making use of more complex hacking practices than DDoS, such as cryptography and SQL injections, Anonymous could show its force to the world thereby mechanically attracting people to the collective. This attraction can be justified by the striving for perfection that is part of human beings, as noted by Burke. In other words, people tend to be more compelled by strong organisations than by weak ones. In addition, the action might also attract other hackers to the collective, ones who, as said before, value cleverness, expertise and humour. Those hackers would not feel compelled by simple DDoS attacks, which can be done even by people with no technical skill who simply follow instructions and download a specific program - as much of the mass of Anons did in Chanology and Operation PayBack.

The power and irony of the hacking attacks made by Anonymous against HBGary could even be seen on HBGary's website when it was replaced by the e-graffiti made by Anonymous. It contained the logo of Anonymous, the headless suit, along with a message to HBGary. Part of the message was:

This domain has been seized by Anonymous under section #14 of the rules of the Internet.

Greetings HBGary (a computer "security" company),

Your recent claims of "infiltrating" Anonymous amuse us, and so do your attempts at using Anonymous as a means to garner press attention for yourself.

How's this for attention?

You brought this upon yourself. You've tried to bite at the Anonymous hand, and now the Anonymous hand is bitch-slapping you in the face. You expected a counter-attack in the form of a verbal brail [sic] (as you so eloquently put it in one of your private e-mails), but now you've received the full fury of Anonymous. We award you no points. (Anonymous, "HBGary Hacked")

Noticeably, rule 14 of "The Rules of the Internet" says "Do not argue with trolls — it means that they win". Thus, at this time, Anonymous was showing its full hacking face, plenty of technical skills and irony. It had no intention of defining itself as a cyber-activist collective fighting for rights, but to show its troll side. More than gathering people to the collective, Anonymous wanted to mock HBGary and its attempt to destroy the collective; and the damage was considerable, since client data was leaked, a serious fault when it comes to a security firm. As a consequence, the e-graffiti, as well as the other actions, truly showed the power of Anonymous, attracting people mechanically, but also creating dissociation from HBGary, which was one of Anonymous' intentions, since HBGary was the common enemy in this operation.

As the troll spirit was an essential part of Operation HBGary, Anonymous also doxed Aaron Barr and his associates. Doxing means that personal information is retrieved and made public. In the case of Aaron Barr, apart from having his social media profiles hacked, he also had his address, phone number, and personal pictures published. As a consequence, his house became the target of a large number of pranks, from *rickrollings* to pizzas deliveries; but some of the pranks were not so funny, like death threats. In the end, Aaron Barr had to temporarily move with his family, and he also resigned from HBGary, giving Anonymous the taste of victory.

As stated before, Operation PayBack had already put Anonymous in the hands of the FBI, but the practices used in Operation HBGary were even more serious and constituted a

cyber-warfare. Moreover, some of the information leaked was about the United States government and its relations to HBGary. Thus, the campaign showed the full power of Anonymous for both the ones who were interested in taking part in the collective because of its force, and the ones who were trying to find and arrest its core members.

4.4 Considerations about Identification in Anonymous' Campaigns

The campaigns studied in this chapter were analysed according to the taxonomies of identification provided by Burke. Interestingly, all of them make use of the repetitive form, though the strategies and kinds of identification vary. For instance, the first two campaigns, Chanology and PayBack, present a strong ideological appeal connected to the question of online censorship and freedom of speech, whereas HBGary was mainly created as a retaliation because Aaron Barr had threatened Anonymous. Thus, it did not have the same ideological appeal as the first ones, but it was also important, since it could mechanically attract people to the cyber-activist collective and also consolidate the power of Anonymous among hacker communities. When it comes to the different strategies, similarity, commonality, and hidden division could be observed in the campaigns. However, it is notable that Anonymous often created enemies to personify the target of its campaigns. By adopting this posture, the collective made use of the strategy of commonality, which is quoted as one of the strongest strategies to promote identification. In the case of Chanology and PayBack, the targets were represented by powerful institutions. However, in HBGary, though the security firms were attacked, the figure of Aaron Barr himself was cast as the enemy. The broad rhetorical appeal of the three campaigns and their power of creating perfect enemies were largely responsible for the consolidation of Anonymous as the cyber-activist collective that we have nowadays.

All the three campaigns studied here can be grouped according to the characteristics identified by Lance Bennett: they had a well-known target, a large appeal that can reach different groups and lifestyles, and they made use of convergence to promote their messages and create a large community. All of these features are important in identification, since they define, respectively, how a common enemy is set, how different people can join Anonymous, and also how the same message can be repetitively promoted through different channels, increasing the chances of reaching people. In addition, they are all long term, as they are still being discussed nowadays, despite the rupture with WikiLeaks that happened in 2012.

Although Anonymous defines itself as a collective without a fixed ideology, the presence of an ideological appeal in the first two campaigns discussed is an undeniable strength when it comes to identification. These appeals lead to the presence of critical thinking and are responsible for attracting a large number of people who are not interested only in the *lulz*. This attraction is important if Anonymous wants to keep being a cyber-activist collective, even with hints of humour. Nevertheless, the mechanical identification that can happen through the symbols or even the transfer of energy from one entity to another, as was the case with WikiLeaks, is also important in the process of community-gathering promoted by the collective. People who joined mechanically could reinforce the voice of Anonymous and make it louder than if the collective were restricted only to hackers and */b/tards*. In addition, even if critical thinking were not involved in the first moment, it could appear later on.

Interestingly, one of the more successful tools of commonality used by Anonymous was the creation of a perfect enemy, a method described by Burke as highly efficient. It can be observed in all the three campaigns studied, from Chanology to HBGary. In addition, the sense of similarity, associated with the force of belonging to a group, was also a frequent strategy. We

can even say that the core leaders of Anonymous were quite aware of the power of this strategy since they chose to omit information, in the case of the attacks against the financial institutions, to preserve the feeling of power among Anons.

Some characteristics of Anonymous as a collective are also of interest when it comes to identification, though they are not related to any specific campaign discussed, but rather permeate the collective in its form. As Coleman points out, Anons usually gains respect inside the collective "by engaging in activist interventions, some of them risky and illegal" and also by working on the infrastructure that supports this type of work" (Coleman, "Am I Anonymous"). For instance, controlling a botnet, such as the ones used in Operation PayBack, can almost guarantee a person the right to take part in the group of commanders. Thus, although the collective is porous and participation is free to everybody, it is not so easy to be an active personal voice inside Anonymous. Apart from engagement, we can also consider the artistic skills required to put together powerful audio-visual material that will be accepted and legitimated by other Anons. If a person lacks any of these skills, the chances are that s/he can be a member of Anonymous, but will never reach the identification exigencies required to take part in the chain of command in any operation.

Nevertheless, as Coleman says, "Anons collectively enforce a prohibition against seeking personal fame, [but] they do not suppress individuality" ("Weirdness"). Thus, it is worth noticing that the commanders, although important and having their own process of identification, do not reveal their faces and do not take pride in being commanders. As a consequence, the sense of a faceless organisation is still respected, which is important to keeping the sense of group-power that Anons have, even when they are not taking part in the group's decisions.

Conclusion

When I decided to study Anonymous, it was difficult to clarify my own opinion about the collective. On the one hand, it appears to be a bunch of teenagers without any ideology, who are protesting just for the sake of being popular. On the other hand, some of the campaigns have a powerful discourse and well-projected audio-visual materials. For instance, the recent campaign to support the Hunger Strike by Guantanamo prisoners was well argued and used interesting strategies of identification, such as promoting identification through similarity by asking people to put themselves in a prisoner's shoes (Anonymous, "#OpGtmo"). The fact is that Anonymous cannot be defined by any campaign; it is the voice of anyone who wishes to promote his/her ideas under the visual identity of the collective. This voice can be from a highly politicised person or from an individual who wants to use the Internet as his/her personal army to promote chaos. Moreover, the symbolic mask can also be used by anyone, as a sign of collective identity or a way to obscure one's face while taking part in acts of vandalism. The point is that Anonymous promotes itself through so many faces because it has lots of different faces, and a person will probably identify him/herself with one of those faces but not always on a consistent basis. As a consequence, defining Anonymous is not easy, and neither is saying that one supports all the campaigns promoted in the name of the collective.

Despite this lack of clear definition, I can easily say that I do appreciate Anonymous for its power of community-gathering. This appreciation motivated this thesis from the very beginning. The collective, whatever it is, has been able to group such a large number of people that it makes itself noticeable in a place as large as cyberspace. It gained mainstream media attention, the streets, and many followers. In doing so, even if some of the campaigns are weird, Anonymous raises awareness for important causes and gives youth a taste for socio-political

activism. Through its ample rhetorical appeal, Anonymous groups people together who would never come together in a real-life situation and amplifies the voices of some individuals and groups.

On 31 May 2013, a famous Anonymous profile on Twitter, @PFL1940, was hacked by a group of hackers, the Rustle League. While controlling the profile, Rustle League posted a tweet clearly mocking the rhetoric used by Anonymous to promote its campaigns: "blahblahblah polemic nonsense blahblahblah revolution blahblahblah expect us". What Rustle League failed to acknowledge is that this ample rhetoric is what built the fame of Anonymous, since the collective is able to appeal to different people through its polemic and "*spetaclish*" discourse.

Although Anonymous usually has specific targets, it does not have a specific public that delimits its collective practices. Thus, the ideology created to sustain each campaign is loose and somewhat broad, like the identity of the collective. As a consequence, it can appeal to a wide variety of people. For instance, an Anon once said that "Anonymous is a collective where many operations are being designed on a daily basis and more evidence surfaces... That is the power we have as Anonymous. We can be everywhere at once. Focus in one area and we suffer in the others." (Anonymous, "Expose"). The fragment shows how Anonymous is conscious about its loose identity and how it gains influence from this fact.

This influence can be seen through the community-gathering power of Anonymous, which is heavily associated with the idea of identification discussed by Burke. As in the case of identification, cyber-activism also has the aim of bringing people together towards a specific cause. Hence, the theory is an important tool to analyse the logic of cyber-activist collectives and how they are able to form a huge virtual community, such as the one involved in Anonymous operations around the world. In addition, identification is on the very basis of human relations,

being also present in cyberspace. The taxonomies of identification help to understand how Anonymous campaigns could gain force and, consequently, strengthen the presence of the collective in contemporary society. Moreover, it also can give the specific cases in which dissociation appears as a consequence of the media-related practices promoted by Anonymous. In a broad sense, when it comes to cyber-activism, identification could be used to track cyber-activist campaigns in terms of community-gathering and judge the kinds, strategies, and forms of identification that are most successful in attracting people.

In the case of Anonymous, the community-gathering through identification gave to the collective an audible voice not only in cyberspace, but also in the real world. However, its fluid identity, and consequently lack of a specific public, makes the collective difficult to define. In other words, we can say that a strong community is present, but we cannot define exactly what this community is. Sometimes, even the actions taken by the collective cannot be fully explained, since they can be serious or for the *lulz*.

Despite the processes of dissociation present in all the campaigns studied, Anonymous has been highly effective in creating identification. From its very first campaign, Chanology, the collective managed to promote itself as a cyber-activist organisation with a young spirit, one that would fight for rights at the same time that it enjoyed the amusements of acting together. While the power of attraction reached people from different demographics, it is undeniable that the image created was more appealing to youth. It can be observed in the constant appearance of *lulz* or pranks, and also in one of the Anonymous hymns, "Smells Like Teen Spirit". Nevertheless, it is difficult to affirm what Anonymous is and the true face of its members. What we can affirm is that identification has been an important resource to legitimate and give force to this collective and its campaigns.

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