THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
ABDERRAHMANE MIRA UNIVERSITY OF BEJAIA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

جامعة بجاية
Tasdawit n'Bgayet
Université de Béjaïa

Hollywood and Post-9/11 George W. Bush's Policy:
A Study of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center (2006)*
and Bush's Selected Speeches.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a **Master degree in Literature and Civilization**

Candidate:

Ms. Randa Brachouche

Supervisor:

Dr. Nouara Touche-Kharouni

Panel of Examiners:

Chair: Ms. Sabrina Slimi

Supervisor: Dr. Nouara Touche-Kharouni

First Examiner: Mrs. Sihem Saibi

Second Examiner: Ms. Nabila Bouzera

Academic Year: 2018-2019

General Introduction

The September 11th event is considered as one of the deadliest and most violent foreign attacks on the American soil. The fateful event consists of four hijacked air planes targeting symbolic areas such as the Pentagon and World Trade Center. The attacks caused massive human and material casualties, in addition to a significant set of political changes and strategies in the American policy both at home and abroad.

The Bush administration took some strict regulations in the post-9/11 era, as it adopted unilateralism, Pre-emptive war and War on Terror strategies abroad while attempting to maintain a certain adherence to the cause domestically, as president Bush delivered demagogic and rhetorical speeches in which the concept of patriotism was highlighted, and principles of the Western civilisation such as liberty were glorified. The President relied on the imagery of the United States as a land of freedom, justice and opportunity, constantly threatened by the obscurantist and evil East. By doing so, he appealed at people's emotions and patriotism.

Being a significant historic event, the 9/11 attacks impacted several fields including culture, and most importantly cinema which was highly influenced by the attacks. A number of film specialists establish a correlation between politics and film, and consider the latter as being highly sensitive to political issues; in "The films that Abbas Kiarostami carries inside", Mark Olsen quotes the famous Iranian film-maker and screenwriter Abbas Kiarostami who declares: "I would say that no film is apolitical. There are politics in all films, any film that is anchored in a society, any film that deals with humanity is necessarily political. There are politics in it, but I do think my role is to make audiences sense the politics indirectly". Similarly, Claire Molloy and Yannis Tzioumakis in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics* argue in favour of "an enduring connection between cinema and politics where films continue to play a role in the dissemination of political messages, shape the collective

memories of past events and inform political agendas" (1). In the context of the September 11 attacks, Andrew Schopp and Matthew B. Hill assert in *The War on Terror and American Popular Culture: September 11 and Beyond* that "the events of September 11 and the subsequent War on Terror have further tangled the knotted relationship between popular culture, political discourse, and terrorism" (12). This being said, Cinema is deemed to go beyond a mere means of entertainment, as it effectively depicts political and social stances related to specific contexts, and this idea conjures up the concept of propaganda.

In this regard, from the array of the 9/11 related films, Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* is considered as one of the earliest Hollywood reactions to the attacks. The plot revolves around two American Port Authority officers who become trapped in the rubbles of the twin towers after a heroic rescue attempt. In this movie, the director puts emphasis on courage, religion, family values and the notion of good versus evil.

The Review of Literature

The September 11 attacks in New York are among the deadliest terrorist attacks on the American soil. In *Civilisation des Etats-Unis, Marie*-Christine Pauwels relates the fateful events of that day by focusing on the two hijacked air planes which first collided with the two World Trade Center towers and both of which spectacularly collapsed an hour after the crash. Meanwhile, two other hijacked air planes respectively hit the Pentagon and crashed in the Pennsylvania forest, presumably instead of the White House, thanks to the heroic insurrection of the passengers (200). Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the 9/11 attacks were not the only act of terrorism in America, it is nevertheless considered by Pauwels as the most tragic and traumatic offensive, as it resulted in a feeling of vulnerability never experienced before (200-01).

The insecurity that hovered over the country was accompanied by the awareness that America was perceived through an animus and hostile lens by other countries of the world.

The Unites States' hawkish foreign policy sparked scathing criticism even from home; some even considered such initiatives as lying behind the attacks themselves such as the American left-wing historian Howard Zinn. In his book *A people's History of the United States,* Zinn implicitly suggests that the American government was behind the killing of almost 3000 people on that dreadful event, and thus the latter was doomed to happen (681-82). Nevertheless, the status quo made it that a set of measures were taken by the White House, among which are Pre-emptive War against Afghanistan and Iraq and a rallying with certain European forces to fight potential terrorist countries. It is important to mention that the attacks were crucial as a whole new doctrine emerged from the then-Republican government with G. W. Bush at its head. The belligerent stance adopted by the United States was foreshadowed in Georges Bush's two speeches following the terrorist attacks.

Michael J. O'Neal presents a significant analysis of Bush's speech on that fateful day. In *Milestone Documents in American History: Exploring the Primary Sources That Shaped America,* the author first introduces the terrorist attacks. He puts emphasis on the fact that the latter were decisive in "leading ultimately to changes in American foreign policy, military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and years of controversy about appropriate and legal ways to combat terrorism at home and abroad" (1: 2063). The core of O'Neil's argument revolves around the analytical study of the president's very first address whose audience was primarily the victims and their families for reassurance, and the American people on a second degree to assert the United States' power and might and in attempt to gain public support. Another targeted audience is the terrorists themselves and any of their potential harbouring nation that is to be put on the same pedestal if any suspicion is built upon it (1: 2064). The importance of such a speech, says O'Neal, lies in the fact that it served the American government's interest in making the people adhere to the president's perspective, and rallying the nations around the same cause, that of fighting evil (1: 2065-66).

In "A Call to Arms at the End of History: A Discourse-Historical Analysis of George W. Bush's Declaration of War on Terror", Graham, Keenan and Dowd draw an analogy between George Bush's speech, issued on the 20th September, with other historical speeches like that of Adolf Hitler in 1938 and Queen Elizabeth's Tilbury speech right before the Armada in 1588, in an attempt to integrate Bush's speech among the "call to arms" speeches (200). In doing so, the authors rely on four decisive guidelines: the legitimization of power, the focus on the significance of culture, viewing the other as "evil", and a call to union. All of the afore-mentioned aspects conform to the characteristics of the American president's speech (200). This analogy not only aims at underlying the warlike aspirations of the government, but it also shows how it fits the modern media-relying audience. Just like the 9/11 terrorist assaults themselves, which were meant to be made grandiose thanks to the digital age, as the authors note: "the attacks were directed at symbolic centres of a globally hegemonic system and were designed specifically for their mass media impact" (217).

Because the significant 9/11 attacks happened in the modern and pro-media era, it is an expected outcome that the latter is of great importance and usage by the media to the extent that it has become an inherent part of the American cinema and popular culture. As a matter of fact, famous films and series focused on these attacks, either directly, such as Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, by Stephen Daldry, or indirectly like the science-fiction monster movie Cloverfield directed by Matt Reeves.

It is worth mentioning that away from the deliberate act of mythicizing the event, Hollywood's emphasis on the portrayal of the attacks is not altogether an innocent act. In fact, the blockbuster movies dealing with 9/11 should not be taken as mere entertainment. Rather, we believe that films can have a significant importance in influencing the public opinion. These productions very often have political stances to defend, either implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, according to their study entitled "Moving Pictures? Experimental Evidence of

Cinematic Influence on Political Attitudes", Todd Atkins and Jeremiah J. Castle argue that "popular movies are capable of influencing the attitudes of viewers precisely due to their popular nature: viewers come expecting to be entertained and are not prepared to encounter and evaluate political messages as they would during campaign advertisements or network news programs." (1242). In the same context, Thomas Riegler states that, for some experts, the terrorist attacks brought the perspective of a "pact" between the authorities and Hollywood. The propaganda's aim was to revive the patriotism of the American people just like it was previously done after the Pearl Harbour attack in 1941 (106), thus highlighting the propagandist motivations of the Hollywood film industry.

Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* is a 65 million dollars blockbuster movie which relates the story of sergeant McLoughlin and his team heroically standing against the evil attacks by attempting to save lives, which would lead them to be buried alive in the rubbles of the twin towers before being rescued. Moreover, heroism and self-sacrifice are among the most salient themes because "In the immediate period after the September 11, 2001, the overriding executive mantra was 'no more movies of mass destruction' 45 film projects were either cancelled, substantially altered or postponed" (Riegler 105). This shows how too soon it may have been for Oliver Stone to be overtly discussing such a serious matter. Instead, the US film industry turned towards glorifying America's might, which is very significant and revealing as far as politics is concerned.

In *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Films and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era*, Douglas Kellner holds the theory that the 2000's Hollywood industry accurately mirrors the era's struggles and political issues (40). Regarding Stone's movie, *World Trade Center*, the author classifies it among the conservative genre because of its mainstream narrative, its focus on patriotism, family values and religion (104-05). Kellner also implies that Oliver Stone has quite a populist way of showing America as a united nation, by disregarding the harsh realities

of racial divide (107) for instance, an aspect which, we personally think, gives the narrative, a particularly utopian taste. *World Trade Center* can be considered not only as a perpetuation of the American administration's firm intention to classify foreign nations as being "with" or "against" America, but as a mirror of this policy as Cal Thomas defines it as a "pro-American, pro-family, pro-faith, pro-male, flag-waving God Bless America" film. What is more, the movie's ending with a young man enrolling in the military to fight in Iraq is an accurate depiction of the Bush-Cheney administration's initiative of invading Iraq (Kellner 106); we also believe that it echoes the Bush's "call to arms" policy, which was sustained through his speeches.

In "Masculinity Unredeemed: Masochism, Masquerade and the Absent Other of World Trade Center", Glen Donnar studies the film with a focus on the notion of gender. The author draws a parallel between the masculinity and the uniform by asserting that "male identity is sheathed and privileged in the uniform" (228). He also touches on the non-appearance of the perpetrator-others as leading to unrestored male agency as "Masculinity/ies do not exist in isolation but are defined, and constructed and performed in relation to and interaction with their many others, including other/alternative masculinities." (236).

Esther Pérez-Villalba analyzes *World Trade Center* by shedding light on American identity in "Constructions of US National Identity in Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006): Back to the Same Old Story?" by evaluating aspects of nationalism in the film. Pérez-Villalba refers to the presence of heroism, communal solidarity, a traditional embodiment of the family and Christianity; these aspects participate in the portrayal of American identity and foster the feeling of American pride. The representation of various ethnic groups in the film is considered by the author as falsely inclusive, given that many communities related to Islam, in the likes of Pakistanis and Indians are not included.

The theme of religion is also evoked in "La Citation du Réel: le 11 Septembre" by

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Anne-Laure Bell, who comments on Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* by making reference to its moralistic theme and the angel-like feature attributed to the protagonists (86). What is more, in "Pinned Under the Weight of Skyscrapers and History in 'World Trade Center'", A. O. Scott discusses the dramatic aspect of the movie and the emotionally charged representation of the attacks and more particularly of the two men's heroism.

Toby Harnden in "'World Trade Center' Is Insulting" conducts a character based analysis by pointing out the conventionality of the film, while denouncing the caricaturing of the character of Dave Karnes, who is portrayed as a secondary character and "a religious zealot". According to the author, the persona of Karnes is represented superficially. Because the film is based on true events, the real Dave Karnes is said to be disappointed by the way he has been depicted by Oliver Stone.

The attempt at deconstructing the Hollywood's narrative as regards politics is Joshua E. Keating's concern, as he argues that Hollywood is no more than a means of "nurturing" conspiracy by shedding light on the American pride with conventional plot lines consisting of heroes who fight aliens and evil creatures to save the nation, a theme which consolidates the nationalist right-wing tendencies; Ben Affleck's movie *Argo* is given as an epitome for this sort of movie narrative, a film that was indeed, harshly criticized by Iranians as inciting racial hatred and prejudice. Moreover, Keating, just like Douglas Kellner, considers that a lot of Oliver Stone's movies, such as *Platoon* about the Vietnam War, revolve around the equation between being a foreigner and being a savage, thus belittling the non-Americans, sustaining the Orientalist discourse and giving prominence to the American subject as the overriding character and power.

Significance of the Study

The feature film *World Trade Center* has inspired various studies by a number of scholars. For instance, as mentioned above, Douglas Kellner focuses on the political aspect of

the movie in *Cinema Wars,* and Esther Pérez-Villalba's study revolves around the representation of the American identity in the film. However, no research has been dedicated to the comparative study of George W. Bush's speeches and Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center.* The choice of these sources are significant in the sense that they are related to the same context, namely, the 9/11 attacks. Additionally, they share a number of common themes such as patriotism and religious symbolism, among others. This commonality conjures up *World Trade Center*'s ideological adherence to George W. Bush's standpoint regarding the September 11th terrorist offensive.

Aim of the Study

This research aims at understanding cinema from a political perspective; how films contribute to the political and social life of nations, and how it constitutes an important source of propaganda and power to manipulate the public opinion. Moreover, it is also a way of exploring another role of films, deeper than that of entertainment, and concerned with the realm of ideology. Besides, our study attempts to elucidate an important incongruity regarding the film director's motivations in the production of *World Trade Center*, when he has been known in his previous works to adopt a leftist position.

Thesis Statement

Our research holds for main topic the relationship between cinema and politics. More specifically, it examines the notion of ideology in Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* by relating it to its political context, reflected by George W. Bush's speeches entitled "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress".

Hypothesis

We hypothesise that *World Trade Center* has a political agenda which endorses the Bush administration's post-9/11 policy and subsequently aims at influencing the mass to

adhere to it.

Research Methods and Material

In order to achieve the objectives of this research work, the analysis of Bush's "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress" speeches will be carried out in order to determine Bush's political standpoint. Then, the study of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* will follow, in an attempt to determine its position regarding the Bush administration policy. Thus, the movie's study will be conducted by shedding light on the theory of ideology in film which argues that a movie, like any other form of art, bears a specific stance and a set of principles to be instilled in the mass.

Structure of the Research Paper

The paper will be divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, we will first provide an overview of the September 11 attack and its media coverage and representation. Then, we will attempt at understanding the figure of George W. Bush, and most importantly, his post-9/11 policy. The second chapter will revolve around an overview of the Hollywood film industry and its development throughout American history, as well as the relationship between Hollywood and the 9/11 terrorist attack. Furthermore, a review of *World Trade Center's* director Oliver Stone will be established to understand his ideological stance and leanings. As regards the third chapter, it will encapsulate the respective analyses of *World Trade Center* and George W. Bush's "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress". What is more, the comparative analysis of these texts will shed light on the affinities and similarities between them.

Chapter I

The September 11th Terrorist Attacks: An Event with a Global Impact

Introduction

The Terrorist assault of September 11th, 2001 on symbolic areas, in the likes of World Trade Center, ushered the United States into a new political era. Far from being mere attacks which caused deaths, injuries and considerable material casualties, 9/11 had far reaching and long-term consequences on both domestic affairs and foreign policy. This being said, the entire world was impacted by the attacks, specifically the Middle East which has known turbulent times through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The present chapter examines the 9/11 terrorist offensive, its consequences and the way it was relayed by the media, in addition to its effects on both American and world politics. This first chapter also focuses on President George Walker Bush, the supreme policy-maker of the post-9/11 era, his response to the attacks and the most salient political initiatives he implemented following the terrorist offensive.

1. The September 11th Terrorist Attacks

With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990's, the United States of America reigned over the world as the most powerful country in the world. The end of the Cold War ushered the country into a relatively serene and peaceful period, until the fateful attacks on World Trade Center occurred and heralded the nation in a state of fear and insecurity. The collapse of the twin towers was repeatedly relayed on television all over the world, to become one of the most broadcast events in the world.

1.1. An Account of the Attacks

The 9/11 attacks are a traumatic episode which marked a watershed in the history of the United States. The offensive was committed by the Al-Qaeda Islamist organization and targeted key symbols of American hegemony, namely the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and

the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, New York. In fact, the September 11th event encapsulates four attacks by hijacked American planes. Thus, American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the Northern tower at 8:46; seventeen minutes later, United Airlines Flight 175 struck the Southern tower. The Pentagon was the third area to be hit by American Airlines Flight 77. As for the fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, it crashed into a Pennsylvania field and was presumably intended to hit the White House. The deadliest attacks on American soil killed almost 3 000 persons and thousand others were injured. In addition, a great economic impact followed, which corresponds to public facilities and property losses, and the blockage of the airline industry due to the closing of airports and the decrease of passengers. Most importantly, the financial firms were paralyzed, which considerably affected the stock market as Marc Davis declares in "How September 11 Affected the U.S Stock Market" that the week following the attacks "saw the biggest losses in NYSE history" with a Dow Jones loss of nearly 1 370 points.

1.2. Early Responses

In the aftermath of the attacks, a number of responses were delivered. British authors Ian McEwan and Martin Amis conveyed their reactions as "spectator-witnesses". In "Fear and Loathing" Martin Amis puts emphasis on the feeling of fear that hovered, not only among Americans, but over the whole world as a consequence of the attacks' being internationally broadcast. The writer states that the attacks were meticulously organized to make the world's terror reach its highest peak, especially by marking a short interval between the two attacks, "to give the world time to gather round its TV sets" before the Southern tower underwent the second attack. Thus, the latter was what triggered the American consciousness of being under assault, as Amis states.

As far as the September 11th attacks are concerned, the notion of fear was considered as tightly related to, and emanating from the television screen. In this regard, Ian McEwan

argues in "Beyond Belief", that the tension between the visible and the invisible, or, what was shown on TV and what was left for the mind to envision, intensified the horror of the spectators as it was that "safe distance from it all that was so horrifying". Subsequently, McEwan holds that fear also showcases the West's sudden realization of being vulnerable as the world's superpower was being toppled within a short period of time.

For Martin Amis, such a widely televised event epitomizes the postmodern condition, equated with "images and perceptions". Beyond engendering trepidation and alarm, 9/11 prompted American's incomprehensible feeling of being despised, as Amis declares that "the message of September 11 ran as follows: America, it is time you learned how implacably you are hated", suggesting a lack of consciousness about their country's wrongdoings abroad. Additionally, McEwan declares that the spectators were seen as being so consumed by and dependent upon the visual dimension of the event, that "the pictures obliterated the commentary". Moreover, both Amis and McEwan touched on the fusion of reality and imagination that characterized the event by considering the attacks similar to a disaster movie scene.

Being an unequalled foreign offensive, McEwan foreshadowingly asserts that 9/11 is an epoch-defining moment which would alter the world forever. Correspondingly, Martin Amis' commentary bears a visionary and cautionary statement about upcoming acts of retaliatory violence from the United States of America as an unavoidable outcome.

1.3. Media Coverage

The 9/11 event was relayed and replicated by millions of cameras and screens all over the world, to the extent that it is widely believed that media made the event. It is an unprecedented incident which combined the obscenity of violence with it being broadcast live in such a way as to make the whole world shift from being spectators to witnesses.

The above mentioned reactions to the attacks convey the importance of media,

especially television, in shaping the event as McEwan considers that "the screen became the only reality". In the same perspective, Douglas Kellner in *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy* defines 9/11 as "a media spectacle" (57).

The offensive of September 11th, 2001 is considered as one of the most covered events in the history of media (Brian A. Monahan 55), and an increase in media interest was indeed manifest. In fact, what was happening was so incomprehensible that "virtually everyone turned to some form of media on September 11 to gather information and follow the unfolding events" (Monahan 58). Television played a significant part in transmitting and framing the attacks, and a large number of TV channels all around the globe covered the September 11th offensive. Moreover, Adam Buckman declares that in such a national tragedy, a collaboration was observed even between usually competing channels in order to exchange footage and make them largely available.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, what made television take precedence over other media is the fact that it provided continuously updated and visual content which other communication means failed to offer. Additionally, the echo brought by the simultaneity of its happening and diffusion made the horrific assault on World Trade Center a historic moment, although it ordinarily needs hindsight for an event to be considered as such. In this regard, Jean-François Sirinelli considers that "l'événement-monstre a été, en même temps, un événement-monde" (35), hence its global and far-reaching impact. Sirinelli's reflection also mirrors Marshall McLuhan's concept of the "global village" which revolves around the idea of the world being abstractly connected via cybernetic technology (Danesi 135).

As the news of the attacks on World Trade Center broke, Television channels started what would be an extended coverage that would last for days to come, with news holes considerably expanding to report, analyze and debate over the significance of what was happening in Lower Manhattan. The beginning of the reporting, notes Brian A. Monahan,

produced a great deal of disbelief and confusion which made anchors resort to analogizing the attacks with disaster movie scenes (61). Subsequently, much of the information produced shortly after the offensive took place were mere "speculation, conjecture, or unsubstantiated reports" (Monahan 62). In fact, it was too early to utter any valid interpretation. On the other hand, media had to alleviate the spectators' insecurity fuelled by their puzzlement. Later on, the first attempt to give clarifications is through phone interviews and reports delivered by correspondents in New York City and the Pentagon (Monahan 76). Accounts, debates, early interpretations and repeated images of the attacks followed, while emphasizing, as Monahan states, a dramatic and emotional tone (94).

The media coverage of such an unforgettable moment in the history of the United States was also conducted in ways that would support specific political agendas, Fox TV channel for instance, considered retaliation as a plausible response to the 9/11 attacks. *The O'Reilly Factor show* overtly held Bill Clinton's administration accountable for the attacks by accusing him of failure as far as his security strategy was concerned, and allegedly declared Iraq's implication (Kellner 59). It is also worth mentioning that this narrative was not exclusive to right-wing television channels; as Kellner states: "The dominant response on U.S. television was to interpret the terror attacks as an 'act of war' and a 'second Pearl Harbor,' requiring military retaliation" (57). Such an interpretation falls into what Monahan considers as "the responsibility and retaliation frame" (64), a term used by the author to refer to the media response to the attacks. Indeed, Monahan considers that in spite of the availability of material, media only delivered superficial analyses of the attacks; he divides these analyses into two distinct categories, the first one is "the responsibility and retaliation frame", and it is equally illustrated in Douglas Kellner's reflection. In this regard, Kellner argues that media focused on the identity of the culprits and an early promotion of militaristic retaliation (64-65). As for the second category, which Monahan names the "dealing and healing frame" (66),

it concentrates on the political and physical responses to the attacks, with emphasis on Ground zero and New York City in general, in addition to the emotional and psychological consequences of the fateful event (66). From Monahan's analysis, we can argue that media failed to consider the American responsibility on the attacks and what the Bush administration did or did not do to reach such a point of instability and insecurity. Furthermore media leaned towards a hawkish stance to respond to the attacks, and this left no room for a well-thought-out evaluation of the political situation and objective ways to come to terms with the threat of terrorism, with no precursory political leanings.

Written press was also devoted to daily reporting information in the aftermath of the attacks; some even resorted to special editions, such as *Time*, whose special issue served to enlighten its readership through pictures, stories and other such 9/11-related data.

2. George W. Bush: A Leading Figure in Troubled Times

George W. Bush served as president of the United States of America for two terms, from January 2001 to January 2009. He is known for his conservatism and his hawkish foreign policy towards Middle Eastern countries, dubbed the Bush Doctrine. He is also equated with the September 11th terrorist attacks, which he handled through a series of initiatives.

2.1. Understanding the Figure of George Bush

George W. Bush is the 43rd president of the United States of America. He was governor of Texas from 1995 to 1999, and graduated from Yale and Harvard universities in business administration. President Bush junior is known for being a heavily religious figure. In fact, he reconverted to Methodism in his forties, after a long struggle against alcohol addiction. He is thus considered as a born again Christian, a pathway a number of American presidents undertook, and which influenced their ideology and policy making process. For example, Ronald Reagan and Jimmie Carter are two born again Christians, and the latter,

states Michael J. McVicar, is said to have been elected owing to the support of evangelicals.

In the pre-9/11 era, and in the direct aftermath of his election, George Bush's political interests were not initially centered on international policy. In *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency,* Thomas S. Langston states that "George W. Bush presidency was focused on implementing his CAMPAIGN PLEDGES" (63) such as the fulfillment of tax cuts. As for social welfare related reform, Daniel Béland considers that it was not among the president's priorities, and hence, he opted for the "Compassionate Conservatism" philosophy, which consists of relying on charity and the participation of religious organizations to come to terms with social issues such as poverty (21-22). Concerning healthcare, Béland asserts that Bush was in favor of a decentralized insurance system and against strong regulations in drugs prices for instance, which ultimately leads to put more authority on the hands of pharmaceutical firms (22-23). The president equally focused on the implementation of the partial privatization of social security, yet, it was never fulfilled.

It is worth mentioning that Bush, a religiously committed political figure, was strongly opposing abortion and even forbade pro-abortion organizations from benefiting from American funding (Langston 63). Being a right wing politician, he thus strongly endorsed conservative family values and the traditional heterosexual family model. What is more, his withdrawal on March 2001, from the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, epitomizes Bush's indifferent position towards climate change.

Although Schubert, Stewart and Curran state in "A Defining Presidential Moment: 9/11 and the Rally Effect" that Bush has reached one of the highest approval ratings in the history of America (580), his two presidential terms were tarnished by a number of mistakes and failures, in the likes of the war on Iraq, the infamous Abu Ghraib prisoners' torture scandal, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) delayed response to the hurricane Katrina disaster.

With the fateful events of September 11th, George W. Bush found himself at the heart of a crisis which required to shift his interests towards the international arena. Indeed, the terrorist attack had an important political influence; it led the United States to wage wars on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, on Al-Qaeda, and to topple Saddam Hussein in Iraq under the label of War on Terror. Moreover, on October 2001 the president signed the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act, in other words, the PATRIOT Act. The latter can be defined as a law which permits to track, spy and eavesdrop communications, conduct searches without the accord of the citizens, and allows detention without trial and charges. It also violates the Fourth Amendment of the American constitution which protects Americans from unreasonable searches and seizures.

2.2. The Election of George W. Bush

The 2000 US presidential election held on the 7th of November, is among the closest and most controversial in American politics. It confronted the Republican George W. Bush and the Democrat Al Gore, who won the popular vote. The controversy arose when the Florida electoral votes were placed back in the undecided column for a recheck, after announcing that Gore had won that state. Hours later, Bush was declared winner of Florida, to which Gore answered by withdrawing his concession and asking for a recount of the votes in four Florida counties. Katherine Harris, the state campaign co-chair for George W. Bush and Florida secretary of state charged with the vote recount, announced that the state's votes go to Bush. What followed is the Florida Supreme court ruling to extend the election deadline for the Palm Beach votes to be recounted, thus rejecting Harris' decision. On the other hand, the Republicans reached for the help of the Supreme Court which ordered the halt of the recount process by issuing the Bush V. Gore decision, making George W. Bush the 43rd president of the United States.

3. The Post-9/11 Bush Administration Policy

The September 11th attacks and their consequences required from George W. Bush and his administration to take special and stringent measures. The post-9/11 Bush administration policy encapsulates the most salient and impactful procedures implemented as a plan of action to retaliate against the attacks, and to come to terms with terrorism. These initiatives are mainly equated with the president's conservative standpoint, and were largely welcomed by the American people in the early period following the attacks.

3.1. Neo-conservatism

As formerly mentioned, George W. Bush is a highly religious and conservative political figure and pertains to the religious right. The latter is defined by McVicar as a political partisanship of mostly white evangelical Protestants who promote conservative values and principles.

McVicar holds that the conservatives' political involvement in contemporary America was manifest as a consequence of the Scopes Trial in the thirties, when fundamentalists strongly resisted the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in Tennessee's public schools. Furthermore, the ideological conflict between America and Soviet Russia intensified the religious implication in political affairs, as the Cold War was seen through a theological lens. In this regard, Ronald Reagan's 1983 "Address to the National Association of Evangelicals" in Orlando, Florida is emblematic of the religious interpretation of this conflict by utilizing the term "evil empire" to refer to Soviet Russia. This parallels Bush's recurrent use of the term "axis of evil", which bears a strongly religious connotation, and which he first employed in his "State of the Union Address" on January 2002 to designate the nations he accused of endorsing terrorism in the likes of Iraq and Afghanistan. What is more, Dirk Nabers and Robert G. Patman consider Bush's immediate response to the attacks as moralistic and religiously affiliated (176). In the same context, Nabers and Patman shed light on the Project

for the New American Century (PNAC), a neo-conservative foreign policy think-tank, whose members were part of the G. W. Bush's administration. In fact, the authors consider that the toppling of Saddam Hussein was suggested by the PNAC as early as the 1990's to prevent Iraq from hindering America's economic interests in the Middle East region, and that the PNAC supported the preemptive war initiative (173).

The War on Terror, defined as the post-9/11 military assaults waged on states accused by the United States administration of being supportive of terrorism, is a watershed episode in the history of the country. Consequently, in "Religious Resonances in Bush's 'War on Terror' ", Linell E. Cady asserts that the presidential political discourse encapsulating the War on Terror cannot be considered as purely secular, rather, it is an area where politics and religion are intertwined (203). Giving a theological tone to a political strategy is not as exceptional as it might seem, and the author considers it as "part of a tradition of American civil religion that has frequently been invoked by presidents in times of war and crisis" (200-01). Furthermore, it is worth to mention that Bush, in a press conference following the attacks on 16th September used the term "crusade" to refer to the war on terrorism. Such a controversial declaration stirred the national and international public opinion's criticism. Thus, Alexander Cockburn, a journalist for the renowned political magazine *CounterPunch*, coined the term "Tenth Crusade" to express his indignation while drawing a parallel and a historical continuity between the American initiative to combat terrorism and the religious wars of the Middle Ages.

One can deduce that the religious dimension given by Bush and his administration to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 served to bring the community together while enhancing the president's leadership role and thus create a sense of security as far as the American people is concerned. Moreover, "the good versus evil" theory suggests a strategy for the president to

pave the way to upcoming retaliatory policies and actions that would ultimately be approved by the American public opinion.

3.2. Unilateralism

In "The Bush Foreign Policy 2001-2003: Unilateralist Theory in a multilateral World, and the Opportunity for Change Offered by Iraq", Michael J. Kelly considers that what characterizes the Bush presidency is "a predisposition to 'go it alone'" (221). Indeed, president Bush decided to wage the war on Iraq without the approval of the United Nations. In order to legitimize such an initiative, he resorted to the use of the term "preemptive war", which Mary Ellen O'Connell in "The Myth of Preemptive Self-Defense" defines as "cases where a party uses force to quell any possibility of future attack by another state, even where there is no reason to believe that an attack is planned and where no prior attack has occurred". Furthermore, Strobe Talbott declares that another instance of the Bush administration's unilateral strategy lies in the refusal to cooperate with the NATO to combat the Taliban in Afghanistan.

3.3. Manichaeism

Kelly describes G.W. Bush's foreign policy perspective as "monochromatic" (222); in other words, the President used binarism by classifying the world into good and evil. In fact in his "Address to a Joint Session of the 107th Congress" on September 20th, 2001, the president states clearly that "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.", and such a declaration illustrates his foreign policy vision and strategy to reach his administration's interests. The use of binary opposition in American politics is referred to as Manichaeism. In a review of Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style in American Politics,* William F. May defines Manicheans as those who "reduced all distinctions to the cosmic struggle between two rival powers: Good and Evil, Spirit and Matter, the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness". As far as George W.

Bush is concerned, in "Binary Discourse in U.S. Presidential Speeches from FDR to Bush II" Wassim Daghrir considers that terrorism is viewed as "a demonic force candidly opposed to all that was good, true, and pure" (25). Beyond being a religious philosophy, Manichaeism is a political strategy employed by the Bush administration "to defend and justify a whole host of controversial actions" (Daghrir 26), which will ultimately increase the people's approval of the president's plan. Consequently, as Daghrir points out, the role of Manichaeism lies in expanding the government's power (30). Since the author links the president's Manichean tendency to the belief in God's mission to the United States (27), this moralistic political strategy evokes another dimension, deeply rooted in American principles, namely, American Exceptionalism.

3.4. Exceptionalism

Exceptionalism, as a concept related to the United States of America, was first used in 1835 by the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America.* De Tocqueville considered that "The situation of Americans is entirely exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be put in the same situation" (3: 768). This concept is defined by Duncann Watts in *Dictionary of American Government and Politics* as the belief of the United States as being unique, compared to other developed countries, in terms of its society, culture, as well as its political and social organization, and also because it is "a bastion of liberty and democracy", principles which are supposed to be spread worldwide (10).

The belief of America being attributed a godly mission lies at the heart of exceptionalism since its earliest days. In fact, this notion can be traced back to the country's earliest historical periods, as John Winthrop laid the foundations of the country in the Puritan era, through equating it with the "City upon Hill". Furthermore, the Cold War equally

encapsulates the exceptionalist symbolism of the United States, with God being on the side of America, while the Soviet Union being associated with atheism.

In politics, exceptionalism is manifest in a number of situations. In the foreign policy context for instance, it can be represented through a refusal to depend upon the international community and comply to internationally set laws. Within the Bush Doctrine, this can be exemplified through the initiative of waging a preemptive war on Iraq and the use of military retaliation before resorting to a diplomatic solution. In "Exceptionalism Again: The Bush Administration, the 'Global War on Terror' and the Human Rights", Rosemary Foot argues that "Exceptionalism encouraged the Bush administration's decision to adopt the metaphor of war and to engage in militaristic behavior" (709). In his initial response to terrorism, Bush puts emphasis on 9/11 as being an attack on the American model of democracy, thus Gregory Britton in "September 11, American 'Exceptionalism' and the War in Iraq" regards the president's perspective as an impetus which "reasserted an exceptionalist understanding of America's role to spread its values throughout the world" (131), given that his Address to a Joint Session of Congress gave no choice to the world's nations but to be the United States' allies, or otherwise be deemed an opponent of freedom and democracy.

Within the context of 9/11, the United States cooperated with a number of governments. One of the United States' most important allies is the United Kingdom, as the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair showed his support to the American president since the early stages of the post-9/11 policy and was a fervent supporter of the war against Iraq. Nevertheless, the United States of America maintained a unilateralist stance when it comes to international affairs; Britton thus asserts that "despite the fact that the United States was working in concert with 'friends and allies', it is the United States that leads the way, and *only* the United States that can lead the way" (128). This claim further highlights the exceptionalist dimension in the American policy during the Bush era.

Exceptionalism has known a revival in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. It was an important feature for the American people to reassert its identity and national pride in such a critical and calamitous episode the country was going through. As far as the political sphere is concerned, exceptionalism was a way to appeal to the citizens' emotions and stimulate their support. Such a deep-rooted characteristic was also pivotal in advocating America's new foreign policy following 9/11 in the international arena. This being said, American exceptionalism led to a number of human rights violations through the initiative of preemptive war and the resort to extraordinary rendition, which is the political act of displacing criminals to countries where human rights are not strongly respected, and where these culprits would receive brutal interrogations and torture. Consequently, it is worth shedding light on the paradox of American exceptionalism, which depicts the United States as a savior and advocate for human rights, and at the same time foregrounds the pursuit of its own interests.

3.5. Patriotism and Nationalism

Broadly defined, patriotism can be interpreted as the state of being faithful to one's country and proudly identifying with its symbols. Ervin Staub draws a distinction between "blind" and "constructive" patriotism; he defines the former as an uncritical support for one's nation without questioning its flaws and defects. As for the latter, it revolves around showing loyalty to the country while resisting "the policies and actions of the group that they see as betrayal of the group's basic values, or basic human values, or as contrary to the group's interests in the long run" (498). Thus, "blind" patriotism can be assimilated with chauvinism or nationalism. As far as America is concerned, Leonie Huddy and Nadia Khatib in "American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement" consider patriotism as "commonly tinged with political ideology" and strongly associated with conservatives rather than liberals (63). This argument showcases the political implication of patriotism.

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Following the end of the Cold War, the United States underwent an undisturbed period of invincibility, security and prosperity, as it came out of the war as the world's superpower. Nabers and Patman state that "for more than 50 years, American governments had assumed that no enemy would attack the country of fear of an overwhelming retaliatory strike. September 11 abruptly ended that sense of security within American society" (175). Furthermore, national crises are known to be an important impetus to the rise of national pride, unity and patriotism. Accordingly, Li and Brewer assert that increased rates of patriotism and nationalism were witnessed in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks (728). Subsequently, the attacks were a national tragedy that caused fear and insecurity to hover over the nation. Vulnerability is thus what characterized America and participated in the surge of such a fervent feeling of patriotism, as "being American" was what held the nation together amid a melting pot, comprising a myriad of ethnic, religious and political affiliations. In this regard, paranoia and fear have been an intrinsic part of the American culture; by way of illustration, we can cite the "yellow peril", a racist discriminatory behavior against Asians culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the "red scare", which is the fear of communism during the Cold War.

Within the context of September 11th, fear was even more amplified through the saturated television broadcast of the attacks. Moreover, Kristina Kočan Šalamon in "Public Response to 9/11 in Politics: Patriotism, Fear and Language Issues", asserts that political leaders "helped to magnify the events with the use of expansive rhetorical gestures that pushed many American citizens deeper into feelings of despair" (35). Subsequently, in the midst of this paranoia and search for meaning, emerged fear and a vehement "need for protection, and thus for national heroes" (Kočan Šalamon 40). Indeed, the presidential political discourse following the terrorist attack was highly strategic as it made Americans' fear culminate into anger and need for retaliation. It also generated a feeling of reliance on the

president as the national figure, and the nation's ultimate savior. What is more, Šalamon considers George W. Bush's "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress" as "highly patriotic" and idealizing the United States (37). This is in fact, reminiscent of Staub's above mentioned concept of "blind patriotism", and ultimately leads us to link strong patriotism with conservatism in the light of Huddy and Khatib's argument.

Given that patriotism is a tangible outcome of national crises, the president tapped into the American people's emotions by adopting a patriotically charged rhetoric in his immediate response to the 9/11 offensive, which he considered as an assault on complex and abstract principles common to all Americans such as freedom and democracy, a discourse which sheds light on the exceptionalist position of the United States. Eventually, the Bush Doctrine, encapsulating the hawkish War on Terror and unilateralism, among others, was made easily acceptable by the public opinion through the recourse to the patriotic rhetoric. Indeed, refusing to adhere to any retaliatory initiative at the time could be viewed as being anti-American. This claim is further explained through the binary and dichotomous perspective imposed by the president; thus, anyone opposing his administration's policy would be deemed a potential enemy of the United States.

4. Rally Round the Flag Effect

As above mentioned, the September 11 attacks led to a surge of patriotism and a revival of exceptionalism among Americans, which ultimately led to a reconsideration of the president's role as the country's savior. In other words, the American people resorted to the "Rally Round the Flag" Effect.

4.1. Definition

The "Rally Round the Flag" Effect is a political concept which Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson describe as a large adherence to the president during an international crisis (37). Furthermore, John E. Mueller asserts in "Presidential Popularity From Truman to

Johnson" that the "Rally Round the Flag" is the result of a specific, dramatic, and sharply focused international event which directly implicates the United States and its president (21).

The causes behind this phenomenon are numerous, William D. Baker and John R. Oneal for instance indicate in "Patriotism or Opinion Leadership: the Nature and Origins of the 'Rally 'Round the Flag' Effect" that media coverage of the event and the way it is represented by the White House via presidential addresses lie behind the emergence of an exceptional support for the president at the national level (682). As far as the September 11th event is concerned, patriotism, exceptionalism and the feeling of fear generated by the attacks can be regarded as stimuli which engendered support for the Bush administration; Hetherington and Nelson affirm such a claim as "the September 11 rally event has been extraordinary in its size and duration" (41).

In spite of the fact that the Rally effect is directly linked to the communal aspect of a nation, J. Tyson Chatagnier draws a close relationship between government trust and the Rally 'Round the Flag by declaring that the latter is also based on the individual's response to a crisis; the author holds that citizens with a certain trust in the government are more likely to rally to the president than those citizens with lower levels of political trust (643). What is more, a multitude of international crises can lead the president to wage an armed offensive against the enemy; in this case, the Rally 'Round the Flag effect is said to be enhanced with United Nations Security Council approval (Chapman and Reiter 908-09).

4.2. "Rally 'Round the Flag" in the United States of America

The surge of popular support for the president in international critical events is a situation recorded a number of times in the History of the United States. The Cuban Missile Crisis is a conflict which occurred during the Cold War in October 1962 between the United States of America and the Soviet Union; it emerged when the United States discovered the presence of missiles pertaining to the Soviet Union in Cuba. Tom W. Smith declares in

"Trends: The Cuban Missile Crisis and U.S. Public Opinion" that this crisis led president John F. Kennedy to enjoy an approval rating boost from 61% to 76% in the months following the Cuban Missile Crisis (269). Moreover, in "Revised Models of the 'Rally Phenomenon': The Case of the Carter Presidency", Karen J. Callaghan and Simo Virtanen claim that former president Jimmy Carter's approval rating knew a significant increase of 26 percentage points, to reach 58% within a month during the 1981 Iran hostage crisis (756). The latter is an international conflict in which the American Embassy in Tehran was taken over by Iranian students for more than a year during the Iranian Revolution, which was characterized by the revolt of the Iranian people against their political regime supported by the United States of America.

Regarding the September 11th attacks, it has been formerly stated that George W. Bush has reached one of the highest popular support following 9/11 (Schubert, Stewart and Curran 580). Indeed, it is indicated in "War President: The Approval Ratings of George W. Bush" that Bush's approval rating rocketed to 90% in the aftermath of the attacks and extended in duration more than any other president (Eichenberg, Stoll and Lebo 787). The significant impact of the event may lie behind such a colossal Rally Round the Flag after the terrorist attacks, it is also believed that the president's political affiliation is a favorable element for the massive popular support he reached; in this regard Matthew A. Baum in "The Constituent Foundations of the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon" holds that Republican presidents are more prone to experience a rally around the flag effect than their Democrat counterparts (291).

The idea of turning to the president in times of crises indicates how the USA needed to stay united during such a critical period, to the extent that Lambert, Schott and Scherer in "Threat, Politics, and Attitudes: Toward a Greater Understanding of Rally-'Round-the-Flag Effects" state that a singular and temporary alliance between Republicans and Democrats was

witnessed at the time (343). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the 2002 midterm elections "transformed a divided party government into a united one" (Hetherington and Nelson 42), given that Republicans gained seats in both chambers of congress.

Some scholars indicate that it is the sentiments of fear and vulnerability that lie behind the public opinion's support to the president, while Lambert, Schott and Scherer assert that "anger, but not anxiety, triggers greater support for hypothetically 'hawkish' politicians espousing militaristic aggressive positions regarding the war in Iraq" (345). Either way, it is now manifest that the attacks led to the president's increased popularity.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the 9/11 event's impact, as it touched the world's superpower, namely, the United States of America. Subsequently, the changes that followed the attacks not only affected America, but other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, as well. Furthermore, the present chapter reveals that the post-9/11 policy led by the neo-conservative president George W. Bush was characterized by a reliance on exceptionalism, religion, and Manichaeism. These concepts, added to the critical condition of the country, participated in looking on Bush as a national hero, thus generating an exceptional feeling of patriotism and a rally around the flag effect. Because it was displayed live on television, it can be said that this event was shaped by media, and the latter's role became even more significant as the attacks became gradually incorporated in a number of narratives. In fact, the 9/11 attacks have been portrayed by American and international movies alike. Being one of America's most influential media entertainment industry, Hollywood depicted the event through a myriad of perspectives, and this will be the core of our second chapter.

Chapter II

The Hollywood Film Industry: America's Socio-Political Mirror

Introduction

This chapter examines the Hollywood film industry and provides the brief history of its development, from a small entertainment business to a universal movie making production. Moreover, it puts emphasis on the correlation between cinema and politics, and how films convey specific ideologies and political messages. Subsequently, the representation of the September 11th attacks in various Hollywood movies is tackled. Then, the present chapter gives an insight into *World Trade Center*'s film director, Oliver Stone, in an attempt to have a grasp of his ideology and political stance.

1. An Overview and Chronology of Hollywood

The film industry is a thriving system in the United States, and Hollywood is the epitome of movie production equated with the highest-grossing films in the world. As any other art form, cinema quite often reflects the community in which it is produced and its socio-political concerns; therefore, Hollywood's development can be divided into a number of periods which are shaped by the context of their production.

Hollywood, geographically an area in the city of Los Angeles, California, is the heart of American film industry and a worldwide symbol of American popular culture, entertainment and motion picture production. It is home for major film production companies such as Paramount Pictures, and comprises the iconic Hollywood Walk of Fame, which contains thousands of stars implanted on the sidewalk of Hollywood Boulevard to honor real or fictional characters who marked the entertainment industry.

1.1. Classical Hollywood Cinema

Hollywood started as a small agricultural area with few inhabitants. As for film

production, it emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. Indeed, Southern California was a privileged destination for filmmakers for a number of reasons, such as its convenient weather -given that it is a sunny area all year round-, its assorted terrain, as well as its distance from the Motion Picture Patents Company, (Scott Siegel and Barbara Siegel 201), which was essentially located in New York and had monopoly over the film industry in the United States, thus dwarfing any competitor.

An affluence in film production was witnessed starting from the 1920's with a considerable income made by film companies. For example, in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture,* Michael Baers states that in 1939 alone, the industry earned around 700 million Dollars (2: 433). This was known as the Golden Age of Hollywood, during which major movie studios, such as Metro Goldwyn Mayer, RKO Pictures and Warner Brothers Entertainment Company owned theatres and controlled what was displayed to the public. In such a thriving era of the American cinema, lavishness and licentiousness were the watchwords, as drug consumption and other excesses culminated (Baers 2: 432).

In the 1930's, came the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code, or the Hays Code, after the Republican politician and chairman of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, William H. Hays, and these laws meant for movies to be censored and comply to strict principles of morality. Additionally, under the United States antitrust law, the Supreme Court issued the United States V. Paramount Pictures, Inc. decision in 1948 which led the dominating Hollywood studios to sell their theatres since they were accused of practicing unfair competition. This caused the movie industry to gradually wane and be ushered into what is known as the end of the studio system. Moreover, the advent of television further influenced the decline of Hollywood's prosperity, as the number of moviegoers dwindled through time. Ironically enough, it is television itself that helped Hollywood get back on its feet by buying and releasing its productions (Siegel and Siegel 201-02).

1.2. Hollywood Renaissance

After the classical era, Hollywood's prestige would be revived around the 1960's and 1970's through the advent of the Hollywood Renaissance during which directors gained consideration and recognition (Siegel and Siegel 433). Also designated as the American New Wave or New Hollywood, this era is seen by Noel King in *The Last Great American Picture Show* as a blend of "the traditions of classical Hollywood genre film making with the stylistic innovations of European art cinema" (20).

Although no well defined denotation of the term New Hollywood cinema is offered, it is worth mentioning that it is a period in which considerable change in the former principles of Hollywood took place given the socio-historical context of the time, namely, the counterculture as the latter shattered much of the established principles deeply rooted in the American society. In this regard, Geoff King indicates that a number of films representative of the New Hollywood era tackle the themes of estrangement, youth revolution, non-conformism and independence seeking by pointing out to films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* (15-17). Moreover, King considers that the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War were also echoed in Hollywood Renaissance productions through the themes of conspiracy and spying, war and the soldier coming back home (19-20).

To convey such new ideas and themes, filmmakers also resorted to a set of new techniques quite different from those of their predecessors. In this regard, Duncan McLean regards Hollywood renaissance as being characterized by an "experimental aesthetic style". In *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction,* Geoff King considers that a number of novelties in terms of style and techniques have been incorporated to the Hollywood Renaissance movies. These techniques include fragmented editing, shot discontinuity, jump cuts (11-12), flashbacks and flash-forwards (39). Such singular and *avant-garde* cinematic methods convey

disruption and lack of coherence, and the latter concepts are strongly representative of the 1960's context. Additionally, King states that filmmakers focused on the natural, casual and modern aspect of movie scenes by relying on affordable materials in the likes of hand-held cameras, and shots such as zoom lenses instead of tracking shots (39-42).

The use of the term Hollywood Renaissance is equated with the revival of the industry, which considerably declined with the end of the studio system. Thus, McLean states that Hollywood adopted a new strategy which consisted on investing on young filmmakers to appeal to the young generation, considering that as a result of the baby boom, the median age during the 1960's and 1970's was 29.5 and 28.1 respectively (Hobbs and Stoops 57). Ultimately, the then young generation, generally leaning towards a liberal perspective, meant for the strict moral codes and censorship to be loosened to appeal to this specific audience. Thus, in 1966, the Production Code was replaced by a rating system which determines the appropriateness of films' contents to specific audiences by age range (Siegel and Siegel 191). This not only opened new horizons for filmmakers to explore, and for filmgoers to discover and thus increase in number, but it was a way to compete with the emerging industry of pornography as well (King 31).

1.3. Contemporary Hollywood Cinema

What also marked the Hollywood Renaissance era is the emergence of a new generation of film directors such as George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, called the Film School Generation. The latter were film school graduates, inspired by the French New Wave and European cinema in general. The Film School Generation filmmakers directed commercial movie productions (Noel King 20) called blockbusters, a term referring to a type of films in which large sums of money are invested and which are subsequently expected to generate high income. According to Marco Cucco in "The Promise is Great: the Blockbuster and the Hollywood Economy", "blockbuster" was a military term

used in World War II referring to "large-scale bombs", and it was subsequently used in cinema to designate films with a great impact in terms of production and income costs (215).

According to Linda Ruth Williams and Michael Hammond in *Contemporary American Cinema*, the blockbuster production was propelled mainly after the financial success of *Jaws* and *Star Wars* (8). McLean notes that with the rise of the blockbuster, filmmakers' focal point shifted from the aestheticism to the marketability of the motion picture by starring big celebrities and revolving around specific genres such as action movies, adaptations and film franchises. Furthermore, In "Industry: The Sixth Annual Grosses Gloss", Myron Meisel asserts that the Success of these movies was equally sustained by being promoted as "advertising expenses have gone up even faster than production costs" (64). Additionally, Justin Wyatt in *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* states that in an attempt to make them easily "advertisable", these films' plots were made simplistic and straightforward (8-10) at the expense of their potential artistic and philosophical value. In sum, these productions are dubbed "high concept" movies. In the same context, Marco Cucco asserts that blockbusters are built on a strategy whose features is to avoid originality and innovation and abide by conventional techniques in the production in an attempt to maximize the revenues (228).

The Hollywood blockbuster is not only popular and influential within America itself, but it is a genre of movie production with an international impact. In "Introduction: World Filmmaking and the Hollywood Blockbuster" Stephen Prince draws a parallel between global cinema and the highest grossing American movies, and holds that the latter exert monopoly over the realm of world cinema (4). Such a claim is linked to the blockbusters' marketing strategy and innovative technology, and consequently contributes to the dissemination of American values and culture worldwide. Furthermore, Prince notes that "spectacle and hyperbolic special effects" are what characterize these films and make them easily absorbable

by a global spectatorship (5).

As any other film genre, the contemporary blockbuster is highly sensitive to the socio-political context of its production. As formerly mentioned, the American film industry responded to the September 11th attacks with an array of films in the likes of *Zero Dark Thirty* and *United 93*. Moreover, the influence of 9/11 on cinema was consequential in the long term; after the attacks, a particular interest in the apocalyptic genre was manifest. In "Social Apocalypse in Contemporary Hollywood Film", Douglas Kellner advances a number of reasons behind the proliferation of this film genre. In addition to the religious beliefs, the author assumes that the context imposed an atmosphere of disaster and destruction generated by the attacks and the hawkish retaliatory strategy in the Middle East, which was eventually continuously conveyed by media (26). Moreover, it is argued by Matthew Leggatt in "Melancholic and Hungry Games: Post-9/11 Cinema and the Culture of Apocalypse" that the theme of deconstruction can also be related to the ecological concerns which surfaced within the last few decades and to the economic impasse experienced by the country. Therefore, the apocalyptic film can also be read as the annihilation of the capitalist system.

Among the most notable post-9/11 apocalypse movies, we can cite Neil Marshall's *Doomsday*, Francis Lawrence's *I Am Legend* and Alex Proyas' *Knowing*. As far as the apocalypse film genre is concerned, John Walliss and James Aston in "Doomsday America: The Pessimistic Turn of Post-9/11 Apocalyptic Cinema" argue that these movies are a reflection of the American collective consciousness which was shaped by insecurities and hope regarding the period following the attacks (63). As a result, the authors point out to the ambivalence of these apocalyptic movies; some are seen as bearing a pessimistic message, while other most recent productions are considered optimistic. The latter are said to coincide with the end of George W. Bush's second presidential term and leaned towards "renewal and starting over" (61-62). Such a claim conjures up a political allegory within this particular film

genre, and ultimately draws a parallel between cinema and politics. In this respect, Walliss and Aston advance that in *The Book of Eli* lays a scathing criticism of President George W. Bush's use of religious rhetoric, through a character who seeks to control others by the use of the Bible (62).

As formerly stated, the Contemporary Hollywood era in the history of American cinema is not considered as easily clear cut given the numerous transitional changes leading up to the contemporary cinematic production, thus McLean considers post-war, or post studio system American cinema as bearing the label New Hollywood, and divides the latter into Hollywood Renaissance and high concept. This last period thus encompasses big budget, spectacular movies which were highly promoted to reach immediate success. Consequently, the directors' goal is to make their blockbusters widely acceptable by the audience by avoiding sensitive and controversial topics; thus, Geoff King considers that:

> If Hollywood's blockbuster productions tend to be politically conservative, as numerous commentators have argued, this is primarily because they are designed to resonate, in various ways, with dominant and familiar social attitudes. . . . This does not make the films any the less political in their implications. But it makes them less explicitly or recognizably political. (79-80)

Therefore, we can draw a correlation between cinema and ideology; a point which will be further developed in the following section.

2. Film and Politics

Film is an artistic creation which is said to transcend its aesthetic dimension. It is influenced by the context in which it is produced and consequently conveys specific messages and ideological stances. Among the theorists who linked art to ideology is the Algerian-French philosopher Louis Althusser, whose ideas are valuable in understanding the

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Hollywood film industry and its portrayal of politics. Therefore, the September 11th offensive, considered as an international political crisis, has been subject to an array of cinematic portrayal over the last few years.

2.1. Ideology in Film

Film is an art form and a cultural product which reflects society, its ideology, its cultural representations and the political atmosphere hovering over it. This is highlighted by the German film critic Siegfried Kracauer in his essay "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies", as he states that "films are the mirror of the prevailing society" (291).

In *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser believes that the ruling classes maintain authority by using Repressive State Apparatuses that rely on coercive power like the army (75). Furthermore, Althusser theorizes about the interrelatedness of art and ideology and how the latter is subtly incorporated within what he calls Ideological State Apparatuses, which enforce the prevailing ideology through various institutions like schools, churches, theatres, media and cinema in order to ensure its domination (77-78). Moreover, according to Counsell and Wolf, Althusser affirms that "ideology is reproduced in familiar, apparently benign institutions that are part of everyday social life" (33). These institutions legitimize and reproduce the State by creating consent for the dominant ideology.

In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays,* Althusser asserts that "every work of art is born of a project both aesthetic and ideological" (242). He further maintains that "Art does have a quite particular and specific relationship with ideology. . . . What art makes us **see**, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and **'feeling'** (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it **alludes**" (222-23). Therefore, film as an artistic creation of the movie industry is situated within a particular culture, and is created with principles and values

that are inherent to that culture. Thus, films are ineluctably products of ideology. The latter is sometimes manifest but always latent in films and indicates the filmmaker's attitudes, beliefs as well as his/her social and political views and perspectives.

To have a better grasp of Althusser's perspective, the concept of ideology should be unravelled. Thus, Susan Hayward in *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* defines ideology as a Marxist term created by the dominant class, imposed on the rest of the society, and which "reflects the way in which a nation is signified" (192-93). Therefore, film as a popular means of entertainment and a dominant visual form of popular culture, can be explored as an institution which conveys ideological messages. Indeed, filmmakers play a vital role in moulding public opinion and influencing society.

2.2. Hollywood and Politics

Among the film genres produced by Hollywood those dealing with political subject matters are numerous. In *Hollywood Goes to Washington: American Politics on Screen*, Michael Coyne divides American movie productions into phases in accordance with the socio-political events of the country. We can cite for instance, the "Paranoiac Phase" corresponding to the Watergate scandal and the people's subsequent distrust of the government (29-30), and the "Apocalyptic Phase" which is equated with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on World Trade Center (39).

The chronicle of political watershed moments is thus an inherent aspect of the American film industry, as Ian Scott emphasizes the strong cinematic depiction of America's strife against external enemies after the Cold War (191). Moreover, Scott mentions the influence exerted by cinema on the public opinion regarding specific political figures. For instance, the author mentions a parallel drawn, through cinema, between former president John F. Kennedy and the then presidential candidate Bill Clinton (223) which helped the latter "shape the mythology of the contemporary film industry for his own undefatigable ends"

(225). However, after the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, added to his unkept promises, Hollywood's support for president Clinton is said to have waned (226).

The example mentioned above shows how the leading motion picture industry in the United States operates in favour of a specific ideology, and suggests that "Hollywood exists to legitimate the dominant institutions of the nation state" (Scott 31) either explicitly or implicitly. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that such a claim does not deny the existence of a plethora of American films bearing an anti-government stance. Among the film productions opposing the political regime in America, we can cite Oliver Stones' *The Untold History of the United States*, a provocative nonfiction movie which deals with the obscure and hidden side of the USA political system and its repercussions at the national and international levels. Additionally, *All the President's Men,* directed by Alan J. Pakula denounces corruption in the American government by chronicling one of the most memorable political scandals in the United States, namely Watergate.

2.3. The Representation of 9/11 in Hollywood Movie Productions

Being a momentous episode in the American socio-political arena, the 9/11 events have also been the subject of various representations through the seventh art. By way of illustration, Thomas Riegler declares in "Mirroring Terror: The Impact of 9/11 on Hollywood Cinema" that although the figure of the jihadist appeared in films as early as the first terrorist assault on World Trade Center at the beginning of the 1990's, the 9/11 attacks generated a multitude of movies tackling the themes of wars and conflicts involving America, thus "reflecting George W. Bush's proclamation of the War on Terror" (104-05). What is more, it is worth mentioning some cinematic works dealing with the attacks. For instance, we can cite Paul Greengrass' *United 93*, which showcases the heroic act of the passengers on board the United Airlines Flight 93 who attempted to take control of the plane over the hijackers, leading to a crash on the Pennsylvania forest, thus preventing potential human and material

damages to occur. Furthermore, Douglas Kellner, in *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era*, holds that *United 93* also displays the authorities' immediate inefficiency and inability to cope with the attacks (103).

Another movie which revolves around the aftermath of the deadliest terrorist attacks in America is Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*, dealing with the hunt for, and capture of Osama Bin Laden by the Navy Seal. What is peculiar about this film is its graphic violence, which can be read as endorsing the "Enhanced interrogatory techniques" employed by the US government, reminiscent of the infamous Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Additionally, the movie under study, *World Trade Center* is a feature film which looks at the 9/11 attacks through two New York City police officers, sergeant John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno, who find themselves buried within the rubbles of the collapsing towers. The feature film explores the heroic survival of the two protagonists and the intensely dramatic atmosphere hovering over the victims' families, and New York in general.

The political dimension of a movie can be explicitly or implicitly expressed (08), as it is highlighted by Haas, Christensen and Haas in *Projecting Politics: Political Messages in American Films*. This is why it is crucial to consider the fact that political messages are not only conveyed through films labelled "political", but can be part of an array of movie genres. In this regard, Ian Scott states that "Hollywood has often made political films interesting by wedding them to other genres" (24), subsequently, he adds that Hollywood resorts to symbolism to convey political messages (25).

Jack Valenti and Honor Hsin declare that the connection bounding the film industry to the political sphere is further illustrated by the establishment of the "Hollywood 9/11" committee whose role and responsibility revolve around supporting the American War on Terrorism (78). Even though Valenti argues that the movies' content is not subject to the government interference (79), we believe that his declaration conjures up the use of

propaganda as a way to make the public opinion adhere to the authorities' decisions, thus echoing Riegler's evocation of a "pact" between Hollywood and the government to highlight the themes of patriotism and jingoism (106).

3. Oliver Stone: A Committed Film Director

Oliver Stone is one of Hollywood's most popular film makers. In addition to documentaries and independent films, Stone has directed a remarkable number of mainstream Hollywood films where conspiracy theories and political subject matters are combined. Therefore, his implication in political affairs through cinema renders him one of the most politically committed artists in Hollywood.

3.1. Biography

William Oliver Stone, better known as Oliver Stone, is a famous American film director and screenwriter who directed more than forty movies. Born on September 15th, 1946 in New York City, he is the son of a French woman, Jacqueline Goddet, and of an American father, Louis Stone. The latter was a stockbroker and is said to have been a great influence behind Stone's direction of *Wall Street.* He briefly attended Yale University and later joined New York University, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in film in the early 1970's; he was taught by Martin Scorsese, one of the prominent figures of American cinema. He taught English in Vietnam, before enrolling in the military in 1967 where he served for one year, and subsequently earned a Bronze Star Medal for his participation in the Vietnam War. The latter has an important impact on his career as a filmmaker, given that a number of the films he directed tackle the theme of the war in Vietnam. He is currently married to Sun-Jung Jung and is the father of three children.

Oliver Stone is known for his controversial positions regarding political affairs and for his liberal leanings. Throughout his career, he earned a number of honorary prizes, most notably three Academy Awards and two Golden Globes.

3.2. Filmography

Oliver Stone is widely known for his controversial political movies and is deeply engaged in the political arena. In *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, Chris Routledge asserts that politics is a recurrent theme in a number of Oliver Stone's movies (4: 543). In this regard, he directed films such as *The Untold History of the United States*, which Mary McNamara considers as a documentary series countering the concept of American exceptionalism and suggesting an alternative perspective of the mainstream narrative concerning the United States' history. Additionally, *JFK* is another important movie tackling the assassination of former American president John Fitzgerald Kennedy through a conspiracy theory. This film is said to be the direct cause of the release of recordings related to that matter through a law passed by Congress in 1992; which subsequently marks an important correlation between Stone's films and politics. The filmmaker equally touched on other themes such as American economy and the power of money in *Wall Street*, as well as the manipulative influence exerted by media on the public in *Natural Born Killers,* released in 1994 (Routledge 4: 544).

In an interview with the historian Harry Kreisler in the University of California, Berkeley for the series *Conversations with History*, Oliver Stone asserts his conservative background by overtly saying "I grew up conservative" (00:04:51). However he declares that his political views have changed overtime and that he identifies as a liberal film director. Additionally, in "Personal Struggles and Political Issues: An Interview with Oliver Stone", it is said that the filmmaker has expressed his support for the Democrat Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential elections (Gary Crowdus and Oliver Stone 21). Moreover, Michael Carlson in *Oliver Stone* considers the filmmaker as "a crusading voice of courage almost uniquely committed to a cinema engaged with political issues" (7). Nevertheless Stone maintains a

balanced stance in his films, as Carlson also asserts that his motion picture productions are far from being radicalist or extremist in their liberalism (9).

As formerly stated, Stone served in the military during the Vietnam War, and this experience shaped his career in cinema as he became significantly disillusioned by the atrocities of the war. In this regard, he declares that "the war had no moral integrity" (Crowdus and Stone 20); consequently Stone dedicates a number of his movie productions to this specific theme. *Platoon,* which earned four Academy Awards, was both written and directed by Stone; it exposes the realities of the Vietnam War from the perspective of a military named Chris Taylor. Other films also tackling the war in Vietnam include *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Heaven and Earth*, which tells the story of a Vietnamese woman during the war and the trials she underwent such as being raped by Viet Cong soldiers. The movie is based on the memoirs of Le Ly Hayslip bearing the title *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace.*

As far as the Vietnam War is concerned, Stone declares to Harry Kreisler that America has not yet recovered from it and that it is still a trauma in the American collective memory. Furthermore, Stone's statement displays his regret that no apologies have been addressed by the United States (01:23:00). Such a claim thus asserts his anti-war position and reinforces his anti-Republican political stance, since it is the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower who was the first president to be involved in the war. In the same context, Stone also directed *Salvador* in 1986, which revolves around the civil war in El Salvador. The movie not only exposes the American support of the civil war, but also "anticipate[s] America's awareness of the depth and viciousness of Reaganite unlawfulness in Central America" (Carlson 7).

Despite Oliver Stone's presumably liberal standpoint, a number of his oeuvres are deemed moralistic, as John Stone equates *Platoon* and *Wall Street* with morality plays, through the study of the notion of evil in the characters of Barnes and Gekko (86). Moralism

in Stone's films is equally asserted by Carlson (10), who also points out his stance regarding gender equality by stating that he is "a male-oriented director unable to avoid objectifying women even in films about them" (7), which makes his liberal position questionable. In a similar perspective, his George W. Bush's biopic entitled *W.* received criticism regarding the portrayal of America's 43rd president. Despite Stone's declaration that "Bush was a military incompetent" (00:28:09) in "Movies, Politics and History with Oliver Stone", Philip French regards *W.* as inducing sympathy towards Bush. He also declares that the film focuses on the personal level of the protagonist's life without highlighting his role and political involvement in the United States, while putting his administration in the background of the narrative.

As stated above, Oliver Stone graduated from film school and started his career around the 1970's; he can thus be considered as pertaining to the Film School Generation. In addition, Carlson asserts the filmmaker's influence by the French New Wave, more particularly the cinema of Alain Resnais and Jean Luc Goddard (10). Therefore, among his notable cinematic techniques, we can cite, the use of the hand-held, unstable camera and natural lighting, among others (Routledge 4: 544). It is also noteworthy to mention that the use of melodrama is central in Stone's movie productions, as implies Martin Fradley in his review of Ian Scott and Henry Thompson's *The Cinema of Oliver Stone: Art, Authorship and Activism*. Moreover, *Platoon* and *Heaven and Earth* epitomize the dramatic leanings of the director, as they expose the atrocities of the war through the lens of individuals, respectively Chris Taylor and Le Ly Hayslip, and the struggles and trials they go through within a specific historical context bound to the Vietnam War.

Having directed both independent films and mainstream blockbusters such as *The Untold History of the United States* and *World Trade Center* respectively, Stone comments on the importance of motion pictures to raise awareness about political issues (Crowdus and Stone 21). Consequently his films are considered as bearing a sense of "art's utilitarianism"

(Carlson 8) and are deemed "fiercely manipulative" (Carlson 10), which ultimately asserts that his oeuvres go beyond the realm of entertainment to encompass an ideological scope.

Conclusion

The present chapter has dealt with the Unites States' most prominent entertainment industry, namely Hollywood, and its development, paralleled with the socio-political context of the country. Our investigation has also demonstrated the existence of an interconnection between cinema and politics, given that films, being Ideological State Apparatuses, bear specific ideologies which are intended to be subtly disseminated to the mass. Thus, according to Louis Althusser's theory on the relationship between art and ideology, one can conclude that the seventh art is far from being mere entertainment; rather, it usually bears an agenda, subtly but effectively relays specific ideas and consequently influences spectators towards particular perspectives through the power of cinematic techniques such as editing, *mise-en-scène* and soundtrack. Subsequently, as far as the 9/11 attacks are concerned, it has been proven that specific measures were taken, through the "Hollywood 9/11" committee, to use propaganda in favour of George W. Bush's War on Terror initiative, which further reinforces the implication of cinema in political affairs.

As a landmark event in contemporary American history, the terrorist attacks have been subject to a number of cinematic representations, both through Hollywood big budget movies and independent film productions. Among the most popular 9/11 related movies is *World Trade Center*, a feature film directed by American film maker Oliver Stone. The latter is a prolific director, whose movies are politically committed. Through the study of his biography and filmography, as well as an inquiry into his ideology, we can say that Stone defines himself as liberal, but some of his works are not always in accordance with his claimed political stance. Although his films are critical of the Vietnam War and the mainstream narrative regarding the United States history, the use of moralism and drama, the sympathetic portrayal

of former president George W. Bush in *W.*, and his representation of women, lead us to consider him as an ambivalent, or restrained liberal.

Chapter III

Analysis of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center and* George W. Bush's Speeches

Introduction

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, two important speeches were delivered by George W. Bush. "Address to the Nation on the September 11th Attacks" is a short speech broadcast live on television in the evening of September 11th; it is the president's first formal reaction to 9/11. As for "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress", which was delivered on September, 20th 2001, it encompasses the main aspects of the forthcoming policy to be implemented as a response to the terrorist offensive. Likewise, the 9/11 event is reflected in popular culture, including the Hollywood film industry, which responded to the attacks through a number of productions in the likes of *World Trade Center*. This feature film directed by Oliver Stone tells the true story of ordinary American citizens, John McLoughlin, Will Jimeno and Dave Karnes, who demonstrate courage and self-sacrifice during the terrorist offensive.

The aim of this chapter is to study the portrayal of the September 11th attacks in *World Trade Center* through Louis Althusser's conception of the relationship between art and ideology. Yet, it is important to analyze Bush's speeches beforehand, in order to examine the themes they convey and decipher the interlocutor's aspirations.

1. Analysis of George Bush's First Speech: "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks."

"Address to the Nation on September 11 Attacks" is the first and immediate presidential speech delivered as a direct response to the 9/11 attacks, from the Oval Office, Washington D.C. at 8 p.m, in the evening of September 11th, 2001. Through his short speech, President Bush chiefly addresses the American people, expresses his sympathy and

condolences to the victims and their families, and reassures the population about the United States' resilience and willingness to stand in the face of terrorism.

The address sheds light on the attacks, which had happened earlier that day and their significant consequences on America. In a tone of grief and distress, the president puts emphasis on America's core values such as freedom and democracy, principles considered as lying behind the terrorists' assault on and contempt of the USA. As an emblematic figure, epitomizing the country in all its ideological, economic and social dimensions, Bush displays a reassuring tone and tries to alleviate the people's insecurity by asserting that the government is handling the situation through assisting the victims and their families, making sure that all American institutions kept being operational and most importantly, through conducting judicial investigations until unmasking the malefactors and ensuring that justice is done. Thus, the president of the United States touches on the themes of patriotism, religion and binarism by referring to the upcoming foreign policy and shedding light on the emotionally charged atmosphere which hovered over the country in the weeks and months following the attacks.

1.1. Patriotism and Exceptionalism

In his speech, the president resorts to empowering Americans and mitigating the insecurity which hovered over the country. He thus utilizes expressions to soothe and reassure citizens, by asserting the country's power, as he states: "our country is strong", and that "America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time". Moreover, Bush employs a metaphorical language to refer to the United States' strength and sovereignty in the following statement: "These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve". In putting emphasis on the country's might, George W. Bush aims at stimulating his people's steadfastness and showcasing the nation's unassailable position to the world.

Through the process and duty of reassuring American citizens, Bush addresses them as the "great people", he appeals to their patriotism by focusing on expressions such as "a great

nation", as well as the term "freedom", which is repeated three times to assert that democracy is inherent to the American political model, and also by referring to the country's past victories against its enemies to heighten Americans' pride of belonging to such a great nation. He equally sheds light on the country's exceptional status; in doing so, he defines the United States as "the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" and asserts that their advocacy of universal values are the reason behind the terrorist attacks. Bush, thus, reasserts the "city upon a hill" metaphor and through it, an underlying message of hope finds its way amid this emotionally charged address.

As formerly stated, Cal Thomas considers *World Trade Center* as a "flag-waving God Bless America" film. Behind the "Address to the Nation on September 11", lies a deep motivation towards bringing Americans together by kindling a sense of national pride within the people and focusing on American exceptionalism. The hawkish foreign policy later undertaken by Bush is also subtly evoked, and refers to his strong reliance on the military to assert America's power in the world. Additionally, the presence of a religious discourse magnifies his conservative stance as far as politics is concerned.

1.2. Religion

For a seemingly secular country, what is noticeable about the president's speech is the religious imagery it contains. By way of illustration, he uses the words "pray" and "prayers", and repeatedly employs the term "evil", which is mentioned four times. Moreover, Bush resorts to quoting from Psalm 23, and alludes to a superior spiritual force that would soothe the grief invading America. This set of Biblical allusions evinces the prominent influence of religion in the United States as well as the president's conservatism and strong reliance on Christianity.

1.3. Good versus Evil

In his speech, Bush draws a binary opposition between two contrasting forces, the terrorists and those who ally themselves with the United States, implying that no neutrality is tolerated as he states: "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them". Contrastingly, he also makes use of the term "evil" and "the worst of human nature" with "a great people". To reinforce the "good versus evil" antagonism, the president adopts a moralistic tone by considering America and its allies as the sole nations from which justice, democracy and benevolence emanate.

1.4. Post-9/11 Policy

With the benefit of hindsight, the address can be read as containing a foreshadowing element as the president proudly asserts: "Our military is powerful, and it is prepared". Such a statement echoes the War on Terror initiative and the series of military interventions that would be launched in the Middle East. The premises of the administration's hawkish foreign policy are discernible in the very first post-9/11 address delivered by the president, who subtly seeks his people's approval.

1.5. The Emotional Aspect

In *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, Richard A. Lanham defines pathos as a set of techniques used by the interlocutor to stimulate emotions within the audience (111). In his speech, President Bush uses a style which recaptures the attacks by describing the burning and collapsing buildings, he then proceeds by referring to those who lost their lives or have been injured, to express his compassion and sympathy. It is worth mentioning that the president makes use of words such as "terror", "sadness", "disbelief" and "anger" to match the collective emotions of that fateful day. His words get deeply dramatic as he utters his prayers for "those who grieve" and "for the children whose worlds have been shattered". Such a strongly emotional message also demonstrates the colossal impact of the 9/11 terrorist assault

on America. Furthermore, the president represents the American society as a solidary community by paying tribute to the rescue workers, and those who have donated blood to the victims. In doing so, he generates a sense of unity and fraternity within the Americans. We can thus assert that Bush employs pathos in his speech as he stirs sorrow, hope, patriotism and sympathy in his audience.

2. Analysis of George W. Bush's Second Speech: "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress."

"Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress" is the second speech delivered by President George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks, on September, 20th 2001. As its name indicates, the address is made in the presence of the members of the two branches of Congress, the Senate and the House of Representatives in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. Other presents include the president's administration members, the mayor and governor of New York and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, among others. The address encompasses the initiatives to be taken as a response to the attacks. In fact, it is in this speech that the president tackles the War on Terror initiative and lays out his strategy to come to terms with terrorism, such as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

2.1. Heroism

In the midst of turmoil, President Bush seizes the opportunity to highlight his position as that of a savior. Indeed, heroism is an important facet of his speech, and it is manifest in the way he warmly reassures Americans about the country's strength and resilience, how he comforts them by asserting that the attacks are by no means the United States' fault, and by anticipating a return to normalcy and being hopeful about the future; as an anaphora is noticeable in the use of the sentence "we will come together". This expression also puts emphasis on the importance of national unity. Indeed, throughout his speech, President Bush puts himself in the role of the defender of good against evil, and the end of his speech

captures this heroic role he attributes to himself by promising his people: "I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people".

2.2. Religion

Bush depicts the United Stated as a nation to which "great harm" has been done, and overcoming such an affliction can only be solved through a set of military responses, as part of God's mission to the United States to defend freedom and democracy against terror and tyranny. Indeed, religious references make up a significant part of President Bush's "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress". The "grace" of God and prayers are considered as important agents to overcome the troubled times which devastated the country, and the president explicitly refers to a "mission" which is the "advance of human freedom". Furthermore, to give more weight and legitimacy to his upcoming strategy, Bush affirms that by standing for freedom and justice, God is subsequently on the side of the United States, and thus victory over the enemy is bound to happen.

2.3. Good versus Evil

To gain more support from the public opinion, binarism is focused on. In fact, the address contains one of the most memorable expressions uttered by the president George W. Bush, which is the following: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists". Such a statement evokes that neutral and centrist positions are rejected by the administration, which seeks at dividing the world and enlarging the circle of its allies and subsequently turn against any nation that does not agree with its political stance and ideology. Furthermore, Manichaeism is made even more salient in the use of oppositions such as "terror" and "liberty", "freedom and fear" and "justice" and "cruelty"; which suggest the self-righteousness of the United States of America, an exceptional country which stands for good and virtue.

2.4. Post-9/11 Policy

In his speech, George W. Bush not only addresses American citizens by paying tribute to the victims, announcing the plans to be undertaken by his administration and summoning their support, but also targets an international audience. Indeed, Bush solicits foreign cooperation from its allies, whom he considers as "the civilized world". Moreover, his message contains an ultimatum to Afghanistan's Taliban regime to deliver the Al-Qaeda members operating in their country. He also takes advantage of the opportunity to warn the countries supporting terrorism by announcing that the United States will make no difference between them and the terrorists themselves.

What characterizes the president's address on that 20th of September 2001, is the announcement of the Bush Doctrine. Thus, the concept of the "War on Terror" is at the heart of his speech and the ultimatum he gives to Afghanistan to hand over the terrorists present in their territory presages an unavoidable entrance into a long war, not only with Afghanistan, but with all the nations that do not choose to be on the side of the United States. Reference to war is also present in the president's word choice; for instance, he recurrently uses the word "fight" to put emphasis on the importance and inescapability of a military response to come to terms with terrorism. What is more, the president seems to prepare American citizens and induce them to support his foreign policy initiative as he declares that "Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen.". In asking them for their "patience, with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security", Bush refers to the PATRIOT Act, which would be implemented a month later. In the same context, the speech equally foreshadows the preemptive war initiative on Iraq when Bush states: "We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans".

2.5. The Emotional Aspect

Given the context, Bush's address to the Joint Session of Congress can be characterized as highly emotional. Similar to his first speech following the attacks, he pays tribute to the victims while emphasizing Americans' unity and steadfastness in such a precarious event by declaring: "the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union- and it is strong.". Furthermore, he refers to the "Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol singing 'God Bless America'", this imagery, not only bears a utopian depiction of America, but also appeals to the people's patriotism. The latter is equally foregrounded in the speech as the president praises American principles of liberty and democracy to instill pride in his audience, as he solemnly argues "They hate our freedoms".

3. Analysis of *World Trade Center*

World Trade Center is an American blockbuster which tells the true story of two New York police officers trapped in ground zero and their subsequent rescue. In this film, Oliver Stone sheds light on the themes of religion, patriotism and heroism while attempting to draw a realistic depiction of the attacks and their immediate effects on the city of New York.

3.1. Film Synopsis

World Trade Center is a feature film which can be considered as a thriller, disaster and drama movie released in 2006. It is distributed by Paramount Pictures Company, a major Hollywood studio, and is therefore a big budget movie whose production costs exceeded $65 million and reached a box-office gross of over $160 million. The film is based on the true story of two Port Authority officers, Sergeant John McLoughlin and Officer Will Jimeno who were part of the rescue teams on the fateful day of September 11th. Buried under the twin towers' rubbles, they were among the twenty people to be pulled out after nearly a day of struggle against pain, thirst and death. The film is directed by Oliver Stone and chronicles one of the most critical events in the history of the United States by shedding light on the attacks'

immediate impact on New York City and its inhabitants, and paying tribute to the courage and heroism displayed by the rescuers. The film stars Nicolas Cage as John McLoughlin, Michael Peña as Will Jimeno and Michael Shannon in the role of Dave Karnes. The cast also includes Maria Bello, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Jay Hernandez.

3.2. Contextual Analysis

World Trade Center has been filmed in New York City; it faithfully chronicles the day of the attacks through the subtle reference to the primary elections of September 2001, and can thus be considered realistic. Produced in 2006 and directed by the politically committed filmmaker Oliver Stone, the film portrays the American society facing one of the most devastating and impactful offensive on America through McLoughlin and Jimeno, their colleagues and their families, a microcosm of the American people. Its social and political concerns focus on a period of national crisis during which solidarity and national unity were the watchwords to overcome the foreign attacks and their consequences.

3.3. Themes

The movie contains a myriad of themes which resonate with the socio-political atmosphere prevailing in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks and the content of George W. Bush's formerly studied speeches. The film's analysis is conducted in the light of Louis Althusser's theory, which draws a correlation between ideology and art. Therefore, the movie under study will be considered as the product of an institution which disseminates the prevailing ideology.

3.3.1. Patriotism

As formerly mentioned, *World Trade Center* is a narrative based on the true story of two Port Authority officers in New York City, John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno. Throughout the whole film, the protagonists are honoured for their bravery as the long hours the two men spend underneath the rubbles is the epitome of patriotism. Additionally, when McLoughlin

and his team reach the vicinity of World Trade Center, the police officers stepping forward to volunteer for the tower's evacuation (00:16:49-00:17.00) is a true act of courage and self-sacrifice towards their country. Furthermore, the four men's love of their nation pushes them to unhesitatingly offer to be part of the rescue team, even though it means crossing the threshold of ground zero.

Dave Karnes, a former marine corps is displayed as a true patriot. His strong determination to serve his country is manifest when he moves from his comfortable position as an accountant to a rescuer braving danger in the wreckage of the Twin Towers. It is also worth mentioning that Karnes is a key character in the protagonists' rescue process, and his sense of heroism and patriotism are further reinforced as he asserts: "we're marines and you are our mission" (1:28:45). Furthermore, when president George W. Bush's statement on the attacks is broadcast on television, the filmmaker uses a shot/counter shot of Dave Karnes and president Bush (00:47:04-00:47:08). This technique not only conjures up Karnes' determination to defend the nation, but it can also be regarded as a foreshadowing element for his subsequent enrolment in the Iraq War, and thus his adherence to the president's foreign policy.

In the film's beginning, when the spectators are introduced to Will Jimeno, the latter is driving a car while listening to a particularly significant piece of music. The latter's title is "Only in America", a country song by Brooks and Dunn which revolves around the American Dream. It designates that United States as the "Promised Land", portrayed as a nation of freedom and endless opportunities "where we dream as big as we want to". Therefore, the polished image of the United States drawn by this song reinforces the notion of patriotism in the film.

In *World Trade Center*, Oliver Stone chronicles a national crisis where heroism is equated with ordinary individuals who attempt to give the best of themselves for their country.

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Consequently, patriotism is an underlying theme throughout the narrative. This theme is also prominent in Bush's two addresses following the attacks, as demonstrated by our analysis.

3.3.2. Exceptionalism

The film under study pays tribute to the courage and resilience of the American people against adversity. In spite of their cultural and ethnic differences, the characters show a great sense of solidarity as they work in unison in the name of their country. Therefore, America is represented as a land of tolerance, diversity and liberty. The scene displaying Donna McLoughlin hugging a woman of African-American descent (1:51:34) presents the United States in a utopian way by ignoring the issue of racial divide in America. The seemingly inclusive society, the patriotism conveyed by the narrative and the representation of the country as powerful in spite of the calamitous attacks suggest another important feature of the United States of America, namely, exceptionalism. Indeed, as formerly mentioned Brooks and Dunn's song played at the beginning of the movie promotes the exceptional position of the United States as a country where anyone is allowed to dream big and where any fantasy can become reality. Furthermore, Dave Karnes' volunteering initiative to help in ground zero is represented as a godly mission, and the latter can be read as a microcosm of the United States' mission to defend justice and freedom worldwide.

Moreover, the movie's title is a reference to the country's hegemony and economic strength. The film director uses a low angle shot (00:15:22) as well as a wide shot (00:15:37) to display the World Trade Center; and these cinematic techniques are deliberately opted for to convey a sense of primacy and indubitable power.

Behind the film's happy ending, lie the theme of hope and a message of resistance that America remains unconquerable in spite of the violent and destructive offensive, as conveyed by the president in the aftermath of the attacks. The end is an uplifting message for the American spectatorship, and a firm declaration of the Unites States' resilience and invincible

position to the entire world, which stresses its exceptionalism.

3.3.3. Conservatism

In addition to being a mainstream, big budget Hollywood movie, *World Trade Center* encompasses a number of conservative elements. The themes of religion, family and gender roles are central features in the movie which reveal its conservative dimension.

While watching *World Trade Center,* the spectator can notice the predominance of religion, more precisely, the Christian faith. Indeed, the two protagonists are portrayed as strong Christian believers. Jimeno's cultural background is highly influenced by religion; we can, for instance, identify a cross hanging in the inside of his front door (1:18:45), and this is indicative of the importance of religion in his family. After the announcement that Will Jimeno had gone missing, Stone employs a zoom-in inside the kitchen, where a crying middle aged woman recites a prayer (1:18:30), and this scene is also quite indicative of Will Jimeno's strongly religious background. Accordingly; when underneath the rubbles, Jimeno experiences a strange and striking vision as he sees Jesus Christ handing him a bottle of water (01:16:14).

In Jimeno's vision, Jesus Christ is represented through an ethereal lighting effect which leaves a spiritual impact on the spectator. Not only is the image of Jesus significant in terms of the prominent role given to religion, but it can also be read as a foreshadowing and auspicious element for McLoughlin and Jimeno's rescue.

The other Port Authority officer, John McLoughlin, is also depicted as belonging to the Christian faith. The name John, although of Hebrew origins, also appears in the Bible as in the last book of the New Testament entitled *The Revelation to John,* which is displayed in a full shot in one of the scenes (00:47:27). According to *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions,* this religious book revolves around the Apocalypse which is believed to happen "after the completion of some millennium" (927). Thus, the film creates a similarity between

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the attacks and the end of times as represented by the Bible. Another significant religious aspect related to McLoughlin, lies in the scene where he recites the Lord's Prayer when he thinks he is about to perish (1:01:25). In this context, biblical referencing is also found in the speeches of President Bush, a religious political figure known for his neo-conservative leanings.

The theme of religion is also equated with Dave Karnes, the former marine officer thanks to whom McLoughlin and Jimeno are rescued. In the aftermath of the attacks, Karnes' heads to the church to pray before volunteering to ground zero. As he tells the pastor that God has given him a mission to protect and defend his country, A shot/ counter shot of the character and a cross hanging on the church's wall (00:48:00-00:48:23) epitomizes the religious motives behind his strong patriotism and determination. To intensify the impact of religion, Karnes also evokes God when commenting on the barren and apocalyptic site of World Trade Center as he declares: "It's like God made a curtain with the smoke, shielding us from what we're not yet ready to see." (1:05:50).

Family plays an important role both in the narrative and for the characters. Oliver Stone presents a mainstream and conventional image of the family which he characterizes as middle class, heterosexual and bi-parental. This representation is similar to that drawn by American conservatives and the Republican Party to which Bush belongs. The family representation in Stone's *World Trade Center* can thus be regarded as complying with the Christian and conservative model.

When considered from a gender role lens, the movie is patriarchal in nature. In "Masculinity Unredeemed: Masochism, Masquerade and the Absent Other of World Trade Center" Glen Donnar asserts that the film focuses on masculinity and aims at "the restitution of male agency" (236). The leading and heroic characters are solely attributed to men, while women play secondary roles. In a movie narrating courage and patriotism, John McLoughlin,

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Will Jimeno and Dave Karnes are the only ones in the spotlight. The female characters, principally Alisson Jimeno and Donna McLoughlin, are portrayed as wives and mothers, whose roles encapsulate domestic responsibilities and whose concerns revolve around their children and husbands. Besides, Allison and Donna are portrayed as emotional, they are frequently displayed indoors, crying over their husbands, while doing nothing to concretely act in such a dreadful situation. Instead, it is other men, Allison's brother and Donna's brother in law who inform them that their husbands have finally been found alive. Oliver Stone thus perpetuates gender stereotypes and fails at attributing an equal representation of the female American citizens, equal to men in their duty towards their country.

To conclude, *World Trade Center* can be considered as a conservative motion picture through its representation of religion, family and gender roles. The conventional principles it conveys are reminiscent of President George Bush's political leanings given that he is a neo-conservative.

3.3.4. Good versus Evil

World Trade Center is a cinematic representation of the September 11th attacks on the United States of America. As a matter of course, the latter is represented as a victim against whom inhuman brutality has been committed. Thus, this portrayal evokes the equation of the terrorists with "evil", which automatically creates a binary situation where the "good" and virtuous is associated with the United States. Oliver Stone sheds light on the "good", as the film puts emphasis on the representation of America and its people as regards the September 11th attacks, while the evildoers are denied any direct representation. In fact, the attacks are solely represented through the shadow of the hijacked plane hitting the first Tower (00:8:28), and the spectator only comes to contact with the terrorists via the ravages they caused in New York City.

From a religious point of view, *World Trade Center* suggests that America is the

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ultimate defender of Christianity's virtuous and moralistic principles. Eventually, providence is represented as being on the side of the United States, hence the godly mission attributed to Dave Karnes to "defend our [his] country" (00:48:12).

As formerly referred to, a full shot of the *The Revelation to John*'s first page is displayed in the film, and this can be read as a symbolic reference to the binarism drawn by *World Trade Center*. Indeed, in *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions* it is stated that *The Revelation to John* pertains to the apocalyptic literary genre (927), a theme closely related to the destructive event of September 11th. Moreover, *The Revelation* is also a visionary scripture which prophecies the triumph of good over evil (927). Consequently, the analogy drawn between the attacks and the Apocalypse reinforces the conflict between good and evil within the 9/11 context, as represented by the president's Manichean discourse.

In the movie, the confrontation between good and evil comes to an end with the triumph of the United States. The film's ending is encapsulated by a proleptic scene which represents the recovery of the American people and how the nation has reborn from its ashes. In this regard, the extradiegetic narrator asserts that the attacks crystallized "the evil... but it also brought out the goodness we forgot could exist" (1:58:28-1:58:34); the courage and solidarity which characterized the American people throughout the narrative demonstrate that the United States epitomizes the "goodness" which eventually prevailed.

3.3.5. War and Foreign Policy

In "Oliver Stone's 'World Trade Center' Seeks Truth in the Rubble" David M. Halbfinger states that Stone does not consider *World Trade Center* as a political film unlike most of his movie productions. On the other hand, Geoff King considers in *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* that "Hollywood's blockbuster productions tend to be politically conservative . . . because they are designed to resonate, in various ways, with dominant and familiar social attitudes", but this does not make them apolitical; rather, their political leanings

are hidden (79-80). Therefore, the movie treats the political aspect related to 9/11 in a subtle way.

Known for their global impact, the September 11th attacks are equated with George W. Bush's foreign policy. In the language of cinema, the latter is represented through a high angle camera shot which progressively zooms out from the Twin Towers' rubbles to all of planet earth (00:35:04-00:35:28); this cinematic technique emphasizes the international impact of the terrorist attacks, which are also portrayed broadcast in different parts of the world in an array of languages (00:35:37-00:36:21).

The first and direct reference to war in the movie occurs Through Dave Karnes who declares: "I don't know if you guys know it yet, but this country is at war" (00:47:13). This declaration is an affirmation that what was happening in New York that morning of September 11th is not a mere plane crash, but a foreign attack on American soil. Karnes' statement also resonates with President Bush's initiative to declare war against the terrorists and the nations supporting them. The War on Terror is later evoked when the spectators are informed that Dave Karnes had enrolled to participate in the Iraq War. This being said, because Karnes is portrayed by the author as a good and courageous character, it eventually implies that the film sympathizes with the war on Iraq initiative, as part the United States' plan to fight evil.

World Trade Center narrates the real experience of two Port Authority officers' heroic sacrifice and survival; it focuses on the struggles of ordinary individuals in a period of national crisis. The September 11th attacks are an inextricable part of the contemporary American political landscape and no reference to it could be done without taking the political aspect into consideration. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the movie was released only three years following the Iraq War, thus it may have been too early for Oliver Stone to overtly address George W. Bush's post-9/11 foreign policy, principally the War on Terror. In this regard, the latter is alluded to via subtle references which can be read as representing a

legitimate act of defence against evil.

3.3.6. The Emotional Aspect

As most of Oliver Stone's productions, *World Trade Center* pertains to the drama film genre. The film revolves around the struggles of two individuals to survive underneath the Twin Towers' rubbles, and the emotional feature is salient as the events unfold. To begin with, the movie opens with a smooth and sentimental non-diegetic music while displaying John McLoughlin checking on his children before heading to work (00:02:07). The affective link between the protagonists and their respective families is later developed through flashbacks and memories. In this regard, the warm family atmosphere and the unity sealing the members of each family in their affliction increase the emotional dimension and arouse compassion within the spectators.

As far as the protagonists are concerned, a strong emotional bound is created throughout the hours they spend together under the rubbles. In such a wretched condition, the two men share fragments of their personal lives while trying to keep each other awake; the conversations they have are often accompanied by a soft background music, stimulating pathos, and this is reminiscent of the president's two speeches. What is more, the ethereal lighting through which the protagonists' memories are displayed, in (1:09:39) for instance, is another indicator of the deeply emotional dimension to be found in the movie.

The film is built on a three act structure and the climactic scene of the collapsing buildings is emotionally stirring; it generates fear and anguish at the sight of the victims falling from the towers (00:15:59) and others screaming in panic. To render the scene more poignant, around the 14th minute Stone opts for the use of the slow motion effect to capture the injured victims, thus generating a dramatic atmosphere which is further heightened as a fit of hysteria overtakes the people when the towers start crumbling (00:24:29). As for the film's ending, the denouement is particularly moving; the protagonists' rescue and the elation of

their families (1:47:00) release the tensions induced by the long hours of claustrophobic entrapment. The resolution is nevertheless over-sentimental and perpetuates the conventional endings of mainstream Hollywood narratives. Consequently, the film is emotionally charged; it chronicles the 9/11 events through fear, sorrow, despondency, courage, and hope. The portrayal of such a wide range of emotions ultimately leads the spectators to revere the protagonists, while identifying and empathizing with America's tragedy. Therefore, a parallelism with the formerly studied speeches can be drawn as the president uses a dramatic tone in his addresses.

3.4. Plot structure

The narrative complies with the conventional three act structure encompassing the setup, confrontation and resolution. *World Trade Center* opens with one of the protagonists, John McLoughlin, getting ready and heading to work. Will Jimeno is also presented to the spectators on his way to work through medium, long and extreme long shots. The city of New York is displayed in a serene and untroubled state, with the sun smoothly rising on the citizens going about their usual business. To put emphasis on the setting and its importance, Oliver Stone opts for a set of long and extreme long shots of New York City. The twin towers also appear in some shots such as the high-angle extreme long shot over the Hudson River (00:02:55), and at the left of a long shot of Manhattan (00:04:39). The focus on these two towers can be read as a foreshadowing element, and the emphasis put on New York City serves to create a contrast between the peacefulness preceding the attacks and the post-9/11 apocalyptic atmosphere. The setting also serves as an element of historicity which is reinforced by reference to a factual event, namely the primary elections (00:02:28) which were to take place on the September 11th 2001. The opening scene encapsulates different sound elements, the extradiegetic music is soft yet suspenseful; it stirs the audience's apprehension and anticipates a dramatic incident. Furthermore, as above mentioned, the

intradiegetic music playing on the radio is a patriotic song about the American Dream, praising the United States as the land of opportunities (00:04:55).

The movie's second stage is the confrontation, which starts with the shadow of the plane hitting the first tower. The events then escalate through the collapse of the towers and the claustrophobic journey of the protagonists under the ruins. Their ordeals lasted for long hours, during which life has nearly gave up on them. The events making up the confrontation ultimately lead to the protagonists' rescue, which ushers the narrative into the resolution and culminates with a flash-forward portraying the protagonists, their respective families and a large group of people in a party honouring McLoughlin and Jimeno's courageous act. The resolution is thus synonymous with a happy ending, which makes the film's storyline mainstream and conventional.

3.5. Title and poster

The movie title is a direct reference to 9/11 as the collapsing World Trade Center towers are equated with the attacks given their over mediatization and the fact that they were the most prominent area touched by the attacks. World Trade Center is also a symbolic assertion of the United States hegemonic status and financial might. In this regard, the title can be read as a message of defiance and resistance in the face of the enemy and an affirmation of the country's power, and that America is still standing on its feet in spite of the critical period underwent by its people.

Fig. 1. "*World Trade Center"* Movie Poster.

World Trade Center's theatrical release poster (Fig. 1) is minimalist, it depicts in black

the twin towers and two men standing in between, with the sky in the background. The two silhouettes stand for the protagonists, John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno, and the parallelism created between the two men and the huge towers is used to honour the police officers and shed light on their greatness and heroism. Additionally, this parallelism can signify that the two heroic and deeply patriotic protagonists are the embodiment of Americanism. The poster equally pays tribute to the Twin Towers, a landmark monument synonymous with America's supremacy. The use of the colour black stands for the deep sorrow and mourning in which America drowned on that fateful day. On the other hand, the blue sky in the background conveys a message of hope and the expectation of a better tomorrow.

3.6. Community Representation

World Trade Center presents characters from different ethnic backgrounds, which gives a more realistic demographic dimension of the United States of America as a melting pot. The white Anglo-Saxon race is essentially represented by McLoughlin, his wife and children, and the ancient marine Dave Karnes. Moreover, Jimeno, his family and officer Antonio Rodrigues stand for the Hispanic community. People of African American descent are less prominently present, and are mainly presented via sergeant King, Officer Reynolds and Will Jimeno's doctor, all of whom make furtive appearances throughout the film. Moreover, Names like those of Dominick Pezzulo and Officer Colovito suggest that they are from Italian origins.

Although a number of communities are represented in the film, others are neglected; few Asian figures appear in the film, while Arabs and some other Asian communities are even left aside in the likes of Pakistanis, Middle Easterners or Indians. The latter constitute a non negligible component of the demographic landscape of New York, and thus they have equally witnessed the attacks and experienced their traumatizing consequences. In this regard, Esther Pérez-Villalba suggests that the Muslim background of these groups may be behind their total

omission from the film. Therefore, it can be said that *World Trade Center* gives its spectators a false impression of ethnic inclusion. not only does the film display the American society through an unrealistically harmonious state as it is "trying to create realities which did not exist in real life for the sake of showing concord and unity among ethnically different individuals" (Pérez-Villalba), but it omits crucial communities as well.

Thus, the utopian representation of America as a melting pot crashes into a paradoxical portrayal where some minorities are overlooked. The same can be applied to the representation of religion, as the Christian cult is the only faith to which Oliver Stone attributes a voice in spite of the fact that America, in its diversity, comprises a myriad of religious affiliations from Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, among others.

Like George W. Bush's speech, the film is populist in nature and attempts at appealing to different social groups regardless of their political affiliations or ethnic belongings, while addressing them with words and imageries from the Bible. Additionally, George W. Bush also resorts to a utopian portrayal of the American society as being ethnically and socially harmonious and heterogeneous, while ignoring the social and racial cleavage by stirring the population's patriotic sentiments. Furthermore, the president's use of binarism further contradicts the harmonious image of the United States presented in his speeches.

3.7. *Mise-en-Scène*

In *Film Studies: The Basics,* Amy Vellarejo defines *mise-en-scène* as "all that encompassed by the **frame**" (28). In other words, this cinematic term encapsulates various elements which are displayed by the camera such as lighting, costume and setting, among others.

World Trade Center, chronicling the 9/11 attacks and the rescue operations which resulted from them, is set in the City of New York. The urban setting adds realism to the narrative and plays a symbolic role because it represents the heart of the United States of

America and its financial center. Therefore, the setting also stands for America's hegemonic situation as highlighted in the president's speeches.

The film contains extreme variations in terms of lighting. The scenes of ground zero and those of McLoughlin and Jimeno underneath the rubbles are displayed through low key lighting. The latter conveys the claustrophobic condition under which the protagonists are confined and emphasizes the high degree of danger that these rescue workers risk and their struggle to survive in the name of patriotism and heroism. By contrast, the sequences starring the rest of the characters are presented through high key lighting.

What characterizes the rescue team members is their costumes. In fact McLoughlin and his colleagues are distinguished by their navy blue Port Authority hats and uniforms with shoulder embroidered patches and badges showcasing the colours of the American flag. The other rescuers in the likes of Dave Karnes wear the Army Combat Uniform, which can also be read as a foreshadowing element reminiscent of the forthcoming war. Thus, in addition to conveying further information about the characters and their positions, these particular costumes are symbols of the United States of America and its sovereignty. Therefore, it can be considered that the movie's *mise-en-scène* serves to reinforce the themes it conveys, such as patriotism.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered the analysis of Oliver Stone's movie *World Trade Center* in addition to George Bush's "Address to the Nation on September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress". On the whole, we can deduce that the two speeches mirror, to a great extent, the United States of America's post-9/11 policy and can even be considered as a threshold to the a new political era motivated by the attacks themselves. Moreover, the study of *World Trade Center* evokes the existence of an analogy with the speeches. Indeed, the film adheres to George W. Bush's political ideology in its emphasis on

patriotism, Manichaeism, exceptionalism and conservative principles given that it is conventional both at the level of form and content.

General Conclusion

The present research has looked into the correlation between film and politics. It has studied Oliver Stone's blockbuster *World Trade Center* in relation to George W. Bush's "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress" which mirror the president's administration policy implemented after the September 11th attacks. Our study has claimed that *World Trade Center* reflects George W. Bush's speeches and subsequently endorses the president's post-9/11 policy in spite of the liberal stance of the film director.

This dissertation is divided into a general introduction, three chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction has given an insight into the September 11th event and its representation in cinema. Moreover, it has reviewed previous research works related to the movie *World Trade Center* and the president's speeches under study. The first chapter is entitled "The September 11th Terrorist Attacks: an Event with a Global Impact", it has examined the terrorist offensive, its consequences and media coverage. It has also looked deeper into the figure of George W. Bush and the policy he implemented in the aftermath of the attacks. As far as the September 11th event is concerned, this chapter has also touched on the political notion of "Rally Round the Flag" effect, a phenomenon which characterized the period following the attacks with a salient support for the president. "The Hollywood Film Industry: America's Socio-Political Mirror" is the title given to the second chapter. The latter has encompassed an overview of Hollywood's history and its development, and has established a relationship between politics and film by putting emphasis on Louis Althusser's theory on the interrelatedness between art and ideology. This chapter has also shed light on the representation of the September 11th attacks by Hollywood and has provided an insight into *World Trade Center*'s film director, Oliver Stone, his filmography and ideological stance through his movies. As for the last chapter, "Analysis of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*

and George W. Bush's Speeches", it has encapsulated the thematic and ideological analysis of Bush's "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress" to determine the extent to which these speeches are representative of the United States' post-9/11 policy. Most importantly, this chapter has analyzed Stone's *World Trade Center* with a focus on the notion of ideology; the film analysis has also been elaborated with specific consideration to the two speeches under study.

Our research has pointed out the significant relationship between film and politics by taking into account Louis Althusser's theory. Althusser asserts that any work of art functions as an Ideological State Apparatus which bears a specific stance to be disseminated to the mass. Consequently, our study of *World Trade Center* has deduced the prominent parallelism with George W. Bush's two speeches. In fact, the movie and the speeches are similar in terms of the principles they advocate and the way in which they respond to the attacks; for instance the notions of patriotism, heroism, Manichaeism, War on Terror and conservatism are highlighted in all three of the texts under study. It is worth to mention that our investigation of the president's speeches has demonstrated that the latter mirror to a great extent the post-9/11 policy principles evoked in the first chapter. This being said, it can be concluded that *World Trade Center* bears an ideological message and adheres to the George W. Bush's administration policy implemented in the aftermath of the attacks; therefore, our hypothesis is confirmed.

Our findings may indicate a discrepancy between the ideology borne by the film under scrutiny and its film director, Oliver Stone. In fact, Stone is widely known for his leftist position and political commitment which counters conservative principles through a number of film productions bearing a scathing criticism of the American government. Thus, the conservative standpoint adopted by Stone could be explained by the "Rally Round the Flag" phenomenon, a political concept which has been studied in the first chapter. The "Rally"

effect emerged within the American population in the aftermath of the attacks and made the vast majority supportive of President Bush; who subsequently reached the highest approval ratings in the history of the United States of America. Indeed, a time of international crisis like the September 11th event is propitious to mobilize the nation to stand together in the face of the enemy and provide the audience with a content loaded with political innuendos which call for supporting the head of the state and any initiative he may undertake. In addition, the second chapter has indicated that Stone's liberalism is deemed ambivalent or restrained, and this element could also account for *World Trade Center*'s ideological standpoint.

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Abstract

The present paper undertakes the study of Oliver Stone's blockbuster *World Trade Center* and the ideological stance it conveys. In this regard, the film is analyzed by shedding light on the political context which followed the September 11th attacks, with reference to Louis Althusser's theory on the interrelatedness between ideology and art. Therefore, the study of *World Trade Center* is conducted with a special focus on George W. Bush's speeches "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" and "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress", both of which we consider to embody the president's ideology and encapsulate the tenets of the post-9/11 policy. Thus, this research work looks into the representation of 9/11 in cinema and the film's implication in politics. It also attempts to confirm or infirm our hypothesis, which suggests that *World Trade Center* adheres to the policy implemented by President Bush in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks.

Key Words: 9/11 attacks, cinema, ideology, American politics, *World Trade Center.*

I

Dedication

To my family and my close friends, who have believed in me and blessed me with love and

support.

Acknowledgments

I would like to convey my deep gratitude and respect to my supervisor, Dr. Nouara Touche-Kharouni, for her help, patience and unwavering support.

I am thankful to the board of examiners for reading and evaluating this humble paper.

My appreciation also goes to all the teachers who have contributed to my education.

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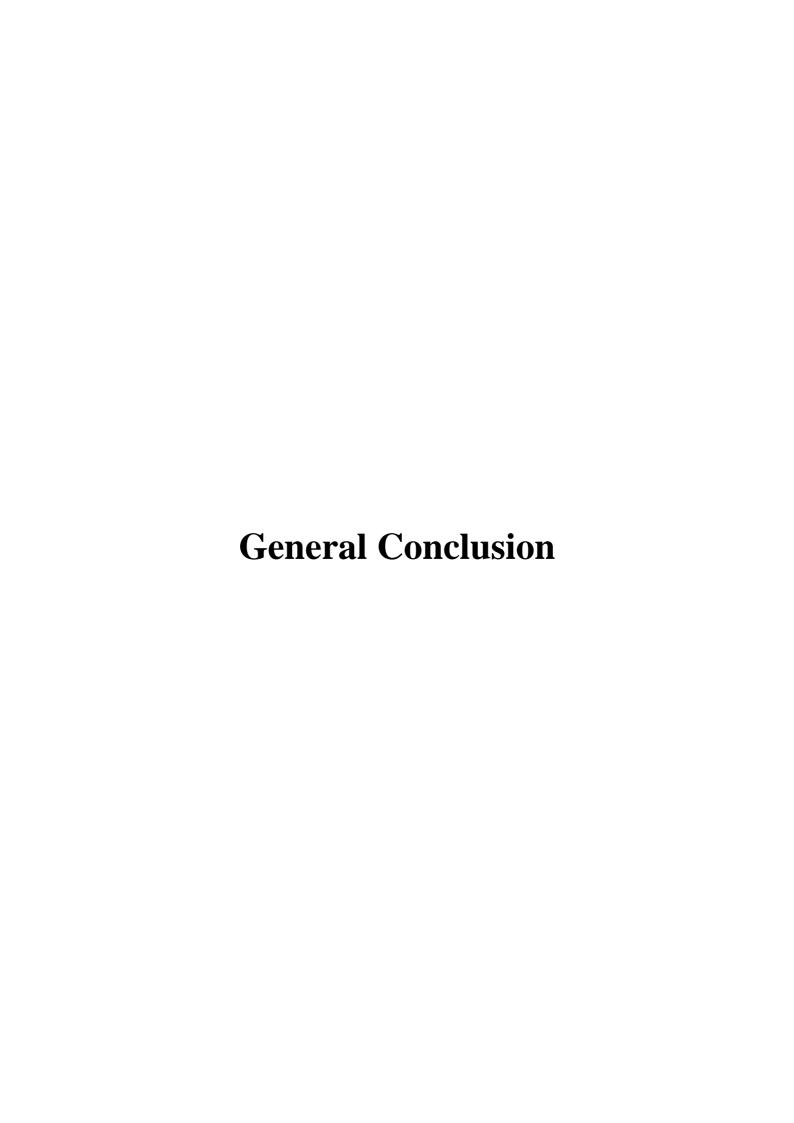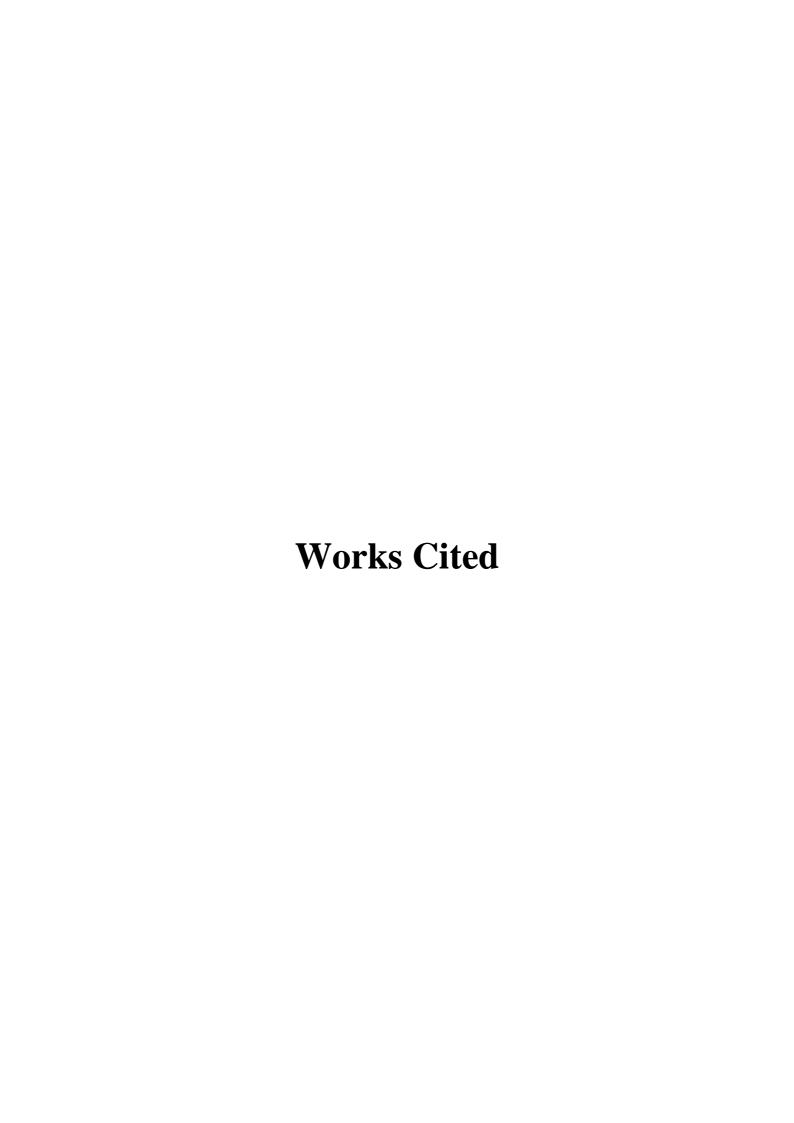# America's Socio-Political Mirror

Chapter III

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Abstract in French (Résumé)

Ce travail de recherche aborde l'étude du film intitulé *World Trade Center* d'Oliver Stone et la position politique qu'il tend à transmettre. Ceci dit, l'oeuvre d'Oliver Stone est analysée en prenant en considération le contexte politique ayant suivi les attentats terroristes du 11 Septembre 2001, ainsi que la théorie évoquée par Louis Althusser qui met l'emphase sur le rapport entre l'art et l'idéologie. Par conséquent, l'analyse de *World Trade Center* est réalisée en mettant l'accent sur les deux discours du président George W. Bush, intitulés "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks" et "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress". Ces derniers représentent, selon nous, l'idéologie et l'ensemble des principes politiques entrepris par George Bush après les attaques du 11 Septembre. En outre, ce travail examine la représentation cinématographique de l'événement du 11 September 2001 et la relation entre la politique et le cinéma. La présente recherche a également pour but de confirmer ou réfuter l'hypothèse préalablement émise, postulant que *World Trade Center* adhère a la politique mise en place par George Bush a la suite des attaques terroristes du 11 Septembre 2001.