

**The Mythic Monument and the Monumental
Myth:
9/11 Through Film Posters.**

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Abstract

Two films were released in 2006 that depicted the events of September 11, 2001.

This thesis seeks to interrogate the interpretation of the events through the vehicle of the film poster, for *United 93* and *World Trade Center*. The single image of the film poster calls on audiences to re-engage with the events of 9/11 by bearing witness through consumption in the realm of entertainment. Combining these powerful experiential imperatives with memorialisation and commemorative practices, representations are located in the nexus of the troubled binary of personal and the monument.

This discussion will be levelled at the depiction of the personal/monument binary and how this binary is employed to make sense of the event, by disciplining the narrative to exist outside of terrorists' aims. The use of mythic Hollywood images in the posters can be seen as interpreting the events of 9/11 for a movie-going audience. The posters draw upon mythologies using particular constructions of the binary of personal/monument in response to the role of public memorials, trauma and commemoration, and representations of grief, tragedy and heroism in mythic Hollywood images.

Considering the strong national and ideological divisions inherent in the September 11 narrative, film posters from English and non-English speaking contexts are considered. While no claims are made on the individual national identities portrayed, a comparison of five posters English language posters, with four posters released to non-English speaking countries – Korea, Turkey, Germany and Russia – show

distinctions between the internationally released posters and alterations made for audiences in the United States.

This thesis will adopt a post-structural method of critique. As such, binaries must be seen as contextually bound. Apart from the conceptual apparatus of post-structural theory, the body of literature provides a conceptual and thematic form for analysis. This study develops its own context for analysis by drawing on previous literature concerning: 9/11 particularly in relation to concepts of the Real, taken from Žižek and Baudrillard, including work on pain, tragedy and mourning drawn from Sontag and Butler; previous literature on the film poster, an area of work that is limited and normally tied to advertising discourses, which is not of interest to this study; and mythologies and semiotics, drawing heavily on the work of Roland Barthes. This thesis will use Barthes' description of "Leaving the Movie Theater" that engages with posters and the role of the cinematic space, as a point of departure.

The aim of this thesis is to engage with binaries to find dominant meanings to question the various interpretations and understandings of 9/11, and to question whether these parties to the binary are truly opposed poles. Engaging with a large body of previous literature to theoretically and conceptually guide the analysis, this thesis seeks to further existing study to argue toward a new socio-historical understanding of 9/11 through an in depth analysis of film posters.

DECLARATION

Statement of original authorship

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief;

- i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. contain any material previously submitted or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;
or
- iii. contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Kathleen Williams

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Introduction:

Emerging from Darkness

According to a true metonymy, the darkness of the theatre is prefigured by the ‘twilight reverie’ (a prerequisite for hypnosis, according to Breuer-Freud) which proceeds it and leads him from street to street, from poster to poster, finally burying himself in a dim, anonymous, indifferent cube where that festival of affects known as a film will be presented. (Barthes 1986: 345-346)

Emerging from the dark of the rubble, the heroic firefighter sees light for the first time. He has moved from myth to myth: the hero lost in a moment of national tragedy, an exceptional historical moment that will transform the political sphere. His narrative is now one of exceptionalism, his survival forms a new myth with its own imagery. He has emerged from a fallen monument in a rare moment of triumph. He is positioned at the nexus of the personal and the monument – the symbolic conflict of signification that will shape the representation of the event itself.

The emerging firefighter covered in dust is one of the many images that has become synonymous with the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and crashed flight United 93 on September 11, 2001 (herein referred to as 9/11). He was later appropriated into Hollywood’s mythic imagery of heroism, victim-hood and fighting against the odds. His very representation was questioned: how could this event, allegedly beyond the scope of human understanding, be signified? Could this signification exist in the personal or just in the monument? As Barthes describes leaving the movie theatre under the auspices of a type of hypnosis the dark “cube” of the cinema affords (1986: 346), the image of the film poster intrudes on his discussion. Like Barthes moving from image to image, so too the firefighter was tossed from poster to poster with much debate over the right to represent him and interpret his tragedy, to eventually find himself situated in the “festival of affects”

that is the cinema (1986: 346). Similarly, those who surfaced from the darkness and dust of the collapse of the towers emerged to see posters of missing loved ones. The iconic symbolism of the poster as a call to arms, as both a memorial with potential for commemoration, and as a method of engagement that lends itself to critical analysis. This thesis seeks to follow Barthes from the theatre, to question the role of the poster in re-engaging with an event and its signification. For Barthes, the cinema is a “lure”, to which the cinema-goer fling themselves “upon it like an animal upon the scrap of ‘lifelike’ rag held out to him” (1986: 348). Barthes claims that the lure cannot be escaped, and as film posters and images of 9/11 infiltrate the landscape of consumption, this thesis seeks to question how an audience could be lured to witness the events of 9/11 through the medium of film.

Two Hollywood feature films representing the events of 9/11 – *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006) and *United 93* (Greengrass 2006) – were released in the contexts of debates over potential interpretations of the terrorist attacks on the United States of America (herein referred to as the United States, America or American in adjectival form). The two films were integrated into the genre of the disaster or action film and recalled the mythic Hollywood images of the hero and the victim. Interpretations of the event had previously been considered in a discourse of truth and fact: in the genre of documentary and media footage, which seemed to render any “dramatization gratuitous” (Lewis 2006: 41). The images of the firefighter trapped at the bottom of a crumbling tower or the passengers on a plane helping to overthrow their captors seemed too uncannily like many Hollywood films before them (Žižek 2002: 11-32; Baudrillard 2003: 7). It was argued that this was the event that Americans had

dreamed and wished for (Baudrillard 2003: 5), “haunted by the presence of earlier representations” (Bird 2003: 86).

Hollywood was a highly politicised space after 9/11 and was utilised by the American government as an ideological space, with talks over what images could be represented after the attacks, and also, eerily, in imagining scenarios in which the American people could come to harm (Žižek 2002: 16). There were reports that the Federal Bureau of Investigation warned Hollywood studios that they were the next potential targets (Hoberman 2006). When movies were created depicting 9/11, this seemed to defy the logic that had existed prior – of erasing the World Trade Center towers from forthcoming movies, halting the release of films deemed thematically inappropriate (Žižek 2002: 16-17), and covering the “semiotic black hole” left by the attacks (Morrione 2006: 158). In order for the films depicting 9/11 to be shown, they had to *create* an audience: one that was willing to relive the event and one that was willing to enter the “festival of affects” (Barthes 1986: 346) of the cinema to witness what they had seen many times through various mediated outlets. The erasure of the event was challenged and repositioned back into the cinematic space to be integrated with the personal and the monument.

Appearing mirage-like to Barthes in the discussion of the lure and power of cinema as both space and place, the poster relies on signification in a context of consumption to draw the audience into the cinema (1986). The posters needed to entice their audience quickly and through a process of signification that also responded to debates over representation. In the lead up to distribution and within the first week of release, advertising such as posters become totems for films, later replaced with new

advertising for other films (Adams and Lubbers 2000). This dictates an immediacy of representation that will be substituted, defying the alleged exceptional nature of the event itself. The film poster also allows the cinema-goer to feel as though they are familiar with a film prior to seeing it, as the spectator has been likely to consume other media prior to watching the film, informing their experience (Burgin 2004: 9). The poor takings of *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006) in its first week of release perhaps indicate that “the American people ‘weren’t ready’ to see this trauma replayed as a movie” (Rich 2006: 17), however, this may also be read as an active rejection of the jarring nature of the integration of images of 9/11 and all they signified into the realm of entertainment and consumption.

As Barthes describes entering the cinema, he moves from “poster to poster” in a trance marked by the face of the celebrity, the darkness and the artificial space of the theatre itself as removed from its surroundings, under “hypnosis” (1986: 346). This hypnosis forms part of the spectacle and illusion of the cinema, a space in which to engage with narrative and fantasy. This hypnosis is also perpetually connected to the ideological. Barthes sees the image as mythic and part of the modern consciousness, the cinema’s dark, alluring, trance-inducing space furthers the mythology of the image, the ideology that it represents, and the wider society in which the ideology can be fostered or created. Part of this implication is noted in the very mythic images deployed in the film and the film’s posters, such as the hero-myth, which is designed to provide a “moral compass” for a society to define exactly what “human greatness is” (Hyde 2005: 8). The hero, in this context, navigates a space between the personal and the monument and how both are imagined in the representation of 9/11. The role of the hero, the symbolic power of the towers and plane, the situations they signify

and the ideologies these institutions denote, has been the subject of much study (Hyde 2005; Morrione 2006; Baudrillard 2003; Žižek 2002; Simpson 2006; Bird 2003). The film poster demonstrates the historical imagining of the event as a document to survive the act of watching the film in the cinematic space. Indeed, as the cinema-goer leaves the cinema, the re-consumption of the film posters initially designed to lure them into the cinema *reinforces* the myth they have consumed, using iconography from the film as beacons by which to guide them. The film posters seek to not only draw in the cinema-goer, but are intended to give ideological reference points by which to integrate the mythology they have witnessed back into the society outside of the cinema.

The cinema can be seen as a place for commemoration, while also acting as a space for consumption. The interplay between the personal and the monument in an ideological mythological imagining of 9/11, as depicted in the posters, provides a fertile site for examination and decoding of the event. For a historical moment that has so strongly permeated western discourses, a new language of signification had to be created in a single image for casual consumption in a universe of fragmented images (Burgin 1996). As Burgin argues, because of a film's publicity, the film "spills its contents into the stream of everyday life" (2004: 12) where the poster is an integral player in consumed media. However, it has not been considered widely by academic literature. Burgin lifts a metaphor from Barthes in claiming the fragments of film advertising such as posters and trailers infiltrate a marketplace surrounding the cinema, but do not form "sentences" (2004:12), as they do not resolutely complete a coherent narrative for the film. The events of 9/11 also inform the everyday experience of modern society, and yet, its representation in the film poster,

the constant narrative of images spilling out after other images (barely forming sentences), creates new understandings and signifiers of the original event.

This thesis places the film poster in discursive frameworks of film studies, semiotics, tragedy and mourning. At the centre of the representation of mourning, tragedy and 9/11 will be a discussion of the contrast between the personal and the monument: individual and collective experience which is tied to the domestic/public, which to this date, has not been specifically discussed in literature on 9/11.

Considering the scope of the events in a western context, the film poster provides ground for symbolism, iconography and the divide made between the personal and the monument. It is the purpose of this study to take scholarship of the film poster for analysis further than merely being subjected to debates over art versus commerce in an exclusionary binary (Staiger 1990; Adams and Lubbers 2000). Rather, the film poster is a modern imprint of a wider ideological framework, representative of the time in which it was created and relevant as an emerging understanding of the way in which 9/11 has been imagined and interpreted, and used to *lure* an audience. As the majority of literature that discusses the film poster outside of a distant historical past (Rhodes 2007; Verhagen 1995) also combines the analysis with trailers and other forms of advertising (Staiger 1990; Burgin 2004; Adams and Lubbers 2000; Wyatt 1994; Schatz 2002), this analysis will instead contribute to the small field discussing film posters without engaging with an advertising studies focus or other forms of promotion. Furthermore, the films that the posters denote will not be analysed. It is the intention of this thesis to shift the film poster out from the margins of other texts, away from functioning as a decoration to analysis of another textual forms.

Considering the limited field of literature focussed on the film poster, the use of theorists from a variety of disciplines situates the analysis in dominant academic discourses, including media and cultural studies, semiotics, film studies, art history, politics and history. This demonstrates the power and validity of the film poster as a medium for interpretation, and in particular, as reaching a new socio-historical understanding of 9/11. Much of the literature concerned with 9/11's semiotic implications do not address the crash of United Airlines Flight 93. While the literature focussed on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center will be considered, dedicated analysis and discussion of the crash in Pennsylvania is a new contribution to the field of 9/11 studies. As the two films discussed do not represent the events at the Pentagon, this element of 9/11 will not be considered, nor will the subsequent war in Iraq and Afghanistan be analysed. This study investigates distinctions between English language and non-English language film posters for *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006), which will not be analysed separately, but their context considered in the interpretation in challenging the American mythologies perpetrated, and how they are altered for international audiences. Furthermore, no known study exists on the distinctions between film posters according to releases in different countries, let alone a comparative study of posters released for one film.

This thesis will examine the use of mythic images used in posters to interpret 9/11 to a movie-going audience. What mythologies are drawn upon to interpret these events? What do the personal and the monument teach us about our understanding of 9/11, and how are they able to lure an audience through the strong symbolism of national mythologies into the dark cinema to relive the spectacle of a national tragedy? Do the posters monumentalise the personal, or personalise the monument?

Chapter Overview

This thesis presents two chapters: one providing the theoretical and methodological context for analysis, the second to house the analysis and conclusions drawn.

Chapter One

This chapter combines the literature review with a description of the methodology employed, as they are closely related. This chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks against which the representation and interpretation of the events of 9/11 will be analysed. The methodological processes of post-structural critique are introduced to set the scene for the analysis. This will draw upon existing bodies of work on 9/11, particularly concerned with pain, tragedy and mourning; literature on the film poster; and discussions of Roland Barthes, mythologies and semiotics.

Chapter Two

This chapter will analyse the interpretations of 9/11 in the film posters. Both the post-structural theoretical framework introduced in Chapter One and the literature addressing thematic concerns from 9/11 will be applied to the posters. In particular, the literature review highlights the prevalence of the monument/personal binary subconsciously applied to any interpretations of 9/11. The chapter is organised thematically into five sections based on conclusions found in the analysis: the towers; the individual or hero; the American flag; the planes; and time and temporality. The posters are included in the body of Chapter Two to aid with reading, in conjunction with their presence in the Appendix.

Methodology

This thesis adopts a post-structural method of critique to investigate binaries in representations of 9/11. Post-structuralism acknowledges that binaries can be created, however, unlike structuralism, that they can also be deconstructed (Derrida 2001; Poster 1989). Central to post-structural analysis is the acceptance that there is no truth, no one meaning, no grand or meta-narrative and the author and the audience are equally considered in critique. Binaries are found to be arbitrary distinctions because discourses inform all interpretation. Even if binaries are to be employed, often with the intention to present universal truths, the role of the audience would result in no fixed meaning. The author can intend for an audience to find a certain meaning, but they cannot dictate that meaning resolutely (Huisman 2005: 38-39). Mythologies are an integral part of structural theory as they reinforce the function of a society through binary structures such as good/evil. Post-structuralism proposes they can still be created, but their use of diametrically opposed figures is questioned (Sturken and Cartwright 2001), which provides a useful vocabulary for this analysis.

While the audience engaging with 9/11 brings their own cultural specificity to the text, this study instead focuses on the dominant reading according to the clues left by the author (Cartwright and Sturken 2001: 56). As such, it does not seek comment from the advertising companies responsible for the creation of the film posters, nor seek audience responses. In this sense, this is not a qualitative analysis of how these texts were received or distributed, it seeks to analyse the dominant readings according to the contextual discourses provided. In regard to the concept of the lure, as previously introduced, this study does not seek to conclude that an audience has

been lured into the cinema, rather, the methods by which the film posters attempt to create and lure an audience.

It also considers the way an American event is marketed to an international audience using the same narrative mythology of personal/monument. As each film has a number of different posters to be examined, the study will focus on those distributed in the United States. Two posters for *United 93* (Greengrass 2006) are considered, in conjunction with three English language posters, and four non-English language posters for *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006). Film posters generally change through the lifespan of a film's distribution (Adams and Lubbers 2000) – in conjunction with imagery changing for soundtrack releases, special promotions, DVD covers – so no poster will be attributed as the definitive poster for the film. This analysis does not attempt to privilege certain imagery over others and the changes in symbols will inform the semiotic analysis. The film poster is analysed in order to understand the dominant meanings in the representation and interpretation of 9/11 retrieved from the relevant literature to be introduced in Chapter One.

Chapter One

Coming Attractions: Theory and Method

Against the backdrop of the smoke obliterating the whole WTC complex, a huge movie poster carried the snarling face of Arnold Schwarzenegger advertising *Collateral Damage*, later removed as the distributors read the general mood and postponed the release for five months. And always, depending upon the prevailing wind, the suffocating ash and dust... (Bird 2003: 91)

This thesis analyses film posters in order to understand the dominant interpretations of the events of 9/11 – film posters that directly engage and confront the events of 9/11 defying the environment that Bird describes. Select discourses will be applied to guide the analysis of the film posters through a post-structural critique. This chapter will outline literature informing the analysis: 9/11 studies; pain tragedy and mourning; and the film poster. Following consideration of the importance of this literature and its limitations, the conceptual framework used to analyse the posters will then be discussed. Post-structural theory will be drawn upon to guide these concepts, which also engages with semiotics. This chapter will also more closely discuss the methodological approach to the analysis presented in Chapter Two.

Defining the Binary

This thesis defines the binary of personal/monument as being bound by the context in which it is presented. As this binary is defined by its presence in the film posters, this definition is original. For the purpose of this study, the two parts to a binary will be considered more closely in relation to the literature employed in the analysis. It will be argued that this binary is situated amongst other binaries that inform the

interpretation of events of 9/11: private/public, us/them, we/Other, West/Islam (Bird 2003: 84). While not precisely engaging in the same configuration, the binary of personal/monument seeks to find divide in representations, upon which to hinge mythologies. However, the difference between this binary and the aforementioned such as us/them is the lack of an imagined offshore enemy – the personal and monument exist in national, accepted depictions of 9/11. This, it will be argued throughout this thesis, is tied to a difference between the depiction of modernity and post-modernity.

The way in which personal/monument are constructed in the film poster signals a stark contrast between their representations. This thesis contends that perhaps anything can be monumental, or indeed, a monument. The monument is imbued with a sense of awe – it often commemorates and is aesthetically presented as an icon of extraordinary size and power. It is objectively present, despite its meaning shifting according to reception. It is in the public domain and is consumed publicly. By comparison, the personal is configured as private and subjective. While the private or domestic sphere that the personal is attached to becomes public in the film posters, at the level of signification it connotes subjectivity and intimacy. However, there are several tropes that exist within the nexus of the personal and the monument, such as memory, commemoration and tragedy. While defining the binary as such is not exhaustive or universal, it responds to the binary as shown in the posters, and consequently, the event proper.

Previous Literature on 9/11

In contrast to the limited literature on the film poster, there is a large amount of work dedicated to 9/11 across different disciplines and focus areas. This vast field can be used selectively, in accordance with the previously nominated themes of pain, tragedy, mourning, memorialisation and commemoration, as well as the more general literature on film and larger interpretations of the event. The work of Baudrillard (2003) and Žižek (2002) is vital here, as they seek to debunk the mythologies perpetrated in the aftermath of 9/11. Their approach is useful to raise the relationship between the reality of an event and a copy of it in the form of a cultural product such as a film or film poster and the place this holds in symbolic order. In conjunction, the work of Butler (2006) and Sontag (2003) provide theoretical grounding for the themes of tragedy and mourning.

Baudrillard (1994) argues that the virtual, or the copy, has become more real (“hyperreal”) than the original. Baudrillard claims that in order to understand 9/11, one must recognise that the event was *wished for* not only by the terrorists but also by the American public (2003: 5). That is, the mass media in America – by now, according to Baudrillard, the only source of the hyperreal that has replaced real meaning – had for so long created and recreated such a disaster, the event itself simply embodied an American hyperreality (2003). This concept is particularly potent to consider in light of the film posters, as they recreate the event in a medium that has appeared to house the images of 9/11 prior to their conception in the “real”, through action and disaster films. The towers, according to Baudrillard, united “all the events that have never taken place”, and committed “suicide in a blaze of glory”

(2003: 4-5). The towers, after being attacked, had no choice but to fall. Baudrillard argues that the event existed in its duplicity (2003; See also Morrione 2006): the first tower was hit, followed by the second, the first tower falling was also mirrored by the actions of the second – removing all likelihood of chance or accident. The symbolic and literal destruction was directed at the towers that were: “universal, and ... perfect embodiments, in their very twinness, of that definitive order” (Baudrillard 2003: 6), the order, it is argued, of a constructed reality and as beacons for freedom. Baudrillard sees the disaster films that followed the event as the embodiment of the desire to witness 9/11 (2003: 7). Similarly, Žižek argues that the disaster film shows pain inflicted on buildings and the body, with individual and political bodies both reacting to the event (2002: 16-17). The desire to witness these events in the cinematic space signals to Baudrillard a fascination with disaster and tragedy, creating images that allowed for the falling towers to seem familiar.

Bird (2003) identifies the binaries that existed in discussion around 9/11, such as good/evil, us/them, West/Islam. These binaries are also discussed by Butler (2006) and Baudrillard (2003) and are seen to be a process of Othering: “It all comes from the fact that the Other, like Evil, is unimaginable” (Baudrillard 2003: 62). This ensures that the attack on American soil is shown to be strictly demarcated from, and entirely irreconcilable with, American beliefs, and attacks of retaliation are therefore justified. The event is placed in a discourse of justice so the American public and the United States are not guilty (Lewis 2006: 40). These binaries also allow the event to fit seamlessly back into a Hollywood narrative:

...the cultural industries have long been preparing us for the actual event and the profusion of images that are and will be for most people the record of 9/11 are haunted by the presence of earlier representations. (Bird 2003: 86)

Consequently, while claiming that the event was beyond human comprehension, or “like a dream” (Sontag 2003: 19), the spectrum of images that familiarised an audience with the events of 9/11 inform all readings of the event, the copy becoming more real than the original. In this regard, the images depicting the terrorist attacks become more real than the event itself, and become synonymous with an understanding of 9/11.

Sontag (2003) and Butler (2006), writing in response to 9/11, offer an analysis not exclusively concerned with the event itself. Rather, by interpreting the event through the themes of mourning, pain and tragedy a new understanding emerges of how the nation and the individual are imagined in coming to terms with loss. The disjunction between the “I” or “we” and the lost body, involves a process of privileging of some corporeal injustices over another, with Butler claiming that the following questions will inherently arise: “Who counts as a human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, *What makes for a grievable life?*”(2006: 20 italics in original). The lives worth grieving are those framed by the film posters, not those outside the frame, such as the terrorists who also died. Even if loss is directed toward an individual body, there is an “appeal” to create a “we” that can grieve (2006: 20), an extension of the “we” of modernity. Problematically, a collective cannot grieve or mourn in the same way as an individual. And yet, the rhetoric surrounding the event endorses the need to imagine a traumatised national body – a collective mass that mourns the national body, which becomes the site for each individual loss. The monument becomes the embodiment of this grief, while also, as will be shown in the film posters, privileging of personal grief and narrative. This, it is argued, is an attempt to discipline the post-modern individualised society, to grieve and exist collectively with universal aims.

Butler defines mourning as:

...when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever. Perhaps it has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance. There is a losing, as we know, but there is also the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be chartered or planned. (2006: 21 italics in original)

Consequently, while the individual who has lost chooses to mourn, she is also stripped of her agency in not being able to assign a period of mourning, of not knowing how long it will last. This lack of temporality and finiteness means that mourning can just continue to happen, as the mourning body had no reference point at which to stop, acknowledging that they may have changed, “possibly forever” (Butler 2006: 21). There is a very different logic to *collective* mourning. Does a society have the ability to simply decide when a period of mourning has finished, if they are unable to return to their state prior to the loss? There is a conflict between what Butler identifies as the notion that grief appears to be private, and consequently, is “depoliticised”, and the awareness within the United States community of their status as a nation who has lost (2006: 22). It calls these definitions of mourning and the political into question. The grieving society, despite cultural claims of grief being private, is still governed by concerns as to their productivity, and defiance of what the terrorists sought to achieve. If Foucault’s notion of the “docile body” is applied here, the grieving body becomes an inactive one, and one, consequently, that is stripped of its function in society (1979). Furthermore, the very categorisation and mass diagnosis of national grieving is an exercise of power over the collective experience (Foucault 1973), and yet, a diagnosis that if overcome, demonstrates a tremendous exhibition of agency and empowerment both at the site of the individual and at the sovereign state. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the hero can be seen as a body that is able to perform function in this grieving society, however, the use of

the hero to create universal narratives is at odds with the destruction of the symbol of modernity – the skyscraper – a paradox discussed further in Chapter Two. As Butler describes, President Bush “announced on September 21 that we have finished grieving and that *now* is the time for resolute action to take the place of grief” (2006: 30). Consequently, it is now time for the body to resume its roles of consumer and worker. Butler sees this rhetoric as encouraging people to *fear* grief, by denying it as something that can continue to exist indefinitely, and instead “reinvigorat[ing] a fantasy that the world formerly was orderly” (2006: 30). Action against those seen to be responsible for 9/11 places agency back into the American narrative, and the reaction to the event is re-interpreted and re-narrativised into agency as opposed to reactionary mourning.

Simpson engages with the role of commemoration in the creation and consumption of cultural forms in response to 9/11 (2006). He discusses a genealogy of commemoration, an approach shared by Edkins in relation to trauma (2003).

Simpson will be relied heavily upon in Chapter Two as a means of categorising the methods of commemorative practice. This system of categorisation is not an attempt to situate the practices of post-9/11 culture into a body of universal meaning, rather it is used to place the collective responses to 9/11 in historical discourses, questioning the alleged “exceptionalism” of the event (2006: 5). Edkins argues that war memorials “can inscribe the national myth or the imagined community” (2003: 17). Central to this understanding is the creation of a “linear time” (Simpson 2006: 16), in which an event such as war, or a tragedy is given temporality and the memorial seeks to encapsulate that moment in an effigy (Huysmen 2002). This trope, present in the film posters, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two utilising Simpson’s

description of the role of commemoration and memorial as being highly ritualised in order to perpetuate a mythology (2006). This can also be seen as furthering the notion that the world prior to the events of 9/11 had “order” (Butler 2006: 30; Baudrillard 2003: 6), and the order of commemoration as following rituals ensures that there is a path to follow even in the most exceptional of events.

Both Butler and Sontag identify the exceptional quality of 9/11 in that the American public saw pain against their national body, as opposed to existing in another country, mediated by cameras (2006; 2003). Sontag identifies part of the power of the static image of 9/11 in that a photograph “has only one language and is destined potentially for all” (2003: 17). The relevance this bears on 9/11 is that the image of the World Trade Center falling can be read not only by Americans for their national narrative, but for those all over the world. The attack is not against an “Other”, but is distributed throughout the world in the same way that war would generally be consumed: through offshore news footage by the American public (Sontag 2003: 16). In this sense, photography requires little interpretation, “[m]emory freeze-frames; its basic unit is the single image...the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something about a compact form for memorising it. The photograph is like a quotation...” (Sontag 2003:19), and the film poster is like an unfinished sentence (Burgin 2004: 12). Despite the power of the photograph, Sontag references other mediums in the way that people make sense of pain:

After four decades of big-budget Hollywood disaster films, ‘It felt like a movie’ seems to have displaced the way survivors of a catastrophe used to express the short-term unassimilability of what they had gone through: ‘It felt like a dream’. (2003: 19)

However, despite the survivors of 9/11 likening the event to a film in order to make sense of it and its excesses, Sontag argues the photograph of a tragedy embalms the

event for all time (2003: 53), something that can only be done by cameras. As such, they “turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed” (Sontag 2003: 72) and, consequently, something that can be consumed. The film posters, in their re-enactment and interpretation of the event, ask for the event to be relived, the audience is prompted to revisit this pain in this embalmed state, in close-up, after the period of mourning has allegedly finished. If the body that is subject to pain in 9/11 is the celebrity or fictional body, the politics of viewing these images adopt new meaning. This will be further discussed in Chapter Two, and it will be asked if, as Sontag claims, the images can create a “collective memory”, defying the notion that “memory is individual...it dies with each person” (2003: 17).

Understanding the Film Poster

Very few texts across relevant disciplines discuss film advertising, let alone dedicate study solely to the film poster. Using the few studies that have been found, this thesis still does not discuss the history of film advertising or the poster (See Rhodes 2007; Staiger 1990). Instead, the literature consulted tends to make only fleeting comments on the film poster as medium (Klinger 1989; Adams and Lubbers 2000; Burgin 2004; Barthes 1986). This is representative of the majority of scholarly work that has been found. This analysis seeks to situate the film poster as an aesthetic form in relation to an event which is not in a distant historical past, as a medium to be analysed and treated as a text separate to the film itself as the sole target of this discussion – which is an approach not commonly employed.

Klinger argues that all types of film promotion create a “network specifically designed to identify a film as commodity” (1989: 5). Klinger argues that the “linear nature of the film is interrupted by the previous forms of distribution that the viewer of the film has consumed” (1989: 5). This places the cinematic text in a discourse of commodification (Harbord 2002), amplified by the numerous promotional texts that the audience has consumed, placing the narrative shifts in the film alongside the small packets of the filmic text exhibited in advertisements and other types of promotion. Klinger combines all types of film promotion together, including press kits, behind-the-scenes documentaries, posters and trailers, however, this approach will not be adopted here due to limitations of space. Klinger endorses considering the film promotion as part of the larger texts of cinema, however, this analysis considers the film posters as separate from the films they invoke, further discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Providing an overview of advertising scholarship’s discussion of film promotion, Adams and Lubbers offer a genealogy of work thus far (2000). Like Klinger (1989), they place film posters in amongst all other types of promotional material, without privileging any specific form. This analysis does not consider the impact advertising has on the commercial success of a film through the poster, or the manner in which they were created (See Wyatt 1994). Adams and Lubbers claim that the movie is a “luxury item”, and deciding to see a film is an “impulse decision” (2000: 235). Consequently, film advertising has a short life in that it is meant to draw in an audience under the condition of impulse purchasing. Adams and Lubbers point out that the film poster has now become a collectable, with its own monetary value outside of the film’s life (2000: 256). In this way, the poster is defined by both

aesthetics and commerce, affecting the way in which the film poster is seriously considered as a text, particularly in light of the medium as commodity – it is placed into a marketplace, both in act of choosing to watch a film, and as a collectable after its promotional life (Adams and Lubbers 2000; Harbord 2002). This thesis acknowledges Staiger's claims that the study of film posters and other advertisements tend to categorise the poster as being an extension of the commercialisation of cinema – one to which the audience supposedly has no resistance (1990: 3). This, it is argued, is representative of the art and commerce binary applied to advertising texts that have not yet enjoyed intense critical analysis. This study does not seek to purport that the audience to the film poster adopts the meaning intended by the author, but seeks to interweave the dominant reading, and the assumed intentions of the author into the findings of the analysis. Indeed, as Staiger notes, the history of film advertising does not replicate the history of advertising more generally, as it does not enjoy the same theoretical considerations, one that in recent times has placed agency with the consumer and is widely deconstructed (1990: 23; See, for example, Bignell 1997; Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Scholes 1982; Schirato and Webb 2004; Van Leeuwen 2005).

The Approach to the Film Poster

As there is no central archive for the film posters these posters have been drawn from Internet sources. The context in which they were distributed (such as whether for print, the cinema, etc) and the timing in which they were released, is not of interest to this thesis. Instead, each of the posters will be analysed according to thematic concerns, with no regard to the success of advertising strategies, and only attempt to

make general assumptions about the manner in which they were distributed and consumed. The structure of the analysis is guided by thematic distinctions. As such, the binary of personal/monument will inform the method by which the posters are analysed, and their representation of different elements of the events of 9/11, providing the vehicle for the study to travel through. This section of the thesis will examine the potential for commemoration, the tension between the allegedly exceptional and somehow universal viewings of 9/11, and analyse the attempts to respond to thematic concerns such as grief and trauma through the binary of personal/monument.

The film poster will be analysed for several reasons. Firstly, the poster is a single image, designed to lure a cinema-goer to see a film and, this thesis argues, to draw an audience to bear witness to the events of 9/11 again. In the context of 9/11, it demonstrates an interpretation of the event in a way that can be casually consumed and plays to vested interests about whose story is being shown. Film studies to date has dealt with the film as text, but has not been overly concerned with the extra-textual qualities of the cinema as an ideological space with the aforementioned exceptions. However, the literature discussed has no unified approach to the poster, and the methods employed will not be adopted for this analysis – such as analysing success of advertising strategies, demographics and branding (See Schatz 2002; Harbord 2002; Wyatt 1994), providing a historical overview (Rhodes 2007; Staiger 1990), or studies that do not engage with textual analysis (Adams and Lubbers 2000; Klinger 1989). Theorists such as Metz (1982), Barthes (1986) and Burgin (2004) address the extra-textual qualities of cinema, however, the film poster does not enjoy widespread theoretical considerations.

Second, the film poster is an appropriate vehicle for analysis for representations of 9/11 as it is an imprint of a wider ideological framework. Considering the film poster in post-structural theory, the image cannot be separated from discourse or ideology (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Barthes 1986; Dikovitskaya 2005). The film poster stages the event again, and presents signs that embody the event to an audience, demonstrating a historical imagining of the event as a document to survive the act of watching the film itself. The film poster has not found its place in academic texts as a common object of analysis, despite its permeation of cultural consumption and the understanding that it affords to the wider film text.

This analysis will identify binary distinctions that the film posters appear to rely on to integrate the events of 9/11 into a national narrative. These binaries will be subjected to a post-structural analysis, to destabilise their meaning and understand the myth-making process behind them (Derrida 2001). As post-structural analysis places emphasis on the role of discourses in informing interpretation of texts (Poster 1989), the contexts of the previous literature on 9/11 (particularly with thematic emphasis on pain, tragedy and mourning) and the film poster will be discussed according to theoretical frameworks provided by mythology, post-structural theory and semiotics. These are by no means indicative of all relevant debates or theoretical frameworks: their selection is intended to thematically inform the analysis and limit the scope of study of the texts, as well as to argue against a universal meaning.

Post-structural Thought Applied

Post-structural theory seeks to debunk the imposition of myth and binaries on texts in order to claim universal meaning (Fulton 2005b: 300-306). These binary structures,

while perhaps lying dormant at times, constantly inform culture. Post-structuralism acknowledges that these binaries can be created as well as deconstructed. As such, post-structural criticism sees binaries as arbitrary distinctions, as both parties to a binary cannot exist without the other – they are mutually reliant to gather meaning, and are contextually bound (Poster 1989; Fulton 2005b: 300-306). The binary of personal/monument can be deconstructed accordingly to show that the monument cannot be brought into being without the personal, and the personal relies on the monument in the film posters analysed. While post-structural thought critiques many different facets of structuralism, the main thematic concerns applied to this argument will be the lack of universal truth or meaning, no grand or meta-narratives, and a complex relationship between binaries (Poster 1989). Consequently, while this analysis discusses binaries and myths, it is not a structuralist argument, as the findings expressed do not attempt to be universal but dependant on contextual specificities, while acknowledging that the use of binaries often privileges one part to the binary considered the norm (Derrida 2001). This analysis will look beyond the film poster's frame in order to understand what is behind the representation and extra-textual sources will derive from a number of disciplines.

The author is also subject in post-structural theory, as authors are producers and interpreters of meaning (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Huisman 2005: 38-39). Consequently, the potential for absolute meaning is released from the creator of the text, and situates the meaning-making equally with the audience, which indicates a lack of objective or true meaning (Fulton 2005b: 300-306). The “death of the author” implies that the text is open to all types of analysis, which will be informed by the practices, opinions and background of the audience for the text (Barthes 1977). The

text's meaning cannot be compressed simply, and the text cannot possess an inherent truth. The attempt to create such truth demonstrates the dominant structures that post-structuralism and deconstruction question. Paradoxically, however, this also requires the analyst of texts to realise that, while the text cannot possess or allege truth, objectivity or universality, the criticism of the text also cannot find one universal meaning. It will be assumed for each of the posters that the image was consumed in several different settings, as is the norm for film posters (Adams and Lubbers 2000). As audiences outside of the United States are being considered, the difference in the film posters will highlight alterations based on national identity – both of the receiving nation's conception of the United States, but also their self-perception. This will be discussed in light of Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (2006) and Barthes' *Mythologies* (2000) in creating a text to typify the representation of the supposedly inherent qualities of a nation. While national identity will inform this discussion, this thesis will not draw upon the vast body of literature around this term, nor debate its meaning. Anderson's definition of a national community, discussed in Chapter Two, will be adopted without contest due to limitations of space.

The analysis demonstrates the subjectivity inherent as well as the texts' attempt to situate the event in a personal/monument binary. This binary is situated with other binaries constructed as a response from the United States to 9/11, which are false distinctions created to discipline the rogue narrative of 9/11 into an American ideological framework. Post-structuralism did not argue that these binaries would not be created and depicted, but that the interpretation by the audience would result in no fixed meaning. Even if narratives attempt to present universal truths through binaries, ways of making meaning will be shown as more complex than merely identifying

difference, or putting the pieces of the puzzle together, as Fulton puts it (2005b: 301). In identifying problems in structuralism such as the above, post-structuralism provides a language for analysis of the structural properties of the film poster, but moving beyond the structural frame for interpretation.

Like a road sign, the film poster is imbued with signs that we “might learn their codes for them to make sense; the codes we learn become second nature” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 25). But, as Sturken and Cartwright identify, these codes are explicitly concerned with the privileging of some images over others brought out of the integration of dominant social paradigms. In questioning the universal meaning of the text, and in particular, questioning icons, “there is an increased understanding that these concepts of the universal were actually restricted to specific privileged groups” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 37). Consequently, the icons used to depict 9/11 can be questioned as having no universal truth, and any attempt to create collective meaning or memory can be seen to work under dominant social and political ideologies; privileging one voice and image over another; and using codes and signs recognisable under these structures. The subjectivity inherent in consuming images and texts ensures that “all images” are “worthy of investigation and implicated in relations of power and history” (Dikovitskaya 2005: 117). However, this analysis also seeks to find the *dominant* reading of the film posters, according to the frameworks selected to guide the analysis, while acknowledging that any meaning derived is not universal. Sturken and Cartwright argue:

Images present to viewers clues about their dominant meaning. A dominant meaning can be the interpretation that an image’s producers intended viewers to make. More often, though, it can be the meaning that most viewers within a given cultural setting will arrive at, regardless of the producer’s intentions. (2001: 56)

While this study does not canvas audience opinion, it will work to find the dominant meaning according to the circumstances and frameworks provided to guide the analysis, and also look for the “clues” left in the text which are a response to the rhetoric surrounding the events of 9/11.

Mythologies

Utilising Barthes’ essay “Leaving the Movie Theater” (1986) as a point of departure for an analysis of the film poster, his concepts of mythologies and the lure and the power of the image are central to this discussion. Barthes describes leaving the cinema to move from “poster to poster”, under a type of hypnosis, the cinema working in a dark space to lure the cinema-goer to see a movie (1986: 346). Furthering the idea that the cinema is a place for leisure and impulsiveness (Adams and Lubbers 2000: 235), Barthes alludes to the hypnosis of images and darkness in attracting a viewer to the cinema.

For Barthes, the image is ideological and cannot be separated from wider structures, including mythologies (1986). Mythologies are the rules and conventions that underlie all social structures (Barthes 2000). According to a structuralist argument, narratives would manifest in binary distinctions, seeking to teach a society what attributes are valued and creating universal truths. While Barthes does analyse texts in *Mythologies*, he also advocates no fixed meaning, rather, meanings that are contextually bound to wider ideologies (2000). This will be applied to the film posters, and while they are analysed and meaning is sought, that meaning is not fixed and is bound by context.

In a discussion of Barthes, Burgin describes how a movie can be familiar to an audience that has not actually seen the film (2004). He describes turning analysis from the screen to “beyond the frame”, considering the film text, the cinematic space and filmic advertising, which negotiates the cinematic image and other images that form part of everyday experience (2004: 10). Barthes describes leaving the cinema, and the other “festival of affects” that form to create the total cinematic space (1986: 346), which Burgin likens to meaning outside of a spoken or written sentence (2004: 11). Burgin argues, in a discussion of the promotion for the film *Eyes Wide Shut* (Kubrick 1999):

From poster to trailer to film there was a progressive unfolding: from image, to sequence, to concatenation of sequences – as if the pattern of industrial presentation of commercial cinema were taking on the imprint of psychical structures... (2004: 12)

This unfolding, or moving from image to image does not privilege the cinematic text proper, and instead endorses, like Barthes, a consideration of all images that become part of the cinema. This thesis will seek to move beyond identifying the film poster as helping to navigate the cinematic space, to a detailed analysis of the film poster as cultural text, without consideration of the film itself.

Myths, according to Barthes, represent “metalanguages” that function as “symbolic, ironic or metaphorical commentaries on what we understand to be literal meaning, offering us alternative readings imbued with ideological flavour...” (Fulton 2005a: 7).

Fulton argues that Barthes’ concept of myth can be seen as “narrativised ideology”, a formula by which to comprehend and signify ideologies (2005a: 7).

Applied to media texts, the use of mythologies allows the reader to identify categories within which characters can be placed, or events can have their meaning realised. However, these categories are limiting, and as already discussed restrict full

comprehension of the meaning imbued in the film posters. The following chapter will analyse the posters, according to the literature discussed in this chapter. As both methodological and theoretical frameworks, the literature will be employed to deconstruct the binary of personal/monument. Using extra-textual concepts – such as national identity, pain, tragedy and mourning – allows for the frameworks to be fluid in their readings of the film poster, as they seem to appear out of the darkness of the cinematic space, reaching for new understanding of 9/11 and the role of the film poster.

Chapter Two

“It Felt Like a Movie”: Analysis of the Posters

I want justice. And there’s an old poster out West, I recall, that says, ‘Wanted: Dead or Alive’. (President Bush, September 17, 2001)

The complex meanings imbued in the events of 9/11 cannot be represented by a single signifier. Barthes claims the role of the Photograph is to signify both “what is no longer” and “what has been” (1982: 85), but the ongoing debates over the representation of 9/11 mean the ethics of signification will be fraught. The right to manipulate images to adhere to public and private narratives ensures that the single image displayed in the poster’s frame is haunted by the spectre of technological objectivity (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 19). It cannot rest and is moved from “poster to poster” (Barthes 1986: 346), seeking meaning. This chapter will follow the components of the film posters and locate the paradoxical representation at the heart of the binary of personal/monument. It will examine which one – if any – has the right to claim ownership of the signification of the “unspeakable” events of 9/11 (Hyde 2005: 5).

Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006) has numerous film posters accredited to it (Figures 1-6; 9). The three English language posters are analysed to show distinctions between posters derived from four countries: Germany (Figure 3), Turkey (Figure 4), Russia (Figure 5) and Korea (Figure 6). This analysis will seek to understand the reasons behind differing representations and how each are utilised to be sold to a national audience, and in particular, how these distinctions show the supposed centrality of American symbols and mythologies to international audiences

in an attempt to create universal narratives. The analysis is guided by thematic distinctions present in each of the posters.

Twin Towers in a Binary

The single image replicated in each of the posters to be discussed, is the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. New York consequently becomes the geographic site of the signification and interpretation of the events of 9/11. The towers, as symbols of modernity (Morrione 2006), become synonymous with both the destruction and advancement of American ideals (Wallerstein 2002). This analysis of the dual presence and absence of the towers, considered in conjunction with their literal duplicity, relates to the binary of personal/monument.

Morrione argues that the towers and their destruction formed two events (2006: 158). The duplicity of the towers, both in their prior existence and in method of their destruction, refutes the “failure” that classical semiotics attaches to a singular object, and instead their “duplication confirms the idea of the original” (2006: 158), or as Baudrillard put it, “[o]nly the doubling of the sign truly puts an end to what it designates” (2003: 39). As Baudrillard claims, the towers’ destruction existed in its very twin-ness, “reflecting” one another, eliminating all chance of accident (2003: 42-43). While, overwhelmingly, the towers are represented in the posters in duplicate, the German and Turkish posters differ in their signification, allowing for several towers to exist simultaneously (Figures 3; 4). The towers are situated in several different narratives: their creation as beacons of modernity; their destruction

as fulfilling the terrorists' aims; and also in their re-signification to be placed again in an American narrative, which is the narrative present in the film posters.

The towers can be accepted as the central representation of 9/11, as demonstrated in the posters, however their representation differs according to the intended national audience and the tower's relation to other icons, symptomatic of the symbolic meaning attributed to the towers in different narratives. Any force acting against the towers, then, represents the polar binary of "evil" or the "Other". Morrione argues that the towers became emblematic of "catastrophic semiotic collisions" (2006: 159).

Furthermore:

...the Other, meant to take inspiration from the iconography of post-World War II modernity embodied by the Twin Towers, ruptured the symbols of technological perfection with its own tools. By hijacking passenger airplanes, themselves testament to the ability to traverse spatial points in a way before not seen in human history, and ramming them into the symbolic center or anchor of modernity's systemic interplay, the skyscraper, the Other played a trump card. (Morrione 2006: 159)

Morrione's use of the terms "center" and "anchor" are of particular interest. The towers are symbols of American life, signifying economic freedom in an open market and international trade, as a manifestation of technological triumph, and as representative of the western "World". The symbolic destruction of the embodiment of these ideals became hijacked by another American ideology (perhaps one always lying dormant in the economic effigy): that of the American hero who *is* freedom, courage and hope. While the towers housed the deaths of both the Other/criminal and the "we"/victim, death via a symbol of modernity encapsulates sacrifice to this American ideology, allowing for the victim body to ascend to heaven. If the towers were the "anchors" of modernity, the anchors have been pulled to the ground to perpetually remain at Ground Zero – itself a semiotic lack, somehow managing to be

both something and nothing. The empty channels become the anchor and gates on Earth to be the passage between heaven and hell. They become the “moral compass” by which to direct the hero-narrative (Hyde 2005: 8). This destruction is also aimed at the “we” of modernity, who will shatter into the fragmented individualised selves of post-modernity. The film posters thus function as a restorative process of commemoration, to fill the semiotic void.

To sustain the binaries of victim/criminal and us/them requires the separation of the Twin Towers’ demise from the hijacked planes’ path of destruction and instead be placed in a context of American mythology. Be they fallen, on fire, or complete, the images of the towers in film posters must represent a call to arms for the lured cinema-goer. Rather than simply signifying the death of individuals, the towers embody their own narrative: they signify courage and survival, as opposed to a lack of agency in a narrative driven by outsiders. However, this is not achieved by one single depiction of the towers. The towers are simultaneously both present and absent, and as such, the towers move from literal depictions, and become abstracted forms presented in a number of states, appearing both complete and destroyed. The images of the towers on fire, rather than the images of their collapse, demonstrate the duplicity necessary for their signification. As the towers fell at different times, the depiction of this would perhaps satisfy Baudrillard’s claim that the towers appear to have committed suicide (2002: 43), and indeed acted alone. The smoke that the towers produce – an attribution of agency – provides a symbolic line to heaven (Figures 3-6; 8). The ash of the people and the towers form one line that separates the skyline/Earth from the gods, or at the very least, heaven. This is demonstrated in the Russian and Korean posters (Figure 5; 6), as the frame of smoke encapsulating the

New York skyline and over the Statue of Liberty (with its back turned on the World Trade Center both literally and metaphorically), allowing for the crossing between Earth and the towers to appear greyed out, backgrounded and billowing smoke as part of the skyline. The towers producing smoke also become an “anchor” for the literal representation of the event, and despite not appearing in the actual flight depicted in *United 93* (Greengrass 2006), become the centre of the event, regardless of their inaccurate depiction, with the ill-fated plane aiming toward the towers after they had been subject to the attack, making their target a monument – any monument (Figure 8).



Figure 1 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Red Towers" (Paramount 2006a).

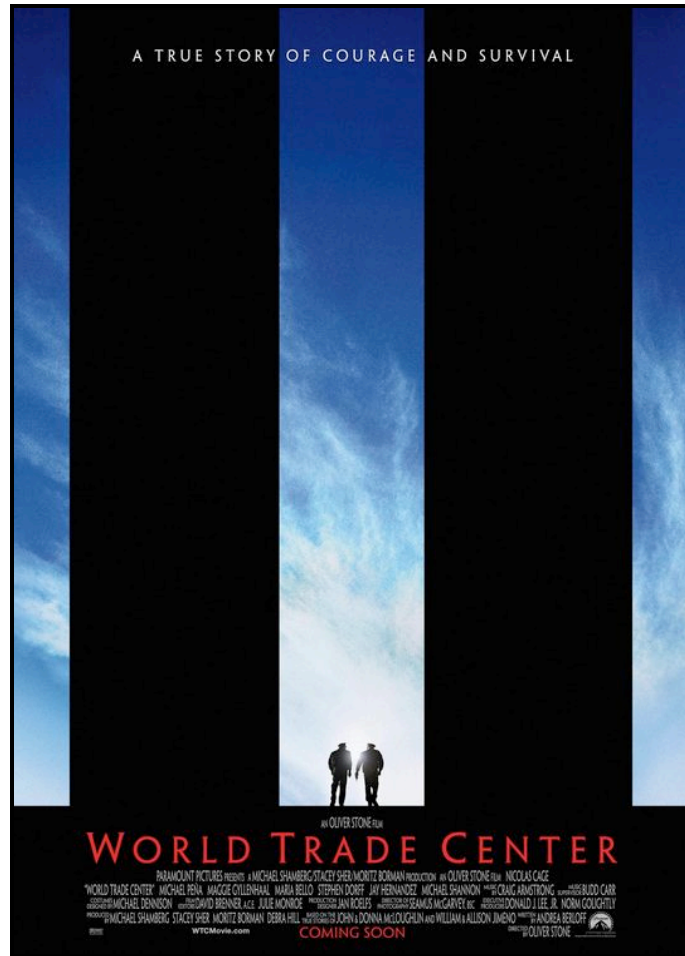


Figure 2 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Black Towers" (Paramount 2006b).

Two of the English language posters depict the towers as providing a shaft between the ground and sky respectively as red pillars of smoke and black towers (Figures 1; 2). The towers as smoke, obscured by light in red, mimic the red stripes of the national flag, an icon to be further discussed in this chapter (Figure 1). The towers arise from smoke, along with the two firefighters who replicate the structures of the towers, while being able to move. The light of the towers tapers toward the top of the poster, while providing the illusion of moving beyond the poster's frame. Again, a light appears between them, and the towers overall appear reminiscent of the memorial constructed after the fall of the World Trade Center known as the Freedom Towers. The red at the base of the towers – the smoke at its thickest – allow for a

mystification of the feet of the firefighters: they emerge with their own flashlight providing the illusion that they are running from darkness and that they are able to *cast* light. However, the two towers head toward the sky, providing again a channel for the bodies of the dead to ascend. This ascension, despite the crumbling and decline of the towers, is a useful metaphor to consider in light of Morrione's description of the "anchors" of modernity. If the terrorists were able to obliterate the buildings, the true heroes are in contrast to the demonised Others, and are able to ascend past the Earth that could house and produce the terrorists.

The twin towers as black pillars, almost totems to the ideas of courage, survival and a universal truth, appear as the gates of heaven and hell in a motif drawn from classical mythology (Figure 2). The towers are literally removed from New York, however, they appear against a calm blue sky, with the two firefighters becoming part of the cityscape. And, like the two firefighters with the red pillars of light, the two men in the centre of the towers move toward a light – rather than holding it – and appear to walk away from the black of the towers. In a combination of the personal and the monument in aesthetic form, the towers are mirrored by the men who walk together almost touching between the two pillars. Their actions are exhibitions of agency, moving toward a light connotating the purity of universal truth, of courage and survival. The two black towers, in likeness to the red pillars (Figure 1), move from the Earth that is static and solidly black, and into a coloured sky with white contrasted (in a hue binary) to the black. Here, the monuments are not the motifs of purity or courage, instead, it is the firefighters who *act*. If the towers are totemic of heroism and courage, moving beyond the poster's frame and into the sky, the firefighters become emblematic of the American ideologies of freedom and agency.

As they are able to walk toward the light, so can they be seen as truly representative of courage and freedom. The black ground allows for the towers to be framed to demonstrate ascension, and not appear as two unending columns. Their journey is clear: they are tomb-like chambers, appearing as memorial monuments that the two men traverse.



Figure 3 *World Trade Center* Poster "Germany" (Paramount 2006c).

Simpson suggests that in the history of commemoration, it is common to monumentalise, both literally and metaphorically, in order to place the tragedy into a historical discourse (2006). He argues:

Grieving over and laying rest to the bodies of the dead, summarizing them and remembering their lives in obituaries and epitaphs, and erecting monuments and buildings that memorialize or mark the sites of tragic events have all been part of the rituals of ongoing life...(2006: 1)

The site of 9/11 has lacked a monument being erected as a final sign of triumph. The monument, instead, has been recreated in the film posters that are consumed in many different sites often without warning. In order to memorialise the bodies of the dead, the depiction of the towers must create universal truths, and create a willingness in the audience to view the events again through the most potent of its two signs: the personal and the monument, the two structures that were attacked by the terrorists. However, this memorialisation is not directed solely at the American public, as it is distributed internationally. The similarities in the representation of personal and monument in the English language posters and the non-English posters for *World Trade Center* suggest that certain thematic concerns can be consumed by potential cinema-goers regardless of nationality, drawn instead by universal mythology to which they can relate. Anderson argues that communities are created according to national boundaries, as although each member of a society will not see one another physically, they are able to imagine their similarities through the consumption of cultural products that present a certain mythology (2006: 6). If a true binary can be accepted of America/Other, the internationally released posters preach to an audience that is theoretically considered the “Other”. The posters thus demonstrate fluidity to these binaries, as those who are willing to accept the mythologies perpetrated by the American national ideology, can therefore be placed in the prior party to the binary.

Simpson argues that the binaries presented in the rhetoric concerning 9/11 were “disputed both as ideological figments and as empirical facts” (2006: 7). The terrorists were trained in the United States, and the weapons themselves as planes

were provided by America. However, the imperative of the film posters is also to purport the fear and universalism of the potential of a terrorist attack. The American flag and its colours, for example, are removed in the international depictions (Figures 3-6). Simpson argues:

They are secretive, cowardly, primitive, inflexible: terrorists, followers of Islam. *We* are an open society, honorable, sophisticated, and committed to the global conversation to respectful dialogue. We stand up in place and identify ourselves; they are anonymous and everywhere. (2006: 7 italics in original)

The common threat is simply terrorism, and the communal victims are people of honour and duty. The monuments are destroyed in each of the international posters, showing a clear demarcation between innocence and deviance, chaos and calm. This is constructed through symbols of heaven and hell, which are presented as universal themes upon which to hinge nationalist narrative: to make this allegedly “exceptional” event (Simpson 2006: 5), an international exception. Following on from the thematic concerns of heaven/hell, the gate between the two and their realisation in effigies of both the personal and the monument, the German and Turkish film posters demonstrate that the towers can appear as many (Figures 3; 4). There are no two towers, instead several which cast light on the overseeing faces above them. They are responsible, however, for creating both light and dark, the shadows of which allow for the construction of the light that appears out of the rubble. Two men look down into an unadulterated homage to the gates of hell, but the light prescribes a paradoxical relationship between the binary of heaven/hell. In light, there is hope, and in the rubble there is none. While there is grief in the monument and its absence (Sturken 2002), there is hope and a future above the disaster zone. The courage and survival exists in the manufactured hell, framed by images of a fallen modernity – the crumbled technological pillars to the sky of the skyscraper. Smoke billows out from amongst the towers and obscures the monument

and the light: the symbolic realisation of the ambiguities between heaven and hell, and consequently, all binaries called upon to help to interpret the events of 9/11. The many towers mimic the spherical frame of the Earth, their upright slabs reminiscent of tombstones in a graveyard. Edkins discusses the trope of the Earth in Vietnam War Memorials:

Whereas an uplifting, triumphal, phallic monument might be seen as reinstating the social fantasy of completion and sovereignty, a monument that encircles the earth does not conceal the lack revealed by death and trauma. It does not cover over the problematic nature of certainty and social power. It marks the trauma and enables us to recognise it. (2003: 80)

This is an Earth, the depiction declares, that saw both heaven and hell that day, and both literally and metaphorically, comes to depict an open wound. In contrast to the English language posters (Figures 1; 2; 9), this internationally released poster (distributed in two major defeated powers of the last two World Wars –Turkey and Germany) acknowledges the wound that tragedy leaves. There is no “phallic monument”, only the reality of the aftermath of fallen towers. If, as Wright suggests, the cemetery traditionally is situated at the town centre (2005), the memorial space here is at the centre of the world. Appearing beyond the confused gates are the godly saviours, the public servants and their dutiful wives, appearing as guardians to the scene below: the phallic triumph is reserved for America.

Bird labels the Twin Towers the “markers of American modernity” (2003: 87). They became spatial and temporal “reference” points, guiding the view of the city, and also acting as a sundial for their locale: the time is imprinted by the amount of light reflecting off the towers (Bird 2003: 87). The towers are symbols of a lack of barbarism, of controlled ideology and order. As totems in the events of 9/11, the towers become reference points by which to “tell time” in an event that appeared to

transgress all attempts at situating the fall of America in history. The event is allegedly beyond history, and is argued to exist beyond historical discourses (Trimarco and Depret 2005: 30). The towers, once fallen, are representative of the post-9/11 world, and transform into new iconography of disaster and the unsayable, and in the film posters they morph into a memorial by their depictions in various states of presence and absence, sold to a supposedly internationally grieving audience.



Figure 4 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Turkish" (Paramount 2006d).

Heroic/Un-heroic

Simpson defines the process of commemoration as:

Rituals of memorialization [that] exist to assimilate these intense and particular griefs into received vocabularies and higher, broader realms than merely the personal. The routines of commemorative culture, whether public or private, exist to mediate and accommodate the unbearably dissonant agonies of the survivors into a larger picture that can be metaphysical or national-political and is often both at once. They must somehow signify and acknowledge the idiosyncrasies and special qualities of each of the dead, so that each death is not simply merged with innumerable others, without allowing those idiosyncrasies to disturb or radically qualify the comforting articulation of a common cause and a common fate. (2006: 2)

Placing images of the celebrity body as the corporeal imagining of those who died or were present during the events of 9/11 is an attempt to situate private discourses into national narrative. Applying Barthes' method of analysis of Greta Garbo's face in the cinematic text, the celebrity face dons a mask to be situated in ideology (2000: 56-57). The dirt and dust covering the face of Nicolas Cage, wearing his firefighter hat, the emblem of statehood and duty, ensures that he literally has elements of the event on his face (Figures 1-6; 9). As the bodies of the firefighter and civilians are drawn alongside images of monuments, the posters dictate a relationship between the two. Memorialisation, consequently, does not merely occur at the site of the building or in the body of the plane, but in the faces of people – however, the presence of buildings seeks to move grief from only existing in the personal. As Simpson suggests, the correlation between public and private is realised in the film posters in order to commemorate, by demonstrating upon few bodies the “vocabularies” of the mourning public (2006: 2). The celebrity body, or the actor, becomes representative of each individual lost or changed in the national tragedy. Similar to the towers and the radically different ways in which they are depicted, the individual body monumentalises the personal in a myriad of ways, and attempts to create a binary, however complex the relationship between the two.



Figure 5 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Russian" (Paramount 2006e).

As previously discussed, Anderson defines a national community as:

...*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (2006: 6 italics in original)

The image of communion in the film posters requests the audience imagine the bodies in the towers or plane, and allow the many individuals whose narratives are being discussed to exist through the representative actor's body. The monument provides the icon by which to hinge the personal narrative, and extrapolate the private sphere's stories. This imperative of comprehension placed upon the audience of the film posters asks for the personal and monument to be read as signifiers of

9/11. In the posters for *World Trade Center*, the firefighter is the most commonly used image of an individual. He is placed in several discourses and is encoded with duty and courage, indicated by entering the very places that few would choose to enter, holding the light and saving those within. He is shown as exhibiting “selfless acts built on foresworn commitments” (Adams 2006: 302). Their uniforms standardise their appearance, while also showing an inherent duty to the nation state. They are the soldiers, people implicated in an event that has been heavily loaded with symbolism.



Figure 6 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Korean" (Paramount 2006f).

In the international posters for *World Trade Center*, the images of people are removed from the monument (Figures 3-6). They appear in the sky as guardians of

the disaster scenes below. The sepia colours of these posters also indicate a sense of light in contrast to the darkness of the ground below: the faces of the individuals hold the hope for freedom – however, the use of sepia (the only time it is used in the posters) indicates a desire to situate the event in historical discourses of nostalgia. This is to be read, the poster declares, as part of history – the individualised representation of the event is combined with the monument of modernity. The representations of individuals, or of the private sphere, are not uniform in the internationally released posters. While civilians originate from the private sphere, their deaths or survival in discourses surrounding 9/11 become public property.

Simpson argues:

Those who died on September 11, 2001, were civilians, but civilians who could be and were readily identified with a national cause, victims of an attack on America and on democracy itself, the very medium of the dignity of ordinary life. (2006: 34)

In the German and Turkish posters (Figures 3; 4), a similar formation of the key individuals of the film to the Russian and Korean posters is shown (Figures 5; 6). However, Nicolas Cage's face turns directly to gaze at the audience, and instead of the tableaux of family and "ordinary" life present in the Russian poster (Figure 5), the only other individuals that appear in the poster are on the hellish Earth, looking down into the light of the rubble (Figures 3; 4). They are blacked out with their back turned to the audience. The four people at the top of the poster are categorised by their relationship in the films by their gaze; Cage, however, deviates from this in the German and Turkish posters (Figures 3; 4). His gaze is one of confrontation and despair: his eyes are permitted to engage with ours, whereas in the Russian and Korean posters, he does not gaze directly at the audience (Figure 5; 6). In conjunction with the many towers that appear in the rubble beneath the cluster of faces, the Turkish and German posters separate heaven and Earth in a binary, while

also appealing directly to the audience through the body of the hero (Figures 3; 4). The motifs are of destruction and chaos, despite hope being offered in the light and in the faces of those above the towers. In contrast, the Russian poster directly references the domestic sphere (a space that Simpson identifies as being inherently politicised by the event) by the portrayal of a couple lying together, and the image of four children hugging, as if posing for a family portrait (Figure 5). Simpson argues that the history of public acts of commemoration are “spontaneous but are frequently stage-managed” (2006: 1). The introduction of the family pose is designed to present a familiar scene, and shows that this closeness, along with the lying couple, is at stake in the events below. These direct representations of the ideological imperative under threat from the terrorist attacks on 9/11 are literal interpretations of the ideology represented by western values to a Russian audience. The family, connotating community and the future of a society, is under attack by the terrorists. These institutions - family and love - are as important as civic duty and become part of the American narrative sold to the Russian audience. By comparison, the Korean poster utilises the same layout as the Russian, however, the depictions of the family and the couple are omitted (Figure 6). These significations indicate a translation to the national narrative present, and their omission in the Korean film poster suggests that these institutions are not of paramount importance to interpret the events of 9/11 and the intended narrative to decode for a Korean audience.

The posters for the film *United 93* present a very different representation of the individual (Figures 7; 8). A corporeal imagining of the loss and trauma that America allegedly experienced after 9/11 is omitted from one poster, which instead focuses on representations of monument: showing the relationship between the plane, the tower

and the Statue of Liberty (Figure 8). However, the other poster distributed for *United 93* uses a collage of a mixture of monument and the personal in providing the background, or the flight path, for the plane to travel over (Figure 7). This poster presents the images of both monument and personal in a democratisation of what comes to represent 9/11. Simpson discusses the role of public obituaries following the events of 9/11 as creating a “mournful democracy of grief” (2006: 21). If this notion is applied to the film poster for *United 93*, the many small images of both monument and people, appearing in the same size frame and without priority, mimic the role of the obituary or the naming of the dead in memorials (Figure 7).

Reminiscent of the *New York Times*’ “Portraits of Grief”, as discussed by Simpson, this style of commemoration responds to “common absence of a conventional grave site for the provision of alternative and repeatable solace” (2006: 42). The upright figures of the firefighters and the towers are both absent, and the landscape of both the private and public spheres is constructed as something that is lost and something to mourn.

Simpson argues that those who died in the event are constructed as being both “victims and heroes, those who made a sacrifice and who were objects of a sacrifice invented by others in the aftermath of their deaths”, altering previous conceptions of heroes (2006: 49). The actions, consequently, of the individual are not of primary import, instead their death – which was at the hands of the terrorists in the binary presented by the narrative of the event – is what makes them heroes. As Simpson describes, imagining the acts of heroism is necessary to interpret the events of 9/11 in an American national narrative, aimed at disciplining the symbolism used by the terrorists (2006: 48). The black of the towers reflects the blindness that the viewers of media coverage experienced with the many different narratives operating in the

monument: the faces of the individual pins the ideals of the American preferred interpretation of the event on a physical body, even if it is that of an actor.

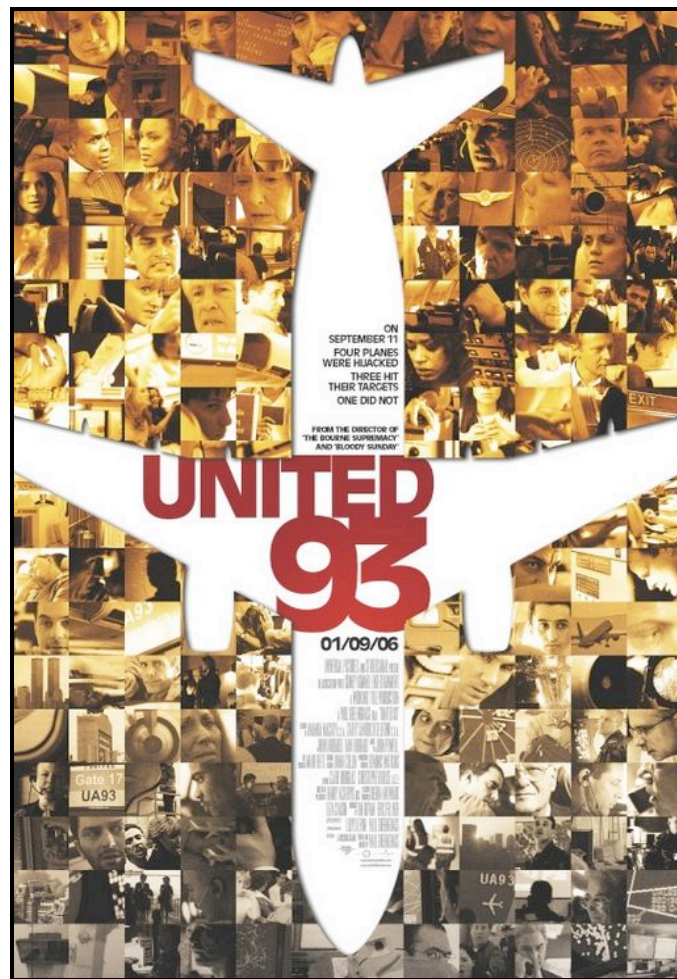


Figure 7 *United 93* Poster, "Collage" (Universal 2006a).

Taking off/Landing

The representation of the plane in discussions of 9/11 and in the posters analysed presents a paradoxical representation, as the plane acts as both weapon and site for commemoration. Very few academic texts refer to the role of the plane in discussions of memorialisation or commemoration in order to comprehend the events of 9/11, and those that do combine their discussion with other sites of trauma and disaster

outside of discussions of 9/11 (See Tumarkin 2005). The plane, in its presence and absence in the film posters, reflects this lack of discussion afforded to the plane driven by the terrorists, and its direct depiction is only present in the film posters for *United 93* (Figures 7; 8). This is indicative of a crisis of representation of how to discipline the rogue plane into an American national narrative: one that uncovers difficulties to attribute hero status in simplistic binaries to further mythologies. Furthermore, in the posters for *World Trade Center*, the plane is totally absent from literal depiction (Figures 1-6; 9). The towers are at times shown in the aftermath of the planes striking, with the fire also omitted. The spectre of the power of the plane is present but released from the narratives of heroism and courage. In the posters for *World Trade Center*, the plane is a weapon, and consequently, the people on the planes headed for the towers are excluded from depictions of heroism, unlike *United 93*'s posters, where the passengers are thought to have overthrown their captors. This accounts for the absence of the plane in the posters for *World Trade Center*.

Simpson refers to United Airlines Flight 93 in terms of the labelling of heroes. He writes:

The hero is the soldier who sacrifices himself to save others, the person who jumps into the flood to save a child. To be sure, some of those involved with 9/11 *were* heroes: the claim may be applicable to many police officers and firemen, and we can surely imagine other forever unrecorded acts of heroism inside the burning and collapsing buildings, akin to those of the passengers who rushed the cockpit of the hijacked plane heading for Washington. (2006: 48 italics in original)

Here, Simpson engages with imagined mythology surrounding the events of *United 93*. Arguably, it is not known for certain the destination of the flight as intended by the terrorists: but the destination imagined by America would always be one prevented by sacrifice and heroism. However, the plane is seen as technological

triumph in modernity, and consequently, the plane had to be destroyed. Despite the labelling of the acts of those on this plane as stopping another national catastrophe as heroic, it seems at odds with the actual representation of the plane as a symbol of modernity in discourses surrounding 9/11. Both the tower and the plane were instruments and modernity, and the “world” towers and the plane symbolise the global environment and transnationalism. However, in order for the actions of those on *United 93* to be considered heroic, they had to sacrifice themselves in order to save a monument and modernity. The passengers, according to this mythology, exhibited agency in their *choice* to die (unlike those in the crumbling towers) and this is what situates them as heroes. They are without the uniform of the firefighter, and instead acted as civilians rather than an accepted extension of the nation state.

The collaged poster for *United 93*, free from the omnipresence of the towers, has previously been discussed in terms of the democratisation of the commemorative process for its inclusion of images of the personal and the monument (Figure 7). However, at the centre of the poster’s interpretation of events is the plane. This is outside of the norm for all other posters, and consequently, declares that this event be read differently and *separately* to an extent, from the events in New York. The flight is not tied directly to the geographic centre of 9/11 as New York, instead the poster demands individual stories be read from the background and be projected onto the white plane. The plane’s wings are clipped by the frame of the poster, reflecting the nature of the flight itself as being stopped before reaching its imagined destination. The didactic text of the film’s information is housed by the plane, including narrative of the events: “On September 11 four planes were hijacked [...] Three hit their targets [...] One did not”. This text differs in the other poster for *United 93*, demonstrating a

shift in agency that reflects the change in focus of representation (Figure 7). The other poster is more directly concerned with the monument, and is the one poster lacking the presence of a human face, while the text reads: “September 11, 2001[.] Four planes were hijacked[.] Three of them reached their target[.] This is the story of the fourth” (Figure 8). Comparatively, the prior poster declares that the plane “hit” their targets, with the plane itself responsible for the carnage. One plane did not – and consequently, one plane acted correctly. Alternatively, the latter poster has the plane “reaching” their target, rather than “hitting”. The poster also directly references the act of mythologising, claiming that the film will tell the “story of the fourth”. In both of these cases, however, the plane is the source of agency, and it is the site for storytelling, not the individuals on the plane. Both planes descend in the film posters, clearly representative of the end results of their flights.

In contrast to the democracy of many images, the plane in the *United 93* poster is also framed by its relation to monuments (Figure 8). The plane is symbolic, in the same sense as the World Trade Center is intended to be read – both in relation to the terrorists and the American mythologies. The plane is returned to the geographic centre of the events as New York, and appears in limbo between the heaven/hell narrative present in the posters for *World Trade Center* (Figures 1-6; 9). The plane exists in the nexus of light and dark, with the Statue of Liberty framing the plane’s path. The text of the film’s name places emphasis on the word “United”, bolding it over “93”, reinforcing the unity with which the people on the plane exhibited agency (Figure 8). The people become one on this modern vessel, losing their individual agency and working collectively, and consequently, are memorialised collectively.



Figure 8 *United 93* Poster, "Monument" (Universal 2006b).

Stars/Stripes

In *Mythologies*, Barthes describes the meaning imbued in an image of a “young Negro” saluting the flag of France (2000: 115). The context that provides the meaning for the signified and signifier is colonialism and nationalism – despite racial differences, all people of France stand under the one flag. Barthes’ discussion of the creation and depiction of mythology is of use to analyse the role of the flag and its colour in the film posters studied. As Barthes argues, once the mythical language is consumed by the medium in which it is presented, it attempts to find a “global sign”

(2000: 115). Despite this analysis being post-structural in its aims, the clues left by the author of the text demonstrate this global intention in the case of the film posters.

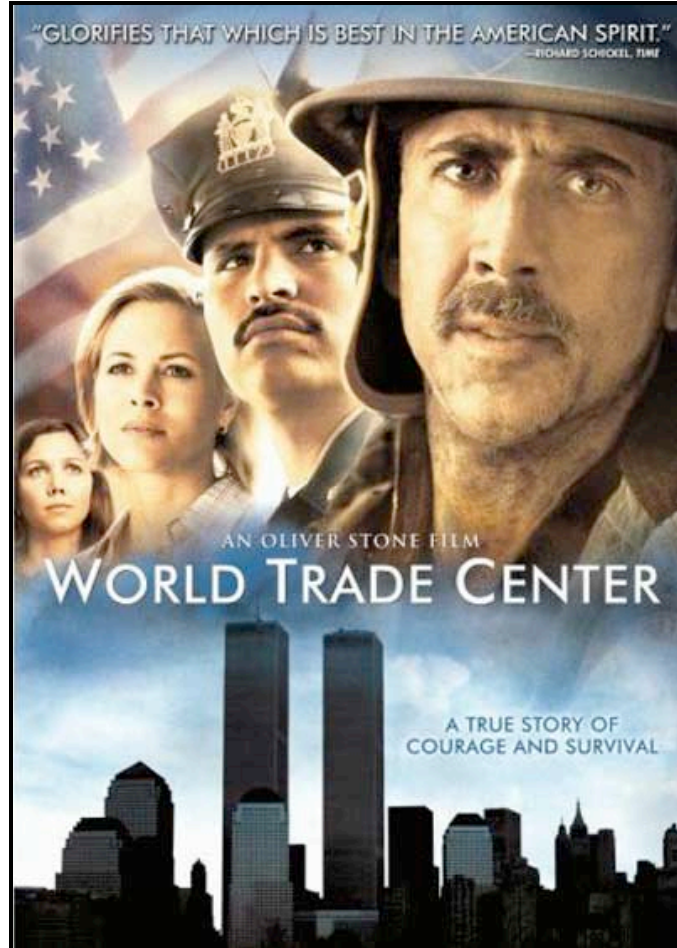


Figure 9 *World Trade Center* Poster, "Flag" (Paramount 2006g).

The American flag appears in its full form in only one poster, which is also the only time that the towers appear in their pre-destroyed state (Figure 9). The flag appears behind the faces of the firefighters and their partners. Appearing over the flag is the text: "Glorifies that which is best in the American spirit". This unadulterated representation of American nationalism attempts to utilise the flag and its attached mythology as representative of the centre of the American spirit: courage and survival. The use of the flag is a call to arms, providing a context and guide for the

public servant firefighters to *fight* under their nation's flag: to stand uniformly under the star-spangled banner. The flag is shown in flight as though to stress the resilience of the American way of life: it is still on a flagpole, triumphant and not torn down. In creating this "global sign", the flag's stars and stripes frame the standing towers and the heavenward turned faces of the people who oversee the landscape of New York as mediators between heaven and Earth.

George Washington is said to have described the meaning of the American flag as taking:

...the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty. (*United States Flag – Department of Veteran Affairs* 2006)

The stars of the flag show unity and union, and also provide a constellation for the sky in which the firefighters appear. If, as Bird claims, the towers became a reference point both spatially and temporally for those in New York (2003: 87), the stars and stripes of the flag become ideological maps for the heroes to be guided by, and heroes become the "moral compass" by which to direct future action (Hyde 2005: 8). Simpson identifies that in New York "[t]he name Freedom was there even before a building was imagined" (2006: 59). The fabric of the flag provides a totem by which to direct the events and the reading of the events of 9/11 over the space of New York, even if it does not appear in a literal depiction. The colours of the flag are relied heavily upon in the posters discussed, however, they are absent from the posters released in languages other than English, in an attempt to universalise the thematic structures of the narrative. In the poster with black towers reaching to the sky for *World Trade Center*, the three other colours drawn upon are those of the American flag (Figure 2). The title of the film is written in red, in comparison with the white of

the “True story of courage and survival”, representing the “liberty” prescribed by American mythology. The white of the stars against the blue background is recreated in the sky of the poster, with the light shining between the two men appearing as a star, showing unity rather than separation. This transforms the event back into a strictly American site, rather than that of the New York shown in the international posters.

Time

In his musings on the act of photography and the power of the photograph as a response to his mother dying, Barthes’ discusses the role of mourning and embalming of the dead in a frozen image (1982). Just as he describes moving from “poster to poster” in “Leaving the Movie Theater” (1986: 346), he also explores the transitory viewing pattern in consuming the photograph of his recently deceased mother to piece together her life through photographic fragments (1982: 71; See also Wawrzycka 1997; Burnett 1995). This process, he claims, is part of a long-standing ritual designed to place the lost body in a context, placing movement and life into stillness. In essence: evidence is collected to recreate a scene – moving backwards toward the birth of the individual. This evidence, as Edkins suggests, is also to provide a temporality of evidence to memory, which is seen as being highly subjective and individualised (2003: 30). The film poster, however, is designed to be consumed *prior* to the act of watching the film, approaching the filmic text of which the poster is the signifier. When film posters are designed, as in this case, to show the deceased or missing, this presents a process akin to Barthes’ description of consuming images of the dead to place them in a coherent narrative. The posters, a way of representing and interpreting 9/11, and in representing both the fictional and

the “true” dead, reconstruct the events after they have occurred and before the film will be consumed, haunted by the temporal narrative constructed with the phrase, “Coming Soon”. Trimarco and Depret argue trauma is a “disorder in the experience of time” (2005: 30-31). The film poster attempts to shift this by creating a positive image of time in relation to trauma and memorialisation. However, this can be seen as an exercise of what Davis describes as collective memory already shaped by historical discourses – the images are familiar, and the myths are already circumscribed before the event (2004: 92), the film poster relying, then, on pre-existing mythic tropes which have been discussed throughout this chapter. Consequently, the film poster occupies a complex temporal imagining in relation to the events of 9/11, and the film to be consumed.

The films *United 93* (Greengrass 2006) and *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006) were the subject of debates as to whether the American public were ready to bear witness to 9/11 again and actively choose to participate in this recreation (Rich 2006: 17; Lewis 2006) which is also a reaction to the jarring nature of *consuming* the film and its advertisements. Lewis claims that it was only a matter of time until films were made depicting 9/11, but that reliving that “national trauma” could only be expected after a “decent interval” (2006: 40). Simpson argues that large public memorials for world-changing events such as the Holocaust, war or 9/11 “are the products of slow time” (2006: 2), in that collective time is taken to reach a sense of community consensus on the ways in which the dead should be signified. Here, the posters can be seen to act as public memorials in the absence of a collective site while advertising the event’s arrival. It is attributed release dates and requires an audience

to be lured to bear witness once again, allowing the event from which they are grieving and traumatised to be integrated into the entertainment realm.

However, this also indicates a temporality that provides hope. If the event can be relived in the future, it indicates that there is a tangible future, of which the film's distribution will be a part. Simpson argues:

A culture can *take* time over the commemoration of its past signals in its protracted deliberations the expectation that it will *have* time, that it can look forward to a continuous future both in the minimal sense of mere survival and in the substantial sense that events from the past will be explained and put into context, made part of an intelligible history. (2006: 3 italics in original)

This, Simpson argues, is also accompanied by a sense of guilt, about a lack of representation and “proper acknowledgement” of the dead (2006: 3). Edkins describes the concept of “trauma time”, which is “disruptive, [and] back-to-front” and precisely where survivors want to remain in order to “testify” or bear witness (2003: 229-230). Moving trauma into history validates the trauma, and yet declares that it has been, and is no longer. If the period of mourning has ended, as President Bush has suggested (Butler 2006: 30), will the grieving end when a memorial is constructed which places the time of the event in concrete? Does the representation of this event as ‘coming soon’ disrupt this quest for temporality and finiteness? While simultaneously moving the events of 9/11 into historical discourses, guarded by national narratives, the coming attraction of 9/11 as filmic text ensures that the world is ripe for consumption for another day, reinforced by the iconography employed to disseminate the American disciplining of the narrative of 9/11.

Conclusion:
Resisting Erasure

In the aftermath of 9/11, the American public was urged to resume their normal state of consumption (Heller 2005: 1-26). Reducing the “unspeakable” and “unthinkable” acts that changed the world forever, into something that demanded resilience through consumption, demonstrates the ideological response to disciplining the narrative. But while trips to Disneyland and shopping at Walmart would allegedly show to the terrorists that American ideology was in no way destroyed (Heller 2005: 23), moving the “exceptional events” of 9/11 (Simpson 2006: 5) into the cinematic frame would somehow lessen, or trivialise the national tragedy (Lewis 2006). An unspecified amount of time had to pass until Americans were ready to bear witness to these events again and the potential for biased rhetoric from an auteur presented variables that threatened the process of healing.

The films themselves were a threat to the disciplining of the narrative of 9/11. The exhibition of agency that was necessary to choose to see the film depicting 9/11 was confronting to the pedagogical instruction that the American public received over how to consume images of 9/11. They had witnessed images that erased the towers, erased the plane (Bird 2003) – now this erasure was to be resisted. However, the film poster – plastered on billboards, the back of buses, newspapers and in the cinema – depicted one of the many items to choose to consume and infiltrated the landscape of a post-9/11 culture. Representing just two films of many that an audience could choose to pay to view, the exceptionalism of the event was theoretically lost among the many other posters showing disaster, tragedy or adversity. Consequently, as it

has been argued, the film posters needed to employ a call to arms and decisive symbolism for representations that could be interpreted by international and national audiences. To choose to witness this film was to celebrate American heroism and partake in the depiction of acceptable mythologies.

If the claim that the events of 9/11 seamlessly integrated into the Hollywood action film genre can be accepted, as proposed by Baudrillard and Žižek (2003; 2002), the advertising for the films should come as no surprise. As previously discussed in Chapter One, Baudrillard's claim that the copy has become more Real than the real (2002), can be applied to the consumption of the images of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The film posters that have been analysed draw directly on media depictions of the event, and play into the mythologies that have come to simply *be* 9/11 in collective consciousness. While the use of a term such as collective consciousness is problematic in assigning one national/international memory, this reflects the precise intention of the rhetoric surrounding 9/11. The imagining of a collective consciousness that was outside of history (Trimarco and Depret 2005: 30), allowed for an autonomous group to be traumatised and wounded. The imagery, consequently, attempts to situate the individuals involved in 9/11 as tied to totems for the event, that were experienced collectively in the consumption of the images of 9/11. The majority of Americans were not physically at the site of 9/11, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2006: 6). The towers, and the other mythic images that seem all too familiar from numerous Hollywood films and the political and social ideologies that spawn them, placed the events of 9/11 which were supposedly "exceptional", in the canon of prequel images that

preceded the actual events, but which are arguably just as “real” in the collective minds of Americans.

Žižek argues that in the aftermath of 9/11, Americans were able to “fully” assume their “national identity”, American pride replacing any guilt about America’s past actions or ideological proliferation (2002: 45). As Žižek argues, “In the traumatic aftermath of September 11, when the old security seemed to be momentarily shattered, what could be more ‘natural’ than taking refuge in the innocence of a firm ideological identification?” (2002: 45). This, Žižek proposes, appears to Americans to be an organic response to the trauma of 9/11: it is *natural*, and therefore correct, to stand behind the mythic images of heroism, courage and survival, and that which “glorifies all that is best in the American spirit” (Figure 9). While there may be objections to actions that followed 9/11, the American public is connected by their pride in America and the heroes of that day, who were seemingly plucked from the future statues that may be erected in their likeness. The images of those involved in 9/11 preceded the actual event itself, and despite claims that the event was exceptional and unthinkable, the numerous images and movies that had to be pulled from distribution or delayed because of their uncanny likeness to the events of 9/11 dictate otherwise (Bird 2003: 86).

If the events of 9/11 seemed “like a dream” (Sontag 2003: 19), the American public emerged from their slumber and awoke to posters of the missing with the intense saturation of media images. Indeed, the image of uncountable sheets of paper falling from the towers before their collapse begged for each sheet to have the face of the missing projected on it. The landscape of consumption had changed, and the national

and international community was presented with a “wounded” nation (Trimarco and Depret 2005: 27-53). If, as Butler argues, the traumatised nation or body is one that is changed, perhaps forever (2006: 21), the movie-going public was altered after 9/11. How does this marry with the idea that the events of 9/11 integrated in pre-existing narratives that were distributed via Hollywood? Baudrillard argues “we have dreamt of this event”, despite how this might be “unacceptable to the Western moral conscience.” (2003: 5) Baudrillard goes on to claim, as discussed in Chapter One, that if we do not acknowledge that “we” wish for it, the event becomes an “accident, a purely arbitrary act” (2003: 5). While the images may have been familiar, they are framed as being *specific* to 9/11, and this identification of mythology elevates the mythic Hollywood image to transcend the narratives that have existed prior to its conception. They are images beyond history, to create hope in the future, and a call to arms to take pride in the heroic acts of those involved in the events.

Part of this response to 9/11 is the need to commemorate. Arguably, depictions of heroes in disaster films do not require the audience to mourn or memorialise the loss of the fictionalised body. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, while the celebrity body becomes the effigy upon which to project the narratives of the individuals who died or survived 9/11, the celebrity becomes representative of this process of commemoration. The depiction of the World Trade Center, the plane, and the celebrity and their body as firefighter (or actor body, if that individual is not notorious, as shown in the posters for *United 93*), rely on recognition of those icons as being specifically tied forever in representation to the events of 9/11. This is achieved by the combination of these icons to exist in a binary of personal/monument, existing alongside the numerous binaries that have been called

upon to interpret the events. However, as has been shown, this binary is problematic, and by no means absolute. The binary exists in numerous ways, which portray no uniform depiction of 9/11, representative of the paradoxical way that the events have been integrated into public mythology. Symbolic of the divide between private/public, the binary of personal/monument shows that the two do not exist separately, and rely on a mutual formation in order to memorialise and to validate one over the other. The images of the dead – the buildings, the planes and the individuals – serve to create a national body of death for which to grieve. As Sontag argues, photographs of war victims are “a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus” (2003: 5). Consensus here means a connection to the ideological aftermath of 9/11: that heroism and courage are synonymous with the American way of life. Those standing under the star-spangled banner triumph over the other evil party of the binary of good/evil. As in a morality play, there is no ambiguity between us/them, and the framing of victims in homage to the many images of victims of war before them ensures that the events of 9/11 have their place in the canon of tragedy, validated by historical discourses, even if the event itself was so exceptional as to exist beyond history.

Entwined in the death of the plane and the death of the individual, is the role of modernity in prefiguring these deaths. As a grand-narrative that was obliterated through the vehicle of the plane and the tower, modernity paradoxically was enlivened by the call of grand narratives and truths to somehow repair the damage. As discussed in Chapter Two, the plane and the skyscraper are both tools of modernity and represented the triumph of western ideology. The very tools of progress were utilised against the American state, and the ideologies of free market

and free travel were hijacked and overtaken by a competing ideology: one, by default, of evil. Consequently, not only are individuals to be commemorated, as too are the monuments of the plane and the towers. However, in destruction they now adopt new signification. Courage, survival and heroism are tropes that thus help to interpret the loss of grand narratives, while replacing that which is lost with another, more encouraging direction for the future, which promotes the prevailing of the American ideology. Even if the symbolic intention of the terrorists was to destroy this narrative, or at least show its structural weaknesses, the heroic American nation can discipline this intention through recalling the mythic images of Hollywood. As if plucked from numerous disaster films of the 1970s onward (Bird 2003: 86), the agency exhibited in emerging from a collapsing building, or fighting the threat of terrorism, the civil guardian of the state will emerge from darkness. And these threats can be overcome with the antidote to barbarism and animalistic tendencies, with the ordered structures of the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, guided by a constellation of unity and the stripes of freedom.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Trimarco and Depret argue that trauma appears to be a “disorder in the experience of time” (2005: 30-31). To assign a period of mourning to cope with the trauma of 9/11 is to suggest that society can continue to function, while also being changed forever, as evidenced by the aforementioned rhetoric employed after the events. The nation will be altered, but will survive, adhering to one of the motifs disseminated in the film posters. Consequently, the bearing this has on the binary of personal/monument is to suggest that while the literal monument has crashed into the ground, what rises are the people who are deemed heroes. They become the moral guardians for the society to mould its future actions upon, drawing

on the memory of their actions to fully commemorate. The film posters, by their very nature in luring an audience to witness the events of 9/11 again, ask the audience to bear witness to what has been, and what will be, aligned to Barthes' description of the role of the Photograph (1982). Even if the monuments do not physically stand, their depiction in the English language film posters, in particular, demands that they be recognised as standing, or having an abstracted form in their place. Ground Zero's void is not depicted, instead the posters create a memorial site in the place of the "semiotic black hole" (Morrione 2006: 158): they become the monuments. The intense symbolism drawn upon to lure the audience suggests that this level of depiction is necessary, and that the creation of distinct mythologies through the vehicle of a binary will warrant wanting to witness the events of 9/11, *on our terms*.

As has been discussed numerous times throughout this thesis, the concept of the lure is useful to help comprehend the process of signification behind the film posters. As there have been numerous cultural products that indicate an impulse to commemorate and memorialise, the film posters need not necessarily employ entirely new methods to attract an audience. However, as it has been argued, the unease the public may feel *choosing* to witness the events, rather than memorialising them, shifts the experience of the audience from relying on memory to engaging with a new cultural form. While directly analysing the films has been beyond the scope of this thesis, the advertising that lures the potential customer has been of interest as it is a summary of the film itself, abiding by the conventions of its own medium. However, in terms of the period of time that the film posters appear, it presents a unique object of study. No memorial is erected in the place of the towers, or the planes. There is a crisis of representation bound by politics and personal interests that the film posters defy, as

they claim to understand the depictions necessary to engage an audience. If the film-goer emerges from a “type of hypnosis” that the black cube of the post-9/11 world has created, they can move from “poster to poster” to find a version of 9/11 that they are directed to consume (Barthes 1986: 346).

There have been numerous questions raised by this thesis that suggest areas for further study. Firstly, and most obviously, is the study of filmic texts for *World Trade Center* (Stone 2006) and *United 93* (Greengrass 2006), particularly in response to Baudrillard and Žižek’s claim the film already exists in popular culture consciousness (2003; 2002). To date, very little academic study has responded to these films (See Lewis 2006; Rich 2006; Spark and Stuart 2008; Hoberman 2006), perhaps reflecting the post-9/11 environment – one saturated with references to 9/11, but an unwillingness to engage with the events that could result in passionate, negative reactions (Butler 2006; Bird 2003). Moreover, the use of binaries in discourses surrounding 9/11 calls for its own dedicated study. Sparse academic work has been written on the film poster as a medium. The lack of critical gaze afforded to this pervasive medium appears counter-intuitive when it constitutes so much of our cultural understanding. Arguably, its omission, in particular in film studies, signals the operation of a high/low culture bias with demarcation between the high film text and the low advertising form. Shifting the analysis of the film poster away from the texts of advertising studies, or as a curious illustration to more supposedly serious analysis, provides a valid medium for analysis of wider ideological frameworks and trends, and even a dedicated study to the unspoken norms of film poster production and reception.

What, then, of the validity of the personal/monument binary? Thus far the parties to the binary have been shown to be reliant on one another in a post-structural framework. However, how do the film posters specifically illustrate this claim, if they are employing the binary for a coherent depiction of 9/11? As has been developed in this section of the thesis and in Chapter Two, the representation of 9/11 shifts according to what section of the event is being portrayed. The representation of both the monument and the personal have been drawn upon to validate trauma, helping to guide the process of memorialisation and commemoration, both nationally and internationally through recognised mythic tropes, drawn in particular from Hollywood. This provides an affirmation by which to situate the events of 9/11 and by which to understand this new order of filmic consumption. The public/private spheres are depicted in the posters, it has been argued, in an attempt to present a democratisation of grief and mourning. These public obituaries to the dead and glorification of survivors, however, exist in a false divide between the personal/monument. The binary is arbitrary, it has been proposed, because both are monuments and are personal. They are effigies upon which to mourn the dead, while also simultaneously being dead. They are represented, but both are present and absent and find no single form of depiction. It can be argued that the binary is necessary for depiction, however, this binary is troubled and bound by the context in which it is placed. It may be able to reinforce American mythology, however, it does not suggest that it exists inherently in the event itself, and reflects the crises of representation that guide critical discussions of the event. Perhaps, until a tangible monument or memorial is erected, the monumentalised personal and the personalised monument will enjoy more troubled depictions in an attempt to make meaning.

This thesis has explored new understandings of 9/11, as well as the medium of the film poster and presents a new contribution to the relevant academic fields in several ways. A method has been proposed for the film poster's analysis that demands contextualising the poster in the wider cinematic experience, including intertextuality to other filmic texts, not necessarily those to which the poster directly refers, while looking beyond the film poster's frame. This study has also identified the deficiency in 9/11 studies' discussion of the fictional depictions of the event, and furthermore has dedicated analysis to the semiotic implications of the crashed flight in Pennsylvania – a topic not discussed at length reflecting the conflicted depiction of the events. This thesis was written as the seventh anniversary of 9/11 passed, and yet the gaps present in academic literature demonstrate an eagerness to privilege some forms of representation over others. Ultimately, this thesis has argued for a new method for analysis of 9/11 that demands the experience of cinema and its lures be considered in reading the ideological underpinnings of cultural responses to the event. The film posters are erected as a new monument that exists in lieu of any replacement physical structure in Pennsylvania or Ground Zero. Covering the semiotic lack, narratives depicting the triumph of the static monument and the universalised personal ensure that 9/11 is retold according to heroic monumental mythologies.

Appendix
The Posters



Figure 1 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Red Towers” (Paramount Pictures 2006a).



Figure 2 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Black Towers” (Paramount Pictures 2006b).

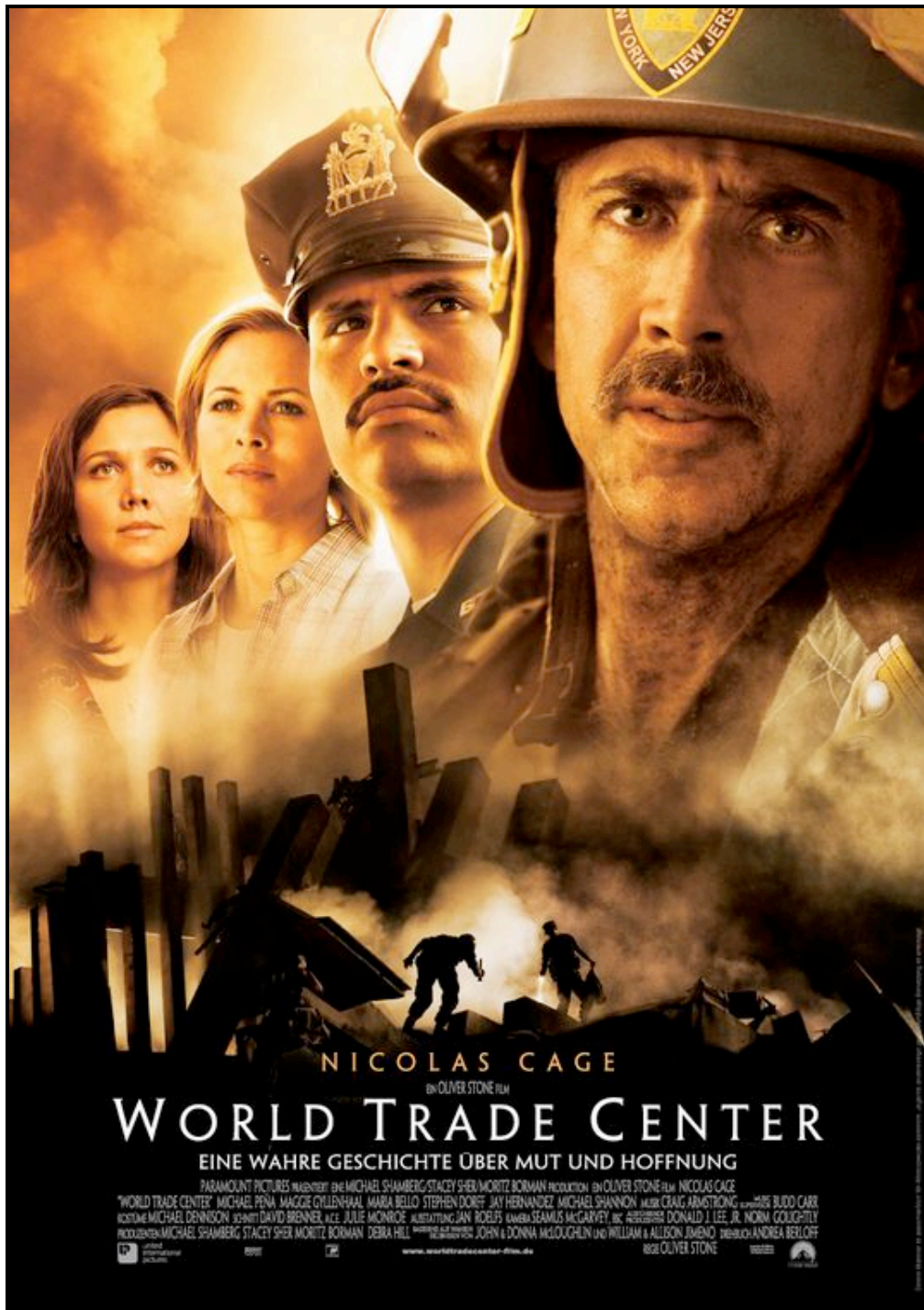


Figure 3 *World Trade Center* Poster, “German” (Paramount Pictures 2006c).



Figure 4 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Turkish” (Paramount Pictures 2006d).



Figure 5 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Russia” (Paramount Pictures 2006e).



Figure 6 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Korean” (Paramount Pictures 2006f).

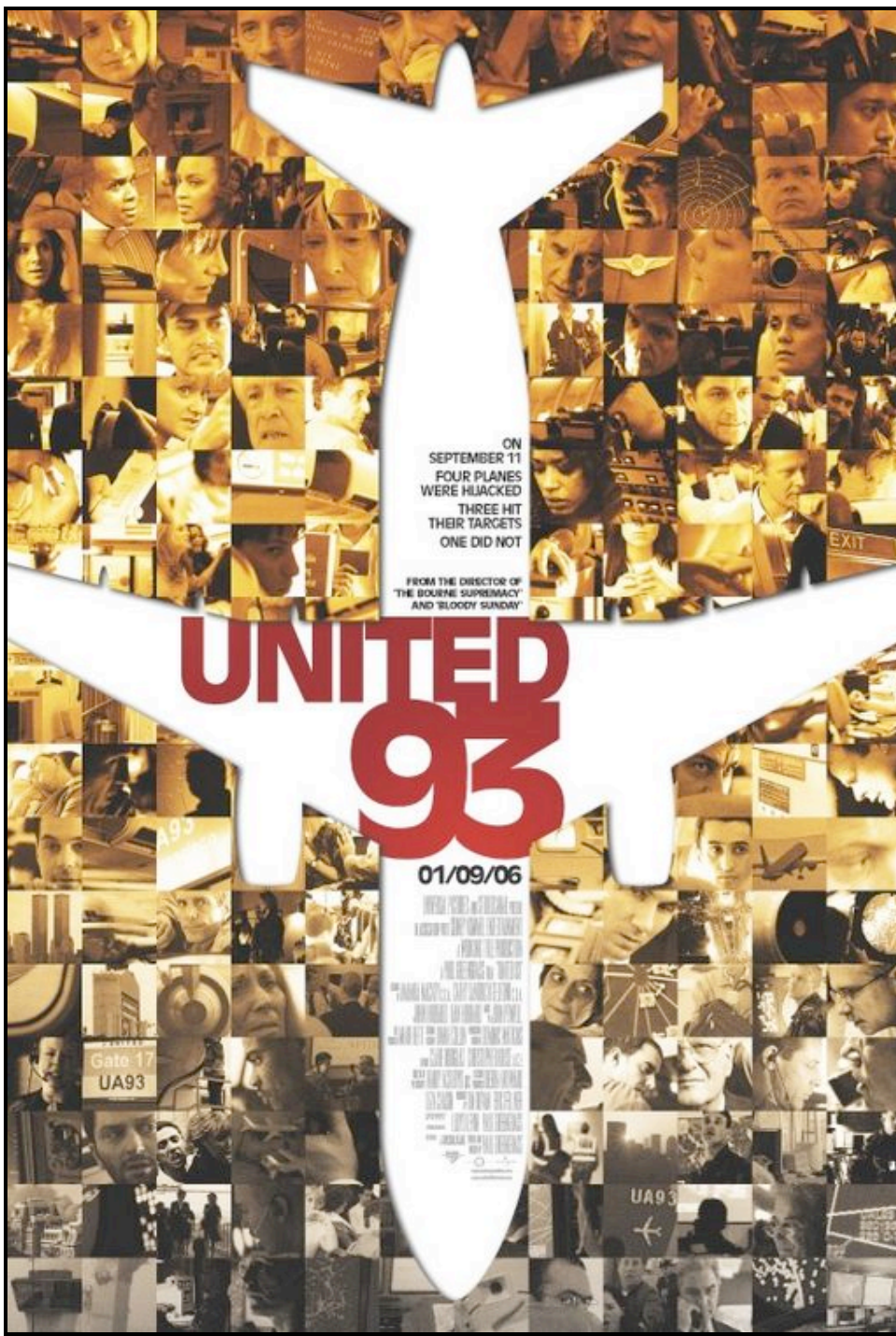


Figure 7 *United 93* Poster, “Collage” (Universal Pictures 2006a).

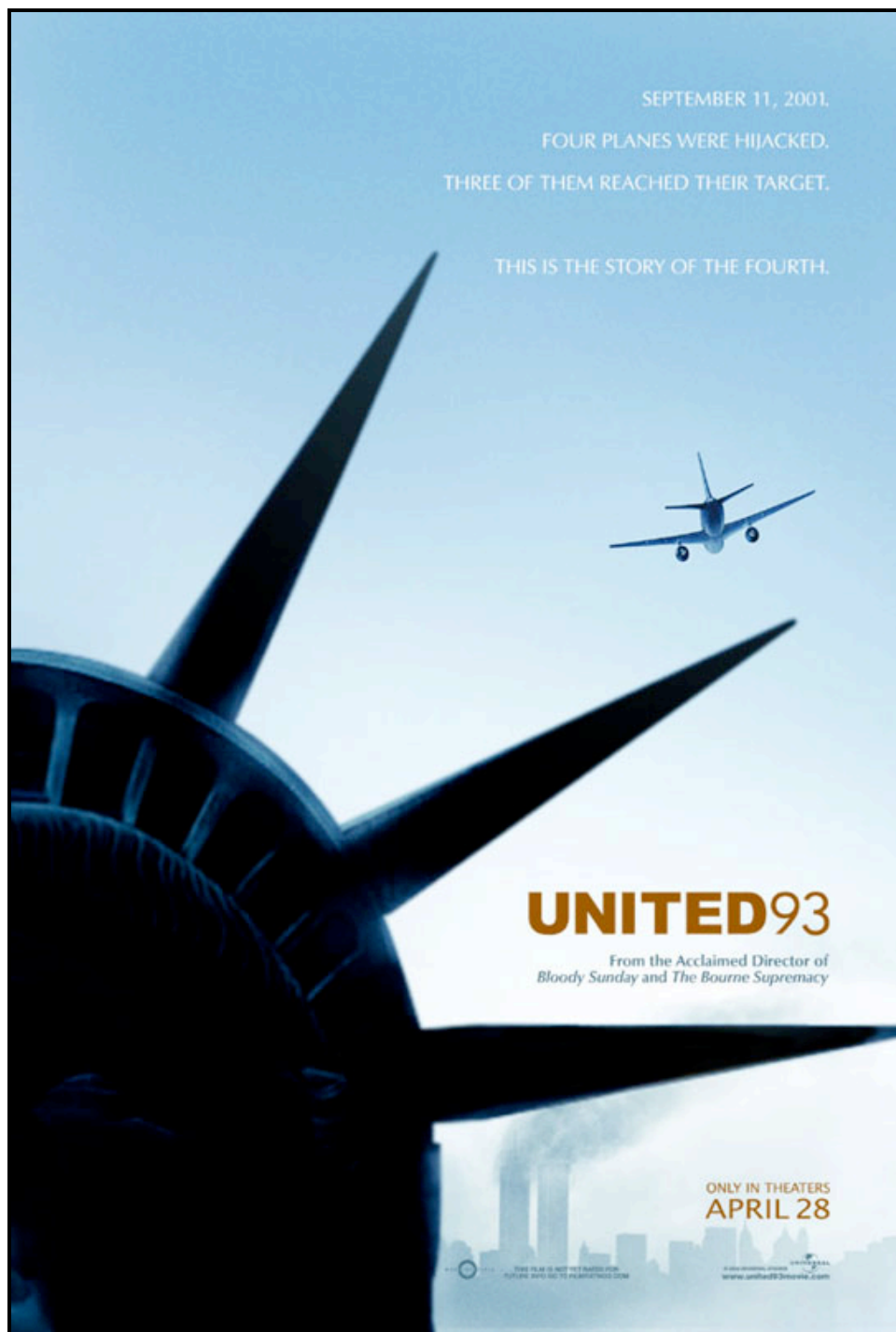


Figure 8 *United 93* Poster, “Monument” (Universal Pictures 2006b).

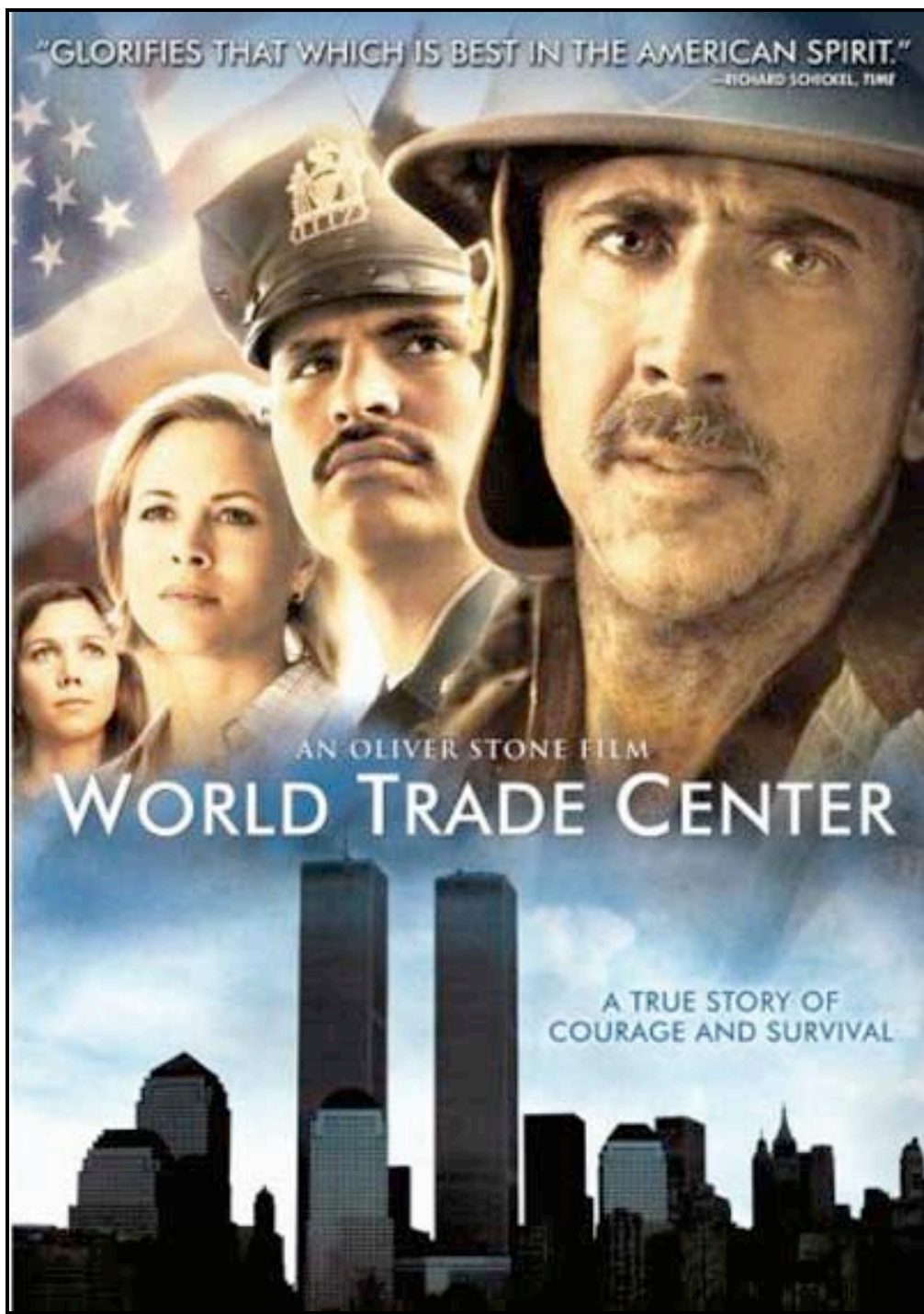


Figure 9 *World Trade Center* Poster, “Flag” (Paramount Pictures 2006g).

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