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**AMERICAN NEWSMEDIA  
and AMERICAN POLITICS  
in MICHAEL MOORE'S *FAHRENHEIT 9/11***

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## ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi  
MICHAEL MOORE'un *FAHRENHEIT 9/11* FİLMİNDE  
AMERİKAN MEDYASI ve AMERİKAN POLİTİKASI  
Hüseyin KOCAMAN

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Medyanın toplumun fikrini ve algısını oluşturmaya ve şekillendirmeye yardım ettiğini kabul etmek gerekir. Her yeni medya aracı bizim zaman ve mekan görüşümüzü aydınlatır ve yeniden tanımlar. İçinden geçtiğimiz bilgi devrimi bizim düşüncelerimizi ve yaşam şeklimizi dolaylı veya dolaysız olarak etkilemektedir.

Noam Chomsky bu fikirleri politika alanına taşımıştır. Chomsky'ye göre, günümüz politik arenasında medyanın rolü bizim demokratik bir toplum algımızı sorgulamaktır. Bir toplumda demokrasi olduğu zaman, o toplum kendi meselelerinde karar verme sürecinin içinde olma olanağına sahiptir. Ama şu anda Irak'ta toplum, kendi işleriyle ilgilenmekten alıkonmuştur. Medya sayesinde buna yine de demokrasi denmektedir. Yalan ve yanlış bilgilendirme ile medya demokrasi ve birçok kavramın genel algısını belirlemektedir.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* yönetmen Michael Moore'un bir belgesel filmidir. Moore Amerikan politik-ekonomik sistemini radikal bir şekilde eleştirir ve bu eleştiriye geleneksel medyaya kadar götürür. Film Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin politik durumunu ayrıntılı bir şekilde anlatır. Temelde haber medyasının yönetimini ve 11 Eylül 2001 saldırılarının sosyal baskı ve kontrol araçlarının güçlendirilmesi üzerindeki etkisini eleştirir. *Fahrenheit 9/11* mali kazanımlar için ne kadar fedakârlık yapılabileceği, süper-güç Amerika'yı yöneten bir avuç insanın haritaları ve milyonlarca insanın hayatını değiştirmek için ne kadar ileri gidebileceği hakkında bir başka korkunç gerçektir.

Film 9/11'in korkunçluğunu daha önce görülmemiş bir şekilde hatırlatarak başlar: uçakların binalara çarpma sesleri esnasında bize siyah bir ekran gösterir. Bu korkunçluğun kafamızdaki hatıraları daha tazeyken Moore Bush ailesinin Arap kraliyet ailesiyle uzun bir geçmişe dayanan ilişkilerini ortaya koyar. Bu gerçek filmin gösteriminden önce çok az insan tarafından biliniyor gibidir. Moore daha sonra Bush yönetiminin "Teröre Karşı Savaşı" politik etkinliğini artırmak için nasıl kötüye kullandığını eleştirmeye geçer. Bu kötüye kullanımın zirvesi Patriot Act olur, bu yasaya göre sıradan Amerikan vatandaşlarının belli temel hakları rafa kaldırılabilir.

**Filmin sonu temel bakış açısını özetler: “Savaş yöneten grubun kendi tebaasına karşı açılmıştır ve hedefi Avrasya veya Asya üzerinde zafer değil, toplumun yapısının olduğu gibi kalmasını sağlamaktır.” Bu Amerikan halkının önündeki tehdidin Amerikan politik ve ekonomik sistemi olduğu demektir.**

**Anahtar Sözcükler: 1) Amerikan Dış Politikası, 2) George W. Bush, 3) Teröre Karşı Savaş, 4) Irak, 5) Amerikan Sineması.**

## ABSTRACT

Master Thesis  
AMERICAN NEWSMEDIA AND AMERICAN POLITICS  
IN MICHAEL MOORE'S *FAHRENHEIT 9/11*

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It is necessary to admit that media helps manufacturing and shaping public opinion, even public perception. Every new media enlightens and redefines our view of time and space. The information revolution that we are going through at the moment has many direct or indirect effects on our thinking and daily lives.

Noam Chomsky carried those ideas into the field of politics. According to Chomsky, the role of the media in contemporary politics makes us question our sense of a democratic society. When democracy exists in a society, that society has the means to take part in the decision-making process of their own matters. But now in Iraq, the public is barred from managing of their own affairs. This again is called democracy thanks to the media. Through disinformation and misinformation the media has determined the general sense of democracy and many other things.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* is a documentary film from director Michael Moore. Moore radically criticizes the American political-economic system and advances that critique into the mainstream media. The film elaborates on the political condition in the United States. It mainly targets to criticize the direction of the news media and the impact of the attacks of September 11, 2001 on the strengthening of instruments of social repression and control. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is another awful truth about how much can be sacrificed for financial gains, how far a bunch of people that leads the super power USA can go to alter the maps and to change the lives of millions of people.

The film opens with recalling the horrors of 9/11 in a unique way: showing us a black screen while the sounds of the planes crashing into the buildings are heard on the soundtrack. While the memories of that horror are still fresh in our heads, Moore then proceeds to expose the Bush family's long-standing connections with the Saudi royal family, a fact that few people seemed aware of before this film was released. Moore then goes on to criticize the way in which the Bush administration has exploited the "War on Terror" for maximum political effectiveness. The peak of this exploitation is the Patriot Act

which brought the removal of certain civil rights of ordinary American citizens.

The film's final summarizes its main perspective: "The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia, but to keep the very structure of society intact." That is to say that the threat against the American people is the American political and economic system.

**Key Words:** 1) USA Foreign Policy, 2) George W. Bush,  
3) War Against Terror, 4) Iraq, 5) American Cinema.

**AMERICAN NEWSMEDIA**  
**and AMERICAN POLITICS**  
**in MICHAEL MOORE'S *FAHRENHEIT 9/11***

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## INTRODUCTION

After seeing *Fahrenheit 9/11*, I was shocked by the harsh reality of war and the losses it brought. What made the shock stronger was the unnecessariness of the deaths from both sides. After all there are not many documentaries ridiculing all the wars in the world and the people who lead them. There must be something special about this war.

People and countries which make profit out of wars, organizations which manipulate elections to their own ends, incompetent people who become important people due to their family connections, plots which keep citizens silent and fearful are depicted in such a plain way that you go: Have I ever watched the evening news?

The media which is ideally expected to enlighten people about what is going on around them is owned by the very people who find it essential to hide things from public for the sake of their personal benefits. Consequently the press and the TV prefer not to show the deaths of innocent people and the companies which run inconvenient businesses. We never see the kind of graphic war images that we see in *Fahrenheit* neither in newspapers nor on the TV. The reason for this must be the same with why the US military banned the press to publish photographs of coffins wrapped in US flags on their way home while they were shipped back to be buried in their own country.

It is necessary to admit that media helps manufacturing and shaping public opinion, even public perception. Every new information enlightens and redefines our view of time and space. The communication revolution that we are going through at the moment has many direct or indirect effects on our thinking and daily lives.

Noam Chomsky carried those ideas about the media into the field of politics. According to Chomsky, the role of the media in contemporary politics makes us question our sense of a democratic society. When democracy exists in a society, that society has the means to take part in the decision-making process of their own matters. But now in Iraq, the public is barred from managing their own affairs. This is also called ‘democracy’ because of the media. Through disinformation and misinformation<sup>1</sup> the media has determined the general sense of democracy and many other components of people’s lives.

Michael Moore based his film on the United States. *Fahrenheit* deals largely with the issues of Iraq, necessity of the war, the U.S. election system and the soldier recruiting methods of the U.S. army. It also reminds the viewers that the American news media avoids interfering with these problems. Moore blames the American corporate media for not providing a detailed analysis of the invasion of Iraq, shadowing the actual reasons for the war and its aftermath.

According to Latta, Michael Moore is obviously not only a filmmaker but also a cultural producer; his film criticizes corporate, state, and media power in the United States. Hoping to change the results of the next election, Moore released the movie shortly before the presidential elections. Moore tried to reach behind the boundaries of documentary by aiming this social target. Moore can also be listed among the major important directors who revolutionized film-making and brought unconventional and idealistic film theories to life like Eisenstein, de Palma, Godard, Bazin, de Sica and Bergman.

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<sup>1</sup> Disinformation: false information, as about a country's military strength or plans, publicly announced or planted in the news media, esp. of other countries. (Definition from Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary)

Misinformation: information intended to deceive (Definition from Cambridge Learner's Dictionary)

The title of the movie is derived from Ray Bradbury's dystopian science fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451*<sup>2</sup> and the September 11, 2001 attacks on US. *Fahrenheit 451* tells us the story of people who are prohibited to read books. The fire department serves the government by burning books in order to censor them from the people. 451 is the degree books start to melt. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is a film about people who are never shown important news. This time the fire department is replaced by the media in the service of the government.

The making of the movie started with a “why” question. It is natural to ask why the question was not “Why did September 11 happen?” The question was “Why did the U.S. administration need a military operation that targets nearly all of the Middle East countries in a war against terrorism?” Let alone answering the question, even asking it is quite a difficult task. Michael Moore takes up this hard job in his documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The members of the media eagerly questioned if Moore is a traitor by making a movie. The same people never asked Bush how fair it was to attack Iraq.

Moore tells the audience a version of the events in the country's recent past. Moore criticizes the mainstream and the official history similar to the American academics like Noam Chomsky and Edward Said. He presents a completely new perspective on events occurring within the United States capitalist society. “On its opening day it started to break all documentary film records ... The efforts to have it stopped and the subsequent media attention and popularity of the film exemplify the gaps in the democratic-capitalist system that allows dissenting voices.” (Latta, 2005; 112) According to Noam Chomsky, the capitalist democracy offers gaps, or windows of opportunity to test the limits of democracy, through which counter-hegemonic voices can be heard. Moore's job is difficult when it comes to convincing people. A warning in the form of a

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<sup>2</sup> Ray Bradbury was not pleased with Moore's use of the name.

documentary is a totally new idea. When we are not informed about something in a form we already trust like media images, we believe it does not exist.

Strengthening of the means of social repression and control also made it hard to criticize the leader of the country in a time of war. This was the result of the terrorist attacks and the following wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. War was a good excuse to ask people to give up their certain rights. Noam Chomsky has theorized that condition a long time ago. He argued that democratic societies had their own methods of manufacturing consent among people. In his work titled *Manufacturing Consent* Chomsky portrays the media as an ideological system in the service of the powerful élite in society. This work is based on his previous books. He gives examples of governments getting away with lying, of academics and intellectuals manufacturing consent to the actions of government, and of the media avoiding discussion. Chomsky argues the US media have refused their questioning role. He sees the media's role as producing consensus amongst the public towards the ruling élite in government and business. He argues that the media establishes and defends the agenda of the dominant privileged groups in society. The methods of the media to silence the public are various. Media selects topics, distributes concerns, frames issues, filters information, Media employs appropriate emphasis and tone to keep the debate within acceptable limits. Chomsky's message for journalists is that there is a way of bringing information to the public that many would prefer to see kept secret.

Chomsky states that the role of the media in contemporary politics makes us question our sense of a democratic society. Through disinformation and misinformation the media has determined the general sense of democracy and many other concepts like freedom. Moore is in a position of a journalist motivated by Chomsky's surprisingly optimistic style.

In her research, Maureen Elizabeth Latta states that “Moore emphasizes an old problem within American thought between the liberal view and the libertarian view.” The two-party system of the United States is the source of the intensity between these two thoughts. Liberal point of view advocates political and economic power must belong to a limited group of people who are given authority to exercise on behalf of the ignorant masses. Libertarian point of view advocates the power to exercise must belong to the common man/woman. The debate between these two views is a major component that shaped the American culture.

Expressions of life and life itself are interdependent. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between them. Artistic representations generally come out of real life. But sometimes real life comes out of artistic representations. “Just as expressions are formed by facts in hand, so are facts by representation. Mainstream targets to shape the perception of facts, pacify people and continuously program them to consume by building stereotypes using images, words, implications, and comparisons in the media.” (Renov, 2004; quoted from Latta) Administrations in power, corporation executives, advertisement companies and news networks are all in an effort to reinforce beliefs that make everyone consent to the existing condition.

Moore’s biggest success is revolutionizing the genre with *Fahrenheit*. Many intellectuals have tried to use his Brechtian style to criticize the governments, to warn people about an inconvenience etc. But none of them became as popular as Michael Moore. So everyone assumed being unpopular was a necessity to dissent from corrupt media and corrupt politicians. His style is not unique, but his popularity is.

Michael Moore stands up to the condition of the media. He knows it is difficult to alter the mainstream media. Targeting to change the functions of media and to affect the outcome of a presidential election,

Moore gained respect from other media workers. He is also a media worker, his boss is himself again. He criticizes the media in the media. In *Fahrenheit 9/11* he shows us how journalists and politicians work together and presents a different aspect. What he does is actually using his freedom of speech at its best. If a filmmaker from another country does the same to that country's president he/she would end up in prison, hospital or grave.

## **I. THE MEDIA**

It is necessary to admit that media helps manufacturing and shaping public opinion, even public perception. Every new media enlightens and redefines our view of time and space. Popular media philosopher Marshall McLuhan stated “Earth is going to shrink into a globalized village thanks to the electronic-based means of communication.” He said this in a time people watched black-and-white television. Today, it never surprises us to bump into an article that will never be published. Blog and news on the internet will also never be published. Today it is possible to do business through e-mail or mobile phones and simultaneously play three dimensional games with people on the other side of the world.

### **1.1. Recent Advances in the Media**

Information technologies bring everything closer every single day. Earth shrank just like McLuhan said. The perception of news changed while keeping the same distance before. What we think is just defined by a network of relations between social, economic, cultural, political and technological ideas. Media has a major role in manufacturing and consuming public consent in a global aspect. Politics cannot be analyzed without involving media which shapes our way of lives.

‘New Media’ is an interdisciplinary field in the University of California. This school in Berkeley, Center for New Media, examines the theoretical and practical aspects of information and communication technologies. They define New Media as the computer-based production, consumption, representation and transfer of all kinds of information. New Media is actually a stand to discuss the conception of new ways of communication, not this new way of communication. Its main concepts are

hyper-textuality, programmability, automation, digital and virtual reality and interactivity.

The historical consequences of the discovery of writing in Mesopotamia are similar to those of Gutenberg's invention of printing machine. Today's electronic revolution has a similar size impact. We are lucky to observe this big event on a global scale. Today, new media is a very important part of economy and politics. The information revolution that we are going through at the moment has many direct or indirect effects on our thinking and daily lives.

“The medium is the message.” As McLuhan said, the medium also became a message. You cannot criticize the system on system's television or paper. Your message should be in accordance with the system, if it is meant to reach the crowd. An ideal message should not stimulate the public to think. The system wants the public to be incompetent to think. This incompetency is what it requires to exist. Through subtle messages the public is programmed not to think.

## **1.2. US Media and Politics**

In his book `Manufacturing Consent` Noam Chomsky presents a world where a secret consensus lies beneath the constitution of the news media to manage public opinion. He says there may be no chance for journalists to resist these trends. He argues that the media establishes and defends the agenda of the dominant privileged groups in society.

Chomsky portrays the media as an ideological system in the service of the powerful élite in society. He gives examples of governments getting away with lying, of academics and intellectuals manufacturing consent to the actions of government, and of the media avoiding discussion. Chomsky argues the US media have refused their questioning



role. He sees the media's role as producing consensus amongst the public towards the ruling élite in government and business. He explains the production of systematic propaganda in the media. "It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public." (Chomsky, 1994, 84)

The role of the media in contemporary politics makes us question our sense of a democratic society. When democracy exists in a society, that society has the means to take part in the decision-making process of their own matters. But now in Iraq, the public is barred from managing of their own affairs. This again is called democracy thanks to the media. Through disinformation and misinformation the media has determined the general sense of democracy and many other things. Noam Chomsky gives many examples to that kind of propaganda:

The first modern government propaganda operation ... was under the Woodrow Wilson Administration. Woodrow Wilson was elected President in 1916 on the platform "Peace Without Victory." That was right in the middle of the World War I. The population was extremely pacifistic and saw no reason to become involved in a European war. The Wilson administration was actually committed to war and had to do something about it. They established a government propaganda commission, called the Creel Commission which succeeded, within six months, in turning a pacifist population into a hysterical, war-mongering population which wanted to destroy everything German, tear the Germans limb from limb, go to war and save the world. That was a major achievement, and it led to a further achievement. Right at that time and after the war the same techniques were used to whip up a hysterical Red Scare, as it was called, which succeeded pretty much in destroying unions and eliminating such dangerous problems as freedom of the press and freedom of political thought. There was very strong support from the media, from the business establishment, which in fact organized, pushed much of this work, and it was, in general, a great success. (Chomsky, 1994, 81)

Media is used to ‘manufacture consent’ among people. Media has the power to change, even destroy, thousands-of-years-old traditions. It is possible to get an idea about the power of media. It is used to create a chaos which is necessary to keep the public under control. By definition, media should analyze or help people analyze the chaos.

The political class and the decision makers prefer the media, the schools, and popular culture provide the public an acceptable version of reality. For this purpose the public basically just have to be distracted. Their attention must be turned to something else. Keep them out of trouble. The key to this is propaganda. Propaganda is an essential element of democracy.

The history of public relations industry dates back to the crisis of 1930. The events started with a demand from workers to have the right to take part in the decisions of the company. The working class is not supposed to organize, because then the public might be something beyond spectators of action. If many people with limited resources get together to enter the political arena, that would be a real threat. The techniques of public relations were first applied in the United States at a time when there was a need to control the public. It later became a huge industry, an industry to keep the division of society as men-of-action and spectators-of-action intact.

People in public relations business are expected to discover effective means of propaganda mainly targeted to create a move or a halt in society. The idea is simple: ability to turn the public against or for anything at any given time, ability to present anything or anyone against or for the common interests. The people in this business work very hard to achieve that. They serve the élite who have almost endless resources and the control of mass media.

It is also necessary to whip up the population in support of foreign adventures. Usually the population is pacifist, just like they were during the First World War. The public sees no reason to get involved in foreign adventures, killing, and torture. So you have to whip them up. And to whip them up you have to frighten them. ... It's necessary to constantly ram through domestic programs which the public is opposed to, because there is no reason for the public to be in favor of domestic programs that are harmful to them. This, too, takes extensive propaganda. (Chomsky, 2005, 9)

In a democracy, it is essential to silence odd voices. The Patriot Act, the decision of war, lowering the budget on education were never discussed in the media. The result of this was a false thought that nobody is against. So everyone thought they were constructing a minority. People chose to shut up at a time everyone who questioned the fairness of the invasion of Iraq was blamed with treason.

If you take particular programs, like armaments, cutting back on social spending, etc., almost every one of them was overwhelmingly opposed by the public. But as long as people are marginalized and distracted and have no way to organize or articulate their sentiments, or even know that others have these sentiments, people who said that they prefer social spending to military spending, who gave that answer on polls, as people overwhelmingly did, assumed that they were the only people with that crazy idea in their heads. They never heard it from anywhere else. Nobody's supposed to think that. Therefore, if you do think it and you answer it in a poll, you just assume that you're sort of weird. Since there's no way to get together with other people who share or reinforce that view and help you articulate it, you feel like an oddity, an oddball. So you just stay on the side and you don't pay any attention to what's going on. You look at something else, like the Superbowl. (Chomsky, 2005, 9)

In a democracy, it is also essential to completely modify history. Future historians will depict today's USA invasion of Iraq in a different way. They will probably say they are actually protecting themselves

against dictators. They will present a pack of lies as reality. After the Vietnam war, people became suspicious and were beginning to get a picture of the reality. There was a need to stop this tendency in order to keep the democracy intact.

It was necessary to rearrange those bad thoughts and to restore some form of sanity, namely, a recognition that whatever we do is noble and right. If we're bombing South Vietnam, that's because we're defending South Vietnam against somebody, namely, the South Vietnamese, since nobody else was there. It's what the Kennedy intellectuals called defense against "internal aggression" in South Vietnam. That was the phrase used by Adlai Stevenson and others. It was necessary to make that the official and well understood picture. That's worked pretty well. (Chomsky, 1999, 39)

Despite all the propaganda, despite all the efforts to control thought and manufacture consent; people started to gain the ability and the will to analyze things. The power became questionable.

American media ignores the growing social and economic problems at home. Government officials seem to ignore those problems. Media is again choosing not to question the authorities. That is the way a well-functioning system of consent manufacturing works. There is almost no proposal about what to do about such problems as health, education, crime, homelessness, joblessness and jails.

Just in the two years that George Bush has been in office three million more children crossed the poverty line, the debt is zooming, educational standards are declining, real wages are now back to the level of about the late 1950s for much of the population, and nobody's doing anything about it. In such circumstances you've got to divert the bewildered herd, because if they start noticing this they may not like it, since they're the ones suffering from it. ... You have to whip them up into fear of enemies. ... Over the last ten years, every year or two, some major monster is constructed that we have to defend ourselves against. (Chomsky, 2005, 3)

Michael Moore says Bush's monsters are ridiculous or unreal. When there are no real enemies, he presents us an imaginary enemy, sometimes Saddam, sometimes anthrax, sometimes weapons of mass destruction. Chomsky explains why his job is harder when compared to previous presidents:

There used to be one that was always readily available: The Russians. You could always defend yourself against the Russians. But they're losing their attractiveness as an enemy, and it's getting harder and harder to use that one, so some new ones have to be conjured up. In fact, people have quite unfairly criticized George Bush for being unable to express or articulate what's really driving us now. That's very unfair. Prior to about the mid-1980s, when you were asleep you would just play the record: the Russians are coming. But he lost that one and he's got to make up new ones. ... So it was international terrorists and narco-traffickers and crazed Arabs and Saddam Hussein, the new Hitler, was going to conquer the world. (Chomsky, 2005, 4)

Media serves the current administration by making those imaginary enemies seem believable. The public is driven into and kept in a state of emotion that they can believe anything, especially if it comes from the TV. It is a form of media that already gained our trust.

They've got to keep coming up one after another. You frighten the population, terrorize them, intimidate them so that they're too afraid to travel and cower in fear. ... That gives relief. We were saved at the last minute. That's one of the ways in which you can keep the bewildered herd from paying attention to what's really going on around them, keep them diverted and controlled. (Chomsky, 2005, 4)

That is an example of a well-functioning propaganda system that works perfectly. Chomsky points that out as 'a success of propaganda of quite a spectacular type.' People can believe that they are actually fighting an illegal occupation and human rights abuses when they use force against people in Iraq.

The role of the media is supposed to inform people. But today's American media is hiding vital information from American citizens. Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky have been fighting against this situation in different areas both of which are advertised by the conservative media. Their success comes from the fact that they are members of conservative side and at the same time doing their business in a non-conservative way.

## II. THE MOVIE

*Fahrenheit 9/11* is a documentary film from director Michael Moore. His other films are *Roger and Me* and *Bowling for Columbine*. *Fahrenheit* opened in movie theatres around the world during the summer of 2004. It mainly attacks George W. Bush and his administration's handling of the 9/11 events and also criticizes the War on Terror. The film won Best Picture at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. It was also a record-breaking documentary.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* (USA 2004) is, beyond doubt, the most successful documentary of all times. It is Michael Moore's personal triumph to have brought his film to big multiplex cinemas. In this manner, Moore has outdone himself and the much-debated *Bowling For Columbine* (USA 2001) which, at the time being, was regarded as an outstanding commercial success. (Oppermann, 2004, 101)

The popularity of the film has driven many people crazy. Many authorities tried to suppress the film. Some tried to refute the information Moore presented.<sup>3</sup> Understanding the political condition in the United States on which the film elaborates, the direction of the news media and the impact of the attacks of September 11, 2001 on American people has crucial importance to appreciate this film. As Latta states, Moore tries to speak truth through the medium of film in spite of the power of increasing right-wing authoritarianism, *Fahrenheit 9/11* represents alternative to the official narrative of the conservative news media (2005, 66).

Many people think the film exposes the acts of a deceitful administration; others think the film consists of distortion of facts. The

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<sup>3</sup> In the 1930s, Roosevelt Administration's Federal Theatre Project funded a play by film director Orson Welles. It was about the topic of steel strikes from a working class perspective. Its title was *Cradle Will Rock*. Days before its opening it was cancelled by the government. Before the release of *Fahrenheit 9/11* similar things happened. Although it won a Palme D'Or at France's Cannes Film Festival, the Walt Disney Company forbids distribution of the film. Very soon, alternative distributors were interested in the film.

efforts to block *Fahrenheit 9/11* from the screen only made it more popular.

First of all, it has to be pointed out that Disney's refusal to show the film through their network has grossly helped to promote the movie. *Fahrenheit 9/11* became the film "you're not supposed to watch." Secondly, Moore's constant attacks on the American press and his ability to turn his entire persona into one big media event have also helped to increase the movie's reputation of being somehow "subversive" and a "must be seen". Thirdly, the decision to give the film an "R" rating (which means that, in America, people under 17 are not allowed to watch it) has also stimulated interest in the movie; many people in America regarded the rating as indirect censorship. (Oppermann, 2004, 102)

*Fahrenheit* was released in a time when America was full of people who were extremely discontent with the current administration and the current situation of the country. Thus, the film has caught great attention from viewers. This encouraged studios to produce more political documentaries.

No American president was criticized while they were still in the service in American history. LaSalle stated that "In the 90-year history of the American feature film, there has never been a popular election-year documentary like this one." (LaSalle, 2004)

The film opens with a black screen. All we hear is the sounds of the planes crashing into the World Trade Center. This opening scene reminds us the events that took place on 9/11. After the credits, Moore shows us the close relationship between the Bush family and the Saudi royal family. Before the film very few people knew about this relationship. Moore tries to outline the first term of the George W. Bush administration. He blames the insufficient flow of information which otherwise could have been used to prevent the events of September 11. He criticizes the wars on



Afghanistan and Iraq. He thinks these wars are unjust and cause suffering of the ordinary people.

### **2.1. Historical Background for *Fahrenheit 9/11***

Moore's standpoint is very similar to that of a patriot writer of the American Revolution era, Thomas Paine (Latta, 2005). His writings in the late 18th-century discussed state (and religious) authority and advocated that real authority resides in the People. Paine's best-known pamphlet, *Common Sense*, (1776) states:

“First. — That the King it not to be trusted without being looked after; or in other words, that a thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of monarchy. Secondly — That the Commons, by being appointed for that purpose, are either wiser or more worthy of confidence than the Crown.” (Paine, 1776 quoted from Latta, 2005, 86)

In addition to Latta's statements; Paine argued that government should serve the People, rather than the other way around, and that people should look after one another. He was one of the first to argue for social security for the poor and elderly. Considering Moore announced his next film would be about US health care and social security system, this is another parallel between Moore and Paine. It is an astonishing similarity between two writers separated by two hundred years. It should also be remembered Paine's writings were extremely influential and far-reaching. “He communicated the ideas of the Revolution to common farmers as easily as to intellectuals, creating prose that stirred the hearts of the fledgling United States.” (U. S. History Website) Moore's movie was very successful to turn the genre of political-documentary into a popular one.

Latta found and outlined another parallel between Paine and Moore. She argues that they both criticize human inventions which unpredictably does harm human. Paine pointed out a disease between

church and state, Moore between corporations and state. Paine's findings were named "natural disease of monarchy" which was set up to terrify and enslave mankind, Moore's findings were named "larger illness that exists" which was set up to monopolize power and increase profit at any costs. Paine talks about a state which could be described as a religious-political machine, Moore talks about a state which could be described as an industrial-political machine.

Moore stands in a position of Thomas Paine in his time. The two patriot writers may have the same fate, if one day Moore over-marginalize himself and spend his last years alone and poor, goes from very-popular to once-popular. Paine marginally stood against church, lost his popularity and died alone.

Moore also criticizes the way in which the Bush administration has abused the "War on Terror" as an excuse to increase its power over its citizens. The peak of this abuse is 'the Patriot Act' which brought the removal of certain civil rights of ordinary American citizens. The Patriot Act allows for searches of medical and financial records computer and telephone conversations even for the books you take out of the library.

Benjamin Franklin once said "Those that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."<sup>4</sup> (Franklin, 1963, vol. 6 p.242) I think this quote does a great job of summing up a lot of problems in the United States. After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the United States as a whole was scared. What resulted was the giving up of freedoms so that American citizens would feel safe from these imaginary terrorists.

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<sup>4</sup> This quotation, slightly altered, is inscribed on a plaque in the stairwell of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." (www.bartleby.com)

## 2.2. The Stolen Election

According to Donnelly, after the Cold War; Americans, both citizens and the politicians, threw themselves into enjoying the calmness they long missed. Governments started to decrease military budget for the first time in a long period. According to some of the political élite – including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz– this was an unreal feeling of security. It was believed America was left defenseless to new kinds of threats. The real motive of those people is thought to be the imposing of the United States power upon other countries, protection of the homeland and its allies, conducting several large-scale wars, sustaining nuclear superiority, continuous spending on a strong and ready-to-fire-at-all-times air force, and the military domination of the world. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, interrupted this calmness and suddenly transformed the public opinion into war-loving policy. Right after the attacks the new Bush administration in which Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz were the decision makers, started to link it to countries they had begun planning to invade long ago.

The new national security strategy was to blame those who are profitable to blame. All that was needed to bring this policy to life was a president who could easily be manipulated. Bush was the right person for the job. His father was an ex-president and his brother was a governor of a state: Florida. And he also knew some people who control the news media.

After all votes were counted it so happened that whoever wins Florida wins the presidency. When the count was still continuing Fox News announced Bush as the winner. “What most people don't know is that the man in charge of the decision desk at Fox that night the man who called it for Bush was none other than Bush's first cousin John Ellis.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

On the day of the election some Florida residents could not find their names on the lists. Some of them were taken out of the lists for crimes they have not committed yet. The documents were full of errors. “Second, make sure your campaign chairman is also the vote-count woman and that her state hires a company to knock voters off the rolls who aren't likely to vote for you. You can usually tell them by the color of their skin. Then make sure your side fights like it's life or death.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

The events lead to a recount which would prove in vain. Bush's father could tell the judges who were appointed to watch the recount when to stop it. “And even if numerous independent investigations prove that Gore got the most votes. If there was a statewide recount, under every scenario, Gore would've won the election. It won't matter, as long as all your daddy's friends on the Supreme Court vote the right way.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

As a routine the election results had to be certified at the Congress. Bush's rival Al Gore was the president of the congress then. He had to lead a session to announce that he lost the election, unless of course a legal objection took place. There were objections. But no senator had the courage to legalize them.

On the day the joint session of both the House of Representatives and the Senate was to certify the election results Al Gore, in his dual role as outgoing vice president and president of the Senate presided over the event that would officially anoint George W. Bush as the new president. If any congressman wanted to raise an objection, the rules insisted that he or she had to have the signed support of just one senator. ... Not a single senator came to the aid of the African-Americans in Congress. One after another, they were told to sit down and shut up. It's a sad day in America, Mr. President, when we can't find a senator to sign the objections. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

When you win an election with lesser votes than your rival, you end up having many enemies: the public. “On the day George W. Bush was inaugurated tens of thousands of Americans poured into the streets of D. C. in one last attempt to reclaim what had been taken from them. They pelted Bush's limo with eggs and brought the inauguration parade to a halt.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) As a routine George W. Bush was supposed to get out of the car and greet people, then walk to the stand to swear for his country. “The plan to have Bush get out of the limo for the traditional walk to the White House was scrapped. Bush's limo hit the gas to prevent an even larger riot. No president had ever witnessed such a thing on his inauguration day.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) These events were never televised. All news networks preferred not to broadcast anything but the inauguration ceremony.

### **2.3. Terror Warning on the First Days**

According to Moore, the new president was a noticeable outdoor man. He walked like a cowboy, and he talked like one. The White House was generally silent for the first eight months of Bush’s presidency. “In his first eight months in office before September 11 th George W. Bush was on vacation, according to *The Washington Post*, 42 percent of the time.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) Consequently things did not go smoothly. There were documents to sign, things to arrange, changes to confirm. “He couldn't get his judges appointed, he struggled to pass his legislation and he lost Republican control of the Senate. His approval ratings in the polls began to sink. He was already beginning to look like a lame-duck president. With everything going wrong, he did what any of us would do. He went on vacation.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Moore gives the viewer clues about Bush and his character. As the president of the USA he is the main star of the film. He is portrayed as an incompetent president who failed to fulfill responsibilities of the presidency. He would prefer to be jogging at a ranch in Texas, or yachting in Kennebunkport. *Fahrenheit 9/11* tells us that the president is not a strong character to lead a nation. He tries to prove he is not suitable for presidency. He started an unjust war with a country that had nothing to do with the attacks. Bush is portrayed as a man incapable of running a company. The viewer is informed that he ran three oil countries to bankruptcy. How could such a man be trusted with a country?

Moore states that media never paid attention if invading Iraq was fair or not. Similar invasions have been ignored before. If an invasion is causing some rich people make more profit, it can easily be ignored. Because the media is owned by his close friends who feeds on his money. Chomsky explains when media prefers to keep quite:

When the South African occupation of Namibia was declared illegal in 1969, did the United States impose sanctions on food and medicine? Did it go to war? Did it bomb Capetown? No, it carried out twenty years of "quiet diplomacy." It wasn't very pretty during those twenty years. In the years of the Reagan - Bush administration alone, about 1.5 million people were killed by South Africa just in the surrounding countries. Forget what was happening in South Africa and Namibia. Somehow that didn't sear our sensitive souls. We continued with "quite diplomacy" and ended up with ample reward for the aggressors. They were given the major port in Namibia and plenty of advantages that took into account their security concerns. ... And nobody bothered to point out the conclusion that follows: No reason was given for going to war. None. No reason was given for going to war that could not be refuted by a literate teenager in about two minutes. That again is the hallmark of a totalitarian culture. It ought to frighten us, that we are so deeply totalitarian that we can be driven to war without any reason being given for

it and without anybody noticing Lebanon's request or caring. It's a very striking fact. (Chomsky, 1987, 65)

Intelligence agencies repeatedly warned the authorities and the president during that time. But Bush chose to ignore that information.

Ashcroft told acting FBI director, Thomas Pickard that he didn't want to hear anything more about terrorist threats. Mr. Watson had come to you and said that the CIA was very concerned that there would be an attack. You said that you told the attorney general this fact repeatedly in these meetings. That correct? I've told him at least on two occasions. And you told the staff, according to this statement Mr. Ashcroft told you that he did not want to hear about this anymore. His own FBI knew that summer there were al Qaeda members in the U.S. And bin Laden was sending his agents to flight schools around the country. But Ashcroft's Justice Department turned a blind eye and a deaf ear. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

When you have total control over the media and the educational system, it is not a healthy democracy. It is crucial for a well-functioning propaganda system that the subjects above not be discussed. Moore opens them to discussion through his films and TV shows.

### III. THE DIRECTOR

#### 3.1. His Life

In her research Maureen Elizabeth Latta presents a short history of Flint, Michigan. In 1954 Moore was born in Flint, the first American city to have a black mayor, even when 70 per cent of the city was white. He comes from a working class background, and is a descendent of Irish immigrants who came to the United States in the first half of the 19th Century. (Latta, 2005; 71)

He grew up during the sixties, went to Catholic school. He always admired certain social activists who dedicated themselves to civil rights and anti-poverty work, and against the Vietnam War. In high school there came a time Moore got elected to the school board. He managed to fire the principal of the school who once treated him and his friends unfairly. It was around this time a big industrial company declared they had to dismiss many of the employees. This had a huge impact on the people of Flint. Several of Moore's relatives used to work there. Moore started to plan making a movie about it. He sold his house and furniture, organized bingo games and came up with approximately \$60000. The film is *Roger and Me*, Roger being company's chairman Roger Smith who joined Moore's action. Their journey pushed its meaning beyond Flint. It started to criticize corporations and financial and politic systems of the USA. Similar to *Fahrenheit*; *Roger and Me* consisted of humor, Moore's experiences as an American citizen, his observations, archival footage, and public stunts which later will become Moore's characteristic style. (Latta, 2005; 73)

After *Roger and Me* Michael Moore directed documentaries/films like, *The Big One*, *Bowling for Columbine*, and two television series, *The Awful Truth* and *T.V. Nation*. Latta states that all of his works rely on a "social context" to communicate a "social and political message." For



*Roger* the social context was the crisis of General Motors, for *Columbine* it was the school shootings, for *Fahrenheit*, the attack on World Trade Center. According to her, he utilized documentary techniques to present a radical analysis of American militarism. Later he carried his unique approach into *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Michael Moore questioned American culture and ideology before in “Bowling For Columbine”. *Fahrenheit* should be read after combining it with Moore’s other works since Moore is actually examining the operation of American Empire. It would be dead wrong to come to a conclusion that he is only attacking Bush. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is another awful truth about how much can be sacrificed for financial gains, how far a bunch of people that leads the super power USA can go to alter the maps and to change the lives of millions of people.

In *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore discovers critical connections between never-before-seen violence of mass murder at the local high school (social context) and the daily activities of the city’s largest factory which happens to be weapons manufacturer (social and political message). *Columbine*, as it is pointed out in the film, is now synonymous with a specific kind of violence, school shootings. The main idea of the film is that availability of shotguns brought this massacre to the lives of teenagers. According to Latta, Moore also adds white supremacy, as it is being practiced, and has been practiced historically in the United States, into the mixture.

“For many Americans, Moore has become ‘The Titan from Michigan’ who has challenged American media and the American press in particular which, according to Moore, has simply stopped functioning as an independent institution.” (Oppermann, 2004; 102) Moore radically criticizes the American system and advances that critique into the mainstream. Michael Moore himself articulates this perspective in a 2002

interview: “The purpose of the liberal is to police the political discourse, so that the left end of the discussion goes no further than just a tiny bit left of centre, and then to marginalize everybody else out here as if they are not part of the debate.”

### 3.2. His Style

Moore based *Fahrenheit* mainly on the information he got from Gregory Palast, who is a British investigative journalist. Palast also is the first reporter who wrote about how Bush stole the 2000 election. He also exposed the Bush - Enron scandal. But the U.S. media preferred to neglect those matters. Palast’s book “The Best Democracy That Money Can Buy” is also never mentioned on mainstream channels. He generally works for The Guardian and BBC News. Palast jokes about a footage on Bush: “Maybe we should give this to our fat, American friend who looks like a chicken. He can use it uncensored as entertainment material.” He is aware of the fact that his findings will not be televised in the U.S. Moore has this rare kind of potential.

Moore is both political and artistic, enlightening and entertaining at the same time. He owes this to nature of the techniques he utilized during the making of *Fahrenheit 9/11*. “A mixture of various media and activist art traditions, a mixture of various journalism and performance art techniques, a mixture of political montage and theatricality serves Moore in being both political and artistic.” (Latta, 2005; 84)

*Fahrenheit* tells us about the milestone events of the new millennium in American politics: the contested 2000 election of Republican president George W. Bush; followed by a terrorist attack of an unprecedented scale on September 11, 2001; followed by a counter-attack-like war targeted at the wrong country and for false excuses which depends entirely on misled intelligence.

Propagandist films impose a thought on their audience. Moore, in *Fahrenheit*, tries to simulate a viewer's mechanism of thought. According to Latta; with its opening sequence, played along the film's credits, Moore sets certain rules up front. He reminds us that the politicians are no different than actors, with their speeches and pre-prepared press-conference answers, with all their theatricality, complete with make-up. This effect prepares the viewer for the disappointment that follows. Their lies are placed along behind-the-scenes truths, both of which are ironically captured with the same cameras.

“For power to maintain its credibility--or for the ‘fake’ to look ‘real’ (that is, for the ‘real’ to go on unchallenged), as cinema dictates--its workings must remain invisible.” (Minh-ha, 1992; quoted from Latta) Hollywood films are designed to give the audience the feeling that they are not designed; they try very hard to hide their construction. *Fahrenheit* gives the audience clues about the construction of the documentary itself. *Fahrenheit 9/11* does not hide its cinematic construction and does not utilize those techniques of the Hollywood film which pulls the viewer into a trance-like state of identification. (Latta, 2005; 90)

According to Minh-Ha, documentaries, opposed to the popular belief, cannot or should not be neutral or objective. Terms like “personal film,” “personal documentary,” and “subjective documentary,” creates an illusion that such a thing as “objective documentary” can be made. *Fahrenheit 9/11* pushes the limits of documentary and performance by politically intervening in political area, offering an alternative to mainstream media.

Moore, as the narrator and possibly the central character in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, targets to avoid catharsis and audience identification. Hollywood films demand the audience to identify with the actors to

prevent thinking and criticizing. Moore interrupts the flow of images, and thus reminds the audience they are watching a movie.

As stated in the work of Latta, following the opening credits, we watch a blank screen with sounds that we have already associated with the crash of hijacked planes hitting the World Trade Center. We hear people screaming, glasses shattering. Then the image of New Yorkers looking up to the sky with horror, panic and shock on their faces strike us. Unlike the mainstream media Moore rejects to awe people with this technique to depict that day of 2001. The destruction was unfortunately aired again and again just to boost the public support for the Bush administration's aggressions overseas. Moore resists provoking his audience in order not to fall into the trap of mainstream media. He keeps the audience distant from the scene which would otherwise seduce the spectator into experiencing the event as if it were happening now. The slow-motion footage of the debris and white ashes flying through dense air, gives the audience time to recall their own memories of the event. (Latta, 2005; 91)

Moore chooses first person narrative to give the impression that it is a direct address to the people which seems to be ordinary Americans. To be specific, Americans who are not the political and economic élite are the people Moore wants to be heard by. In *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Bush says: "This is an impressive crowd. The haves, and the have mores! Some people call you the élite. I call you my base." Moore's base is his audience. Although he is famous and rich out of his films and books, Moore continues to wear baseball-cap, jeans and t-shirt. (Latta, 2005; 94) Since that is a sign of identification with the working class of which he is a member since he was born, this is to tell the audience "Some of you may think I am a have-more. Some people call you the working class, I call you my base." Both Bush and Moore speak to audiences with different backgrounds depending on the situation. Moore medium to transfer his ideas is inside jokes that will be

understood by a certain audience, such as youth, or those who are at the same age as Moore.

The usage of sources from other art forms like photography, music, journalism and so on makes the film more convincing, and thus it makes it an appropriate tool for social change. Editing is one of the basics of the art of cinema, and when it is done masterfully, as in here, it helps create multi-layered messages. Access to a larger audience –internet, movie theatres, DVDs, TV and public presentations– than any other art form increases the film’s effectiveness as a tool for social change. (Latta, 2005; 5)

Moore’s movie is masterfully edited. Editing is a critical part of *Fahrenheit 9/11*. This is the main process of the production of meaning, a meaning that does not exist in any particular piece alone. Every single element of a movie should be strong in itself. But they should also serve to create a stronger whole than each single element.

The essence of cinema does not lie in the images, but in the relation between images. Editing is mainly the application of the art of film which can be basically described as cutting and sorting pieces of film, often producing contrasts, shocks, or rhythms. Editing has emotional and psychological effects on the viewer. It is aimed at producing a meaning. (Eisenstein, 1975; 39)

For *Fahrenheit 9/11* editing serves multiple purposes. One of them is to make ironical remarks about the world support in Iraq war. Another is to show contradictory official explanations. It also helps Moore expose power and class relations behind current events, and to reconsider events in current American history.<sup>5</sup> Editing also lets him convey his class analysis of the United States culture in a shorter time. Editing lets him compare images of the wealthy élite who control the war and the working class who

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<sup>5</sup> The Los Angeles Times described the film as an alternate history of the last four years on the US political scene.

die in it. This is the cinematic depiction of a hierarchical, advanced capitalist society where the “haves” enjoy the power at the expense of the “have-nots.”

Two old women describe their disgust about Halliburton who keeps being awarded major contracts supplying the war on Iraq. This is followed by an American soldier in Iraq talking about how inflated Halliburton’s Iraq wages are compared to an American soldier’s wages. Shortly after these clips the scene of Lila Lipscomb who mourns her dead soldier son while she walks outside the White House. The sequence suggests that American corporations and politicians are engaged in an effort to engineer wars for profit.

Consistent with Latta, the film is filled with Moore’s brand of ironic editing; as in the “Coalition of the Willing” sequence in which clips of young native girls dancing in the Republic of Palau, a man driving a primitive cart in Costa Rica, and a Viking ship in Iceland. “The Republic of Palau. The Republic of Costa Rica. The Republic of Iceland. None of these countries has an army, or for that matter, weapons. So it looked like we’d be doing most of the invading stuff ourselves. Romania. The Kingdom of Morocco. ... The Netherlands. Afghanistan. Afghanistan? Oh, yeah. They had an army. Our army. I guess that’s one way to build a coalition.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) This is done to illustrate the lack of significant support for Bush’s militarism among the world’s nations. Moore also makes fun of Bush’s wild-west style war rhetoric with footage from old Western films. The use of the phrase “smoke ‘em out” by the president and Western film actors means that Bush is consciously or unconsciously emphasizing the creation of American westward expansion and its popular culture characters. (Latta, 2005; 97) Coincidentally that is another destructive story in the U.S. history. The war in Iraq could be named eastward expansion by future historians. Latta also states that Moore comes up with a particular sort of editing of media clips to critique

the media. For example, Moore says, “Fortunately, we have an independent media in this country who would tell us the truth,” before a sequence of various news clips from ABC, FOX, NBC, CNN and CBS showing reporters’ obvious biases. In those clips, George W. Bush and Rumsfeld link Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and terrorist group al Qaeda several times in the same sentence. Editing serves Moore to show his view of how Bush and the mainstream media misled the public about a connection between Hussein and the terrorists.

Editing is also used to compare clips of Bush and Powell warning the public that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction with contradictory clips of Powell and Rice reporting at press conferences in 2001 that Saddam Hussein “has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction.” When official explanations contradict, Moore allows the architects of American neo-imperialism to hang themselves with their own propaganda. He does not need any further editing. Moore’s political editing turns the tactics of state and media against themselves. (Latta, 2005; 97)

The use of music is targeted to increase the effect of editing in *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Unlike Hollywood films, songs are not designed to maximize the emotions during climax. Instead they serve as commentaries, generally with ironic and humorous lyrics. Melodies are generally not sentimental again unlike Hollywood films. One example for that is the scene where Moore asks “Is it rude to suggest that when the Bush family wakes up in the morning they might be thinking about what’s best for the Saudis instead of what’s best for you or me?” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

The lyrics of the song that is played during Bush and cabinet members with the Saudi élite holding hands and smiling for photo opportunities are “Shiny happy people holding hands / shiny happy people laughing.” Following the presentation of a strong evidence of ethically

debatable dealings between the American and Saudi governments, the laughter distracts the attention of the audience. Audience may not recall the exact evidence but they will not forget the ironic editing of “happy people holding hands.” (Latta, 2005; 99)

The Bush family and the Royal Saudi family were so close to each other that the Saudi ambassador was given the surname Bush among friends. Michael Moore narrates:

Prince Bandar was so close to the Bushes they considered him a member of the family. They even had a nickname for him: Bandar Bush. Two nights after September 11 th, George Bush invited Bandar Bush over to the White House for a private dinner and a talk. Even though bin Laden was a Saudi and Saudi money had funded al Qaeda and 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis here was the Saudi ambassador, casually dining with the president on September 13th. What were they talking about? Were they commiserating or comparing notes? Why would Bandar's government block American investigators from talking to the relatives of the 15 hijackers? Why would Saudi Arabia become reluctant to freeze the hijackers' assets? The two of them walked out on the Truman Balcony so that Bandar could smoke a cigar and have a drink. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

We should also remember that the Saudis had a special treatment after the World Trade Center attacks. The government let Osama Bin Laden’s family leave the U.S. after September 11 even though all other air traffic was grounded.

In the days following September 11th all commercial and private airline traffic was grounded. The FAA has taken the action to close all of the airports in the United States. Even grounding the president's father, former President Bush on a flight forced to land in Milwaukee. Thousands of travelers were stranded, among them Ricky Martin due to appear at tonight's Latin Grammy Awards. Not even Ricky Martin could fly. But really, who wanted to fly? No one, except the



bin Ladens. We had airplanes pick up Osama bin Laden's family and other Saudis and transport them out of the U.S. The White House approved planes to pick up the bin Ladens and numerous other Saudis. At least six private jets and nearly two dozen commercial planes carried the Saudis and bin Ladens out of the U.S. After September 13th. In all, 142 Saudis, including 24 members of the bin Laden family were allowed to leave the country. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Then we watch the footage of a public beheading in Saudi Arabia. Moore points out that the relationship between the Bush family and the Saudi Royals has gone too far. It is presented as a contradiction with liberal American values.

As the minutes went by, George Bush continued to sit in the classroom. Was he thinking, "I've been hanging out with the wrong crowd. Which one of them screwed me? Was it the guy my daddy's friends delivered a lot of weapons to? Was it that group of religious fundamentalists who visited my state when I was governor? Or was it the Saudis? Damn. It was them. I think I better blame it on this guy. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Michael Moore also displays the financial connections between the two families. James R. Bath was the middleman in between. He and the president were friends from long ago. "In 1972, two airmen were suspended for failing to take their medical examination. One was George W. Bush. And the other was James R. Bath. In 2000, the documents show both names. But in 2004, Bush and the White House had Bath's name blacked out. Why did Bush not want the press and the public to see Bath's name on his military records? Perhaps he was worried that the American people would find out that at one time, James R. Bath was the Texas money manager for the bin Ladens. Bush and Bath had become good friends when they both served in the Texas Air National Guard. After they were discharged when Bush's dad was head of the CIA Bath opened up his

own aviation business after selling a plane to a man by the name of Salem bin Laden heir to the second-largest fortune in Saudi Arabia the Saudi Binladin Group.”

The use of music creates a common language that speaks to various audiences. The scene where George W. Bush was suspended for absence before a medical exam to avoid the detection of his drug use during the time he served in the Texas Air National Guard is played along an old Eric Clapton song; “Cocaine.” This song can be recognized by those who grew up in the 1970s. The scene is not about his drug use but about his connection with James R. Bath who is a middle-man between Bush family and the Saudi Royals. A few days before Christmas, American soldiers start a raid on an Iraqi family, the Iraqi women and his son scream and cry out of fear. We watch this scene with the accompanying song “Santa Clause is coming to town.” When soldiers enter the dark house and, amidst crying and general chaos, drag a man from the second floor, the song goes “He sees you when you’re sleeping / He knows when you’re awake / He knows if you’ve been bad or good / So be good for goodness sake”. (Latta, 2005; 100) However the songs sound irrelevant to the subject, music is used to produce a secondary meaning for a smaller portion of the audience.

During a scene where American soldiers tell us their experiences of killing innocent civilians they are motivated by songs which is transmitted from their war machine’s internal communications. They even have a popular song: “The Roof is on Fire.” One of the soldiers says it symbolizes Baghdad catching fire from the explosions of American bombs and missiles. (Latta, 2005; 101)

Moore tries to exhibit the brands which make money out of war. For this purpose he repeatedly names companies, most of which are running in the oil business.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* is the movie with the most brands out of the 30 top box office rulers of the same year. Disney, Nike, United Defense, WalMart, Watergate Hotel, Zytech, Unocal, Harken, Carlyle Group, and Halliburton are some of the brands that appeared in the documentary. Advertisers use the cultural force of film since it is the most powerful medium for communication in the world. The latest advertising strategy for corporations is now to make this seamlessly. (Latta, 2005; 102)

In fact, *Fahrenheit 9/11* functions as a mocking of the style of corporate media advertising to reveal the way that meaning is produced in society. But it is the other way around. Most brands would not want their names in this kind of advertisement. While a businessmen talks about how much money can be made in Iraq we are shown clips from a Halliburton commercial that promotes the company as “the supplier of hot meals, supplies, clean clothing and communications to our [American] soldiers so they can be a little closer to home.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) That way Moore portrays Vice President Dick Cheney as a war-profiteer since he was the chief executive officer of Halliburton Industries between the regimes of Bush Sr. and Bush Jr.

In an interview Moore says “One of the wonderful flaws of capitalists is that they will actually help me produce something against their interests, if they can make a dime out of it.” (BBC Website, Michael Moore Talks To Kirsty Wark, 2002)

Over the course of the last few years, American nation became increasingly hostile against questions aimed at their leaders. It was considered treasonous to criticize the president. It is a citizen's duty to ask questions of their leaders and their policies, yet such questions are increasingly labeled as “un-American” and even “pro-terrorist.” As Hitler once said, “What good fortune for those in power that people do not think.”

The average American family is scared out of their wits by the media-pumped fear of drug dealers, gangs, and terrorists. The Bush administration tries to keep the population in a state of paranoia. We hear from the member of Bush administration that “We [American people] have entered what may very well prove to be the most dangerous security environment the world’s known,” and “Terrorists are doing everything they can to gain even deadlier means of striking us [the USA].” Also another statement by Bush himself “The post-9/11 world is no longer safe.” Later we hear Bush say “Americans should fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots.”

Demonstrations of useless devices like “family safe room” “emergency escape parachute for skyscrapers” indicate the silliness of a culture of fear and the methods for both creating it and making money on it.

Now to escaping from a skyscraper. John Rivers is the CEO of the Executive Chute Corporation. Good morning to you, John. ... It's an emergency escape chute. It's an option of last resort. ... You only have to be on the 10th floor or above. ... They can put this on themselves in as easy as about 30 seconds. It's real easy to put on. When you first get this chute, you're gonna wanna put it on and try it on a few times yourself. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

The U.S. government wants its citizen to be fearful. When Americans hear such things as a safe room, the funny thing is they actually fear. The greatest fear from 9/11 should be what short-sighted and dangerous things can Bush administration do in retaliation?

The reality facing American families is they're not as safe as they used to be. Drug dealers and users looking for their next fix. Gangs who roam the streets in search of their next victim. And the growing threat of terrorists means the need for protection is ever greater. And now that protection is here. Zytech Engineering,

LLC has developed and tested a safe room finally affordable to the average American citizen. Protection formerly obtainable only by the wealthy or powerful. Heck, you can be sitting in here, drinking your finest Bordeaux and enjoying life, while chaos is erupting outside. Every family in America should prepare itself for a terrorist attack. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Media was used not only to deliver news in the way the politicians desired, it was also used to spread fear among the public. The impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks can also be seen on the forms and functions of US entertainment television. News coverage of the attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the expression of these events on entertainment television served in legitimating the war.

With the war in Afghanistan over and bin Laden forgotten the war president had a new target: The American people. We've got an unusual terror warning from the feds to tell you about. Fox News has obtained an FBI bulletin that warns terrorists could use pen guns, like in James Bond filled with poison. ... You can make people do anything if they're afraid. And how do you make them afraid? Well, you make them afraid by creating an aura of endless threat. They played us like an organ. They raised the orange, up to red, then they dropped it back to orange. I mean, they gave these mixed messages, which were crazy-making. The world is changed after September the 11th. It's changed because we're no longer safe. ... It was very, very skillfully and ugly, in what they did. ... They will continue, in my view, as long as this administration is in charge of every once in a while, stimulating everybody to be afraid. There clearly is no way that anyone can live constantly on edge like that. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Even in small towns, ordinary people have internalized this kind of fear. Moore's interview proves his point about how successful the media was. "Do you feel extra suspicious of outsiders? Oh, everybody does that. That's just something that happens." (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) Fear has become a natural element in ordinary people's lives.

Moore forces the audience to question the plans and acts of corporations and the state. As a result the spectator is face-to-face with something unfamiliar, the kind of news they never heard before. According to Latta it reminds the audience that their ideas, opinions and sentimental reactions are controlled by whatever the media constructs. It is media's choice what they will be exposed to. Media decides for them what to think, what to feel. Moore equips his viewers with the knowledge of the ways thoughts are determined.

Footage, editing and music are not the only elements of a Moore documentary. Street performances, or in other words; pranks also serve him to reach his political and artistic goals. According to Rushkoff, although they seem to be lowering the seriousness of his documentary, the fact is that pranks work best when people do not know if you are serious or not. Such pranks were first seen in 1920s but they caught on only in the 1960s. Underground groups used pranks as an alternative form of anti-war protest. Pranks later became popular again in the 1990s, this time as a device for social construction mainly conducted by AIDS activists, feminists, and environmentalists.

According to Latta, Moore transforms his works from traditional documentary into activism by using pranks. In *Bowling For Columbine*, Moore takes two young men to K-Mart, disabled by bullets that were bought there. They were the victims of the high school massacre. The bullets were still in their bodies, so they wanted to return the merchandise. At first some personnel try to turn them away. Consequently they decide to go to another K-Mart store and buy all their bullets. The following day they return to corporate headquarters with boxes of nine millimeter bullets and a couple of reporters. It starts to get crowded. They must wait outside till the person in charge shows up. Suddenly the event turns into a press conference. They make an announcement that within 90 days K-Mart stores

will no longer sell ammunition. (Latta, 2005; 77) Moore says “That blows my mind. That’s more than what we asked for.”

The two pranks in *Fahrenheit 9/11* are weapons at a symbolic level. First prank is actually a radical announcement. Moore borrows an ice cream truck in Washington D.C. to drive around Capitol Hill reading the Patriot Act on a loudspeaker. Before this the audience is informed that since September 11 U.S. citizens have been stripped off their civil rights with the new regulations brought by the Patriot Act. Additionally the act passed in Congress without anybody actually reading it.

They wait till the middle of the night, drop it in the night, print it in the night. And the next morning when we come in, it passes. How could Congress pass this Patriot Act without even reading it? Sit down, my son. We don't read most of the bills. Do you really know what that would entail if we were to read every bill that we passed? Well, the good thing, it would slow down the legislative process. I couldn't believe that virtually no member of Congress had read the Patriot Act before voting on it. So I decided the only patriotic thing to do was for me to read it to them. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

The Patriot Act, adopted by Congress and signed by Bush six weeks after the attacks has changed the way the government does business. Moore tries to prove that this act was written before the attacks. The attack were used as an excuse to pass it. The Patriot Act strips American citizens off of their basic freedoms. “But people we spoke to say they're willing to give up liberties to fight terrorism.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

The Patriot Act was criticized for invading privacy of the citizens in the name of preventing terror. The administration used the media to silence the voices that rose against this bill. “There was an assumption of the administration that there had to be a surrender of certain of our rights. There's troubling definitions in the bill. The definition of terrorist, it's so

expansive that it could include people who - Like me.” (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Second prank involves the help of a military official who has, earlier in the film, expressed anti-war ideas. They go around Capital Hill asking members of Congress who might send their children to Iraq. Additionally we are informed that out of 535 members of Congress, only one had an enlisted son in Iraq. The scene resembles an earlier prank in which Marine recruiters go around the streets and malls of Flint’s poor neighborhoods to recruit young black boys.

Military experts say three times the 120,000 U.S. Troops now deployed would be needed to pacify and rebuild the country. They would find them all across America in the places that had been destroyed by the economy. Places where one of the only jobs available was to join the Army. Places like my hometown of Flint, Michigan. (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

In the second half of the film, Moore allows the story of Lila Lipscomb who initially appeared as a flag-waving patriot to take lead. Lipscomb When her son Michael Pedersen is killed when his Black Hawk helicopter is downed in April 2003, Lipscomb breaks down as she reads his jaded letter from the front. By the end of the film, she makes a tearful pilgrimage to the White House.

Latta states that Lila Lipscomb represents the quintessential American mother. We first meet Lila Lipscomb in the middle of the film representing a perfect example of American mother. She lives in Flint, Michigan, also Moore’s hometown. She was unemployed for a while. Now she works in an office that helps the poor. Many of her relatives have served in the military, and she proudly encouraged her own children to do the same. A religious Christian, she is a white woman married to an African American. They have several children, two serving in the Army. She and her husband represent the “backbone” of American family life.



We feel her determination and her pride in her family's hard work, and we root for their success. "I'm an extremely proud American. I'm probably more proud than the average Joe. When I put my flag out, I can't allow it to touch the ground. Because I know the lives that were lost and the blood that was shed so that I could be here and have a flag." (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) As seen here she has a habit of hanging the American flag outside her house every day. She thinks very highly of her country; "My family is what I consider part of the backbone of America. It's families like mine, and it's not just my family, there's hundreds of families, millions of families out there, that this country was founded on their backs." (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*) She hates the anti-war protestors who she feels are dishonoring her son, who signed up. This is the Lila Lipscomb we meet around the middle of the film.

The second time we see her she tells us how much she feared for her son's life in Iraq until finally she was informed of his death. Lipscomb's interviews with Moore create an emotional scene especially when Lipscomb and her entire family read aloud the last letter from her son the letter which arrived just two days before her son died. Lipscomb's reaction to her son's death in Iraq is difficult to watch.

Later in the film, Moore takes her to the White House, where she tries to find out the meaning of her loss and pain. She shares her grief with another mother, a protestor outside the White House. She has to tolerate a woman who refuses to believe that Lipscomb is real. Lipscomb sobs when she talks about the woman's attitude towards her. Lipscomb thinks she is ignorant. This reminds her of her own ignorance before her son died. She cries out to her face: "People think they know, but you don't know. I thought I knew, but I didn't know." She almost collapses on the ground. The grief makes it hard for her to stand. She cries "I need my son." She continues "God, it's tougher than I thought it was gonna be to be here, but

it's freeing also, because I finally have a place to put all my pain and all my anger and to release it."

Moore thinks the worst part of all this is that future generations will know they were lied to. After all those explicit lies and deceitful acts, he worries that it will be very difficult to restore that trust again:

I've always been amazed that the very people forced to live in the worst parts of town, go to the worst schools, and who have it the hardest, are always the first to step up to defend that very system. They serve so that we don't have to. They offer to give up their lives so that we can be free. It is, remarkably, their gift to us. And all they ask for in return is that we never send them into harm's way unless it's absolutely necessary. Will they ever trust us again? (Moore, 2004; *Fahrenheit*)

Then Moore shows us the clip of an anguished Iraqi mother. Five family members, all civilians, were killed in an American attack. The Iraqi mother cries, "Why my family?" Despairingly, she calls upon Allah to bring similar destruction on the homes of Americans.

The sound of suffering and pain in the voices of the two mothers in Flint and Iraq, voices of two women separated by thousands of miles and two different religions is possibly the most convincing part of *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Moore has proved his gift by creating this unique scene and won the biggest prize in the film festival of Cannes.

Moore reached his audience very deeply due to the techniques mentioned above in this section. *Fahrenheit* manages to embrace the viewer from several aspects, you feel like a mother who just lost his son in an unjust war, you also feel a great shock when you see the hypocrisy of the world leaders. It also embraces the viewer mentally. You are forced to think about the events that recently happened when the footage is shown

you in slow-motion. It enables the viewer to recall the horrible events that happened on that sad day.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to raise some questions concerning how mainstream media and politics function in the American society, considering it is a society where multinational corporations and the United States government and its allies work hand-in-hand to ensure the continuation of the current structure by pumping fear in the minds of its citizens.

In the light of the brilliant analysis of Noam Chomsky, I tried to present two similar views of the American media. Both Moore and Chomsky highlights the facts that there is a malfunction in the mechanism of media. The filtering of news, the silencing of odd voices, favoring a certain group of people whose only goal is to make more profit at any costs conflict with the definition of a free media.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* works to create a space in which independent thinking is possible. Moore makes the audience question its trust in the decision-makers of the country in political and economic arenas and their goals. He brings the morality of the political-economic system into discussion. He sheds light on the media and its strategies. He examines the mainstream news and public relations industries while pulling them into radical social change. He makes the audience consider the official reasons for war overseas and repressions at home. When it comes to the grounds the war is fought for, Moore eloquently narrates:

*George Orwell once wrote that it's not a matter of whether the war is not real or if it is. Victory is not possible. The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous. A hierarchical society is only possible on the basis of poverty and ignorance. This new version is the past and no different past can ever have existed. In principle, the war effort is always planned to keep society on the brink of starvation. The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object*

*is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia, but to keep the very structure of society intact. (Moore, 2004; Fahrenheit)*

*Fahrenheit 9/11* proved that politics and documentaries can be fun when mixed together, they can ignite your emotions, put your intellect into motion, make you question the actions of your country. It even has the potential to provoke you to cause change. Moore's tactical approach to the documentary film reforms the genre, and makes way for more creative experimentation within the mainstream.

Even if you disapprove of what Michael Moore does in his documentaries, you should appreciate him. Because he works among journalists who are paid as the spokesperson of the white house, in a time when voices of different opinions are silenced, –Moore openly states that he wants George W. Bush out of White House– he focuses on the unsaid and unknown. He successfully uncovers what some people work very hard to hide. Chomsky states that through disinformation and misinformation the media has determined the general sense of democracy and many other things. Moore is in a position like the journalist motivated by Chomsky's surprisingly optimistic style. Periodic scandals confine the journalists to show the public the real affairs of government. But Moore acts like an ideal journalist, ideal not for the system but for the definition.

Moore works in a style which is a mixture of that of an activist, a TV reporter, a journalist. He proved a 2-hour-long political documentary may not be boring to watch. He can use parody as a weapon. He insists on asking the simplest question in front of the cameras. Maybe the most outstanding is Moore proved that things can be said out loud, large masses can hear what you say. He proved it is possible to know something and to make people know something. The true potential of his film can only be realized if it is discussed thoroughly and honestly.

There are things that the public needs to consider after seeing this movie. One- this is not the whole story. After all, any documentary that gets Americans talking about politics is a good thing.

The film's final summarizes its main perspective: "The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia, but to keep the very structure of society intact." That is to say that the threat against the American people is the American political and economic system.

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