

## The September 11<sup>th</sup>: how the news came to the world

When I was asked to write a two-page essay about the September 11<sup>th</sup>, the first idea that came to my mind was to write about any of the many films we can find on the internet or about a documentary. The topic of the 11-S is a very trite one and we can find many cultural references to it in any part of the world but mainly, obviously, in the United States: *Where in the world is Osama Bin Laden?* (2008 – American documentary), *The Secret History of 9/11* (2006 – American documentary), *Dear John* (2010 – American film), *Julie and Julia* (2009 – American film), *Loose Change* (an American series on the internet), *Being Osama* (2004 – Canadian documentary), *Kabul Express* (2006 – Bollywood film), *In the shadow of no towers* (2004 – graphic novel), *The Guys* (2001 – play)... These are only some of the cultural responses we can find to the 11-S. After looking at this wide range of possible sources for my essay I decided that I would write about: the newspaper covers of the newspapers from different parts of the world the same day of the tragedy or just the day after.



This newspaper cover belongs to a Spanish newspaper: 20 minutos. It is a newspaper whose ideological orientation is left or centre-left. This newspaper cover is from the 21 h. special edition of the newspaper. As we can see, there are two big pictures of the attack. The one on the top shows a photo of New York from the distance in which we can see dark smoke due to the crash of the two planes on the Twin Towers. The picture on the bottom shows how people ran away and on the background of this picture we can see the dust and smoke. The headline is very explicit: “sangre, fuego y caos en EE UU” and catches the eye easily with the big photographs.

The next newspaper cover is from an influential Spanish newspaper, El País. The same as the previous newspaper, its ideology is from the left or left-centre and is in favour of monarchy. The first cover is from a 20 h. especial edition in which we can see highlighted “América, atacada” and under it in slightly smaller words “Máxima alerta mundial” as if warning the reader of an imminent war. In the second cover we can read a long headline “EE UU sufre el peor ataque de su historia” and under it in bold letters “El mundo en vilo a la espera de las represalias de Bush”. In my opinion this newspaper has

centred in the attack as the trigger of a war. In both covers the image is the same: the Twin Towers falling down under a huge cloud of dust and smoke. The photograph is quite shocking because you can see hardly anything, you know both towers are falling into pieces and that many people were working on it.



For me, this cover is maybe the most shocking one from the ones I have found and chose for the essay. It belongs to a newspaper of San Francisco, The Examiner and it is clear in its headline: BASTARDS!. This word may summarize the thoughts of the 90% of the world population and the 100% of the North American citizens. A picture overlays almost the whole cover and it is a picture of one of the towers in flames and over it a big “light” insult: BASTARDS!. I find this cover really interesting for many reasons. One of them is, obviously the huge picture, the other is the headline because it is a light insult but an insult in the end and newspapers tend to be moderate with their opinions and how they express them. On the bottom we can read “A CHANGED AMERICA” and it was in fact true.

The next newspaper cover is from Daily News, a newspaper from New York and for me is also very eye-catching firstly due to the photograph, which shows clearly the first of the planes inlaid in the tower and how the second one is approaching to follow exactly the same destiny as the previous one. From my humble opinion, this picture can be considered as a cruel one because you see the plane going through the towers full of

people working and you can do nothing to stop it. The headline is quite shocking as well: in red very big letters (the colour of blood) we can read the fateful words “IT’S WAR”. This attack was obviously the trigger of a war and many north Americans claimed for it as a revenge.



El Nuevo Herald, an American newspaper from Miami shows in its cover three pictures: a pile of rubble where the Twin Towers used to be, another of the planes impacting against the towers and a woman with blood on her head being assisted.



This newspaper qualifies this attack as a second Pearl Harbour in which 3.403 people died. The estimates of the 11-S were, in contrast, of: 3.017 dead people (including the terrorist and the missing people) and more than 6.000 injured people.



In last term we have the cover of the English newspaper The Times. I find it also really interesting because the cover is a picture of the Twin Towers from the distance and we can only see dust and some, hardly anymore. The picture is self-explanatory and the only text we read is “10.02 am September 11 2001” a date for the collective memory.

I would have liked to talk about more covers from many parts of the world, for example the ones from Lebanon, Japan, Germany...but it was a short essay and I chose the covers I found more interesting and more illustrative of the 11-S. All the covers showed the crudity of the attack with their pictures and headlines but the American newspapers were much less restrained and made the covers according what the American people felt, uncensored.

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### **September 11 in movies and TV production**

The role of public opinion in the formation of the US foreign policy is of a fundamental significance all the way through the history until nowadays. The political culture in United States can be considered a very active one. The mobilization of public became even faster and easier with the development of new media. The aim of this paper is to focus on the other direction of this relationship, the image of the event of September 11 in the movies and television production. Or in other words the effect of recent war with terrorism on part of American culture. I have chosen those two kinds of media because I find it very influential on American society. This work is not using any secondary sources; the statements are based entirely on personal opinion about the movies mentioned and on observations made during my stay in United States and after that thanks to internet communication.

There are several ways in which movies or series about the events after 9/11 are made. First of them consist of movies showing the human impact of this catastrophe and the heroism of individuals dealing with it. This first group of work can be represented by for example the movies World Trade Center or Flight 93, for both of them is very typical the emotional, touching atmosphere

with generous amount of pathos which helps to produce strong patriotic feelings in the audience.

Second direction of production could be considered very similar to the first one, because its main characteristic is the ability to mobilize patriotic feelings. The difference is that in the first group the main focus is on the immediate consequences of the event and the human point of view. The main impressions of those movies are emotions, sense of unity in suffering and individual heroism of helping in hard situation. The other direction is focusing more on the political dimension of this event. It is dealing with the fear and uncertainty of the new era of the history of the US, when for the first time the public feels imminently threaten. This fear, and even more the consequences of this fear, is very illustratively described in the series of Homeland. The title is a reference to the system of Homeland security, which is a term covering many different systems of protection of the United States against the threat of terrorism. This system appeared after the 9/11 and it is still a subject of wide discussion. The series deals with two main questions of this system, first of them is where is the line that shouldn't be crossed while dealing with terrorism and if it even exists. What tools are justifiable and what is the relationship between legal and legitimate. This topic became very discussed in American society lately and one of the important movies dealing with this dilemma is the Unthinkable, which raises question if it is defensible to protect civilization and safety of many by destroying one in a barbarian way. The other very important moment of this series is the fact that the new realization that the peril is not only something foreign, strange or from the outside but that this danger can come from the inside as well. The contradiction is in the moment when an American

citizen, an object of automatic protection of US government, becomes a threat. The conflict is in the willingness to distinct between “us” and “the others” and the impossibility to apply this simple concept on recent situation.

The third kind of movies is more critical and tries to show this era of American history from less conventional point of view. The most significant from this group can be Fahrenheit 9/11. This movie is going through the events of September 11 step by step and tries to raise questions. The authors are advocating the conspiratorial theories about the role of American government and corporations. The importance of this direction of movies lies in bringing our attention to the fact that modern society is highly influenced by media and the public opinion is very often formed by information which can be not accurate and misleading. This aspect of society, and in particular of American society, is examined and put ad absurdum in the movie Wag the Dog.

Whether we support the official version proclaimed by US government or we advocate some kind of alternative explanation, it is indisputable that the “spectacular” aspect of 9/11 became an important part in forming not only US foreign and home policy but also it is a very significant principle of modern American culture. It seems to be another substantial aspect of the society of the US. After WWII as a response to the communist threat of atheism the phrase “In God we trust” appeared on the dollar bank notes, after 9/11 the American flag became necessary equipment of every household. The patriotism became not just required but almost obligatory and the absence of it or even the disapproval of what is “official” and “American” started to be considered dangerous and anti-American. By this the American society became much escalated in a sense that there are only two possibilities – to be “with us” or “against us”.

## **Oil, Smoke & Mirrors**

*Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* is a documentary movie directed by Ronan Doyle . It is made of a series of interviews to some of the most important experts on American history and politics, who show how Peak Oil and 9/11 could be closely related. As a matter of fact, oil is not an endless resource and, always more and more, having the control of it will mean having the power to lead the world.

The documentary starts focusing the attention on what Peak Oil is: in human history oil has been the most important mean to reach wealth and richness; our industry, agriculture and transportation are heavily dependent on oil. (To give an example, for each calorie of food we consume, 10 fossile calories are burned).

In an energy-eating world it is inconvenient declaring that the production of oil has already touched its maximum between 1999 and 2010, and that it is destined to fall smoothly as the years go by. This is the main problem we will have to face in the years yet to come and an important clue to understand many aspects of the American politics. In the future the demand for oil will continue to grow while the supply will slowly decrease leaving fertile terrain to tensions and so-called "oil-wars".

But why should we label 9/11 as a bloody conspiracy? During the documentary many examples are given and, whether we like it or not, the idea that United States were aware of it or, even worse envolved in it, is not so far.

There are many reason to believe it: looking at what happened itself, it seems quite improbable that neither a fighter airplane took off after the first attack; the nearest military base was only 2-minute-fly far and until that day fighters had been used 67 times for imminent threats. Nevertheless, as precedents confirm, it is impossible that a concrete-steel building would collapse due to over-heating and signs of use of thermite were found in the metal ruins: this usually happens when buildings are blusted.

Through a series of impressively candid, informed and articulate interviews, this documentary tries to wake us up and tell that the bizzare events surrounding the 9/11 attacks, and the equally bizzare prosecution of the so-called "war on terror", can be better understood in the wider context of an imminent and critical energy crisis.

If at the beginning the picture was not so clear, after the first half of the film, we start to go deeper and questioning ourselves on why that happened



on 9/11. It feels like overcoming the wall mass media put between fictional life and reality.

Bearing this in mind and looking at the events now, the interviewees take us throughout an analysis which almost demonstrates the conspirational theory.

Instead of discussing for a future equal redistribution of natural resources and energy, United States have chosen another strategy: through military power and false excuses they are trying to run an egemony over the rest of the world in order to assure the remaining oil reserves to themselves.

But how can they do it? First of all they need to be present and influential in the oil-richest region of the world which is the Middle-East. They must have the control of that land with military power and 9/11 seemed to be the best chance US could have to invade that important part of the world. “...*no 9/11, no war on terror...*”.

As it is so crucial being there, we cannot put apart the theory shown in the movie: United States could have let it happen, or partecipated in organising it, or even been the thinking mind of it.

This might sound horrible or product of a sick mind but, unfortunately, what we see suggests that perhaps the world we live on is very different from the idea we had of it. George W. Bush changed the perception of safety that Americans had and, after 9/11, playing with citizens’ fears, he started to paint an enemy, which was necessary to put all the people together and start the so-called “war on terror” to fight it and win, but with another purpose.

The “war on terror” is very likely a 21st-century colonialism which allow America to keep control over the most strategic area of the world. Once the enemy disappears they will be ready to aim their weapons to a new “dangerous” one, which could be either Iran, North Korea or Syria.

This film is a must-see for everyone, especially for American people who are kept in a bell jar by medias. The future it depicts is very worrying and it warns about a possible return of a hidden fascistic leadership which, thanks to mass media control, will facilitate United States to run unfair politics over less-developed countries. Additionally, the documentary urges everybody to wake up and reknow that the 9/11 was a big excuse to put solid bases for the “war on terror”. Even though the ideas presented in this film can at first seem daunting, its ultimate assertion is that these challenges can be met and surpassed, if, but only if, we can find the courage to perceive them. *Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* ends with an important warning which should make us think:

“...*Because without accurate information, without an accurate understanding of the world, you cannot have a functional democracy. If people don’t know what’s going on, and people don’t understand what their leaders are doing, there’s no democracy...*”

**Matteo Bernardini**

## THE 9/11 COMICS

The morning of September 11, 2001, the United States suffered the most destructive terrorist attack of their history. On that Tuesday morning four passenger jets were hijacked and as a result, two of them crashed, intentionally, into the Twin Towers (the main buildings of the World Trade Centre of New York), other crashed into the Pentagon and the last one's target was Washington D.C. but it finally crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

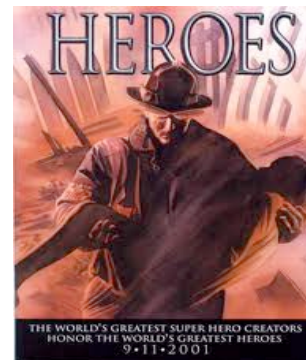
The attacks resulted in the death of nearly 3.000 people and countless material damages.

Thus, American society plunged into a deep sorrow and in a state of shock where nobody knew what actually had happened, and why.

Rapidly, lot of artistic manifestations, as well as literary works appeared in order to pay tribute to that tragedy that marked the history of the United States forever.

Focused on the necessity of coping with people's frustration and fears, some editorials, like Marvel, decided to publish comics dealing with the attacks.

*Heroes* was published on October 17, 2001, as an anthology of illustrations which raised the tragedy from two perspectives: firstly, the fact that the attack had been, not only a direct offense against the U.S., but also an attack against world peace. Secondly, they wanted to pay tribute to the real heroes of the story, policemen, firemen, doctors... that is, to those people who risked their lives to save other's.



Three months after the attacks, Marvel published a special edition of one of its most-known comics, *The Amazing Spider-Man*. This mourning edition had its cover totally in black and it illustrated a Ground Zero where patriotic heroes and villainous help the emergency corps to rescue people in the place of the tragedy.



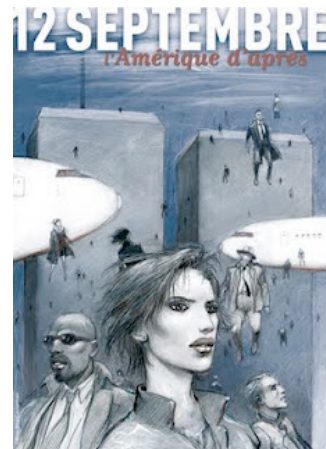
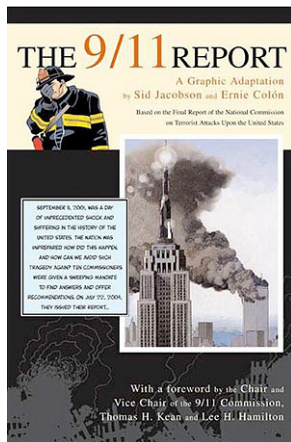


As it is usually said, reality goes beyond fiction and it is clearly reflected in the next comic.

On January 9, 2002, Marvel published another comic called *A moment of silence*, four dumb stories focused on the work of firemen, medical and police corps that fateful day. The 'special' of this work is that the prologue of the comic was written by the then mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani.

After having written the official version of the facts called *9/11 Commission Report*, a graphical version was published and it was called, *The 9/11 Report, a Graphic Adaptation*. The authors of this work try to illustrate the monitoring of the facts minute by minute, without politic or religious beliefs. This way, they try to capture the attention of the youth.

Finally, in other places apart from the United States, some works related to the attacks have been published, as we can see in the recent book, *12 septembre, l'Amérique d'après*.



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**Estudios culturales de EE.UU.  
11/9/2001**

I remember very well the moment when I first realised what was happening in those images that the television was showing me. At first it seemed a joke, a strange advertisement but, after a while, I knew I was staring at an event that would change the world forever.

Two planes, hijacked by 19 Al-Qaeda militants, attacked the World Trade Centre, crashing into the Twin Towers and reducing them to powder.

Nearly 3.000 people died in the attack, including the 227 passengers and the 19 terrorists aboard the four planes. After that, George W. Bush, who was the president at the time, and USA government started a war against Al-Qaeda, the credibility of which has always been questioned.

In this atmosphere of terror and doubt came Michael Moore, an American filmmaker and political commentator who directed several documentaries about USA policy. In 2004, at the Cannes Film Festival, he presented his documentary called “Fahrenheit 9/11”, a public criticism of the president and his so-called “War on Terror”.

The documentary is an analysis of the events surrounding 9/11. It starts with the history of the corrupt elections that allowed George W. Bush to become the president of the USA, the first of his tricks to obtain American's support. It continues with the events of 9/11 and then it explains the economic relationships between the Bush family and the Bin Laden family, which are extensive and suspect. The rest of the movie is an accusation against Bush for his psychological terrorism which caused an unnecessary and illegal war in Iraq, a country that had never posed a threat to the USA.

This movie became the highest-grossing documentary of all time grossing over \$222 million. It debuted at Cannes 5 months before the presidential elections in 2004 with the intent of “seeing Mr. Bush removed from the White House”. However, it didn't have the outcome Moore was hoping for and Bush was re-elected, despite all the illegal activity revealed in the documentary.

Watching “Fahrenheit 9/11” a lot of things struck me. The first is the fact that the day of the attack George W. Bush was visiting a primary school, and when he received the communication of the event he seemed not to react. Thousands of people were dying and he kept on reading a story with the children, that's a thing I will never understand. Regarding this event, Michael Moore says that he didn't say anything for a while, maybe because he was wondering if he could have avoided all this by paying attention to the information that he received in August 2001, when Osama Bin Laden

told him that he was planning an attack on the USA. Maybe he was thinking about all of his economic relations with Bin Laden's family and how to avoid investigation into this thing, that would have compromised his credibility and revealed that his war for freedom and destruction of the dictatorship in Iraq was in reality an oil war.

The days after the attack all flights were cancelled, except those with the express permission of the government. The majority of the flights that took off the following days were transporting Bin Laden's family members and other Saudis out of the USA.

There is a part of the documentary that I had to watch several times because I couldn't believe my ears, I didn't want to accept what they were saying.

After the attacks the government approved a law called the "Patriot Act" which allowed the authorities to investigate any so-called "terrorist" comment made by a US citizen, as well as access their private documents – even the books they borrowed from the library. They started to investigate minor things like an old man who told his friends at the gym that Bush wasn't a good president. The "best" part of all of this is that NONE of the people who approved this law had actually read it. The American people were ready to renounce a part of their freedom, trusting a government who hadn't even read the law that was going to pass. "Sit down, son. We don't read the most of the bills." These are the words of a congressman interviewed by a journalist, he says this like it was the most natural thing in the world.

Obviously this was only a part of the plan to terrify the nation into giving their approval for the starting of a war in Iraq, which began on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March of 2003.

And then comes the icing on the cake: the U.S. Army.

Every soldier, after the initial euphoria, realised that this was a useless war, a war of economic interests with the false objective of obtaining freedom for the Iraqis. A soldier in an interview declares that he will have never come back to Iraq, even if it meant risking prison.

At this point, the American people are still convinced that this war is a good thing, it is the best thing to do and they still trust their president, the same president who bans the showing of images of dead soldiers' coffins because they are "demotivating."

The last part of the documentary is dedicated to the recruitment of new soldiers because the troops in Iraq needed help. Moore shows images of two soldiers who go into poor cities telling young people that the army is able to take care of them in terms of healthcare and education, and that it can fulfil their dreams. They offered them a false escape from their poverty in order to take them to a place from which they would have never come back alive. Watching their faces I saw the desperation, their awareness of a

nonexistent future in a country where you are important only if you have a lot of money, a country which watches you dying if you haven't got the money to pay for healthcare, a country which exploits a terrible attack like 9/11 in order to reach their military goals, the same country which was asking these boys and girls to leave their families to fight a false war. A war which doesn't include any support from the members of the government themselves.

Finally, I think that everyone must see this documentary because it offers a great opportunity to understand what happened on and around that day. I hope that the American people who supported Bush will learn from their mistakes in order not to ruin their people and to destroy another country without any reason.

Giulia Querzola  
Estudios culturales de EEUU

# “World Trade Center”

Original title: World Trade Center  
Directed by Oliver Stone  
Country: U.S.A.  
Year: 2006  
Genre: Drama

On September 11, 2001 everything in New York works, laughs, lives. Suddenly a dumb sound and the hell starts. The Port Authority Police officers John McLoughlin and William J. Jimeno, who are patrolling the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown Manhattan, see a plane fly dangerously low overhead. The North Tower of the World Trade Center has been hit. Sergeant McLoughlin assigns many of the officers to assist in an evacuation attempt of the still undamaged South Tower. Then they hear reports that the South Tower has also been hit. An officer named Chris Amoroso appears to inform them of other events, such as the attack on the Pentagon and the second plane hitting the South Tower, though the group does not accept this. As the men prepare to enter the North Tower, the buildings begin to rumble: the South Tower is collapsing onto them. McLoughlin and the agent Jimeno are trapped under the rubble, with no way out. Two United States Marines, who are searching for survivors, find the men and call for help to dig them out. At the end they are rescued and they are then both reunited with their families at the hospital.

This is the true story of John McLoughlin and William J. Jimeno, two of the last survivors extracted from Ground Zero and the rescuers who never gave up. It's a story of that fateful time in the history of the United States when buildings would fall and heroes would rise to inspire the entire human race.

This is Oliver Stone's vision of that day, the 11<sup>th</sup>, which was in fact the only “act of war” perpetrated on U.S soil. In other words, the film tells the human and universal story of a wounded country, and he represents it in the darkness of the rubble of the Twin Towers. The anxious moments in the darkness, the smudges on faces, the rubble are juxtapositioned with the heavenly brightness of the faces of the families waiting. This parallel increases the emotional impact and gives a great importance to the values of friendship, love and family.

The risk of losing the objectivity to judge the movie is strong. Because the theme obscures every critical aspect, it takes you there, in the perspective of the millions of people who were there that day, watching everything from the sidewalk. Watching a collapse from the bottom, listening to the noise of the iron, the claustrophobic period of time trapped under the rubble, the terrible waiting of the families makes you lose the clarity of mind, as the film is concentrated in making you feel emotions. But for me, as a typical American movie, is based too much on making you feel emotions, shots of weeping eyes, the anxiety of the people and totally ignoring the true meaning of the



events about the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. Stone usually cuts the American history, tearing it apart in order to make the truth come out. From “JFK” TO “Nixon”, “Platoon”, and “Born the 4<sup>th</sup> of July”, his plots always tried to look for the truth, giving up on the heroism in order to make them appear true, normal and clear. I expected this from Oliver Stone, one of the most criticized directors in his own country.

Instead here Stone’s direction is typical of a hero-action movie. The characters become heroes as soon as they appear on screen, we know their terrible future and we are forced to live it with them. We accept all their imperfections, their fears, their absurd phrases like “We are at war” exclaimed in a decisive tone, in order to involve each member of the audience. The strength of this movie is not in the plot, the politics, or the originality. It has the simplest emotions, the most obvious fears, the most exploited pain but it gets you involved emotionally. At its heart the movie tells a simple story but Stone’s dramatization can, at times, detract from that. Because the events of 11<sup>th</sup> of September are dramatic as they are, for me there was no need to dramatize them even more. However “World Trade Center” is, in my opinion, rightly appreciated as an act of memory and respect.

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May 2012

Cultural History of the U.S.A.  
Essay about September 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **World Trade Center:**

“World Trade Center” is a 2006 film directed by Oliver Stone and starring Nicolas Cage as the protagonist.

It is based on the attacks of September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center and it is the second film project dedicated to the attacks of September 11 after United 93.

The plot is built around the story of a Port Authority team which is patrolling the Port Authority Terminal in Midtown Manhattan and one day while they are working, they see a plane dangerously low overhead. Only when they return to the station do they see on TV that the North Tower of the World Trade Center has been hit by a plane.

Sergeant McLoughlin (Nicolas Cage) assigns many officers to assist the evacuation attempt of the still undamaged South Tower but while they are going there the South Tower is hit. Only when they arrive do they realize the extent of the disaster, they see people jumping from the building's windows, injured people who are crying, desperate scenes of destruction and death.

The team decide to persist in their mission, they proceed to get safety equipment and enter the concourse between the towers. The group is composed of 4 men commanded by the sergeant John McLoughlin. When they begin their intervention the South Tower begins collapsing onto them and their only chance of survival is to run into the service elevator shaft. Only Jimeno, Pezzulo and McLoughlin manage to escape, but in the end they are trapped under the building.

Pezzulo, after another collapse of the building, cannot move and is fatally injured so he decides to shoot himself, making the situation worse and producing a sense of terror for his companion. Jimeno and McLoughlin spend hours in pain under the rubble but they never stop talking to try to stay alive despite all the difficulty. Finally two United State Marines who are searching for survivors hear the two trapped boys and call for other help to try to rescue them from there.

Jimeno is rescued first and some hours later also McLoughlin, so they finally reunite with their worried and desperate families.

The film is set from the point of view of all the rescue forces (NYPD, FDNY, Port Authority Police) which intervened to help the people trapped in the World Trade Center on the September 11th when an Islamic militant of al-Qaeda hijacked and intentionally piloted two jets into the Twin Towers. Both towers collapsed within two hours.

Two other jets were piloted into the Pentagon, and another crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, because its passengers attempted to take control of the jet from the hijackers. This event caused serious damage to the economy and had a big impact on global markets.

The attacks had major global implications: the United States of America responded by declaring the "War on Terrorism" .

During this attacks 3000 people died: 2752 in the Twin Towers, among them 343 firefighters and 60 police officers. Most of the victims were civilians of 70 different nationalities.

The film describes all the feelings and thoughts of the people that day, during an event which changed so many lives. Most of the people didn't know what was really happening and nobody realized at the time that it was so significant.

Hundreds of rescuers tried to make an effort to help the people who were in the towers but in the end died under the rubble.

Besides the death and destruction of that single day, and the catastrophic effects for the global economy, the effects of the terrorist attack of September 11<sup>th</sup> are still alive in our everyday life.

Since that day, people are more aware of the threat of terrorism and what it is able to do.

As result security has been increased. However many people feel a sense of panic which can translate into a misunderstanding of global problems. This has led to tense relations between the western and Arab worlds, which in turn increases the danger of terrorist activity.

## Oil, Smoke & Mirrors

*Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* is a documentary movie directed by Ronan Doyle . It is made of a series of interviews to some of the most important experts on American history and politics, who show how Peak Oil and 9/11 could be closely related. As a matter of fact, oil is not an endless resource and, always more and more, having the control of it will mean having the power to lead the world.

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There are many reason to believe it: looking at what happened itself, it seems quite improbable that neither a fighter airplane took off after the first attack; the nearest military base was only 2-minute-fly far and until that day fighters had been used 67 times for imminent threats. Nevertheless, as precedents confirm, it is impossible that a concrete-steel building would collapse due to over-heating and signs of use of thermite were found in the metal ruins: this usually happens when buildings are blusted.

Through a series of impressively candid, informed and articulate interviews, this documentary tries to wake us up and tell that the bizzare events surrounding the 9/11 attacks, and the equally bizzare prosecution of the so-called "war on terror", can be better understood in the wider context of an imminent and critical energy crisis.

If at the beginning the picture was not so clear, after the first half of the film, we start to go deeper and questioning ourselves on why that happened on 9/11. It feels like overcoming the wall mass media put between fictional life and reality.

Bearing this in mind and looking at the events now, the interviewees take us throughout an analysis which almost demonstrates the conspirational theory.

Instead of discussing for a future equal redistribution of natural resources and energy, United States have chosen another strategy: through military power and false excuses they are trying to run an egemony over the rest of the world in order to assure the remaining oil reserves to themselves.

But how can they do it? First of all they need to be present and influential in the oil-richest region of the world which is the Middle-East. They must have the control of that land with military power and 9/11 seemed to be the best chance US could have to invade that important part of the world. “...*no 9/11, no war on terror...*”.

As it is so crucial being there, we cannot put apart the theory shown in the movie: United States could have let it happen, or partecipated in organising it, or even been the thinking mind of it.

This might sound horrible or product of a sick mind but, unfortunately, what we see suggests that perhaps the world we live on is very different from the idea we had of it. George W. Bush changed the perception of safety that Americans had and, after 9/11, playing with citizens' fears, he started to paint an enemy, which was necessary to put all the people together and start the so-called “war on terror” to fight it and win, but with another purpose.

The “war on terror” is very likely a 21st-century colonialism which allow America to keep control over the most strategic area of the world. Once the enemy disappears they will be ready to aim their weapons to a new “dangerous” one, which could be either Iran, North Korea or Syria.

This film is a must-see for everyone, especially for American people who are kept in a bell jar by medias. The future it depicts is very worrying and it warns about a possible return of a hidden fascistic leadership which, thanks to mass media control, will facilitate United States to run unfair politics over less-developed countries. Additionally, the documentary urges everybody to wake up and reknow that the 9/11 was a big excuse to put solid bases for the “war on terror”. Even though the ideas presented in this film can at first seem daunting, its ultimate assertion is that these challenges can be met and surpassed, if, but only if, we can find the courage to perceive them. *Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* ends with an important warning which should make us think:

*“...Because without accurate information, without an accurate understanding of the world, you cannot have a functional democracy. If people don't know what's going on, and people don't understand what their leaders are doing, there's no democracy...”*

**Matteo Bernardini**

### Essay about September 11<sup>th</sup>

**September 11<sup>th</sup>**, everybody all around the world knows where he was and what he was doing when he learned about the collapse of the World Trade Center's twin towers. If this tragic moment marked the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for the Americans it marks the beginning of the era of fear, persecution and fight against terrorism. The Twin Towers were built from 1958 to 1973 and until September 2001, they were the highest skyscrapers in the world becoming the symbol of the US power. September 11<sup>th</sup> wasn't the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, the site was the target of one bombing in February 1993 but the last one is, without any doubt, the most important causing the collapse of the two towers and consequently, the death of nearly 3,000 people. Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden, suspected for the attack, became at this moment the enemy of the entire Nation and the main target of the army. This is why, the US army decided to invade Afghanistan to fight against Taliban and indirectly against Al-Qaeda. As a response, the US reinforces the security and the government passes legislations to combat terrorism starting the War on Terror and converting Bin Laden in one of the most wanted fugitive looked for the US.

September 11<sup>th</sup>, reporters on air while they were commenting on the first crash on the North Tower, didn't know exactly if it was an accident or not but after the second crash it was clear that it was on purpose and they started to talk about terrorism for this day. Many people say that the event of September 11<sup>th</sup> is the real beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century marked by terrorism. The US sees itself as the main target and people started to wonder who the enemy of the US is really: Al-Qaeda? Muslim? Islamists? Afghanistan? Arabs? No Americans? Until nowadays, all these terms are mixed; put together and misunderstood that's why for many people the fear comes from the Arabs.. Barack Obama tries to clarify things many times saying that it's not a religion war against Muslim but a war against Extremists Islamists responsible for terrorism. The topic and terrorism in general are very often used as background, thematic elements in movies, series, and books. We can mention *Homeland*, *24*, *American Dad*, *West Wing* (some episodes only). However, all the TV series, movies dealing with terrorism and indirectly linked to 9/11 appeared a long time after the event, in order to not shock the audience. In other cases, directors tried to focus on the heroism in *World Trade Center*; *Rescue Me*.

Some people pretend that 9/11 was just a complot. These theories that are opposed to the official version presented by the US government are called "9/11 conspiracy theories" and are supported by 9/11 Truth Movement. These people claim that the government was aware of the possibility of a terrorist attack but it didn't do anything to control or try to stop it and part of them, more radicals, are persuaded that the government is involved and participate in the attack. They based their theory on the LIHOP (Let it Happen on Purpose) and on the MIHOP (Make it Happen on Purpose). These two hypotheses defend the idea that the government was forwarded about the attack but they do nothing to prevent it and worst, that it organized and provoked terrorist attacks on its own territory. The partisans of the theory also defend the idea of a controlled collapse: damages not provoked by the planes but by explosives placed there before the events. The polemic includes also the crash on the Pentagon and focus on the fact that the impact of the supposed plane was too small and couldn't be an impact caused by a plane but maybe by a missile. Some says that there was any fragment of the plane scattered all over the Pentagon. The most famous and probably the most controversy series of video dealing with 9/11 conspiracy theories is *Loose Change* which presents all the proofs and explanations supported the complot.

Even if there are so many different opinions about this day, everybody agree that the damages and consequences are enormous: many people died, workers in the buildings, passengers of the two planes, firemen trying to save life, because of the crash, because of the collapse. But it has to be noticed that the attacks struck on specific points of the country: the Pentagon (symbol of US military capability) and the World Trade Center (symbol of the US economy). Two targets which would paralyze the country: Tourism is stopped (due to the fear of a repeat attack), little businesses are destroyed, recession.. The catastrophe of that day was not like any other catastrophe within the US territory, that's why the effects are considerable. The only sector that increased after 9/11 is security (particularly on the airport but not only): creation in 2002 of Department of the Homeland Security (to protect from and respond to terrorist attacks), more surveillance power over US citizens, security restriction (for instance, for several days after the attack, flies were cancelled, postponed, forbidden to fly over NYC)

We don't know, and we will never know, if the catastrophe would have been avoided but the country, especially New York City, try to rebuild step by step without forgetting what happen that day. After all, it's now a part of the US history. A Memorial has been built in homage to victims and heroes who run the risk to lose their life against other one's caught under rubbles. But as a response of 9/11, it has been decided to build new skyscraper to show the fast recovery.

As we said before, Bin Laden became one of the most wanted fugitive and terrorist purchased by the US. Recently, on May 2011, Bin Laden had been killed during the Operation Neptune Spear led by the US Special Unit after 10 years of track. Even Barack Obama declared "Justice has been done", and Al-Qaeda affirmed the death of its leader, his death also stirs controversy: The US army took the responsibility of the body and dropped into the sea, but nobody saw it. So the polemic is: is he really dead? It's obvious that terrorism is not going to stop after bin Laden's death. Al-Qaeda is still there and worst they want to take revenge. So, the effort on security and the alliance with Pakistan to stop Al-Qaeda is it really enough to avoid another catastrophe causing the murder of thousands innocent people or is it inevitable?

That why, we say that 9/11 is the real beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century of terrorism because day after day since that day it's a fight, and not only for the US but also for all the countries.

### **MAIN LINKS USED:**

9/11 Attack: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_11\\_attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks)

Impact of the US Economy:

<http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/2008/OliviaJackson911andUS-Economy.pdf>

West Wing: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21eaubatLGc>

Loose Change: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4L9tA0aCIII>

LIHOP: <http://www.halexandria.org/dward255.htm>

Truth Movement: <http://www.911truth.org/>

Barack Obama discourse on bin Laden's death:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6eC76DLWTU>

## SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>, A DATE TO REMEMBER

Why?

At first my plan was to make a critical essay about the documental video “Fahrenheit 911” by Michael Moore, but after having seen it I realized that it was made in a very polemic view, I dislike those resources used to explain an idea, such as sensationalist points like desperate women crying and shouting, it is not necessary to show what happened before and after September 11<sup>th</sup>, the real facts are awesome in themselves.

So, I am going to write about how I remember that day. To begin with something I must say that I was only 11 years old, and I don't remember that day as a special one, what is more, I do not remember specifically when I first saw the worldwide known images of the twin towers being crashed by the planes, I think that was at the news when arriving from school.

At first I was no conscious about what had really happen, I didn't realize that it was real life, not a movie or a video game. The two images below can seem fictional if you don't know anything about What the Ground Zero was, Who Osama Bin Laden or al-Qa'eda were, or Why the attack took place; the two may have been taken from a movie, that is what seemed to me.



(from NBC news,  
attack to the  
Ground Zero)

(from the movie  
“The avengers”  
2012, by Marvel)

Nowadays,  
when I am totally  
conscious about what  
really happened, it  
causes an  
agglomeration of  
emotions in me: fear,  
shame, condolation,

and some others that I do not find a particular word to express, I think that more or less is what the entire world feels about S11<sup>th</sup>, American people feel it hardly, but everyone from all around the world have a general idea and feels it as something personal in different grade.

Many terrorist attacks take place almost daily in some other places of the world, the nearest example is Spain, where we have suffered so many terrorist attacks in the



last years, noting that not so violent, nor with so many victims and material damages; but we only hear a few notes, and give lesser importance to them. What I remember clearly is that during weeks the images of the World Trade Center, now Ground Zero were shown 24/7 in every channel at the news hour, also news special and reports about what was happening in New York. Another news were mentioned briefly, the important news at the moment were centred in the USA.

I am not trying to rest importance to the 9/11<sup>th</sup>, on the contrary I am trying to illustrate how important was the World Trade Center (as the proper name say) in order to produce such a consternation. I have never been interested in politics, what is more I consider myself an illiterate in those topics, but dealing with everything that surround the terrorist attack of 9/11<sup>th</sup>, everyone feels the necessity or curiosity to investigate a little about what happened before and after. And because of the worldwide consciousness, so many false (and not so false) theories have emerged; We all know that George Bush was not an example of public accountability, we also know that smuggling or corruption happen in every government, but what the American nation tries to mean (liberty) is persecuted by doubtful methods, methods put in evidence when the crisis after the terrorist attack arrived.

The crisis and the war marked a breakup in the history of the US, until September 11<sup>th</sup> they feel selfconfident, still living the American dream, a land of opportunity and progress. But with the destruction of the twin towers they realized that they were not so safe as they thought, that they were vulnerable as any other country, and this illumination get them to a complete chaos and frightened people about another imminent attack, they were not prepared to take the situation under control. The war led to the population the opportunity to have a real enemy, and by thinking at that the normal life would arrive earlier.

Talking about this some questions come to my mind:

Why is so important **that** terrorist attack?

Why everyone from America, Europe, Africa and so on were worried about it?

Why everyone wanted to know what truly happened and what were the US going to do?

Why everyone were so worried is the same "why" that caused that the attack was precisely there and not in another place. World Trade Center and terrorist attack mingled in the same sentence cause the chaos in the entire world. Economics, commerce, politics... the subjects that manage the world were strongly damaged, that was the purpose of the terrorist group, they wanted to strike the entire world.

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Cultural History of the U.S. Group B 14951

### A mosque at the ground zero.

During the Summer of 2010 a controversial debate grew among the American population: whether building a mosque at the ground zero would be licit. This was not only a rhetorical question proposed for debating but a reality.

The architect of the project, named firstly *Cordoba House* and later *park 51*, declared in many interviews that his main goal was creating a community centre for Muslims, which at the same time has the intention of twisting American misconception about Islam. It should promote interfaith dialogue. Actually, he said: “those actions which are being seen as the main feature of Islam have nothing to do with the religion itself” and referring to the Mosque he also claimed: “What we are doing has no reflection or association with the horrific events that happened on nine eleventh”.

This position of tolerance and understanding should be widely spread in a country as America where among its founding principles we find freedom of religion. Of course, many Americans perfectly agreed with the project. Although, there is a vast amount of citizens who cannot see the reason for which the mosque had to be built at the ground zero.

I am talking about familiars, lovers, friends, acquaintances, of September eleventh's victims who were unable to conceive the construction of a mosque as a peaceful act. As a matter of fact, they clearly saw it as a challenge. Even the construction of a shopping centre near the ground zero could be considered as an insult to the victims.

It is perfectly reasonable that this topic had become one of the major national debates due to the sensitive question it leads to. The president of the nation, Barack Obama expressed his opinion in a public event, the controversial words of the president's speech were: “let me be clear...”, and so he was, “...Muslims have the right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country, and that includes the right to build a place of worship in a community centre on private property in Manhattan according to local laws and orders”.

Population against the construction rose up against the president in public demonstrations and street meetings. Many of those went a little beyond the issue. They manifested their opposition to the increasing power of the Islamist communities in America. Apparently, they were imposing some of their orthodox

rules in American companies, some of them, as we know, are quite extremist and this should not be allowed in “the country of Liberty”.

It must also be said that the Mayor of New York stopped the plans for reconstructing a damaged building of Orthodox Catholics in the ground zero, but he saw no problem in *park 51*. Politics' affairs are irremediably shown in this type of actions.

Despite the opposition of many Americans, the community centre *park 51* is nowadays placed two blocks from the ground zero, opened to the general public. Replacing an existing 1850 building of Italianate style of architecture damaged in the September eleventh attacks.

### ***Comparative essay on documentaries and movies about 9/11***

September 11, 2001 – probably one of the darkest days in American history. Countless books, movies, documentaries and scientific papers deal with the terrorist attacks which changed America that day. This essay discusses two different ways of reappraising the event by taking a documentary and a fictional movie as examples.

Firstly, I have watched the BBC's documentary series *Days That Shook the World: September 11* which examines the whole happening from a scientific point of view and mainly addresses the following question: Could the use of another method of construction or use of different material prevented the Twin Towers from collapsing? During the movie, various experts talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the new revolutionary method of constructing a skyscraper which was first used by Minoru Yamasaki, the architect of the World Trade Center. One expert concludes that considering the long term, the two buildings stood upright after the attack is a proof for the effectiveness of this method, but critics claim that a great number of people could have been saved if the architect had used concrete instead of drywall.

The documentary really focuses on explaining the sequence of events and the effects of the terror attack in a detailed and clear way. The viewer is confronted with dramatic video material of camera teams and receives additional explanation from computer animation. Although it also contains interviews with survivors and firemen, people and their emotions are not as important as the building itself.

In comparison, the movie *11'09"01 – September 11*, which is composed of 11 contributions from international filmmakers, has a very personal and emotional touch, even if the stories are not based on true happenings. The characteristic of that special movie is that every short film is exactly 11 minutes and 9 seconds long and consists of 1 frame. In this movie, it is not just the feelings of Americans that are in the centre of attention because each filmmaker acts as a representative for his cultural environment and tries to illustrate that this terror

attack not just had changed and affected the people of the United States but also the rest of the world.

Something especially interesting and provocative about this movie is that besides the Americans, also people of other nationalities are portrayed as victims. For example, in the short film of the Indian filmmaker, Mira Nair, an American of Indian descent is under suspicion of being involved of the terror attacks. Besides having to bear the tragically loss of their beloved son, the family is confronted with the fear and hatred of the Americans of everybody who could be of Middle Eastern descent. The especially outstanding of that contribution is that it is based on a true story. Another short film deals with a Chilean living in exile, who is writing a letter addressing the Americans. In his letter he offers his condolences to all who had lost someone during the attack but he also asked if the Americans remember what they did to Chile on the same day earlier in history.

I personally think that the short film directed by Sean Penn, which represents the American point of view, communicates much information about the American character. His short film is centered on an elderly widower who remains locked in his own private grief over the loss of his wife. In that moment, when the world trade center collapsed, the daylight returned to his flat and the dried flowers of his wife blossom once again. In my opinion, this scene can be interpreted in a way that every end is the beginning of something new, which reflects American optimism.

Through that movie, the viewer is animated to think critically about the happenings and not just adopt the point of view from the nation in the media focus. In the majority of the short films it is difficult to recognize the director's message at first sight and some ideas are very abstract but as a result the viewer is forced to make an effort in order to be able to understand. Unlike the documentary, the movie focuses on transmitting emotions and feelings rather than knowledge and information.

In my opinion, both of the above mentioned film genres are very important for educational reasons. Although the informative importance of scientific research has a higher reputation than the facts delivered in fictional movies, both documentaries and movies can teach important lessons. Movies often have the power to move one's heart and stories which are based on true events can be

remembered more easily by people through seeing it in an entertaining movie. Nevertheless, it is vital to watch documentaries featuring various perspectives in order to encounter the truth about an event.

## **11<sup>th</sup> September 2001:**

### **“I thought that it was my last breath”**

11<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

It was one of the worst days of my life.

I woke up at 6.50 in my apartment in Queens to go to work. There was nothing that could make me unhappy or unfortunate that day; my life was good. I had a shower, I put on my heels and I took the breakfast and took the tube, like everyday.

I was working at my office in one of the two towers that suffered the attack, but almost at the time of the impact of the planes, I have gone to the Starbucks to have a coffee with one of my colleagues, and that is why I am still alive nowadays.

While we were living the coffee shop and going back to the tower to continue with our work, all happened. We could see the plane impacted with one of the towers (the one where we used to work in those days), but we did not have time to keep us safe from collapse and we were trapped by the rubble.

They were the ten worst hours of our life... I thought that all was lost, that it was probably the last moment of my life, trapped there, with nobody who could hear my voice, praying, crying with the last breath that I could remember. I begged God to give me a second chance to complete what I should do. I think mostly it was my daughter who gave me energy to keep energy and to stay alive.

But...miracles do happen, and, when I had lost all hope, a firefighter got me out...I was born again, to start a new life, different from the previous one.

Many magazines and television programmes wanted to talk with me, and wanted me to tell my personal story to the whole world; but it still remains impossible for me to speak of those moments in which I have seen people dying around me could not do anything to save them or to keep them alive till the firefighters arrive to save us.

It has passed more than 10 years, and I still remember the horror in the faces of the people who run throughout the whole avenue to save themselves from the death; I cannot stop praying when I think that I am one of the survivors of that terrible day in which the way of the world changed, in which the life of many people was destroyed.

Nowadays, I when I see the pictures of that day, the videos, when I read the newspapers of those days saying that more than 2,900 people had died,...., when I remember the people who were killed there, I only want to say “thank you” to God for saving me.

During these ten years, did not passed a day in which I do not ask myself: “Why me?”, “Why not my friends and my colleagues?”, “Why was I chosen among all, for what purpose?”. But those questions are part of

a whole “Why?”, and I am not able to find an appropriate answer to them.

I do not know why I am still alive today, I have to say “thank you” every single day that I wake up and see the sun through my window, every single evening when I see the sun going down behind the skyscraper.

At the moment, I have a completely new and different life with my husband and my children. I still cannot go to “Ground Zero” to see the new square and the new buildings, because I am still getting the images of that day in which I lost my job, my colleagues and also my best friend, the one who went with me to the coffee shop and was trapped by the rubble too, and who could not have been saved alive.

Everyday I go to the church to pray for them and also to thank God for saving my soul and for letting me stay with my family.

I will always remember the 11<sup>th</sup> of September as it was the first day of my new life.

I had a lesson of life and I would not be scared of my destiny. That's why if it is my time, I'm ready, I'm prepared.

P.D: This is a made-up story. Few things are taken from a true personal story but that is only an “invented diary”.



## THE 9/11 COMICS

The morning of September 11, 2001, the United States suffered the most destructive terrorist attack of their history. On that Tuesday morning four passenger jets were hijacked and as a result, two of them crashed, intentionally, into the Twin Towers (the main buildings of the World Trade Centre of New York), other crashed into the Pentagon and the last one's target was Washington D.C. but it finally crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

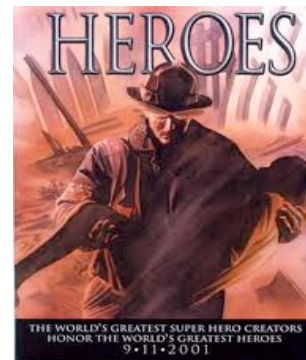
The attacks resulted in the death of nearly 3.000 people and countless material damages.

Thus, American society plunged into a deep sorrow and in a state of shock where nobody knew what actually had happened, and why.

Rapidly, lot of artistic manifestations, as well as literary works appeared in order to pay tribute to that tragedy that marked the history of the United States forever.

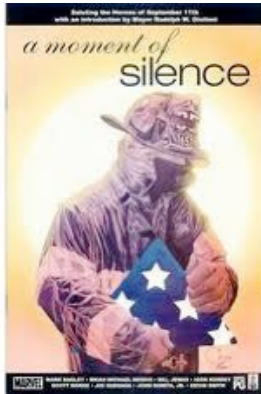
Focused on the necessity of coping with people's frustration and fears, some editorials, like Marvel, decided to publish comics dealing with the attacks.

*Heroes* was published on October 17, 2001, as an anthology of illustrations which raised the tragedy from two perspectives: firstly, the fact that the attack had been, not only a direct offense against the U.S., but also an attack against world peace. Secondly, they wanted to pay tribute to the real heroes of the story, policemen, firemen, doctors... that is, to those people who risked their lives to save other's.



Three months after the attacks, Marvel published a special edition of one of its most-known comics, *The Amazing Spider-Man*. This mourning edition had its cover totally in black and it illustrated a Ground Zero where patriotic heroes and villainous help the emergency corps to rescue people in the place of the tragedy.



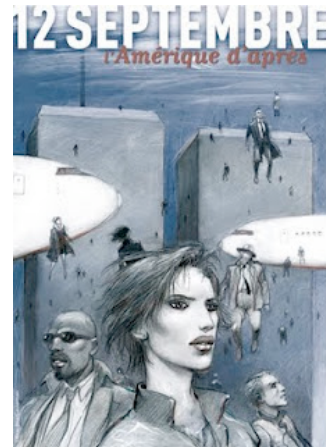
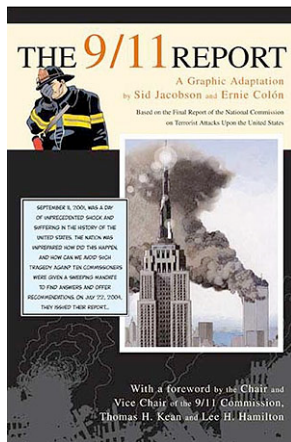


As it is usually said, reality goes beyond fiction and it is clearly reflected in the next comic.

On January 9, 2002, Marvel published another comic called *A moment of silence*, four dumb stories focused on the work of firemen, medical and police corps that fateful day. The 'special' of this work is that the prologue of the comic was written by the then mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani.

After having written the official version of the facts called *9/11 Commission Report*, a graphical version was published and it was called, *The 9/11 Report, a Graphic Adaptation*. The authors of this work try to illustrate the monitoring of the facts minute by minute, without politic or religious beliefs. This way, they try to capture the attention of the youth.

Finally, in other places apart from the United States, some works related to the attacks have been published, as we can see in the recent book, *12 septembre, l'Amérique d'après*.



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