THE AESTHETICS OF RELIGION-BASED-VIOLENCE

IDEOLOGY

IN

POPULAR AMERICAN FILMS

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Çiğdem Nigar Pakel

Ankara-2004
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Tez Danışmanı

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INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to analyze the effects of religion in shaping the American ideology, to develop a critical eye on the dissemination of this ideology by means of cultural and literary presentations. This is an effort to focus on the religious history of America as well as to understand the American values that are shaped under the guidance of Christianity. The thesis also underlines the reality that the ideologies are shaped by means of popular culture and hence are conveyed to masses. Therefore, a great emphasis is given to explore the relationship between the most popular Hollywood movies and the religion. In order to make concrete references, eight films are chosen from different directors – two classic movies; *The Easy Rider* and *The Exorcist* and six contemporary ‘box office’ movies, *Natural Born Killers, Pulp Fiction, Artificial Intelligence, The Matrix Trilogy, The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* and *The Passion of the Christ*. Those movies are chosen as the best representatives of religion-based-violence ideology that is expressed aesthetically. In order to answer the question how the religion does shape the identity and the culture of a nation, first of all it is necessary to look back into the religious history of America.

America settled its boundaries and struggled to become a free nation, members of which were looking for a new and a peaceful way of life. Some suffered from the religious oppression in Europe, some felt restlessness in his soul to leave their homeland, and some were assigned on a religious mission to bring the ‘light’ of
Christianity to the uncivilized lands, like Columbus. There were Natives who were already settled on this land of plenty when the ‘explorers’ arrived. Those explorers brought their religion, values and life styles with them. Many considered America as the Biblical land of Eden, or the Promised Land and some considered it as an everlasting adventure. With the arrival of Columbus, “the Catholic world came in the spirit of a crusade. Columbus was convinced that he could use wealth from the “Indies” to help Castile stab the infidel Muslim in the back from the east, the other side of a round world” (Marty 304). The first settlers on the American soil were Protestants and they had their Gospel and faith with them. When Puritans arrived, they found that the natives already involved themselves in the multi-religious community. Despite the differences in the applications of Christianity, those Protestants, Catholics and Puritans brought the same cultural heritage, the same history and collective memory to the places they settled. A common philosophy and politics were formed and they reshaped their culture under the guidance of Christianity.

What has particularly marked philosophy in America is its long identification with Protestant theology...With the Darwinian controversy and the emergence of the modern university, professors of philosophy appeared who were not ministers but whose concerns were essentially religious... (Marty 341).

Moreover, through Transcendentalism¹, the American sought after his ‘reasons to be’ as well as the mystery of his existence. He was motivated to learn, to experience and

¹ It is a movement which derives its power from idealism and
to explore as a result of which he realized his own power. Philosophers like Emerson and Thoreau promoted ‘the power of the individual’ and ‘the soul’.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events…And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark (Emerson 140).

The American Religion and The American

With a religious pluralism in its history, the nation shifted itself into a new mode of expression, a new kind of religion which united the country as a nation. This, as Harold Bloom defines in his book, was the “American religion”.

The American Religion is pervasive and over-whelming, however it is masked, and even our secularists, indeed even our professed atheists, are more Gnostic than humanist in their ultimate presuppositions. We are a religiously mad culture, furiously searching for the spirit, but each of us is subject and object of the one quest, which must be for the original self, a spark or breath in us... (22).
The American religion was structured with the combination of Puritanism, Transcendentalism, Individualism and Christianity. American religion was shaped under the guidance of Protestantism, Puritanism, and Catholicism as well as under the philosophical and scientific theories derived from Western cultures.

Theological doctrines were combined with logical, rhetorical, and mathematical theories derived from the French Protestant reformer Peter Ramus, with a neo-Platonic theory of conscience derived from Augustine, and with scientific concepts derived from Aristotle and the scholastics. The result was a theory that both viewed nature and history as a symbolic discourse whereby God speaks to his creatures, and also emphasized the value of descriptive science (Murphey 325).

This new religion bestowed the power upon the individual who had to work hard in order to glorify God and who also had to rely on his instincts and believe in himself. Martin Marty stressed that “Religion is a major element in shaping character and culture” (302). Since America built itself within the realm of religion as a nation, American identity also developed in connection with religious values. The American individual was taught to consider himself as a genuine and elect character that had to follow God’s way through salvation. He believed in the necessity to experience physically or psychologically as a result of which he learnt to know himself and trust himself. Therefore, The Bible served as a guide in his journey to achieve self reliance and to obtain power. As Harold Bloom emphasized, “the American finds God in herself or himself, but only after finding the freedom to know God by experiencing a total inward solitude” (32).
The American had to follow the path to freedom by believing in the principles of American religion such as self reliance, intuition, confrontation, nationality, immortality, and resurrection. He “adopts the whole connection of spiritual doctrine. He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power” (Emerson 96).

By knowing himself and by trusting himself the American established a place in the world. With the help of Western thought and collective memory, the nation formed its own ideology. This ideology, which highly emphasized the sovereignty of the nation, secured its power by means of tales, myths, and the fears that were conveyed through cultural products. This process of creating an ideology and making it a part of culture was necessary for manipulating the society. Since “force and violence are likely to be successful techniques of social control and persuasion when they have wide popular support”, it was necessary to infiltrate into the minds of the masses to achieve control and unity among the nation (Arendt 19). This was an act of violence because violence can easily be defined as not only a physical power but also a psychological assertion or imposition i.e., ‘a power of persuasion’.

Cultural representations such as literature and cinema act like social mechanisms that transfer the beliefs, the fears, the desires to be consumed by the masses. Therefore, Hollywood cinema can be considered as one of the
superstructures\textsuperscript{2} of the American society that creates illusions. It is a kind of microcosm, a world of representations that more or less define the political and religious values believed to be the very means of preserving unity on the territory. The nation achieves its unity by means of politics; by preserving its power on multitudes. American popular cinema serves for this aim since “the American directors were undeniably the first to play so well upon the emotions of the spectator” (Aumont 187).

Cinema has always been a part of the cultural phenomena that shapes and reconstructs its own values in connection with the dominant ideologies. It derives its power from technology, art, literature, and by combining these; it creates an illusion of reality. This illusion derives its power from the society’s dependence in myths like ‘pursuit of happiness’, dreams like ‘the American dream of success’, and religion. Representation of this illusion depends on the aesthetic norms which make the spectator’s identification possible. This identification process is the main concern of American cinema since it is the only way to exert the ideology and the only way to infiltrate into the mind’s own mechanisms. Thus, American popular cinema can be considered as the cinema of power that succeeds in infiltrating into one’s own consciousness.

The violence presented in Hollywood films can be grouped into two, as physical and psychological violence. Physical violence that is usually demonstrated

\textsuperscript{2} Superstructure is the term attributed by Karl Marx to all aspects in the society like culture, politics, and religion.
in the gangster, science-fiction, thriller, horror or action genres can be conveyed by bloody death, mutilation, and fight scenes or by certain other violent images. According to David Slocum,

whether through masculine protagonists, public conflicts and resolutions, familiar genres, or integrated fictional narratives, this popular cinema employs certain images of violence and excludes others in the process of exploring, and for the most part, validating the prevailing ideology (Slocum 5).

Psychological violence is a passive imposition or a kind of manipulation which targets on the “other” and which aims at assimilating and/or controlling or even exterminating that “other”. In cinematic productions, these passive assertions are hidden behind a narrative pattern. It is likely to find an icon, a metaphor for fear or God; perhaps a song reminding the listener of the past, a tale, or a poem exerted inside the context of the plot. Thus, the ideology of the modern world is secured by means of the cultural productions. The objective is to create consumers as well as new demands, fears or dreams. By enforcing the products aesthetically, the popular understandings of the past, the present and the future are also shaped. One might usefully invoke in this regard the philosophers Jean Baudrillard and Theodore Adorno, who set the reasons for distorting ‘the real’ and the aesthetic presentation of the hyper–real which is only a simulacrum of the reality. Baudrillard in his work “The Precession of Simulacra” defines reality as a past experience which is lost for so long. Baudrillard argues that “signs have now taken priority over the things signified”
The “hyper-reality” that Baudrillard defines, turns into an object of manipulation in Walter Benjamin’s terms. Walter Benjamin, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” supports that the modern age bestows power to the production and this power can easily gain control over the masses. Therefore, cinema stands as a proof of advanced technology in the modern age controlling the emotions, desires, dreams of the masses as well as shaping the unreal, the distorted reality or in Baudrillard’s own terms, the hyper-reality.

Aesthetics becomes the means to present this hyper-real from a beneficial point of view to invoke the feeling of reality in the mind. American cinema derives from tragedy, Aristotle’s notion of catharsis in order to heighten the emotional impact and impedes the spectator to look beyond the illusion.

The illusion is mostly placed on the patterns which are the paradigms of Christian issues. Biblical stories convey values like faith, brotherhood, sacrifice, maturity. The American relies heavily on the religion and religious values because religion helps him to confirm his existence and to fulfill his sense of belonging. Therefore; the spectator is also motivated to learn those Biblical stories as mere truths of life. In America, Christianity secures itself in the hands of “American religion” by creating its own reality and by demonstrating its own values and beliefs within the cultural products like the film industry and canonized literature.
American popular cinema creates the ‘illusion of reality’ with the help of religion. It forms an ideal hero, a unique individual who, by experiencing and suffering crosses the bridge from purgation to salvation. This ideal hero even makes sacrifices in order to reach his aims or dreams. The goodness is inherent in him and he resembles Jesus Christ in many ways.

The Christian metaphysical idealism finds itself a place in the society and in popular culture by means of American popular films. Accordingly, these cultural representations turn into vehicles conveying Biblical values which highlight the American society as a community. In order to define itself as a community, America struggles to achieve a cultural unity as well as a political ideology. Theodore Adorno in “Dialectic of Enlightenment”, like Baudrillard, blames contemporary consumer culture and imperialistic Western science and philosophy for their violent efforts to form a collective ideology (1223). Thus, American cinema exerts both psychological and physical violence through popular films and it achieves transmitting the Christian ideology and Western conscience not only throughout America, but also throughout the world.

The reason why Easy Rider (1969) and The Exorcist (1973) become classic movies is that they are successful in representing the fears and desires of the society. The journey pattern that Easy Rider utilizes or the battle between evil and good in The Exorcist are familiar traditional patterns in American culture. The aesthetic representations along with the techniques in The Matrix Trilogy (1999-2003) once
more declare Christ’s return. Moreover, *Artificial Intelligence, Natural Born Killers (1994)* and *Pulp Fiction (1994)* which do not openly declare and demand religious concerns, in fact, are nothing more than the manifestation of the “American religion”. *The Passion of the Christ (2004)* is a repetition that envisions the biblical legacy which also serves as a paradigm of ‘the American’ and ‘the American religion’. Finally, *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy (2001-2003)*, which is a New Zealand - America joint production, proves that American ideology effectively affirms itself even in a movie which is written and directed by people from different cultures. *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* is one of a kind since it is the first film that has won the Oscar in all the categories in which it was nominated.

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I. THE HISTORY OF RELIGION AND VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

*There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.*
“Religion, whether it be Shamanism or Protestantism, rise from our apprehension of death. To give meaning to the void is the endless quest of religion...When death becomes the center, then religion begins” (Bloom 29). Bloom’s definition of “American Religion” takes its power from death, the ultimate reality that all creatures face sooner or later. Death is itself an act of violence; violence against all the established values, orders, all borders. Mankind has so long suffered from the tyranny of death and still, he has been trying to find a way to overcome this sense of fear against the realm of death. The questions - that man has been asking himself since ‘he is created’ - are to find an explanation to his own vanity.

Rollo May, searches for the sources of violence in *Power and Innocence* from psychoanalytical perspective, and there, he defines the five ontological phases of power as potentialities in human life. According to him, the first is “the power to be”. It can be observed in a new born infant, crying and demanding a response for his needs; in a way reminding others of his own existence, declaring that ‘he is’ by using a certain power. This power leads to the second phase; “self affirmation”. May defines this phase as “the affirmation of own being” and the consciousness, which is not inborn, begins to develop few weeks after the infant is born. “The cry for recognition becomes the central cry in this need of self affirmation”. If these ontological phases are blocked the fourth phase “aggression” occurs. On the contrary to self affirmation -which is a declaration (“This is me”) - “aggression is a moving
into the positions of power or prestige or the territory of another and taking possession of some of it for one’s self” (May 42). If the efforts to block aggression are ineffective, then “there occurs the ultimate explosion”: The violence (May 43). This final phase can be defined as the manifestation of physical power. He then adds, “Violence comes from powerlessness...it is the explosion of impotence” (May 53). This powerlessness, this impotence comes with ‘the fear’ which contributes the emergence of violence. Hannah Arendt defines violence as “nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power.” She then quotes C. Wright Mills who supports that “all politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence” (35). According to John Keane (the writer of Reflections on Violence), violence is an act in which the identity, ‘the otherness’ of the subject is ignored and the subject is reduced to an object to be destroyed or eliminated (69). Within the light of these definitions, American identity develops ‘a power to be’. It asserts itself, its own being to the imperial powers of the world and when its ‘otherness’ is ignored, the aggression and violence are occurred. The nation both politically and culturally insist on its ‘uniqueness’ which is the outcome of the religious history that assert itself in cultural, political, social positions. Thus, American history becomes a history of aggression and violence deriving its power from the necessity to define itself as a separate, chosen and unique entity.

In America, religion always secured itself in the safe hands of Christianity. “Bible has been an ever present force” in North and South America (Noll 408). In 1493, Ferdinand and Isabella have sent Columbus to America with a team of
missionaries and they have assigned those with the mission to convert the natives to Catholicism (Berkin 36). In Spanish colonies, the established system is the “encomienda system”; “...a system of bonded labor in which Indians were assigned to Spanish plantation and mine owners in exchange for the payment of a tax and an agreement to “civilize” and convert them to Catholicism (Berkin 41). Protestants who were really suffering in Europe from the tyranny of Catholicism in France chose to migrate to New Netherland which needed labor and which therefore welcomed every person those that agree to farm the land without making discriminations in gender or religion (Berkin 54). The first English colony was established in 1607 in mainland America as Jamestown and then came George Calvert’s Maryland, which was established to create a Catholic society of powerful noblemen and obedient tenant farmers. On the other hand, a small Puritan group which was called as Separatists leave England for a pilgrimage to the protestant city of Leyden in Netherlands and then by 1620, under the guidance of William Bradford, they set sails to America on the well- known ship “Mayflower” (Berkin 68). By the time they learned how to survive, another puritan colony was established under the guidance of John Winthrop in 1629 in Massachusetts.

Those colonies were strictly Protestant. They did not allow any Catholics to vote or worship openly. This violence that was exerted on Catholics is the first example of discrimination in American history. The protestant leaders were enthusiastic Puritan preachers who were passionate to serve as the spokesmen. Those leaders struggled to form communities who were bound to family, to community life and who were also devoted listeners of the sermons. The diversity in churches was promising however, the number of people who were not attending to those churches
were also increasing and some colonies were interested in settling their places in the secular, economic community rather than the spiritual ones (Berkin 100). The economic prosperity in towns brought the loss of interest in religion as a result.

Into this moment stepped a group of charismatic preachers, men who denounced the obsession with profit and wealth they saw around them, condemned the sinfulness and depravity of all people, warned of the terrible punishments of eternal hell fires, and praised the saving grace of Jesus Christ. In a society divided by regional disputes and economic competition, these preachers held out a promise of social harmony based on the surrender of individual pride and a renewed love and fear of God. In voices filled with “Thunder and Lightning,” they called for a revival of basic Calvinist belief (Berkin 100).

Those who came to America with the mission to build “a city upon a hill” like John Winthrop or those that brought “a sense of the covenant which they inherited from ancient Jews” devoted themselves converting people and thus the evangelism was born (Luedtke 306). What Jonathan Edwards preached was the common denominator of American ideology. The ideology adopted a well known philosophy of ‘the redemption of mind for the salvation of the soul’. Opening eyes into a reality, –that reality can be a divine reality or a realization of one’s own power—and questioning ‘the truth of perception’ was important in Christianity. According to Edwards, this awakening in minds aroused interest in people’s concerns for the salvation of the soul and they also started to think about the uncertainty of life, reality of another world and Christ (Mathisen 24). Not only those elect ‘settlers’ but also the natives ‘were
awakened into the reality’ of Christianity. Edwards in most of his sermons addressed natives as “poor Indians” and he spoke about their conversion process as well as that of the “poor Negroes”:

And under the influences of this work, there have been many of the remains of those wretched people and dregs of mankind, the poor Indians, that seemed to be the next to a state of brutality, and with whom, till now, it seemed to be to little more purpose to use endeavors for their instruction and awakening, than with wild beasts. Their minds have now been strangely opened to receive instruction, and been deeply affected with the concerns of their precious souls; they have reformed their lives, and forsaken their former stupid, barbarous and brutish way of living; and particularly that sin to which they have been so exceedingly addicted, their drunkenness (Mathisen 25).

He then pointed to the enlightenment in the manners of “poor” Negroes. Edwards under the light of these judgments finally made a conclusion that the “work of God’s Spirit” would be a light to mankind and beginning of this great work of God was very near and “there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America.” (Mathisen 25). In order to prove his prophecy Edwards again quoted Bible, He quoted a passage from Isaiah; “Surely the isles shall wait for me and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring my sons from far” (60:4). Those “isles” were not Europe or Asia or British Isles but “they are spoken of as at a great distance from that part of the world where the church had till then been” and this place was America (Mathisen 26).
Thus, creating a Christian nation became the main concern of Evangelists. These ‘chosen’ people devoted themselves to conversion, Bible reading and preaching. They were successful in reaching masses and they provided ordinary American with the reading material but they also shaped the patterns of their thought by founding colleges and schools (Noll 227). Those Evangelical Protestants were successful in assimilating minorities, such as the Cherokee Indians. Their conversion process was slow, but as a result most of them became Christianized. However, becoming Christian was not enough for sharing equality. “Protestants have grown accustomed to thinking of the United States as their special preserve” (Noll 208). During Jackson’s election in 1828, gold was found in Northern Georgia where the Cherokees were living and despite the fact that the Cherokees were adapted to the American ways with remarkable skill, they were removed from Georgia (Noll 188). In politics, American presidents also acted like missionaries in order to assimilate ‘the other’ which was not ‘elect’ or ‘chosen’ like themselves. In the last decades of the nineteenth century when Spain took control over the Philippines, in 1898, President William McKinley decided to declare war against Spain for his ‘missionary motives’. In 1899 he told his reasons:

There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ died (Noll 292).
Senator Albert J. Beveridge’s interpretation of the Philippines case was more interesting: “God marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world” (Noll 293). As a result, “American religion” began to form itself not only within the church but also within the context of politics and literature. It was Evangelical Protestants who became leaders in print technology, mass communication as a result of which the popular thought was shaped throughout the states (Noll 227).

Undoubtedly, “The First “(1740) and “Second Great Awakening” (1800) both played great roles in altering and shaping the religious views of a country which was trying to achieve its own nationality and ‘uniqueness’. Those movements were religious reactions that aimed to emphasize the importance of religion in everyday life. Moreover, they also stressed the significance of religious education and revival which intended to make religion a part of cultural life. In both movements, the preachers were telling “what to do to be saved”; in both revivals “America and world-wide Christian renewal” was the concern (Noll 169). The First Awakening stressed “God’s sovereignty in all things” and “the inability of sinful people to save themselves, whereas the Second Awakening stressed that “God has bestowed on all people the ability to come to Christ” (Noll 170). The Methodists, the Baptists, The Revivalists and the Disciples -whose main motive was the Christianity and the individual-, contributed to the formation of the Second Awakening and the emergence of religious pluralism.
Meanwhile, another group that would affect the future American religious thought was slowly immigrating to America. The Jews, the wanderers of an epic journey story, who searched for the Promised Land, whose temples were destroyed by Babylonians and Romans and who were forced to “flee from Portuguese harassment in Brazil” finally arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654 (Hudson 305). They were small in number and they remained secluded from the society till the end of nineteenth century.

From the beginning Jews had a love affair with America. Almost everywhere throughout the world Jews had been forced to regard themselves as a separate entity, living apart from the general community and governing themselves...In the United States the legal restrictions which fostered this isolated life were absent. Jews could become full citizens. They could be Americans of Jewish faith rather than an alien people...Jews felt more completely at home than they had in the lands from which they came (Hudson 307).

On the verge of the World War I, “The Great Immigration” began. “By 1914, the Jewish segment of the population numbered three million.” (Hudson 309). Those Jews formed their own communities and gave start to a reconstruction period among their community. They united under the older view of Zionism³ which made Jews ‘a nation’ (Hudson 313). Zionism suggested civilization rather than religion would build its way to the establishment of Israel in 1948. This belief later transferred itself into

³ Zionism is the movement that aimed the return of the Jews to their homeland in Israel.
the thought of “American Zionism” which would guide America through becoming world’s super power.

Harold Bloom considers religion and literature as “orphans” that are” stumbling about in cosmological emptiness” trying to attain the poles of meaning and truth (21). Therefore, he believes that just like literary criticism, religious criticism is also necessary to point what it means to live in a Christian nation, or to point the effects of religion in culture. After 1920’s, Protestants continued to exert a considerable influence on the public life of United States (Noll 390). The revivalists “who want to see people’s lives change” were “ultraists who push for the reorientation of all of life under God” (Noll 392). Revivalists also had the puritan legacy with their reliance on the Scripture and it was a Puritan-Evangelical combination that derived its power from Protestantism. The influence of this union had great impact in the society and political life.

Every time television networks broadcast a Democratic or Republican political convention, we see in our living rooms a shadow of revivalistic Protestantism. Every time the rhetoric of a political campaign heats up—promising to “save” the world or the United States, offering something “new” to change our lives decisively for the better, announcing a strategy to “reform” the evils of the incumbent administration, or pleading for “commitment” to causes of justice and fairness—we hear the echoes of that same revivalism (Noll 391).
As Tocqueville observes; “...an American sees in religion the surest guarantee of the stability of the State and the safety of individuals” (Jeffrey 23). Therefore, religion became a means to define the American identity. Bible has been a symbol of this Christianity frequently popularized by Western literature. The writer of *Religion and Violence*, S. Wesley Ariarajah points to the “violent history of Christianity” and emphasizes the importance of their reference book, Bible which has provided the spread of Christianity as a religion. He also outlines many dimensions of violence within the first few books such as; “Violence as a human response arising from jealousy, fear and hatred America and as Lincoln has called, it has been considered as “God’s best gift to man” (Noll 404). The American identity shaped its own future and destination with the help of the scripture and the biblical language.

*The Bible* is a handbook to rely on, an example to be quoted, and a mythical long story to be told in American culture. It has not only been the book of religion but also the book of literature, popular culture and mass media as well. Faith, treason, punishment, love, atonement, sacrifice, fate are the most common themes of Christianity (story of Cain and Abel), violence as judgment or punishment (The flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), violence as structured oppression (Hebrews under the Egyptians), violence in war and conquest (the occupation of Canaan), violence as part of maintaining law and order (punishments related to the breaking of the social laws) and so on (Ariarajah 2).
Faith is the essential theme in the Old Testament. The faithful tribes such as are awarded a long life and the disobedient tribes are struck by the Lord and destroyed. Since destruction is the reason to fear, God bestows and secures his power among the tribes. Faith in God, Faith in Jesus, and Faith in ‘the good’ is necessary to identify and destroy ‘the evil’. In a way, shedding blood for the sake of destroying the enemy is sacred. The New Testament focuses more on Christ, and the ultimate battle between ‘evil’ and ‘good’.

The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matthew 12:36).

This threat along with the stories of destruction imposes a great fear. The consumption of fear contributes to the use of violence in movies. Since there is no way for a civilization to survive without fears it is necessary to create fears to control the nations which explains America’s eagerness to destroy ‘the evil’ to secure its power. “The tree of life” from which Adam and Eve have eaten is also the tree of good and evil. The deceived and fallen couple is banished from the Garden of Eden and they are punished by God because of their obedience in ‘evil’ (Genesis). These punishments continue throughout the Bible when man becomes, disloyal, unfaithful or sinful.
The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

The violence in Bible continues as man commits sins- he never gives up committing sins because his heart is evil- and God’s destruction never stops. The more the man fears, the easier he obeys the Lord. Moreover, the man who fears to be destroyed, -for his own salvation- can commit himself to destroy ‘the evil’.

The concept of ‘sacrifice’ is another important element of violence that justifies the shedding of blood as a religious duty. Jesus’ death is a sacrifice for all mankind to find the ‘truth’ and to believe. Also Abraham, who attempts to sacrifice his only son Isaac, is tested by God and just as he is about to kill his son, he is blessed by the Lord and praised because he ‘feared’ and listened to God’s commandments (Genesis: 22).

‘Fears’ live through myths, legends and as long as men survive, those fears survive. It is a process of creating a collective memory as well as a heritage for future generations. The Bible is a part of this collective memory that presents fears of the nations; the fear of death, the fear of being destroyed, the fear of God. “You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 25:17). Therefore, The Bible serves as a very important example of fear and violence that is inherited or learned. “American religion”, which heavily relies on both the New and the Old Testaments and which derives its power from Western
thought, history and collective memory, can not escape becoming a part of this violence, can not escape inheriting the tradition.

They inherited from their parents’ generation the experience of a massive intrusion of criminal violence into politics—they learned in high school and in college about concentration and extermination camps, about genocide and torture, about the wholesale slaughter of civilians in war.... (Arendt 14).

Violence becomes a part of American life. It exists side by side with religion and asserts itself into the communities. The best two examples to be given on this struggle for destroying ‘the other’, the struggle for ‘the territoriality’ were; the problem of slavery and the dominance of Puritanism in the early seventeenth century. Puritanism, as the most dominant religion among the colonies, effected a great part of the country not only in cultural but also in political matters as well. Massachusetts which was one of the biggest Puritan settlements undergone many changes towards the end of sixteenth century. The economical growth and prosperity made a new Yankee ideal -that contradicted puritan communal idea and that proposed a more secular orientation to daily life- possible (Noll 75). As a result, the Puritan powerlessness towards the changes in the society imposed a kind of fear that ‘the society was diagnosed with bewitchment’. In 1692, the most violent trials and executions took place in Salem, Massachusetts. Neighbors, friends, children they all blamed each other with witchcraft, a great paranoia and hysteria dominated the whole town.
1866 was an important year, the year that the secret organization Ku Klux Klan was formed in the South. The formation of the Klan and the ideology was important because it proved that the union of collective memory and “American religion” was tyrannical. The Klan’s major goal was the establishment of white supremacy and the destruction of the Republican Party. “In the Klan’s bizarre ritual, members were called ghouls. Officers included Cyclops, night hawks, and Grand Dragons, and the national leader was called the grand wizard.” (Noll 479). Those images, ghouls, Cyclops, dragons are the metaphors of violence from mythology, fairy tales or legends, which were transferred by means of collective memory into the nineteenth century America. These images outlined the aims and defined the ideology of the Klan. Klan members devoted themselves to White Anglo Saxon Protestant principles and they attacked black churches and schools. Its ideology had changed into a more “aggressive statement of white supremacy and racial and religious nativism.” (Alexander 5). The Klan had reached to the population of five million and it had continued its existence throughout twentieth century as a secret political organization. The members demanded the right to attack black people and the right to claim hundred percent Americanism in the name of God. This tendency to identify your self-interest with the design of Providence is defined as “the hallmark of pseudo innocence” by Rollo May. May also believes that American’s fear of exploitative power throughout the history-because they escape from the European exploitative power- turns them into deniers of their power and as a result makes them irresponsible of any power based act (53).
Americans now had the difficult ethical task of believing overtly that they did not want power, that their capacity for moral thinking and for serving their fellow man obviated their need for power. They saw themselves as the saviors of the needy from Europe. In this country the garden of Eden myth, along with the open denial of power, has continuously coexisted with a great amount of violence. We can not develop responsibility for what we don’t admit we have. We can not act upon our power directly, for we always carry an element of guilt at having it. That is why power is customarily translated to money in America. At least money is external. ”Cold cash” we can give to other people and nations; we share it profusely with charities, indicating our guilt in possessing it. So we behave like a nation of wolves in rabbits’ skins (52-53).

Along with the Puritan tyranny, the ‘White Anglo Saxon Protestant’ tyranny forms another important political, historical and cultural phenomenon. John Bailey believes that “because we live and work in such a violent society, it is natural that our films reflect and explore this violence” (Bailey 81). Since racial discrimination has been one of the major problems in America, its representation in Hollywood, in literature or generally in art becomes inevitable. Considering himself as chosen or elect, the American Protestant has difficulty in accepting the freedom of blacks. Therefore as the conflict between the South and the North grows, the tension and the violence rise.
The movie *Mississippi Burning* (Dir. Alan Parker, 1988) is an outcome of a necessity of expression and it focuses on a historical reality of racism. It is the investigation story of three young civil rights workers in Mississippi who are murdered by the members of the Ku Klux Klan. The whole story covers the depiction of the life in Mississippi, the condition of blacks and whites as two separate communities, and the investigation of the FBI agents Anderson and Ward (Anderson -Gene Hackman- is a native born Mississippian who does not care about legal procedures in crime law, Ward –Willem Dafoe- is a Harvard graduate who believes in legal enforcements, not in rough tactics). Parker shows the involvement of Ku Klux Klan in burning black churches, in arousing fear among the blacks by torturing and murdering them. He shows the sheriff’s involvement in the violent actions and by showing Deputy Clinton Pell (Brad Dourif) as an unloving, violent and ignorant husband. Parker presents him as unfavorable and also motivates the spectator to dislike the other members who are obsessed with the White Anglo Saxon and Protestant (WASP) missions. He also takes some steps towards exploring the roots of the hatred and discrimination towards black. Pell’s wife (Frances McDormand) becomes Parker’s mouthpiece:

> It's ugly. This whole thing is so ugly. Have you any idea what it's like to live with all this? People look at us and only see bigots and racists. Hatred isn't something you're born with. It gets taught. At school, they said segregation what's said in the Bible... Genesis 9, Verse 27. At 7 years of age, you get told it enough times, you believe it. You believe the hatred. You live it... you breathe it. You marry it (Mississippi Burning).
Towards the end of the movie, the conflict between the two FBI agents is solved when agent Ward agrees in the necessity of exerting violence on those members that they have been so long suspected. “Anderson and other FBI agents then assault suspects, threaten castration, participate in kidnapping and fake a lynching to get the information they want” (Toplin 37). Parker in a way suggests violence as a solution and although the spectator is motivated to feel disgust and anger towards the members of the Ku Klux Klan and their violent actions, he becomes relieved when the agents also exert violence on the members. Moreover, it is known that FBI has played an insignificant role in the real historical events of 1964 and their action in the movie is proved out to be just a scenario as a result of which Parker is accused of distorting the reality. He is also accused of showing blacks as insignificant, passive in the civil rights struggle in Mississippi. For instance, the murdered black victim Chaney is in fact not sitting in the back seat of the truck and he is not a passive member but a dedicated civil rights campaigner (Toplin 35). According to Vernon Jarrett, a member of Chicago Sun Times’ editorial board, “the film treats some of the most heroic people in black history as mere props in a morality play.” And similarly Coretta Scott King, Martin Luther King Jr’s wife, asks “How long will we have to wait before Hollywood finds the courage and the integrity to tell the stories of some of the many thousands of black men, women and children who put their lives on the line for equality?” (Toplin 35).
The distortion of reality is a kind of assertion, a passive imposition of the distorted truths into the minds of masses. The representations of violence in literature, music, and cinema justify the American ideology and identity that secures itself behind the self complacency. American Hollywood cinema can be considered as the only art which has used and abused religion, by distorting and shaping it in terms of its own ideology, in order to justify the violence that dominates the whole nation. Hollywood cinema, with an increasing financial success and cultural influence becomes an important vehicle in communicating with masses audio visually and it becomes a means to manipulate or to fascinate people by arousing certain feelings in the spectator. As a result, the violence that has dominated American cinema since 1915’s becomes a metaphor, a reflection of America’s violent historical past.

II. **THE BIBLE (The Old and the New Testament)**

*The Bible*, an offspring of mythology, the religious myth, appears as a useful source or a handbook in shaping the collective memory. It is a long epic journey story of mankind from Adam and Eve to Mary and Jesus. The two books, Old and New Testaments, provide a wide range of imagery and patterns as well as the religious poetry, are considered as the first examples of literature. The roots of the creation of the world, mankind and his nature, the relationship between man and God, the long and suffering journey of man in the labyrinths of history and myth are the basic
sources that occupy art and literature. “To Christians as to Jews the Old Testament is far more than a collection of ancient religious books; it is a record of the past and future relationship between man and God” (Harrison XI). Western collective memory uses religion for justifying its own ideology as a result of which the representations become merely passive impositions. America is also deriving certain patterns from the Bible to define itself, to verify its reason to be “a city upon a hill” or to define itself as ‘chosen’. Thus, it is necessary to focus on Biblical patterns in order to develop a critical eye on the presentations.

The Bible starts with the Genesis, the beginning and continues with the creation. Man is created and is put into a garden planted by God in Eden. Adam is allowed to eat fruits from every tree but he is forbidden to touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil that stands in the midst of the garden. Then God creates Eve from the rib of Adam to be a helpmate and a wife. The serpent deceives Eve and tempts her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Thus, the fall begins. Adam and Eve are punished and banished from Eden into a mortal life in which they have to struggle and suffer till they die. The temptation and the fall is henceforth attributed to all the descendants of Adam and Eve, to all mankind.

Exodus is the biblical journey that follows the mythological pattern. The Israelites who are oppressed in the land of Egypt and who are suffered from the tyranny of the king Pharaoh set on the journey under the guidance of Moses. It is a long and painful journey towards the promised land of Canaan.
In the New Testament, Jesus and his twelve Apostles also set out to deliver the people the word of God. Moreover, after Jesus is crucified and ascended heaven, the apostles also make long journeys to preach about Jesus and to baptize man. However, the Promised Land or heaven is hard to reach. One has to suffer and bear the burden or pain throughout the purgative way. Sometimes it is an eternal struggle. After Christ is crucified, the suffering and struggle do not end. The apostles continue to preach Christianity.

The Tower of Babel is one of the most important imagery in the Western collective memory. It is frequently used in art and literature as the symbol of power. The descendants of the Noah decide to build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven and since they all speak one language they start to build the city and the tower, in a way, they are united. Then Lord punishes them for their desire and for their rebellion by asserting different languages and creating a confusion and chaos. People give up building the tower because they fail to understand each other.

Sacrifice is the proof of men’s loyalty to the Lord. The act embraces a wide spectrum of animals, people, and even a nation. Thus, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of his own body becomes a metaphor for maturity and a symbol of the spiritual richness. Biblical nations are blessed and they are multiplied as long as they give offerings and they make sacrifices to God. It is a ritual, a criterion for showing gratitude and love. Sacrificing is preached as a necessity on the way to reach heaven and God. The blood
shedding is a ritual, an offering. In Genesis, Abraham attempts to kill his only son as a proof of his Loyalty, and he is blessed for his attempt.

The savior is the faithful, the loving hero that has the courage to bear the burden, and suffer in order to fulfill his dream. The Biblical savior is Jesus Christ; he is courageous and faithful enough to sacrifice his body for the sake of mankind, to save the world. For Christians, the only way to be saved is to believe in him and in God. Thus, Jesus says; “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11: 25-26)

In The Bible, ‘doing evil in the sight of God’ is generally defined as ‘serving another God’. Oppression against God, and against the rules he had set, is the very reason to be punished. In order to keep men away from temptation, prophets or messengers are sent; since “the wickedness of the men was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis: 5). Betraying God’s covenants and commandments is also a great sin. God punishes even his prophets, his favorite sons because of their betrayals or because of their temptations. David, King of Israelites, is punished because he secretly ‘sets his eyes’ on Uriah’s wife and because he deliberately causes the death of Uriah (Samuel 12: 1-15). Similarly, Adam and Eve are also punished because of their weaknesses. They are punished by mortality and since then, they are searching for immortality.
In *The Bible* and also in mythology, man is always in need of justifying his own power. He does not trust or believe in his own self or in his capacities but is in need to be affirmed. Because of this feeling of inadequacy, man commits himself to Gods and Kings. Nevertheless, he struggles to exist as a separate entity, as a true self. Those signs—that may be either supernatural or natural—help him find the power that is hidden in him, to betray the feeling of inadequacy and to restore self confidence. In Bible, men—who are chosen by God to become a savior or a warrior to defeat evil or the enemy—seek signs to verify the power granted. Miracles, unexpected, unnatural events are accepted as signs that restore the inherent power of man.

The Crucifixion is another important theme in *the Bible*. Jesus Christ is arrested and he is taken before the High Priest, Pilate and then before Herod. The priests and a multitude want him to be crucified. The way to the Crucifixion is painful and suffering, thus Christ slowly walks—carrying the cross—through his death and salvation. It is the last step in the purgatory before ascending the world and the heaven. He sacrifices his own body for the multitudes for the sake of their ‘awakening’. Thus, his spirit ascends and the sign of cross becomes a symbol, an icon reminiscent of this sacred history.

It is the Day of Judgment, the day in which the whole world will be destroyed by the angels of the Lord. Apocalypse is the most feared event of the Bible. The

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4 A place where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, the souls of dead people must suffer for the bad things they did, until they are pure enough to enter heaven.
judgment day is described in detail by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke as; “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven”.

Death is not the ultimate end in *The Bible*. By crucifixion, Christ rises to Heaven and he achieves immortality. The crucifixion is the last stage in the journey, the last phase before reaching God. Jesus’ salvation can only be achieved by his crucifixion and by his ascent. The second coming is the return which is prophesized in the Bible and with his return it will be the beginning of a new period and a New World. The second coming is the most popular pattern used in cultural presentations. It reveals immortality of the soul and it promotes faith and sacrifice. The day of return is unknown but it has been expected for a long time in the Christian world.
III. AMERICA AS THE SIMULACRUM OF GOD

What if God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence?

Jean Baudrillard

America is a country that discussed whether to teach the theory of evolution to the children of Tennessee with the Monkey trial of 1925 (Gunn, 14), or whether to consider slavery as a religious issue or not. It is also a country that welcomed Ku-Klux Klan as a social and political power though it still keeps on splitting religious ethnicity after the 9/11. The violent historical past that derives its power from the
collective memory, adopts the values imposed by the religious, cultural, social and political doctrines. Its history is the proof of its tyrannical existence.

For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind (John 9:39).

With a religion haunted vision, America tends to situate itself as a protector of the Old and The New Testaments by using and recreating its doctrines. It deliberately needs to justify and to affirm its own being as ‘a sacred unity’, a divine being against ‘the uncivilized’ and ‘the oppressed’. It creates the oppressed, the devil or the enemy and just like God, by casting sins in the hearts of the people, it finds the chance to destroy and to prove that it is ‘the One.’ According to William Blum, America shall keep on creating new enemies. The rivals are important since, without them, America is an aimless and routeless nation (29).

Just as God creates Ezekiel, Moses, Solomon, Abraham or Christ, American culture also creates heroes or saviors. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ verifies America’s revelation in heroes and saviors. That is the very reason why the American hero with all the Christ-like qualities, becomes the epitome of morality and a mythical character. The representations of American culture rely heavily on the religious ideology and values such as faith, sacrifice, and atonement.
The consumer societies, whose demands are shaped by the mass media and collective memory, are always ready to absorb and consume the artistic representations; the representations which are the reproductions of the “cult”. According to Walter Benjamin, “the uniqueness of the work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition...the unique value of the authentic work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value” (1171). This authentic work of art becomes something reproducible in the age of Modernism. Benjamin believes that productions, in that mechanical age, have the ability to rewrite the history or in a way, they have the ability to manipulate the masses. Thus, Benjamin places the film above all kinds of representations since “film is the most powerful agent between the reproduction and masses... Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage” (1170). The cultural heritage that bestows the product its uniqueness is replaced by “a simulacra”, by “a sign” in capitalistic world. In Baudrillard’s own words;

... the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials—worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, a more ductile material than meaning in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalence, all binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra...It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes (1733).
Thus, works of art as well as the cultural phenomena turn into reproducible commodities. According to Baudrillard, the signifier is the reproduced object that exists within the microcosm of the simulacra and on which the security of the unity depends. Since preserving the unity among the society is ideologically important in America, it is necessary to create an illusion of reality or a distorted image of reality that will satisfy the demands of the people. All the same, those demands are also shaped and outlined by the dominant ideologies. As Baudrillard emphasizes, “simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ ” (1734). Thus, the world and the society face a chaotic situation in which the mind has to conceive of a spectrum of pastiches, of post-modern puzzles.

Therefore, Walter Benjamin believes that “the film has enriched [the] field of perception” (1180). As this field of perception is broadened, the authorities are struggled to preserve their power and to impose their own rules upon the society. According to Theodore Adorno, man becomes susceptible to violence because his individual consciousness is controlled by “the people at the top”.

Because the inhabitants, as producers and consumers, are drawn into the center in search of work and pleasure, all the living units crystallize into well-organized complexes. The striking unity of microcosm and macrocosm presents man with a model of their culture: the false identity of the general and the particular. Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin
to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows (1224).

Consequently, Hollywood becomes a means to create illusions for the manipulation of the masses. By reproducing, recreating or rebuilding the myths, the tales, the distorted images of reality; movies can easily reshape history, religion and culture. That’s why Christ is resurrected in every American hero, that’s why communism is frequently presented as a source of threat in the movies. Thus, myths are reshaped and rebuilt as they are presented as the ultimate truths. Hollywood explores and utilizes the techniques in order to present in an aesthetic way. As Jean Mitry states, “cinema is an aesthetic form (like literature) that employs an image that is, in and of itself, a means of expression whose sequence (which is to say its logical and dialectic organization) is a language” (Aumont 140). This language is more or less an aesthetic as well as a violent one since it yearns for the power to fascinate, to manipulate and thus to create its own microcosm.

The American individual is vacuumed in this microcosm and he becomes a part of this big whole, a part of the system. Dominated by such ‘unique’ and heroic American individuals, the system becomes the embodiment of power, a power which achieves to control and to rule. In Mao Tse-Tung’s own words, “power grows out of the barrel of a gun” (Arendt 11).
Just as “Lord is a man of war” (Exodus 15:3), America is a country of war. Even after the cold-war period, America continues to define ‘the good’ and ‘the evil’ in terms of its own ideology and values. It becomes the one and the only power that has its influence on all over the world. Moreover, America’s eagerness to bring light to ‘the uncivilized’ and to tame ‘the devil’ recalls God’s Words in the Old Testament.

There is no God beside me
I kill and I make alive
I wound and I heal;
And there is none that can
Deliver out of my hand
…
If I sharpen my flashing sword
And my hand takes hold on judgement
…
I will take vengeance on my adversaries
And will repay those who hate me.

(Deuteronomy 32: 39-41)

America becomes a representation of God, a simulacrum that makes his people explore and colonize beyond its settled boundaries. This domination along with the cultural infiltration process is stated in the Bible as “possession of the land”
And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods (Exodus 24: 31-32).

Thus, America ‘has’ every right to create conspiracies and fears, to intervene in ‘other’ countries\(^2\) and to wage wars on them. Anxiety is ubiquitously present in every government, in every citizen, in daily life. Evil is sometimes communism, sometimes women, sometimes black people, sometimes Indians, sometimes South or North, sometimes East, sometimes the whole world except America. The destruction or the existence of the world both depend on the ‘peace’ that America will bring. The target of the enemy is most of the time America, because it is the super power that the enemy first has to attack and defeat in order to destroy the world. Like Satan, the enemy tries to manipulate people against God, against America. This is how America defines its own being as the governor, as the sheriff or the Lord of the world. Thus, America commits crimes or kills people and still remains the peacemaker all the time. As Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen\(^6\) emphasizes in his poem\(^7\) the peacemaker or the warmonger is always America.

We were quicksilver
sliding on the blue

\(^2\) In his book; A Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower, William Blum makes a long list of at least sixty countries from Ecuador to the Middle East, that America intervened in.
\(^6\) William S. Cohen served as the secretary of defense between 1997 and 2001 under president Bill Clinton
\(^7\) The poem is published in A Baker’s Nickel in 1986.
water of thought,

unmindful, almost, that

on the gleaming wings

of the death machine

hung the terrible paradox of peace.

IV. HOLLYWOOD, VIOLENCE AND THE AESTHETICS OF VIOLENCE

_The essential American soul is hard, isolated, stoic and a killer._

_D.H. Lawrence⁸_

American cinema’s progression from silent films in Victorian sentiment and style, melodrama or farce towards what is known as today’s cinema, becomes possible with D. W. Griffith, the father of the American cinema. He begins his career in the theater as an actor and in order to create ‘good’ and “respectable” films, he shifts his way for aesthetic creation (Monaco 236). By the early 30’s, American cinema achieves a dominant position against European cinema which has dominated the first half of the 19th century (Monaco 244). American cinema becomes not only an industry but also an art as well. Griffith’s _The Birth of a Nation_ (1915) is one of the films that mark the beginning of American cinematic representation and it is a progression towards today’s Hollywood cinema. With this movie, not only does Griffith achieve financial success but he also announces the beginning of a new era of

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⁸ Quoted from Rollo May’s book _Power and Innocence_, p 52.
representation. The movie is considered to be a landmark of racism and it attacks southern blacks as being lascivious and uncivilized while showing their northern white allies as unscrupulous and arrogant people. The film also presents southern whites in a deplorable condition both politically and socially at the hands of the white northerners and black southerners. Those southern whites are going to be ‘saved’ by the Ku Klux Klan. Griffith’s movie is important not because it is the first example of American Cinema but it is the first example of the representation of religious violence and ideology.

The movie is partly based on Thomas Dixon’s historical novel *The Clansman* (1906). The writer, Thomas Dixon Jr. who is a North Carolina lawyer, devotes his entire life writing about the racial conflict. The following passage is taken from *The Clansman* and it is an example of the literal representation of violence and intolerance that will turn into frenzy in later decades.

Since the dawn of history the Negro has owned the Continent of Africa—rich beyond the dream of poet's fancy crunching acres of diamonds beneath his bare black feet. Yet he never picked one up from the dust until a white man showed to him its glittering light. His land swarmed with powerful and docile animals, yet he never dreamed a harness, cart, or sled. A hunter by necessity, he never made an axe, spear or arrow-head worth preserving beyond the moment of its use. He lived as an ox…With league on league of ocean strand and miles of inland seas, for four thousand years he watched their surface ripple under the wind… gazed on the dim blue horizon calling him to worlds
that lie beyond, and yet he never dreamed a sail! He lived as his fathers lived—stole his food, worked his wife, sold his children, ate his brother, content to drink, sing, dance, and sport as the ape! (Dixon 292).

In this literary representation, the persona, who looks down on The Negro and rejects the nature of his being, asserts his own understanding, his own interpretations of the world into the reader without considering the Negro’s right to exist and live. For the racist persona, The Negro is the other and a threat, which is a source of fear.

The violence that is expressed in both literary and cinematic examples proves that the representational techniques; such as the style, the tone and the language of the artistic product are not only the means to convey the ideology of a work but also the only way to present it aesthetically in order to fascinate or manipulate the spectator or generally, the subject. Since “cinema is a “recording art” and it embraces a spectrum of all other arts, such as architecture, sculpture, painting, drama, literature and music” (Monaco 7), it can be considered as a mirror that reflects the cultural, social, political or religious ideologies of the nation. As Eisenstein has stated, “influencing the spectator is a central trait” (Aumont 184) and Hollywood succeeds in creating illusions and in conveying a narrative pattern similar to religious Gospels or mythological representations.

Stephen Prince claims that “Ultraviolence emerged in the late 1960’s and movies have never been the same since” (6). He believes that the increase in the
representations of violence is directly related to the cultural, historical and political situation of the nation.

In addition to the youth audience, however, a multitude of other factors influenced and helped shape the new direction of American cinema. The period’s general social turmoil, its climate of political violence, and most especially, the war in Vietnam convinced many filmmakers and the MPAA that movie violence paled next to the real-life blood shed in the nation’s cities and the jungles of Southeast Asia...Moreover, the war and the political assassinations of the 1960’s fed a general cultural fascination with violence to which the movies responded (8).

*Bonnie and Clyde* (Dir. Arthur Penn, 1967) is a milestone in cinema history, since Penn employs “multicamera filming”, “slow motion” and “montage editing” techniques (Prince 10). He also adds some squibs which according to Prince “changed the way screen violence looked”. The use of “squibs” -the condoms that are filled with fake blood- make the illusion of bleeding and the visualization of the bullets in a body, possible (10). The destruction of the villain and the exaltation of the hero is a tradition in American culture. According to Kolker, “the essence of Hollywood cinema depends on the spectator’s acceptance of the well-known forms and unchangeable traditions as well as his belief in the illusionary world that is created with the help of those traditions” (Kolker 359). This impression of reality is a criterion for aesthetics in cinematic representation. It is obtained through “film
materials, image and sound” which offer a “perceptual richness” for the spectator and a full participation (Aumont et al. 122). Hence, the power of the illusionary world derived from the Western collective memory; use the familiar patterns and imagery in order to secure its place among the spectator. Thus, the American myths, The Bible and Christianity become materials to guarantee the spectator’s belief in the illusion.

The American hero is a reminiscence of biblical heroes like Moses, David or Jesus Christ in many ways. He is destined to go through a purgatorial period and suffer as he sets off to find his own being or to find a home or to soothe the restlessness, the dissatisfaction that he feels in his soul. The experience or the knowledge that he gains in the end is not only for him but also for all mankind. The hero’s journey most of the time resembles the biblical journey “Exodus”. Under the guidance of Moses the Israelites who are suffering from the tyranny of the Pharaoh, leave Egypt for the ‘Promised Land’ Canaan. On their way, they suffer, they fight but at the same time they learn about the ‘ten commandments’ from Moses. They experience and change. The pattern in Jesus’ journey is the same. All his life, he waits for his own crucifixion, his own sacrifice for the goodness and salvation of mankind. His sufferings help him reach into a spiritual awakening as a result of which, he leaves the earth for the “Kingdom of God”. What is promised to him is an eternal salvation and a life in Heaven. Whatever the destination is, the hero goes through ordeals, sufferings, but never gives up his faith and is never deceived by evil. Not only do Moses and Christ serve as metaphors for the American hero but also
there are others such as Adam and Eve, Mary Magdalena or Mary the mother of Jesus.

America symbolized a new opportunity for the Christians to recreate the early mythology of their religion; however unlike Adam, these patriots were determined not to fall victim to the temptation of the demonic Satan, the snake who beguiled the first mother. Instead, inspired by their brotherhood in Christ, they would form an idealistic kingdom, a heaven on earth as they awaited the second coming. This initial idealistic concept of the Puritans would later become the archetypal vision which would be labeled the American Dream (Perkin 94).

By creating a journey pattern, the artist enforces, imposes the collective background upon the characters in order to claim attraction from the subject who perceives the work. Exertion of values and traditions by means of saviors, super heroes, and use of metaphors, allusions from mythology or Bible, help the subject admire and love those heroes as well as despise those villains that are clashed. The American hero or savior goes through suffering, sacrifice, atonement, with faith, courage and patience to achieve his dream. He has a tendency to preserve the American values and he, who sets off for the American dream, also has the mission to destroy evil that is a threat to his dream or to mankind.

This utopia of extermination of evil is also one of the mainstream goals of the American hero. In the way through achieving his dream, through the way to gain
power, the hero must be patient, faithful and must be ready to sacrifice himself for the mankind or destroy evil. In this mission, anything can be used to destroy; a gun, an atomic bomb or a sword. Thus, violence which heavily relies on the power, secures itself through the use of weapons. Since this “violence has a legitimate place in art as part of the human experience and as one of the mysteries of life that haunts and fascinates” (Prince 33), it’s physical and psychological impact can not be ignored.
V. THE SPECTATOR AND THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

“Violence appears in so many contexts where you can not reflect on it any more, where you can not experience it any other way than consuming”.

Wim Wenders¹⁹

American cinema welcomes violent representations with the gangster genre. The gangster genre is on the silver screen at the end of 20’s and Carl Milliken, the secretary of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), justifies the use of violence by explaining that “pictures were consistent in their demonstration of the punishment of evil. Of the thirty eight underworld pictures produced in 1928, the principal villain was killed in fourteen, arrested by the police in nineteen, and reformed by the love of a good woman in the remaining five” (Maltby 124). Therefore, extermination is justified both politically and ethically in American cinema. Along with the gangster genre, Westerns also celebrate the rise of masculine power. “Violence is the means by which men are encouraged to show their manliness, both as handsome cinematic figures that rivet the viewer’s gaze and as individuals capable of triumphing over adversity as only men are allowed to do” (Mitchell 177).

¹⁹ Quoted from “Graphic Violence in the Cinema” by Stephen Prince page 33.
Action movies, which appear later, like *Rambo* (1985) or *Terminator* (1984) present “ensues” (Prince 22). Those viewers who whoop with approval at ultraviolence are often intuiting the filmmaker’s own aesthetic pleasure in creating such scenes...The viewer grasps the filmmaker’s own relationship to the materials, the sensuous pleasures that a Penn, Peckinpah, Scorsese, or Tarantino has derived from the audiovisual design of graphic violence and is manifesting through those designs (Prince 27).

Spectator identification process is closely associated with the use of aesthetic implements such as optical regulations, the movements of objects and the camera, the camera angles, casting, stage and costume design, editing and montage techniques. These elements, together, if they are balanced and arranged with a certain aesthetic concern, can simply create an illusion of reality which makes the spectator identification possible. “The medium inevitably aestheticizes violence. The arousal and expression in cinema of negative emotions—fear, anxiety, pain—typically occur as a part of a pleasure inducing aesthetic experience” (Prince 27).

Hugo Münsterberg is one of the first theoreticians of the cinema whose main concern is the spectator’s perception of film. Jeffrey Aumont reemphasizes Münsterberg’s theory claiming that cinema is an art deriving from several mental activities like “attention”, “memory and imagination” and “emotion”. Those three phenomena define the spectator’s perception of the illusion which is represented not
only by the cinematic techniques such as camera movements or flashbacks, but also by means of his psychological interpretations (184). Moreover, another theorist “Rudolph Arnheim, insists upon the fact that our vision is not simply a question of the stimulation of the retina, rather it is a mental phenomenon, involving a whole field of perceptions, associations and memorizations. Arnheim’s theory is based on the Gestalt psychology theory which focuses on the ability and the process of creation in the mind. Thus, he defines the creation of art as a trading process between the world and itself. The artist derives the model which he perceives as a thing or event; and then by shaping them with the help of his imagination sends them back into the world. The world replies to it and the cyclic pattern goes on till the satisfaction of the artist and the world is secured (Andrew 45). Thus, art becomes an ever changing, reproducing phenomenon that relies heavily on the artist’s perception of reality or nature. This perception of reality turns into an illusion once it becomes art, so one can move further from this point to Baudrillard’s definition of the simulacra and to the consumer’s perception that is continuously distorted and reshaped by the dominant ideology in American culture.

Thus, the patterns used in American popular cinema, are mere cultural representations that aim to create a certain illusion in mind. The more those illusions resemble reality, the better the spectator’s identification is. American popular cinema relies on one of these cultural phenomenon; religion. It derives its characters from the religious tales and myths along with the use of biblical values such as atonement, sacrifice, purgation, passion, the second coming and the apocalypse. By making
“American religion” a paradigm of moral codes and values; Hollywood outlines its own standards and ideology. By means of aesthetics the spectator is overwhelmed by the visceral and emotional impact of the film as a result of which he is motivated to believe and accept the ideology.

_Easy Rider (1969)_

One of the important movies that carry the heavy burden of American history, Western collective memory and religion is Dennis Hopper’s movie _Easy Rider (1969)_.

The movie has a conservative and a moralistic point of view and it uses American values, such as freedom, nationality, religion, love and individuality. The movie is a critical outlook to America- in 1960’s and 70’s- that has been going through a period of dissatisfaction and hopelessness. Hippie culture that dominates the time is a manifestation of alienation and an expression of freedom against the rising capitalistic institutions. _Easy Rider_ which is directed by Dennis Hopper in 1969 is one of the best examples of the hippie movement that suggests individuality among the communal system as well as a simple, authentic life style and relief through drugs or marijuana. The movie is one of the masterpieces that mark the emergence of “the alternate Hollywood of independent movies” (Horsley 200). _Easy Rider_ presents a typical journey pattern which is dominant in American culture, and it gives a panorama of the whole country in 1960’s by means of the two hippie’s journey on their choppers. They are headed towards New Orleans where the Jazz festival Mardi Gras is held. (They dream of selling the drugs in the festival and getting rich) The
individualism of the 60’s can be seen throughout the movie which is a male and narcissist individualism. Therefore the journey of the motorcyclists is a metaphor for both “the escape into the freedom of ‘Nosce Te’ 10 and also an expression of the regression of male narcissism that frees itself from the repressions of modern life into a soothing life (Ryan, 1990: 53). Nature becomes a metaphor for a romantic rhetoric in the cinema in this period and it appears as another world that is completely separated, that exists for its own sake, as ‘other’ (Ryan 56).

*Easy Rider* opens with a drug dealing scene in Mexico. The two protagonists Wyatt (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper) – names are reminiscent of the legendary Western figures, Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid 11 – carry those ‘symbols of rebellion’ that mark the period like, choppers, leather pants, cowboy boots and hats, long hair and moustache. The music that dominates every scene becomes a second language, a semiotics that emphasizes this freedom. “You know I smoked a lot of grass/ oh lord I’ve hopped a lot of pills/ but I’ve never touched nothing /that my spirit could kill...” while Hoyt Axton’s song “The Pusher” goes on, Wyatt is seen hiding ‘the money’ - they have earned it from illegal drug dealing- into the ‘American flagged’ gas tank of the motorcycle. American flag and the gas tank ironically

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10 ‘Know thyself’, that is a common philosophical view in America represented by transcendental movement and preached by scholars and philosophers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

11 Wyatt Earp lived between 1848 and 1929 in America. He had done a wide range of jobs from coach driving to buffalo hunting and he even got involved in politics. Earp traveled all over the Western America, like Wyatt in *Easy Rider* and he has become a legendary cowboy figure that represents the enthusiastic American. Billy the Kid was an outlaw cowboy who was killed when he was 22. He also became a legendary figure in American history.
becomes a safe that preserve the money for their freedom. Their survival depends on this money, as a result of which those young travelers are already made depended creatures that can not in fact become free in a physical world. In 1960’s LSD, Rock’n Roll and Jazz are metaphors for freedom in America. With this despair and hopelessness in physical conditions, a search for spiritual freedom becomes inevitable. As Harold Bloom defines American religion he points to the meaning of freedom for American individual.

Freedom, in the context of American Religion, means being alone with God or with Jesus, the American God or the American Christ. In social reality, this translates as solitude, at least in the inmost sense. The soul stands apart, and something deeper than the soul, the Real Me or self or spark, thus is made to be utterly alone with a God who is also quite separate and solitary that is a free God or God of freedom (15).

The movie is an exploration in the paths of American history for freedom which helps the individual to reach into a spiritual awakening. Horsley defines Easy Rider as “a countercultural statement on society” (200). Hopper uses religious patterns such as the journey pattern and the sacrifice to present his point of view, to make his statement on the society clear. With a critical outlook into the cultural phenomena of the 60’s, Hopper promotes narcissism and the individuality and he believes in sacrificing certain values for the sake of society. Horsley supports that the movie is an experimental work and the subject matter and style suggest a reaction to the action oriented, family valued blockbuster movies (208). However, besides all
these freedoms that are presented, besides all these free representations of cultural phenomena of dissatisfaction, and besides these experimentations in shooting techniques, the movie can not refrain from using American traditions and legendary characters as well as using religious figures and allusions from Bible.

Dennis Hopper presents the wild, untouched setting of the West as opposed to the civilized, white dominant cities or towns. The most secure place -that is emphasized with the camera movements, with the use of daylight- is the wilderness. On their way to New Orleans, the two protagonists are welcomed into the community that is settled in nature. Those people struggle in vast lands, plant their own food, live in tents. In a way, they live as Emerson teaches and as Thoreau practices. They are depicted as a peaceful community content with their lives. From historical point of view, the tribal community is an allusion to the first colonies that come and settle in the wilderness. The place they are settled is also depicted as the Garden of Eden, with a landscape and a fountain. Moreover, the harvest emphasized in the community, is frequently used in the Bible as an image of judgment (Meyer 83). Jesus (Antonio Mendoza), the leader of the community, is most of the time shown as preaching or praying:

We have planted our seeds. We ask... that our efforts be worthy... to produce simple food... for our simple taste. We ask that our efforts... be rewarded. We thank You for the food we eat from other hands... that we may share it with our fellow man... and be even more
generous... when it is from our own. Thank You for a place... to make a stand. Amen (Easy Rider).

Camera by drawing a cycle -starting and ending in the same face- shoots different faces. Mendoza, who resembles a priest or a Mormon\textsuperscript{12} preacher, praises God as well as praising the nature and the harvest. The swimming sequence that follows is presented through a Gerry Goffin & Carole King song “I Wasn’t Born to Follow”, which outlines the nature of existence as a part of the universe but nothing else.

In contrast to this peaceful nature, the cities are presented like hell with the church-like brothel, with the machines that sound like horns and with cold stone cemeteries. Whenever the two travelers enter a town, something bad happens. The empathy of the spectator towards the characters is secured through the emphasis on their ‘otherness’. The question that Wyatt asks “You got a room?” emphasizes the tragic search of the protagonists for a place in the society. The question is answered by the hotel keeper with a blank face and with a door slammed shut in their faces. Wyatt and Billy are not allowed into public places, they are not given a room and they are considered as others, as threats to the system. The spectator travels with them as they drive on, he watches them as they talk sitting around the fire, as they walk into the wilderness.

\textsuperscript{12}Mormons are members of a religious organization formed in 1830 in the U.S, officially called the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
According to Jean Mitry, cinema is an aesthetic form (like literature) that employs an image that is, in and of itself, a means of expression whose sequence (which is to say its logical and dialectic organization) is a language (Aumont et al. 140). The sequences that present the companions traveling on their choppers, passing through a beautiful panorama of the wilderness are shot from the spectator’s point of view, as if he is traveling with them. The soft and soothing song is interrupted suddenly by a wild, disturbing one which evokes a sense of insecurity and self complacency. Ironically, the camera first moves under the ugly metal constructions of a bridge and then together with the cyclists, it rides through a wealthy town to a poor black settlement. It is such a striking contrast that one can not easily refrain from the shocking effects of this skillful presentation. The Jimmy Hendrix song “If Six Was Nine” tells about this self complacency and alienation:

If the sun refused to shine/I don't mind/I don't mind/If the mountains fell in the sea/Let it be/ It ain't me/Got my own world to live through…/I don't mind If all the hippies/ Cut off all their hair I don't care/Oh, I don't care/Dig, 'cause I got my own world to live through and I-

As they move through the wilderness, through the forest into a town or city, the peaceful atmosphere turns into a dangerous one. They are caught by the sheriff-the authority figure- and taken into a cage in which they meet the young lawyer George Hanson (Jack Nicholson). The most important words will be uttered by Hanson, since he represents the young intellectual, educated youth. He is an alcoholic
and he is having some problems with the authority figure, his father. What he represents is totally in contrast with the two travelers Wyatt and Billy (their clothes, their dialects); however, it is essential that “they are all in the same cage [t]here”\textsuperscript{13}. Hanson who is a master of rhetoric also becomes a road companion, a mentor who talks about capitalistic system, UFO’s, individualism, freedom and who will be later killed in a tragic way.

They are not scared of you. They are scared of what you represent to...What you represent to them is freedom...That’s what its all about. Talking about it and be in it is two different things. I mean it’s really hard to be free when you are bought and sold in the market place. Of course don’t ever tell anybody that they are not free, cause then they wanna get real busy killing and maimin’ to prove to you that they are...For once, man will have a God like control over his own destiny, he will have a chance to transcend and to evolve with some equality for all (Easy Rider).

The only person who knows the meaning of freedom-but can not really be free- is beaten to death. Later the two protagonists Wyatt and Bill are also going to be killed. From historical point of view, the movie represents the close of an effective era, the end of a liberal, revolutionary period in American Hollywood cinema. The anti-capitalistic movements in 1960’s such as the protests against the Vietnam War, students’ movement, women’s rights movement with many others, celebrate the

\textsuperscript{13} Those words uttered by George Hanson are symbolic and ironic in the sense that they emphasize; despite the differences they all belong to the same culture, same history and to the same country and that they will soon share the same destiny.
freedom and the alienation to the American dream (Ryan 46). 70’s are the messengers of a new conservative period in Hollywood culture. It is the beginning of another era that announces a series of conservative movies promoting the capitalistic and conservative point of view as opposed to 60’s freedom in social matters such as family, sex, human nature, crime, war, and politics (Ryan 72). The movie makers start using violence for the sake of justifying their conservative views. Hippie culture, although it has provided a new outlook in nature or in American values, can not refrain itself from being conservative in the solutions it propose and in its use of religion as a model.

*Easy Rider* therefore becomes an allegory of not only American history but also biblical history as well. Camera moves through the prison walls, -words “I love God” is written, the famous cartoon characters which are created to arouse sympathy towards the American Vietnam War, are drawn on the walls- and the camera focuses on a tablet which immediately forms a contrast with the dirty wall: “Jesus Christ. The same yesterday and to-day.” The allusions to Christ are symbolic in the search for freedom. A certain sympathy towards the protagonist Wyatt is aroused since he is depicted as Jesus Christ who is prophesizing his own death. Wyatt’s prophecy is given in the very beginning of the movie- a scene in which flames are rising towards the sky- that is Wyatt’s own death and its going to be interpreted by the spectator in the end. There are other religious allusions such as “the last supper” that Wyatt and Billy have in a restaurant before they die, Wyatt’s meeting with a prostitute named Mary, the suffering of Wyatt, the sexual intercourse that is presented with prayers in a
cemetery. The fall of the two companions and the cry for salvation- that is a reminiscence of *The Bible*- is attributed to the descent into the hell.

These attributions justify the conservative point of view, because not only they condemn the two important actors in American history, Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid but also justify the termination of the two young outsiders that represent an important era in American history. The director can not find a concrete solution to the problems he exposes; therefore he can only depict the physical loss and the fate that await the generation. Wyatt and Billy are sacrificed for the sake of preserving the unity in the town. There is no other way for those intruders Wyatt and Billy to be accepted as ‘they are’ (because they are threats) as a result of which they have to be nullified.

The movie has a realistic touch; for example the scenes in a drug party, in which a dozen of young people are shown in a dream state after they use acid, are shot in a real party as 16 mm and then they are montaged to become a part of the movie (Dorsay 280). According to the philosopher Kant, “a pure judgment of taste is one that is not influenced by charm or emotion (though these may be connected with a liking for the beautiful), and whose determining basis is therefore merely the purposiveness of the form” (514). The purposiveness of the form in *Easy Rider* is given through the perception of reality and through the music that makes the shifts between the sequences possible. The reality is secured by historical flashbacks and the use of collective memory justifies the values that are presented. After the
cemetery sequence -that is like a confession scene- Wyatt’s epiphanic realization of reality strikes the spectator as he confesses their ‘crime’, their guilt with the words “We blew it”.

The guilt that is attributed to mankind in Genesis, the curse that falls upon Adam and Eve as a result of which they and their off springs are condemned to struggle throughout their lives, is a popular theme that is being imposed in American literature and culture. Man is defined in the Bible as a creature who has evil in his heart and therefore a true Christian has to devote himself to exorcise evil, ‘the other’ that is a threat. The interpretation of ‘otherness’ in American cinema is directly related to the outsider and to evil that do not belong to the community or that rebel against the values of the majority. The intruder, ‘the other’ is considered as a threat to the safety of the community. In order to preserve the safety it is necessary to nullify the intruder.

*Easy Rider* reveals the principles of American religion such as freedom and individualism. The journey pattern that is depicted throughout the movie is a repetition of the biblical journey of Jesus Christ. Wyatt and Billy’s tragic ends can both be seen from different perspectives. From conservative point of view, the ‘guilty rebels’ are both punished by the townspeople since they are threats to the order. On the other hand, their story is a repetition of the Christian past and American history, in a way, nothing more than a passive imposition of ideology and fear.
Fear becomes a metaphor in American cinema. The movies, which are made in 70’s like *Jaws* (1975), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Alien* (1979), create metaphors of fear like sharks, aliens, devils which are ready to attack the insecure and unable individuals. In such movies, the hero is reminiscent of the religious figures that struggle for the salvation and goodness in the community. Moreover, the action genre, which dominated the silver screen throughout 1980’s, also uses the Biblical themes of sacrifice and passion. “The action film establishes its hero as a suffering Christ who rises from the dead as an almighty avenger” (Schubart 193).

According to Douglas and Ryan Kellner, in American politics, the energy of the masses is feared and individuals are tried to be nullified. By imposing the notion of insecurity, the danger of an unknown enemy ready to attack, it is easy to release these dangerous energies (Kellner and Ryan 111) C. Wright Mills supports that “all politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence” (Arendt 35). The American policy is formed by a struggle to gain this power throughout centuries and it aims to possess this power to govern. Religion, politics, popular culture, mass media are the means to achieve this aim. Therefore, as it is done in *The Bible*, certain fears have to be aroused in order to rule. The fear of European intervention, the fear of communist intervention, the fear of losing the unity, the fear of losing the horizon, the fear of becoming economically weak, the fear of becoming pagan, the fear of terrorist attacks etc. Those fears keep the power alive. Even if there is nothing to fear, pseudo-fears are made up. Those fears are taught to every individual, to every citizen through the myths, religion and popular culture. As a result, the individual becomes
like Truman (Jim Carrey, *Truman Show*) who is taught to fear ‘the sea’ or he becomes an ordinary American citizen who sleeps ‘with a gun under his pillow’ (*Bowling for Columbine*) fearing the unknown enemy.

The target in American cinema, therefore, is the rebel who commits sin and who resists against the American values. That’s why Murphy (Jack Nicholson) in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Milos Forman, 1975) becomes the target of the system since he refuses to obey the authority. Finally, with a lobotomy operation, which is the most violent scene in the movie, the non-conformist, non-religious ‘rebel’ is nullified.

The violence that is exerted on Hester Prynne in the novel *Scarlet Letter* (Nathaniel Hawthorne) or on Yank in *Hairy Ape* (a play by Eugene O’Neill) is not different from the violence that is applied on Murphy or Wyatt and Billy. Although the characters do not have any resemblances in their destiny, these two protagonists both suffer because they are considered as ‘others’, as threats to the safety of the community. Yank, after being degraded by Mildred Douglas and after being rejected by the union workers loses his sense of belonging and becomes alienated and destroyed. Hester, after being condemned as adulterous, is forced to carry the scarlet letter “A” that is embroidered on her clothes as a symbol of her sin, as a reminder of her atonement. Suffering from this violence that is exerted on her, Hester goes through a purgative period and becomes a mature, angel-like figure as a result of which her acceptance into the community is possible. She gains this tragic, mature heroine figure and attracts the sympathy or the empathy of the reader. Thus, the
violence that is depicted becomes something ‘useful’ and therefore; aesthetic. Socrates believes that anything that is useful is good and beautiful while, everything that is useless is bad and ugly (Tunalı 138). And beauty, according to Friedrich Schiller, is the harmony of emotions and mind (Tunalı 148). With all these definitions, the presentation of violence becomes beautiful and useful since it helps the spectator to soothe his passions.

**Natural Born Killers (1994)**

Just like Bonnie and Clyde, Mickey and Mallory Knox (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis), the modern gangsters of Oliver Stone movie *Natural Born Killers*, violate every law and regulation in the society. These outsiders become victimizers after they are victimized by their parents, by society or mass media. Therefore when they start rebelling, it seems such a natural act that the spectator does not totally classify these two couple as evil. They resist against the corrupted authority which is represented by the police. The spectator immediately identifies himself with these two killers. They kill people, but not the totally innocent ones, except the Indian who is killed by Mickey, by mistake. Malory is bitten by a snake which allegorically reminds the audience of the serpent that deceives Eve in Genesis. Malory and Mickey feel the curse and their fall begins. This one mistake leads them to a purgatorial period and to separation. Their story is spread from mouth to mouth and finally with the help of the mass media, the couple becomes living legends. Their story becomes a myth just like the story of Adam and Eve that still has its legendary
impact on men. After Mickey uses the media to create a rebellion in the prison, Mickey and Mallory escape into a forest - in American culture it always stands for wilderness and darkness or it is a place where evil resides - and as they walk to their freedom, they are seen as a hippie couple with children. Mickey and Malorie Knox become a part of the collective memory, a part of American history like O.J. Simpson or Bonnie and Clyde. That’s why when the movie ends, despite all the killings and shootings, Mickey and Malory appear as metaphors for freedom; as a hippie couple traveling in a truck with their offspring. This story serves as a parody of biblical ‘evolution’ of man that learns violates and who continues to teach this violence to new generations. Thus, the last sequence suggests this eternal survival of violence and its secure place in collective memory (with the help of mass media and popular culture) as an inherent part of human nature.

*Natural Born Killers* places you inside the violence, makes you a part of it. Its point of view is that of the killers, not because of a clear critical or moral perspective but because that’s where the action is... (Prince 82).

Mickey is like Adam who is banished from heaven because of his disobedience. The place he is doomed to live is the earth presented in a white screen through a series of violent depictions of historical events, like atomic explosions and the World Wars. American cinema, therefore by using certain camera techniques and Aristotle’s theory
of catharsis\textsuperscript{14}, appeals to the emotions. On the other hand, it also appeals to the mind by recreating the history, repeating the well-known patterns of collective memory like the journey pattern. The violence depicted or exerted on the screen is used in accordance with emotions- to create disgust or excitement- and is used in harmony with the mind to justify its existence. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Dir. Peter Jackson, 2001) or in the *Star Wars* series (Dir. George Lucas, 1977-2002) which can also be considered as war and journey movies, violence is justified in the eternal battle between evil and good. When this pattern is depicted in mythical journey stories, the spectator shows the tendency to accept the ‘well-known’, which is already in his memory. Thus the battle becomes a harmony of emotions and mind decorated with violence. This imposition is an exertion of the power to secure its ideology and authority in the representations. According to Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan, in American politics, the feeling of insecurity, the danger of an unknown enemy ready to attack, is kept live to secure the power (111). Since evil is ubiquitously present and since it walks side by side with man, just as it walks with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s famous character Young Goodman Brown, faith is necessary to defeat this evil.

\textit{Pulp Fiction (1994)}

Quentin Tarantino always depicts violence as something funny and in most of his films he glamorizes it. “He doesn’t take violence very seriously and he describes

\textsuperscript{14} “Art gives harmless or even useful purgation; by exciting pity and fear in us, tragedy enables us to leave the theater in ‘calm of mind, all passion spent’” (Daiches 38).
it as funny and outrageous” (Prince 122). Tarantino’s movies are also full of allusions that help him parody the history of Hollywood blockbuster movies and popular culture. That’s why religion and violence forms the mainstream in his movies. For example, the parody of violence and religion together can be seen in the movie. Jules Winnfield (Samuel Jackson) is the unforgettable character of Tarantino’s post-modern, pop culture movie *Pulp Fiction*. He is the good guy who has seen the light, “the miracle”, and has opened up his eyes into the path of salvation. He works for the boss Marcellus Wallace (Ving Rhames) and is about to retire when the movie begins.

Jules and Vincent are seen together, wearing the same black ties, black jackets and white collars which ironically symbolize the duality in the human soul; the bad and the good. Vince and Jules, who both seem as ordinary people talking in everyday language about food and women, change suddenly after they enter the apartment. There are young boys in the room, to be killed due to the betrayal to the boss. Ordinary conversations of Vince and Jules turn into violent ones and the audience realizes that these two men are like the messengers of death that come to punish the traitors. The camera movements increase the tension and Jules’ fasting scene becomes one of the most violent parts of the movie. Then, Jules begins quoting a passage -the last two sentences of which are from Ezekiel; from *the Bible*- and makes an allusion that will serve as an epigram for the rest of the movie.

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he, who in the name of charity and good will shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost
And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who would attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee (Ezekiel 25:17).

The passage immediately evokes sympathy for Jules and justifies his ‘good’ intentions, that he is a man to be identified with, a man who is searching for ‘justice’ and ‘salvation’. By exerting violence on the fast food loving, fearful white boys, Jules becomes a typical Christian hero that has every right to punish the betrayers. His confessions throughout the movie and his naive belief -the bullets, ‘as if by a miracle’ have missed him and have struck upon a wall- helps the spectator sympathize with this man who chooses to devote himself to ‘the signs’ of God. With his tendency to believe in miracles and signs, Jules is no more a cold blooded killer but he appears as a Christian missionary who travels and converts people. “Ringo is his first convert” (Horsley 248).

You are the weak. And I’m the tyranny of evil men. But I’m trying, ringo; I’m trying real hard to be the shepherd (Pulp Fiction).

On the other hand, Vincent’s destiny is set already when he kills the innocent boy (Marvin) for nothing. He blows the boy’s brain out- it is one of the most graphically violent scene of the movie- and he makes a silly defense that it is an accident. Oliver Stone (in a way Tarantino) also punishes Mickey -in famous Natural Born Killers- when he kills an innocent Indian by mistake. Later, when Vince is
charged by Marcellus to kill Butch, (Bruce Willis) – to the spectator’s surprise- he will again be punished and be killed by Butch in a toilet ironically.

Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction*, places the whole story on the thin line between guilt and redemption, good and evil. The characters are searching for their own salvation; beautiful Mia Wallace (Uma Thurman) is looking for a way out of this enslavement; she is as dead as a vampire is and her resurrection with an injector immediately reminds the spectator of vampire stories and movies. On the other hand Jules is on his way to quit job and retire while Butch is also trying to escape from Wallace’s tyranny. Pumpkin (Ringo) and Honey Bunny (Yolanda) (Tim Roth and Amanda Plummer) are like Bonnie and Clyde, two amateur bandits looking for a better life.

*Pulp Fiction* reminds the spectators of well-known Hollywood patterns such as car-chasing sequences, vampire stories, or some memorable scenes from old movies like John Travolta’s unforgettable dance scenes in *Grease (1978)* or *Staying Alive (1983)* or Rambo; 80’s famous boxer. These pastiches are memories from Hollywood’s past. Therefore, the movie can be considered as a repetition of Hollywood values, such as graphic violence, action and blood mixed with religious values like repentance, judgment, salvation and freedom. The ones who are punished in the movie are the paradigms of the characters that Hollywood always chastises. The woman who rebels like Mia, the one who betrays like Vincent Vega have to be punished for the sake of the society.
Up to 70’s, American popular cinema defines itself by means of the camera. It forms its own power and makes its own constitution in accordance with violence. Defining violence is necessary since it becomes a tradition in popular movies. “When critics or theorists discuss film violence, they usually have in mind what we might call physical violence—killings, beatings, mutilations, and the like. Yet what we might call psychological violence, though lacking in gore, can be no less brutal and no less devastating to those subjected to it.” (Rothman 40). In 70’s, there rises an insecurity crisis as an outcome of the Vietnam defeat. People who are fed up with the rising inflation and unemployment search for a better life, for ‘a way out’. As a result, they seek help from the conservative Protestantism and a refreshed Christianity (Ryan 96). They look for a hero or a ‘savior’.


Neo (Keanu Reeves) is a savior. He is the prophesized leader who is long expected to save mankind from the Matrix, from the tyranny of the artificial intelligence. It is 2199. The world is being ruled by Artificial Intelligence. People are living in an illusion, in an unreal world. The real world is destroyed in a battle
between the A.I. and the mankind. The artificial intelligence has gained the control of the world from men and they have turned the people into dependent creatures by growing them like plants in the fields as a result of which they obtain the power they need. There is a rebellious group awakened into the reality and that devote their lives to save the souls who want to be saved. Morpheus\textsuperscript{15} in his ship Nebuchadnezzar – the ship’s name is an allusion to the Babylonian king from the 6\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. (he conquered Jerusalem and banished the Israelites to Babylon.)- devotes his life to find the leader that is prophesized by the oracle. Nebuchadnezzar and its crew are working to convert people into ‘the reality’ that they are unaware. In \textit{Matrix Revolutions}, the audience learns that the last human city left is Zion which is a direct quotation from the ancient Jews and which is inherited by Catholics as a religious attitude. This religious attitude forms the basic motivation of America to be an “American Zion”, a nation who will “have dominion over the earth” (Luedtke 307). Morpheus appears as a faithful and courageous person as a result of which the spectator easily believes what he believes. When Neo is welcomed in the Nebuchadnezzar – together with Neo, it is also the spectator who is welcomed in- the camera moves through the metal sign on which the ship’s name is written and from which the spectator understands that it is made in America near 2069 (The spectator is informed that the time in real world is hundred years beyond the illusionary matrix). In 1969, America sends the

\textsuperscript{15} The name is an allusion to the Mythological God, The Greek God of dreams. He lies on an ebony bed in a dim-lit cave, surrounded by poppy. He appears to humans in their dreams in the shape of a man. He is responsible for shaping dreams, or giving shape to the beings which inhabit dreams. Morpheus, known from Ovid's \textit{Metamorphoses}, plays no part in Greek mythology. His name means "he who forms, or molds" (from the Greek \textit{morph}, and is mentioned as the son of Hypnos, the god of sleep. 'Morphine' is derived from his name. \url{www.pantheon.org/areas/all/articles.html}
astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk on the moon. The event is considered as “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” by Armstrong himself. Competitions in space with Russians begin in 1957 when Soviet Union launches sputnik, an artificial satellite. America fear that Russians can beat them by launching nuclear weapons in the orbit and after the Soviets place the first man in orbit in 1961, Kennedy commits the United States to land a man on the moon and bring him back before the decade ends (Outline of American History 309). The fear motivates USA to struggle for the power to conquer. It is Nebuchadnezzar’s ship, which in a way carries Armstrong to the moon after many ages. It is America that conquers; it is Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in the shape of Morpheus, Neo and Trinity that devote their lives to ‘convert’ people who are ready.

Neo’s resurrection scene is quite symbolic; his ‘liquidified’ body falls from a labyrinth and he comes out from a hole that immediately calls to mind a womb. Immediately after his ‘fall’ – after he takes the pill, he gains the knowledge just as Adam and Eve gain —, he is pulled up by a machine, through the crane shot he descends slowly to the light as a crucified Christ figure.

Those Biblical references and allusions which are combined with American history make the movie a representation of a certain ideology; a religious ideology, as well as a political one. The Matrix is a system in which people have lost their ideals and become ignorant creatures. Morpheus and his team have the sacred mission to wake the people into the reality.
The Matrix is a system Neo. That system is our enemy. When you are inside you look around. What do you see? ... The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are a part of that system and that makes them our enemy. You have to understand most of these people are not ready to be unplugged and many of them are so inert, so hopelessly depended on that system that they will fight to protect themselves (The Matrix).

This is a well-known and long preached subject in American culture formed by Jonathan Edwards’ philosophy. According to a Christian, what matters is the truth of perception. Throughout the movie, Morpheus wears a long black leather jacket and black eye-glasses. He appears like a missionary priest who devotes himself to ‘convert’ people to Christianity.

The tension and the action in the movie are both kept alive with the use of ultramodern representation techniques. The movie is a war movie that utilizes the traditional pattern; the ultimate battle between ‘the good and the evil’. Presentations of this ultimate battle are the replications of biblical and mythological collective memory. There are not only names -like Persephone, Seraph, Niobe- allusions of Western mythology, but also themes from history like the character Merovingian whose name is derived from an ancient dynasty16.

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16 “The Merovingians were a dynasty of Frankish kings who ruled an (frequently fluctuating) area in parts of present-day France and Germany from the 5th to 8th century AD.” But as Tracy R. Twyman explains there are also mythological origins of their existence; the Merovingian race is believed to be the descendants of “Nephilim,” or “Fallen Angels,” a civilization, far more ancient than recorded history, from which came all of the major arts and sciences that are basic to civilizations everywhere. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingian_Dynasty. http://www.21stcenturyradio.com/merovingian-twyman.htm
In *Matrix Reloaded*, the spectator is welcomed in Zion, the last surviving human city. The meeting sequence directly appeals to the emotions of the spectator in which thousands of men are gathered together with torches in their hands as if they are in a church and listening to a sermon. Morpheus- like a priest- speaks in an effective tone:

I stand here without fear because I remember. I remember that I am here not because of the path that lies before me, but because of the path that lies behind me. I remember that for hundred years we have fought these machines, I remember that for hundred years they have set their armies to destroy us. And after a century of war I remember that which matters most, we are still here! Tonight, let’s make them remember this is Zion and we are not afraid! (Matrix Reloaded).

Morpheus, in his speech attempts to prove the reality of their existence. Therefore ‘the act of remembering’, like in *Artificial Intelligence*, is essential for proving one’s existence. *Matrix Reloaded* thus follows the same repetitive journey pattern with direct references to American history that has already built itself and secured its power within a hundred years time. It is evident that the act of remembering is the proof of the American individual’s existence and the confirmation of American history. Morpheus appears as the faithful leader figure throughout the movie. He encourages the team to believe and to fight for the sake of their freedom.
All of our lives, we have fought this war. Tonight, I believe we can end it. Tonight is not an accident. There are no accidents. We have not come here by chance. I do not believe in chance. When I see three objectives, three captains, three ships, I do not see coincidence. I see providence, I see purpose. I believe it is our faith to be here. It is our destiny (Matrix Reloaded).

Zion’s destiny depends on Neo. If he reaches to the source, if he opens the door he can save Zion. Neo finds the door and as he opens it, he finds the Architect (Helmut Bakaitis), the creator of the Matrix. Neo is the sixth who is created to become the One. He is special just like David in *Artificial Intelligence* because he loves. Love is the most important theme in The New Testament. Jesus Christ is the only prophet who repeatedly emphasizes the necessity to love.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection… Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law (Romans 12: 9).

Neo turns into a Christ figure who heals people and who resurrects the dead. He can even perform miracles while he is fighting, such as stopping the bullets, fighting thousands of Agent Smiths and flying like the Superman. He even sacrifices himself in *Matrix Reloaded* for the salvation of people and he is crucified only to be resurrected later.
Neo, like the typical mythological hero comes across with crossroads and he makes choices. While Zion is about to fall, he has to decide whether to save it or let it fall. Neo chooses to save Zion, because he is destined to do so. Just as the Oracle says, he is there to do what he is accustomed to do. That’s why he makes his choices.

**Agent Smith:** Why, Mr. Anderson? Why do you do it? Why get up? Why keep fighting? Do you believe you're fighting for something? For more than your survival? Can you tell me what it is? Do you even know? Is it freedom? Or truth? Perhaps peace? Yes? No? Could it be for love? Illusions, Mr. Anderson. Vagaries of perception... And all of them as artificial as the Matrix itself, although only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love. You must be able to see it, Mr. Anderson...You can't win. It's pointless to keep fighting. Why, Mr. Anderson? Why? Why do you persist?

**Neo:** Because I choose to (Matrix Revolutions).


*The Lord of the Rings (Dir. Peter Jackson)* is a joint production of New Zealand and America. Although the director and the screenwriters are from New Zealand, the production team contains Americans which make the movie a complete cooperation. The actors and actresses like Liv Tyler (Arwen), Viggo Mortensen (Aragorn), Eliaj Wood (Frodo), and Sean Astin (Sam) are Americans and there are also familiar American assertions that break into the production such as the
traditional story telling patterns and American values like brotherhood, love, individualism, immortality.

The film is an epic journey movie adapted from J.R. Tolkien’s book which follows the American story telling tradition. It is the story of people who are in search of power and immortality, it is the story of the eternal battle between good and evil. The book and the movie both follow the mythological pattern. The characters are those of the myths, legends or fairy tales like the Elves, Hobbits, sea monsters, dragons, talking trees, wizards and kings. The Lord of the Rings is a trilogy that has the call, the descent and the return patterns of the hero journey. The hero, Frodo Baggins of Shire (Eliah Wood) is ‘chosen’ to take a golden Ring - which is specially made to rule the world by the evil power - back to Mordor and destroy it in the fires of Mount Doom from whence it comes. Unless he succeeds, the evil power of Mordor will reign in the world. However,

one does not simply walk in to Mordor. Its black gates are guarded by mortals as Orcs. There is evil there and it does not sleep. The great eye; watchful. It is a barren waste land whittled with fire, ash, dust. The very air you breathe is a poisonous fume. Not with ten thousand men could you do this (LOR).

There is a long way to go, a mission to achieve and also as Wizard of Oz (1939, Dir.Victor Fleming) emphasizes, this way can not be crossed without the help of the

17 Orcs also belong to mythology, they are creatures of the underworld. http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Orc
road companions. The journey can not be achieved unless there are helpmates and unless there is faith. *The Lord of the Rings* not only uses biblical values such as faith or temptation but it also parodies the Biblical myth.

Lord Sauron which immediately reminds the audience of the devil- he wears a black long suit and a mask with horns- is about to rule the world through the ring. Similar to Satan, Lord Sauron (Sala Baker) is the deceiver. In order to control the whole world, he makes rings and gives them to the Elves, Dwarf Lords and to mankind. He makes himself a master ring (made with his cruelty and madness) to possess the power and to rule the world. Race of man “who above all else desire power” are trapped by Sauron and the world becomes a chaos. Fortunately, King Iseuldor by cutting Sauron’s finger off takes the master ring, but driven by worldly desires -which calls to mind the treason of Judas Iscariot or Adam and Eve’s temptation- he does not destroy the ring. Lord Sauron seems to be destroyed after his finger is cut off and after he has lost the ring, however his soul continue to live.

According to the principles of contagious magic, a severed part of the body can still exert an influence on the whole. Thus Hebrews, Egyptians, Teutons, and some American Indians cut off the hands or fingers of slain enemies as trophies and as ways to further torment their former adversaries. Similarly, hands or fingers would be cut off living persons as a punishment and the mutilation was thought to adversely affect the person’s ghost in the after life (Gillooly 204).
Thus, Sauron becomes the soul of evil in afterlife and he possesses the power he has lost. As Old Testament states;

... the great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth. (Revelation 12:17)

Iseuldor, who betrays his own self, is killed by the enemy and the ring is lost in the darkness of the river. After three thousand years the ring is finally found by Bilbo Baggins, a Hobbit. Frodo takes the ring to Shire (country of Hobbits), as a result of which his destiny is shaped. The ring is ‘a sign’, it can be considered as the very reason of Frodo’s departure. Frodo can not refuse the journey since the whole world is in danger. According to Joseph Campbell, the writer of The Hero with a Thousand Faces, for those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crane or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass (Campbell 69). Frodo sets on the journey with road companions and he has also a mentor; Gandalf the Gray (Ian McKellen) with him who is a wizard and a guide through Mordor. Gandalf symbolizes wisdom and goodness. In The Fellowship of the Rings (2001), he appears as a poor old man wearing shabby clothes. At the end of the first part, he falls down from a cliff and sacrifices himself for the sake of killing the half bull, half dragon-like monster. The camera follows him as he falls into an abyss and with all those fires around, the place seems like hell. The second part, The Two Towers (2002) welcomes a different Gandalf- in white clothing, riding a white horse-, the wizard whose power is restored.
He is like a prophet who has the ability to predict the future and to perform miracles. Throughout the whole movie the war sequences are highly emphasized, those scenes that contain extreme violence make the purgatorial journey possible. The journey through Mordor can only be possible if Minas Tirith or Gondor, “the last free kingdom of men” is protected from the enemy. The place is a direct allusion to the Tower of Babel. Its architecture is that of the Tower and just as in the Biblical story it is built by man. This is a repetition of the collective memory, a passive imposition of biblical imagery into the minds. The resemblance between Bruegel’s painting and the City of Gondor (Figures 1 and 2) is fascinating. Gondor is governed by a weak, tempted and crazy King and it is about to befall into the hands of evil. Just as the false prophets and evil powers are about to take possession of The Middle Earth (that is given itself into temptation and disbelief), the ring will be destroyed by Frodo, as a result of which he will have immortality and the story will pass on. On the other hand Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) will be restored to the throne, that directly alludes to Christ’s second coming in the final movie *The Return of the King*,

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems…He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God…And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make a war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army (Revelation 19:11-19).
The Lord of the Rings celebrate the unique American individual who has faith and desire to make the journey. He learns to trust in his instincts and in his own power just like Frodo or Sam. Finally, the exclusive American individual gets on the ship and achieves immortality. Moreover, Sam writes the story of Hobbits - another way of achieving immortality - which is not only a proof of their existence but also a way to create history and collective memory. Furthermore, there are repetitive uses of conventional religious values like salvation, purgation, faith and also the movie asserts American religion that celebrates the power of faithful men who struggle to punish evil.

The Lord of the Rings can be considered as a unique production that received popular success as well as eleven Oscars. The success in the box office also certifies the outgoing cultural infiltration process.

**Artificial Intelligence (2001)**

The Second Coming is a very common pattern in cinematic presentations - as in Matrix or Lord of the Rings - it is also very popular in science fiction genre. Artificial Intelligence (Dir. Steven Spielberg, 2001) presents such a journey pattern rich in allusions. It is the journey of an eleven year old mecha robot who desires to become a real boy. The mecha David (Haley Joel Osment), who is the reminiscence of the Biblical David, has three periods in his life. Like David in the Bible the first period defines his character, his family relationships and gives hints that he is a faithful and chosen creature. The mecha David’s first period ends when the real son
appears. The second period begins with the jealousy—just as Biblical David is envied by the King Saul—and it goes on with the escape story and the purgatorial journey. Then, the third period begins with Biblical David’s reign over Jerusalem, Egypt and Persia and his imperial dominion which is defined as the dominion of the chosen people (Genesis 15: 18-21). In the movie, this is presented as the power of faith and the power of the unique individual who is restored to the ‘throne’ he deserved.

The movie opens with a narrating sequence giving hints about the main situation of the world that faces an ‘apocalyptic’ situation of over population, poverty and famine. The decrease in pregnancies gives birth to the Artificial Intelligence, serving for the human race and providing cheap labor for mankind. Thus, Professor Hobby, a metaphor for God, creates a robot child who can love; a robot with a ‘mind’ and ‘neuronal feedback’.

If a robot could genuinely love a person, what responsibility does that person hold toward that mecha in return? It’s a moral question isn’t it?

Professor: The oldest one of all. But in the beginning didn’t God created Adam to love him? (A.I.)

David is born out of this creation. He first appears as dressed completely in white; the symbol of purity and goodness. When the door of the elevator opens, he is first seen as a silhouette, as a shapeless creature whose difference is immediately perceived. As
he approaches, he creates the appearance of an ‘orga\textsuperscript{18}' boy. However, he differs from mankind with his innocence and purity. As being an innocent, pure creature ready to love, he also becomes susceptible to evil and violence that is ubiquitously present in the world. In certain scenes, David is presented as an angel- the camera shoots him from the top and most of the time, the lamp that is hanging on the ceiling forms a halo over his head, or while he is sitting in his bed, the light on the wall forms a cycle again over his head- on the contrary to the fallen mankind (Figure 3). Moreover, there are scenes that remind the spectator of religious icons or paintings of Jesus and Virgin Mary. With Martin’s arrival, David learns about violence and envy.

David, since he is an intruder and since he is a loving and innocent creature, is victimized by Martin, by the other children and even his mother Monica can not stop the process of alienation. David who is victimized and alienated also learns the meaning of oppression and violence, thus he gains human qualities; loses his angel-like status.

The relationship between Martin and David is an allusion to Biblical Cain and Abel, one of which ends in death. In David’s situation it ends with banishment.

We should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous…We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates

\textsuperscript{18} orga and mecha are the abbreviations for the words “organic” and “mechanic” that define human and robots. The terms are used throughout the movie.
his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (John 4:12-15).

Yet another point that lies at the heart of the subject is Spielberg’s presentation of men’s memory as a proof of his existence. The collective memory that is formed by fairy tales, by myths and literature is the cultural heritage of mankind. Remembering is an act of proving one’s reality. The bird that David draws is the logo of the company in which he is created. David, in order to prove his existence and reality, just like Pinocchio, must set out.

David is sent away by his mother, and he is left in a forest all alone. His journey begins in that forest- he becomes an outlaw- and with his road companions Teddy and a “love mecha” Gigolo Joe, he goes through a purgatory period to prove his purity and oneness. The Biblical Exodus pattern is used to emphasize the sacredness of the journey.

Come away o human child to the waters and the wild
With a fairy hand in hand
For the world is full of weeping
Then you can understand
Your quest will be perilous
Yet the reward is beyond price (A.I.).
The Flesh Fair welcomes a series of robot destructions, some of which are crucified; some of them are destroyed violently by a sword. Flesh Fair owner Lord Johnson’s (Brendan Gleeson) words remind the audience of Jesus Christ’s words. The words of Jesus are quoted, "Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone." Those robots are suffering from the tyranny of men. The love mecha Gigolo Joe says

They made us too smart, too quick, and too many. We are suffering for the mistakes they made because when the end comes, all that will be left is us. That's why they hate us, and that is why you must stay here, with me (A.I.).

However, David has a dream to fulfill and he goes on his way to find the Blue Fairy. ‘The Lady of The Immaculate Heart’ is a direct reference to Virgin Mary, and thus the relation between the blue fairy and faith is secured. With Joe and Teddy, David descends into “City Rouge” passing through the bridge that is shaped as a fish (that is also a metaphor for the big fish that swallows Jonah). The replication myth thus presented as reality, and David as being the mouthpiece of the director, poses the striking question; “If a fairy tale is real then wouldn’t it be fact; a flat fact?” By uttering the question, man’s desire to regard tales as mere representations of reality is fulfilled.
The spectators, who feel sympathy for David, believe in his dream. Because the spectators are grown listening to fairy tales, because they have this collective religious memory, they love David and accept him as the paradigm of courage. “Viewers identify strongly with characters and situations on screen and this leads to the arousal of normally repressed feelings. Heightened arousal produces loss of ordinary self control as the unleashed feelings gain or threaten to gain expression” (Prince 18).

Securing all this empathy and reliance on him, David meets Professor Allen Hobby, his creator and he discovers that in fact, he is not so special or unique. The discovery resembles The Little Prince’s (The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint Exupery) encounter with a field of roses, as a result of which he finds out that his beloved rose is not unique in the universe. David’s encounter with other Davids is quite tragic and it leads him to a catharsis. As a result, his self esteem and self confidence are destroyed and he becomes violent. The halo over his head is broken now, since he learns the feelings envy, desire and passion. However, in addition to those human feelings, he gains the ability as well as the desire to chase his dreams.

Professor Hobby: David do you have any idea what a success story you’ve become. You’ve found a fairy tale and inspired by love, fuelled by desire, you’ve set out on a journey to make her real…

David: I thought I was one of a kind (A.I.).
This encounter with the father, with the authority figure and his resistance against him is a foreshadowing that makes David an individual. Similarly, the Biblical David meets Saul, the king and the authority figure before he is restored to the throne to reign all the Israelites.

When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. (Samuel 25:16-17).

David, as an individual can also be connected to the Biblical Adam who disobeyed Lord’s commandments and thus, he is sent away from the Garden of Eden. Ironically, David falls from the top of the building in which he is created. His fall, just like the Biblical Fall, is the beginning of his eternal struggle till Jesus Christ is resurrected.

David is both the Adam, Jesus Christ, King David or he is the paradigm of American hero that achieves his ‘oneness’, his self through faith. Therefore, the journey is necessary for establishing a complete psyche to become a real boy. After two thousand years, David finally wakes up- like the Sleeping Beauty- and his wish to become a real boy that is justified by his existing memory, is fulfilled. As David enters in New York City which is emphasized as the “lost city at the end of the world where the lions weep” (that directly reminds the audience of the myth of the lost city Atlantis which is thought to be drowned), his descent begins. He finds the blue fairy
under the sea, and he begs her to make him a real boy. He stays under the water for two thousand years and is again found and thus resurrected in an alien world. The human race is extinct in that alien world and those creatures find David in the midst of ice and bring him back to life. David, with his faith—just like Jesus Christ—achieves his dream and he finally becomes a real boy. The thing that proves his reality is his memory. Thus, not only does the established memory make him a real boy, but also it celebrates the cultural colonization of ‘genuine’, ‘unique’ mankind. Spielberg points to the formulation of the memory with the help of some basic human motivations and emotions as well as with the collective ideology (that is conducted through fairy tales like Pinocchio, The Little Prince or Biblical stories). David is created to love. He, just like Jesus Christ, has an extraordinary nature. The pure love that he offers is answered with violence and banishment in return. He is crucified by the most loved ones. After the purgatorial experience, he is awarded by true love, and immortality. Thus, it is emphasized in The Psalm of David:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.
He will receive blessing from the Lord
and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 24:1-5).
What David achieves is not only his own salvation, but also man’s salvation and immortality. After the purgatory, he is baptized under the water (he commits suicide and falls into the water) and finally, he finds the source of life (the fish bring him to Blue Fairy- a direct allusion to Mary) and thus, he is resurrected as the paradigm of the faithful and the loving.

Spielberg also presents an apocalyptic vision of New York City which is shown as the drowned city at the end of the world. In the New Testament it is thus “the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished” (Peter 3:5-7).

Dr Know: Discovery is quite possible; our blue fairy exists in one place only; at the end of the world where the lions weep. Here is the place where the dreams are born (A.I.).

New York City has indeed been a place where the dreams are born. It has been the symbol of freedom and a symbol of life for many immigrants. The American history welcomes New York as the land of plenty and as the land of wealth. Ironically, in the movie, the only place that still survives after two thousand years is New York City hence, it symbolizes the New Jerusalem in which “there sits those to whom the authority to judge was committed.” (Revelation 20: 4). Fulfilling the symbolic representation of the Revelation, Spielberg presents the New York City -after two
thousands years- as a bride completely dressed in whites (it is the ice age and the sea is frozen, and there are no human beings left in the world).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:1-3).

David opens his eyes in his home after the creatures read his memory and at that moment, the audience is thrown into a situation in which he has to question himself about the reality of David’s journey. He asks if that journey is real or is it only David’s dream that is shaped within the realm of his imagination. The story may also be considered as a cyclic pattern which starts and ends in the same house, repeating the same myths and stories in the consciousness. Each time David falls into a sleep he is going to dream about the journey and each time he wakes up, he is going to find himself with his mother recreating the journey in his imagination or in the pictures he draws. Ironically, that place where the dreams are born and where David goes, is the New York City.

So David went to sleep too. And for the first time in his life, he went to that place where dreams are born (A.I.).
Since America is believed to be the promised kingdom or heaven, the devil or the sinful always resides in the East or belongs to the East. Therefore, in *The Lord of the Rings* the West is presented as “the undying land” in which a chance for another life can be found.

*The Exorcist (1973)*

In *The Exorcist* (Dir. William Friedkin, 1973), Satan (The Mesopotamian demon Pazuzu) ironically resides in Northern Iraq, in an archaeological tomb and after it is brought to America, it possesses Regan MacNeil (Linda Blair) who lacks an authority figure in her life - like a father - to control her. In American culture, the devil or the Satan is always ready to seduce the hero. Its presence is emphasized in cultural presentations such as The Bible or other literary and artistic productions. The *Exorcist* is about devil’s possession of Regan MacNeil and the efforts of her mother Chris (Ellen Burstyn) to save her. As Ryan and Douglas Kellner state, the possession is a metaphor for the male anxiety and fear about women’s freedom and sexual identity (101).

According to the director William Friedkin, *The Exorcist* is about the mystery of faith and “it is a story that can perhaps make you question your own value system,
even your own sanity because it strongly and realistically tries to make a case for spiritual forces; both good and evil.” 19 The movie is based on a real story of exorcism that takes place in Maryland in 1949.

Eisenstein believes that, showing three static but separate lions from different perspectives and which, edited in one sequence, evoke the sense of violence is better than shooting a lion ready for a real fight (Andrew 65). In *The Exorcist*, Friedkin instead of showing the devil directly first shoots an Iraqi standing on the mountain, then moves his camera towards ‘the fighting dogs’ and then the camera focuses on the sculpture of the devil, immediately followed by the bloody, crimson red sky. By means of these shots combined with a certain montage technique the audience feels the uncanny, extraordinary situation that invokes fear and excitement.

‘The long expected’ exorcism takes place towards the end of the movie. Up to that point, the audience is informed about the lives of Chris (Ellen Burstyn), Regan (Linda Blair) and Father Karras (Jason Miller). Regan’s mother Chris -divorced and living alone- appears as an independent woman working and raising her daughter. However, this appearance is not acceptable in 70’s America which is struggling to suppress the rising feminist movement. Therefore, each sequence that presents the relationship between mother and daughter is followed by a noisy, disturbing sequence foreshadowing the incoming rupture in their relationship. The devil suddenly enters into the lives of these people as a threatening force. It comes to possess the one who

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19 *Exorcist*, the digitally re-mastered version.
is devoid of any religious beliefs like Chris or the one who starts to lose his faith, like Karras. It punishes Chris because of her love-affair with Burke and the audience realizes this moral attitude when Burke is killed. Moreover, doctors are drawn as inadequate, ignorant and uninformed torturers using the patients in experimentation (They make a series of painful and disturbing shock treatments on Regan.) The spectator witnesses the change in Chris as she loses her self confidence and as she slowly turns into a weak, dependent creature. The dark tone of the movie owes so much to film-noir techniques as the music adds pessimism and despair. Chris and Karras meet when all the hopes in their lives are faded away. Karras can not bear the burden of his mother’s death- he feels himself guilty because he left her alone- and Chris is suffering because of her daughter Reagan’s illness which can not be medically cured.

Exorcism is depicted as a long and painful procedure in the movie. Faith is necessary to banish the evil from the body. Father Merrin (Max Von Sydow), before starting the session takes out a cross and a bottle of holy water. He kisses the cross as a symbol of loyalty. Regan lies in the bed with scars on her face; she tries to manipulate both of the priests to give into temptation.

Regan MacNeil: What an excellent day for an exorcism.

Father Damien Karras: You would like that?

Regan MacNeil: Intensely.

Father Damien Karras: But wouldn't that drive you out of Regan?
Regan MacNeil: It would bring us together.

Father Damien Karras: You and Regan?

Regan MacNeil: You and us (The Exorcist).

It is a battle between good and evil, between faith and disbelief, between sin and salvation. The movie can also be considered as a spiritual journey towards redemption. Father Karras sacrifices himself for Reagan’s salvation. In his last moments, after Father Merrin is killed, Karras becomes faithful again. In Friedkin’s own words; “If you believe that there is a force for good that combats and eventually triumphs over evil, then you will be taking out of the film what we tried to put into it” (The Exorcist). The dominant moralistic attitude in the movie shapes the destiny of each character. Father Merrin is guilty because he digs up the tombs and makes it possible for Satan to come out, Father Karras feels guilty because he abandons his old mother, because he starts to lose his faith and Chris is guilty because she represents the free, powerful woman. Father Burke’s mistake is his involvement in a love affair regardless of his religious title. Each one is punished because of their sins. Reagan’s possession is symbolic since she represents innocence. Thus, The Exorcist preaches basic Christian values and by punishing the women, the movie imposes fear into those who attempt to live alone without the guidance of a male authority figure. Douglas and Ryan Kellner define Exorcist as movie of crisis since it is a metaphor for anxiety towards social movements like feminism and the only solution that is proposed is the restoration of the male authority figure as the ultimate power (Ryan
and Kellner101). The Exorcism is made by the two powerful male figures that both represent courage and faith.

Demon is defeated in the end. Although he is defeated he plays an important role as the tempter or the deceiver. His existence is necessary to promote faith and also his defeat is required for the establishment of the order. That’s why, Frodo with so much faith- although he is a Hobbit, although he is not as strong as man- defeats Satan by throwing the ring into the fire.

The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

**The Passion of the Christ (2004)**

Satan, depicted as an asexual, androgynous creature in *The Passion of the Christ* (Dir. Mel Gibson, 2004), appears in the weakest moments of Jesus Christ (James Caviezel) to deceive him. It promises its own kingdom for Jesus in return for his obedience. It walks like a shadow among the people as Jesus is tortured and as he is about to be crucified. The word of God is preached by Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus appears as a prophet healing the sick, treating the patient. What he preaches is no more than love and faith however, he is considered as an intruder among the Pharisees. His power is a threat for the Pharisees; that’s why Jesus must be crucified.
Jesus is first seen in a dark forest; “Mount of Olives” praying. The setting and the décor attributes a dream-like quality to the scene. This dark mood and tone will continue throughout the movie; however the unreal atmosphere is going to vanish as the torment begins. The last twelve hours of Christ is a metaphor for man’s everlasting struggle and search. This painful journey is symbolizing hero’s search for the source of his existence and his desire to return to the source. The quest for eternity is achieved through pain, patience, sacrifice and salvation. When Jesus is crucified and raised, Satan is finally shown sitting in the middle of a desert as a beaten and helpless creature.

The Passion envisions the last twelve hours of Christ on earth. Instead of giving a full biography of Christ, Gibson focuses on the violent torture scenes before the crucifixion and by using flashbacks; he goes back to Christ’s life to remind the audience of the Gospel. The movie follows the pattern- with a few slight differences- as it is told in *The Bible* and it achieve a great public interest in America.

In the official web site of the movie it is stated that, “never before has any filmmaker attempted to bring this story of passionate sacrifice to life with such intensely focused cinematic detail and realism.”20 The realism that Gibson asserts is achieved by the depiction of the tortured and damaged body of Christ. Christ’s journey towards Golgotha -on which he will be crucified- is a long one with the ‘everlasting’ torture sequences. In order to heighten the dramatic effect, Gibson

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20 quoted from the official web site /www.passionofthechrist.com
presents the mother and son relationship from an emotional point of view, emphasizing the sacred maternal tie. Certain scenes are reminiscent of the religious paintings since this is made possible by the cinematographer Caleb Deschanel on Gibson’s demand. Gibson wants him “to make the movie look like the paintings of Italian baroque artist Caravaggio, whose images are known to have a lifelike glow from sharp contrasts of light and darkness” 21 (Figure 4). The aesthetic photographic scenes and the flashbacks to Christ’s life make the torture sequences more violent and disturbing. Those bloody torture scenes are in contrast with the silent scenes depicting Christ as a loving, faithful man. In one of these flashbacks, which is shot in slow motion, Virgin Mary recalls Jesus Christ as a small boy who needs motherly care and attention, then when the camera shifts to the present moment, despite the noisy crowded streets of Jerusalem, Christ is shown as a man who is still in need of his mother’s support to bear the burden. With the help of those emotional moments, Jesus Christ becomes someone to be identified with, a man just like one of us.

Although Caviezel’s seven hour make-up sessions prove out to be great success in conveying the pain, the torture scenes are extremely violent and exaggerated. With this exaggeration, the audience is thrown into a purgatorial situation in which he goes through a catharsis. Looking from this perspective, Gibson by controlling and shaping the emotions of the spectator becomes a manipulator. Like a missionary priest, he succeeds in promoting the Christian values like faith, passion,

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21 quoted from the official web site/www.passionofthechrist.com
sacrifice and atonement. Although the movie ends, nothing remains more real than the violent crucifixion scene (figure5).
CONCLUSION

The present study attempts to demonstrate how American history develops and asserts itself into culture in reference to certain cultural and literary presentations. Since American culture is developed under the Western thought and philosophy, the nation’s eagerness to define itself as a separate and unique civilization figures its principles. Thus, a great emphasis is given to the American individual who is the smallest but the chief component of the society. Accordingly, in order to shape the thoughts and beliefs of the individual, it is necessary to form a collective memory which in turn will define the ideology of America.

The “American religion” is also important since it is the locus of American identity. Therefore, the ideology relies heavily on the historical past of the nation. Hence is the emphasis on religion and its place in the collective memory finds itself a shelter in cultural representations. The repetition of certain biblical images, creation of certain icons and the use of Western mythology together, form a cultural memory that distorts the reality and create a hyper-reality; in a way a new history. This new history transmits its ideology to the cultural representations like cinema and literature.

Hollywood serves this aim with the repetitive presentations. Consequently, those representations convey illusions, dreams and myths which belong to an unreal world. This unreal world must seem as real just like in The Matrix and people must believe in this illusion. This belief is necessary to possess the power and to preserve
the unity among the masses without which there will be a chaotic situation. This illusion is achieved in American cinema by means of aesthetics. Aesthetic representations make the cultural infiltration process possible. Cultural infiltration is necessary because America yearns for creating an empire whose power is secured through culture. The American policy is formed by a struggle to gain the power throughout centuries and it aims to possess this power to govern. Therefore, as it is done in *The Bible*, certain fears, values, norms are created and imposed upon the reader by means of certain icons, symbols, representations and then myriad connotations in order to rule. Moreover the repetition of fears, symbols, icons keep the power alive. These fears, together with the use of biblical patterns like faith and sacrifice, the use of biblical allusions or icons like the crucifix, are frequently imposed on every individual and they are deliberately used in politics, popular culture and mass media. Those are taught to every individual, to every citizen throughout myths, religion and popular culture. As a result, he feels like a hero on the way to the Promised Land, as a chosen individual who is in search of a reality or a savior. America, as a nation presents itself as a savior, as a power to civilize the rest of the world. In order to possess the power, the unity must be preserved among the society. America secures its unity by means of “American religion” which shapes the values and conservative ideologies of the nation. This new and unique religion, by emphasizing the essence of each individual power, forms a community in which every individual is motivated to think and act in the same manner. Consequently, each individual, having the same moral values, sharing the same collective memory and history, contribute to the establishment of a harmonious community.
Thus, American literature and popular cinema, as cultural outcomes and reflections of this community, convey the Christian metaphysical idealism which promotes the Biblical moral values like, ‘love your neighbor’, ‘do favor to people’, ‘be a good person and a citizen’, ‘do not commit sins’ and ‘do not be tempted by evil’. By promoting these values in movies with certain aesthetic techniques, American popular cinema casts a light on the cultural identity.

Identification is necessary for the spectator to participate in the film and to understand the message it conveys. “The spectator is nonetheless over present, in another fashion, as the locus of all vision; without his or her vision…there would be no film” (Aumont 215). ‘The eye of the spectator’ is therefore the essential part of film making.

Spectator’s perception and acceptance of this distorted reality depends on the use of cinematic techniques such as editing. Lev Kuleshov studied with cinematic material and “influenced the possibilities of montage as a means of imposing a single meaning onto sequences of images” (187). As a result of his experiments, he found that it is possible to control the spectator’s reactions “by an appropriate manipulation of the film material” (187). That’s why the spectator easily perceives Frodo’s (LOTR) fear of evil when the camera makes a close-up towards his face or realizes David’s (Artificial Intelligence) ‘sinful’ temptation in the meal sequence and immediately perceives the reasons for the distortion in his face. Similarly in The Passion of the Christ, with a certain close up to the disgusting coyote, the spectator is motivated to
perceive the rottenness of Judas which helps him feel relieved after Judas hangs himself from a tree. The spectator,

during a screening, shares the hopes, desires, anxieties, in short the emotions, of one character or another. The spectator puts himself or herself into the character’s place or momentarily thinks she is the protagonist; the viewer thereby loves or suffers with the character, as if by proxy, and this experience is at the base of the spectator’s enjoyment and governs it to a large extent (212).

Hence, the spectator’s identification with Jesus (The Passion of the Christ) becomes possible since he is shown as good and innocent. The spectator develops empathy towards him. Or when Neo meets the oracle to learn his future, the spectator wants him to be the ‘prophesized one’ because he also believes in Morpheus’ dream. As Neo fights with Agent Smith in The Matrix, the spectator wants Neo to defeat him. Since the narrative pattern and the technique of editing can both shape the spectator’s identification, they can also manipulate the spectator to take sides with certain characters and to condemn the other. That is the very reason why the spectator likes Gandalf the Gray, not the Saruman.

Hollywood cinema is mostly considered as “the classical cinema” or “the cinema of bourgeoisie” because it struggles to present the illusion of reality instead of depicting the reality. All the efforts are to promote catharsis and by this emotional
impact, by means of spectator identification, to block the mechanisms of the mind (Parkan 33). Thus, by watching David’s journey, by concentrating on the well-known pattern, the spectator unknowingly involves himself in the illusion. Therefore, David’s journey in the *Artificial Intelligence* becomes something to be admired and even something to be followed or in *Exorcist* Father Damian’s sacrifice remains as a most heroic attempt.

Finally, American popular films, by means of aesthetics, become resources to transmit the religion-based-violence ideology all over the world as well as in America. The recognition and acceptance of the American ideology is the first step in shaping the collective memory. The replication of the values and beliefs throughout history is a way to create a society that is susceptible to violence as a result of which power is secured.

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FILM INDEX


ABSTRACT

As the title “The Aesthetics and the Religion-Based-Violence Ideology in Popular American Films” suggests, this thesis aims to develop a critical eye on the ideology of Popular American cinema that derives its values and beliefs from religious history. Before focusing on certain films, the religious history of The United States provides an outlook to understand how the American Religion is formed and how it finds a way to promote and exert Christianity as the ultimate reality.

This study contains six essential parts. Chapter I focuses on the religious history of America and examines the reasons of physical and psychological violence. Within this multi-religious historical background, the so-called ‘American Religion’ is defined and its reflections in popular culture and literature are exemplified. Chapter II is about The Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments) and the Biblical themes which are repeatedly used in many American culture productions. It is necessary to identify and define the Biblical values since they are the locus of American collective memory. Moving further from Jean Baudrillard’s and Walter Benjamin’s theories, Chapter III places its debate on the ‘illusion of reality’ created within the political ideologies of America. The essential roles of the films are emphasized in this chapter in conveying the ideology and the power of popular culture is stressed. Chapter IV is an outlook into the depiction of violence in Hollywood throughout the aesthetic representations described in Chapter V. After describing the spectator identification process within the light of cinema theories, the movies Easy Rider, Pulp Fiction, Natural Born Killers, Artificial Intelligence, The Matrix Trilogy, The Exorcist, The Lord of the Rings, and The Passion of the Christ are analysed in detail. Finally, in The Conclusion, we summarize the thesis statement that the analyzed Hollywood fear-ridden movies aestheticize violence and serve the American ideology for global power.
ÖZET

Bu tezin yazışma amacı, Amerika’nın geçmişinden getirdiği değerleri ve inançları Amerikan küresel emperyalizm ideolojisine dönüştürme sürecini tarihsel olarak irdelemek, eleştirel bir yaklaşımla Amerikan popüler sineması ile kitlelere ulaştırılan bu ideolojiyi tanımlamak ve bu ideolojinin temelini oluşturan dinin ve şiddetin kökenine inmek ve Hollywood örneklerinde bu ideolojinin estetik yanlarını ve alt paradigmalarını açıklamaktır.


Bu incelemeler beşinci bölümde estetik teorilerle desteklenmektedir.Sonuç bölümünde din ve inancı şiddet öğeleriyle dolu Amerikan filmlerinde korku temelli bir iktidar ideolojisine hizmet ettiği tezi özetlenmektedir.