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Hrdinové dnešní doby: Obyčejný člověk jako hrdina ve filmech

World Trade Center Olivera Stona a United 93 Paula Greengrass

Modern-Day Heroes: The Everyday Man as a Hero in Oliver

Stone's World Trade Center and Paul Greengrass' United 93

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Cílem práce je:

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- 2) prozkoumat odlišnosti mezi zavedenými druhy hrdinů a typy hrdinů v analyzovaných hollywoodských filmech
- 3) identifikovat možné významy změn z pohledu filmové teorie.

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Anotace:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá konceptem moderního hrdiny, zejména poté zobrazením obyčejného člověka jako hrdiny ve filmech pojednávajících o útocích z 11. září 2001. Těmito analyzovanými filmy jsou *World Trade Center* Olivera Stona a *United 93* Paula Greengrassa, oba natočené v roce 2006. Tato práce se skládá ze dvou částí. První, obsáhlejší část řeší neustále se měnící koncept hrdiny a vlivy, které formují pohled společnosti na hrdiny a hrdinství. Zejména se pak zaměřuje na otázku hromadných sdělovacích prostředků a jejich zobrazení hrdinů. Tato práce též zkoumá faktory, které přispěly k vytvoření hrdinů 11. září. V druhé části se poté pojednává o hrdinech zobrazených v analyzovaných filmech. Tato část odhaluje, jak se tyto hrdinové navzájem liší, a poukazuje na to, že existuje celá řada hrdinů, kteří jsou zároveň pouze obyčejnými lidmi.

Klíčová slova: hrdina, hrdinství, World Trade Center, United 93, 9/11, hromadné sdělovací prostředky, zobrazení

Abstract:

This thesis deals with the concept of a modern-day hero, particularly with the representation of an everyday man as a hero in the movies about 9/11 terrorist attacks. These analysed movies are Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* and Paul Greengrass' *United 93*, both released in 2006. The paper consists of two parts. The first, more extensive part deals with a constantly changing concept of a hero and with influences that form society's point of view on heroes and heroism. Above all it focuses on a question of mass media and its interpretation of heroes. This thesis also discusses the factors that contributed to the creation of 9/11 heroes. The second part then deals with the heroes displayed in the analysed movies. This part shows how these heroes differ from each other and points out that there are many heroes who are only common people at the same time.

Keywords: hero, heroism, World Trade Center, United 93, 9/11, mass media, representation

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1 Introduction

The thesis deals mainly with the heroes created after 9/11 and their appearance in two Hollywood movies based on true stories, both released in 2006, only five years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Nevertheless, the thesis also discusses different concepts of a hero as the concept is changing all the time. Last but not least the final paper focuses on different representations of heroes in both analysed movies. I will approach the topic as follows:

The first part of my final paper deals with the concept of a hero. At the beginning, I try to give a general definition on the terms “heroes” and “heroism” since they are not easy to define. Then I focus on a mythological concept of a hero and its application to both analysed movies. However it may seem strange, there are many characteristics which a mythological hero and the heroes displayed in the movies share.

Then I approach a topic that is very important in formation of heroes, and it is the role of mass media. Since its invention, mass media has influenced people’s way of thinking and thus their interpretation of heroes. I discuss both television news as mass media influencing people’s life as well as movies themselves as mass media showing their heroes and affecting the audience. Each of the analysed movies uses a different style of narration, which is also discussed in the paper.

Another chapter deals with a question of gender, since the term “heroism” is usually associated only with men. I try to find out what has led to such association. I also show the heroes in the analysed movies in terms of gender.

Then my thesis focuses on the creation of heroes after 9/11 and discusses what factors contributed to the formation of 9/11 heroes. These factors, including the

number of deaths on American soil or feeling of helplessness, are also shown throughout the analysed movies.

As it has been already mentioned above, the concept of a hero is changing all the time. I include a description of heroes prior to that morning of 9/11 and I describe how it changed that day, and mainly, how the concept is altered every day.

In the last part of my thesis, my attention lies on the representation of a hero in the analysed movies. I mention different types of a hero displayed in the movies and I try to compare them. Finally, I describe how Hollywood creates heroes, since actors are sometimes widely seen as modern-day heroes too.

2 The Concept of a Hero

2.1 Definition of a Hero and Heroism

It is not easy to define who a hero actually is because there is no simple definition. Philip Zimbardo (2010), a leading psychologist and founder of the Heroic Imagination Project, argues that:

A hero is someone who possesses and displays certain heroic attributes such as integrity, compassion, and moral courage, heightened by an understanding of the power of situational forces, an enhanced social awareness, and an abiding commitment to social action. (25)

Heroism is then, according to Zimbardo, “a social concept, and—like any social concept— it can be explained, taught, and modeled through education and practice” (25).

He believes:

Heroism is common, a universal attribute of human nature and not exclusive to a few special individuals. The heroic act is extraordinary, the heroic actor is an ordinary person—until he or she becomes a heroic special individual. We may all be called upon to act heroically at some time, when opportunity arises. We would do well, as a society and as a civilization, to conceive of heroism as something within the range of possibilities for every person. (25)

Lindsay E. Rankin and Alice H. Eagly from Northwestern University run a survey where they tried to find what an ordinary person understood by the term “heroism”. “One goal of our research is to determine whether people’s spontaneous

definitions of heroism generally contain these elements of taking risks and benefiting others” (Rankin and Eagly 2008, 414).

Participants wrote down the “required components or characteristics that make an individual’s or group’s actions or behaviours heroic.” The instructions indicated that they should “give a definition or list the components” of heroism; [...] Benefits others and acts selflessly were the most frequent components; [...] As expected, another frequent component was confronts risk; [...] Overall, the findings supported the hypothesis that risking oneself to benefit others is regarded as heroic. Both of these risk and benefit elements were common in participants’ definitions and often appeared together. (415-416, 418)

Benefits others, acts selflessly and confronts risk were the most common answers. However, there were also other elements listed although they were not so frequent. These components were supports beliefs, acts supernaturally, acts morally, dissents, acts for self, serves as role model, accepts others, cultural relativism and also acts normally (417).

As one can see, there are many approaches to the explanation of terms “hero” and “heroism”. Definitions vary from author to author and it is difficult to find one unique definition. In my final paper, I will deal with several approaches to heroism and I will discuss what a hero really represents in different points of view. First, I will take a look at the mythological concept of a hero and its application to the analysed movies. In mythology, a hero was usually a demigod focusing on a quest during which he got supernatural aid. Nevertheless, there are some aspects in which he is similar to those modern-day heroes discussed in the analysed movies.

The important turning point was then the “boom” of mass media and its representation of heroes and heroism. It has changed the way people look at heroes. I will deal with the heroes who appear in the analysed movies but I will also discuss the fact that television news affects people’s way of thinking.

Last but not least this thesis will deal with a constantly changing concept of a hero. It is said that at the end of 20th century people saw heroes in celebrities such as actors, athletes or singers. Then, on the morning of 9/11 their point of view changed. However, these days people start to see celebrities as heroes again although sometimes, when rescue staff die in a rescuing action, people talk about them as heroes too. As one can notice, it is not easy to state clearly who the hero is and who is not. In this paper, I will try to search for various aspects of the meaning of the word “hero” and then apply them to those heroes in the analysed movies.

2.2 Characteristics of Mythological Heroes and Their Application to the Analysed Movies

Mythological heroes differ from contemporary ones in many aspects. However, one can also find some similarities while comparing these two concepts of a hero. In the following lines, it will be seen how the concept of Campbell’s heroes can actually be found in these two analysed movies, *World Trade Center* as the first one and *United 93* as the second one.

Joseph Campbell (2004) divides a hero’s adventurous journey into three stages in chronological order: departure, initiation, and return (45, 89, 179). All three of these stages are divided into phases.

The first phase of the hero's departure is the call to adventure. A herald appears and invites a hero for an adventure (47). A hero chooses if he wants to go for an adventure or not - that is the case of refusal of the call (54).

On this example it is illustrated the choice of the police officers on 9/11 in the movie *World Trade Center*. There is a group of the Port Authority Police Officers that are supposed to go to the World Trade Center site and help with the evacuation of the people in there. Some of them choose to go there and try to help, which can be associated with Campbell's call to adventure.

In the film, one can see that there are only five of them willing to go inside the towers. The sergeant John McLoughlin (played by Nicolas Cage) tells his subordinates in front of the buildings that whoever wants to go inside with him and help with the evacuation should step forward (Stone 2006, 00:16:04).

The first one to answer is William Jimeno (00:16:10) (portrayed by Michael Peña), who is later pulled out from the rubble together with the sergeant McLoughlin. The second one to step forward is the officer Antonio Rodriguez (00:16:13), later killed immediately after the South Tower collapse. The last one to decide to go inside is Dominick Pezzulo (00:16:17), who survives the first collapse of the South Tower. He is actually the only one not pinned so he starts to try to free Jimeno (00:27:40). However, when the North Tower falls down, he is mortally wounded by a falling piece of concrete (00:30:33) and dies only several minutes later (00:32:30). The fifth person who decides to go with them is the officer Christopher Amoroso, who meets the sergeant McLoughlin and the other three officers in the main lobby between the two towers right before the South Tower collapses (00:19:45). He is killed immediately after the collapse.

Nevertheless, many police officers choose not to go to the towers and that is what Campbell (2004) describes as the refusal of the call (54).

In the second movie, *United 93*, the people actually do not have the chance to decide if they want to go for “an adventure” or not. They are just passengers who happen to be on board the airplane that has been hijacked. Nevertheless, some of them decide to act after realizing that it is a suicide mission (Greengrass 2006, 01:25:32). They find out that two airplanes have hit the World Trade Centre because one of the passengers uses an air phone to call his wife who tells him about the attacks (01:21:35). That is why a group of men with the help of the stewardesses decide to take the control over the aircraft. In Campbell’s terminology, this behaviour can be associated with the call to adventure.

There are more phases in the stage of departure, one of them called the crossing of the first threshold. At the moment of the crossing of the first threshold, a hero enters an unknown zone full of danger and darkness and it seems like if he had died (Campbell 2004, 71, 83).

One could again compare this statement to the situation on 9/11, particularly to the film *World Trade Center*, where the police officers go into the towers which collapse a while later. They enter a dangerous, unknown zone without any thoughts on what can happen to them. Some of them really die, they are the officers Amoroso, Rodriguez and Pezzulo as mentioned above although two of the policemen, the sergeant McLoughlin and the officer Jimeno, survive and, as it is shown at the end of the movie, they are found hours later after a long time of doubts whether they are still alive or not (Stone 2006, 01:24:53). William Jimeno is pulled from the debris after thirteen hours and John McLoughlin after twenty-one hours, gravely injured (CBS Worldwide Inc. 2004).

During this time, their relatives and close friends do not even know for a while if they have entered the towers or not (Stone 2006, 00:44:15) as one can see in the film. Nevertheless, later they get confirmation they really have gone into the towers (00:48:21). The great part of the film is about Jimeno's and McLoughlin's love ones, waiting for some information about them. In the movie, the viewer meets with Jimeno's family, particularly with his pregnant wife Allison, and he/she also watches the story of McLoughlin's wife, Donna. The two do not know each other as one can find out later in the film when these two women pass by each other in the hall of the hospital (01:36:02).

There are, of course, more relatives portrayed in the movie like John's four children or Jimeno's mother, sister and daughter but the movie focuses mainly on the wives and their memories of their husbands.

The movie shows the chaos, which arose after the attacks, nobody could tell the wives for sure if their husbands had gone into the towers or not.

The second stage in hero's adventurous journey is called initiation. Probably the best-known part of a hero's journey is the road of trials where a hero has to face various trials (Campbell 2004, 89).

Again, one can compare this so-called hero's road of trials to the things happening on board the United Airlines Flight 93. In the movie, the viewer watches the effort of the passengers and stewardesses to take the airplane back from the hijackers. Symbolically, one can imagine the way through the aisle from the back of the airplane to the cockpit as the road of trials.

The passengers, mainly the four men, Todd Beamer, Mark Bingham, Tom Burnett and Jeremy Glick, who are believed to form a plan to take the airplane back (Reilly 2011), have to overcome several obstacles in the form of two terrorists with

the knives, one of them with a bomb wrapped around his waist, in order to get into the cockpit, where the other two hijackers are, and try to take control over the aircraft. As weapons for their “road of trials”, they use the fire extinguishers, knives, forks or boiling water (Greengrass 2006, 01:26:27).

They manage to kill one of the terrorists, that one with the bomb, by using the fire extinguisher and they find out it is a fake bomb (01:36:07). Then the viewer watches them struggling with the second hijacker while the pilot-hijacker is moving the aircraft from one side to the other in order to prevent the passengers from attacking them.

The useful weapon that both sides, not only the passengers but also the terrorists, use is a trolley. Later the passengers use it for breaking into the cockpit. Nevertheless, the second hijacker is still fighting with them, he turns the fire extinguisher on but he cannot prevent the passengers from killing him. One of the passengers, Mark Bingham, steals his knife and Jeremy Glick, who says he used to do judo, breaks the terrorist’s neck (01:38:42). The passengers break into the cockpit only few seconds before the airplane crashes into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania (01:40:42).

Although it is a slightly different situation, there is a similarity between this mythological phase of a hero’s journey called the road of trials, and the situation of the policemen on 9/11 in the movie *World Trade Center*.

As well as a mythological hero in this phase of his journey receives help (even though it is supernatural help), the policemen buried alive in the ruins of the Twin towers receive help by means of their colleagues trying to find them and rescue them. In *World Trade Center*, one can watch the story of the rescuers who find the officer Jimeno and Sgt. McLoughlin in the rubble. At the time they find them, it is

prohibited for all rescue workers to keep looking for the survivors in the debris. There is a danger it can collapse because the whole thing is unstable (Stone 2006, 01:02:54) and after the WTC Tower 7 has fallen down later in the afternoon, the superordinates do not want to risk other lives.

However, there is David Carnes, a former Marine that “had been a Staff Sgt. in the Marine Corps infantry” (Bos 2006), who does not respect the ban and goes to search for the survivors by himself. He meets another former Marine, Sgt. James Thomas, and they start to look for the buried people together (Stone 2006, 01:17:46). These two rescuers are both out of duty, yet they have decided to come to Ground Zero and help with the rescue works. They even do not care that it is too dangerous to search at that time because of the constant danger of collapse. They just want to help and save lives.

Nevertheless, these two Marines are those who hear Jimeno’s call for help and find him and Sgt. McLoughlin (01:24:28). Sgt. Thomas goes for help and comes back with the officers Scott Strauss and Paddy McGee (01:27:45) although in reality he came back only with Chuck Sereika, a former paramedic whose license had expired (01:28:47), and those officers came a few minutes later. “Around ten minutes later, Scott Strauss and Paddy McGee, officers with the elite Emergency Service Unit of the NYPD, also arrived” (Liss 2012). Sereika and Strauss are then those who reach the Port Authority officer Will Jimeno (Stone 2006, 01:31:55) and dig him out of the debris.

When the hero’s quest is done, he is supposed to come back and try to renew the community. This stage is called return and it does not have to be always easy. A hero refuses to take such a big responsibility, so he refuses to return (Campbell 2004, 179). However, there is not necessary the stage of return in every hero’s journey as in

the case of the hero's death. As one can see in both analysed movies, not many heroes survive. In *United 93*, the passengers and crew die when the airplane crashes into a field. In *World Trade Center*, only two policemen are pulled out from the rubble alive.

Although just dying does not make a man a hero, it is the greatest action that one can do - to risk their life for saving another one. As it is written in the Bible: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Albert Barnes, an American theologian, reacts to John's statement with these words: "No higher expression of love could be given. Life is the most valuable object we possess; and when a man is willing to lay that down for his friends or his country, it shows the utmost extent of love" (Barnes 1834).

There is a contemporary example of this statement, referring to 9/11. On that day, one could observe a true devotion of ordinary citizens not only to their country and friends, but also to complete strangers. Starting with the rescuers who decide to go to that "burning hell" and help the people they do not even know, continuing with the rescuers' colleagues who are looking for them in the ruins for long hours till exhaustion.

In the case of United Flight 93, the passengers try to save not only themselves but also the other innocent people on the ground, and last but not least also another symbol of the US, the Capitol (although it is still not sure if the forth target was supposed to be the Capitol or the White House, in the movie the picture of the Capitol is seen on the control stick in front of the hijacker-pilot, Ziad Jarrah (Greengrass 2006, 01:04:20)). Even though the passengers do not know what the target is, they know about the attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the

Pentagon, and they are quite sure their plane is going to be used in a similar way as those three others earlier that morning. They decide to act. This decision prevents the terrorists from killing more people and probably saves lives of many civilians on the ground.

As Campbell (2004) says, the last act in a hero's life is his departure or death. It is also said that a hero should not fear death, otherwise he could not be considered a hero. A hero is reconciled to death (329).

This statement can be again illustrated on the events of 9/11 where the passengers of United Flight 93 know the terrible truth about their kidnapping, yet still they decide to react even at the cost of their own lives. The same applies to the rescuers who decide to go to the burning towers although they might know they will not come back.

On the other hand, one can feel from the movies the determination of the heroes to live. As the viewer watches the passengers of United Flight 93 calling their love ones, it is obvious that they are not reconciled to death, they are determined to fight and come back to their families.

In the other movie, *World Trade Center*, the buried policemen are talking about dying and assuring each other that they will make it through (Stone 2006, 00:41:25). However, at some point when they have been lying there for several hours, Jimeno seems to be reconciled to death, it is when he asks Sgt. McLoughlin to tell his wife he loves her and that he wants his unborn daughter to be named Olivia (01:11:13), because in the film the viewer can see Jimeno's memory of his wife arguing with him about the name of their unborn daughter. He wants her to be named Alisa, his wife, however, likes the name Olivia (01:07:25). Sgt. McLoughlin takes his transmitter despite the fact that the connection is cut and reports this last wish

into it (01:11:47). He also adds that he wants his family to know that he loves them very much (01:12:25). It is probably the point they both really think they are going to die. Nevertheless, they keep trying to stay awake and talk to each other, so the viewer is able to notice their determination to survive.

2.3 Role of Mass Media

2.3.1 The Representation of Mass Media in the Analysed Movies

Due to the communication technology, one felt as though he/she had participated in those terrible events that were happening on 9/11 in Manhattan, however as cyber-spectators there was nothing anyone could do except for watching the brave NYC firefighters entering the towers, which later on collapsed and buried thousands of people.

There is a concept of mass media shown throughout both analysed movies. In *United 93*, the officers at the National Air Traffic Control Center (from now on NATCC) in Herndon, Virginia, turn on CNN on a huge screen after the first airplane crashes into the World Trade Center and watch the North tower in flames (Greengrass 2006, 00:37:52).

At the moment of the second attack, the camera focuses on the staff in the control tower at Newark watching the second plane flying over Manhattan (00:44:47) and then there is a cut and the audience watches the second plane hitting the South Tower from the video shot (00:44:56). This video was probably used from the shot captured on that September morning while millions of people all over the world were watching the attack live. Immediately after the plane hits the South Tower, there is a cut to the soldiers at the Northeast Air Defense Sector (from now on NEADS) in Rome, New York, watching the event on a big screen (00:45:02).

In the case of the attack on the Pentagon, the movie shows the situation at the NEADS. The soldiers are dealing with the problem of the lack of fighter jets when they hear from the CNN news about the airplane hitting the Pentagon (01:19:12). Then there is a cut to the NATCC. All the staff are watching a big television screen, including “just-that-day” promoted Ben Sliney (played by himself), the operations manager of the Federal Aviation Administration (from now on FAA) who decides to close the US air traffic just a few moments later (01:20:40).

In the film *World Trade Center*, the media are also omnipresent. Through the whole movie, the audience watches televisions showing the events happening that day over and over again. First, the police officers watch television after the first airplane has crashed into the North Tower (Stone 2006, 00:09:18). Then people from all over the world are shown watching the attacks on television (00:34:10). Later, the policemen from Wisconsin, who are later seen helping in the World Trade Center site, watch the attack on the Pentagon in a bar (00:34:50). Both wives of the buried police officers also watch the news, Alison at her work (00:35:30) and Donna in a house in Goshen, New York (00:36:42). Then when they are already at home, the television is still showing the attacks. John’s children are watching the news when one of John’s friends comes and tells Donna that John has gone into the towers (00:46:39). David Karnes, who later finds the buried officers, watches the news showing President Bush giving a speech (00:44:57) and then decides to go to New York City and help. Later, when he stops to have his marine hair-cut done, he again watches the news on television (00:49:40). Televisions also show a collapse of the World Trade Center Building 7. The police officers are watching the news about the collapse when their colleagues arrive all covered with dust and blood (01:00:35). Also, when Donna is waiting in the hospital, televisions are turned on, showing the

collapse of the towers again and again (01:45:11). The omnipresence of mass media is obvious in a scene where Alison goes out and she hears the news about the attacks coming from all houses in the street (01:15:55).

Elliot Aronson (1972) also deals with the question of mass media and its influence on people and their opinions (47). As Aronson states:

Influence through mass communication need not to be blatant – it can be very subtle indeed. Even when communicators are not making a direct attempt to sell us something, they can succeed in influencing the way we look at the world. (47)

Since the media was constantly showing the brave firefighters and other rescue staff on 11th September 2001, it affected the way people started to look at them from that day on. People created heroes out of these rescuers with a great help of mass media. Especially the news that runs on television was particularly influencing. Aronson says that televisions choose their news according to how entertaining it is for the audience (48). That is why they decide rather to broadcast a flooded metropolis than “a dam that was built in order to prevent such flooding” (48). It is simply more interesting for the viewer.

Just as such action events as football games are more entertaining on TV than such quiet events as chess matches, it is more likely that riots, bombing, earthquakes, massacres, and other violent acts will get more air time than stories about people helping each other, people working to prevent violence, and so on. (48)

The incidents that occurred on 9/11 definitely got sufficient deal of air time. During several months, people could watch the September events again and again. The televisions broadcast them repeatedly because they knew it was a good material

for keeping the viewer's attention. As it has been mentioned above, people usually like watching some actions in the news because "action makes for more exciting viewing than does a portrayal of people behaving in a peaceful, ordinary manner" (48). As one can see, mass media has a great influence on people's lives and it definitely influenced the way of creation of firefighters and other rescue staff as heroes after 9/11.

Although, according to Aronson, stories about people helping each other are less popular among the audience than more action things like bombing and massacres (48), the whole world could still find amazing stories about people helping each other on 9/11 and the following days. The media was covering stories about how people trapped in the buildings that were hit by the airplanes helped each other to get out.

In addition, in both analysed movies, one can see many people helping each other. Mainly in *World Trade Center*, the people's concern for each other is clearly seen. First, the rescue staff go to the burning towers to help and save the people who are trapped there, even at the cost of their lives. Then, when the majority of them are buried under the debris of the World Trade Center site, their colleagues run to try to pull them out and save them.

In the second analysed movie, *United 93*, the viewer can also notice the acts of people helping the others. The passengers are helping each other by giving their mobile phones to the others so that they can call home, one of the passengers who is an Emergency Medical Technician (from now on EMT) tries to help the passenger who has been stabbed by one of the terrorists, and last but not least, the stewardesses help with organization of the attack against the hijackers.

2.3.2 Analysed Movies Themselves as Mass Media

People are affected by what they see on television, whether they watch the evening news or an action movie. Both news and films show heroes every day. The difference is that an action hero in a movie is usually a fictitious hero. Just as a director of the news chooses what appears later in the news and thus who is a hero of the day, a director of a movie chooses his hero for his movie. Oliver Stone chose a story of two rescued police officers for his movie *World Trade Center*, he did not choose anyone else who survived that day in the debris of the World Trade Center site.

As one can see, the viewer is forced to accept a director's opinion on who the hero is and who is not. After releasing Stone's movie, the two police officers who the movie is about, are now more well-known among people than the others, those who were pulled out from the debris and also those who were not, because these people are, of course, heroes too. Thus, film-makers have the power to affect people's knowledge about events that happened. After watching this film, everyone will have an idea how those two police officers were rescued. However, if the viewers do not search for other rescues and events that happened that day, they will probably not have such knowledge about it as they will have about the two survivors presented in the film *World Trade Center*.

The director of the second movie *United 93*, Paul Greengrass, chose to display in his movie more heroes than just one or two. He decided to shoot a movie about the passengers of Flight 93 who stood up to the terrorists and probably saved lives of other innocent people on the ground because of their decision. His movie honours those people.

2.3.2.1 *Identifying with the Characters of the Movies*

There are methods that help the viewer identify with the heroes of a movie. François Jost (2006) says that there are two ways of identifying with the characters (22). One attitude works on the basis of resemblance of our own world, it means that well-known places, language, or professions are displayed in a movie. In addition, the important tool for an induction of reality is the usage of dialogues (22). This is the case of the film *United 93*. The audience identify with the characters thanks to the resemblance of their own real world. The movie focuses on the passengers on board an airplane and almost everyone has been on an airplane at least once in their life. In addition, the dialogues, which are completely casual, help the viewer to empathize with the people on board Flight 93.

Nevertheless, there is another approach to identify with the characters without help of the resemblance of physical world. Jost gives an example of the popular series *Dallas*. Despite the differences between the characters and the audience consisting in different social status and exotic setting in Texas, the audience can identify with the characters through their behaviour and motivation such as love, jealousy, hatred, or desire for power. The viewer experiences real emotions and thanks to viewer's cognitive ability, he/she is able to connect the things happening in a movie to his/her real experiences and memories. Thus both worlds, real and fictitious, mingle (23).

One of the analysed movies, *World Trade Center*, uses this approach. It is more real for the viewer to be on an airplane than buried alive below ground. Not many people are rescue workers, thus there is a high chance that the viewer has never faced a dangerous rescue situation as the heroes from *World Trade Center* have.

However, the viewer can still empathize with them through their emotions and memories, especially when they remember their families.

2.3.2.2 *Fictitious and Factual Narration*

Factual narration is usually used in historical stories when the creators have a source of information about chronological order of events. The viewer can verify the truthfulness of the order of events in real world. Paul Greengrass uses this approach in his *United 93*. He does not break the chronological order of events by any flashbacks or background stories. On the other hand, Stone's *World Trade Center* uses another approach that is used in the area of fiction.

Jost claims:

In the area of fiction the breach of chronology is indicated either explicitly (for example when a character tells us a fact in flashback), or implicitly, when the breach is recognized thanks to the viewer's (or reader's) ability to refer to visual or sound elements: a sixty-year-old man is absently looking through the window on a train and then we see him on the riverside much younger so we easily realize that he is reminiscing his past. (96, my translation)¹

In *World Trade Center*, the chronology is breached by memories of the two trapped police officers of their families, but also by memories of their wives. It is another fact that shows this movie more like a fictitious catastrophic movie than a movie based on a true story.

As for frequency in storytelling, Jost says:

¹ “V oblasti fikce je porušení chronologie naznačeno buď explicitně (například když nám postava vypráví ve zpětném záblesku paměti nějaký fakt), nebo implicitně, kdy je porušení rozpoznáno díky divákově (nebo čtenářově) schopnosti odkazovat na vizuální nebo zvukové prvky: šedesátiletý muž hledí ve vlaku nepřítomně z okna a poté jej vidíme na břehu řeky mnohem mladšího, takže nám snadno dojde, že vzpomíná na minulost.“

A narrator of an event can choose from three main approaches: to tell once what happened once (*singulativ*), to tell once what happened more times (*iterativ*) and to tell several times what happened once (*repetitiv*). (98, my translation)²

Both analysed movies uses a *singulativ* approach, however, if one considers television news, it sometimes repeats the same event several times, using then a *repetitiv* approach.

The importance of an event is, from medial point of view, usually measured by the intensity of their repetition: how many times did we see Boeing 747 hitting the World Trade Center building? The French channels repeated the whole scene so many times that some children actually thought that dozens of airplanes had hit the towers. (98, my translation)³

Nevertheless, both movies diverge in different usage of focalization. According to Jost, there are three types of focalization in fictitious storytelling.

Fictitious storytelling can be expressed from a point of view of only one character, thus with limited understanding of what is happening in other characters' minds (*internal focalization*), or on the contrary, from a point of view of an omniscient reader or viewer who penetrates through all minds and observes acts and behaviour of all characters wherever they are (*omniscience* or *viewer's focalization*). Last but not least we can let

² “Vypravěči nějaké události se nabízejí tři hlavní postupy: jednou vyprávět, co se stalo jednou (*singulativ*), jednou vyprávět, co se stalo několikrát (*iterativ*), a několikrát vyprávět, co se stalo jednou (*repetitiv*).”

³ “Význam události je ostatně z mediálního hlediska často poměřován intenzitou jejího omílání: kolikrát jsme jen viděli, jak Boeing 747 naráží do budovy World Trade Center? Francouzské stanice celou scénu opakovaly tak dlouho, že některé děti si myslely, že do věží narazilo několik desítek letadel.”

the reader or viewer out of the cognitive field of a character and let him/her share only character's expressed thoughts or motivation (*external focalization*). (99, my translation)⁴

In *United 93*, the director uses external focalization, so the viewer can observe only what a cameraman sees with an objective of his camera. This technique is usually used in a documentary film. There are no thoughts or memories displayed in the movie.

On the other hand, in *World Trade Center*, there are scenes which show thoughts and memories of the characters. Although they are memories of more than one character, one can say that the director uses internal focalization because the audience watches what is happening in characters' minds. Jost says that using internal focalization is an advantage of a film-maker since in ordinary life people cannot read other people's minds (99). He also says that "[...] using of internal focalization can be permitted only when dealing with characters who are fictitious or "considered fictitious" (99, my translation).⁵

2.3.2.3 Comparison of the Similarities Displayed in the Movies

There were two films released in 2006, both dealing with the events that happened on 11th September 2001, yet still so different from each other. Both movies show the events of that day, however, each of them portray those events differently.

While the first movie, *World Trade Center*, directed by a well-known director Oliver Stone, reveals a story of two Port Police Authority Officers trapped in the

⁴ "Fiktivní vyprávění může být podáno z hlediska jedné postavy, tedy s omezeným pochopením toho, co se děje v hlavách ostatních postav (*vnitřní fokalizace*), nebo naopak z hlediska vševědoucího čtenáře nebo diváka, který proniká do všech myslí a sleduje činy a chování všech postav, ať jsou kdekoli (vševědoucnost neboli *divácká fokalizace*). A konečně můžeme ponechat čtenáře či diváka vně poznávacího pole postavy a umožníme mu sdílet pouze její vyslovené myšlenky nebo motivaci (*vnější fokalizace*)."

⁵ "[...] užití vnitřní fokalizace lze tedy tolerovat jen tehdy, jde-li o postavy fiktivní nebo „považované za fiktivní."

debris of the Twin Towers, the other one, *United 93*, directed and written by Paul Greengrass, tells a story of the passengers and crew members on board Flight 93, the only hijacked flight that did not reach its target that day.

Although there are obviously more differences than similarities while comparing these two movies, one still can find something that these movies have in common.

First, they are both based on a true story. They take the viewer back to that important day of modern history, 11th September 2001, and he/she starts to remember those events that happened on that Tuesday morning in the United States of America. They both recreate and honour the people who are now known as heroes.

Furthermore, both films use two perspectives. In *World Trade Center*, the storyline is shifting from the buried police officers to their families waiting for some information about them.

In *United 93*, the focus is changing from the NATCC to the situation on board the airplane although the viewer can also watch the scenes from different air traffic control centers such as the Boston Air Traffic Control Center, the Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center, the New York Air Traffic Control Center, a control tower at Newark, and also there are some scenes from the NEADS.

However, the main focus stays on the passengers and crew of Flight 93 and, in the second half of the movie, after the American 77 hits the Pentagon (Greengrass 2006, 01:19:13), the attention is turned only to the situation on board the United Airlines airplane after it has been hijacked. It does not shift the focus anymore until the end of the movie.

At the beginning of both movies, daily routines are presented. In *World Trade Center*, the sergeant John McLoughlin gets up, takes a shower and leaves for his job

to New York City (Stone 2006, 00:01:08). Then the audience observes the officer William Jimeno getting on the bus and going to Manhattan, watching the Twin Towers still standing (00:05:07). Then the focus is shifted to the Port Authority base in Manhattan and one can see the officers preparing for their usual patrol as any other morning (00:06:08). Nothing indicates that this morning will be different.

In *United 93*, this routine of everyday life is shown by the staff at the NATCC. Ben Sliney, who was just promoted the day before, enters the office and everyone congratulates him on his promotion (Greengrass 2006, 00:07:27). He asks usual questions about the air traffic as any other morning. Even when he gets the message about a possible hijack of Flight 11 (00:19:24), he still does not expect this day to be one of the blackest days in modern history.

The viewer also gets to see the crew members of United Flight 93 preparing the aircraft for taking off and the passengers waiting to board the airplane. Nobody except for four Arab men, who later take control over the aircraft, imagines that something big could be happening in just few moments. Then there are the scenes from different air traffic control centers when the audience sees the staff working as usual. The first suspicion comes when the pilots from American 11 are not answering to the Boston Air Control Center (00:15:55).

As one can see, nobody is expecting something unusual to happen. Therefore, when the terrorists strike, nobody is prepared for that and it creates chaos and confusion. There is misinformation flowing to the NEADS, miscommunication between the FAA and the NEADS, and it causes that nobody knows what is actually true. In *World Trade Center*, the chaos and misinformation causes that nobody surely knows if the police officers have gone inside the towers or not.

Last but not least, in both movies one can see people saying goodbye to their love ones. In *United 93*, the passengers and stewardesses say that directly to their families through the air phones and mobiles. In *World Trade Center*, the two police officers leave a message for their families on McLoughlin's transmitter (Stone 2006, 01:11:47). In *United 93*, there is also a scene where Ziad, one of the hijackers, calls somebody and says three times "Ich liebe dich", which means "I love you" (Greengrass 2006, 00:10:46). It is a proof that Paul Greengrass was not trying to dehumanize the terrorists, nor understand them. He shows them as ordinary human beings who do not bring any suspect on themselves until they hijack the airplane.

Nobody noticed them. Nobody sitting next to them said, you're not human. They looked like us. They looked unexceptional and with respect to the particular scene of I Love you, well, number one, that's what he did. And number two, I wanted the film to be framed to by two I Love you'. Burnett, Jr. sits down next to him and makes a phone call. Burnett, Jr. makes a hum drum business call, completely unaware of anything abnormal. And the man sitting next to him says I Love you because he's about to go off and commit mass murder. An hour and 40 minutes later, Burnett, Jr. picks up the phone, calls his wife and says I Love you. I wanted it to be symmetry. (Johnson 2006)

What one should remember is that these movies are not documentaries although *United 93* uses a documentary-like style. Both movies use dramatization and both directors put their imagination into them.

The both directors also did a research of the facts although it seems that Paul Greengrass did a better job. Although he could not be sure exactly what happened on board Flight 93 as all of the people who were there died when the airplane crashed,

he spent a lot of time on collecting the facts and what was known for sure. He met the people involved in that tragedy, the relatives and friends of the passengers, United Airlines aircrew, the controllers and members of the military. With their help and the help of voice records from the cockpit and phone calls of the passengers, he tried to recreate the story as true as possible.

However, in the case of breaking into the cockpit, nobody is still sure whether the passengers managed to break there or not. In *United 93*, the passengers do break into the cockpit (Greengrass 2006, 01:39:43), they cannot, however, avoid the collision. Paul Greengrass probably chose this version of ending in order to be more dramatic.

Concerning the situations on the ground, Paul Greengrass gathered the facts cooperating with the people who were working that day at the air traffic control centers, NATCC or NEADS. Many of them also play themselves in the movie, which causes that the movie seems more natural and thus believable. Those events happening on the ground are pictured in detail in the movie and one can see that Paul Greengrass actually did a good job there.

On the other hand, Oliver Stone in his *World Trade Center* also uses the facts based on cooperation with the people involved. Both Sgt. McLoughlin and the officer Jimeno cooperated with Oliver Stone. However, even though the director had all the facts he needed, he changed some things in the movie, mainly how the rescue of both trapped officers happened.

In addition, the two Marines who found the buried police officers did not cooperate with the director, so there are some things that are not true such as that one of the Marines, Jason Thomas, is in reality black although in the movie he is portrayed as a white man (Liss 2006). Oliver Stone also went too far with

dramatization of those events so it actually seems more like a big Hollywood movie than a movie based on the truth.

To sum up, even though Oliver Stone had probably easier job to find out the facts, Paul Greengrass' movie just seems more realistic.

2.3.2.4 *World Trade Center as an Action Movie*

The movie *World Trade Center* carries many characteristics of an action film.

Sky-high orange fireballs; vehicles and bodies pitching, often in slow motion, through plate-glass windows; characters diving and rolling across wrecked interiors, either under the impact of rapidly fired bullets or to escape from them; automatic pistols and large-calibre portable weaponry like grenade launchers; death-defying stunts: these are all immediately recognisable attributes of the action blockbuster. (Langford 2005, 234)

Almost all of these features appear in *World Trade Center*, making it seem like a big Hollywood action blockbuster. The audience watches orange fireballs as they start to fall down through the debris where the two trapped police officers lay. One of them hits the officer Jimeno and hurts him (Stone 2006, 00:41:57). Some bodies are falling down as the police officers approach the Twin towers. They also see flying papers and disorder in general (00:13:53). At the time of the South Tower collapse, the main characters try to run and hide in elevator shaft (00:23:50). Another frequent characteristic of action movies, a slow motion, is used in this scene.

Special effects techniques like CGI are now widely used in Hollywood and they were used in this movie as well. A slow motion is commonly used in catastrophic movies such as *Armageddon* or *Titanic*, mainly for dramatic effect. As

for fired bullets, there is a scene when Pezzulo's gun starts to fire due to extreme heat and the officers cannot hide because they are pinned (00:42:55).

Another well-known feature of action blockbusters is casting “a high-profile male star (Tom Cruise, Eddie Murphy, Bruce Willis) in an easily summarised plot formula [...]” (Langford 2005, 236). It is said that “blockbusters showcased the leading male action stars of the time [...]” (240). In *World Trade Center*, the main character, the sergeant McLoughlin, is played by a famous actor Nicolas Cage. The focus is mainly on the main character, “who may be paired with [...] a “buddy” (235). It is obvious that, unlike Paul Greengrass, Oliver Stone took his chance with a big Hollywood name.

In addition, other well-known actors were cast and it actually does not seem to be as realistic and natural as *United 93*. In *United 93*, the audience can identify with the actors because they have never seen them before. Therefore, it is more likely that the viewer identifies with the unknown actors in *United 93* better than with Nicolas Cage in *World Trade Center* as many people remember his previous movies and thus it is harder to put oneself into the story.

Action blockbusters are often connected with another genre, which is melodrama. These movies are usually full of pathos and sentimentalism and there is often a love story or a topic of “familial conflicts and their resolution [...]” (254).

In *World Trade Center*, the viewer watches scenes showing relationships between the main characters and their wives, which are, of course, full of sentimentalism as the main characters are buried under the debris of the World Trade Center site and they do not know if they will make it through.

Action movies also focus mainly on one main hero and his fight against the evil. In the case of *World Trade Center*, the main heroes do not try to fight the evil,

they are just waiting for their rescue. However, before the collapse of the towers, they try to fight the evil by going to the towers and try to save those people trapped in there.

“The protagonists of the “hard” action films were most often police officers [...]” (247). The protagonists of *World Trade Center* are also police officers. It seems that these movies with police officers as main protagonists attract people.

As one can observe, the majority of action blockbusters end with happy ending. It is also the case of the film *World Trade Center*. Although many people died that day, the movie focuses on two police officers who survive in the debris and who are then rescued and thus one can say that the movie ends with happy ending.

To sum up, Oliver Stone has created a movie that presents itself as a big Hollywood picture. It includes a lot of sentimentalism and pathos and it resembles big Hollywood action movies such as *Titanic* or *Armageddon*.

The movie focuses not only on two police officers who are buried alive when the Twin Towers collapse but also on their families, revealing their backgrounds and also their problems. There are brief little scenes with the memories either of the wives or those of the officers. There is also a scene where the officer Jimeno sees Jesus with a bottle of water (Stone 2006, 01:13:06) as he is waiting for someone to rescue them. *World Trade Center* does not use a documentary-like style, it rather looks like a fictitious Hollywood movie.

Oliver Stone is a well-known American director and he is famous for putting his conspiracy theories into his films such as *JFK*. In *World Trade Center*, however, Oliver Stone abandons his usual style and does not include his thoughts into the film. Nevertheless, he never shows the airplanes hitting the building, nor does he talk

about the terrorists. He only focuses on the events seen that day by the eyes of those two police officers.

2.3.2.5 *United 93 as a Movie Using Documentary-like Style*

Guy Gauthier (2004) says that “Crime news is a frequent topic for both fiction and documentary movies, however, there are different approaches to deal with it” (328, my translation).⁶

United 93 is not a documentary movie but it uses some of the techniques that are used in documentary movies. Hand-held cameras, mainly noticed in the moment of the attacks, minimal music, inconsistent camera angles, and unknown actors, all of these elements help the viewer feels as he/she was a part of the story.

By casting unknown actors and many non-actors, the movie just seems more realistic. They were carefully chosen so they would resemble the actual passengers, crew and hijackers. As it has been already mentioned above, many people play themselves in the movie and therefore the whole movie seems more natural.

As Paul Greengrass says:

The idea was that you have a few actors in amongst professionals and if you get that balance right and if you are very, very lucky, the actors stop acting and the non-actors start acting and you have this beautiful sense of reality. (Stanger 2011)

There are also no back-stories, no background of the characters. The viewer gets to know only what he/she would find out about the people he/she would meet on an airplane. There are only regular small talks between the passengers or the crew, the audience does not get to know anything more from their background. Names are

⁶ “Černá kronika je vděčným tématem pro hraný i dokumentární film, ale je zpracována odlišným způsobem.”

also hardly used, the only names the audience hears are the names of the pilots and the officials on the ground. Nobody hears the names of the passengers although one can easily find them out anywhere on the Internet.

One can also hear Arabic language when the hijackers are talking to each other. Some of their dialogues are untranslated. It helps to the feeling of actually being there. If one had been there, they would not have understood them either. It helps the movie to be even more realistic.

Greengrass also uses a technique when the time on the screen equals the time in reality. Events are unfolding in near real-time and one can also notice time data throughout the movie. All in all, Greengrass tried to create an honouring story of the 9/11 heroes and make it as realistic as possible.

Paul Greengrass is an Englishman and he is interested in such types of movies. He does not put any political or ideological lines into the movie. He also claims that that attack of the passengers on board Flight 93 symbolizes the post 9/11 war against the terrorism. The whole 9/11 was almost over, the World Trade Center already collapsed and the Pentagon was in flames. These passengers thus already represent the post 9/11 world (Johnson 2006).

2.4 Heroes and Gender

Mass media also played an important role in forming the division of gender roles. Aronson (1972) describes a situation where a girl called Mary gets a Suzie Homemaker baking and cooking set for her ninth birthday (3). The author thinks that she was probably “encouraged every time she expressed an interest in such “feminine” things as cooking, sewing, and dolls – to a greater extent than if she expressed an interest in football, boxing, and chemistry” (5). Aronson also adds that

it is probable that “if Mary’s kid brother had shown an interest in “housewifery”, he would *not* have received a Suzie Homemaker set for *his* birthday” (6).

According to Aronson:

Mary’s self-image could have been shaped by the mass media, which tend to depict women in roles that the culture encourages them to play: housewife, secretary, nurse, school teacher – the mass media rarely depict women as biochemists, college professors, or business executives.

(6)

Lindsay E. Rankin and Alice H. Eagly researched why the term heroism is usually associated with men. They claim that the public heroes are mostly men (Rankin and Eagly 2008, 418). One could then think that there are more male heroes than female ones.

As Rankin and Eagly discover there are several explanations why men are considered more heroic than women:

[...] one important caveat is that risk taking that imposes demands of physical strength (e.g., rescuing people from fires and drowning) advantages men because of their greater physical prowess. [...] In general, opportunities for heroism reflect the access of women and men to social roles. [...] In fact, many occupations with particular opportunities for heroism are male dominated, such as firefighter, law enforcement officer, and soldier, despite the increasing access of women. (414-415)

Nevertheless, they also claim that “heroic women should sometimes come to mind, perhaps more often in less publicly visible roles” (415).

They found out from their research that:

In contrast to public heroes, personal heroes encountered in everyday life were male or female in equal frequencies. Thus, women as well as men emerged as extraordinary for serving as family guardians and for meeting life's unusual challenges, activities that rarely yield widespread public recognition and admiration. (419)

It means that women can be as heroic as men although in different ways that are not so publicly visible. Rankin and Eagly add:

The predominance of men and mostly male groups among the public heroes is inherent in the types of roles that have yielded heroism. Rescuers appeared primarily in male-dominated occupational roles, such as firefighter and law enforcement officer, that have become accessible to women only in recent years. [...] We found out that people widely recognized as heroic (public heroes) generally performed their extraordinary actions within social roles to which women do not enjoy equal access. Occupations in which people perform emergency rescues are highly male dominated, as are leadership roles in politics and many social movements. (418, 421)

As one can notice, the question of gender rises in both movies. In *World Trade Center*, only men are portrayed as heroes. Their wives are displayed more like characters who cannot do anything else than wait for the telephone to ring. Although they try to stay strong, which can be seen as heroic behaviour too, they are not presented as the main heroes of the movie.

In *United 93*, the main heroes are also men although the stewardesses are shown helping with the preparation for the attack. They collect forks, knives, fire extinguishers and boil water (Greengrass 2006, 01:26:27). One of the stewardesses,

who is later killed by one of the hijackers, refuses to open the door of the cockpit (01:01:43). This stewardess definitely acts heroically, she refuses to do what the terrorists demand even at the cost of her life. There is also one woman on board who is EMT and she wants to help the passenger who has been stabbed (01:07:22). There is no doubt that she acts heroically because she tries to help the passenger although she herself is scared. Nevertheless, the main heroes in both movies are men.

2.5 Creation of Heroes Based on 9/11 and Its Representation in the Analysed Movies

Elizabeth Goren's article "Society's use of the hero following a national trauma" focuses on the creation of heroes after 9/11. Those heroes, the New York City firefighters, were created by society even though they did not consider themselves heroes. Nevertheless, the society, shaken by horrible consequences the terrorist attacks on 9/11 caused, needed its heroes to turn to. As one will see in the following lines, a hero is not created by the hero itself. A hero is created by society because society needs its heroes, someone to hold on to. Goren (2007) explains what factors contributed to the need of society for the creation of NYC firefighters as national heroes (38).

2.5.1 Attack on American Soil

First of all, it was the massive "number of deaths on American soil" (37). In the movie *World Trade Center*, there is a scene where the police officers go closer to the Twin Towers, which are situated in Manhattan, New York City, and they can see people falling or jumping from the towers (Stone 2006, 00:15:13). One can see the horror and helplessness in the officers' faces.

Another scene in the movie that characterizes helplessness is nearly at the end of the movie when Allison, the Jimeno's wife, is passing by the missing-person posters (01:52:23). There are hundreds of these fliers hanging on the wall in the corridor of the hospital. They show photos of missing people, their names, and descriptions. At that moment, one realizes that many people lost their lives that day and other people lost their love ones. At the end of the movie, there is a scene where the officer Strauss says to the officer McGee "[...] thousands of people in there. Where [...] are they?" (01:51:57). At this moment, the viewer realizes that thousands of people are dead, lying under the debris of the World Trade Center site.

What is interesting is that it is not shown in either of the analysed movies how the towers collapsed, yet still the people realize that thousands of people died that day. In the movie *United 93*, Ben Sliney is thinking about how many people are trapped in the tower. "Jesus, how many people are in that building?" (Greengrass 2006, 00:43:04).

2.5.2 Feeling of Helplessness

The fact that the terrorist attacks on 9/11 caused a death of thousands of people is another factor, which contributed to the society's need of heroes. Goren (2007) in reference to Bennett (2004) states that "the hero is created by a society as a collective response to ... helplessness and dread of loss" (38). The word "helplessness" is often used with regard to the attacks on 9/11.

In both analysed movies, the audience meets people who feel helpless. It was probably the strongest feeling on that day, even stronger than the hatred against the terrorists who committed those crimes. The feeling of powerlessness is caused by something that happens so suddenly that one can hardly react. Terrorists usually make use of the moment of surprise and count on the psychological effect of the

attacks. In both movies, it is shown that no one was prepared for something that big like those terrorist attacks on 9/11.

In the film *United 93*, there is a moment where the staff of the NATCC tells Mr. Sliney about the possible hijacking of American 11, a heavy 767 Boeing going from Boston to Los Angeles (Greengrass 2006, 00:19:27). Then one can see a discussion between Mr. Sliney and his colleagues about the possible hijack, saying that they have not seen a hijack in years and they do not even remember when the last hijack occurred. They say it could be in 1991 or 1990 (00:19:57). At that moment, they seem not to understand the gravity of the situation going on.

Everyone from the NATCC and not only them is surprised by a rapid sequence of events. When the third hijacked plane hits the Pentagon, Mr. Sliney gives the order to land every plane, regardless of destination. Whole U.S. airspace is being shut down (01:20:26). He says “we got stuff flying around we have no control over” (01:20:20). He feels helpless because he does not know if there are more hijacked planes and if there are, he does not know for sure which ones (00:51:23).

In addition, the communication between the NATCC and the NEADS is very bad and chaotic as one can see several times in the movie (01:11:16).

Other characters feeling powerless in *United 93* are the commanders of the NEADS because they cannot get the president’s approval for shooting down the hijacked planes and they are worried a hijacked plane could hit the Capitol (01:12:02).

Another feeling of helplessness feel the passengers and stewardesses on board United Flight 93. First, the terrorists stab one of the passengers and they show the passengers and crew that they have a bomb (01:01:02). Then, one of the flight attendants notices dead bodies of the pilots (01:15:20).

Before they find out about the other suicidal attacks, some of them still hope that the hijackers will ask for the ransom and then they will let them go. One of the passengers says that in 1977 in Mogadishu the hijackers only demanded the ransom (01:10:28).

Later, the passengers find out from the calls with their relatives about the attacks in Manhattan (01:21:35). In addition, one of the stewardesses calls the maintenance line that they have been hijacked but the man is no help, he does not tell her anything because he is only a maintenance guy (01:09:22) , another factor which intensifies the feeling of helplessness.

The other analysed movie, *World Trade Center*, is filled with the feeling of being completely helpless. Starting with the officers who see that they cannot probably help the people above the impact zone (Stone 2006, 00:15:23), continuing with them being entirely powerless lying buried alive under the debris. In addition, the viewer watches their families helplessly waiting for some information and the powerless rescuers trying to find anyone alive.

The officers who arrive in front of the World Trade Center a while before it goes down, are looking at the burning towers and discussing if it is possible to save those people trapped in the tower. One of them says that it is not possible to save those people, mainly those who are above the zone where the airplane has crashed (00:15:23). Furthermore, they are helplessly watching the people jumping or falling down from the towers (00:15:13).

Nevertheless, some of them try to fight with this feeling of powerlessness by taking an action. Some of these brave officers are later buried alive when the towers go down. At that moment, their feeling of helplessness starts to deepen. Not only did they not manage to save those people in the towers, but also they are now buried

under the debris, unable to move. The only thing they can do is to hope that someone will find them and they will survive.

During the whole movie, the audience watches them waiting for the rescue and imagines their incredible feeling of powerlessness. When the officer Dominick Pezzulo is mortally wounded by falling debris, the officers William Jimeno and John McLoughlin can do nothing but watch him die (00:31:24). Then the bullets from Pezzulo's gun start to fire due to the extreme heat and the officers can just lie there and hope they will not get hurt by the bullets (00:42:55). Similar situation occurs when the fireballs start to fall around them, one of them hitting officer Jimeno (00:41:57). During these long hours of waiting for the rescue, the officers must feel extremely helpless.

Last but not least, there are their families on the ground struggling with their own feeling of helplessness. There is nothing they can do but wait for the call and some information about their love ones. Moreover, there are not only the families of the buried officers, but also the families of hundreds of other people who are missing.

Nearly at the end of the movie, the audience sees sergeant McLoughlin's wife, Donna, waiting in the hospital. She meets a black woman who tells her she is waiting for some information about her son. The audience then finds out that her son Lawrence works as an elevator operator in the South Tower (01:46:00). One can see that the woman feels completely helpless. She does not know what happened to her son, if he is still alive or not.

Finally, there are also rescuers trying to find anyone alive in the debris. At the end of the movie, the viewer finds out that there were only twenty people pulled out from the debris (01:54:58). This fact helps the rescuers to feel even more helpless,

considering the number of people who were trapped in the towers. On the other hand, one can see in the movie that every person who is found alive is considered a success, as in the case of finding the officers Jimeno and McLoughlin. One can see how relieved the superordinates are when they get the message about finding the officers alive (01:26:00). In addition, there is a scene where they are pulling Stg. McLoughlin out of the debris while hundreds of rescue workers are applauding (01:49:10).

The feeling of helplessness was caused mainly by the media that have been incorporated in our lives for years. On that day, the media were broadcasting the catastrophic events all around the world, leaving “the populace feeling totally involved but simultaneously helpless” (Goren 2007, 40).

2.5.3 Symbol of an Airplane

On that day and later on, the symbol of firefighters as heroes was created. Nevertheless, as Goren points out, another symbol of America’s ingenuity, heroic power and freedom, the airplane, was transformed into a symbol of our victimization and impotence (40).

The movie *United 93* is all about the hijack of United Airlines Flight 93, heading from Newark airport to San Francisco. In contrast to Goren, the passengers try not to be impotent, they try to take an action. They decide not to be the victims and they want to take the control over the hijacked aircraft.

The airplane could be seen as metonymy for their home country, the United States of America. They fight and even though the airplane crashes and they all die, they actually win over the terrorists. They were not just the passive victims and their action prevented the terrorists from doing even more harm.

2.6 Constantly Changing Concept of a Hero

The concept of a NYC firefighter as a hero represented duality of death and life, victim and rescuer, loss and triumphal survival (42). Nevertheless, those called as heroes, the very NYC firefighters did not feel as heroes at all. Goren found out during her work with the FDNY that the firefighters usually “felt that they had failed to save the lives of 343 of their fellow firefighters and three thousand civilians. The only real heroes of the day in their minds were their fallen brothers” (43). They did not choose to be called as heroes, the society did. The constant media attention took them ability to mourn in private (43). Ironically despite that omnipresent attention, they felt isolated, thinking that “no one who wasn’t really there could understand” (47).

It is obvious that the concept of a hero is changing all the time. Those who once have been called heroes might as well become to be seen as fallen heroes literally overnight. Goren in her article gives an example of a modern-day hero, Lance Armstrong (39). Nevertheless, if we consider Lance Armstrong now after realizing he was taking dope all those years, no one will think of him as a hero anymore. The same applies to the case of Oscar Pistorius, which is highly discussed these days. Once a hero, Pistorius is now widely seen as a killer. The point is that as time flows, the concept of a hero is changing every day. As one of the NYC firefighters stated “When the dust settles, we’ll be as interesting as the next bit on the eleven o’clock news” (43), and another, “Yes today we’re heroes, but tomorrow we’ll be zeroes” (43).

Goren states that there was “the phenomenon of celebrity as hero” (39) prior to the morning of 9/11. “[...] heroes symbolizing fame, fortune, youth, beauty and prowess and the celebrity had come to largely replace the traditional hero in

America” (39). This all was changed after that morning of 9/11 when a symbol of a firefighter as a hero was created. Nevertheless, as time flows, people have started to see celebrities as heroes again. Philip Zimbardo (2010) says:

[...] these days rarely do we hear about ordinary men and women who have, by circumstance or fate, done something extraordinary for a greater cause or sacrificed on behalf of fellow human beings. Today’s generation, perhaps more than any preceding one, has grown up without a distinct vision of what constitutes heroism, or, worse, has grown up with a flawed vision of the hero as sports figure, rock star, gang leader, or fantastic *super* hero. (25)

3 The Representation of a Hero in the Analysed Movies

3.1 Types of a Hero in the Analysed Movies

There are several types of heroes that appear in the analysed movies. Firstly, there are people who tend to become heroes more likely than the others. It is because of their profession they have chosen.

In *World Trade Centre*, the viewer meets with the firefighters or police officers, so actually with the people their job is heroic itself. However, as one of the New York City firefighters said, “Just wearing a uniform doesn’t make you a hero” (Goren 2007, 37). It means that not all the people who are supposed to act heroically because of their jobs actually become heroes. In *World Trade Centre*, there was just a small group of police officers that decided to go to the damaged buildings and try to help the people who were trapped there. One could say that they were acting more heroically than the other police officers who refused to go inside.

On the other hand, in *United 93*, one can observe a completely different type of a hero. They are people who became heroes due to the situational context. One can say that their heroic behaviour was activated by the situation. They knew that they were probably going to die anyway so they at least tried to get the control over the airplane in order to prevent the terrorists from hitting another building and killing other innocent people.

Probably the most disputable are the characters of the terrorists. If one looks at them from the Islamic point of view, they are also heroes. As Gerald Seymour wrote in his book *Harry's Game* (1975): "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Henley 2011).

As one can see, the concept of a hero differs from culture to culture, and sometimes it is subjective to decide who is a hero and who is not.

3.2 Comparison of the Heroes in the Analysed Movies

Different characters involved in the same tragedy appear in the movies. Both movies show heroic actions of several people who were somehow involved in the events of 9/11. Nevertheless, each movie focuses on different heroes, ones below and on the ground and others in the air. The movie *World Trade Center* honours the rescue staff such as Port Authority Police Officers, firefighters or paramedics. In *United 93*, the tribute goes to the passengers and crew on board Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania.

In *World Trade Center*, the focus is on the police officers who decide to go to the burning World Trade Center site and help the people in there. One can also see several firefighters inside the buildings (Stone 2006, 00:22:39), however, the focus stays on a group of five Port Authority Police Officers. Nevertheless, before they manage to climb the stairs, the South Tower starts to collapse (00:23:22). After the

collapse, only three of them are still alive although buried under the debris. When the North Tower is falling down, a piece of concrete kills the officer Pezzulo (00:30:32). All of these police officers are shown as heroes because they go into the towers although they know it is dangerous.

Furthermore, *World Trade Center* displays the people searching for the survivors under the debris as heroes too. They were looking for the buried people for hours ignoring the danger of another collapse or the threat for their health. In addition, in the movie many people help with the rescue although they do not belong to rescue staff anymore. Davis Karnes and Jason Thomas are those who find the trapped officers alive and bring the help. They are both former Marines, out of the service for several years. They are voluntarily helping on Ground Zero, nobody asked them to do that.

Another important character, the paramedic Chuck Sereika, is also no longer a paramedic. His license has expired. In addition, he does not have any training for rescuing people from the collapsed buildings (Liss 2006). Nevertheless, he decides to go to Ground Zero and help with the rescue works although he does not have to. All of these heroes portrayed in *World Trade Center* act voluntarily.

On the other hand, the passengers and crew in *United 93* act as heroes due to the situational context. They do not choose to be heroes, the situation makes them to act like heroes. Nevertheless, they still have two options: they can do nothing and just wait until the terrorists crash into a building, or they can try to get a control over the airplane and protect the hijackers from killing other innocent people. They choose the second option and they probably save lives of many people thanks to their decision to act.

However, not all of the passengers decide to be heroes. The main characters who decide to take an action are four men, Todd Beamer, Mark Bingham, Tom Burnett and Jeremy Glick. They attack the hijackers and try to take control over the airplane but the airplane falls and crashes in the field eventually (Greengrass 2006, 01:40:43).

One can also argue that the air traffic controllers are heroes as well. There is a scene where the hijacked airplane United 175 does not answer and there is a danger that it will crash into another airplane, Delta 2315, that is flying near the hijacked aircraft in the same altitude. The controller at the New York Air Traffic Center has to act quickly so the both aircrafts do not crash. In the end, Delta 2315 gets around the hijacked airplane, United 175, and thus avoids the collision (00:41:47).

3.3 Hollywood-created heroes

In the film *World Trade Center*, one can see how Hollywood creates heroes. Prior to the morning of 9/11, heroes were people endowed with fame and success. Then the concept of heroes changed and the concept of firefighters as heroes was created. However, in 2006, Oliver Stone released his movie about the tragic events of 9/11, *World Trade Center*, and he cast Nicolas Cage, a famous Hollywood actor, for the main role. It is probable that the movie helped to turn back to that kind of heroes that are connected with fame and fortune.

On the other hand, the director of the second analysed movie, *United 93*, Paul Greengrass cast unknown actors, and what is interesting, also people who played themselves in the movie. However, these unknown actors were highly supposed to become “Hollywood heroes” as the movie was released. One of the heroes of the day, Ben Sliney, who was responsible for closing the air traffic over the United States of America, played himself in the movie and became a star. If it was not for

this movie, ordinary people would hardly know him. He then also appeared in another Paul Greengrass' movie, *Green Zone*, released in 2010 (IMDb).

4 Conclusion

This thesis presented a topic of modern-day heroes, especially those displayed in two 9/11 movies, *World Trade Center* and *United 93*. It outlined the concept of a hero and showed how it changed during the time. In my paper, I also focused on the similarities between mythological heroes and those heroes who appeared in the analysed movies.

It was also proved that mass media had enormous influence on society's interpretation of heroes and heroism whether it is television news or a movie itself. The thesis also discussed the factors that helped the creation of 9/11 heroes, such as a huge number of deaths on American soil or feeling of helplessness.

Nevertheless, the major part of the thesis focused on the representation of heroes who were shown in the analysed movies. It discussed the similarities between the movies but it also showed how these heroes in both movies differ from each other. It was demonstrated that in *World Trade Center*, the police officers were only doing their job and they had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to go inside the Twin Towers or not. On the other hand, the passengers and crew in *United 93* became heroes unwillingly, they did not have the possibility of choice. Nonetheless, both movies portrayed ordinary citizens as heroes although they were displayed differently in each movie. The thesis thus showed that also common people may become heroes.

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