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*The depiction of war, the role of humour and
the narration strategies in Patrick Ryan's
novel *How I won the War*
(Bakalářská práce)*

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla jsem veškeré použité podklady a literaturu.

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Podpis.....

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Obsah

Introduction	6
1. Characterising the novel.....	8
1.1 Considering the topic of the novel.....	8
1.2 Temporal determination of the novel.....	11
1.3 The author's opinion on the subject.....	12
1.4 The form of composition of the novel	15
2. The depiction of the war and its role in the narration	17
2.1 North Africa.....	17
2.2 Italy	18
2.3 The Communists in Greece.....	21
2.4 Over the Rhine to Germany	23
2.5 Important historical personalities and events mentioned in the story.....	24
3. The characters and the narrator of the novel	29
3.1 Characterization through name.....	30
3.2 Direct and indirect characterization	32
3.3 The roundness, flatness and dynamics of characters	33
3.4 The narrator.....	36
4. Humour and its manifestations in <i>How I Won the War</i>	39
4.1 Humour.....	39
4.2 The absence of black humour?.....	40
4.3 Absurdity.....	41
4.4 Parody	42
4.5 Satire	43
4.6 Grotesque	44
4.7 Lasciviousness and fecalism	45
5. Similarities and differences between <i>How I Won the War</i> and <i>The Good Soldier Švejk</i>	48
5.1 The world wars	48
5.2 The properties of the novels.....	50
5.3 Humour in the novels.....	51
5.4 The main characters of the two novels	53
5.5 The narrators	56
Summary	58
Resumé.....	62
Bibliography.....	66

Introduction

How I Won the War is a novel written by the British author Patrick Ryan and was published in 1963. Through the course of the book, the reader watches the main character Ernest Goodbody go through a number of countries which were victims to the Second World War. Sometimes he even makes a direct contact with the enemy, his life is immediately threatened and at some points, it is certain that he should not get out alive of the situation which he got himself into. After becoming a lieutenant, the commander of the Twelve Platoon of the Fourth Musketeers, Goodbody is a part of the C Company of the British army. After that, he and his men are sent from the relative safety of the British Isles to North Africa and from there further into the whirl of the Second World War.

Because the story is set into the events of the Second World War, the war is one of the aspects onto which this bachelor thesis will focus in one of its chapters. In the remaining chapters, other aspects will be pondered, namely humour, the characters and the narrator, the characteristics of the novel itself, and how much similar it is to the Czech novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek. These aspects were chosen to see how they add up to Ryan's novel as it is and what roles they play in the whole piece of literature.

Several research questions and hypotheses are posed in the thesis, as each chapter deals with a different aspect of the novel. The first chapter which will try to characterize the novel and will work with more than just one hypothesis, but the following chapters will stick with one hypothesis for each. The second chapter will look at the relation between the war and the novel, and will look into the similarities between the events described in the novel and the real historical events of the war, whether the author could have taken inspiration from the history of the Second World War. The third chapter which will look closer on the characters and the narrator of the novel will ask whether the main character Ernest Goodbody, who is also the narrator in the novel, is really as silly as he seems to the reader, or whether he only pretends to be. It will also classify the characters based on name analysis, direct and indirect characteristics, and their roundness or flatness and dynamics. The fourth chapter will focus on humour. It will look at several subgenres of humour and will provide examples of them in the text of the novel. It will also ask whether the main protagonist and narrator in one person could be aware of his and his narration's comicality. The last chapter will compare Ryan's novel with the novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek and subsequently will ask whether Hašek's work could have been another source of inspiration for Ryan next to the true historical events of the war.

The reader of the thesis will be introduced to the improbable similarities between the novel and the history of the Second World War, and the types of novel possible to define Ryan's work will be defined. The narrator and the characters will be analysed and characterized in their personalities. Because humour shows in many forms in the novel, some of them will be looked closer into and provided with examples from the text. Finally, the similarities and differences between a Czech novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek and Patrick Ryan's novel *How I Won the War* will be examined and the two novels compared, although they deal with different world wars and their publication dates are set apart by over forty years of time. Despite the long time between them, the themes which they deal with are still current and unchanged.

The final question offers if any of the elements of the novel *How I Won the War* were removed or changed, i.e., the processing and adaptation of the war in the novel, different types of characters and/or their different personalities, or different usage of humour or possibly other forms of expression or attitude, would it change the novel and disrupt its nature? It should be found out whether all of the aspects which will be discussed in the thesis are necessary for the novel as it is, or whether some of them would not be missed if changed or left out.

1. Characterising the novel

In literary theory, there is a great variety of labels which can describe a piece of literature according to its genre. Such a piece of literature can be considered from a number of angles, and thus a number of labels can be attributed to it. The characterizing variants are divided into groups regarding the content or topic, the temporal determination, the author's opinion on the topic, and the form of composition.¹ Thus, the novel may be assigned a number of attributes to characterize it without them being in mutual discrepancy. Still, there may be problems with deciding what labels the particular novel should be assigned, and therefore it may be unclear what kind of novel the reader is reading. The reason for this is also that some of the labels may be misleading.

1.1 Considering the topic of the novel

There are numerous genre variants of a novel if the topic is considered. The labels of 'social, autobiographical, romantic, detective, adventurous, psychological, war, or travel'² are listed as examples. The problem here is that the novel does not suit strictly just one label, but more of the attributes could be used to describe it. For example, it could be said that technically all of the novels written are social, since their plot is located in a society, not isolating the main character in solitude. However, the label of social novel cannot describe every novel, because it is not always their main feature. Looking at the topic and content of *How I Won the War*, it can be easily deduced that its main feature is the Second World War, therefore it should be labelled as a war novel; just as easily it could be an anti-war novel though, which deals with the same topic, only approaches it from the opposite direction.

If the colloquial question 'what the book is about' is pondered, the answer should be found easily. It narrates about a British officer in the Second World War. Thus, it should clearly be a war novel. However, if the war novel is typically based on the 'celebration of patriotism and heroism'³, the reader will probably get confused at first. While a selfless main protagonist capable of honourable deeds and possessing an extraordinary knowledge and experience would be expected, the reader is left with Lieutenant Ernest Goodbody who is not a typical hero who would be fit for a famous war novel. He gives a seem to be rather a fool who reads too many books about warship, but thinks practically too little about it. Although he has been promoted to the rank of a lieutenant and commands his own platoon of men, he is obviously not capable

¹ Marie Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury* (Havlíčkův Brod: Fragment, 2007), 21.

² Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury*, 21.

³ Josef Hrabák, *Čtení o románu* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1981), 267.

of doing it right and needs his right hand, Sergeant Transom, to do it for him. While every heroic deed which he attempts to perform seems to turn against him in a humorous way, there is nothing in the novel which would celebrate the main protagonist's heroism. Goodbody is a comical character and the whole story is rather humorous than heroic, and heroism as a high theme should be taken seriously, not be ridiculed. Thinking about it this way, the reader would rather abandon the conclusion to label the piece of literature as a war novel.

In this stage, when the label of a war novel was put aside, it should be logically deduced that the correct label for the novel is an anti-war novel. The anti-war novel is defined as 'the very opposite'⁴ from the heroic and patriotic war novel; 'its main point... is the criticism and condemnation of war'.⁵ In this case, it would be expected that the narration would show the destruction and horrors of the war, the fear of men and the omnipresence of death, and thus completely rejecting war as a crime against humanity. Something similar is witnessed in E. M. Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which depicts the conditions in the army, the suffering of the soldiers and finally also death of the main protagonist and his friends. That is what one would most likely expect of an anti-war novel.

Similar pictures of destruction can be found also in *How I Won the War*, but they are fairly rare. As an example of picturing the destruction of war can be presented in the story when Goodbody narrates about how they were sent to find the Dragoons in Africa in chapter nine. He describes the 'newly-sown battlefield' of destroyed tanks which 'smouldered here and there in a last drift of smoke, the shell-scars on shattered buildings were livid and unweathered, and the bodies about them not yet wearing their grey pall of dust.'⁶ However, this description of the war destruction seems to be fairly distant from that in Remarque's novel. Considering the fact that the just described landscape was a battlefield only a short time ago, the description feels emotionless, objective and brief. Even the dead bodies which used to be living humans are not paid any special attention to. Instead, the entire destroyed landscape speaking of the recent horrors is overlooked only briefly, superficially described for the report purposes, and then abandoned in order to focus on the platoon's task at hand again.

However, such pictures of the war are presented only rarely, and otherwise the war stands in the background since Goodbody does not comment on it overly. It is viewed rather neutrally, as a necessary evil and an unchangeable state of affairs, perhaps even adventure by the narrator, while he finds himself in dangerous situations and has to 'pass through the limits

⁴ Hrabák, *Čtení o románu*, 267.

⁵ Přemysl Blažíček, *Haškův Švejk* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1991), 13.

⁶ Patrick Ryan, *How I Won the War / Jak jsem vyhrál válku* (Praha: Argo, 2008), 172.

of his own abilities',⁷ e.g., when negotiating for the bridge over the Rhine with his enemies, the Germans, although this does not make it an adventure novel. The war is not viewed as something despicable and horrible which should be avoided in the future at all costs. Goodbody says it himself after all in the epilogue, that he is 'confident that [the new generation] will... look up in defiance as the mushroom cloud foams across the sky, ... proud to be known as the first of the Heavily Radio-active Civilians.'⁸ He would not have said that if he perceived war as something which should be definitely avoided. Thus, the novel cannot be claimed to be an anti-war novel.

Finally, the first theory which presupposed that the book could be a war novel should be accepted, since the second theory of the anti-war novel could not be proven suitable. Although the main protagonist is not a prototypical hero of a war novel, he does strive in his own, usually not very helpful, way to contribute to the final ultimate victory of the Allies. Despite himself being an inadequate commander, Goodbody genuinely strives to fulfil every order which he is given, maintains the unshakable positivity of his mind and the belief that what they fight for is the right thing, and eventually with his men they make their way through the war and get out of it alive and unharmed. Death is not an option for him.

Despite not being a hero in the true sense of the word, the story of how masterly he stalled the Germans when they wanted to blow up the last bridge over the Rhine until the Americans arrived, or how cleverly he had the barrels left after the Montepico '92 wine spilt across the Italian countryside filled with a mixture of whatever he could collect so that Colonel Plaster knew nothing could not be labelled as anything else but heroism. There is also no greater patriot than Goodbody in the entire British army, no one with greater trust in his commanders, and no one holding his generals in greater esteem than him. Perhaps whatever he attempts to do leads to a comical complication, and thus rather ridicules the army and the war, but it does not criticise it openly. In the end, 'the war is [the novel's] basis, not the goal which it would target',⁹ which would be the case of an anti-war novel, where the main focus is aimed at the negative features of the war and militarism.

Deciding what type of a novel is being read with respect to the topic can be very difficult and misleading. If it is not the names of the labels which confuses the reader, then it is the definitions of them. However, there should always be an answer to this question, although it may not always be so clear at first. In the case of *How I Won the War*, it has finally been decided

⁷ Dagmar Mocná, Josef Peterka et al., *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů* (Praha: Paseka, 2004), 118.

⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 462.

⁹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 13.

to label the novel as a war novel, since the book has been mentioned as one of the more important and influential English war novels.¹⁰ Although the admirable prototypical war hero is substituted by a simple-minded, incompetent officer, the novel does not explicitly criticise the war and its consequences. Instead, it approaches the war neutrally, as something that just is. This attitude is represented by the narrator of the story himself, while the author seems to distance himself from taking any stance on the war, as is stated in the very title of the book that he only provides the story which was otherwise composed solely by Goodbody.

1.2 Temporal determination of the novel

The variants in the field of the temporal determination of a novel listed as examples are ‘historical, from the present, and utopian’.¹¹ Here, the terms might once more be misleading for the reader unfamiliar with their definitions. While a great number of novels may seem to the contemporary reader to be historical since they narrate about times now in the past, it does not have to be always true, and the label ‘from the present’ may suit the novel better. Some readers at the end of the previous century might have also thought that George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was a novel parodying their present instead of being actually a dystopian novel. In the case of *How I Won the War*, where the plot is taking place during the Second World War, the novel clearly narrates about the past, that means history, since the Second World War was fought and won almost eighty years ago; thus, the reader might deduce that the novel should be a historical novel, as it narrates a story about an event which is now history.

To the contemporary reader, it should seem obvious that the novel about the Second World War would be historical, because the war itself is now in the past. It is also true, that many novels with the topic focused on the Second World War are historical, because they are usually not written by anyone who would still remember it, but by contemporary and young authors. However, it differs from novel to novel not with respect to the perspective of the reader, but to the perspective of the author. The definition of a historical novel says that it is a ‘narrative which reconstructs history and re-creates it imaginatively [for which] the good historical novelist researches his or her chosen period thoroughly and strives for verisimilitude.’¹² Therefore, while the novel *How I Won the War* may seem historical to the reader, it was not historical to the author, Patrick Ryan, because the story of the novel does not take place

¹⁰ Ladislav Soldán et al., *Přehledné dějiny literatury III: Dějiny české a světové literatury od roku 1945 do současnosti* (Praha: SPN, 1997), 209.

¹¹ Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury*, 21.

¹² J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin books, 1999), 383.

generations or centuries before his birth.¹³ The novel was written about the times which he experienced himself, so it is a novel ‘from the present’ of the author, although when it was published in 1963,¹⁴ it was already history for him too. The important difference between the historical and the novel ‘from the present’ is that Ryan did not necessarily have to study any special resources, as opposed to e.g., Sir Walter Scott, one of the most famous authors of historical novels, who published his *Ivanhoe* in 1819,¹⁵ while the novel’s story is set into England of the late 12th century.

According to the definition of the term ‘historical novel’ it is clear that however odd it may seem to the contemporary reader, Ryan’s novel *How I Won the War* is not suitable for the term. Instead, with respect to the author’s lifetime, it should be labelled as a novel ‘from the present’, as it is concerned with a part of history which was the author’s present once. Literary history is generally not much concerned with the reader’s approach, as this can differ from person to person. The only unchanging approach is that of the author, and therefore literary history and terminology is much more focused on the author.

1.3 The author’s opinion on the subject

From the author’s opinion perspective, the novel can be ‘humoristic, satiric, educational, or sentimental’¹⁶, which means that this category of genre variants is focused on the relationship of the author to the topic of the piece of literature. As it was with the topic or theme of the novel, in this category it is also possible for more than just one label to fit the given novel. For example, it should not be surprising that the humoristic aspect of a novel may sometimes have close to satire, but still, only one of them can be prevalent in the book. From the author’s approach to the topic of the novel, it is obvious that he chose to laugh at the war and the military establishment as he employed irony and parody in his work, and thus, turned its serious potential into a humoristic novel; since humour has close to satire, it is not always easy to decide what is only parody or irony and what is already satire.

Although the topic of war is fairly serious in itself, humoristic and/or satirical novels are nothing new in this area. From the Czech tradition of humoristic novel exploiting the military topic could be mentioned *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* by Jaroslav Hašek or *Černí baroni* by Miloslav Švandrlík; from the English writing tradition Joseph Heller’s *Catch*

¹³ Chris Baldick, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 99.

¹⁴ Soldán et al., *Přehledné dějiny literatury III*, 210.

¹⁵ Mocná et al., *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*, 241.

¹⁶ Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury*, 21.

22 should be named. None of these novels take place in the same time period, except for the *Catch 22* and *How I Won the War*, which are set into the Second World War, while *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* are centred in the First World War, and *Černí baroni* takes place after the Second World War during the Communist era in Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 20th century. All of these novels employ both humour and satire, but each in a different way.

The genre of humoristic novel is defined as ‘a novel type depicting the comical sides of life in a funny way’, while it also tends to give a deeper, more serious testimony about life.¹⁷ Thus, through humour *How I Won the War* shows the imbalance between the unprepared lieutenant who is incapable of protecting his men from harm and rather puts them as well as himself into even more danger, and the experienced sergeant who would do much better as a commander but lacks the necessary military rank. The reader also witnesses the typical military grudge of the high command officers toward the lower rank officers and letting them feel their displeasure in a humorous way. The reason why Ryan chose to compose his work as a humoristic novel might have been for the therapist effect of writing, as it was in the case of Norman Mailer and his novel *The Naked and the Dead* which helped him to ‘get rid of the war experiences if he were not to end up in the psychiatric hospital.’¹⁸ Everybody deals with their trauma the best way they can, and as Ryan wrote in the introductory part to his novel, that, in relation to the military memoirs written by the generals, ‘we... must choose to laugh – for fear of weeping’.¹⁹ It should be obvious that he meant to include himself in the ‘we’ as well alongside the readers.

Although the novel is mainly humorous, the elements of satire and grotesque can also be spotted in it. Satire, which ‘attacks alleged vices and stupidities – either of individuals or of whole communities or groups – and its tools are those of ridicule, exaggeration, and contempt’,²⁰ has very close to grotesque, which is ‘employed to denote the ridiculous, bizarre, extravagant, freakish and unnatural ... for comic, sardonic and satirical effects’.²¹ Since grotesque can be found also in pornography,²² such comic and satirical purposes of grotesque can be found in chapter nineteen, when Goodbody’s men in the time of his absence prepare a party for local children. However, when Goodbody arrives, followed by Colonel Plaster, the children turn out to be prostitutes. Goodbody, anticipating the colonel’s wrath, is shocked when

¹⁷ Mocná et al., *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*, 261.

¹⁸ Soldán et al., *Přehledné dějiny literatury III*, 207.

¹⁹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 8.

²⁰ Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1997), 58.

²¹ Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 367.

²² Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 368.

the colonel asks ‘to have a few words with one or two of the children by [himself]’.²³ The grotesque in this passage is in Colonel Plaster asking for the girls who still reminded children, while the satire is in him as an officer of such a high rank letting his primitive desires show before his subordinates. Finally, the entire scene is comical, since he should have some self-esteem and contain himself in order to maintain his face before his men.

Related to humour, mock-heroic is defined as adopting the heroic manner ‘to make a trivial subject seem grand in such a way as to satirize the style, and it is therefore commonly used in ... parody’.²⁴ In *How I Won the War*, it would mean the interconnection of ‘the serious with the ridiculous, the noble with the undignified.’²⁵ Parallels to this second definition could also be found in *How I Won the War*. The novel is centralized around the serious topic of the Second World War, however is otherwise filled with ridiculous and absurd events; it could be taken as a parody to the classical famous war novels, which show the horrors of the war as well as the heroism and bravery of the common soldier. Even better argument supporting the claim of *How I Won the War* to be an example of the mock-heroic is that it also deals with the comical main character who may or may not strive to be a hero. In the Czechoslovak literature, this example of the comical character thrown into the middle of a war is witnessed in *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* by Jaroslav Hašek. The good soldier Švejk could be likened to Goodbody, since they are both characters of humoristic war novels.

Although *How I Won the War* contains the examples of satire and grotesque, the novel is humoristic, because the author chose to laugh rather than cry, and therefore it can be judged that he did not mean to make criticism and satire the main purpose of the book, since ‘a novelist may ... include satirical elements in works that do not ... merit the term ‘satirical novel’’.²⁶ The mock-heroic has also been uncovered as a phenomenon present in the novel, due to the comical main character of lieutenant Goodbody, who has a lot of things in common with his Czechoslovak counterpart Švejk. The novel also connects the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ themes, namely the war and comicality. This connection takes the effect of ridiculing the war and the British army. This way, the novel becomes a parody of the serious novels with the same topic.

²³ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 438.

²⁴ Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 514.

²⁵ Libor Pavera and František Všetická, *Lexikon literárních pojmů* (Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2002), 134.

²⁶ Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, 58.

1.4 The form of composition of the novel

Apart from the 'epistolary novel'²⁷, a novel written as a form of diary of the main character could also be an example of the form of composition of a novel. However, not always does a novel have such an extraordinary form of composition, while usually the novels are composed using only the division into chapters which may be either named or only numbered. The name of the chapter may in a couple of words reflect what is significant in the chapter, or it can carry the name of the character who is the most important in it. In some novels, each chapter may be initiated by a piece of poetry or by quotes from other pieces of literature or historiography which also in some way relate to the topic and plot of the chapter. From the humorous voice of *How I Won the War*, it is clear that the author chose to write the book as a humoristic novel; however, it leaves the question of the purpose of the more serious sources quoted at the beginning of each chapter.

The plot of *How I Won the War* is divided into twenty chapters; each of them is furnished with its number which is followed by a quote from a serious source about the Second World War. The chronological composition is prevalent in the book, although at the beginning of it, the reader comes across an example of retrospective composition. The book begins with Goodbody and his men disembarking on the Algerian coast, but in the very next chapter, the reader is taken back in time to be explained how Goodbody found himself in the British army and what happened to him before he became a lieutenant and got to Africa. When chapter eight catches up with the events from Africa, it moves on from here chronologically again. Another phenomenon concerning the composition of the book is the chain composition, which means that 'one event (chapter) connects to new events (chapters) in such a way, that they are connected by the main character at the same time'.²⁸ This means, that the main character is present in every chapter of the book, which is necessary in the case of *How I Won the War*, because Goodbody is the main protagonist as well as the narrator, therefore he could not narrate about anything which he did not witness personally.

As it has already been said, the individual chapters are not named, only numbered. Instead of the name, the number of the chapter is followed by a short quotation from serious historiographical or autobiographical sources focused on the Second World War which were written usually by famous commanders of the war; Field Marshal William Slim, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Field Marshal Montgomery, and Winston Churchill are among them.

²⁷ Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury*, 21.

²⁸ Felix Vodička et al., *Svět literatury I* (Praha: Fortuna, 1995), 47.

The question of why Ryan would incorporate the serious sources into his humoristic novel remains to be pondered. A possible answer to it may be that the quotations ‘serve as the basis for the belletristic desacralization, irony, parody’²⁹ of the war and the military establishment. In the introduction to the novel, Ryan says that in the sources written by the generals of the Second World War he witnessed that ‘each general and field-marshal has published his Memoirs... [in which they] explained their lone responsibility in victory and their personal innocence in defeat.’³⁰ Thus, it is possible, that *How I Won the War* was written to serve as mockery to those ‘wishful recollection[s]’³¹ of the generals.

Another possible answer for the question presented would stand in the contrary to the one just offered. It is possible that the author wished to show that, despite writing a humoristic novel with the elements of satire and grotesque, he still took the topic of the war, the sufferings which it brought upon the soldiers as well as their commanders and the civilians seriously. He might have only wanted to support the parts of the narration which were not humorous but serious and conscious of the true nature of the war, which were usually presented in the descriptions of scenery, with reliable sources which have the courage to show the reader what the war was truly like. It was Ryan after all who said in the introduction to the novel that the reader of the historical sources, like those which he quoted, should rather choose to laugh than cry.³²

Either Ryan put the quotes in contrast to the narration because he wished to point out the irony and stupidity of the war and the military commanders, or because he only wanted to show that although he wrote a humoristic novel making fun of everything in it, he still took the topic of the war seriously. In the end, it is quite possible that Ryan had more than just one reason to use the quotations in his otherwise humoristic novel, perhaps both of the mentioned reasons included. Eventually, his motivations for including the quotations in the book are not so important since he is right about one thing; it is always a better option to laugh than to cry.

²⁹ Soldán et al., *Přehledné dějiny literatury III*, 210.

³⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 8.

³¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 8.

³² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 8.

2. The depiction of the war and its role in the narration

How I Won the War is a novel narrating about the Second World War. While reading the book, the reader encounters passages in the text which make them believe that what they read truly happened in the war. On the other hand, they also come across passages which are not so believable anymore. Narrations with similar topic could be divided into two groups. They are those, which place the main character into the war and form their fate according to the historically accurate course of events of the war. Then, there are those stories which do not concentrate so much on the historical accuracy of the war events but rather on their characters and their fates in the larger picture of the war. The general course of the war and major events indicates that the story of *How I Won the War* must be based on real history, while it is also clear that not everything in the narration is completely true; this makes the reader question to what extent which events really happened or were made up.

2.1 North Africa

The very first chapter of the book starts with the disembarkation of Goodbody and his men in Africa on the Algerian coast, and thus pulls the reader immediately into the war. Consulting the history of the Second World War about the British troops landing in Algeria, a similar event can be found. Although Goodbody names precisely the ‘eighth of November 1942’ to be the ‘historic day’³³, while the history speaks of the 11th November³⁴, there are certain similarities between the events as described by Goodbody and by history. Goodbody describes the details of approaching the beach and how he accidentally fell ‘backwards into the Mediterranean’³⁵, which might suggest ‘the strong high tide’, and ‘the worries of the enemies welcoming them at the shore... eventually turning out to be friendly’³⁶ might be paralleled in Goodbody encountering an Algerian native, who is at first considered to be an enemy. Fortunately for Goodbody who failed to prepare his revolver, the native man, only means to help the lost British officer. Despite the minor differences between these two events’ descriptions, there are the obvious and undeniable similarities, which might point to Ryan getting inspiration from a true event, even though the details he made up.

After disembarking in Algeria and meeting the local people briefly, Goodbody speaks of the winter-time rains, which held them practically inactive. The time discrepancies here lie

³³ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 10.

³⁴ Liddell Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 2nd ed. (Brno: Jota, 2020), 361.

³⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 10.

³⁶ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 361.

in Goodbody who claims to arrive near Medjez-el-Bab in March 1943, when the rains finally stopped and the land was dry again,³⁷ while Hart mentions this town to be reached by the British Blade Force in November 1942.³⁸ Here, the Blade Force might stand for Goodbody's Fourth Musketeers. A proof for that would be the similarities between Goodbody's story and a historically true event, despite them happening in various times. When being ordered to meet the American tanks, Goodbody and his men accidentally knock on the door of a farmhouse which is inhabited by German soldiers. The similar historical story speaks of a 'small unit set off of the Blade Force [which] accidentally scared German Higher Command.'³⁹ Although, this story happened at the beginning of December 1942, it might have served as a source of inspiration, therefore it is most likely also based on a true event.

In reality, the reason why the land is free for Goodbody to get to Tunis unopposed in 1943 came only a few days later through, when the German commander pulled his units back to defend Tunis.⁴⁰ Thus, Goodbody turns out to be the first to reach Tunis without anyone knowing, however, he does not manage to conquer it himself, despite the German Headquarters being probably guarded by only a handful of men,⁴¹ although these facts apply also for December 1942. In reality, however, the Allies finally managed to conquer Tunis at approximately the same time as Goodbody, at the beginning of May 1943.⁴² The real history and Goodbody's story vary in the sequence of events, and although Goodbody takes a much simpler and less complicated way to conquer Tunis than it actually happened, the order which applied to both Goodbody and his real counterparts, that is to 'advance at Tunis and eliminate the forces of the Axis',⁴³ was eventually accomplished in both cases anyway. This may be the proof that *How I Won the War* is not entirely true since the events in Africa happened at different times and in a different order than in history, however, the story is almost certainly based on true events of the Second World War.

2.2 Italy

The Italians do not present themselves in the best light when meeting Goodbody and his men for the first time in the early 1944. As one of Goodbody's men puts it, 'the worst thing... one soldier can do to another... is to be late for a take-over'⁴⁴. It was not solely their fault, though.

³⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 144.

³⁸ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 363.

³⁹ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 365.

⁴⁰ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 365.

⁴¹ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 367.

⁴² Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 465.

⁴³ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 362.

⁴⁴ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 228.

Before the war even began, Italy had been ‘drastically underprepared and ill equipped’.⁴⁵ They also had troubles finding motivation, they did not want to fight and they did not even sympathize with the Nazi Germany. On top of that, the military commanders were usually terrible.⁴⁶ The Italians did not have the determination and motivation to fight in the war. The war was not theirs after all like it was the Germans’, who were fighting to erase the humiliation caused by the Treaty of Versailles and its consequences. However, for the Italians, the reasons were not so clear. This shows, that the poor discipline of the Italian army was not Ryan’s invention, but that even in reality they had problems finding reasons to strive.

It is true, though, that even the Italians in *How I Won the War* manage to pull themselves together eventually, and they fight alongside the British once they find their purpose. They wanted to have the privilege to decide what the post-war Italy should look like. Therefore, when the Italians finally come and join the British in the mountains, they certainly are heroes, so much that they do not hesitate to let themselves get killed. Gordon speaks of the ‘good partisan violence – a heroic struggle for liberation against overwhelming odds...’.⁴⁷ The ‘overwhelming odds’ in Goodbody’s narration might be their reluctance to come to the appointed place at the appointed time, so it is more of an inner struggle within the Italians rather than the outer struggle against the Germans, but a struggle which needs to be fought and won nonetheless in order to get to the ultimate victory in the war.

Goodbody’s task in the woods below Monte Cassino is to guard the river Garigliano before the Germans. Cooperating with the Italians assigned to him, they discover a division of the Polish Corps, who mistake the British and the Italians for Germans. As the small group of the Allies gets lost in the woods, the Polish take them back to the rest of their men. Despite Goodbody making such a brief encounter with the Polish, they were actually very important in the fights going on in Italy, so their appearance in the narration was not without its historical parallel. In spring 1944, they helped the British by drawing attention of the Germans to themselves at the fights at Cassino and also near the area of the Garigliano river, which meant that the losses of the British were not so high. The situation was not so fortunate for the Poles, however.⁴⁸ All of the sides finding themselves in the middle of the war had their reasons to be there. The motivation for the Polish must have been very different from that of the Italians. Their country was the first one attacked and conquered in September 1939; their countrymen

⁴⁵ Robert S. C. Gordon, ‘The Italian war,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, ed. Marina MacKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123.

⁴⁶ Ian Kershaw, *Do pekla a zpět: Evropa 1914–1949* (Praha: Argo, 2017), 356.

⁴⁷ Gordon, ‘The Italian war,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, 130.

⁴⁸ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 576.

suffered probably the most and certainly the longest under the cruel Nazi rule. Their motivation for taking part in the war was clear then – to do anything in their power to defeat the Germans, banish them from Poland and free their homeland.

While the 4th Indian division was trying to seize Monte Cassino, Goodbody is ordered to keep his men idle so that they would not spoil anything. However, neither Goodbody, nor the Italian captain can keep the men in line which ends with one of the men dead. Goodbody speaks about Nicolo Pellochi who starts singing as if from a cave or a chasm. Churchill mentions a brigade which, while moving to Monte Cassino, came across a chasm full of German machine guns which attacked them without hesitation, causing the brigade great losses.⁴⁹ There is no obvious connection of this event to Goodbody's story of Pellochi's death, which is not specified after all anyway. However, Ryan could have taken the inspiration of the sounds which the machine guns must have made when being fired in the chasm, and he turned the deadly echo of the guns into the Italian soldiers' songs, which must have been certainly much more pleasant to the ear than the gunfire and the cries of the dying soldiers.

The 4th Indian division is mentioned once to Goodbody by the mysterious officer drinking alone on the deck of a ship taking them from Greece to France. He tells Goodbody about the bombing of Monte Cassino which hit also the 4th Indian division, since they were the only ones who were not warned about the bombing. This story is historically probably not entirely true, although it is true, that the monks at the Abbey were warned about the bombing. The difference is in the bombing which took place before the 4th Indian division got to the Abbey. Most of the soldiers of the division died fighting a German position before they could get to the Abbey itself.⁵⁰ Therefore, the story of the 4th Indian division dying in the bombing of Monte Cassino is most likely untrue, however, it was convenient for Ryan to alter the reason of the soldiers' decimation to fit the picture of the disillusioned, broken officer who appeared in chapter seventeen.

Goodbody is not anywhere near when Monte Cassino is bombed in March 1944. Churchill speaks of the Monte Cassino bombing in February,⁵¹ though. The temporal differences are not of so much importance, however, and still, it does not mean that Goodbody was somewhere safer. The Twelve Platoon moves from the hills to the town of Cassino, which is held by the Germans, although the town was bombed sufficiently as well to banish the

⁴⁹ Winston Churchill, *Druhá světová válka V.: Kruh se uzavírá* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 1995), 495.

⁵⁰ Churchill, *Druhá světová válka V.*, 495.

⁵¹ Churchill, *Druhá světová válka V.*, 495.

Germans.⁵² While Goodbody fights a single group of Germans for several days while living in the same house with them, the battle in Cassino went actually quite fast.⁵³ Since the Allies moved up after seizing most of the town, also Goodbody moves up the hill a little; his battle with the Germans below is not over, though. Due to bad luck, Goodbody almost falls in their hands. However, probably because Cassino is supposed to be from great majority under the Allies' control, the Germans surrender to him. Thus, the narration is again inspired by the true events which happened in Cassino; the Germans could not have not surrendered to Goodbody if the rest of the town had already been conquered by the Allies.

The Battle of the Booze could never be mentioned in the historical sources even if it were true. While everyone headed to Rome to finally end the long war in Italy and hurried to get there earlier than their allies, Goodbody and his men are sent to seek Italian alcohol. On this special and secret mission, he is ordered to arrive at the alcohol before any of the other Allies do. If any proof of the Battle of the Booze should be tried to be found, it could be the plan of general Leese of the British 8th army, who believed that 'the 5th and 8th armies will perform their tasks better if they are not focused on the same objective', to which the Americans happily agreed.⁵⁴ While the armies were moving slowly across the Italian country, unable to defeat the Germans for good, Goodbody and his men lead the Battle of the Booze against their own allies. Also, as the armies were stopping to refill their supplies, they might also be refilling the levels of alcohol for their soldiers. It was Stalin who said that he found that 'the more [his] generals drink, the better they are'.⁵⁵ In this case then, history was once more the source of inspiration for Ryan to incorporate alcohol into his story, since it obviously played an important role in history.

2.3 The Communists in Greece

Transports never seemed to stress Goodbody, despite the fact that transport is the best time to overthink everything one has seen, experienced and lost. To the reader, it seems that Goodbody takes the need to transfer to another place and fight another battle as something necessary if not natural. Since he never complains about it, he probably takes it as a natural course of events, something that is decided by forces stronger than him. Goodbody is a man who is commanded easily after all; he never protests against any of his superiors' orders however odd or insane they might be. The story of how he breaks the artificial teeth of his two superiors because they

⁵² Churchill, *Druhá světová válka V.*, 501.

⁵³ Churchill, *Druhá světová válka V.*, 501.

⁵⁴ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 582.

⁵⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 282.

order him so in their drunkenness could serve as an example. Without a word of doubt, Goodbody takes the two dentures and throws them against a wall, and even salutes to the two officers. If he did not question this, the transports would certainly not stress him overly. The break in Egypt where Goodbody was taken from Italy is not mentioned in history. It is usually said that the soldiers from Italy were taken to Greece instead.⁵⁶ Therefore, the rest time in Egypt and the Divisional Parade might be solely Ryan's invention.

The situation in Greece was very specific when Goodbody arrives at the end of 1944. The Communist armed forces were formed by ELAS, which stands for The Greek People's Liberation army.⁵⁷ They had many enemies; not only did they fight against the occupants, that means the Germans and their collaborators, and the British, but also against their own right-winged countrymen.⁵⁸ When the British and Greek politics decided that Greece was to be freed from the Communist influence and the ELAS was to be disbanded at the beginning of December 1944, the Communists left the government and turned openly against the British. When Goodbody arrives in Greece, the Germans are already gone. The British soldiers suddenly find themselves standing against the Greek Communists who also fought the Germans. Goodbody does not mention the political side of the conflict in Greece. The reason should be clear; he does not take part in the politics of the war. To him, the ELAS might even seem to be fairly reasonable men when after the fights pass through the Athens and stop nearby a hospital, they agree that it would be better to take the conflict elsewhere. Here, the only similarity to history would lie in both the British and the Greek understanding the necessity to fight each other.

The previous claim that Goodbody had little to do with the politics in Greece is not entirely true. After leaving the fights in the Athens behind when 'an uneasy truce was agreed'⁵⁹, Goodbody is assigned the administrative position in a made-up town of Dolia. The merchants and entrepreneurs come to him with their demands, and although he tries to reason with them at first and explain why things like olive oil and icing sugar cannot be a priority for the British army, the number of demands is too much for them. Their determination to deal peacefully with the Greek comes to an end, just like the efforts to arrive at an agreement in the official British politics with the Greek Communists. Here the similarity ends. While The British decided to renew the fights with the ELAS, Goodbody and his men employ a strategy of divided attention. At a convenient moment, they simply start talking of something else, namely cricket, in order

⁵⁶ Pavel Hradečný et al., *Dějiny Řecka*, 3rd ed. (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2015), 455.

⁵⁷ Hradečný et al., *Dějiny Řecka*, 436.

⁵⁸ Hradečný et al., *Dějiny Řecka*, 441.

⁵⁹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 350.

to take the mind of the Greek off of their demand. Thus, the Greek start playing the popular British game instead of getting back to the fights as it happened in reality. Ryan inspired himself by the political talks between the Communists and the British, but not entirely as he did not renew the fights between them again in Dolia.

2.4 Over the Rhine to Germany

Historically, the offensive on the Rhine started in March 1945,⁶⁰ where Goodbody and his men also arrive from Greece. Crossing the Rhine and getting onto the German side of the river was impossible for the Allies at first, since ‘the bridges over the Rhine had been blown up before their arrival’.⁶¹ Goodbody is eager to cross the river on boats. However, his men push him into the boat and on his own he is taken by the stream. This complication turns out convenient eventually, when Goodbody manages to reach a bridge which has not yet been blown up. He stalls the German officers long enough, so that the Americans who arrive later can easily seize the bridge undamaged. In history, a similar story can be found of a small unit of Americans who found an intact bridge near Bonn and seized it.⁶² In this story, the British are not mentioned, most likely because there were none present. However, this fact could still support the argument that the events narrated by Goodbody are based on true events, since putting one British soldier into the story of the American army success is not such a big deal.

The story which finishes Goodbody’s narration of the war does not end with the Twelve Platoon entering Berlin as it would be expected. It was probably crowded enough there already with the British and the American competing in who would conquer more land.⁶³ Another reason why they hurried to arrive at Berlin as soon as possible was because of the Russians and the efforts to limit the Communist influence in Germany to minimum.⁶⁴ On the contrary, Goodbody is interested in meeting the Soviet soldiers. The Soviets who arrive at the meeting place are Mongolians though, and they most likely do not share any values with the Russian Soviets, apart from alcohol. Like in history, when Churchill and the non-Communist Allies wanted to prevent the Soviets and Communism from gaining power in Greece, Goodbody’s men are also not fond of them, so the dislike for Communism is based on historical facts. However, unlike in history, their dislike is forgotten over an open bottle, and maybe that is how it should be in the world too.

⁶⁰ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 728.

⁶¹ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 728.

⁶² Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 728.

⁶³ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 730.

⁶⁴ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 731.

2.5 Important historical personalities and events mentioned in the story

A number of proofs have been proposed that the story of *How I Won the War* is not entirely based on historically true events, however, from a wider point of view, the book stands on the basic historical facts of the Second World War. In contrary to these historical events which were altered to fit the needs of the narration, the characters in the story are from great majority made up. However, a couple of real historical personalities appear in the story. The most famous personality mentioned in the narration is Winston Churchill, for the larger period of the Second World War the Prime Minister of Great Britain. To Goodbody, Churchill is described as a ‘very great man... but a bit impatient... a bit difficult... [and a] very tough chap’ but in the end one who can be reasoned with.⁶⁵ The historical sources agree; here, he is pictured also as impatient and demanding more significant and more active operations.⁶⁶ Thus, it is obvious that the picture of Churchill in the story was based on his true traits.

Similarly to Churchill, general Montgomery is also only mentioned in the narration as the author of Goodbody’s study literature, but he is never actively present in the story. From Churchill’s notes on crossing the Rhine, the reader may understand Montgomery as a very careful man, anxious for other people’s lives on one side, and as a reckless, curious man on the other as he scolded Churchill’s secretary for almost getting himself killed when he had crossed the Rhine without a proper escort, and then did almost the same thing when he took Churchill to a destroyed bridge to watch the land on the other side of the river. Churchill himself said that he had the feeling, that Montgomery ‘had one standard for [the secretary] Jock Colville and another for himself.’⁶⁷ It can be judged, that it would have been interesting to have Montgomery directly figuring in Goodbody’s narration. Although it is quite understandable why the real historical personalities were nothing more but mentioned in the narration. Ryan certainly did not wish to insult any of them in any way should they find his book anything else but a humoristic novel.

At the beginning of chapter nine, there is a figure of a British general, who is never named. He talks to the soldiers about their situation and future plans in Africa, and narrates about Churchill. It could be anyone of the generals figuring in Africa as well as a character completely made up. One of the names which could stand behind the unnamed general is general Wavell, who was ‘the chief commander for the Middle East area’,⁶⁸ and therefore he

⁶⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 168.

⁶⁶ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 139–140.

⁶⁷ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War VI.: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 365.

⁶⁸ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 140.

could appear on the African front to talk to his men. General Wavell is mentioned in the story, although not directly acting in it anyhow. The character could still stand for any general real or made up, and although Goodbody provided his description, the reader can never be sure whom he is supposed to represent. There might be a reason for the general remaining nameless, though. Since Churchill and Montgomery were named but never appeared physically in the story, the general remains anonymous because he figures in the story. This should prove that the character is based on a real personality, otherwise he would have been named.

Major Arkdust, who appears in Goodbody's narration quite frequently is understandably made up. It is disputable whether a real person could have the strength and patience to stand Goodbody and to be so short-sighted not to see the lieutenant's unsuitability for the officer post. Nevertheless, Major Arkdust is the commander of the C Company, which the Fourth Musketeers are a part of. A historical parallel could be proposed for Major Arkdust in the personality of Major Barlow of the real C Company which operated in North Africa alongside the Blade Force.⁶⁹ The problem here would be that the real C Company and its commander belonged to the American army, not the British. However, this should not be taken as a proof for rejecting the proposal, since the Fourth Musketeers did not exist anyway, and their alternative was suggested to lie within the British Blade Force. As no real personality is both named and appears physically in *How I Won the War*, then also the military units and companies had to be renamed in order to maintain their anonymity. Thus, it could be deemed likely that Ryan took the American C Company and made it British with a brand-new commander.

The well-known personalities are not the only pieces of history which appear in the story. The famous battles of the Second World War are mentioned only briefly as well as the personalities. One of such battles is the Battle of Britain, which Goodbody mentions in July 1940. To this crucial battle taking place in the sky, he devotes barely two sentences; the first one at the very beginning of chapter five, and another at the beginning of the following chapter. In July, he describes the planes as 'fighters... making silver-plume patterns in the sky',⁷⁰ thus lending them the glory of silver arrows, while in the following chapter, he already speaks of the 'dark days of 1940',⁷¹ which he spent on the coast of Dorset, prepared to stop the land invasion, which was supposed to follow after the Battle of Britain. It might seem ungrateful to mention such an important battle so briefly, but the truth is that for Goodbody, who does not take part

⁶⁹ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 365.

⁷⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 80.

⁷¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 100.

in it, it is not very important. Thus, he uses the battle only to be set on the timeline and help the reader to orientate themselves better in his narration.

Similar to the Battle of Britain is what happened at Dunkirk. Goodbody mentions Dunkirk by only one word, and that only because he, as a recently promoted lieutenant, is about to join the Fourth Musketeers and the Twelve Platoon for the first time, who have settled on the Dorset coast ‘after their return from Dunkirk.’⁷² After mentioning this, Goodbody goes back to describing how he had to travel on foot to his company, and otherwise utterly ignores the tragedy which could have happened at Dunkirk, had Hitler not stopped his men from massacring all the Allies on the French coast.⁷³ It is claimed that by letting the approximately 338.000 men retreat to Britain,⁷⁴ ‘he caused his own fall and the defeat of Germany five years later’, and thus ‘the Dunkirk miracle’ was born.⁷⁵ However, Goodbody was not affected anyhow by the events at Dunkirk like the men whom he was about to join, and he perhaps did not even know what really happened and how important it was for the war, since he spent this period of time at the officers’ training.

D-Day, or Operation Overlord, is not mentioned in the narration at all. The reason may be that Goodbody did not know about the operation at all because at the time of the Normandy landings at the beginning of June 1944, he was in Italy most likely fully engaged in the Battle of the Booze. The reason why Goodbody was prescribed this particular path through the war and why he was in Italy at the time of the D-Day is unclear. It could be only argued that Goodbody was left standing aside of all the important operations and events going on during the Second World War, because there would be the necessary ‘Goodbody danger’ – that his actions would unavoidably request the change of history, and this had never been Ryan’s goal. Ryan never seemed to want to disrupt history too much. Thus, Goodbody is put rather to the periphery of the war, where he cannot cause too much damage. Some minor events are changed in how precisely they happened, some are probably completely made up like the Battle of the Booze, but the overall basic course of the war is never changed. Since such large and important operations give little space for fantasy, there was no space for Goodbody to be put.

Goodbody ends his story with the Twelve Platoon befriending the Mongolians of the Red Army, because here the war practically ended for them. Yet, in the epilogue, Goodbody returns to say a little more about his life after the war. He mentions the Cold War, the Space

⁷² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 82.

⁷³ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 90.

⁷⁴ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 96.

⁷⁵ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 90–91.

Race between the USA and the USSR, and only indirectly points to the nuclear bomb which since the end of the war has been hanging over the world like a dark cloud. He never says that two bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities and killed tens of thousands of people.⁷⁶ He also does not say that the capitulation of Japan was certain also without the nuclear bombs being used.⁷⁷ Goodbody does not express his opinion about this matter, as he never expressed his opinion about anything; he would just always fulfil the orders which he was given. The reader does not know whether he was in favour or against the bombs, they can only guess, while Goodbody's optimism about the radioactive future is fairly confusing.

Finally, even something as basic as cricket should have a special role in the story. To the reader, it might seem that it is just a sport which the soldiers play when they have nothing to do. However, since almost everything in the narration was inspired by a true event, then even the presence of cricket must have a logical explanation. It appears twice in *How I Won the War*. At first, cricket is a part of the divisional parade held in the hot desert of Egypt after Goodbody won the Battle of the Booze in Italy. The second time cricket appears in Greece where the soldiers are sent from Egypt, and it helps Goodbody to deal with the never-ending demands of the local people in the town of Dolia, remembering the obligatory Recreational Training from Egypt. They just had to wait for the right opportunity to use the experience elsewhere to prove that it was not just a 'military waste of time'.⁷⁸ The reader might think that it was a coincidence for cricket to appear in the story. However, at the end of 1942, the British soldiers in North Africa named a peak to which they retreated a 'Longstop Hill', where 'Longstop' describes a player position in cricket.⁷⁹ This should be the evidence that cricket has a special place in the British culture of the previous century, and therefore it had to appear also in the narration.

To sum up, several undeniable similarities have been found between the events of the story of *How I Won the War* and the real history of the Second World War. That means that the events of the story are inspired by the real history, although they are not in complete accordance with it. It has been uncovered, that Ryan maintained the general course of the war and the outcomes of the battles unchanged, so that history would not be rewritten, however, the details of the events were transformed. This transformation was necessary in order to support and explain the narrator's claim which appeared in the title of the book, i.e., how Goodbody won the war. Thus, the reader witnesses Goodbody and his men surprising a group of German

⁷⁶ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 751.

⁷⁷ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 769.

⁷⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 370.

⁷⁹ Hart, *Dějiny druhé světové války*, 368.

officers in Africa, conquering Tunis without even knowing it, or saving the bridge across the Rhine until the Americans arrived to claim it completely, to name just a few. All of these events happened differently in reality, either with a different British or an American unit taking part in them, or with the British interference missing completely. However, the overall general course of the war was not disrupted and the major events of which it consists were not changed.

3. The characters and the narrator of the novel

With the plot and the spatiotemporal determination, the character is one of the three aspects which can be prevalent in the novel.⁸⁰ However, even when the novel is focused primarily on something else than the character, it may still play a significant role in the book. In novels, there are usually many characters, but some are more important than others. Some characters change more, some appear more often in the story. The qualities of the character may not always be so straightforward though. Some aspects of a character the reader can never be entirely sure of. Considering Goodbody's behaviour, his way of thinking and the things which he says and does, it should be clear that he is far from being the smartest man in the British army; however, sometimes he comes with a more or less reasonable solution to his problems which means that he is not always clueless about what is happening, and this makes the reader question whether he is a fool with a couple of bright moments, or whether he only pretends to be dumb.

What is important to realize about the characters of a humoristic novel is that they are 'ordinary people ... [who] for the sake of the necessary comical distance lack any deeper psychological elaborateness and ... they are resistant to any development.'⁸¹ If Goodbody learnt from his mistakes and changed, the development from the foolish, simple man to a reasonable, smart officer would disrupt the comicality of both his character and the whole story. The character's disability to learn and change is one of the necessary aspects of the humoristic novel. Without it, the humour would be lost. The humour of the comical situations in *How I Won the War* starts even before the comical point of a particular story starts taking shape. Since the reader can learn from the repeating patterns in the book, they can already anticipate that something comical and unfortunate for Goodbody is about to happen based on their previous experience from other chapters. This anticipation of the future events is possible thanks to the constancy of the comical characters and their disability to change which in turn makes further humorous situations inevitable. Since 'most often what happens is the plausible outcome of a character's personality',⁸² the events are directly dependent on Goodbody and his comicality.

There are also some aspects of his character lacking in elaborateness. To the reader, the most obvious is that he has no background. The reader learns fairly little about his life before the war; they only know that he used to work at a corn-chandler's office and that his humanly impossible style of walk is hereditary in his family. He is not fond of alcohol or women, he is

⁸⁰ Mocná et al., *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*, 579–580.

⁸¹ Mocná et al., *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*, 262.

⁸² Sylvan Barnet et al., *A Dictionary of Literary, Dramatic, and Cinematic Terms* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 85.

not married, and it is implied that he had never had a serious relationship in his life. Otherwise, nothing is said about his youth, family or friends. The absence of such fundamental aspects of one's life are needed though to maintain the distance between the character and the reader; if the reader learnt too much about the character, they might start to sympathize with them, and instead of amusement they would feel pity, which is not the comical character's purpose. Thus, the absence of the character's historical and familial background is necessary.

3.1 Characterization through name

There are many ways through which the reader learns about the character and their personality. Sometimes, the 'characterization through name'⁸³ can tell a lot about the character's personality traits. The first name of the main character of the novel, Ernest, should evoke the homophonous word 'earnest', which according to Collins Dictionary means 'serious', 'eager', 'sincere' and 'thoughtful'.⁸⁴ Goodbody takes the tasks which he is given seriously and is eager to do everything right and to please his superiors. He is also sincere and honest. His seriousness, eagerness and sincerity can be well seen in chapter fourteen when Goodbody is sent to guard the Field-Marshal's private latrine. The reader can see that he takes his task very seriously and even 'looked firmly the other way'⁸⁵ to give the Field-Marshal privacy. Afterwards, when Goodbody is inquired about the purpose of his presence by the latrine, his sincerity shows and he says the first thing which comes to his mind – that he is there 'at [the Field-Marshal's] convenience'.⁸⁶ Being thoughtful as well, Goodbody immediately understands that what he said was unwise and also realizes that his further promotion is thus lost. Thus, his first name can be used to describe Goodbody's personality, while it also points to his simpler rather than sly character.

The surname of the main character should also tell a lot when analysed. The surname 'Goodbody' can be divided into two words, 'good' and 'body'. 'Good' obviously means someone with non-evil, positive intentions. 'Body' would then stand for the notion of 'person' or 'man'. This could be characterized as synecdoche, when the whole of a person is substituted only by the physical representation of it,⁸⁷ the body. Together, 'good body' means a good person; however, 'good body' could also be understood as a person simpler in mind than their peers, someone who will without questions do even the work which the others refuse to do.

⁸³ Sochrová, *Kompletní přehled české a světové literatury*, 30.

⁸⁴ 'Earnest' in Collins English Dictionary. HarperCollins Publishers. Available at: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/earnest#earnest_1 (Accessed: 3rd April 2023).

⁸⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 318.

⁸⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 318.

⁸⁷ Vodička et al., *Svět literatury 1*, 39.

Goodbody is like that; he always thinks only the best about others, never expects any betrayal from his own men, and even when he proposes the possibility that it was his men thanks to whom he found himself in the filthy water in Tunis in chapter nine, he categorically rejects to ‘formally say that someone pushed [him].’⁸⁸ This shows the goodness and naivety in him, as well as the simple mind, since it could not have been a stone on which he would have slipped if he acknowledges the possibility that he could have felt someone’s ‘toe prise [his] buttock.’⁸⁹ The unshakable trust within his men points again to his simplicity rather than cleverness.

If the name analysis is applied to the second most important character of the novel, it will be found that the Oxford English Dictionary defines transom as ‘a cross-beam... esp. one spanning an opening to carry a superstructure; a lintel.’⁹⁰ Therefore, it is supposed to be something strong which must be able to carry the weight of other heavy objects or entire constructions and keep them stable and lasting. Sergeant Transom is like that. He forms the bridge between the simple commander Goodbody and the common soldiers who are usually not much educated. When Goodbody is for whatever reason unable to get the men down to work, Sergeant Transom has enough respect to make them obey the orders. Goodbody usually considers this to be ‘an excellent opportunity for Sergeant Transom to practise his powers of control’,⁹¹ although the sergeant does not need that. Having the military experience from ‘Peshawar, Palestine and Dunkirk’, there would be little more which Goodbody’s ‘up-to-the minute O.C.T.U. training’⁹² could teach Transom, while the exposure of Goodbody to Transom’s source of experience would teach the lieutenant little due to his resistance to learning and change.

Transom really represents a strong and steady point of reason in the platoon’s life, the only one who thinks in advance, presupposes and is always ready. With Goodbody they sometimes form a perfectly working pair; when Transom occasionally loses hope and gives in to despair, Goodbody is the one who maintains his calm composure not only in Italy at Castello Montepico, but also when dealing with the Greek merchants who drive Transom almost to the brink of madness. It is Goodbody who calms him down and gets rid of the Greek people with the narration about the rules of the game of cricket. On the other hand, when Goodbody gives way to his gleefulness and zest, ushering the men forward hot-headedly, it is Transom who

⁸⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 192.

⁸⁹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 192.

⁹⁰ J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary. Volume XVIII, Thro–Unelucidated* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 418.

⁹¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 94.

⁹² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 88.

reminds the men to proceed with caution. It is also Transom who comes with the plan to confuse the other Allies in their quest for the precious wine of Montepico with false signs warning before non-existent mines and booby-traps. Similarly, it is also him who carries smoke canisters and tear-gas bombs around Italy from Monte Cassino to Castello Montepico, because he 'knew they'd come in handy'.⁹³ Thus, at times they can form a perfectly working pair.

3.2 Direct and indirect characterization

Another way of characterizing a character is through the direct or indirect characterization. The character may be characterized either 'directly, telling the reader the person's qualities; [or indirectly] through action, showing the person's deeds'.⁹⁴ As the main character and also the narrator at the same time, Goodbody is characterized only indirectly; the reader learns about him and what a person he is through analysing his behaviour and interactions with other characters. This way, the reader finds out that the characterization through name can be applied to him, because his personality fits the outcomes of the name analysis. Goodbody's simplicity of mind is apparent throughout the entire book. An example of it can be found in the first chapter of the book, when being brought to the village of Cleptha in Algeria, he mistakes the brothel for the sheikh's house and the prostitutes for his wives. He does not see his error until he is explicitly explained by Sergeant Transom.

Sergeant Transom most likely understands that Goodbody is rather a simple-minded man and using this, he sometimes makes fun of his commander. When the Twelve Platoon finds Goodbody at the disorderly house in Cleptha, Transom jokes about Goodbody being 'a dark horse'⁹⁵ for heading straight to the brothel immediately after landing. He explains patiently the situation which Goodbody found himself in, but while the rest of the platoon accuses Goodbody of following a sly plan of having his deal of pleasure but withholding it from them, Transom understands that Goodbody was really clueless. Although he makes fun of Goodbody, he would not explain where his commander was actually brought if he did not know that Goodbody would not understand it himself. This shows, that Transom serves as the middle ground between the suspicious and passionate men and the foolish commander.

Since Sergeant Transom is not the main character of his own narration, direct characterization is used in his case. It is Goodbody who introduces Transom to the reader and offers them the primary picture of the character. The reader can deduce the rest from Transom's

⁹³ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 306.

⁹⁴ Joseph T. Shipley, ed., *Dictionary of World Literary Terms: Criticism, Forms, Technique* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), 52.

⁹⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 20.

behaviour in the narration, that means through indirect characterization, which however is in accordance with the information provided directly. On the very first page of the book, the reader learns that according to Goodbody Transom is a ‘grand chap in a tight corner, ... but not over-articulate.’⁹⁶ Although Goodbody thinks Transom to be of lower intellect than himself, mostly because of their diverse military ranks, he acknowledges Transom’s undeniable military experience from previous operations which he had absolved before meeting Goodbody. Goodbody also says that Transom, ‘though admittedly lacking in imagination, was a most loyal N.C.O. ... [and] a good chap, too.’⁹⁷ The admitted lack in imagination can be questioned though, since in Italy Transom did a great job with the booby-traps, despite not having any real mines.

Transom must have been aware of Goodbody’s simplicity and foolishness from the first moment they met. Goodbody’s lack of military experience shows also when the platoon is sent to build trenches at the British coast. While Transom suggests settling down on the cliff, Goodbody insists on going down to the beach, which clearly shows the chasm between their acquired experience and intellect. Transom probably decides that it is better to let Goodbody learn from his own mistakes, and the men dig the trenches on the beach following Goodbody’s instructions, just to watch them being washed off with the first rain which is not uncommon in Britain. While the men suspect Goodbody of malevolence for having them dig the trenches in vain, Transom keeps any scathing remarks to himself broad-mindedly, because he can see Goodbody’s shame. On top of that, since nobody would ever build trenches on the beach under a cliff, it must have been clear to Transom that Goodbody will not be any bright a commander.

3.3 The roundness, flatness and dynamics of characters

The characters of a piece of literature can be either flat or round. While ‘the behaviour of flat characters is thoroughly predictable; that of round characters is sometimes unexpected though always credible’,⁹⁸ the only thing predictable about Goodbody is that he will get into another comical situation and possibly trouble. What will happen to him cannot be predicted, but it is more or less credible. Also, because the flat characters are meant to represent only one trait,⁹⁹ Goodbody would be deemed to be rather a round character, since there are more ways to describe him. His most obvious trait would be his simplicity. However, he can be also smart occasionally and come with a clever solution to his problems. An example of Goodbody

⁹⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 10.

⁹⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 12.

⁹⁸ Barnet et al., *A Dictionary of Literary, Dramatic, and Cinematic Terms*, 85.

⁹⁹ Barnet et al., *A Dictionary of Literary, Dramatic, and Cinematic Terms*, 85.

avoiding his superiors' wrath by a smart deception of his own invention can be found in chapter thirteen. When the Twelve Platoon finally reach Castello Montepico in the Battle of the Booze, they manage to find the small barrels with the wine which are then loaded onto the truck, but are subsequently destroyed by a German tank fire. While the platoon despairs, Goodbody decides to repair the barrels which are then filled with any wine which they are able to get regardless of its quality. Although the final mixture reportedly causes something close to 'colonic lavage',¹⁰⁰ the officers suspect nothing and praise the so desired spoils. Thus, Goodbody's smartness and ability to stay calm saved the day, which indicates that he is not exclusively foolish as he seems to be most of the time.

The question whether Goodbody could be only pretending his foolishness leads to the question why he would do it if not for sabotage. A possible attempt of sabotage could be the court-martial of Private Juniper who was accused of repeated desertion and threatened with three months in jail in chapter seven. Goodbody knows that Juniper's story of poisoned pork is entirely made-up and he understands the joke. However, despite meaning his defence of the accused soldier well, the situation turns against him when Juniper is sentenced to a life-time in mental hospital instead of being proclaimed innocent due to his (pretended) disease. The turn of Goodbody's defence strategy to 'plead "Guilty"'¹⁰¹ so suddenly is too much for everybody, and having wasted four days with the trial leaves them angry including Juniper who is now sentenced to a half a year behind the bars. This shows that Goodbody's good intentions and honesty do not always bring him gratitude, while the previous story rejects the possibility of sabotage. Goodbody would have strived as he did to save the wine if he wanted to sabotage his superiors' orders. Although the stories may seem as the cases of sabotage due to their results, Goodbody only wishes to help.

However, a couple of Goodbody's bright moments in his narration cannot reverse the suspicion which the reader has about his simplicity and foolishness. In chapter eighteen, it is Goodbody who saves the last bridge over the Rhine and thus allows the American troops to get to the German territory by stalling the German officer who is responsible for the destruction of the bridge. Although it is smart and brave of Goodbody to bargain for the price of the bridge, it is foolish of him to really intent to pay the sum on which they agreed with the German officer. Apparently, he came across a fool similar to himself though, because the German officer is willing to wait for him to return with the money. The Americans who find Goodbody on his

¹⁰⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 314.

¹⁰¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 138.

way to the nearest American general have no intentions to follow the contract, and kill all the Germans by the bridge without questions, thus sparing Goodbody the obligation to pay the promised amount of money, and posing their military straightforwardness and practicality against Goodbody's naivety. It is true though, that there is not just one side to Goodbody; although the foolishness and naivety are the prevalent traits in him, he can be also smart and useful.

Compared to Goodbody, Sergeant Transom could be a round character as well, since there are more sides to him as well. On one hand, he is an experienced soldier and commander, while on the other, he is still just a man and along with the common soldiers as well as the higher command, who are flat characters representing the typical ever-complaining or stealing soldiers, he cannot say no neither to a woman nor to a bottle of alcohol. As men in war, they are always at the brink of death and any moment may be their last. They are aware of this fact, unlike Goodbody who chooses to look for a way to save himself rather than to start despairing. While Goodbody explains his lack of interest within the women that he has 'never been a chap for that sort of thing' and 'was not, thank God, brought up promiscuous',¹⁰² and something similar he says about alcohol, it is not the case of Sergeant Transom and the rest of the British army. This also makes Goodbody's oddness clearer compared to the normalcy of the rest of the characters.

Concerning the dynamics of the characters of *How I Won the War*, they are static rather than dynamic, since they are 'the same at the finish as at the start'.¹⁰³ At the beginning of the novel, when Goodbody stands before his platoon for the first time in chapter five and addresses them, he says that he wants them to 'look upon [him] not only as [their] platoon commander but also as a friend' and to 'come to [him] for help as [they] would to [their] own father'.¹⁰⁴ The men make fun of him for his introduction speech, and they keep making fun of him throughout the entire novel. Transom sees Goodbody's good heart but also his silliness, and he shouts at the men as is his habit to usually support Goodbody and maintain the lieutenant's authority in the platoon. However, Goodbody never achieves becoming the men's friend and father as he wished, because even after the war, he 'tried every year since demobilization to organize Platoon Reunion',¹⁰⁵ but because they could never agree on a date and place, the men obviously did not desire to see him ever again, which Goodbody once more fails to understand.

¹⁰² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 18.

¹⁰³ Shipley, *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, 52.

¹⁰⁴ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 462.

As a static character, Goodbody remains unchanged and loyal to his naïve assumptions. There are many of them in the narration, since it consists of his thoughts which he decides to share with the reader. An example for this can also be found in the first chapter when Goodbody falls into the sea when disembarking on the African coast. Almost drowning in the water and calling out for his men to come at his rescue, Goodbody explains their ignorance of his order as being in a difficult situation themselves and that they ‘would have come for [him] if they could.’¹⁰⁶ Although this cannot be proven neither right nor wrong, the annoyance of his tutors evoked by Goodbody’s efforts to ‘study beforehand each lesson in [their] training programme’ and ‘prompt the corporal whenever he forgot any of his lines... [or] when he made mistakes’¹⁰⁷ is obvious in chapter three, although Goodbody interprets it only as Corporal Maloney having difficulties getting used to his new set of dentures. Instead of seeing the truth as it is, Goodbody rather chooses to stick with his imagination, and thinks the corporal ‘was grateful for these little services.’¹⁰⁸ However, the reader can see the other characters’ true feelings about Goodbody, despite the fact that he remains ignorant to them.

3.4 The narrator

Writing his memoirs of the Second World War, Goodbody is the narrator of his own story. Rather than a reflector-character, he is a teller-character, i.e., personalized narrator, whose ‘main function is to tell, narrate, report, to communicate with the reader, to quote witnesses and sources, to comment on the story, to anticipate the outcome of an action or to recapitulate what has happened before the story opens.’¹⁰⁹ Thus, his narration is the narration with temporal distance which means that it is written in the past tense. This type of narration is deemed to be the most common.¹¹⁰ Goodbody provides a first-person narration, and as a character of the story, he cannot be an omniscient narrator; he is limited by his own knowledge and restricted to tell only what he knows from his own experience or mediately from others who would tell him. However, if no one tells him, he can make redundant narration in which he states his theories and assumptions. Being allowed to see Goodbody’s thoughts and opinions on everything which he chooses to comment on, the reader learns much more about him than about any other character in the novel.

¹⁰⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 38–40.

¹⁰⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Franz K. Stanzel, ‘Teller-Characters and Reflector-Characters in Narrative Theory,’ *Poetics Today* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1981, Duke University Press): 6.

¹¹⁰ Vladimír Macura and Alice Jedličková, eds., *Průvodce po světové literární teorii 20. století* (Brno: Host, 2012), 268.

Goodbody could also be labelled as a ‘compromised narrator, because such a narrator is compromised by the discrepancy between his own assessments and what the events appear to be based on his reference’.¹¹¹ This discrepancy is attempted to be reduced by the employment of the redundant narration through which the author informs the reader about the facts which the narrator would otherwise keep to himself.¹¹² At the same time, the discrepancy cannot be gotten rid of, because although Goodbody acknowledges the possibility of being deliberately pushed into the water in Tunis in chapter nine, he emphasises that it is only a theory and refrains from making any accusations. Thus, he attempts to dispose of the compromised narrator label, however, eventually it is not possible because of his central position in both the narration and the story which disables him from being the omniscient narrator. Despite not being the omniscient narrator, Goodbody tells the reader what truly happened through the redundant narration. The fact that Goodbody rejects to believe the theory which he himself offered contributes to the humorous character of the book and suggests his naivety.

As the first-person narrator or also internal narrator who ‘tells only that what he knows’,¹¹³ Goodbody should be taken rather as an unreliable narrator. This label could be argued about though, because thanks to the already mentioned redundant narration, the degree of his unreliability is reduced with the discrepancy between the truth and what Goodbody believes maintained, but the reader is offered the truth by the author. As the internal narrator he also cannot say what he does not know from his own experience, therefore at the end of the book, the reader encounters a fairly prominent ellipsis, which means that ‘the time of the narration is incomparably shorter than the “omitted” time of the story’.¹¹⁴ Particularly, the victory over Germany was definitely a long-time event; however, in the book, the story is ended by the Twelve Platoon meeting and befriending the Mongolians of the Red Army. This is followed by a brief epilogue in which Goodbody rather implicitly sums up the end of the war and his life after it. Here, the absence of both time and further narration is palpable to the reader, while Goodbody’s optimism about the nuclear future points to his foolishness for the last time.

To sum up, the characters of the novel *How I Won the War* can be characterized through name analysis. While Goodbody as the main character and narrator had to be characterized indirectly, the other characters can be characterized directly by him. Similarly, Goodbody and

¹¹¹ Alice Jedličková, *Ke komu mluví vypravěč?: Adresát v komunikační perspektivě prózy* (Praha: Ústav pro českou a světovou literaturu AV ČR, 1993), 94.

¹¹² Alice Jedličková and Ondřej Sládek, eds., *Vyprávění v kontextu* (Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu Akademie věd České republiky, 2008), 94.

¹¹³ Macura and Jedličková, *Průvodce po světové literární teorii 20. století*, 267.

¹¹⁴ Macura and Jedličková, *Průvodce po světové literární teorii 20. století*, 266.

Transom would be rather round characters, whereas the less important and minor characters are flat. All the characters are static though, because they are resistant to any change throughout the novel. Despite being basically a good-hearted person, Goodbody really is a fool rather unfit for being a platoon commander. Sometimes he comes up with a clever solution to his problems, but rather occasionally; most of the time he is dependent on Sergeant Transom's abilities. Because he is both a character and the narrator of the story, he is the teller-character and also the unreliable narrator, although his unreliability is lessened by the redundant narration. All of these things contribute to the humoristic character of the novel.

4. Humour and its manifestations in *How I Won the War*

In some sources, humour is taken as a genre rather than a style of expression or attitude. As a genre, or a hypernym, it has been ascribed ‘several subgenres..., for example black humour, parody, caricature, or the art of nonsense’¹¹⁵ to which another source names also ‘anecdote, joke, farce, grotesque, ... irony, satire, cynicism, lasciviousness, ...’¹¹⁶ as the main pillars of humour. While in humoristic novel the aspect of humour is prevalent and easily detected, it may not always be so obvious to the characters of the story, which only adds to the overall comicality. In relation to the novel *How I Won the War* having been classified as a humoristic novel, Goodbody is certainly a comical character, and the humour of the book is necessarily centred around him since he is both the main character and the narrator; however, it still leaves the question whether he is or is not aware of his comicality and the general comical character of his narration.

4.1 Humour

The definition of humour is hard to find; there is no general agreed definition of it. One of the sources says that ‘humour is a form of taste; reportedly, it is – just like beauty – in the eye of the beholder’,¹¹⁷ or that ‘humour is an amusing state of a person capable of accepting and transforming the stimuli from the outside world with a jolly mind.’¹¹⁸ While Ryan also fought in the Second World War, he had plenty of his own experience which he decided to put into the novel. The second definition would then fit perfectly for Ryan as the author of the humoristic novel, while he took the horrible experience of the war and transformed it into a collection of funny stories. Unlike Ryan who is the humorous one, Goodbody is the comical one, which means that he is necessarily not aware of his comicality which is also related to his naivety.¹¹⁹

The cyclical approach to classifying history works with the repeating phases of naivety in childhood, irony in adolescence, humour in adulthood, which then turns to absurdity and finally back to naivety in the old age.¹²⁰ The cyclical approach can be applied to the characters of *How I Won the War*, while it would classify them nicely. Goodbody is certainly still localized in the first phase of life, that means in the childish naivety. Although it is not said, the reader understands that he is still a young man who has experienced little of the adult life. His naivety

¹¹⁵ Ervín Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru* (Praha: Regia, 2003), 19.

¹¹⁶ Vladimír Borecký, *Odvrácená tvář humoru* (Praha: Dauphin, 1996), 16.

¹¹⁷ Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru*, 17.

¹¹⁸ Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru*, 20.

¹¹⁹ George Meredith and Alena Dvořáková, *Dva eseje o komedii* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2012), 127.

¹²⁰ Borecký, *Odvrácená tvář humoru*, 28.

shows many times in his narration, for example when he believes to be appreciated by his superiors for his services and loved by his men as a friend and father rather than a commander. He never understands that all of these feelings are just his fancy. Private Clapper who keeps coming to Goodbody for advice with his unfaithful wife would be either in the phase of naivety with Goodbody, or irony based on whether his stories are true or not. However, since they are probably not true, as nobody could have such a promiscuous wife and want to keep her, Clapper would be playing mischief on Goodbody; however, the truth is hard to uncover even for the reader. Sergeant Transom would then be in the humorous adult age where he already has his experience, he can make fun of Goodbody and is gentle with it too. Finally, Private Juniper finds himself in the absurd phase, while he pretends to be infected with porcyliocosis before he is put back to prison for an even longer period of time than if he just simply confessed to his desertion. Going back to Goodbody and his youthful naivety, he is certainly not aware of his comicality; he never gives a hint of his awareness in his narration, he takes himself absolutely seriously and never changes.

Goodbody's naivety shows also in relation to the absurdity of the world wars. While he reads the 'noble, rousing message'¹²¹ written by the general just before the invasion of Algeria, it is clear that although the words in the message are not his, he agrees with them completely. Thus, Goodbody identifies himself with the claim of fighting 'in defence of the Old Country, the Empire and the Democratic way of Life.'¹²² Here, Goodbody's naivety dwells in the fact that after a war, nothing can be as it was before. Wars represent the means of radical change, and therefore, while the democratic way of life was maintained in one half of the world, the other half was controlled by Communism. The Old Country, which must mean the United Kingdom as the characters are British, was also left intact when it comes to its borders and the unsuccessful German invasion. However, it still had its problems after the war; one of them was the gradual dissolution of the enormous British Empire. The impossibility of maintaining things as they had been before the war is what Goodbody also does not realize, and thus he does not realize the naivety of his motivation in the war.

4.2 The absence of black humour?

The long but fitting definition of black humour says that black humour is pessimistic, 'cruel, ... amoralistic, ... it blasphemes, ... is maximalist.'¹²³ Black humour could be found in the story

¹²¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 10.

¹²² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 12.

¹²³ Václav Černý, *Studie a eseje z moderní světové literatury* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1969), 210.

of chapter five in *How I Won the War*, where Goodbody and his men are sent to prepare the trenches to defend the Dorset coast. While digging the trenches, the soldiers gradually lose hope for the end of their suffering. Although Sergeant Transom suggests digging the trenches up on the cliff,¹²⁴ Goodbody orders to go down to the beach. Thus, his amorality is shown because he does not listen to the more experienced soldier, and has the men dig up trenches which they not only dig thrice, but which eventually are washed off by the rain, with all the hard work being futile. Although the entire story does not end with the death of anyone, neither of the men working themselves to death, nor of Goodbody whom Private Drogue wants to shoot as a revenge for their suffering, the men certainly do feel as if they were dying due to the blisters on their limbs and the general exhaustion after eleven days of digging. Goodbody's ignorance and naivety in this case shows also when he misinterprets Drogue's riddle aimed his way. While Private Drogue would like to shoot Goodbody, the lieutenant thinks that the soldier is aiming at the villager whom Goodbody accused of spying.¹²⁵ He remains ignorant to the men's pain, exhaustion and despair over the never-ending trench-digging.

4.3 Absurdity

Although absurdity is not mentioned as one of the pillars of humour, it is a phase in the cyclical approach of history classification, therefore it also has to do with humour and comicality. Absurd is also the vicious circle which Goodbody sets in motion in the Greek town of Dolia in chapter sixteen. After facing several delegations of the merchants and craftsmen of Dolia with various demands, Sergeant Transom, the strong and steady beam in the Twelve Platoon's life, loses his temper. Not only it is surprisingly Goodbody who maintains his calm composure, while keeping in mind that the 'peace in Greece in [their] time rests upon [their] shoulders',¹²⁶ it is also him who comes with the solution to the never-ending demands. One absurd metaphor which caught the attention of the Greek craftsmen and which Goodbody probably did not even plan on saying gave him the power to 'come off the defensive and switch to the attack ... and paying them out in their own money'.¹²⁷ The uncontrollable repetition of the same speech of the rules of the game of cricket, gradually improved and prolonged turns the suffering of the British officers to fun, although later they have problems to lead the Greek to the topic of cricket as the Greek understand the pattern, but it is nothing the British officers would not handle.

¹²⁴ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 88.

¹²⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 98.

¹²⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 360.

¹²⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 362.

When the Greek olive-pressers ask what cricket was,¹²⁸ Goodbody realizes what a great opportunity he has at hand and takes advantage of it promptly. Seeing that the cricket strategy works, Goodbody certainly must have been aware of the humour of this situation, as well as of its absurdity.

4.4 Parody

At the beginning of this chapter, parody was named as one of the subgenres or pillars of humour. Looking for the definition of parody, it is said that it ‘typically attacks the official word, mocks the pretensions of authoritative discourse, and undermines the seriousness with which subordinates should approach the justifications of their betters.’¹²⁹ In the case of Goodbody, it is not that he would be using parody deliberately to mock his superiors. Quite the opposite; with his friendly nature, he wishes to get on well with everyone, help with any problem, and serve his superiors the best way he can. This can after all be seen in his wish to be not just the platoon commander, but also a friend and something like a father to his men.¹³⁰ For this statement, it is Goodbody who is being mocked by the men, though, whereas the Field Marshal, whose latrine Goodbody is sent to guard in chapter fourteen, might think that Goodbody mocks him with his statement of standing by the latrine ‘at [the Field Marshal’s] convenience’,¹³¹ as if he could not use the latrine without his service. Judging by the Field Marshal’s expression following Goodbody’s response, and by Goodbody’s own instant regret for the remark, he is aware of how unwise it was of him and how it must have seemed.

In chapter four, where Goodbody attends the training of future officers, he meets soldiers who are clearly members of higher social classes than himself. In order to make friends with them, he tries to imitate their manner of speech. Either it is Goodbody’s obvious membership of a lower social class which makes the others dislike him, or his overly zealous and eager character which he displays in the training. Perhaps the other aspirants can sense that while they are reasonable enough to be entrusted a number of human lives and were chosen for their particular abilities, Goodbody’s presence at the officers’ training is differently motivated. Although at the end of a practical training, his fellow team members stand up for him when Goodbody is attacked by a member of the enemy team with a frying pan, it does not indicate any change in their feelings toward Goodbody, which he apparently hopes for. The mistake is explained when a nobleman of his team hits Goodbody himself with the frying pan; however,

¹²⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 362.

¹²⁹ Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), 20.

¹³⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 84.

¹³¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 318.

the reason for their dislike of Goodbody is never explained. The reason for their aversion may also be Goodbody's attempts to imitate their way of speaking which they might have understood as parody and mockery, while Goodbody was neither aware of mocking them nor eager to do it.

Similarly, when in chapter eleven Goodbody uses foreign words for addressing the Italian captain and his men from the Italian navy, it could also be taken as mockery and parody of the Italians and their language, while he actually only wanted to show his friendliness toward them because Italy used to be an ally of the Nazi Germany. The Italians are pictured as much more unreliable than the British, however, they are much kinder and more warm-hearted than Goodbody's fellow aspirants to the officer posts. They ignore Goodbody's attempts to imitate their language and that it might possibly mean parody. They even ignore the fact that instead of using Italian words, Goodbody actually addresses the Italian captain Demoli by a French phrase 'mon Capitain'.¹³² The Italians show the British no malice, not even to Goodbody who tries to befriend them in such a clumsy way. While the Italians ignore all Goodbody's trespassing, there is no way for him to realize what he does wrong, and therefore he cannot learn and change his behaviour. In the case of the friendly Italians, Goodbody is thus most likely unaware of the possibility to understand his behaviour as parody and mockery.

4.5 Satire

As another of the subgenres of humour, satire can be found in the humoristic novel as well. Meredith says, that satire is 'mockery which sends chills down your back and takes away your kindness'.¹³³ Satire appears for example in chapter three, in which Goodbody is sent to the orderly room to check the correctness of the data in the salary documents, where he finds a number of discrepancies, namely several officers who reportedly received their amount of money, despite being obviously extra in the depot. From the orderly room Goodbody is moved to the stores to check the stock of food and equipment. Here, he discovers similar discrepancies as he did in the orderly room, but in both cases is told to keep the information to himself, while the officers in charge try to cover their apparent guilt. They need not have worried though; Goodbody is easily persuaded to leave the matter to them, and leaves the positions with absolute trust within them. Thus, while the reader understands that the officers enrich themselves on the army's expanse, Goodbody remains blind to this fact and believes he uncovered a striking new information to them. Here, the reader faces the example of satire on the military background

¹³² Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 226.

¹³³ Meredith and Dvořáková, *Dva eseje o komedii*, 50.

which is full of frauds and stealing soldiers, which however, is either ignored or not observed, and thus not further investigated. Just to make sure that Goodbody would remain quiet and would not draw any attention to the officers' stealing from the army, they propose his promotion. The satire is not pronounced by Goodbody though; he is also one of those against whom it is aimed alongside the untrustworthy officers. It is true that they steal from the army, but he keeps the information to himself and lets them proceed with it. However, it is also true that he does not realize what is actually happening and thus that the guilt falls also upon his head.

4.6 Grotesque

Although grotesque has already been defined earlier, it can also be used to '[present] the human figure in an exaggerated and distorted way'.¹³⁴ The example of this kind of grotesque can be proposed in the legal case of the porcyliocosis patient Juniper, whom Goodbody defends in chapter seven. Since porcyliocosis is clearly a made-up term, even in the book it is a very rare disease of being poisoned by consumption of rotten pork. Therefore, the first living patient infected by this illness 'in the regiment'¹³⁵ is fairly free to make up his symptoms. Thus, Juniper ends up performing a Hunchback from the Notre Dame, which is a very grotesque figure concerning the body structure in order to avoid a couple of months spent in prison for his repeated desertion. Putting up such a scene, Juniper must have looked fairly grotesque, 'twisting up one shoulder and leering hideously over it with his black-bagged eyes.'¹³⁶ Another grade of grotesqueness would be the officers present at the court believing this performance. The only difference between this comical event and the rest of the novel is that for one of the very few times, Goodbody is aware of Juniper's pretention and of the lie which they together composed for the court.

Another example of grotesque would be within the grudge which Captain Tablet has been holding against Goodbody since Juniper's legal case on porcyliocosis, as Goodbody himself fears,¹³⁷ and thus directs the reader to the hidden truth, that is through the redundant narration. The form of the captain's revenge is grotesque in the nature of the task which he assigns to the lieutenant, and satirical in the captain's misuse of power. The sight of Goodbody demanding a sample of their excrement from each Arab merchant who would desire to enter the British military camp in order to prevent any infectious outbreak of disease must be

¹³⁴ Roger Fowler, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (London: Routledge, 1993), 107.

¹³⁵ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 122.

¹³⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 136.

¹³⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 200.

satisfying and very funny for the captain. However, for the reader, the picture can be only grotesque. Goodbody would probably agree with the reader on this; judging by his stuttering when he attempts to repeat Captain Tablet's words, the absurdity of the task must have shocked him as well, although not in the same comical way in which it struck the reader.

A piece of grotesqueness hides within Goodbody himself. It is uncovered at the beginning of the book in chapter three when on the drills it turns out that Goodbody does not walk like normal people do, with the right leg going forward with the left arm, but with the limbs of the same side of the body swinging forth. Despite the fact that in practice, this fashion of walking is impossible to perform no matter how hard one tries, the other soldiers catch this manner of walk from him on the drill parade. This way, Goodbody manages to turn the entire drill squad, including the commanding officer, Corporal Maloney, into a grotesque group of men swaying from side to side with the same leg and arm going forward. The reader can decide on their own what is more grotesque; the fact that Goodbody says that the 'Goodbody gait' is a family trait,¹³⁸ or that the others capable of normal walk manage to get infected with his 'Goodbody polka'.¹³⁹ In this case, Goodbody takes this family heritage as something normal and is unaware how bizarre it looks to the others.

4.7 Lasciviousness and fecalism

Since prostitutes and a brothel appear in the very first chapter of the novel, it could serve as a warning for the reader that it is for not the last time. This topic of the fallen women and the lasciviousness of the men is surprisingly fairly frequent in the novel; almost in every country which the Twelve Platoon visits they encounter the members of the oldest occupation; that is in Algeria, Tunis, Greece and Germany. They do not meet any only in Italy probably because in Italy they are focused on the search for alcohol. Although Goodbody and his men find themselves in the company of these women fairly often, the lieutenant's attitude to this matter is stated clearly for the reader at the very first opportunity when Goodbody meets them. While his men would always like to spend a while with the girls (and in every subsequent encounter they are sure to seize the opportunity), Goodbody's misinterpretation of the brothel for a sheik's house and the prostitutes for his wives speaks clearly enough of his inexperience in this area as well as of his disinterest in it. However, he says himself that he has 'never been a chap for that sort of thing'.¹⁴⁰ He is unaware of how comical it makes him seem; Sergeant Transom makes

¹³⁸ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 40.

¹³⁹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 42.

¹⁴⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 18.

fun of him in the brothel in Algeria for this after all. However, Goodbody takes his stance very seriously and demands that his men were more like him. This naïve demand leads to more comical situations when in Tunis Goodbody almost drowns for trying to keep the men and the women apart, and in Germany he runs around the house which he occupies with his platoon in order to separate them from the women. His strives are futile though, and are definitively dismissed by Colonel Plaster who joins the Twelve Platoon's 'children's party'.¹⁴¹

Although fecalism is not a subgenre of humour, alongside lasciviousness, it is certainly one of the topics with which humour likes working. While the topic of sex and prostitutes appears much more often in *How I Won the War*, fecalism is encountered only twice; once in chapter ten, when Goodbody is ordered to collect the samples of excrements from the Arabian merchants, and second in chapter twelve when near Monte Cassino in Italy the British have no better weapons to use against the Germans than their own samples. It should be mentioned, that while in chapter ten, Goodbody is astonished when he is ordered to collect the excrements from the Arabs, he may be even enjoying throwing the substance at the Germans in Italy if it did not lead to his fall and subsequent imprisonment of the Germans as well as of himself. It should be presupposed that after having to collect the excrements, Goodbody would not want to wish such an experience even to his enemies, but it is not the case.

The brief introduction to the theory of scientific world fecalism says that 'the mess is not only unstoppable, but passing through the group which tries to stop the mess, it grows logarithmically instead.'¹⁴² This statement is unfortunately validated by the story just mentioned above. Preparing to throw his smelly contribution, Goodbody falls down the hill to the town of Cassino occupied by Germans. Trying to save himself he promises the Germans willing to surrender almost a luxurious camp for war prisoners. Thus, while trying to stop the mess, i.e., stop the threat of his own death or imprisonment in a German camp, Goodbody ends up imprisoned by his own people. This clearly shows, that the mess is not only not stopped, but also grows in size, since the Germans, who feel deceived, accuse him of being an SS officer, and thus bring the possible death sentence upon him. Fortunately, the Twelve Platoon shows up in the camp and save him. In this case, Goodbody knows what he is doing and does so deliberately in order to save his life. However, the situation turns against him not for the first time in the novel. He is saved by chance or a miracle which is necessary for the subsequent progress of the novel as well as for its humoristic aspect.

¹⁴¹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 438.

¹⁴² Borecký, *Odvracená tvář humoru*, 73.

To sum up, it is clear that in some cases, Goodbody is aware of his mistakes and the comical situations which he finds himself in, while sometimes he does not see what is obvious to the reader. His unwise and stubborn decisions bring pain to his men and earn him their disfavour. However, his incapability to learn from his own mistakes is one the points of the humoristic novel. His stubbornness when it comes to his men being in the company of prostitutes is comical as well also because of the futility of his strife to keep them apart. Although the unpleasant and sometimes dangerous situations which Goodbody gets into may be serious, he never worries too much about them and perhaps naively believes that everything will turn out well eventually.

5. Similarities and differences between *How I Won the War* and *The Good Soldier Švejk*

It happens that a number of features is found similar among books, when one book reminds another piece of literature which had already been published. Such things usually happen when one of the works is a satirical or parodic reaction to the earlier published work. The novel *Don Quixote* would be an example of parody of the genre of chivalric romance,¹⁴³ while the novella *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding are parodies of Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*.¹⁴⁴ Satire and parody are not the only reasons for taking a piece of literature as a model and taking inspiration from it to create something new. The reason may be as simple as the wish to use the old truths fitting for the current times and update them in order to suit the modern world situation. Thus, the reader of the novels *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek and *How I Won the War* by Patrick Ryan cannot not notice that these two pieces of literature have a lot in common despite being written in different times; the similarities might suggest that *How I Won the War* might have been inspired by *The Good Soldier Švejk*.

5.1 The world wars

It is true that while the story of *The Good Soldier Švejk* takes place in the times of the First World War, Goodbody's narration is placed within the events of the Second World War. Thus, the two novels are concerned with different historical events, but the element of war is constant in both of them. This fact might point to the proposal, that the younger novel by Ryan could be only an update of the topics of *Švejk*, while for example satire criticising the army conditions can be found in both. In *How I Won the War*, it would be in chapter three, where Goodbody comes across the discrepancies in the army documents concerning salaries and provisions, points it out to his commanding officers, but remains oblivious to their possible engagement in the frauds and does not proceed any further on this matter, leaving it at the hands of the culprits to deal with, which clearly means that nothing will change. As an example of satire aimed at the 'twisted, i.e., insufficient functioning... inner depravity which controls even [the] smooth running' of the Imperial army¹⁴⁵ would be the scene in the second chapter of the second volume of *Švejk*, where it is narrated about a soldier complaining about being insulted by his officer when they met on the street. Eventually, the soldier was lucky to have been allowed to leave the military barracks, otherwise he would have been punished himself. These examples show

¹⁴³ Dentith, *Parody*, 56.

¹⁴⁴ Dentith, *Parody*, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 143.

that there is no justice and order even in the army, and regardless of the time period this fact remains constant. Both pieces of literature have the same stance to the army then.

The difference between *How I Won the War* and *Švejk* is that Goodbody gets to the front at the very beginning of the book. Then he goes back to what happened before he joined the Twelve Platoon, how he joined the army, his first arrestment and his promotion to the post of a lieutenant, but otherwise the story is centred around Goodbody's presence in the war, what happens to him and how he deals with the comical situations. This is different with *Švejk*. He is put to mental hospital, also arrested several times but his imprisonment is more elaborated and, unlike Goodbody, *Švejk* manages to find friends almost anywhere, even in prison. While Goodbody becomes the lieutenant and remains with his men to the end of the story, *Švejk* changes superiors and only approaches the front gradually due to all the problems which he causes. However, *Švejk* never gets to the front because Hašek died before he could finish the novel. Perhaps it is better this way though; there would be nothing humorous about seeing *Švejk* in the First World War, and his possible death might have disrupted the entire humorous nature of the book. This way, both of the comical heroes live, because there is nothing humorous about death.

It is said, that 'if the same combination of features repeats in two or more literary works, it can be presumed, that it is a case of adoption and that only one of the compared works is original.'¹⁴⁶ In the case of the two works discussed here, both could be deemed to be original, because the elements of *How I Won the War* do not completely correspond with the elements of *Švejk*. They are only similar in some aspects, which would rather point to the possible inspiration which *Švejk* offered. An example of this could be the motif of the enemy uniform appearing in both novels. Goodbody accepts the German greatcoat in chapter twelve, because he is cold, but this mistake turns against him when they reach the prison camp and he is arrested along with the Germans as a 'Waffen S.S. man' who kills 'wounded British soldiers.'¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the enemies to the Imperial army of the Austria-Hungary were the Russians, and one Russian soldier's uniform found its way to *Švejk*. On his way to Felštýn, *Švejk* comes to a pond where a Russian soldier bathes. He runs immediately at the sight of *Švejk*, leaving all his things behind. *Švejk* puts the abandoned Russian uniform on not because he would be cold, but because 'he was curious how the Russian uniform would suit him'.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, he is

¹⁴⁶ Josef Hrabák and Vladimír Štěpánek, *Úvod do teorie literatury* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1987), 184.

¹⁴⁷ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 272.

¹⁴⁸ Jaroslav Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 3: Slavný výprask* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 259.

arrested just like Goodbody and imprisoned. It is obvious that both books work with the motif of the enemy uniform and the subsequent arrestment of the main protagonists, although the reasons why they wear those uniforms differ. The possible inspiration and the resulting comical consequences are clear though.

5.2 The properties of the novels

While *How I Won the War* has already been decided to be an example of a war novel, *Švejk* is told to be an anti-war novel.¹⁴⁹ The difference between these two pieces of literature, despite the number of features in which they are similar, is in the narration. While *How I Won the War* consists of Goodbody's own opinions and experiences which he decides to share with the reader, *Švejk* contains many narrations produced by a variety of people who exchange experience. The anti-war element could be found in Goodbody's narration as well, when in chapter nine the landscape of destroyed tanks, broken earth and dead bodies is described, but the description is fairly brief and emotionless. Chapter fifteen offers the sight of the ruins left of the city of Athens, and the anarchy ruling in the city. However, this picture also seems somewhat careless, as if the war did not affect the people in the city, since the children still play in the streets and entertain themselves by confusing the British soldiers. Even the death of the German officer guarding the last bridge over the Rhine is only brief and plain of any feelings. While reading *Švejk*, the reader gets a different notion of war than when reading *How I Won the War*. Goodbody's narration lets it seem as if war was not that serious and death was not as final and sorrowful as it really is. On the other hand, *Švejk* shows the unstoppable power of war which 'destroys the present way of life of the people, exposes them to various problems and injustices, demoralizes them, fills them with worries about the future and (especially in the narrations of some soldiers) also kills.'¹⁵⁰ Thus, the novels differ in their attitude to the war.

However, both *Švejk* and *How I Won the War* are safely identified as humoristic novels despite dealing with such a serious topic. One of the goals of *Švejk* is 'to make the reader laugh',¹⁵¹ thanks to which the book enjoyed a great success with the readers.¹⁵² Although the approach of *How I Won the War* to the war is rather lax and *Švejk* directly avoids the open conflict, they use these attitudes to build up to the recognition in the reader that the war is not at all as much fun as it seems. It is said, that 'there is seriousness in the classical humoristic

¹⁴⁹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 155.

¹⁵⁰ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 155.

¹⁵¹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 18.

¹⁵² Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 139.

works. Their humour is the manifestation of wisdom...'¹⁵³ The seriousness and wisdom are shown in chapter seventeen in *How I Won the War*, when on the ship from Greece to France Goodbody meets the unnamed officer. He is nothing like Goodbody; he rejects the necessity of the war and its glory, and laughs at Goodbody who is willing to lay down his life for the king. He is the embodiment of war wisdom, and there is no humour in him, although it is him who advises Goodbody not to take the war too seriously.¹⁵⁴ It seems as if the war novels could never be only humoristic, because the war brings sorrow, but it cannot be only serious either, because the reader is not supposed to cry. That is probably also why in *Švejk* the reader comes across a story of a soldier whose head was shot off, and in the second of his death, his anal sphincter loosened and the mess went down directly onto the piece of his skull. The comicality and the horror of the situation are in an immediate clash, and therefore the reader cannot neither laugh, nor cry. This is similar in both of the novels, although in *How I Won the War* the reader rarely laughs out loud, usually they only smile at the comicality of the situation before they move on.

5.3 Humour in the novels

The humour in both novels is in the main characters being the last ones who would ever want to sabotage something. They both are almost at the bottom of the military hierarchy, and yet they are the only ones who strive to fulfil their tasks the best way they can. It is true, though, that everyone 'even the officers... try to fulfil conscientiously their basic obligations',¹⁵⁵ that means the field curate Katz and the First Lieutenant Lukáš in *Švejk* as well as Colonel Plaster, Major Arkdust and all the other officers in *How I Won the War*. However, all of them also follow primarily their own personal gain, which means to always have sufficient amount of 'alcohol and food, women, cards etc., not to be swallowed up by the war machinery and rather have some profit on it.'¹⁵⁶ That is why the officers were stealing from the military stores, why Colonel Plaster started the Battle of the Booze in Italy, and why he and Goodbody's men were always after prostitutes whenever they had the chance. Although prostitutes do not figure in *Švejk* much, it does not make the First Lieutenant Lukáš a saint; he rather maintains affairs with married women. Here also shows the difference between Goodbody and Švejk; while Goodbody would never touch a woman, no matter what was her social status, Švejk does not hesitate to spend a while with his commander's mistress, especially when it means 'fulfilling

¹⁵³ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 378.

¹⁵⁵ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 15.

¹⁵⁶ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 15.

all the wishes of the lady and serving her dutifully according to [Lukáš's] orders'.¹⁵⁷ In this case, Goodbody is the exact opposite of Švejk who likes women, although he does not seek them deliberately.

What the humours of the two novels do have in common is the stupidity of the main protagonists. While Švejk 'keeps drawing attention to himself with his unwise, i.e., careless behaviour, keeps getting into trouble by his own fault over and over, and then acts as if he did not care for his own rescue',¹⁵⁸ Goodbody is almost entirely the same, except for the last point. He does care for his own rescue and usually surprisingly manages to remain calm and come with a fairly reasonable solution to his problem. An example would be when he is captured by the Germans at the last bridge over the Rhine, but instead of surrendering he decides to stall, makes friends with the German officer and offers him money for the bridge. It is true that he takes their deal seriously and intends to come back with the agreed money which is silly of him, but still, the Germans let him go, which was something that the reader would certainly not expect. It would be sad though if Goodbody had to die at the end of the war. However, it is clear that the two characters have a lot in common.

Another story, or at least the idea of a story, which Švejk and *How I Won the War* have in common is how both Švejk and Goodbody had to go to their units on foot. However, while Goodbody decides himself that he needs to go on foot as 'it was [his] duty to report to [his] commanding officer at the earliest possible moment',¹⁵⁹ Švejk was ordered to undergo the anabasis from Tábor to České Budějovice because he had no money for a train ticket. Also, while Goodbody is told that he needs to walk for about a mile which eventually turns out to be three miles actually, it is still closer than when Švejk had to go from as far as Tábor. That is also why Goodbody did not get lost since he went still 'straight down the road',¹⁶⁰ while Švejk got lost and met plenty of people on the road, and some even offered to hide him in their barns until the war was over.¹⁶¹ Thus, while Goodbody reports to Captain Tablet within a half a page, it takes Švejk almost fifty pages to get back to the First Lieutenant Lukáš, who bears it very badly. The reader cannot complain though; the entire anabasis of Švejk is filled with many comical situations and troubles. Thus, it can be judged that *How I Won the War* might have taken inspiration from Švejk, and it has a great potential in its humour. However, it feels as if

¹⁵⁷ Jaroslav Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 1: V zázemí* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 216.

¹⁵⁸ Blažíček, *Haškův Švejk*, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 82.

¹⁶⁰ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 80.

¹⁶¹ Jaroslav Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 2: Na frontě* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 285.

the potential was not fully used as it is in *Švejk* which never misses a chance for at least a short comical story.

The humoristic potential handled differently in *Švejk* and in *How I Won the War* may be related to the differences in Czech and English national senses of humour. There may be a bit of prejudice in the statement, nonetheless it is true that ‘perhaps every nation has its own characteristic humour and approach to it.’¹⁶² It is also said, that the Czech humour ‘is perhaps švejk-like and somewhat like bitter beer, the English dry and proud’.¹⁶³ The differences in national humours may make the understanding of a humoristic novel written in a foreign language complicated, since it is the problem of all non-native speakers of a language that they can never understand it completely. It does not mean though that the reader cannot enjoy reading such a novel anyway. It is practice which makes the master after all, but *The Good Soldier Švejk* will always be closer to the Czech reader, more comprehensible and easier to appreciate than any other foreign humour no matter how outstanding for its native speakers.

5.4 The main characters of the two novels

While the name analysis was simple and brought a lot of information about Goodbody and his personality, when applied to Josef Švejk it brings almost nothing. ‘Josef’ is a common Czech name; the only thing which it can tell about the character is that it is probably just an ordinary person. If he were named ‘Jan’ then there would be the literary type of Hloupý Honza, i.e., Dull Honza, but with Josef, there is no such connotation. Looking at the surname ‘Švejk’, it is not the most common Czech surname and it also does not denote anything particular. Therefore, the name analysis of Josef Švejk offers fairly poor results. The character of Josef Švejk was named after a member of the Czech Parliament ‘who was renowned for his ability to talk without a break about nothing at all.’¹⁶⁴ The main protagonist of *Švejk* has a similar ability; in every situation he can come up with a story which he heard somewhere before related to his current situation, and this way he could go on forever. In this matter, Ryan chose to create more clearly defined character than Švejk was, starting with the name.

The name analysis of Josef Švejk may lead to the neologism ‘švejkovat’ (‘to švejk’), which is defined as ‘slacking, pretending to be stupid out of passive resistance’.¹⁶⁵ However, the definition of this verb is not suitable for the characterization of Švejk, because he does not

¹⁶² Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru*, 11.

¹⁶³ Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru*, 11.

¹⁶⁴ Joachim Scholl, *Slavné romány 20. století: 50 nejvýznamnějších moderních románů* (Praha: Nakladatelství Slovart, 2006), 38.

¹⁶⁵ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 11.

slack. Quite the opposite; Švejk, like Goodbody, is the only one who fulfils every order, however odd it may be, which he is given. Without questions or protests he sets out from Tábor to České Budějovice, although he does not know which way to go and gets lost several times. Without complaining he obeys every order of the First Lieutenant Lukáš's mistress, thus cleaning the entire apartment and more, not at all questioning the fact that she is dating his commander, while Goodbody breaks the dentures of his superiors without questions. On the other hand, Švejk distances himself from the officers who seek only their personal gain, does not do them any good, although it is not as clear as it is with Goodbody, whether it is a deliberate sabotage or just an unfortunate course of events. Goodbody explicitly says it himself that he is 'anxious only to do [his] duty',¹⁶⁶ so he wishes to do everything right to please his superiors, although it rarely works out.

In Švejk's case, it could also be that all the unfortunate events just happen, although he does not attempt to stop them, unlike Goodbody who tries to prevent every catastrophe more or less successfully. However, in Goodbody's case it is much more obvious that he is not as bright as an average person is, than in Švejk's who 'was definitively proclaimed an idiot by the military medical committee',¹⁶⁷ but there are still disagreements even today whether Švejk really is an idiot or whether he is only pretending, that is for the passive resistance's sake. However, if he chooses to suffer through the entire treatment of his rheumatism honestly saying that his condition is not getting any better, does that not show that he really is as simple as he lets it seem? The statements 'he has, for God's sake, such a silly expression', and 'the warm-hearted, innocent eyes of Švejk kept shining with softness and tenderness',¹⁶⁸ or 'I've never seen such an idiot, ... he confesses to everything'¹⁶⁹ in the novel clearly point to Švejk being an idiot, but there is still space for speculation, so that some people may claim that 'Švejk... shows very accurately the antipathy of the folk masses by his attitude'.¹⁷⁰ However, more likely is the explanation that Švejk really is an idiot as it would be impossible for him to pretend to be stupid before everyone and he would be constantly lying, and that considering Švejk to be actually cunning would mean misinterpreting the character,¹⁷¹ just like with Goodbody.

While Goodbody was found to be rather a round character, because while being silly, he can be smart occasionally, childish but also wise, Švejk is a flat character. He does what he

¹⁶⁶ Ryan, *How I Won the War*, 46.

¹⁶⁷ Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 1*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 1*, 244.

¹⁶⁹ Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 1*, 279.

¹⁷⁰ Hrabák, *Čtení o románu*, 269.

¹⁷¹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 203.

is told, and he is just ‘the good soldier’, nothing more. Both of the characters are static though, they never change and never learn from their mistakes. Looking at the language of the characters, it can be noticed that Goodbody attempts to address the Italian captain in their language, but unfortunately, he exchanges Italian for French, which is left unnoticed by the Italians though. The future officers of the higher social classes do not show any appreciation of Goodbody imitating their accents, because they can sense that he does not belong among them. Švejk never does anything like that. He always remains who he is and never tries to pretend anything else. Perhaps it is because Goodbody thinks too much about everything, while Švejk thinks too little, he is too good and too honest, paradoxically bettering Goodbody in these traits which are written in his name, not in Švejk’s.

It is interesting to watch how both of the novels try to play with the written form of the language in order to indicate which character comes from where, based on their dialects. In *Švejk*, this play gets much larger than in *How I Won the War*, because Czech words read as they are written, while in English, the graphical form of the words written in an accent needs to be changed in order to modify the pronunciation. In *How I Won the War*, this can be seen for example in chapter twelve where the captured Germans speak English, or the English of the Americans is pictured in chapter eighteen when they cease Goodbody’s bridge by force. Goodbody’s men also speak their characteristic informal English of the lower social class. A nice example is that of chapter eleven when the Italians speak their English, which projects nicely their Italian accent into the graphical form of the written English. Goodbody himself uses neutral, formal English in his narration, while Švejk speaks common Czech typical for Prague pubs,¹⁷² thus showing where he comes from. Because Goodbody uses formal English, he could be likened to the First Lieutenant Lukáš who ‘speaks German and Czech, but hides his South Bohemian origin.’¹⁷³ A trained eye can recognize other Czech dialects in the text of the novel. The language of the characters also tries to refer to their professions or bad habits, like the alcoholism of the field curate Katz.¹⁷⁴ The plays with the language in both novels bring the characters closer to the reader, it makes them more human, attributing them such humane traits like dialects and accents. Although working with the graphical form is much easier for the Czech language of *Švejk*, *How I Won the War* works really well with the English graphics as well.

¹⁷² Vít Schmarc, ed., et al., *Obráz válek a konfliktů: V. kongres světové literárněvědné bohemistiky Válka a konflikt v české literatuře* (Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, Akropolis, 2015), 57.

¹⁷³ Schmarc et al., *Obráz válek a konfliktů*, 58.

¹⁷⁴ Schmarc et al., *Obráz válek a konfliktů*, 58.

5.5 The narrators

The two novels differ also in the form of the narrator. While the plot of *How I Won the War* is narrated by the main protagonist himself, in *Švejk*, there is the third-person narrator who is not a part of the story. The third-person narrator, or also the ‘authorial narrator’¹⁷⁵ is told to be omniscient, therefore whatever is claimed by this narrator should not be doubted; he is reliable. Although Goodbody who narrates from his personal, subjective perspective should be rather unreliable, the reader feels nonetheless that Goodbody would never lie, because he is too good and too honest for that. Despite obviously not being an omniscient narrator, through the redundant narration he sometimes provides even the information which he personally does not know in the form of speculations. Also, despite employing different kinds of narrator, the narrator from *Švejk* and Goodbody are both teller-characters, because they both ‘address the reader, comment on the story or on the act of narration, thus making themselves known as narrative agents.’¹⁷⁶ Thus, they use the same type of narrator, although they are not the same.

The choice of narrator form is also important for the reader’s assessment of the characters’ personalities. Because Goodbody is both the main protagonist and the narrator of the story, the reader can easily understand that Goodbody is the silly and naïve comical character who will always get in trouble. The third-person narrator leaves space for speculations about *Švejk*’s true personality and his motives for the problems which he gets into, whether his silliness is only ‘a mask of the cunning folk hero’,¹⁷⁷ or whether it is no mask at all but his true character. However, since *Švejk* responds affirmatively to the First Lieutenant Lukáš’s questions whether he really is ‘such an unearthly lout’¹⁷⁸, he should probably be trusted. For this, *Švejk* blames his never-ending bad luck, although he ‘usually is successful’¹⁷⁹ in getting out of the trouble. After all, Hašek’s initial plan for *The Good Soldier Švejk* was that the main protagonist of the novel would be ‘an idiot at a Company’.¹⁸⁰

The two novels differ also in amount of the in-story narrations. While *Švejk* is filled with what the characters narrate to each other rather than the narrator’s commentary,¹⁸¹ Goodbody is satisfied with his own narration of his experiences. In *Švejk*, the characters’ narrations are considerably long, while in *How I Won the War*, they are not; one Goodbody’s story is allowed exactly one chapter. As an example, the anabases of both *Švejk* and Goodbody to their

¹⁷⁵ Scholl, *Slavné romány 20. století*, 267.

¹⁷⁶ Stanzel, ‘Teller-Characters and Reflector-Characters in Narrative Theory,’ 7.

¹⁷⁷ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 16.

¹⁷⁸ Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války 1*, 204.

¹⁷⁹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 203.

¹⁸⁰ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 16.

¹⁸¹ Blažiček, *Haškův Švejk*, 250.

companies can be offered once more. The journey of Švejk is much longer and fills almost the entire chapter, whereas for Goodbody it is not so important and he is done with this episode within a half a page. It is true that the German uniform story is longer, it ends nevertheless with the end of the chapter. In Švejk, the Russian uniform tried on out of curiosity by the main protagonist leads to more stories and to more troubles for Švejk. This never-ending journey of Švejk when every event pushes him forward to another one causes that there were four books of *Švejk* written by Jaroslav Hašek, while there is only one book of *How I Won the War*.

To sum up, the two novels *How I Won the War* and *The Good Soldier Švejk* have a lot in common. Although both of the novels deal with war, both main characters survive, because Goodbody is lucky in his simplicity of mind, and Švejk never gets to the front. Both novels talk about the corruption in the army, and use similar stories and motifs. Both of the novels are humoristic with their main characters being idiots, although Švejk offers more space for speculation than Goodbody. It is true that they differ in their relationships to women and in their sense for self-preservation; however, they share their innate ability to get themselves into trouble without any effort. The difference between Goodbody and Švejk is that while the former is a rather round character, the latter is flat, but both are static. The narrators of the novels are not of the same type, because Goodbody narrates his own story, while Švejk's story is narrated by the omniscient narrator and Švejk in turn narrates stories which he heard before. Both narrators are the teller-character though. Finally, whether Ryan inspired himself by the famous *Švejk* by Hašek remains a question; however, it is not impossible, since *The Good Soldier Švejk* is 'the greatest humoristic work of the Czech literature' and it is well-known also in the world where it influenced many authors.¹⁸² Therefore, it can be judged that Ryan with his Goodbody could be among them.

¹⁸² Hrych, *Velká kniha světového humoru*, 533.

Summary

This bachelor thesis focused on the analysis of the novel *How I Won the War* written by the British author Patrick Ryan. The thesis consists of five chapters; each chapter dealt with its own research question. The thesis begins with the general characterization of the novel on the genre basis, and proceeds with the comparison of the history of the Second World War and the way it is depicted in the novel. Afterwards, the attention shifted to the characters of the novel, moving on to humour and how it shows in the novel. The thesis finishes with the comparison of *How I Won the War* as an English war and humoristic novel and *The Good Soldier Švejk* which is a Czech novel dealing with similar topics in a similar way.

The first chapter with the title 'Characterizing the novel' looked at the novel from the points of view offered at its beginning. They were 'the content or topic', 'the temporal determination', 'the author's opinion on the topic', and 'the form of composition'. The chapter pondered what possible genre labels could be used in order to characterize the novel, and argued which labels are not suitable and why. The first subpart of the chapter focused on the content of the novel looked at the notions of the war and anti-war novel and decided that the label of war novel would describe the novel better. The second point of view offered the difference between the 'historical' and 'the present' novel; however, the choice of 'novel from the present' was identified as the correct one considerably more easily than in the case of the choice between the war and anti-war novel. The author's opinion on the topic pointed to the ever-present humoristic character of the novel, although the elements of satire and grotesque were also identified in it, as well as the mock-heroic element. The novel was thus ascribed the label of humoristic novel. The form of composition did not uncover anything extraordinary about the novel, except for the quotations at the beginning of each chapter. Two reasons for incorporating them into the novel were offered; their purpose is either to highlight the parody and irony used in the novel or to show that despite the novel being full of humour, it still takes the war seriously. Neither of these two options were discarded as wrong since both are equally likely and they can co-exist. However, it is true that the quotations highlight the discrepancy between the real war and its comical counterpart narrated by Goodbody.

The second chapter 'Depiction of the war and its role in the narration' was divided into five parts based on the Twelve Platoon's course through the war and the countries which they are sent to. The main goal of the chapter was to compare the history of the Second World War to the war as it is described in the novel, identify the historical events in the story and decide whether the novel was inspired by the true events of the war, or whether the war as narrated

was made up. The last part of the chapter focused also on the incorporation of the famous personalities of the Second World War as well as on the most renowned events which are actually avoided in the novel or mentioned only briefly.

While it was found out that the events from Africa as narrated by Goodbody may have been inspired by true events, the events from Italy were found to be more complicated. While there are obvious marks pointing to the story being related to history, they are not as clear as in the chapters from Africa, however, the footprint of history is still palpable. It is also true that the historical sites like the Garigliano river or Monte Cassino appear both in history and in the story. Similarly, the political situation in Greece was maintained in accordance with history, because Goodbody did not fight the Germans, but the Greek Communists instead. Also, while the story of the last bridge over the Rhine was found as based on true events, the friendship between Goodbody's men and the Soviet soldiers was most likely made up by Ryan. Eventually, it was decided that the story of the novel does not narrate about the events of the war as they happened, but is only inspired by them, which means that the historical course of the war was important for the course of the novel, but it twisted them to fit its needs.

The next chapter called 'The characters and the narrator of the novel' asked the question whether Goodbody is as silly as he seems to be based on his own narration or whether he only pretends to be so. Although a couple of examples showed that he can come up with a smart solution to the problems, it was decided that foolishness is the stronger trait in him, and there are no signs which would suggest that he only pretends to be stupid. The name analysis pointed to his personality traits which rather support his foolishness, while Sergeant Transom was identified as Goodbody's opposite, his reason and experience compared to Goodbody's naivety and good-heartedness. However, they fit together somehow and make a perfect team complementing each other.

In this chapter, the direct and indirect characterization of the characters was discussed as well. While there was no one to characterize Goodbody directly, he is characterized indirectly through his deeds, but as the narrator, he characterizes Transom directly. These characterizations of the two characters also pointed to the tremendous differences between them, and showed that Goodbody needs Transom in order to survive the war, because the sergeant can accept him and work with him the way he is. While both Goodbody and Transom were identified as round characters with more sides to them than just one, the other characters which are of lesser importance in the story were labelled as flat characters. Finally, there was

no dynamic character in the story, since the change of the characters and their ability to learn would disrupt the humoristic character of the novel.

Concerning the notion of narrator, Goodbody was identified as a personalized narrator and a teller-character because he narrates the story with his commentary and communicates with the reader. Because he is also the character of the story, his narration is the first-person narration, and therefore he cannot be an omniscient narrator. As a compromised narrator he was found to be a rather unreliable narrator; however, this effect is reduced by the use of the redundant narration.

The following fourth chapter titled 'Humour and its manifestations in *How I Won the War*' asked whether it is possible that Goodbody would be aware of his and his narration's comicality. However, since he was not aware even of his foolishness and was not pretending it in order to sabotage the army, it was not surprising to find out that he was not aware even of the comicality of both his person and narration. Consulting the cyclical approach to history, Goodbody was found in the phase of naivety which is also characteristic for his personality, whereas Sergeant Transom was localized in the adult age of wise humour. Although the real black humour is not directly present in the novel, it was spotted in the story of Goodbody's own men suffering under his inexperienced command. Absurdity found its place in the novel as well, and so did parody both of which Goodbody is aware at least in some cases.

Since humour has very close to satire, it is necessary for satire to be present in the humoristic novel where it is aimed at the corrupt establishment of the army and officers misusing their powers. Grotesque was also identified in the novel with Goodbody not always being aware of it, especially if it directly concerned himself. The lasciviousness appears in the novel avoiding exclusively Goodbody, while fecalism does not avoid him. It is another dimension of comical discrepancy within Goodbody, that while both carnal desires and defecation are natural things, he despises the former while being able to enjoy the latter.

The last chapter 'Similarities and differences between *How I Won the War* and *The Good Soldier Švejk*' concentrated on the things which the two humoristic novels have in common and whether the younger English novel could have been inspired by the older Czech tetralogy, which eventually was found to be very likely to be true. While both novels deal with the topic of world war, although each with a different world war, Goodbody's stance to the war seemed rather neutral, whereas in *Švejk* the criticism of war and death was much more obvious which makes it an anti-war novel. Neither of the main protagonists dies, although for different

reasons, both novels employ satire aimed at the conditions in the army, and both novels use the motif of wearing the enemy uniform, or imprisonment.

When it comes to humour, lasciviousness appeared in both novels, but *Švejk* handles the theme with more elegance and leaves space for secret compared to *How I Won the War*. The main protagonists also differ in their attitudes to women, because Švejk does not share Goodbody's celibacy. The novels also have in common the undeniable stupidity of their main characters, and share also the motif of anabasis, which is however not used fully in Goodbody's narration as it is in *Švejk*. It was also found that while the name analysis was successful in Goodbody's case, it brings no results in the case of Josef Švejk. Despite the fact that Švejk leaves much more space for speculation whether he is dumb or not than Goodbody, they were both proclaimed to be as stupid as they seem. The larger space for speculation in *Švejk* is provided by the third-person narrator, whereas the first-person narrator in *How I Won the War* leaves little to no space. In both novels, there is the teller-character as the narrator, although *Švejk* uses the authorial narrator, while Goodbody is a personalized narrator. Although both Švejk and Goodbody are static characters, which is a necessary aspect of the humoristic novel, Švejk is, unlike Goodbody, a flat character.

In the end, it can be said that all of the discussed aspects of the novel *How I Won the War* have their place in the forming of the novel's humour. Starting with the childish and silly main character who needs to be aided by the more experienced subordinate, going through the fact that it is the main protagonist himself who narrates the story, and to the satire, grotesque and black humour, which are very common and became naturalized in the genre of the humoristic novel as well as all the other subgenres of humour used in the novel, to the comical situations which Goodbody finds himself in, which may have been inspired by *The Good Soldier Švejk*, and the way he deals with the problems, even the war and how it is handled, exploited for the novel's needs and depicted in the novel; all of these aspects add up to the unique form of this novel, and they also form the genre of a humoristic novel. It should be clear, that if just one of the elements were changed or were missing, the piece of literature would not have been such a success as it is.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se soustředí na analýzu románu *How I Won the War* (v českém překladu *Jak jsem vyhrál válku*), jehož autorem je britský spisovatel Patrick Ryan. Práce se skládá z pěti kapitol; každá kapitola obsahuje svou vlastní tezi. Práce začíná obecnou charakteristikou románu na základě žánru a pokračuje porovnáním historie druhé světové války se způsobem vyobrazení války v románu. Poté se soustředí na postavy románu, a také humor a jakým způsobem je v románu zpracován. Práce je zakončena srovnáním románu *How I Won the War* jakožto anglického válečného a humoristického románu s českým románem *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* (*The Good Soldier Švejk*), který se zabývá obdobnými tématy podobným způsobem.

První kapitola s titulem „Characterizing the novel“ román nahlíží podle žánrových variant románu uvedených v úvodu kapitoly. Jsou to: obsah nebo téma románu, časové určení, postoj autora k tématu, a forma výpovědi. Kapitola se zabývá možnými označeními, která by mohla být užita pro charakterizování románu, a určuje, která označení jsou nevhodná a proč. První podkapitola se zaměřuje na obsah románu, zabývá se definicí válečného a protiválečného románu a rozhoduje, že válečný román je pro tuto knihu vhodnější. Druhá podkapitola se zabývá rozlišením mezi historickým románem a románem ze současnosti. Ukázalo se, že jde o román ze současnosti. K tomuto závěru bylo mnohem snazší dospět než u rozlišování mezi válečným a protiválečným románem. Autorův postoj k problematice poukazuje na všudypřítomný humoristický charakter románu, ačkoliv obsahuje také prvky satiry, grotesky a heroikomiky. V závěru je však románu připsán titul humoristického románu. Výzkum formy výpovědi neobjevil o románu nic zásadního, vyjma citátů na začátku každé kapitoly. Byly navrženy dva důvody pro jejich přítomnost v románu. Jejich cílem je buď zvýraznit ironii užitou v románu, nebo poukázat na to, že přestože je román plný humoru, stále bere téma války vážně. Žádný z těchto možných cílů nebyl zavržen jako nesprávný, jelikož oba jsou stejně pravděpodobné a mohou být pravdivé oba zároveň. Avšak je pravda, že tyto citáty podtrhují nesoulad mezi skutečnou válkou a její komediální obdobou vyprávěnou Goodbodym.

Druhá kapitola „Depiction of the war and its role in the narration“ byla rozdělena na pět částí podle toho, jak Goodbodyho dvanáctá četa postupovala válkou a zasaženými státy. Hlavním cílem kapitoly bylo porovnat historii druhé světové války s válkou zobrazenou v románu, vyhledat v něm historické události a rozhodnout, zda se román mohl inspirovat skutečnými válečnými událostmi, nebo zda byla vyprávěná válka vymyšlena. Poslední část

kapitoly se soustředí na známé osobnosti a události druhé světové války, kterou jsou v románu buď vynechány, nebo zmíněny jen zběžně.

Zatímco Goodbodym popsané události, které se udály v Africe, mohly být inspirovány skutečností, události z Itálie se ukázaly být komplikovanější. Zatímco se objevily očividné podobnosti poukazující na to, že se příběh inspiroval historií, nejsou tak očividné jako v kapitolách o africkém tažení. Jak v historii, tak v románu se objevují historicky významná místa, jako italská řeka Garigliano nebo klášter Monte Cassino. Podobně je v souladu s historií i politická situace v Řecku, kde Goodbody nebojoval proti Němcům, ale řeckým komunistům. Také příběh týkající se posledního mostu přes Rýn se ukázala být založena na pravdě, ale přátelství Goodbodyho mužů se sovětskými vojáky byla autorova smyšlenka. Nakonec bylo zjištěno, že román nevypráví události války tak jak se staly, pouze se jimi inspiruje. To znamená, že historický průběh války byl pro osnovu románu důležitý, ale jednotlivé události si pozměnil podle svých potřeb.

Další kapitola nazvaná „The characters and the narrator of the novel“ si kladla otázku, zda je Goodbody skutečně tak hloupý, jak vypadá na základě svého vyprávění, nebo zda jen předstírá. Přestože pár příkladů poukázalo na to, že umí být i chytrý a přijít s řešením pro svůj problém, bylo zjištěno, že hloupost jakožto vlastnost v něm převládá, a neexistují žádné náznaky, které by poukázaly na možnost, že hloupost předstírá. Analýza postavy podle jména poukázala k takovým vlastnostem jeho osobnosti, které podporují interpretaci postavy jako hlupáka, zatímco četař Transom byl identifikován jako Goodbody pravý opak s jeho zdravým rozumem a zkušenostmi v porovnání s Goodbodyho naivitou a dobrosrdečností. Avšak je pravda, že k sobě pasují a tvoří skvělý tým tím, že se vzájemně doplňují.

Tato kapitola se zabývala rovněž přímou a nepřímou charakteristikou postav. Zatímco Goodbodyho jakožto hlavní postavu neměl kdo charakterizovat přímo, je charakterizován nepřímo svým jednáním, ale jakožto vypravěč charakterizuje přímo četaře Transoma. Tyto charakteristiky poukázaly na zásadní rozdíly mezi oběma postavami, a odhalily, že Goodbody Transoma potřeboval k tomu, aby přežil válku, jelikož je Transom schopen jej přijmout jaký je a spolupracovat s ním. Zatímco jak Goodbody tak Transom byli označeni spíše za plastické postavy, jelikož jsou detailněji propracováni, ostatní méně důležité vedlejší postavy jsou plochými postavami. Dynamickou postavou v románu není nikdo, jelikož změna a vývoj postav by narušily humoristický charakter románu.

Co se týče vypravěče příběhu, Goodbody byl označen za personálního vypravěče, jelikož příběh doplňuje svým komentářem a komunikuje se čtenářem. Jelikož je také postavou

příběhu a jedná se o vypravěče v ich-formě, nemůže být vševědoucím vypravěčem. Jako kompromitovaný vypravěč byl shledán nespolehlivým vypravěčem. Avšak tento efekt nespolehlivého vypravěče je snížen užitím redundantního vyprávění.

Následující čtvrtá kapitola s názvem „Humour and its manifestations in *How I Won the War*“ se zabývala otázkou, zda je možné, aby si Goodbody byl vědom své komičnosti a komičnosti svého vyprávění. Ačkoliv, vzhledem k tomu že si nebyl vědom ani své hlouposti, kterou nepředstíral za účelem sabotování armády, zjištění, že si nebyl vědom ani komičnosti své a svého vyprávění nebylo překvapením. Aplikováním cyklického přístupu klasifikace dějin byl Goodbody umístěn do naivní fáze života, která rovněž charakterizuje jeho osobnosti, zatímco četař Transom byl umístěn do fáze dospělosti a moudrého humoru. Ačkoliv skutečně černý humor není v románu přímo přítomen, v jemnější míře byl odhalen v příběhu Goodbodyho mužů trpících pod velením jejich nezkušeného poručíka. Absurdita si rovněž našla své místo v románu, stejně jako parodie. Goodbody si jich je vědom alespoň v minimu případů.

Protože humor nemá daleko k satíře, i ona se v humoristickém románu objevuje, a je zaměřena na zkažené uspořádání armády a jejích důstojníků, kteří zneužívají svých pravomocí. Groteska, jíž si Goodbody není vědom, obzvláště pokud se týká jeho samotného, byla v románu rovněž objevena. Lascivita neboli chlípnost, se v románu Goodbody zásadně vyhýbá, na rozdíl od fekálismu. Jde o další rozpor v Goodbodyho osobnosti, že zatímco jak tělesné touhy, tak defekace jsou přirozené potřeby, první z nich opovrhuje, zatímco druhou je schopen si užít.

Poslední kapitola „Similarities and differences between *How I Won the War* and *The Good Soldier Švejk*“ se soustředila na věci, které tyto dva humoristické romány sdílejí, a zda se mladší anglický román mohl inspirovat starší českou tetralogií. Nakonec bylo rozhodnuto, že je tato možnost velmi pravděpodobná. Zatímco se oba romány zabývají tématem světové války, i když každý jinou světovou válkou, Goodbodyho postoj k válce působí spíše neutrálně, zatímco v *Osudech dobrého vojáka Švejka* se objevuje kritika války a smrti mnohem výrazněji, což z tohoto českého románu činí protiválečné dílo. Ani jeden z hlavních protagonistů nezemře, ačkoliv z různých důvodů, oba romány užívají satiru zaměřenou proti poměrům v armádě, a oba romány užívají např. motivy obléknutí nepřátelské uniformy, nebo vězení.

Pokud jde o humor, lascivita se objevuje v obou románech, ale *Osudy* v porovnání s *How I Won the War* téma zvládají elegantněji a nechávají prostor pro tajemství milostného aktu. Hlavní hrdinové se také liší v jejich vztahu k ženám, jelikož Švejk nesdílí Goodbodyho zdržování se žen. Romány si jsou podobné v nepopíratelné hlouposti hlavních postav, a sdílejí

také motiv anabáze, který ale v Goodbodyho vyprávění není využit tak plně jako v *Osudech*. Bylo také zjištěno, že zatímco v Goodbodyho případě byla analýza jména úspěšná, v případě Josefa Švejka nepřinesla žádné výsledky. Přestože Švejk ponechává mnohem více prostoru pro spekulaci, zda je nebo není pitomec na rozdíl od Goodbodyho, byly obě postavy nakonec shledány hloupými. Prostor pro spekulaci je v *Osudech* zajištěn er-formou vypravěče, zatímco ich-forma vypravěče v *How I Won the War* nenechává spíše žádný prostor. Oba romány užívají vypravěče „teller-character“; v *Osudech* je ale užit autorský vypravěč, zatímco Goodbody je personálním vypravěčem. Ačkoliv jak Švejk, tak Goodbody jsou statickými postavami, což je nezbytné pro humoristický román, Švejk je na rozdíl od Goodbodyho plochou postavou.

Závěrem se dá říci, že všechny z diskutovaných aspektů románu *How I Won the War* mají svou důležitou roli ve formování jeho humoru. Počínaje dětinským a pošetilým hlavním hrdinou, který potřebuje pomoc svého zkušenějšího podřízeného, přes vyprávění jeho vlastního příběhu, k satíře, grotesce a černému humoru, které už v žánru humoristického románu zdomácněly stejně jako zbylé podžánry humoru v románu užitě, až ke komickým situacím, do nichž se Goodbody sám dostává, a které mohly být inspirovány románem *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka*, a způsobům jakými se vypořádává se svými problémy, a nakonec i válkou a způsobem jejího zpracování v románu; všechny tyto aspekty dohromady tvoří jedinečnost tohoto románu, stejně jako přispívají k žánru humoristického románu. Je zřejmé, že kdyby jediný prvek byl změněn nebo vynechán, nebylo by toto literární dílo takovým úspěchem, jakým je.

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The depiction of war, the role of humour and the narration strategies in Patrick Ryan's novel How I Won the War
(Bakalářská práce)

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on several aspects of the novel *How I Won the War* by the British post-war author Patrick Ryan. The specific genre of the novel is defined closer and the possible inspiration of the novel's story from the historical facts of the Second World War is pondered. The main protagonist and other important characters are characterized, as well as the narrator of the novel. Attention is paid also to the humoristic aspect of the novel and to the subgenres of humour which the novel works with. Finally, another possible inspiration is offered in the novel *Good Soldier Švejk* written by the Czech author Jaroslav Hašek.

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá několika aspekty románu *How I Won the War*, který napsal britský poválečný autor Patrick Ryan. Práce definuje specifický žánr románu a zvažuje i možnost, že příběh románu byl inspirován historickými fakty z druhé světové války. Dále charakterizuje hlavní postavu a další důležité postavy, a také vypravěče příběhu románu. Také se zaměřuje na přítomný aspekt humoru v románu a na subžánry humoru, se kterými román pracuje. Nakonec práce navrhuje jako další možný zdroj inspirace román *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*, jehož autorem je český spisovatel Jaroslav Hašek.

Key words

war, history, humour, narrator, main protagonist, humoristic novel, war novel

Klíčová slova

válka, historie, humor, vypravěč, hlavní postava, humoristický román, válečný román