



## **Bakalářská práce**

# **Comparison of the Band of Brothers series with the book by S. E. Ambrose**

*Studijní program:* B0114A300068 Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

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## Zadání bakalářské práce

# Comparison of the Band of Brothers series with the book by S. E. Ambrose

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### Zásady pro vypracování:

Analýza obou děl a jejich porovnání, využití odborné kritiky jak filmové série, tak knižní předlohy, využití historických pramenů popisujících průběh událostí druhé světové války k vyobrazení prostředí, ve kterých se obě díla odehrávají, a to zejména pramenů týkajících se 101. výsadkové divize americké armády. Práce bude průběžně konzultována s vedoucí bakalářské práce.

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- 1) Bando, Mark. 2007. 101st Airborne: The Screaming Eagles in World War II. St. Paul, MN: MBI.
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## **Abstrakt**

Tato bakalářská práce se věnuje porovnání seriálu *Band of Brothers* s knihou stejného jména. Práce rovněž přináší poznatky ohledně autora knihy a metody sběru informací, která byla během jejího vzniku použita, stejně tak se věnuje žánru amerického válečného filmu, kde si všímá kontextu tvorby producentů seriálu a také odlišností, které má seriál v porovnání s mainstreamem. Cílem práce je analyzovat seriál a určit, jak věrná je adaptace knize, ze které vznikla. Za tímto účelem jsou v práci vymezeny metody, kterými je přesnost adaptace analyzována, ty jsou následně aplikovány na vzorek tvořený třemi pasážemi z jmenovaného seriálu. Výsledky analýzy jsou diskutovány v závěru práce.

## **Klíčová slova**

*Band of Brothers*, teorie filmové adaptace, Steven Spielberg, Stephen Ambrose, americký válečný film

## **Abstract**

This bachelor's thesis compares the series *Band of Brothers* with the book of the same name. The work also brings knowledge about the author of the book and the method of gathering information that was used during its creation, as well as the American war film genre, where it notes the context of the production of the producers of the series as well as the differences that the series has compared to the mainstream. The aim of the thesis is to analyse the series from the point of view of the theory of film adaptation in order to determine how faithful the adaptation is to the book from which it was created. For this purpose, the methods by which the accuracy of the adaptation is analysed are defined in the thesis, which is subsequently applied to a sample consisting of three passages from the named series. The results of the analysis are discussed at the end of the thesis.

## **Keywords**

*Band of Brothers*, film adaptation theory, Steven Spielberg, Stephen Ambrose, American war film

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# 1. Introduction

*Band of Brothers* is a 10-part HBO miniseries, which premiered with its first episode on September 9, 2001. The story follows the history of "Easy Company", 2nd Battalion of the US Army's 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, from its formation and training, through their first combat action during D-Day and then to the final battles of World War II and the very end with the addition of post-war lives of those, who survived such enormous conflict (Paget and Lipkin 2009, 94-5). The whole story is based on Stephen Ambrose's book of the same name and is created as a film adaptation. The series is one of the most popular pieces of its genre and also serves as a memory recollection of the veterans of WWII. The faithfulness of the adaptation and the idea to retell history in the form of a story rather than the form of a documentary makes the series interesting.

The work is generally considered accurate. Its similarity to the original book is even considered one of the strengths of the work. This paper aims to analyse the selected episodes and prove whether the adaptation is faithful to the book or not.

The paper is structured into several thematically bounded chapters, some of which are split into subsections. The second chapter is devoted to the author of *Band of Brothers*, Stephen Ambrose, an American historian known for his storytelling skills. In his book, he retells the stories of those who were members of the Easy Company, following the methods of oral history. The specifics of the method used to collect information are described in the subsection.

Due to its success, the decision was made to create a whole television series based on the *Band of Brothers* produced by the duo Spielberg and Hanks. The third chapter focuses on Steven Spielberg as a renowned producer in the field of historical war films. The following subsections discuss American war cinema and also the film *Saving Private Ryan*, which has some elements similar to the *Band of Brothers* and served as an inspiration for the creation of the analysed series.

The fourth chapter deals with the theory of film adaptation and some of its key aspects, which serve primarily as a basis for the analysis of the work. The fifth chapter defines the criteria for selecting the analysed parts of the work and describes the methods used in the analysis. The

last chapter then brings together three subsections dedicated to the analysis of the individual parts. The conclusion then summarises the work's findings and discusses whether the adaptation is faithful to the book.

## 2. Stephen Ambrose

*Band of Brothers* series is based on the book of the same name written by famous American historian and professor at New Orleans University, Stephen Ambrose, and was praised for its historical accuracy and intriguing storytelling.

Historian Ambrose was truly exceptional in his field. Throughout his career, he was interested in many topics in American history, believing that the past was shaped by the great people of the time and admiring them for their abilities. His primary focus was generals, statesmen, politicians and other significant figures, but he also devoted himself equally to military history. He was interested in the American Civil War, the Legacy of World War II and much more. However, his specificity was probably his approach to history. Ambrose completely fell for it, as he recalls in his work:

In 1953, when I was an eighteen-year-old sophomore at the University of Wisconsin, I took a course in American history entitled "Representative Americans." Professor William B. Hesseltine taught it. From his first lecture, I was enthralled. He spoke about presidents, generals, senators, novelists, businessmen. Who they were, what they did, what effect it had. It was storytelling at its best, about real people whose actions had a direct impact on my life, even if they had lived a century or more ago. Some made mistakes. Some were geniuses. Some were kind, others cruel. They were far more interesting than any character in a novel or actor in a movie (2004, 13).

Ambrose's popularity arose from his preoccupation with these true stories and his ability to tell them. His works soon attracted attention not only in scientific circles but also among the general public. Stephen has always considered himself a storyteller who presents history as a whole. What happened will be told, victory, loss, heroism, cruelty, great moments of the nation and gross mistakes that no one wants to remember. Nothing was left out. Thanks to such an approach, Ambrose achieved success in connecting the scientific discipline of history with popular culture in the USA in the second half of the twentieth century. Many of his works became bestsellers and, to some extent, valuable cultural relics that commemorated the great moments of the patriotic nation.

Ambrose was academically active in the decades after World War II, so it is not surprising that he too became involved in the conclusion of that enormous conflict, in which he saw a tremendous American victory and service to the world, even daring to claim that: "Today, we are the world's only superpower, and around the world—even in Russia—there is almost virtual agreement that if there is to be only one superpower then thank God Almighty that it is the United States" (2004, 125). Then, at the turn of the eighties and nineties, when the opportunity arose to work on the story of the men fighting in the Second World War, whom Ambrose himself called the band of brothers because of their loyalty and strength of friendship during and after the conflict, he did not hesitate for a moment and began to collect a large amount of material for his next book. To find out as much as possible about the story, he travelled all over America, visited Orlando, Florida, Pennsylvania, Southern Pines, North Carolina or Oregon, spoke with more than a dozen of members, and even visited memorable European places such as in Normandy or Belgium (195). During his work, he decided to process this story exclusively using oral history, as he describes in his book: "I wanted their stories, told in their words." Collecting of such testimonies "was done in person, at a veteran's home or during conventions, by telephone, or by men speaking their reminiscences into a tape recorder" (195-6). Such an approach created a real historical story, told by real historical figures, so successful that it was later adapted into miniseries.

Stephen E. Ambrose died in October 2002 at the age of 66, but his legacy lives on. His books aroused the interest of many people in the history and past of their own and their country. He again aroused interest in probably the bloodiest war conflict in human history - World War II. Through his work, people once again remembered those who sacrificed their lives many decades ago to make the current generations well. Thanks to him, even the still-living war veterans received the attention and respect they deserved.



## 2.1. Oral history

Ambrose used various methods for collecting historical information in his work, but it was oral history collecting what he used the most. With the development of modern technologies in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a boom in oral history collection through various audio and video recordings. This method brought many other possibilities, such as the popularisation of history or new perspectives on historical events. To understand this technique, the term oral history has to be defined.

Reitz defines oral history in her dictionary as "A sound recording or transcription of a planned interview with a person whose memories and perceptions of historical events are to be preserved as an aural record for future generations. Also refers to a historical work (published or unpublished) based on data collected orally, often retained in the archives and special collections of large libraries" (2017). Another source claims that: "The discipline came into its own in the 1960s and early 70s when inexpensive tape recorders were available to document such social movements as civil rights, feminism, and anti-Vietnam War protest" and also adds that "In Western society, the use of oral material goes back to the early Greek historians Herodotus (in his history of the Persian Wars) and Thucydides (in his History of the Peloponnesian War), both of whom made extensive use of oral reports from witnesses"<sup>1</sup>. However, it was not only Greek scholars or historians in the 60s who created pieces of oral history. Passing down stories from generation to generation was a crucial element of human knowledge in the past. Many of these orally transmitted stories helped shape the culture of many peoples. Despite the need for more accurate research, they still help to understand the course of some historical events.

Oral history works on the principle of gathering microhistory. The historian leading the dialogue speaks with just one person or with a small group, often with ordinary people who are uneducated in the field of history but experienced the event or directly participated in it. The information gathered by this method involves the personal approach of the interviewee and details, which would often be very difficult or almost impossible to find by any other means. Creating such a historical record, often in the form of an audio or a video recording, allows the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*®. S.v. "oral history." Retrieved February 20 2023 from <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/oral+history>

interviewer to express his thoughts and ideas, which could not be used by other means, such as written form, where scientific research is required. In addition, the interaction between both sides also helps construct the historical evidence in its unique way (Lewenson and Herrmann 2008, 79-80). Real stories told by people who lived them have become a highly popular source of historical information. It is essentially a form of storytelling, and historical events processed in such a form often enter the sphere of popular culture. However, from the critical point of view, that form of historical evidence is influenced by many details, such as the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, the narrator's current mood, or his affiliation to culture or language (81-2). That all affects the interpretation of the narrative. From a scientific point of view, it is also necessary to reconsider the historical accuracy of such records. The approach of many historians to this method is therefore critical, a frequent argument being the impossibility of verifying the truth of the story from other sources, as well as describing the event from the point of view of one's own experiences rather than from the point of view of providing historical facts. The time gap from the historical event also influences the narration itself. For example, material for the *Band of Brothers* book was collected decades after the event of World War II in which veterans participated, which means practically their whole life. However, as Lewenson and Herrmann point out, "The point of oral history is not about 'lie versus truth' or whether we can get the story straight in an objective, positivistic sense, but rather how events and experiences are remembered" (84).

The uniqueness of oral history lies in the way it looks at history. Compared to other research methods, it focuses more on the perspective of those who did not stand at the very top of the human hierarchy but were themselves influenced by the decisions of others, as Lewenson and Herrmann claim: "...oral history contributes to a historical analysis that might challenge established and accepted accounts and provide a fuller reconstruction of the past, opening up important new areas of inquiry while adding new and vivid historiography" (2008, 95).

The *Band of Brothers* book is mainly written using oral history, often supplemented by other methods used in historical research. The possibility of connecting oral history with storytelling made it possible to create a work that attracted the attention of both the public and the academic field. The public interest and flexibility of the *Band of Brothers* story then led to a successful

film adaptation, produced by a known American film producer Steven Spielberg, whose experience with American war films and his unusual approach helped to shape the series.

### 3. American war film history

The genre of war cinematography is undoubtedly one of the genres that arose practically hand in hand with cinematography itself. Many conflicts were processed in films, including the environment of the American film industry, which is the focus of this work. The popularity of this genre has always benefited mainly from the combination of depictions of real events and the extremes that war brought. A war conflict is something that no one would want to experience directly, but many want to know what it is like to be a part of such an incredible event, preferably from the safety of the home or the cinema. The ever-developing technology then makes it possible to bring the film closer and closer to its reality (Friedman 2006, 184). In addition, such films also serve as a collection of memories of previous generations. Many screenwriters have worked closely with historians or war veterans, especially in recent decades. Their statements about conflicts, such as World War II or the Vietnam War, were later incorporated into films such as *Saving Private Ryan*, *Band of Brothers* and many others. These also serve as a share of memories between younger and older generations.

An important source of this genre was undoubtedly the First World War and the Second World War. However, whereas the period of the First World War rather meant the consolidation of the leading position of American film in the world, which was possible mainly because such an enormous conflict did not take place on American soil, the situation before and throughout the Second World War was completely different. The rise of fascism and the escalation of extremism in Europe also influenced the American public, and Hitler's regime also had a weapon that no one before him had used on such a large and effective scale - propaganda. Fears of the far-right political spectre claiming power escalated to a great extent, and the American film industry was forced to respond, which it did by forming the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League (Maltby 2003, 281-82). The goal of film studios is well described in a statement signed to a name of Harry Warner, one of the founders of American film and entertainment studio Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., which claimed that: "the men and women who make nation's entertainment have... an ever-present duty to educate, to stimulate, and demonstrate the fundamentals of free government, free speech, religious tolerance, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number", against disapproving criticism he then defended the studio's right to "portray on the screen current happenings of our times" (281). In 1942, the Bureau of Motion Pictures in the Office

of War Information (OWI) was established and one of its tasks was to issue the matter of "how Hollywood should fight the war" (282). Until the end of the war, Hollywood served as a political medium producing its own propaganda by making many war-related movies.

The war film genre could be called a dominant genre during the Second World War. In 1942, up to one of four newly made films were in some way connected to the war effort (Maltby 2003, 565-66). Nevertheless, even the post-war period did not mean its complete disappearance. In addition to trying to capture the events of the Second World War, there were also other conflicts in which the US was involved, Korean War, Cold War and later Vietnam War. Whatever the American public's view on the issue of war conflicts was, it remained a topic that resonated with society. Thus war films were not only profitable and popular but also reflected public moods in post-war American society. Even though World War II again took place outside the territory of the North American continent, many people were aware of how brutal and bloody this war conflict was. As Bodnar points out, many were also aware that even American troops were capable of cruel and heartless behaviour during the war. An idealistic image of the typical American soldier as an honest and loving man was shaken in the face of dark reality. In addition, with the onset of the Cold War, even the war tension did not disappear for long (Bodnar 2001, 809-810).

It was also the effort of the American political system to refute such opinions, which led to typical film characters – a prototype of the American soldier. According to Bodnar, American film studios tried to portray the typical American soldier as a gentle and loving man, defending his country and democratic standards at all costs, even at the cost of having to go on a long journey to the European continent to fight with savage German soldiers, who want to threaten America. While German soldiers thrive on chaos and killing, American soldiers are the exact opposite. They reject war and commit cruelty only when they are forced to do so by circumstances. However, this does not mean that the American soldier is incapable of fighting. These men embody courage, combativeness, and above all, national spirit and patriotism, the highest virtues an American man can have (Bodnar 2001, 805-6). However, films from the World War II era and the post-war decades share very similar characteristics. During that period, American soldiers always embodied the spirit of democracy and the need to defend the standards on which American society is built. Their efforts are always heroic, and they manage

to bring everything to a good end and win over their opponents because of their moral superiority. Even in these films, it is necessary to make a sacrifice, but it is again heroic and in the name of the country, for the sake of which the soldier is willing to lay down his life.

The effort to depict war as a heroic conflict with heroic men could be considered dominant in the field of the American war film industry. However, there were tendencies to change this established stereotype. One of the most famous film producers who decided to go in a different direction was Steven Spielberg, the author of the series analysed in this paper – *Band of Brothers*.

### 3.1 Steven Spielberg

American film producer, director and writer Steven Spielberg was behind the idea of creating a ten-part war series based on the book *Band of Brothers* by Stephen E. Ambrose, on which he cooperated with Tom Hanks. The idea to create a miniseries based on a book written by a relatively well-known American historian dealing with modern American history did not come out of nowhere. Since childhood, Spielberg has been interested in history, especially in World War II. As Friedman claims in his book, the one who brought young Steven to World War II history was his father, Arnold Spielberg, who directly participated in the war. Initially, Arnold was a member of a B-25 bomber squadron in the Pacific War, but he was later reassigned to radio operators, despite his desire to fly. His adventurous nature was reflected in the stories he told his young son about the war, so even in his youth, Steven had a head full of heroic soldiers who served the country during the Second World War. That led him to his first amateur film attempts, including the black-and-white short film *Fighter Squad*, which he made with his middle-school classmates. Two years later, he won first prize at the 1962-63 Canyon Films Junior Film Festival with his film *Escape to Nowhere*, which was also connected to World War II (Friedman 2006, 189-90).

During his career, Spielberg created several war films, many of which often had a significant impact on the American film scene. He is well-known for his controversy and unconventional views in the field of cinematography, for which he is sometimes loved and sometimes hated. A good example is the war film *1941*, which first appeared in cinemas in 1979. The satirical comedy mocking the American army and partly also society encountered harsh criticism in the USA. Film critics condemned this work for its approach to the American army. They also criticised pointless narrative or enormous budget, which was used for creating such a weak movie (Friedman 2006, 191-92). Spielberg's mocking approach to the US military was really controversial and uncommon at its time. For long post-war decades, Americans were used to seeing their army as the embodiment of the national spirit. Soldiers were always brave, strong, and able to sacrifice themselves for the good of society. It is, therefore, not surprising that the mockery and incapacitation of the American soldier were met with a negative response. Despite the negative attitude of the American public, the film was partly a success in Europe, where critics valued the effort to create a war comedy and demonstrate a different approach to war filmmaking.



A completely different story is *Empire of the Sun*. The film tells a story of a young British boy imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp. Here, Spielberg again picked up on an uncommon theme for an American war film – a struggle of a war prisoner. In addition, the main character depicts the innocence of a little boy who longs to live an ordinary life, but the war changes everything. He did not choose to participate in it willingly, the war came to his hometown, and he failed to escape it. The scenes where he admires the heroic efforts of soldiers fighting in the war are in contrast with his efforts to survive the cruel conditions of the camp. Some film critics recognise the movie as an essential turning point in Spielberg's career. As Friedman claims, "...Jim's childhood is reduced, not expanded, as critics have always accused Spielberg of doing in his life and his work" (Friedman 2006, 199). In this work, the motives of American heroism and victory are depicted as well. However, key elements are survival, everyday struggle, and the helplessness of a young boy who cannot enjoy his childhood because of the war.

Spielberg's films often differ in many ways from the classic concept of the American war film, which is how they gained their attention. It was his unusual approach, as well as his knowledge of American war history, that significantly contributed to the success of his most important works of this genre - *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers*.



## 3.2. Saving Private Ryan

Steven Spielberg's most famous war film is probably the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, which premiered in 1998. The film was shot just three years before the *Band of Brothers* series, and both have many similarities. The first was a collaboration between Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. The duo had vast cinematic experience and no lack of enthusiasm for history. Together they then created a film set in the year 1944, the time of D-Day and the Allied landings in Normandy, with Tom Hanks as Captain John Miller in the lead role, and it was a truly phenomenal success. The main character, having all the virtues of a typical American soldier-hero, and his platoon must rescue a single soldier lost somewhere in the middle of the enemy territory. A relatively meaningless task from a military point of view, because of the risk of many lives for just one soldier, is essential from the moral point of view. That soldier, Private Ryan, is the only survivor of four brothers and the American army, serving its people and its country, intends to do everything to find him and get him home to ease the suffering of his mother, a US citizen. The character of Captain John Miller develops a lot on his way to the successful completion of the mission as he reveals he was an ordinary person in civilian life. He worked as a teacher and baseball coach, giving viewers the feeling that every American citizen could be the same hero, even the most ordinary. At the same time, he has the virtues that Miller has, courage, love for the men he leads on the mission and for the country, and above all, an ability of self-sacrifice, which is demonstrated especially at the very end of the film when his entire unit helps the defenders to hold a position on a bridge in the town of Ramelle. After a quarrel with the enemy, while the men finally complete their task to find Private Ryan, who was among the defenders, Captain Miller dies because of his injury. He is dying with relief, knowing that he has accomplished his mission and sacrificed himself for the American people. This heroic main character aroused great interest not only in the film but also in history itself, as Friedman writes in his book: "Tourism shot sharply upward at the Omaha Beach memorial in France, with tour guides having to tell disappointed visitors that no grave existed for Captain John Miller" (2006, 221).

However, it was not just the well-known display of American super soldiers that helped this film to succeed. It would not be a Spielberg film if it did not also carry other, often less common specifics. The contrast between the American war heroism and the terror and death that war brings is depicted in the movie. One of the most iconic scenes of the entire film is the opening,

an approximately twenty-five minutes long passage dedicated to the actual historical event – the American landing on Omaha Beach in Normandy. During the landing, 2,500 American soldiers lost their lives here, and already during World War II, Omaha Beach became synonymous with the suffering and cruelty of war. The same terror and the hopeless attempt to survive the German shelling of the beach, which is not covered by anything, is also very successfully portrayed by Steven Spielberg in the film. In this part of the film, heroism and courage are replaced by fear and terror, as Bodnar suggests: "American soldiers are shattered and maimed on the beachhead, and some fall apart emotionally from the stress of battle" (2001, 805). To make this part of the film realistic and engaging, Spielberg uses "highly sophisticated technology in innovative ways to further his narrative and engage his audience" (Friedman 2006, 229).

*Saving Private Ryan* celebrated its success for many different reasons and served as the groundwork for another successful war cinema effort, *Band of Brothers*. A strong Spielberg-Hanks duo was formed during filming, which later worked together on the mentioned series. Spielberg's experience with the film helped him create the series, especially since Easy Company took part in the same historical event. In one of the episodes, 101st Airborne Division, with Easy Company among them, lands behind the enemy lines on its mission to interrupt enemy supplies to the front. Private Ryan had the same task as he belonged to the same division but served a different company. Other elements are also common to both works, such as the depiction of the terror and cruelty of war or the observation of the war conflict from the point of view of individuals, not the mass, to which historical sources are usually limited.

## 4. Film adaptation theory

In order to be able to compare the series *Band of Brothers* with its source book, it is first necessary to clarify the concept of the film adaptation to state something about its origin and theory. The rise of film, which entered society's subconscious as a new art archetype in the 19th century, experienced its development mainly in the first decades of the 20th century. The new medium brought entirely new directions and perspectives to the world of art, and together with the film itself, the adaptation was also fabricated. A significant chapter in the history of the film became the silent film, a film without any played audio, dialogues, or speeches by the characters; only the most essential key lines were interpreted for the audience through added subtitles. The absence of a soundtrack and the careful development and learning to work with a new medium limited the creation of new plots, so film adaptations of classic works became particularly useful for filmmakers. According to Cartmell, scriptwriters often turned to literature while writing their plots, especially during the time of the silent film. Well-known stories were easier to interpret without a sound. The rapidly growing interest in the new medium meant new possibilities for application, reach, and money. In the case of film adaptations, then, allegedly without effort, all that filmmakers needed to do was to find a well-known and popular masterpiece and adapt it into a screenplay form without the risk of not being accepted by the audience. However, such a strategy has earned its share of criticism, including that from contemporary artists. In her essay "The Cinema", the modernist British poet Virginia Woolf finds the adaptation of classical works as a disservice to both the literature and the film. In addition, she even talks about the rape of classical art (Cartmell 2014, 2). From its very beginnings, the film has thus been viewed from different sides. While some welcomed the new possibilities that such a medium offered and saw it as another significant cultural milestone linked to the technical development of the Industrial Revolution, others pointed out that film would forever change the views on culture; they saw negatively above all the originality of the works threatened by their easy interpretability. The growth of the whole issue and the multiplying perspectives, often contradictory to each other, called for the need to define the theory of adaptation and determine its direction. A new theoretical field is thus emerging around film and film adaptations.

The first of these elements of adapting a novel to the screen is the realisation that each medium targets different human senses. While a novel is examined as a verbal interpretation, films, on

the other hand, are audio-visual. Although a film can be considered as a form of translation from a verbal expression to an audio-visual one (the actors only "translate" the screenplay), just as in the case of the transformation of the text from one language into another, we cannot consider such a translation absolutely literal (Corrigan 2012, 107-9). It is equally important to realise that once the film adaptation is created, its interpretation is unequivocal and unchanging. Casting individual roles by specific actors as well as a clear interpretation of the adaptation in the form of a screenplay influences the viewer watching the film in the direction in which the adaptation was created. This direction does not change significantly with subsequently repeated watching, and when it does, it is again in the same way. In other words, the film adaptation deprives the viewer of the possibility to use their imagination, as McFarlane concludes in his commentary: "Because of its high iconicity, the cinema has left no scope for the imaginative activity necessary to the reader's visualisation of what he reads" (113-14). Another noticeable point is often the lesser depth of the individual characters as the film visualisation is more superficial compared to the verbal expression on which literature is based. The film does not provide an insight into the characters' inner world, anything that is not said or shown; the viewer will not know. Thus, he cannot perceive deeper feelings or psychological habits and moods of individual characters, which, on the contrary, are often very creatively elaborated in the case of the book itself (111-13).

The film adaptation theory aims not only to define the boundaries of such matter but also to deal with the question of how to create a film adaptation. It is necessary to realise that remaking the book page by page with just minor adjustments to the film screen would lead to very long shots (considering how long the book is read, for longer stories, it can be up to many hours). That could hardly keep the audience's attention at all. The screenplay is created primarily by selecting the essential parts that the screenwriter decides to interpret in his film. In other words, the screenplay itself can be different based on the attitude of individual screenwriters, who determine which scenes seem crucial to them. In addition, they decide how to convert them into an audio-visual form, let alone the possibility to develop further the plot for a more expressive rendering or dramatisation of a concrete scene. Thus, the resulting adaptation only resembles the book, so it is necessary to realise that a film created from a literary original by a film adaptation is not the book itself (Cartmell 2014, 408-10).

The *Band of Brothers* series is widely referred to as a film adaptation. Such a statement is also supported by the initial ideas to develop the entire series based on the motifs of the book of the same name, as well as its very close connection with its original. However, as further evidence, one of the analyses proving the truth of this claim is listed. For the purposes of this essay, Hutcheon's analysis is used, which summarises the conditions into one relatively simple rule: "Its creators must intend it to be perceived as an adaptation; and its audience must so perceive it" (Cartmell 2014, 95). With this view, Hutcheon bypasses the complex discussions and proofs of the claim of whether it is or is not an adaptation. When the creator and recipient of that work recognise the work as an adaptation, it is indeed an adaptation. Of course, such a view also has its negatives. If the audience does not find the created work an adaptation, for example, due to a lack of knowledge about the literary original, it is not an adaptation, even though this was the original intention of the creator. It would also be challenging to prove Hutcheon's claim, especially in the case of literary adaptations of lesser-known works, for example, from popular culture, where the works often target specific groups of recipients. However, this tends to change in the modern age of telecommunications, where means such as advertising can quickly introduce audiences to essential aspects of such a series, as was the case with *Band of Brothers*. However, the advantage is the relatively simple interpretation of this analysis. In this case, the work itself and the assessment of artistic elements that could be discussed as signs of film adaptation are excluded from it. Only the reaction to the work as a whole is assessed (94-6). As for *Band of Brothers*, according to the official HBO website<sup>2</sup>, this series is based on Stephen Ambrose's book of the same name, thanks to its close connection with the story of the literary original and also its presentation in this direction through the already mentioned advertisements and other means is also accepted by the audience. According to Hutcheon's analysis, it is, therefore, possible to declare this work a serial adaptation and the further proof of the correctness of this designation is not the subject of this work. There is also no need to state more complex criteria and analyses to demonstrate the authenticity of this claim.

In the case of *Band of Brothers*, we can also talk about a successful film adaptation, the miniseries created by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg is still highly popular despite its years. There are several factors that led to the creation of such a successful film adaptation. Firstly,

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<sup>2</sup> "Band of Brothers: Official Website for the HBO Series." Official Website for the HBO Series | [HBO.com](https://www.hbo.com/band-of-brothers). Accessed January 9, 2023. <https://www.hbo.com/band-of-brothers>.

the cooperation between Stephen Spielberg and Tom Hanks can be described as a combination of two very experienced directors, and their cooperation was not accidental. The pair had previously worked together on the film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), another popular war film also analysed in this work. Also, as Tom Hanks stated in the podcast, "We're both huge readers of history, students of history and constantly compare notes on the documentaries and books that we've read" (Max 2021, 0:10:55). Both directors were also experienced in the matter of war movies. As mentioned in the podcast, the book tells the story of one explicit military unit throughout the war, so the whole narrative is a strong story ideal for adapting to the movie screen. It contained all needed to develop into a successful story in both literary and movie form, as is the character development, strong emotional moments, similarities with real life (as it was real life in its pure) and more. However, most important was the fact that their characters were real live people. The war veterans of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division were still holding their memorial gatherings at the time of the filming of this piece. Hence, the producers had the opportunity to visit them, hear much of their lives, and incorporate it into the series directly from them. It is through this reinterpretation of their entire story and its modification in the light of new knowledge and memories on the part of the veterans that the narrative of the literary model is further confirmed, or on the contrary, there are minor deviations, which are, however, usually even more faithful to the veterans' recollections. From the point of view of the theory of film adaptation, *Band of Brothers* series is thus very different from the usual analysis and also from the element mentioned earlier, namely that the film adaptation is the own adaptation of the screenwriters working on this adaptation, who with their decisions shape their own, later unalterable interpretation of the literary original on the film canvas. This is an interesting starting point for a comparison of the film and the book, and the following sections will ask not only to what extent the film is true to the literary original but also whether the film series might at times be even closer to the historical reality as remembered by the veterans (Max 2021, e1, 1:05:10).

## 5. Comparison and analysis

As mentioned in the introduction, the series aimed to depict the story of veterans both engaging and accurate to its literary source. Such a task is not easy to follow as the question of the quality of film adaptations is a highly spoken topic in modern cinema theory. An equally important element is that the narrative of the whole story was a historical event told by real people who experienced it. If their experience is to be considered 100% historically accurate, omitting any verification methods, it is a question of the responsibility of the producers to decide how faithfully they want to adapt such a narrative. A fairly common way of creating such adaptations is to consider the adaptation to be inspired by historical events, but this is not the path taken by the duo of Spielberg and Hanks. The *Band of Brothers* series is presented as a very faithful adaptation, staying close to the story of the book and, in some cases, even trying to bring new, more detailed insights that were not included in the original. Such an approach places demands on the overall perspective of the adaptation, it is necessary to preserve the accuracy of the narrative, but also socio-cultural aspects play a role here because the whole series concerns real people who are still living, who even reveal their true identity within the series. A series with the breadth of audience that *Band of Brothers* currently has undoubtedly affected the public's attitude towards veterans, both living and deceased, and although it is not the scope of this paper to examine these effects, it is still necessary to include this aspect as one of the criteria for the creation of the entire series.

Due to the limited scope of the work, the subject of the analysis will be successively three different parts of the narrative, selected from different parts of various episodes to cover more or less the entire narrative from its introduction to its conclusion. Each of the selected parts is important in some way, either from the point of view of the story or from the point of view of the film adaptation, and therefore serves as an example for the entire series. Other sources will also be used for the analysis, such as the podcast related to the *Band of Brothers* series or the website of M. Bando, an American historian and author of several books dedicated to the 101st Airborne Division, which Easy Company was a part of. The reasons for choosing this source will be discussed in the first subsection. In the analysis, the ideas of screenwriter Diane Lake, the author of the successful film *Frida*, described in the book *A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation* and summarised in the second subsection of the analytical part, will be used (Cartmell 2014, 409-10).



## 5.1. Mark Bando as a Historian's View

M. Bando graduated from Wayne State University as a history major and later also dedicated his life to gathering information about the 101st Airborne Division. His work eventually resulted in several successful books. However, unlike Ambrose, who is his decidedly more famous counterpart, he devoted himself to this division as a whole. As he states in response to *Band of Brothers* series: "The viewer must just bear in mind that there were 26 other Parachute Infantry rifle companies in the 101st Airborne, including other 'Easy' Companies in the 501 and 502 PIRs, and 327th GIR" (Bando 2000, "index"). Bando, like Ambrose, tried to depict the fates of individual companies and collected a lot of information through meetings with veterans. But in contrast with Ambrose, he connected the gathering of oral history with broad historical research.

After watching the series, Bando decided to write a critique, bringing additional information on the series from his point of view. He claims that: "I rated the series at 8.5 on a scale of 1-10 overall, but I felt through most of the series that 'something' was missing" (Bando 2000, "bandofbrothers3"). According to him, the whole series was both successful and well-made, but some historical info was still missing, despite the enormous budget producers could spend while creating it. For these reasons, his critique can provide an appropriate additional opinion and, because Stephen Ambrose was a historical consultant for the series, also provide a "historian about historian" point of view.



## 5.2. Screenwriter's Perspective

When creating a film adaptation based on literature, it is necessary to consider that this transformation cannot be taken as a translation. Although the task of the adaptation is to bring the book to life on the screen, it is, after all, a personal interpretation from the point of view of the screenwriter who worked on this film story. The reason is primarily the individual interpretation of a specific person. Another problem is the different time requirements when comparing the book and film as media. While reading a book is a matter of several hours, often spread over more than one day, a film must be limited to only tens of minutes, during which everything essential must be shown so that the story functions as a whole (Cartmell 2014, 409). A slightly different case is the creation of a series, which promises a longer span of time and also the possibility of cutting the plot into pieces, but even here, time is still a limited resource, as Hanks himself realises in the case of *Band of Brothers*: "Altogether, it was more like 11 hours of television". (Max 2021, e1, 13:12) At the same time, however, the question arises: "Well, how deep do we go into all of this?" (Max 2021, e1, 13:22).

Lake describes his approach to processing such an adaptation: "My method of reading a book is simple. As I read the book, I mark moments/scenes that do two things: (1) make for good visual representation in a film and (2) are crucial to the spine of the story... after reading the book once and marking those scenes, I go back and reread only those scenes – to try and get the feel for whether or not I've got a movie using the scenes in question." (Cartmell 2014, 409-10).

In the case of judging the accuracy of the adaptation of *Band of Brothers*, I will apply the opposite procedure, so my goal will be to look for these crucial moments in the film's narrative, compare them with the book and judge their interpretation.

## 6. Analysis

### 6.1. Analysis of Episode 2 – Brécourt Manor Assault

The Brécourt Manor Assault became one of the iconic moments of the US Army's work behind enemy lines and an exemplary demonstration of the efficient and organised use of a smaller combat group in overcoming a larger enemy force and is still taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point (Hanks and Spielberg, e2, 46:45). After the unsuccessful landing of the 101st Airborne Division, E Company, among many others, missed a large number of soldiers and therefore did not have full operational strength. Many factors, such as the weather, a night landing or uneasy management of such a large-scale operation led to the paratroopers ending up in a much larger landing area than was originally intended. The objective of cutting off the German troops defending Utah Beach from supply and reinforcements from behind was unsuccessful. However, the troops could still scatter throughout the area and succeeded in confusing the enemy ranks. However, any organised attack was unthinkable at that moment (Ambrose 2017, 72-84). In such a situation, it was rather unpleasant to discover that four 105 mm artillery batteries were located together at Brécourt Manor, shelling the American positions on Utah Beach. This position, defended by approximately fifty men of the 1st battalion of the German Lieutenant von der Heydte, represented a significant threat. The American unit thus found itself in a difficult situation. The 2nd battalion of the American army under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Strayer numbered only about a hundred men at that moment and also had to secure the entire area around Le Grand-Chemin. The task of seizing a battery defended by enemy superiors thus eventually fell to First Lieutenant Dick Winters, who commanded a single company. However, the subsequent attack was a phenomenal success. As Ambrose describes in the book *Band of Brothers*: "Winters' casualties were four dead, two wounded. He and his men had killed fifteen Germans, wounded many more, and taken twelve prisoners; in short, they had wiped out the fifty-man platoon of elite German paratroops defending the guns, and scattered the gun crews" (90).

Ambrose depicted this assault as the pivotal event that Easy Company contributed to the overall victory of allied forces in Normandy and even considered this event as one of the crucial elements of the entire operation when he said: "The significance of what Easy Company had

accomplished cannot be judged with any degree of precision, but it surely saved a lot of lives and made it much easier—perhaps even made it possible in the first instance—for tanks to come inland from the beach. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that Easy Company saved the day at Utah Beach, but reasonable to say that it made an important contribution to the success of the invasion" (Ambrose 2017, 90). The producers, therefore, had the task of portraying one of the key scenes in the history of the entire Easy Company, which significantly contributed to its prestige and brought many of its members their first and most important awards. The duo Hanks and Spielberg once again faced the task of portraying the events in Normandy during D-Day, just as they successfully did in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. However, when comparing the two film pieces, we find noticeable differences, the most fundamental being the environment where the scenes occur. While in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, we watch the soldiers disembark directly on the beach; in the *Band of Brothers* series, the soldiers fight on the rugged terrain of the French countryside.

The producers start this part rather inconspicuously as one of the privates tries to find the commander of Easy Company. However, he is missing, and the deputy commander during his absence is Dick Winters, an unwritten main character not only in this episode but to a large extent in the overall framework of the entire series. Through several cuts, the group of chosen soldiers and the viewer learn about their task, which is also described in the book. Noticeable are statements like: "There are Kraut 88s. Ahead and to the right, about 300 yards." (Hanks and Spielberg, e2, 26:34), "Does the major know we only have 12 Easy Company men?" (26:52) or "How many Krauts do you think we're facing? No idea." (27:30). In this case, the book does not mention how the chosen men learned about what awaited them. However, the producers decided to give it more detail. The scene was arranged in the form of a meeting, so the viewer has the opportunity to get to know the characters more closely before they jump into action in the following minutes. In addition, Winters calls them by name during the distribution of tasks, while in the book, Ambrose has enough space to return to the characters and continuously explain what each soldier is doing at a given moment, the producers limit themselves to a one-time explanation right here and leave the rest to the viewer's memory. It is an understandable and commendable approach because everything is said even during the roughly one-minute briefing, which would otherwise lead to uncomfortable delays during the event. However, the reactions of the men who learn about the momentary situation are questionable here. On the

faces of the soldiers, there is no hint of doubt about how small the chance of success was because of the superiority and lack of information. The fault here may lie in the decision not to grade the plot already in the scene before the action, or there was an effort to point out the fearlessness of the American soldier, which, however, would have been portrayed somewhat dubiously here. What is missing here is any act of heroism, an awareness of the seriousness of the situation and also the fact that a good American soldier sacrifices himself for the good of all. So the most likely explanation is that the soldiers present took the event as their duty. During the entire series and in the book, the approach is often indicated when the soldiers simply tried "to get their job done". Nevertheless, from the point of view of the analysis, this approach is perhaps too superficial.

Ambrose describes the actual attack on the German positions in great detail. The assumption for the analysis here was that the producers would only pay attention to some details mentioned in the book because too much attention to it or specific characters would make the scene slower and less attractive. In addition, the viewer would be unable to follow the attack as a whole and would not get involved in the action. However, the result of the analysis was quite surprising in the end. Although the producers mainly decided to let the whole action flow from the beginning, there were many crucial moments that the scene was built on. Although a person, who is not familiar with the book, may see it as a concrete interpretation of the fighting effort of the Americans, the book fan will quickly notice these details. One of them is the seemingly senseless decision of one of the soldiers to climb a tree and gain a view of the entire defensive position in exchange for his own safety. Soldier Lipton, who did such a thing during the assault back in World War II, told Ambrose that he never would have climbed that tree and so exposed himself had he been a veteran. "But we were so full of fire that day." (Ambrose 2017, 90). Among other things, the book mentions that despite this imprudent move, Lipton was lucky that none of the Germans noticed him, and he was then able to support his comrades by shooting from this position.

In contrast, in the series enemy immediately starts shooting at Lipton, but luckily none of the shots hit him. The effort of the producers here was most likely to make the scene a little more dramatic because, despite the initial disadvantage on the part of the Americans, the whole attack was surprisingly straightforward. In reality, German soldiers thought they faced a much

stronger unit and put up only weak resistance. Even this small change, however, ultimately brings nothing but the strengthening of the combat action experience. Such an approach is also supported by Bando in his critique when he writes: "Don Malarkey [as one of the soldiers present there on that day] gave a lot of input to the production crew, and had only two comments after viewing Episode 2. He stated that the action as depicted, was even more intense than how he recalled the actual battle and that the reason the attack was eventually broken off was that the men were out of ammunition" (Bando 2000, "bandofbrothers4"). One of the bitterly funny moments was Wynn's injury during the beginning of the attack when he got shot directly in the bottom. A scene that would certainly not be lost in any war comedy really happened, and Wynn also eventually survived this injury to tell Ambrose about it later. However, while Ambrose devotes only a few lines of text to the situation, the producers depict it in several cuts. Despite the bizarreness of the injury, the viewer can see how the group treated one of them and sent him back to the reserve even during total combat deployment.

The men of Easy Company, led by Dick Winters, disrupted the German positions during the attack, seized the trenches where they disabled all four guns with explosives, and retreated in front of the German reinforcements. According to Orloff, writer of the episode, the film treatment of the entire attack differed from Ambrose's book after all, the main reason being the different points of view of the individual veterans, both at the time of Ambrose's interviews for the book and at the time when the veterans were asked again by filmmakers. For example, a movie scene might conjure up the false idea that the Americans matched their enemies with firepower and effectively kept them in defensive positions by covering fire. However, according to Ambrose, the success of the attack lay mainly in the coordinated American assault, which brought confusion into the ranks of the enemy. Even so, there are many notable moments in which the book coincides with the series, the scope of the work does not allow for a more detailed analysis of them, but to support this fact, at least their enumeration is given: Compton's jammed machine gun, as well as his specific style of throwing a grenade, because he was in civilian clothes by the baseball team's catcher, a stray German grenade that Toye was saved from by Winters' quick response, Malarkey's risky foray for an army pistol right in the middle of the field that only survived thanks to the German soldiers' misjudgment that he was an army medic and more.

In conclusion, in the case of Brécour Manor Assault, it is hard to determine whether the book or film interpretation is more accurate. In the case of the analysed work, it is not only a film adaptation of a literary piece but also a rendering of the memories of war veterans. As mentioned in previous chapters, the disadvantage of oral history, from which both interpretations of the same narrative come out, is probably the different view of the whole situation from multiple perspectives and the low possibility of verifying such details through other historical research methods. However, other research methods can leave out later forgotten moments in history. This attack is exemplary. While it is one of the pivotal moments in the history of Easy Company, other historical works are often silent about it. As written in the book *Band of Brothers*: "When Marshall [American historian] wrote his book, *Night Drop*, to Winters' disgust he left out Easy Company, except to say 'the deployed [2nd] battalion had kept the German battery entertained at long range. . . .' He did give a full account of the capture of a battery at Holdy, near causeway No. 1, by the 1st Battalion, 506th. Marshall wrote that the battalion had 195 men lined up to take the battery. Winters commented, 'With that many E Co. men, I could have taken Berlin!'" (Ambrose 2017, 92). However, using the Lake perspective of the film adaptation, we can consider the scene to be quite accurate because the essential points of the narrative are the same in both cases, or they differ only in minor details. Concerning the difficulties of interpreting such a scene in a film and a book environment, such work can be considered accurate.



## 6.2. Analysis of Episode 5 – Bastogne

The second analysed part of the series will differ slightly from the first. In the first part, only a segment of the episode was analysed, in which individual elements were carefully selected for comparison. In the second part, the subject will be the entire episode 6. The reason for this decision is mainly its difference. This episode differs in its construction from other episodes in the entire series, as it functions as a separate story within a larger whole. The aim of this analysis is not only to point out again the same and different elements in the book and film interpretation but also to point out the structure of the narrative of this episode which seems to work as an independent story with all the essentials.

The central character of this episode is a man hardly seen in the series until then, Combat medic Eugene "Doc" Roe, who is in charge of providing first aid to the wounded. Together with the entire Easy Company, he moves to the cold Bastogne area in the Ardennes, where the American offensive subsequently encounters stiff enemy resistance, and the soldiers are forced to dig in defensive positions. The situation will worsen further when the German counter-offensive closes a large part of the American units in a pincer from which there is no escape. The situation escalates to the point that the American command receives a call for surrender. In the book *Band of Brothers*, Ambrose mentions General McAuliffe's speech on Christmas Day when he tells the assembled troops that he has received a humiliating message from the German commander demanding their unconditional surrender. He also mentions the American reply: "The German Commander received the following reply: '22 December 1944. To the German Commander: NUTS! The American Commander.'" (Ambrose 2017, 212-13). This pep talk, including a determined response, is also interpreted literally in the series (Hanks and Spielberg, e06, 51:30). According to Ambrose, the soldiers from Easy Company spent a total of thirteen days under siege, from December 19 to 31 1944, including mentioned Christmas. These days were reduced from war action and chaos to just waiting, sitting in frozen trenches, counting the remains of supplies, as well as frequent shelling of company positions by German artillery, which eventually became the grim background for the sixth episode of the series.

The exact reason for such changes in the sixth episode is unknown. However, Bando believes it was based on two criteria, the lack of combat action and the producers' decision to pay homage to combat medics (Bando 2000, "bandofbrothers5"). As mentioned in the previous

paragraph, the American advance was stopped around Bastogne, and the Americans had no choice but to wait and hope for more reinforcements and supplies. The lack of combat action, which functions as a means of keeping the viewer engaged, could lead to a de-escalation of the plot of the entire series, which was gaining momentum during the previous five episodes. The effort to honour American combat medics is also a possible explanation, as their role was often neglected, as Lieutenant Foley mentioned in an interview with Ambrose: "He was there when he was needed, and how he got 'there' you often wondered. He never received recognition for his bravery, his heroic servicing of the wounded. I recommended him for a Silver Star after a devastating firefight when his exploits were typically outstanding. Maybe I didn't use the proper words and phrases, perhaps Lieutenant Dike didn't approve, or somewhere along the line, it was cast aside. I don't know. I never knew except that if any man who struggled in the snow and the cold, in the many attacks through the open and through the woods, ever deserved such a medal, it was our medic, Gene Roe" (Ambrose 2017, 203). At the same time, this quote is the only significant mention of Roe in the book, so it is here that the book and film portrayals of this character diverge fundamentally. In addition, unlike other veterans, Roe was no longer alive at the time of the filming of the series. The absence of his perspective on the events treated in this episode is thus another complication affecting both the accuracy of the historical event and the portrayal of his character. Here, the producers relied mainly on the statements of other medics who knew him. The key points of analysis in this section are the interpretation of Roe's character and the story he experiences in this episode, but also the role that Easy Company plays here and again, the elements that, according to Lake's interpretation, could be characterised as the selected ones for the construction of the film adaptation.

We get to know the character of shy combat medic Roe, who, during the episode, experiences his struggle in the middle of a great war only throughout this episode. The producers present him as a character by the principle of "do not describe, show", which is a method widely used in literature as well. Through the first attacks of German artillery batteries and Roe's closing in on his thoughts, we quickly learn who this young healer is - an introverted yet kind person who seems to not even fit into the war, yet his dedication and effort in saving lives are priceless. His role is a challenging one. If, during an artillery attack, the scream of a wounded man is heard from somewhere, Roe must immediately go to his aid, despite the continuous German shelling, which he does immediately and without a second's hesitation. His innocence and



willingness to help boost Easy Company's morale during the siege add a sense of hope. Perhaps because of these qualities, Roe becomes close to Renee LeMaire, a nurse who helps in a church in Bastogne, which has been established for the needs of the wounded who could not be transported away from the front because of the enemy. LeMaire is a character based on a real woman who helped treat the wounded just a short distance behind the front, but it is not known whether Roe and LeMaire met. Even so, their unspoken relationship plays a significant role in the development of the entire story. At the same time, it also serves as the climax of this episode, when LeMaire dies in one of the final moments during a nighttime German bombardment under the ruins of a church. In a brief emotional scene, Eugene finds the headscarf LeMaire wore in the ruins of the church (Hanks and Spielberg, e6, 59:45). This quick summary of the plot contains everything that should belong to a properly constructed story. There is the exposition of the story, where we get to know the character of the medic and the situation on the front, the conflict when the nurse becomes an essential person to Roe and the climax, the turning point, during which she dies. All of this makes the story relatively insignificant from the perspective of Easy company's fighting effort or just one drop in the sea of historical research. But in the series, it is prioritised even before the war, although the state of war notably affects the whole situation. In conclusion, producers constructed the plot inspired by some historical evidence, but there is no direct evidence that it is based on truth.

Despite Easy Company's role in this episode taking a back seat, we can still notice a plot that runs parallel to Roe's and that the main character often enters. It is this plot that shows the same characteristics as the previous episodes. Many characters appear here, and the audience can recognise familiar faces such as Winters, Lipton and others. The emphasis is on the whole group, not just individuals. At the same time, it is possible to find pivotal points in the episode that coincide with the book's interpretation. However, in comparison with the analysis of Brécourt Manor Assault, where there are a lot of them to find even in a short time, here the producers tried to use these points to depict the overall atmosphere. Still, the first pivotal moment comes relatively early, when Winters and Eugene manage to capture a German soldier who wandered into the American line in the morning fog (Hanks and Spielberg, e6, 6:00). There is a noticeable difference in the scene because in the book the soldier is captured by three Americans, among whom, however, medic Roe does not figure (Ambrose 2017, 202). The producers' effort was to show the medic as one of the central characters from the very

beginning, especially when he appears alongside Winters, who, as the commander of the unit, is already a well-known character. Through the episode's opening moments, the viewer also quickly learns necessary information through a conversation between Winters and his superior, who arrives at the scene in a jeep. The advantage of the film is to explain in a roughly 30-second segment what the book describes on the entire page is thus clearly visible.

Ambrose tries to capture the seriousness of the situation by showing that the soldiers lack necessary supplies such as food, warm clothing or ammunition, which cannot be transported to the besieged area. The producers here depict these shortcomings mainly in the main character's often unsuccessful effort to search for medical materials, such as morphine, for pain relief. Ambrose also mentions this factor but devotes only one sentence to it in the entire chapter (2017, 202). However, there are also a lot of small details that Ambrose also mentions in his book, and the producers pay attention to them. An audience can see, for example, wounded soldiers drinking alcohol, which is mentioned in the book as an effort by unit commanders to raise morale among the wounded, or Winters crushing ice in a box with his knife so that he can then shave with cold water, which depicts the horrible weather conditions soldiers were living in. These details appear to be mere attempts to make the episode more atmospheric, but readers of the book can quickly register and appreciate these details.

In conclusion, even in episode 6, the producers still devote enough space to Easy Company. During the episode, pivotal moments that coincide with Ambrose's book appear, often with a great sense of detail, but the point of view in this episode is specific. This time, the viewer follows the story through the eyes of a character only mentioned in the original book, bringing new aspects to the episode. For example, the viewer gets to know the role of a medic in the war much closer than it is in the book. Behind this act must have been the effort of the producers to find out more about the role of medics. From the analysis perspective, this step can therefore be considered a deviation from the film adaptation to enrich the narrative with other elements. However, the story of combat medic Roe and nurse Renee LeMaire cannot be considered entirely accurate although they are real characters who could meet each other at the time, there is no clear evidence as to whether they did. According to available information, Nurse LeMaire then died in a different way than the one depicted at the end of the episode. From the point of view of analysis, it is thus needed to mark Roe's story as inspired by actual events, yet it is

necessary to understand the steps and the reasons that led to this interpretation. However, thanks to the precise work of the producers, the plot remains coherent with previous episode 5 or following episode 7.

### 6.3. Analysis of Episode 9 – Landsberg concentration camp

In the third part, a scene from episode 9, the discovery of a concentration camp near the town of Landsberg, will be analysed. This camp was established as a labour camp and was part of the Dachau concentration camp system, focused mainly on producing war material. After the Allied forces entered Germany from the west and Poland from the east, the resistance of the German troops gradually weakened. Still, neither the Allied nor the Soviet soldiers were prepared for what the retreating Germans would leave behind. The military forces often did not even want to believe the first rumours about these terrifying places. However, the reality was all the more terrifying when reports of finding more and more camps began to multiply during the advance towards Berlin. Unfortunately, Easy Company was one of the units that saw such a camp with their own eyes, which Ambrose already mentions in his book. While he devotes only one more comprehensive paragraph to this moment, the producers dedicate a significant part of the end of the ninth episode to this scene. As the writer of the episode McCall mentions in the series podcast, these memories were too terrifying for the men who witnessed it to share with anyone again. At the time of filming *Band of Brothers* series, however, it was veteran Dick Winters who decided to speak openly about the whole matter: "He wanted me to get this right because it is the late nineties and Holocaust denialism was just starting to sort of become a thing. And Winters was very deeply offended by that personally." In this episode, the differences are, therefore, not only due to the different approach of Ambrose and the producers but also to the socio-cultural differences in America, which led to different awareness in creating the book and series.

The desire to create a scene of approximately 20-30 minutes of footage based on only one paragraph in the book is essentially the same as the analysis of episode 5. However, there are a few differences that set the two analyses apart. Here, the producers worked on real-based information, and they also had a witness to the entire moment, the veteran Dick Winters; in the case of episode 5, the producers did not have this option. The available information was then incorporated into the plot in such a way as to give a decisive moment of truth. Similar to episode 5, one possible theory was that the producers wanted to pay tribute to the work of medics during the war; there is no dispute that the episode remembers the victims of the Holocaust, as evidenced by the information added in the final moments of the episode. It is here that the

summary talks about the reasons for establishing such camps, as well as the number of victims who lost their lives in them during the war years.

The episode begins with the date April 11, 1945, shown on screen; according to Ambrose's book, Easy Company entered German territory around April 2, but he does not mention the exact date. However, the very beginning of this episode clearly shows that Easy Company already has its first experiences with the German population. The central theme that Ambrose addresses during the chapter dealing with the entry into Germany is the relationship of the soldiers to the enemy population, which is strangely not as hostile as it was assumed, and both the allies and the German population live side by side without severe conflicts. The morale of German soldiers was poor, and the resistance was weakening; only here and there during the advance were the liquidated foci of enemy resistance. In this relatively peaceful atmosphere, considering the war's progress so far, Easy Company only carries out patrols near its camps; any significant war effort is no longer needed. The scene about halfway through the episode is all the more compelling when, after arriving in the small town of Landsberg, a platoon of six soldiers is sent to scout the nearby forest. In addition to experienced soldiers who have already jumped in Normandy, inexperienced newcomers are also sent on the mission. This contrast, which is relatively common when fresh reinforcements arrive at the front, is expressed by the producers with the nervousness of one soldier who still keeps his finger ready on the trigger of his weapon. From this, Private Randleman, a well-known face to the viewer, draws his attention. Suddenly, however, even the experienced members of the reconnaissance platoon realise that the forest is tranquil. In the following moments, the soldiers carefully come out of the forest and stare in absolute silence at something from which the weapons in their hands fall. The viewer has yet to learn what exactly was found here; in the next cut, one of the explorers sprints back to the town to tell Winters what they just found. However, when he finally finds him, he cannot explain it to him in any way. The introduction to the entire scene was thus designed precisely to draw the viewer's attention to what suddenly comes in the middle of a peaceful episode.

Only when two trucks full of American soldiers led by Winters and explorer Frank Perconte return to the scene does the viewer learn that there is a concentration camp on the edge of the forest. Ambrose already tried to capture the horror of what was here when he writes in his

book: "But although it was relatively small and designed to produce war goods, it was so horrible that it was impossible to fathom the enormity of the evil. Prisoners in their striped pajamas, three-quarters starved, by the thousands; corpses, little more than skeletons, by the hundreds" (2017, 298). The producers managed to depict this in full width; the scene really looks like it was taken from reality. The Americans enter among the throngs of impoverished and mutilated prisoners who were lucky enough to survive the abuse of their guards. The people here are sick, emaciated, and on the brink of strength; they do not speak, they do not rejoice in their deliverance; they just look away. Subsequently, Private Liebgott is called in to act as an interpreter between Winters and one of the prisoners. He will then acquaint the soldiers with what they just found and what atrocities the German soldiers committed there. While in the European environment, this topic is still kept in people's subconscious and treated with respect, on the American continent, as already mentioned, there was even a denial of these events, so such an approach can have a significant socio-cultural impact due to the popularity of *Band of Brothers* series. From this point of view, the moment when Winters asks if this camp is set up for criminals is essential. Liebgott's translated answer is: "I don't think criminals, sir. Doctors, musicians. Tailors, clerks. Farmers, intellectuals. I mean, normal people." (Spielberg and Hanks, e9, 41:47). Subsequently, they learn that Jews are the most represented here. According to the information available to the producers, the interpreter Private Liebgott, who was also Jewish, was just doing his job and was not interested in what was happening there more than other soldiers. However, the producers still decided to add emphasis here, portraying Liebgott as broken after what he saw here (Max 2001, e9, 31:30).

Although the previous passage was created mainly from the imagination of the producers and information available outside the book, the subsequent events at this location continue according to the book with only minor variations. In the following minutes, the soldiers distribute loaves of cheese among the starving prisoners, which Winters really found stored in one of the cellars back in Landsberg. The episode then coincides with the book on further solving this situation. The squad commander, Colonel Sink, finally arrives on the scene and then reports to General Taylor. Subsequently, martial law was declared, and the inhabitants of Landsberg were herded into the camp to clean up and bury the dead (Ambrose 2017, 298). Ambrose then ends the entire chapter in the book with Winters' comment, while in the episode, the soldiers learn another shocking news at the end - Hitler has shot himself. With Beethoven's

music being played by a group of musicians right on the street, the news comes that the war is essentially over.

Here, too, the producers tried to build the scene based on only a few available pieces of information. However, this time they also had other sources to dissociate, such as documentation or the personal confession of Easy Company commander Winters. That this particular scene was chosen is understandable, it carries an important message for future generations, and although it is mentioned rather cursorily in the book, it is one of the last powerful images of the war at its very end. The episode was praised a lot for its realistic interpretation. However, from the point of view of the analysis, which mainly focuses on the comparison of the series and the book, it is still necessary to devote space to this evaluation as well. The producers really used all the available information in the scene, which was the discovery of the camp by the Easy Company patrol, the distribution of available food from the nearby town of Landsberg to the prisoners, and the declaration of martial law, but these materials would not have been enough for more than a few minutes. The work of the producers here was mainly to connect these facts into a logical plot and mainly to take care of the intensity of the scene. Bando writes in his critique: "A noble attempt to recreate the atmosphere, sights and sounds of the labour camp near Landsberg was made, but no film could ever do justice to what those who saw it firsthand experienced" (Bando 2000, "bandofbrothers7"). He also does not have too many other complaints about the whole episode.

In conclusion, here, too, it is necessary to consider two possible versions of the interpretation. From the point of view of comparing the book and the series, we can again speak of mere inspiration with the book record, the information is used here and then further elaborated, but the key moments are again clearly visible here, and the scene can thus be considered reasonably accurate in this respect, with additional details added. From a broader perspective, however, it is well known that the other information used in the creation of this scene comes from credible sources, which both media share to a large extent, namely the statements of war veterans or the historical research of the historian Ambrose, who was a historical consultant for the entire series. For these reasons, one can talk about adjustments in order to make the interpretation of the whole event more accurate. However, there is no doubt that even the producers choose from the available materials what will be suitable for depicting the scene.

## 7. Conclusion

*Band of Brothers* book is one of the most essential works in the field of the historical genre. The famous American historian Stephen Ambrose was able to gain the readers' interest primarily with his ability to retell the fates of those who directly participated in WWII. He achieved this thanks to the method of oral history collecting, based on listening to the memories of veterans and their retelling in the form of a coherent story. Although this method is not the most suitable for collecting accurate historical data, it has the indisputable advantage of bringing history closer to ordinary people. Just as a grandfather tells his grandson about life in his youth and the grandson listens with interest, readers read with enthusiasm the pages describing the fates of individuals twisted by a world conflict of catastrophic proportions.

It was the book telling the story of the Easy Company that caught the attention of producer Steven Spielberg, a big fan of American military history, including World War II. Spielberg's innovative style, often controversial but popular, gave birth to many other works of war cinema, especially the film *Saving Private Ryan*, which earned attention for its very unusual approach. While war film-makers tend to portray American soldiers as heroes capable of sacrificing themselves in a heroic fight for their country and thus ensuring their country significant victories and the certainty of safety, Spielberg, in the film *Saving Private Ryan*, depicted not only the heroism of American soldiers as mentioned above but also the horrors that war brings with it. His effort is to point out that although American soldiers are good men, war is not glorious or heroic, but dark, dirty and hopeless. Thanks to this approach, the film gained recognition and interest from the general public. So Spielberg, encouraged by this success, rushed to develop another similar effort, the *Band of Brothers* series. Processing the fates of war veterans, their sorrows, pain and desire to end the fight as soon as possible and return home brought another wave of interest in the fates of people fighting in WWII.

This work aimed to compare the popular series with its book model. As mentioned in the chapter dealing with film adaptation theory, adapting a book into a film does not only mean transforming it into a new medium because each medium has its own rules and specifics. One of the biggest problems is the time requirement. While a book can easily be read for several days, a film should have footage corresponding to the maximum length of one evening, i.e.



generally tens of minutes. For that reason, producers had to select only the most important sections of the work and assemble them in such a way that they were faithful to their original and that the resulting work had its quality.

Three sections from different episodes were selected for the analysis, differing in concept and length. Each section was selected from a different part of the work so that the entire series was covered despite the limitations in the length of the work. The selection criteria are described in more detail in the individual subsections of the sixth chapter. In the analysis itself, the knowledge of another American historian, M. Bando, was used. He devoted himself to historical research about American units in WWII and even prepared his own criticism of the *Band of Brothers* series. Lake's method of film adaptation was also used here, focusing precisely on the search for key elements in the narrative and their subsequent adaptation to a new medium. Other vital sources in the analysis are Ambrose's book, on which the entire adaptation is based, and podcasts, which reveal the behind-the-scenes of the entire series.

The initial expectation was that the series was a faithful adaptation. This hypothesis was based on the general attitude of the audience and the creators because both sides considered the adaptation accurate, and maintaining fidelity to the original book was also the production team's goal. These expectations were largely confirmed because, in the analytical part, crucial moments were found that happened as described in the book. However, it turned out that the series went even further in its effort to keep true to what actually happened. In two of the three sections analysed, the series also contains scenes not mentioned in the book in detail or at all. Those scenes were added based on the film makers's interviews with the veterans but other things were added just for the sake of effective storytelling. From the available sources, it can be concluded that this was done based on further research by the production team, who also used the method of gathering oral history, which then serves as a source for both the book and the series.

Precisely because of the mentioned fact, the analysis results can be interpreted in two possible ways. If the aim was to compare the series' fidelity to its literary source, it could be said that the adaptation remains faithful in most pivotal moments. However, some scenes are not found in the book and appear in analysed episodes. The second, more complex conclusion is that

although the work does not remain utterly faithful to its original book, it remains faithful to the event itself, which is also an essential element for creating and interpreting the entire narrative. Since the producers used the same sources used in the book's writing, and the original book's author also collaborated on creating the series, and even themselves conducted further interviews with the veterans, these additional scenes can be considered an extension of the telling story rather than a different interpretation.

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