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Second World War in American film

David Šafránek

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Jméno a příjmení: **David ŠAFRÁNEK**
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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Druhá světová válka se stala námětem celé řady literárních i filmových děl. Cílem bakalářské práce je porovnat odlišné způsoby zpracování tohoto tématu ve zvolených filmech. V úvodu práce student stručně nastíní historický kontext a uvede zvolené filmy. Svůj výběr zdůvodní. Jádrem práce pak bude analýza filmů z hlediska toho, jak s tématem pracují a jakými filmovými prostředky dosahují svého účinku. Svá tvrzení bude student ilustrovat ukázkami z primárních děl a rovněž konzultovat/konfrontovat s odbornou sekundární literaturou. Závěrem porovná, jak jednotlivá díla k válečné problematice přistupují.

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Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSC.

děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2008

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne

DAVID ŠAFRÁNEK

Rád bych zde poděkoval všem těm, kteří mi pomáhali při vzniku této bakalářské práce. Především bych rád poděkoval vedoucí mé bakalářské práce Mgr. Šárce Bubíkové, Ph.D. za navržení tématu, ochotné konzultace a cenné rady.

Anotace:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá současným americkým válečným filmem zasazeným do druhé světové války. Uvádí historický i kulturní kontext vzniku valéčného filmu. Dále se zabývá zavedenými postupy ve válečných filmech v obecné rovině. Na vzorku tří filmů poté ukazuje rozdílné přístupy k látce a zároveň poukazuje na společné elementy.

Klíčová slova:

Druhá světová válka, Americký film, válečný film, Spielberg, Bay, Eastwood

Annotation:

This bachelor paper deals with contemporary American war film set in the Second World War. It presents historical and cultural context of war film evolution. Then it deals with established procedures in war films in general. On the sample of three films it then presents various approaches to the topic and at the same time points out common elements.

Keywords:

Second World War, American film, war film, Spielberg, Bay, Eastwood

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1. Introduction

Wars have been an important part of human history ever since. People have fought in wars since the very first years of human existence. It has been always very similar, only with different technologies. Many people died and many were injured practically for no reason (with few exceptions, like wars for independence). With a little portion of sarcasm, maybe they did die for a reason. It is not very good excuse for killing people, however a whole new genre of stories evolved. War songs, war legends, war novels and last but not least, war films. This genre is here to capture the monstrosity of wars and it does not change much through years, just like the war. Unlike the war novels or war legends, in war films can be seen the war in motion. And in case of talented actors, director and the rest of the team, the viewer may be dragged to the battlefield and experience the terrors of war. Someone might even think that this kind of demonstration of wars can people stop from fighting, unfortunately, that is wrong. Probably nothing can stop people from fighting senseless wars. Even though they do not save mankind, war films have lot of means how to express the nature of war and how to change someone's point of view.

In this paper are discussed three contemporary American war films from various points of view like script, direction, music, earning power and last but not least the depiction of war. The theoretical part firstly describes the history of film, especially the evolution of war film genre, and briefly describes the history of Second World War (WWII) as well. Secondly the theoretical part names the rules and clichés of war film genre which can be observed in contemporary examples. The analytic part discusses separately three contemporary American war films (*Pearl Harbor*, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, *Saving Private Ryan*) and the conclusion summarizes and compares those films. The aim is to analyze contemporary war film, define rules of the genre and also to find genre innovations in the analyzed films.

2. War film history

The film itself was invented during the last decade of the 19th century, say Bordwell and Thompson (p. 21). According to them, the first experiments with sound and color took place in the twenties (p. 229). These are the milestones of the film history. However, the evolution of each genre differs.

Although the American Civil war was not the first war ever, the first war film ever is about this war. Older events were pictured later, after the potential of this genre was fully discovered. In Dějiny filmu, *Birth of a Nation* is the first war film that Bordwell and Thompson mention. This supposed first war film was made during the First World War (WWI) and it was an independent, silent (all films were silent those days) film consisting of twelve episodes. It was created by one of the pioneers in the early film industry, director D.W. Griffith and it was accused of racism by many newspapers those days (p. 81). After *The Birth of a Nation*, a great number of other war films have been and still are produced. And such films will be undoubtedly produced in the future as well.

Here is a closer look at the history of this genre. Bordwell and Thompson explain how American film industry came to control European cinemas. Films were a great source of income since their very beginning. New cinema buildings flooded the whole America and the potential of film industry was fully used. Still, the appetite for money was not satisfied. Next station on the railroad to wealth was Europe. Nowadays American film industry occupies first positions in Europe and many other box offices. But in the pioneering days of cinema-going, the European cinemas were playing mostly European movies. It was the WWI that changed this situation. European countries concentrated on the war and did not have any other money to spend. America of course shot movies with the same powder as before the war (p. 64). As cinemas were filled with American movies, people had the opportunity to see *Shoulder Arms* and other war films. For example *The Big Parade*, this had an enormous success abroad, according to Bordwell and Thomson (p. 160). Newly discovered target market was a good propaganda target

as well. And that is might have led to the fact that “war films as a major film genre emerged after the outbreak of World War I.” (War and anti-war films, filmsite.org).

Not many years after the WWI, the WWII began. The historical background is discussed later in this paper. The war film evolution during the WWII did not stop. In times of the WWII, films were already very authoritative means of addressing people, because America was fully using the potential of film industry (the most earning film ever is *Gone with the wind* from 1939 and it actually earned most of its money as it was released, not during the re-releases – All time box office, boxofficemojo.com) and this led to the spread of propaganda through films and through documents. “Uncle Sam wants you” and “your will must triumph” were the main messages delivered to a large amount of people thanks to the film industry. Besides documents persuading to join the army, or at least agree with the war, showing how are soldiers trained and telling what has the other side done, there were also fictional stories (although based on the true events), of course. “There they were (the producers), making dozens of skillful propaganda films, depicting enemy evil and supporting the fortitude of America’s British, Russian and French allies”, says Sklar (p. 250) to this topic. In the war times, Hollywood produced almost the same number of war films as before the war and they were very successful and according to Sklar, the movies became more popular than ever (p. 251).

Later the war film genre was influenced by Korean War films, Vietnam War films and most recently ‘war on terror’ films (these are very specific, because the war with terrorists is very different from classic fighting on battlefields, good example of this sub-genre is *The Kingdom*). Vietnam War films, for example, are very naturalistic. Maybe because many Americans consider Vietnam War a big mistake (USA Today/CNN Gallup poll, usatoday.com) and these tragic films just assure them of their opinion (*Platoon*, *Apocalypse now*). Besides these ideologically independent films, some propagandistic films are still ordered by the government. Due to these new war films, the WWII films were set back a little, however in recent fifteen years the WWII films experienced a great comeback. With new means of expression and the old schemas and clichés. If there were no wars, there would not be any war films. And as this paper deals with WWII films, next part presents the basic WWII historical facts.

3. Historical background of WWII

The knowledge of the historical background is important when talking about WWII films. WWII is a very complicated historical event (partly because lots of very detailed information is available) and no war film can waste time re-telling the basic historical background.

Marie Sochrová deals with WWII in her book *Dějiny v kostce II*. The war began in September 1939. In Europe, the allied countries were astonished by Hitler's aggressive attack and were slowly falling under his control (p. 124,125). It is very uncertain, how would the war have ended if he had won the Battle over Britain. Luckily for the civilized Europe, as Binnendijk says in his book, the RAF pilots defended England against Hitler's attack (p. 143). Hitler then turned eastwards, broke the truce and made the same mistake as had made Napoleon more than hundred years before Hitler. He did not underestimate the Soviets, but the freezing winter. The German forces fought hard in the Soviet Russia, however the Soviet army was enormous and the winter extremely cold. The Soviets did not achieve the victory thanks to any qualities. They achieved victory thanks to their quantity. "The Soviets outnumbered the Germans in almost every category, especially manpower", says Maddox to this topic (p. 79). Yet the Soviets did not only resist the attack, they counter-attacked the shocked Germany. According to Sochrová, in summer 1944, US soldiers landed in Normandy and reinforced other allied forces in Europe. This double pressure was too much for Hitler and in May 1945, the war was over in Europe (p. 129,133). Zalampas states in his book that Hitler committed suicide in 1945 (p. 136).

At the times of Hitler's first attacks, Americans had their doctrine about not interfering in other countries' problems. However, as Sochrová says, the Japanese attacked USA in Pearl Harbor, destroyed the USA base there and USA entered the war (p. 128). Pearl Harbor is therefore a milestone for USA and a very important part of their history. Sochrová then states that the USA agreed to help European countries with Hitler and at the same time fought their own war in the Pacific. The Japanese overestimated their

own power and USA had no problem defeating them. USA used the atomic bomb for the first and second time in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and after this demonstration, the Japanese surrendered and the war ended in summer 1945 (p. 135).

Much other information is worth mentioning, at least about German ideology. Sochrová describes this ideology in her book. Hitler was a dictator and he maintained ideology called Nazism in Germany. These Nazis had their own salutations, uniforms or values. They are most remarkable for their racism, especially towards Jewish community. Jewish citizens of Nazi-occupied countries were sent to concentration camps where they were killed by thousands. The final number is in millions (p. 119). This distinguishes WWII from all other wars.

4. The contemporary war film and its rules and clichés

The most pictured war is WWII and it wins this race by landslide. According to wwii-movies.com, more than four hundred English speaking war films picture this unhappy event (Movie list, wwii-movies.com). On the other hand, imdb.com provides a list of all films with 'WWI' tag and although not only English speaking films are counted in, it lists only 325 titles (Movie Keyword Analyzer, imdb.com). That is quite a difference with no doubt, so there must be something that makes WWII so special. Something that makes people love Messerschmidts more than Fokker triplanes, Mausers more than Lewis guns and Zyklon B more than Yperite.

The key to this mystery might be simply money, because in Hollywood very often money determines whether a film will be produced and released in cinemas, as stated in many glosses on the internet (Hollywood v roce 2006: Revoluce nebo K.O.?, moviezone.cz). Despite the fact that many people love to see great made up stories, with even unnatural components, "based on a true story" is still great bait for potential viewers. And many people surely remember going to cinemas with school to see historical films, just because they picture a real event. But WWII films are not leaders

of box office statistics (All time box office, boxofficemojo.com) and few school screenings do not help it much.

The second possible reason is propaganda. As written above, it was hidden in documents shot during the war as well as in films that were shot soon after it. Not only hidden, despite the director's desire to express his attitude, propaganda was one of the main purposes to create such films. The film very simply modifies someone's attitude or opinion (or makes the opinion stronger). The antagonists and protagonists are present here, like in every other story. The point is that the WWII films are based on true events. So the protagonists and antagonists are real and the film leads to a conclusion, that the film antagonists are real people, who are really bad. These films frequently picture the 'well-known truth' that is accepted by the target society. The bad and the good characters are almost always divided just as the current society needs them to (this is of course a problem of many films based on true events). Earlier raised the number of WWII films almost surely the interests of the nation. Bordwell and Thompson stated that "after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the film industry started to fully support the war" (p. 243). And today (or in the last 20 years) there is a trend to come back to roots, to redefine genre rules or to bring old successful trademarks back. Large number of WWII films from older times provides something to return to, something to improve and honor. And the honoring and improving is connected with 'rules' and clichés of WWII genre.

In WWII films, the Nazis (or the 'other side', to be accurate) are always the bad ones. They are very similar in all aspects of human character. They are always clever, cunning, they look like killing-machines with no feelings, and they give everything to the war. They do very bad things, things that an US Army soldier would never have done, because he is simply better person. A contemporary example is Major König from *Enemy at the gates*, which is presented as an international co-production, but has all aspects of Hollywood film and is mainly from Hollywood. Major König looks very Nazi; he has light hair, deep and cunning blue eyes, sharp nose, he is tall, he always wears uniform and that uniform is perfectly ironed and clean even after a battle (in American war films, uniforms are being worn all the time, although it will be quite interesting to see US Soldier in his pajamas or German officer in socks and undershirt).

Furthermore, almost no motivation is presented in the case of Major König. In contrast are US Soldiers, who have more complex thoughts. König only wants to win (beat his opponent). And although he has not much of a motivation, he does the worst things (he hangs a little boy who betrayed him). The Nazis have no families, no hobbies, literally no life besides the soldiers' life. Not only have all the Nazis the same characteristics, they are presented very often as a whole, as an army of unknown people as well (Major König is an exception here). The film industry is evolving really fast so maybe one day there will be a good Nazi soldier with a conflict in his heart; for now the Nazi soldiers are just bloodthirsty creatures.

On the other hand, the examples of good character are of course US soldiers. The US soldiers (or just the protagonists, to be accurate) are the exact opposite of the antagonists. They are all good, they stick together like a team, they like each other and they always treat the injured ones (and often save them). If, in some case, they have some bad characteristics, they are the black sheep of the group. *Band of brothers* is a good example, to represent these types of soldiers. Here in this mini-series (produced by Steven Spielberg) the soldiers all have their stories (they have families, homes and memories and there can be seen scenes from their training), their motivations (they often just want to survive and come home, but the Germans have no presented motivation at all) and more complex characteristics with good and bad attributes (however, only some of them have the bad attributes, generally the side characters). Very frequent character is some sort of superior officer, who is very tough on the surface, although inside he is a good man. He is appears in *Band of Brothers* and in some of the discussed films likewise. The group of protagonists is very often a mix of various personalities. It consists for example of a skilled sniper, a grenade thrower, a soldier of foreign origin and others and they form a perfect team.

These character stereotypes on both sides are the most frequent clichés in war films, but others can be observed too. The films almost always show the Allies and their actions and see the war from their point of view. Not many (if there are any at all) films show the war from the point of the Nazis (this is slightly connected to the character cliché). The films follow the stories of allied soldiers and show the enemy only as an army of

evil soldiers. The narrative is never complicated; the story is simply to get from point A to point B (*Band of Brothers*) or to defeat the enemy (*Enemy at the Gates*), sometimes by defending position, sometimes by other ways. To the simplicity of the story contributes the fact, that in war films happen no plot twists. Furthermore, these films do not have any 'poetic justice', because survival cannot be earned in them. As long as the character is necessary for the plot to move on, he is immortal, he can run through gunfire or survive helpless situations, but he cannot earn survival by being good or earn punishment by being evil, as he can in other genres (action films, romantic comedies). It is worth mentioning that there are war film subgenres, for example films about escaping from prison (WWII captivity tales like *Hart's war*), which stick to different rules in some ways and yet keep some of the presented rules or clichés.

This ends the part of contemporary war film in general and separate analyses follow.

5. Pearl Harbor

5.1. Armageddon in WWII setting

Pearl Harbor may be called Armageddon in WWII setting. It is well known amongst film fans, that *Armageddon* is a love story with the background of an asteroid falling on Earth. *Pearl Harbor* might be considered a love story, which has one famous war event only as a background. That is a very similar concept. This film is an attempt to create a war and romance film. It has many signs of all previous works done by Michael Bay. Actually, all of his works carry many signs of their predecessors; he could almost register his style of direction as a trademark. Michael Bay started to develop his own style through music videos for Meatloaf (Biography for Michael Bay, imdb.com) and when he got the chance to make a Hollywood film, he gave it his best shot. *Bad boys* were very pert start and then he shot *The Rock*, very popular action film (Fourth best film from 1996 in Žebříčky, čsfd.cz). Michael Bay's films all have very similar visual aspects (and scripts as well, but that is not intentional). The camera often slowly rotates around people (or objects), someone is slowly walking (or something else is happening) in the sunset, supported by touchy music. He uses camera filters in every film, mainly

blue and orange ones and that contributes to the fact that his films look similar. But not only are his film distinguished by the style of filming. Moreover, he always hires famous actors, uses a lot of CGI tricks and hires the best composers to compose music for his films. Someone might argue that these are not distinguishing characteristics of his films, however not many directors can get such a large amount of money and spend it all to hire the best staff in every way. It means his films are very expensive. Not many directors can afford all these aspects, but Michael Bay's films are almost guaranteed success, he has never filmed a losing film (Michael Bay, boxofficemojo.com) and so the studios give him very generous budgets for his films. The best words to describe his style are 'MTV Style'. The question is how does this style match together with a very important event in American history.

There is a song about *Pearl Harbor* film, from the puppet film *Team America*. The song goes:

I miss you more than Michael Bay missed the mark, when he made Pearl Harbor.
I miss you more than that movie missed the point, and that's an awful lot, girl .
And now, now you've gone away, and all I'm trying to say,
Is Pearl Harbor sucked and I miss you

I need you like Ben Affleck needs acting school, he was terrible in that film.
I need you like Cuba Gooding needed a bigger part, he's way better than Ben Affleck.
And now all I can think about is your smile, and that sh***y movie too,
Pearl Harbor sucked and I miss you

Why does Michael Bay get to keep on making movies?
I guess Pearl Harbor sucked
Just a little bit more than I miss you.

Team America is a puppet musical from the creators of *South Park*. Above all the songs in *Team America*, this one was the most remarkable. Whether it is right or not is answered at the end of this chapter.

5.2. Unusual approaches

As can be clearly seen just by the topic of *Pearl Harbor*, the director Michael Bay is trying to create a piece of art, an unusual film that will be remembered, although that is quite difficult from his position. When his only objective in his previous films was only to entertain people and himself, it is very hard to suddenly switch and not only entertain, but to deliver a message as well. In a fact, to entertain and to deliver a message is something that only the best directors can do. How hard he tries can be seen from the very beginning. The film begins with the shot of sun setting down, centered just to look like a Japanese flag, with the only exception that Japan is called 'Empire of the rising sun' and in this shot the sun sets down.

The story starts very simply, showing the two main protagonists as best friends since always; they can be seen as kids, trying to fly a plane. In the next shot they are already grown up, showing off on some military base in New York. This is very common method, exposition of the plot through fast-forwarding (to show the protagonists as kids and then as almost adults, it evokes the feeling that the viewer has known them since they were kids), but Bay does not tend to use it. Another common instrument of exposition of the plot, which is very unusual for Bay, is a retrospective (a character describes events that had happened to him in the past, there might be more characters putting together the events like a puzzle). Retrospective is a great instrument to make the plot more interesting (for example Iñarritu's films *21 grams*, *Amores Perros*) and to be not so ordinary for a while, when it is used properly. However, here it is a little confusing. In this case is probably important the fact, that Bay does not use retrospective and that is why he is not quite familiar with it.

To set the right period atmosphere is very important, especially with historical films. After the retrospective, a great period atmosphere builder emerges. A scene in the forties club, in the real American club that comes to mind first, evokes the atmosphere of the period. Clubs with quickstep music played by band, which consists of bass, trumpets, singer (who is often a singer and a host) and other instruments, clubs with period costumes, clubs with everyone smiling and dancing to this music, clubs with soldiers wearing uniforms, clubs open always only when the sun is already gone, are a

great instrument to set up period atmosphere. Also many details in other locations contribute to the period atmosphere; there are period cars, posters ('Uncle Sam wants you' and others) and no computer-like inventions. And as all other Bay's films take place in present times, this can be considered an unusual approach.

Soon, the whole story moves to Hawaii and Europe. The main pair is separated, so that the story takes more tragic direction (but nobody cares, as the romantic line is very chaotic). The main male character moves to Europe. This part is very interesting, as it looks very conformable to Czech film *Tmavomodrý svět* directed by Jan Svěrák. No information is available, whether Bay has seen *Tmavomodrý svět*, but the Britain military bases look very similar in both films and have very similar atmosphere. Just like in *Tmavomodrý svět*, the main character is a stranger to the base and everything is very foreign for him. Bay uses here his favorite blue filter, which is mentioned earlier in this paper, to make it even more strange and cold. This is supported by the English overcast weather. The air fights are very conformable to *Tmavomodrý svět* as well. Someone might really think Bay has seen it and probably likes the atmosphere. Unfortunately, the air fights in Pearl Harbor are very chaotic, even more than in *Tmavomodrý svět*, so the only shot, that can be seen clearly, is the main character crashing into water after being hit. This shot resembles the death of Tamtam in *Tmavomodrý svět*. And so here in Europe the main character dies (but not for long) and the plot moves back to Hawaii.

Hawaii is in great contrast with cold Europe. This can be clearly seen in scenes, where the main character and his love are writing letters to each other and the shots from Hawaii and Europe alternate. Hawaii is hot and unlike the fighting Europe, here it is all calm and peaceful and the sun shines all day long. Local officers' club is a real Hawaiian pub known from all the travel agencies' advertisements. Apposite in this part is the way hospital is introduced. The nurses have a lot of free time and their only trouble is to treat sun burnt soldiers or to torture the new girls. The soldiers here drive cabriolets and play with girls all the time and the most serious situation of the day is a box match, where all the soldiers can place bets.

A love scene occurs after a while and it is not as ordinary as someone may expect from Bay. The participants both go to a hangar and when someone is coming, they hide amongst parachutes hanging from the ceiling. Now they chase each other amongst these white parachutes, so it looks like a dream or imagination. As they are somewhere in those parachutes, few times we do not see them, we see only their shadows kissing. The filter in this scene is blue again, only this time it makes the scene not cold, foreign or strange, but more unreal and magical. Such approaches are very unusual for Bay.

Then is all interrupted by Japanese attack and this part is discussed separately. It is already mentioned earlier in this paper that in every Bay's film is an American flag somewhere. The banner with stripes and stars proudly flaps in the air in his every film and it is really very significant for him. Here the flag is more than once. In the beginning, the flag is in the retrospective on the wall just for everybody to see it. In another shot it may symbolize the whole nation. When the Japanese attack comes to an end, the lacerated flag can be seen in the water with hundreds of soldiers who escaped from sinking battleships drowning around it. This is one of the best shots of the film. Unfortunately, besides this shot and the very first shot of the setting sun, the film does not offer any other symbolic shots.

The scene in the hospital during and after the attack is quite different from the attack and it is filmed in much more interesting way, so it is mentioned in this part. The camera shakes to create documentary atmosphere (this feature is discussed later), lot of various sounds and strange sound effects attack the viewer's receptors and there are so many patients that even the camera 'does not know', whom to film first. All this greatly brings up the chaotic atmosphere, when the hospitals are full and many other patients are waiting outside. And there is a shot, where the hospital is seen from some patient's point of view. All characters are blurred and it demonstrates that he is so seriously hurt, that he cannot see properly.

These are some distinctive unusual approaches in this film; very interesting is for example the last described scene in the hospital. Overall, there are not enough unusual approaches to distinguish this film from ordinary action film. Still it is more than in any other Bay's film.

5.3. The war

As was mentioned and as it is obvious from the title, the film pictures the attack on Pearl Harbor and the immediate American revenge. At the beginning of the attack, the director turns the holiday atmosphere he was building all the time to good account. The feeling that nothing wrong is going to happen is kept until the very first second of the attack. The soldiers play dice, some of them sleep after a party, just ordinary morning in all aspects and even when the soldiers who clean the board see Japanese air fighters in the distance, they do not realize anything. Then the first bomb is fired, the camera follows its track right to the first explosion and the calm morning is very violently disturbed.

The war is a big spectacle action scene in this case. It is a colorful, very dynamic action with lots of cuts. The viewers will probably not worry about dying people because all the dying in this film is very impersonal, every dead body is just a collateral damage more than an American brave soldier (or a bad Japanese soldier). That may be caused by the large number of dying soldiers or simply by the action style of this scene. Bay is purely action film director (all films he has ever made are action or mixture of action and another genre, for example action and romance) and so the scene of attack on Pearl Harbor is another typical action. It tries to amaze with special effects (and in 2001 it could); the bombs are computer generated as well as the Japanese planes in some shots and lot of CGI explosions and destructions appear on the screen. The soldiers die in almost every shot, but they die only as a matter of coincidence somewhere in the background, either because the Japanese airplanes shoots them and they just fall down, or they are only supposed to be death, because a bomb exploded in a crowded place. It is not necessary for the war films to be brutal, but this film is far too soft. The reason is obvious: the kids were allowed to watch it. This violence compromise increased incomes by sacrificing realness. The realness is pushed down by the main characters as well. As the soldiers are dying around, the main characters seem immortal and run unharmed through the gunfire. After the attack, the survivors walk through a large

hangar full of coffins, but it feels almost like they are empty, due to the soulless soldiers.

Next piece of war can be seen when the Americans take up on revenge mission and attack Tokyo. This attack is only aircraft attack and so lots of explosions appear again, some buildings in Tokyo are destroyed and then a little fight evolves after the landing. Here, as the end of the film is near, suddenly the soldiers are not as immortal as they were and one of the protagonists dies (it is supposed to be very sad).

Although the director tried to make a little more complex film and used some unusual approaches in the film, in the attack scene he was not able to suppress his action shooting style and to capture the feeling of the war.

5.4. Characters and plot

As in most Bay's films, all the characters are very simple and flat (like in *Armageddon* or *Transformers*). For example, in the beginning, a captain at a military base is introduced, who is very hard on everybody, although deep in his heart he is a good man and a true American, like it is mentioned earlier in this paper. Squad of the protagonists' colleagues and the main female character appear also somewhere in the beginning. Colleagues are of course good guys, to make them look like a bunch of different characters, one of them stammers. That is really not very inventive. Band of different characters is often included in this kind of films, only excuse may be that this film is focused on the central pair of friends. The main female character is of course beautiful and very kind and means no harm to anyone, but her heart is confused. All characters lack any deeper emotions or more complex characteristic.

And then there are the Japanese, who plan to attack Pearl Harbor. The Japanese appear every fifteen minutes in a short scene where they just plan the attack and look very cruel and very evil and are all dressed in black. If there is stated in the previous paragraph that the characters are flat, then it must be said that the Japanese are completely empty with only one characteristic - evil. No motivation can be observed in their actions, they just plan to attack Pearl Harbor and fight America. Or a slight possibility exists, that in these

short cuts with Japanese generals, the director assumes some kind of historical knowledge, so he does not 'waste time' showing some character or motivation on the Japanese side. This assume of historical knowledge can be clearly seen for example in *The Passion of the Christ* by Mel Gibson, where the film does not introduce or explain absolutely anything.

Not only the characters are simple and flat, the plot in Bay's films is not very interesting or complex as well (confusing does not mean complex). This film is a mixture of a romance film and a war film. Two soldiers in a military base, one woman, a relationship, broken relationship caused by death of a boyfriend, new relationship, return of the original boyfriend alive, Japanese attack, American revenge, tragic death of the new boyfriend, unhappy end. While examining the film structure further, this film is more romance, than war. While in other war films the atmosphere of war is build from the beginning, here is only the Japanese attack and the rest of the film is the tragic romance, set on a military base.

In respect of what is written above, the song presented in the beginning of this analysis is absolutely right. This film misses any point. It is fun to watch, however from such an important and incredible moment of American history one could make a better film, with better characters and less action war scene.

6. Saving Private Ryan

6.1. Hollywood mastermind

Probably every director wants to make a good film (and successful film), to make a better film than his colleagues. The qualities of a certain film may be assessed in many ways, for example the cooperation with actors, the plot, the action scenes, or the invention. Invention determines how interesting the film is; invention creates unusual approaches. The director with a great invention in his films is surely Steven Spielberg. Spielberg is an example of 'Hollywood mastermind'. He has his own production company, DreamWorks (notice the little SKG under their logo, S stands for Spielberg)

and so he can get from his studio the amount of money he needs to make a film he wants.

In the beginning of the nineties, some directors decided to make historical films from recent history. This is explained by Robert Sklar in his book *Movie-made America*. He says that these directors with their films (Oliver Stone – *JFK*, Spike Lee – *Malcolm X*) “set out to grapple with social amnesia” (p. 271). Steven Spielberg is considered one of these pioneers of new historical films as Sklar mentions Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*. He as a Jew might have a strong feeling for this problem and *Schindler’s List* might be considered his ‘opus magnum’. Yet, Steven Spielberg has many great projects in his filmography and almost every second film that Spielberg makes would be a work of a lifetime for many other directors. Therefore, after *Schindler’s List* he directed and produced other historical films and all of them were just as epic and full of ideas as *Schindler’s List* (unlike many other directors, who can easily run out of ideas after such big project). Although Spielberg is one of the most important persons in Hollywood today, he has won the Academy Award (Oscar) only two times, as the Oscar database says (oscars.org). And one of those Oscars he got for his WWII film, *Saving Private Ryan*. The man who pours water on sidewalks and streets just to make them look better now spills dust on the ground to create a WWII feeling.

6.2. Unusual approaches

Steven Spielberg’s films are a good example to understand film critics, because even ordinary viewer might after few Spielberg’s films find out that they are somehow different from others. That they are somehow more entertaining than the other films and that the other films are missing something. Spielberg leaves no time for viewers to be bored in his films. And *Saving Private Ryan* is a great example of it. *Saving Private Ryan* is typical war film. Almost the whole film, except for few minutes at the beginning and few minutes in the end, takes place at the battlefield.

The whole film begins with American flag flapping on the flagpole and then we see a man with his family in some sort of a park. It is revealed that it is not a park, it is

Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial (a cemetery that looks similar to the famous Arlington), military graveyard with rows of white crosses (or David's stars). As this man walks through the graves on Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, it all looks like an ending of the film, the music is comforting and calm and while the man kneels to one of the graves, someone may expect thanks and credits. Instead, the viewer is thrown right to the D-Day, to Normandy, at the moment of landing.

The film has a documentary atmosphere, while picturing the war, and so it has very high level of realness. No filters are applied (or such filters that make it even more realistic) and the camera is shaking. Shaking camera is very popular these days to evoke documentary atmosphere, especially with films based on true events (*United 93*), but in 1998 it was not so popular as today. Nevertheless, it helped Spielberg a lot with dragging the viewers inside the film. In the beginning, it is very uncertain, who is the main character. The shaking camera moves among US soldiers and every time focuses on someone else. For a moment the camera even dives under the water, just to watch two soldiers being shot and one being drown.

The whole D-Day action is a chaos. There is non-stop gunfire, every few seconds a mine blows up, artilleries batter the shore and to all this, the sea blusters. In this setting can be seen large numbers of soldiers, they are running there and back, dying and getting hurt. Suddenly, all the sound stops and we see Captain Miller (played by Tom Hanks, one of Spielberg's favorites), which signs that he is sort of out of his mind and is not concentrated on the battle, he just stares. And this also signs that Miller may be the main character. When he comes back to his mind, the sound of war comes back too. This feature is used one more time when a grenade blows up close to Captain Miller, to evoke the feeling of temporary deafness. All these features and many others (naturalistic scenes, which are discussed later, clouded weather and so on) maintain the monstrous atmosphere of D-Day, where anything can happen and everyone's life trembles on the balance. The landing sequence ends with Captain Miller looking back on the shore, agreeing that it is 'quite a view'. The last shot on the shore is like a conclusion of this 30 minutes long action scene. The shore is now calm, no gunfire, no mine blowing, even the sea does not bluster. The shore is full of dead bodies, body parts, guns and

helmets. They are everywhere, along with many dead fish. Many dead soldiers and many dead fish lie on the shore together and bring up thoughts about the vanity of wars.

Distinct innovation by some directors is, that they pay attention to ordinary things, that no one other would pay attention to (for example Quentin Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction* shows gangsters as ordinary people, talking about McDonalds or foot massages). Spielberg's soldiers, fighting their way through the shore, have their guns wrapped in plastics, so they become water-resistant and sand-resistant. To be able to see around the corner, the soldiers use a mirror, which is probably taken from a car. Ordinary viewers may likewise wonder, where is the brave captain from, how come he is so great man and good soldier. And so do Spielberg's soldiers place bets and try to guess, where is the captain from, however he is not willing to tell them.

Very interesting is Spielberg's attitude to the fact that soldiers during the WWII very often traveled across the world and visited many places. Most people take some souvenirs, while visiting foreign country. The soldiers are not used to do such things or to even care about this fact in other films. So in Spielberg's film captain Miller collects earth samples as a kind of a souvenir. To remember all the dead men for further reports, not only does Captain Miller collect their dog tags, he also writes notes and when being asked about his losses, he looks for his piece of paper, almost like if it was a shopping list and then just reads the numbers. These scenes make the protagonists 'more human' and the film looks more like 'from real life'.

Spielberg has a very good sense of humor as well. Some of his films are supposed to be funny (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Terminal*, *Catch me if you can*), but *Saving Private Ryan* is a war film. Yet there are few scenes where someone sarcastic enough can laugh. For example when captured German soldier begs for his life, he starts to sing the American anthem and he talks about Betty Bop.

Another example is connected to the storyline. The group of main characters tries to find Private Ryan and send him home, because all of his brothers were killed in action. Somewhere in the middle of the film, they find one soldier named Ryan. Even the name is correct, James Ryan. Captain Miller starts to explain him that he is being sent home because his brothers died. The soldier starts to cry and cries very much. Captain Miller

then says that all his brothers were killed in action, to which this Ryan replies that his brothers are still in grammar school and that this is not possible. Funny moments like these also help Spielberg to create more human atmosphere.

An exhibition of Spielberg's directing mastery is a scene, where Captain Miller and another soldier walk through a camp. The scene is 1 minute and 14 seconds long and it is shot without any single cut. It is very rare these days, although even more interesting is the composition of this scene. Captain Miller with his companion walk through the US camp and discuss their new mission, at the same time, far away in the distance are marching soldiers. A row of soldiers with no visible beginning or ending occurs. Captain Miller and his friend cross a road and this road is very busy with transports and other vehicles. As they walk on, they pass many groups of soldiers, where some are chatting and some cleaning guns, packing or taking photographs. To make it even more complicated, they meet a group of German prisoners and end up meeting their own squad. This whole scene must have been extremely difficult to organize and film; everyone had to be at the right place at the right time.

Naturalism and violence are very popular in war films (Soldiers burnt by napalm in Mel Gibson's *We were soldiers*), although violent films almost automatically gain 'R' rating from MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America). The rating explanation on MPAA websites says: "children under 17 are not allowed to attend R-rated motion pictures unaccompanied by a parent or adult guardian." (What do the ratings mean?, mpaa.org) And then very often some theaters reject to screen such films. Spielberg was not afraid to make 'R' film and *Saving Private Ryan* is very violent film, especially in respect of the year it was released in (Spielberg's courage was well-founded, *Saving Private Ryan* is fifth most earning 'R' film in the history, number one is *The Passion of the Christ*).

The landing in Normandy provides many opportunities to be violent. The soldiers in their transports vomit (no one knows, whether it is the war or a sea sickness) and get shot in the head even before they have a chance to land. Shots in the head are the least violent and they just leave a big red hole in helmets and sometimes mess the camera's objective. More terrifying view occurs when the soldiers start stepping on mines. They

are either torn to pieces and they die, or in the worse case, they just lose one limb and continue to fight with a bloody stub coming from their body. A very naturalistic shot of a man with his hand torn off appears. He picks the missing part of his hand up and moves on. Some other soldiers can be seen set on fire and burned. Probably the most naturalistic shot of this part is the one with a soldier lying on the beach with a hole in his belly and some intestines coming out, screaming in pain. Captain Miller drags his wounded friend somewhere safer and when he checks him after few seconds, he finds out that he drags only a torso. The water closest to the shore turned red immediately after the first kills. Later in the film there is a reminder of this naturalism when one soldier is critically wounded, covered in blood, shuddering and screaming for help. These are only few examples to illustrate, how naturalistic this film is.

As I have mentioned few times, lot of explosions and fight scenes occur and of course many buildings are damaged or destroyed. Despite this fact, no CGI (Computer Generated Images) can be recognized by ordinary viewers. It means that all scenes in this film were shot without CGI or that the CGI are very good and they were used just to improve some explosions or to support the destruction of the buildings.

Besides these aspects, there are some others that deserve to be mentioned at least with few sentences. Very important is the role of the music in this film. The music was composed by famous film music composer John Williams (*Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Indiana Jones*, *E.T.*), who cooperates with Spielberg very often and could be considered his prominent composer (over 20 Spielberg's films have music done by Williams). The music in this film is not asserting, like in other Williams' soundtracks (*Star Wars*), it just helps to create the atmosphere. The music is of course not basically different from other Hollywood compositions, the violins slowly play the tune, supported by other instruments of the orchestra. However, recent trend is to have very distinctive music and this one is not. It is like a melancholic memory from the past, like a reminder of the terrible things in the past, but of heroism and friendship as well.

All these aspects I have mentioned help to create a very realistic and very human film. Supported by this realness and humanity, *Saving Private Ryan* successfully captures the

war as a hell-like event, where ordinary people died. In the next part are analyzed signs of religion and the goodness of characters in this film.

6.3. Religion and goodness

Earlier in this paper is stated, that Spielberg is a Jew. As a Jew, he surely has a very strong opinion on the WWII. *Schindler's List* focuses on Jews and concentration camps, so it seems more religiously oriented. However, the WWII film about American soldiers likewise provides a lot of opportunities to express religious attitudes. This film is filled with religion, both Jewish and Christian. The Jewish religion is represented by one of the members of the main squad and it seems that his main objective is to heckle the German soldiers with his religion. It must have been a great feeling for Spielberg to film such scenes and for all Jews to see them. The Jewish soldier greets the passing group of German prisoners by telling them: "Juden. I am Jude, you know? Juden." and showing them his Jewish necklace. When the squad searches a dead body and finds a knife, he takes it and claims that he will cut bread on Sabbath with it. Or he screams during a gunfight: "You were circumcised by our rabbi!"

Spielberg is probably a very religious person, because few other squad members, not being Jews, are very strong Christians and some of them cross themselves before entering battle. Or they kiss a cross, which they wear around their neck (Christianity is frequent amongst American citizens, but the other analyzed war films do not show such religious moments). Christianity is also pictured as a shelter, because the only place where they can rest and even sleep and feel safe is a church. Here in the church, right in the middle of WWII, they can chat and even laugh after many days, tell stories and reminisce. And when the final battle seems lost, the help comes from above, the airplane bombing saves the day and the soldiers look up to the sky, which might be another symbol of some divine power or might not, because airplanes were an important part of WWII battles.

From the point of goodness, Captain Miller or Ryan, whom the squad needs to save, are very good guys. The viewer is being convinced not to like Ryan, even when he is not on the screen, because the whole squad must go find him and that brings up the question,

whether the life of one is worth two other lives. Two times it seems that Ryan is found, for the first time it ends up with a funny situation, which is described earlier. Besides this, the first Ryan, the wrong Ryan, is very annoying. When they call him to report, he jogs to the officers and one of the squad members comments it with “I told you, he’s an asshole”. But near the end, when the real Ryan is found, he introduces himself by saving the whole squad and blowing up the enemy tank. And as he spends more and more time on the screen, he seems more and more worth saving. He does not want to go home, he wants to stay with his friends and fight, he tells funny stories and he looks very friendly.

A very interesting character from the point of goodness is Upham. Upham is a translator, he speaks French and German and he joins the squad. At the beginning he seems just too nice. When a German soldier is captured, he is the only one who talks to him and gives him some water and he supports the idea to let him go. How the prisoners are treated is discussed later. Near the end of the film, Upham transforms from too nice to a coward. This transformation happens in only one brilliant scene, where Upham’s fear causes the death of other soldier, because Upham is too afraid to go up the stairs and help his friend. Plus, the viewers see that upstairs are two soldiers fighting only with knives, while Upham has a rifle. He rehabilitates himself when, after being hidden behind sandbags for a long time, he stands up and kills about five German soldiers who were unprepared.

Talking about goodness, the Americans are not that good with prisoners in this film. Actually, they act exactly like you would expect the evil Germans to. The two German soldiers, who drop their rifles and put their hands up are killed with no question (these two German soldiers speak Czech. Either Spielberg does not recognize Czech from German, or he thinks of us as of Hitler’s allies). Other German prisoner is forced to dig graves for few corpses and then is supposed to be killed, even though he begs, but Upham interferes and the German’s life is saved.

On these few examples is presented that Spielberg’s characters are very interesting. The film ends with a great finale, which might and might not be considered a happy end. The mission was to save Private Ryan and that is accomplished. One son will come

home to mother Ryan, which is kind of a happy end. However, Ryan is not the main character, to whom the viewers have built some kind of relationship. The main character is Captain Miller and viewers hope that he gets back home, to his wife. Captain Miller unfortunately dies and so the film has strange kind of happy-unhappy ending.

The film was very well received by critics (rottentomatoes.com) and public (boxofficemojo.com) and as proves this analysis, it is very complex film with a large number of topics to discuss.

7. Letters from Iwo Jima

7.1. The American legend

Clint Eastwood is very famous in USA and he has been part of the film-making industry for half a century. He is known as an actor from many films, mainly westerns and action films. His most remarkable westerns are *Fistful of Dollars* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* where he was directed by Sergio Leone, one of the greatest western film directors ever. His career then turned to action films and consisted mainly of playing action heroes. One of these action heroes is Dirty Harry, who is a very popular character in the USA (and almost unknown in Czech Republic, in comparison to other action heroes) and has appeared in five films already. In the last twenty years, Eastwood does not act so much and when he does, his character is only supporting. He is becoming more and more appreciated by critics as a director, because so far he has won two Academy Awards for best director, as can be checked in the Oscar database (oscars.org). And his most recent films are getting great reviews on reputable websites (rottentomatoes.com). The first film directed by Eastwood is *Play Misty for me* from 1971 and since then, he is still improving (according to the last reviews and Oscar wins and nominations). Bordwell and Thompson express their opinion that during eighties and nineties he represented the best from Hollywood's tradition (p. 548). Besides directing and acting, he likewise produces a large number of his own films and composes music for some of them.

7.2. From the other point of view

As it is briefly mentioned earlier in this paper, most American war films picture the war from the point of view of American soldiers and because these soldiers are the main characters, they are the good ones. Eastwood decided to shoot two-film project and to see one battle from two different points of view. The first film, *The Flags of our Fathers* shows the battle of Iwo Jima from the American point of view with the traditional definition of American soldiers as the good characters and Japanese soldiers as the bad characters. But the second part of this project, *The Letters from Iwo Jima*, shows a different point of view. The film focuses on Japanese soldiers and their effort to defend Iwo Jima coast from American soldiers. This approach provides many interesting moments and differences from the classical war film.

The Japanese soldiers are presented as equal to Americans. In a fact, their life might seem much harder than the life of an American soldier. At the very beginning of the film, the Japanese are preparing some fortifications and they expect the American attack. They work really hard and while the superior officers are walking by, in the background are nonstop working Japanese soldiers (they only stop to salute a general who just arrived). They totally lack any motivation to fight. The American soldiers are very motivated in war films, for example in the earlier discussed *Pearl Harbor* they are driven by their nationalism and revenge. On the other hand, Japanese soldiers in *The Letters from Iwo Jima* say: “Damn this island. The Americans can have it.” That perfectly expresses how the Japanese soldiers in this film think of the war.

The Japanese soldiers are not as armed as US soldiers. They have just shirts and caps or headcloths, only some of them have helmets when the battle starts. Only the superior officers all have helmets and better uniforms. These superior officers are, unlike other war films, the evil ones. Exceptional is the general, who is the main good character. Apart from this exception, the good characters are the ordinary soldiers. On the contrary, the American soldiers are the good ones in ‘their’ films, however they often admire their superior officers, consider them to be authorities and listen to them (Captain Miller in *Saving Private Ryan*).

From the very beginning, Eastwood introduces characters via many different ways. When the Americans attack in the middle of the film, the viewer already sympathizes with some of the Japanese soldiers. The American army is in great contrast with the Japanese, it is just a tremendous crowd of soldiers, transporters and battleships. No American characters are introduced in the whole film, no motivation shown and no relationship build. The American army as a whole is the main enemy in this film, just like it is usual with the Germans or the Japanese in other war films.

To be as realistic as possible, the language of the film is Japanese. This helps to build up the atmosphere and it is not so common in American films. Examples of American non-English speaking films are *The Passion of the Christ* and *Apocalypto* by Mel Gibson. Those examples are not war films, because in war films is this approach even more unusual (for example the *Enemy at the Gates* shows battle between Russians and Germans and they both speak English). Due to this fact, no Hollywood stars appear in *Letters from Iwo Jima*, just unknown Japanese actors; the only exception is Ken Watanabe, who is becoming more and more popular in the USA.

The tone of the whole film is also different from films focused on American army, because the roles of American and Japanese armies differ. Americans are always the attackers (historical fact is that they were attacked only once, at Pearl Harbor), despite the fact that they are the good characters. The films where the Americans are the protagonists show the attempt to get somewhere, to kill someone or to do something. They sometimes need to defend a position as well, but only until the reinforcements arrive. Then the progress further through enemy territory can continue (this is obvious from the WWII historical context). The Japanese on the other hand are the defenders, they do not wait for any reinforcements and they do not have a place to retreat to, because they defend their homeland. They are literally trapped on the Iwo Jima.

7.3. Psychology and characters

The American army is not the only enemy in this film. The Japanese soldiers fight with their fears and with their superior officers (these are already mentioned), which is another unusual element. The American soldiers do not very often have to struggle with

their superior officers and they rarely run out of battle. The Japanese soldiers in this film seriously discuss the matter of deserting (even the supposedly good characters) and their superior officers seriously want to punish them for this war crime. These aspects signalize that *Letters from Iwo Jima* focus on psychological effects of war more than other films. The psychological impact of the war in this film is more important than the shooting and fighting and so not many war scenes can be seen here.

The psychic pressure is enormous from the beginning. The Japanese soldiers must obey the mentioned superior officers and they cannot complain. They cannot send any important information in their letters home, so the letters are censored or thrown away. And they must wait in the uncomfortable tunnels for the Americans.

The soldiers' dark hideouts have a very considerable influence on the soldiers' psychology. The Japanese soldiers defend the island from inside the mountain, where they built few "dens" connected via tunnels. As it is said earlier, these tunnels seem to the viewer like a trap and maintain very claustrophobic atmosphere. This is mainly achieved by the director, the director of photography and the postproduction. In scenes outside, the film is very light and the camera is steady, except war scenes, where the camera shakes as it is popular in contemporary film. The contrast with tunnel scenes is great, the camera in these tunnels is nervously shaking all the time and everything is covered in darkness, even the faces are partly hidden in the shadows. And there can be heard bombs falling on the surface of the island all the time.

The soldiers do not have many chances to survive; they can stay trapped in the claustrophobic tunnels and wait for death or go out of their hideout and try to fight for survival, as it is common in many American war films, even the earlier discussed. But this film is different. After everything goes wrong in the tunnels, the soldiers either commit suicide in their hideouts in one of the most thrilling scenes in the film or they go out where they die in the battle or surrender and get killed by American soldiers. The mentioned most thrilling scene takes place inside the tunnels, where is a group of soldiers about to commit a suicide due to hopelessness of their situation and their strong nationalism. Each one of them activates a grenade, puts it to his chest and cuddles it. Then they explode, leaving only a signs of torso behind. The last to blow up is one of

the protagonists and as the round gets closer and closer to him, the tragedy of the moment is more and more obvious.

As it is mentioned earlier in this chapter, lot of time is spent creating some relationship to the soldiers. The characters on the island act in a certain way and they do certain things and that shows their basic nature. However, most information about characters gets the viewer from flashbacks. Flashbacks are a very popular method of introducing characters in contemporary Hollywood, but from the three discussed films in this paper, *Letters from Iwo Jima* is the only one which features flashbacks as an instrument of introducing characters. These flashbacks can introduce a character or change the viewer's opinion on that character. Most interesting in flashbacks is the Japanese general. He comes to the island as a trained professional who is supposed to outthink the enemy, but as the viewers can see from flashbacks, he fights a great war with himself. The flashbacks show him in USA, where he has studied and spent a lot of time. He was friend with American generals and he looks up to America as an idol. Unfortunately for him, he is a Japanese soldier and so he must fight the country he loves and admires. All these flashbacks are short episodes from times before the war and they might seem more entertaining than the war story itself sometimes.

The lack of the poetic justice is very obvious here. In the end, even after the psychic pressure they have been through, only one of the few introduced character survives and the Iwo Jima Island is under the American control. The film is an adaptation of a book, which is based on true events (all of the discussed films are somehow based on true events, but this one is more than the others and it is discussed later in this paper). The *Letters from Iwo Jima* are very interesting film with several good ideas, although many of these ideas come from the fact that this film is about 'the other side'.

8. Comparison and Conclusion

First thing that comes to mind is that the contemporary WWII films have made a great progress and yet still remain the same. This statement seems to deny itself, but after this

conclusion some readers might agree with it. Many aspects still remain unchanged. Although the psychology is more and more important, not only in war films, but in films in general, there are of course still expensive war scenes to satisfy everyone who wants to see them. The war scenes and depiction of their consequences (injuries) varies from film to film.

Saving Private Ryan is a very naturalistic film. However, the naturalism has its reason and it definitely helps to create the atmosphere and evoke the terrors of war. The naturalism is a new element, but it does not change the genre, it only makes it better. *Letters from Iwo Jima* are also not afraid of blood. They stay right in the middle. Some torsos can be seen in only very few scenes. On the other hand, *Pearl Harbor* does not show any violent scenes, just explosions and a little blood. It shows no intestines or torn limbs. The reason is not an artistic purpose, the reason is low MPAA rating, so that even young children can see this film and pay for the ticket in cinemas.

And that affected of course the earnings; 198 million are the reward for no violent scenes. The *Letters from Iwo Jima* ended up with 13 million dollars only and Spielberg's film earned 216 million dollars. These numbers show that although exist less war films than films of other major genres, the high attendance is not certain.

The visual aspects of these three films are also very different. *Saving Private Ryan* looks very documentary (due to the shaking camera), dirty, with mud everywhere, the soldiers are very dirty themselves and the tanks and guns look like someone has been using them before. The weather is clouded and the background is often chaotic. The *Letters from Iwo Jima* look similar to *Saving Private Ryan* in some aspects (for example the 'dirty feeling'), but the dark tunnel scenes and the light scenes outside are very distinctive. In both these films can be seen long scenes without cuts. The *Pearl Harbor* is a complete opposite, the film is dynamic with frequent cuts, the steady camera flies around and films the objects from different angles, the battleships and planes in this film are CGI (Computer Generated Images) and they look brand new, as well as everything else in this film. The characters are always well-shaved and clean and wear just ironed uniforms. All the movement looks perfectly organized.

Recent trend is to make films about hour and a half long, so that the film is not boring and everyone can come and see it. The three contemporary war films discussed in this paper are all longer. *Letters from Iwo Jima* are the shortest of them (maybe it is due to the lowest budget, much lower than the other two) with about two hours. *Pearl Harbor* and *Saving Private Ryan* are longer, both are almost three hours long. *Pearl Harbor* includes romantic sub-plot, which takes a lot of time, while *Saving Private Ryan* focuses on the war only and thus it is literally epic war film. It means that the war films are generally longer than for example comedies.

Each of these stories introduces a different group of protagonists, but always just one antagonist. The antagonist is always the whole enemy army; the single enemy soldiers do not mean anything in any of those films. On the contrary, plenty of characters appear (leading and supporting) on the protagonists' side. Ordinary soldiers, some superior officers and in the end even the government and in some cases the president himself. In two of these films is also more than one protagonist. In *Pearl Harbor* and *Letters from Iwo Jima* are two or more protagonists and no one of them is probably intended as the leading character. On the other hand, *Saving Private Ryan* clearly focuses on Captain Miller as a main character. Despite this fact, *Saving Private Ryan* is the longest of these three films. The length of the film increases as the number of main characters decreases.

The picture of the war itself (fighting to be accurate) is very different in all three analyzed films as well. The *Peal Harbor* presents the fighting through modern action scenes, with dead bodies flying through the air and protagonists walking slowly through the battlefield, while the fighting in *Saving Private Ryan* attempts to be as realistic as it is possible for Hollywood. The progress in action scenes is one of the most remarkable signs of film evolution. Since the first war films, the action scenes has changed a lot. *Letters from Iwo Jima* are the least progressive with picturing war scenes, mainly because this film does not focus on them. *Saving Private Ryan* and *Pearl Harbor* represent the two main approaches to action scenes in today's Hollywood. One is the dynamic action with frequent cuts and the other one the documentary style with shaking camera.

All of these three films are somehow based on true events. However, the amount of true events differs. *Pearl Harbor* is based on true events very loosely; the Japanese attack and the American revenge are both true events, but there are many mistakes in depicting them and most of the characters (except the general, president etc.) are fictional. Moviemistakes.com provides a list of inaccuracies in this film and they include changing the purpose of certain place (changing training base to fighter base), bad painting of Japanese aircraft, wrong types of planes and battleships and other similar inaccuracies. Furthermore, the story of the two main protagonists is very improbable to happen, for example it is very improbable or impossible to get through pilot exams with bad eyes. In *Saving Private Ryan*, the whole story is made up as well. And it is very improbable, that USA would ever send a whole unit to find one soldier, even if he were Mrs. Ryan's last son. On the other hand, no one reports any major problems with uniforms, types of guns or vehicles and even though the battle shown in the film never happened, many similar did happen and they probably happened in very similar way as this one. Furthermore, the landing in Normandy from the beginning of the film is real event and so considering all that is written above, this film could be considered more 'true' than *Pearl Harbor*. The last film, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, pictures a true event and the characters are inspired by real letters found on the Iwo Jima Island and so it pictures most true events of all the three films.

These three films have in common that survival cannot be earned in any of them. In Hollywood films in general are unhappy endings very rare, so it indicates an influence of the genre on the plot. In *Letters from Iwo Jima* survives only one protagonist from the whole pack and in *Pearl Harbor* one protagonist dies and the other survives and raises his friend's child. These unhappy endings stress out that no happy ending is probable in wars and even the good guys and heroes die. And no clear punishment for the antagonists can be usually seen.

In all these films is important discipline and obedience, only the effect on the viewer is different. As it is stated many times in this paper, *Pearl Harbor* is a very typical American film and so it is full of heroism, self-sacrifice and responsibility to the country. The film shows no cowards, all soldiers bravely defend their base and in the

end they are all eager to enter almost suicidal mission for the country. The film is more than just heroic, because the soldiers are absolutely not afraid of the Japanese attackers and do not show any emotion at all. The soldiers in Spielberg's film are all aware of the dangers of war and they all know that their return home is not certain. In this film, some signs of disobedience and attempts to desert occur and these acts are presented as something very negative or just a temporary madness. Disobedience and lack of discipline can be seen also in *Letters from Iwo Jima*, but here is this act not necessarily negative. The situation in the hideouts inside a mountain is so bad and the fanaticism of the superior officers is so dangerous, that the attempts to surrender or get away seem almost like the right thing in this case.

This comparison shows the three very different contemporary American war films with their different or common approaches. The comparison indicates that the basic elements of the American war film genre are present in all three films. The antagonists and protagonists are clearly defined; the protagonists are a small group of soldiers and the antagonist is the whole enemy army. The protagonists are always well introduced; their families and motivations are shown. The antagonists are never introduced; they show no signs of emotions or contemplation. The protagonists are always good and the antagonists are always just bad. Each of these films also pictures a single event in war. Some may picture certain period as well, but only rarely the whole war. The American flag can be seen in all of them.

Pearl Harbor shows how different can be a war film, when only few basic principles are left and when the plot combines war and romance elements. It is a good example of the course of American film, because it is one of the first intended summer blockbusters (released 2001) and was the most expensive of the analyzed war films.

Saving Private Ryan handles the war theme with invention and this film probably brings most progress to the war film genre. Its influence can be clearly seen for example in analyzed *Letters from Iwo Jima*. It brings one of the most realistic pictures of war, reasonable characters and many unusual approaches.

Last but not least, *Letter from Iwo Jima* is a low budget film created as a part of Clint Eastwood's project. It does not show many war scenes, it focuses more on the psychic effect of the war. And the most remarkable innovation is that the protagonists are the Japanese soldiers.

All the analyses and comparison lead to a conclusion that the war in American film can be depicted in many different ways and that two major ways occur, both present in the analyzed films. These ways show very different pictures of war, but share many features common to most war films. This means that the Second World War films are evolving as the Hollywood is evolving, they are able to take advantage of new technological possibilities or new ways of telling stories, while the basic war film scheme stays the same.

9. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením druhé světové války v Americkém filmu. V teoretické části je prezentována historie žánru válečného filmu a také krátce historický kontext druhé světové války. Dále je válečný žánr zkoumán obecně, z hlediska zažitých postupů a pravidel žánru. Hlavní část této práce je analýza tří současných válečných filmů. Tyto filmy jsou pak porovnávány mezi sebou a také s klasickými postupy prezentovanými v obecné části.

Určit první válečný film je sporné, ale tato práce za něj považuje *Zrození národa* od D.W. Griffitha. Během druhé světové války byl válečný film hlavně nástrojem propagandy, kde jak válečné filmy, tak válečné dokumenty byly natáčeny za podpory vlády. Jak se postupně rozhořovaly další konflikty, přibývalo témat pro válečné filmy, ale filmů z druhé světové války zůstává nejvíce. Proto také v současnosti, kdy je trendem restartovat zavedené série, předělávat staré filmy a vracet se ke kořenům se někteří vrací k filmům z druhé světové války. Těch je obecně víc, než filmů z první světové války, protože v době první světové války ještě nebyl plně objeven potenciál filmové propagandy a tedy nevzniklo tolik filmů a tudíž nemají filmy z první světové války tak propracované kořeny.

Válečné filmy se, ať již vědomě, nebo nevědomě, drží určitých zažitých pravidel. Nepřítel je v těchto filmech prezentován jako až nadlidské zlo, schopné a nebezpečné, ale bez jakéhokoliv jiného života mimo válku. Tito nepřátelé nejsou do boje vedeni ani žádnou zjevnou motivací. Oproti tomu Americká armáda je parta skvělých chlápků, děj nám dává poznat jejich rodiny, jejich trable při tréninku a další podrobnosti. Tito hrdinové zřídka kdy revoltují proti svým nadřízeným (a když tak činí, tak to nejsou hlavní protagonisté, ale vedlejší postavy) a k zajatcům se chovají nanejvýše humánně. Obě strany konfliktu mají společné to, že nikdo z nich si nemůže zasloužit přežití. Válečné filmy nejsou koncipované tak, aby povětšinou šťastně končili, jako třeba filmy romantické nebo pohádkové. V Americkém válečném filmu umírají jak protagonisté, tak antagonisté nahodile.

Prvním analyzovaným filmem je Pearl Harbor od Michaela Baye. Tento film je velmi výrazně ovlivněn osobou režiséra. Pearl Harbor je film s velmi vysokým rozpočtem, který byl použit především na speciální efekty. Tento film zobrazuje nepřátele (Japonce) přesně podle vypočítaného schématu, Japonci jsou zlí a (pravděpodobně) chtějí porazit Ameriku a nemají žádné jiné vlastnosti. Film je kombinací romantického a válečného filmu a v tomto případě je válečný konflikt upozaděn a slouží jen jako pozadí k romantické dějové linii. Vizually je film poměrně zajímavý, stejně jako ostatní filmy od Michaela Baye. Ve filmu jsou použity kamerové filtry které zbarvují obraz do teplých či studených barev, ve filmu je použit tzv. slow motion neboli zpomalený záběr a celý film je velmi dynamicky sestříhán. Zobrazení útoku na Pearl Harbor také odpovídá tomu, že Michael Bay je režisér výhradně akčních filmů. Japonská útočící letadla jsou plně digitální, všude něco vybuchuje, tempo střihu je velmi rychlé a Bay se snaží zachytit z této akční vřavy co nejvíce. Film je tedy v mnoha ohledech velmi typický produkt Hollywoodu, ale i zde se dá vysledovat několik netradičních postupů. Některé záběry, jako například zničená americká vlajka ve vodě mezi mrtvými vojáky jsou symbolické, jindy je zase použit efekt třesoucí se kamery, navozující dokumentární atmosféru. Takovýchto zajímavých momentů ale film neobsahuje mnoho a proto zůstane i přes tyto snahy jen klasickým příkladem Hollywoodského letního trháku, který stojí hodně peněz a přiláká do kin hodně diváků.

Druhým analyzovaným filmem je film *Zachraňte vojína Ryana* od Stevena Spielberga. Ze všech analyzovaných filmů je tento nejzajímavější a dá se v něm vyzorovat nejvíce netradičních přístupů, symboliky a osobního přístupu režiséra. Tento film zobrazuje americké posily v Evropě a začíná právě vyloděním v Normandii. Hned tato scéna je velmi zajímavá. Ačkoliv v roce 1998 nebyla třesoucí se kamera tak oblíbená jako nyní, *Zachraňte vojína Ryana* je převážně natočen tímto stylem, takže působí více dokumentárně. Tento film je také velmi násilný a snaží se nezavírat oči před ničím, takže hned při vylodění je všude plno krve a i násilnějších výjevů. V porovnání s *Pearl Harbor* je vizuální rozdíl opravdu obrovský. Tento film je navíc velmi "špinavý", vojáci mají ušpiněné uniformy, všude je plno bahna, vojáci jsou zpocení a rozčuchaní. To je velký rozdíl oproti *Pearl Harboru*, kde mají všichni perfektní účesy a vyžehlené uniformy. Spielberg se v tomto filmu otírá o mnoho témat, jako je náboženství (symbolika kostela, důležitost víry, zdůrazňování židovství jedné z postav), hodnota jednoho lidského života (má cenu poslat celou jednotku na záchranu jednoho vojína proto, že jeho čtyři bratři padli v boji?) a další. Realističnost celého filmu je kromě třesoucí se kamery a "špinavého" vzhledu také podpořena detaily jako jsou zbraně obalené v igelitu při vylodění a podobně. Zajímavou drobností je, že dva němečtí vojáci mluví ve filmu česky. Z analýzy vyplývá, že film je natočen velmi zajímavým způsobem a invence Stevena Spielberga je obrovská. Ne nadarmo získal tento film Oscara za nejlepší film.

Posledním filmem který jsem podrobil analýze jsou *Dopisy z Iwodžimy*. Tento film natočil Clint Eastwood, krátce představený jako oblíbený akční herec, který začal také režirovat před skoro 40 lety a za tuto dobu si zmíněné řemeslo opravdu osvojil. Film *dopisy z Iwodžimy* je natočen na motivy knihy, která je sepsána podle dopisů, jež byly nalezeny na ostrově Iwodžima. Tento film je zajímavý především tím, že jeho protagonisté jsou Japonci. To přináší samo o sobě řadu velmi zajímavých aspektů. Japonští vojáci jsou zde ti hodní, zatímco Američané jsou antagonisté. Celá Americká armáda je, stejně jako bývá Německá nebo právě Japonská v jiných filmech, hlavním nepřítelem, který není nijak blíže představen, nevíme nic o jejich motivacích, ani životních příbězích. Naopak se režisérovi poměrně daří vzbudit u diváka sympatie nebo soucit s Japonci, protože řada z nich je ve filmu blíže představena formou flashbacků a

také chování na ostrově. Narozdíl od Americké armády, kde nadřízení jsou většinou dobří chlapíci co to myslí s vlastní dobře, zde je většina nadřízených vykreslena jako ti horší, co ubližují Japonskému vojákovi. Film má velmi tíživou a depresivní atmosféru jednak kvůli zmíněným nadřízeným a druhak proto, že se odehrává celý v tunelech vykopaných uvnitř hory, protože to shledají Japonci jako nejlepší obranou strategii. Scény z tunelů jsou výrazně tmavé a celkově působí velmi nepříjemně. Bojové scény jsou v tomto filmu velmi upozaděny, jedná se spíš o drama v tunelech a film se více soustředí na vliv války (a čekání v zákopu nebo tunelu) na psychiku. Proto nejsou scény válečné vřavy ani nijak zvlášť propracované a není jich ve filmu mnoho. Celkově se dá říct, že Dopisy z Iwodžimy jsou zručně zvládnutý film, jehož hlavní výhodou je již základní premisa, která sleduje jak Japonci brání jejich svatý ostrov.

Největší úspěch jak u diváků, tak u kritiky lze pozorovat u Zachraňte Vojína Ryana, který vyhrál Oscara a zároveň je ze všech analyzovaných filmů ten nejuspěšnější. Oproti tomu Dopisy z Iwodžimy byly sice i desetkrát levnější než zbylé dva filmy, ale přesto na sebe nevydělaly. Příčin může být mnoho, namátkou třeba to, že je film v Japonském znění. Všechny tyto filmy jsou svým způsobem založeny na skutečných událostech, ale každý jinou měrou. Dopisy z Iwodžimy, které vycházejí z dopisů, které byly nalezeny na ostrově Iwodžima pravděpodobně disponují největší porcí skutečných událostí. Oproti tomu Zachraňte Vojína Ryana se odehrává ve skutečné válce, začíná skutečným vyloděním, ale celý příběh o hledání syna mámy Ryanové je smyšlený. Stejně jako romantická linie ve filmu Pearl Harbor. A nakonec bych zmínil to nejdůležitější, přístup k válce samotné. Každý film má naprosto jiný přístup k válce jako takové, přestože je to válečný film a výše je popsáno mnoho styčných ploch. Válka v podání Stevena Spielberga je asi tou nejzajímavější. Na realističnost války je tu kladen největší důraz, rozlehlá bojiště v Evropě jsou zachycena bravurně, vojáci nejsou žádní akční hrdinové, všechno vypadá velmi věrohodně. Oproti tomu nereálná je válka v podání Pearl Harboru, kde hrdinové neohroženě přebíhají po základně která je pod palbou, Japonci útočí tak, aby mohlo vzniknout co nejvíce explozí a atmosféra opravdu velmi silně připomíná akční film. Dopisy z Iwodžimy jsou jiné, samotná vřava není tak důležitá, spíše ukazují hrůzy války v zákopech a soustředí se na to, jak hrůzně to působí na obyčejného vojáka.

Z výše uvedených postřehů se dá vyvodit závěr, že k válce se dá ve filmu přistupovat různými způsoby. Dále je důležité zjištění, že americký válečný film se nemění tolik jako ostatní žánry, stále se drží určitých pravidel a to, co ho posouvá dál nejsou žánrové revoluce, ale spíše změny Hollywoodu a natáčení jako takového.

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