HBO's *Band of Brothers*: Countertendencies and the World War II Combat Film Genre

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Torben Grodan defines "genre" as a category or set of characteristics given to describe a piece of fictional work (162). These fictional works are complex and can be analyzed and categorized in different ways, therefore making it difficult to have one-size-fits-all categories (genres) in which to place fictional works (162). The War film genre is no different, which has led to the creation of subgenres, such as Prisoner of War (POW), war as propaganda, antiwar, and the World War II (WWII) combat genre. Some even argue that the war genre is the "most difficult" of the genres to characterize (Solomon 242).

A great example of this is the renowned WWII docudrama *Band of Brothers* (2001). At first glance, and according to many viewer and film critic reviews, the miniseries follows the traditional glorified and heroic genre characteristics of a WWII combat film while simultaneously guiding the audience through an authentic portrayal of the horrors of war. It transcends the genre by balancing between it and its antithesis, the antiwar genre. This paper argues that *Band of Brothers* is truly unique in that it goes beyond the traditional scope of either the antiwar or WWII combat film by showing the complexity of human nature and its propensity for both good and evil. WWII was perhaps the last war that was highly publicly favored. The soldiers were viewed as the "good ole boys" or the "greatest generation" and war was romanticized in popular culture. WWII popular opinion has even been used by political leaders to justify their own desires to go to war in the modern day (Morgan 26). *Band of Brothers* pulls back this façade, validating the soldiers of WWII by showing both the heroics and horrors of war and not just the romanticized

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parts. By breaking from the status quo, it gave space for post-9/11 war films to transcend specific war sub genres and make more complex and nuanced stories. *Band of Brothers* was a key turning point for how war is viewed today in popular culture and American society. *Band of Brothers* has certainly been examined in other ways by scholars (see Glen; Ramsay; Schatz; Zapatero and Ramos), but scant academic literature exists considering it through this specific lens, therefore leaving a void in the scholarly record.

Band of Brothers aired on HBO in fall 2001 as a 10-part TV miniseries co-produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. The series is based on historian Stephen E. Ambrose's book, *Band of Brothers*. The series portrays the experiences of the paratroopers who served in "Easy Company" of the 101st Airborne during WWII. The story follows the soldiers from basic training in Georgia to them parachuting over Normandy during D-Day, all the way to the capture of Hitler's mountaintop fortress, Eagle's Nest. The series chronicles the horrors of war from the failure of Operation Market Garden in the Netherlands to the soldiers starving, frozen, and at their wit's end during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. Overall, the miniseries is a realistic portrayal of soldiers at war. The critically acclaimed series won the Golden Globe for Best Miniseries or Motion Picture Made for Television and was nominated for two other awards (Band of Brothers).

Jeanine Basinger created the widely accepted WWII combat film genre after examining more than 100 WWII films. Basinger defines the genre as following a group of military personnel led by a hero while exhibiting the theater of war: death/sacrifice/loss, military forces involved, relationship to history and the objective (178-9). Although Basinger examined a wide range of WWII films in defining the genre, the renowned WWII docudrama *Band of Brothers* (2001) was not amongst them.

This paper will employ a close-reading examination of all ten episodes of *Band of Brothers*. Using close-reading and textual analysis, this analysis will focus on cinematography, dialogue, and acting in this series to assess techniques and characteristics employed by the filmmakers to determine if these features fall in line with characteristics and techniques used in the WWII combat and antiwar genre or go beyond them. To gain a thorough understanding of how *Band of Brothers* falls into line and differs from the traditional subsets of the genres it is attributed to, background will be given of the war genre and the WWII combat genre.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how *Band of Brothers* exhibits overarching characteristics of the WWII Combat genre and realistic depictions of

war as illustrated in the antiwar genre. However, it goes beyond both genres in exhibiting the atrocities of soldiers during war time by dehumanizing American soldiers, which solidifies Stanley J. Solomon's notion that the war film is "the most difficult of all genres to define" (242).

The War Genre

According to Matthias Grotkopp and Hermann Kappelhoff, the war genre answers the question of "Why do we fight?" According to the authors, the war genre "includes the presence and memories of stocks of images on the one hand and the attachment to a set of values, the mythology of sacrifice and guilt on the other" (34). The typical war film creates an emotional experience, and "It is on these grounds that the war film performs its function, modulating the emotional experience of the audience and so shaping the process of living memory and compassionate relation" (34). The war genre has several subgenres, thus making it hard to lump any one film, let alone a ten-part miniseries, into one category. Therefore, this study employs two war subgenres, the WWII combat film and antiwar, to analyze the docudrama, *Band of Brothers*.

The WWII combat film genre, as created by Basinger, follows a group of men with the hero as the leader. The group of men come from different areas of the U.S. and from various backgrounds and socioeconomic status. The story is narrated by an observer, usually a man keeping a diary or a man who thinks or talks out loud. The leader/hero is forced into leadership, and the story unfolds as "a series of episodes [...] which alternate in uneven patterns the contrasting forces of night and day, action and repose, safety and danger, combat and noncombat, comedy and tragedy, dialogue and action" (Basinger 176). The episodes feature deaths of group members, battles, and growth as a group. The genre portrays the enemy either close-up or faceless, and, in the end, the conflict is resolved after much sacrifice, loss, discouragement, and hardship (Basinger 177). The genre is also propagandistic in its portrayal of war.

Antiwar films and "glamorized" war films are both propagandistic, but with differing results. "Glamorized" war films romanticize war through "illusions about valor, liberty, and righteousness." Antiwar films illustrate how war is full of "death and desolation" (Solomon 250), and depicts "war as hell" through "interesting evidence to document the truism" (Solomon 251). The antiwar film "operates mainly in a realistic mode that serves to deglamorize the romantic elements

associated with fighting for a cause, for freedom, or for the attainment of noble or heroic ends" (Solomon 252).

This study will analyze the themes and characteristics from both the WWII combat genre, highlighted above, and the antiwar genre as observed in *Band of Brothers*. It will call attention to the realistic and deglamorized portrayal of war, which goes in opposition to the traditional WWII combat genre. This analysis is important to not only cement that the war genre is hard to define by having an artifact falling under two contrasting subgenres simultaneously, but to pull back the façade of the romanticized/glamourized WWII narrative in popular culture by representing all war as hell, even the popular ones.

Findings in *Band of Brothers*

This study finds that the docudrama, *Band of Brothers*, exhibits various overarching themes from the WWII combat film genre, as well as, characteristics of the antiwar genre and beyond. The analysis was carried out through a rhetorical analysis of dialogue and filmic language to show how it aligns with WWII combat and antiwar films to produce a complicated representation of war.

Propaganda. Pro-military propaganda is employed from episode one, featuring training at jump camp and introducing the audience to the group of soldiers the series follows. The viewer sees Easy Company (the overall group) chant together as they run up and down the mountain Currahee, which is a drill used to exhaust the soldiers and weed out those who do not belong in the military. Although the soldiers are running three miles up and down the mountain, their chanting together and working together exhibits the brotherhood of the military.

Throughout the episode, the viewer gets a sense that training is tough through close-ups on individual soldiers going through drills and their reactions to commanding officers treating them poorly. A close-up is used on one soldier as he is being told that he is going to get kicked out of the military unless he can run six miles in fifteen minutes, up and down Currahee. A wide-shot shows him struggling to run, and then the whole company shows up to run Currahee with him in full gear, further demonstrating unity and brotherhood. Propaganda is further employed in two other episodes: in episode two, where a successful operation is carried out and fast editing and continuous shots are employed as propaganda to show excitement of war; and in episode five, where an entire company of SS soldiers is taken by surprise by Easy Company and are killed and captured, showing the enemy as weak

and underprepared in comparison to the U.S. military. By exhibiting the brotherhood of the military, exhibiting the excitement of war during battle, and the superiority of the U.S. military, war is romanticized and therefore propagandistic.

Past Life Pieces. Rituals from the soldier's past and present lives, such as celebrating holidays, reading mail, and discussing postwar plans, are exhibited in the episodes. In episode one, soldiers are successful at doing their jump. A close-up shows them happy as they celebrate at a local bar by drinking and having fun by insulting their commanding officer and trainer, Herbert Sobel. In episode two, the soldiers are seen watching movies while waiting to jump on D-Day and picking up their laundry from a local English woman. In episode three, a wide-shot of five soldiers shows them gloating to each other about the different souvenirs they had found while combing through the battlefield. In episode six, various close-ups exhibit soldiers in their fox holes during the Battle of the Bulge, where they are portrayed making coffee, discussing what they are going to do when they get home, and singing on Christmas Eve. In episode ten, a wide-shot depicts many soldiers playing baseball, and close-ups reveal a sense of relief to not be at war anymore.

Enemy Portrayal. In episode one, Sobel, the company's commanding and training officer during paratrooper school, is portrayed as an enemy to his soldiers. This is first evident through a close-up of Sobel investigating his soldiers, trying to find things about them that would not be considered by others to be a big deal. He uses his findings of lint, rust, and wrinkly trousers as an excuse to revoke all weekend passes. This is further indicated when Frank Perconte complains that he had a crease in his pants when Sobel said he did not, making him feel like he was unfairly judged by Sobel. Sobel functions as an enemy who brings the soldiers closer together as they deal with his misgivings and absurdity as a unit.

Throughout the remainder of the series, the German soldiers were portrayed as the enemy, mainly in a faceless way. During battle scenes, wide-shots portray the enemy at a distance, and during D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge, the enemy is present but not seen by the audience. The enemy is seen close-up during episode 3 when company soldiers encounter some enemy soldiers after they parachute into France. This is further exhibited during episode six, when Winters encounters a group of SS soldiers and he kills one up close.

Hero/Leader. In episode two, Richard Winters is cemented as the hero/leader of the group. When he lands in France, he is calm in demeanor when others are scared, which is exhibited through close-ups on his face. This is further illustrated as he maneuvers himself through the battlefield, collecting lost soldiers, using his

savvy survival skills to lead them to safety. In episode five, Winters is portrayed as a good leader after he carried out a mission that killed or captured an entire company of SS soldiers. This is portrayed through a wide-shot of him running in front of his soldiers, leading them to the battlefield. When he arrives, he is taken off guard by a young SS soldier and an entire company of SS soldiers standing around. A close-up shows him, without hesitation, start firing at the company even though he is alone, having arrived earlier than the rest of the company. In episode seven, the hero changes from Winters to Ronald Speirs as a wide shot shows him take charge during the battle of Foye when others were overcome with fear.

Death/Loss/Sacrifice. Death and loss are evident in many of the episodes and become an overarching theme of the series. Company soldiers are injured and are either sent back to the battlefield or sent home. Lynn (Buck) Compton, who is injured during a battle in episode four, is one of those soldiers who is sent back and forth after being injured. By episodes six and seven, the company has lost many members and loses three key characters in Compton, Joseph Toye, and William Guarnere, all exhibited through close-ups during the Battle of the Bulge. Furthermore, the great sacrifices these soldiers faced during this same battle are evident as the camera portrays them in close-ups on their fox holes as they are starving, frozen, and at their wit's end from being undersupplied during the siege. The deaths or losses of beloved characters weigh heavily on the company as they maneuver through the war, to the point that the soldiers fear they will not make it home either. This is best illustrated in episode eight by Donald G. Malarkey when he is asked to run a mission in enemy territory. A close-up on his face shows that he is disheartened at the need for him to carry out another mission. Malarkey is later taken off the mission by his commanding officer, and a close-up on his face shows the relief of not having to go out into battle again.

Countertendencies. Countertendencies are characteristics, methods, and themes that are counter to what would be traditional to the, in this case, war genre or WWII combat genre. In episode one, countertendencies such as dissent, anti-hero, and anti-group are seen throughout the episode and portrayed through the lack of support for Sobel. Sobel is portrayed as incompetent in the field of battle during practices in Georgia because he makes bad decisions and fails to listen to his supporting officers. His decisions result in 95 percent of his unit getting fake killed during the drill. Similar results occur during drills in England, showing his incompetence. The dissent is further demonstrated when Lewis Nixon worryingly says, "He gets jumpy and you get killed" (00:30:46-00:30:48), referring to Sobel's

incompetence. Additionally, this is instilled when some soldiers are talking about Sobel:

> Roy Cobb: "You gotta admit, he's got no chance. Either the Krauts will get him, or one of us."
>
> Joseph Liebgott: "Who? Sobel?"
>
> Darrell (Shifty) Powers: "He screwed up one maneuver."
>
> Joseph Liebgott: "Ah, you know, I'm always fumbling with grenades... Would be easy if one went off by accident, you know…"
>
> Darrell (Shifty) Powers: "Well, they must have put him in charge for a reason."
>
> Joseph Liebgott: "Yeah, 'cause the Army wouldn't make a mistake, right, Shift?" (00:31:40-00:32:00)

In a refusal to follow Sobel into combat, some of the soldiers create a mutiny by writing letters of resignation to their commanding officer. A close-up on their faces shows stoicism and frustration. Though it is treasonous to resign, they are ready to face the consequences to survive in battle.

In episode two, sticking to the anti-hero countertendency, American soldiers are portrayed as inhuman or evil. This is exhibited when William Guarnere disobeys orders and kills the German soldiers relentlessly during battle. A close-up on his face shows how angry and remorseless he is as he puts round after round into the enemy. This shows that some U.S. soldiers treat the enemy inhumanely by brutally firing upon the enemy when they are not returning fire. Furthermore, the enemy is portrayed as human during the episode instead of evil. This is illustrated when Malarkey comes across some German POWs and finds out that one is from Oregon. Malarkey asks the soldier why he is in the German army, and he says that he answered the call to come back to the fatherland to serve the Germans. This humanizes the enemy by showing that they are just answering the call like the U.S. soldiers and can even be from the same neighborhood. Immediately following this scene, Speirs gives all the POWs cigarettes, seemingly as an act of empathy, but then shoots them all. This makes some U.S. soldiers look like they are just as evil as the enemy, although not every soldier agrees with Speirs' action.

In episode three, unintended consequences of war, such as mental health issues, are portrayed. This is first illustrated from the opening scene when Albert Blithe is staring into the air. A close-up shot reveals that he is confused, signifying shell shock or mental health problems due to the battle. Blithe is seen throughout the battle of Carentan hiding and then gets hysterical blindness, which takes him out of

battle. Throughout the whole episode, Blithe is hysterical and cannot compose himself in battle. In one scene, a close-up of Blithe in a foxhole shows him screaming during a firefight. Furthermore, Speirs' character is portrayed as too calm during battle, to the point of desensitization. In one scene, he is talking to Blithe about how he sees war as just a game: "Yeah...It's a game, Blithe. That's all. Hell, we're just moving the ball forward one yard at a time" (00:32:32-00:32:40). Speirs then says:

> Speirs: "You know why you hid in that ditch, Blithe?"
> Blithe: "I was scared."
> Speirs: "We're all scared."
> Speirs: "You hid in that ditch because you think there's still hope. But, Blithe, the only hope you have is to accept the fact that you're already dead. And the sooner you accept that, the sooner you'll be able to function as a soldier's supposed to function…without mercy. Without compassion. Without remorse. All war depends upon it." (00:37:47-00:38:20)

This demonstrates the psychological dissonance many soldiers go through in order to cope during war, and further demonstrates that Speirs is desensitized. This in turn dehumanizes him because he is now functioning as a soldier without mercy, compassion, and remorse, which demonstrates why he killed the German POWs. Additionally, looting and dehumanizing traits are seen throughout episode three. Perconte steals multiple watches off dead bodies, which demonstrates a lack of respect for the dead and is dehumanizing. A close-up later shows him again taking a watch off a dead man's arm as if it was a typical thing to do.

In episode four, the lines of morality are blurred as soldiers are seen looting and laughing about it, as if looting is acceptable because they are at war. Later, the ineptness of the U.S. military is demonstrated when the U.S. soldiers are dominated during the battle, which is counter to propagandistic techniques, showing the enemy as superior. Furthermore, this episode is the first time the theme of individual survival is featured. Denver (Bull) Randleman gets stranded behind enemy lines after the battle. During this time, he hides in a barn with a Dutch father and daughter when a German soldier investigates the area. A close-up on Bull reveals him having to kill the German soldier with a knife to avoid drawing attention to his location. A close-up shows disgust in the face of a Dutch girl as she sees what Bull does. This demonstrates the consequences of war (having to kill the enemy in a brutal way) and the individual desire to survive, instead of focusing on the overall team survival, which is typical in a WWII combat film.

In episode five, mental health consequences of war are exhibited. This is illustrated through a close-up on Winters when he is on the subway in Paris. He sees a boy and then has flashbacks to the SS boy he killed in his last combat mission. Winters is dazed from thinking about the flashback, and the boy finally has to tell him that the train has come to its last stop. This clearly demonstrates psychological trauma from his actions during missions. It is further demonstrated when Winters talks with Lynn (Buck) Compton during a movie and he seems out of it mentally. Buck had been shot in the previous episode and was not the same, which was visible in a close-up on his face revealing a blank stare, showing him as a shell of a human. In the final scene of the episode, Easy Company is preparing to replace soldiers on the front line in Bastogne. When they pass by the soldiers returning from the front line, close-ups reveal these soldiers as disheartened, defeated, and traumatized as they walk slowly with their heads down, and one soldier simply says with desperation to them to "get out of here" (00:49:11), illustrating that he has gone through hell and was warning others of what awaits them in Bastogne.

In episode six, the glory and heroics of war are removed, and the episode slowly builds to questioning the war, exhibited through the medical staff. The first example is after Renée Lemaire, a nurse, is complaining to Eugene Roe, a medic, after losing a patient:

> Roe: "You're a good nurse."
>
> Renée: "No. I never want to treat another wounded man again. I'd rather work in a butcher's shop."
>
> Roe: "But your touch calms people. That's a gift from God."
>
> Renée: "No, it's not a gift. God would never give such a painful thing."
>
> (00:42:45-00:43:20)

A close-up shot shows that Renée is visibly upset. The nurse, who has an important life-saving skill, has become so desensitized to the violence and gore that she no longer sees it as important or life-saving. Though she isn't overtly questioning the war efforts, she is questioning the necessity of her skill set and obviously feels hopeless because she compares it to a butcher shop, where the animals have one fate: death. The juxtaposition between her hopelessness and Roe's optimism and apparent belief in the war effort is powerful.

The buildup of questioning the war continues through the eyes of Roe when he brings his friend who is paralyzed to the nurse. A close-up on Roe shows him standing, blank-faced, as a fellow soldier asks him what happened to the soldier and Renée asks him if he is okay. He finally answers the soldier after being asked

several times, but he never answers Renée. This, with fast edits between the shocked look on his face and the large amount of wounded and dying soldiers, exhibit his bewilderment of how little help the soldiers are getting from the U. S. military. It is as if it is the first time he is seeing the scope of the human damage and loss. The next scene is the climax of this notion of questioning the war where the company is gathered around to listen to Col. Robert Sink read a letter from General McAuliffe to the company. During the letter, a wide-shot shows Roe sitting up against a tree with a disconnected look on his face while his fellow soldiers are laughing at the content of the letter. The letter reads:

> Col. Sink: "General McAuliffe sent a message to the entire division. Thought maybe your people'd like to hear it."
> Col. Sink: "Men...General McAuliffe wishes us all a 'Merry Christmas.'"
> Col. Sink: "'What's merry about this all, you ask? Just this: We've stopped cold everything that's been thrown at us from the North, East, South and West.'"
> Col. Sink: "'Now, two days ago the German commander demanded our honorable surrender to save the U.S.A. encircled troops from total annihilation.'"
> Col. Sink: "'The German commander received the following reply: 'To the German commander: Nuts!'"
> Col. Sink: "'We're giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present, and being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms, we're truly making ourselves a Merry Christmas.'"
> Col. Sink: "Merry Christmas to you all and God bless you." (00:51:22-00:52:24)

During the reading, the camera zooms in on Roe's face after cutting between the company and back to him, ultimately getting a medium close-up of his face. Roe's face appears disconnected, gazing into the distance, in disagreement with the light-hearted reaction of his fellow soldiers to the letter. He sees this "privileged" and "gallant feat of arms" as coming at a great cost, similar to what Renée called a "butcher's shop."

In episode seven, we see more negative consequences of war (specifically mental health) as well as anti-hero themes portrayed by incompetent leaders putting soldiers in harm's way. This is first illustrated in the interviews (with the actual soldiers being portrayed in the miniseries) at the beginning of the episode when one soldier talks about how he had trouble in later life because the events of Bastogne

would come back in dreams and he could never forget them. When the episode begins, the mental health of Compton is explained when he sees Joseph Toye and Guarnere get blown up by an enemy shell. A close-up on Compton shows a look of disbelief. The viewer later sees a close-up on his face showing him crying, as well as a close-up of him at the aid station laying down and depressed. This montage illustrates the consequences of war: depression.

Furthermore, Norman Dike Jr. is portrayed as an incompetent leader whom no one can trust. This is portrayed through various comments from Carwood Lipton during the episode. Lipton says that Dike would disappear for hours without anyone knowing where he was, he was seen as a "bad leader" because "he made no decisions," and the company had "no confidence" in him. Lipton even complains to Winters that Dike is "gonna get a lot of Easy Company men killed" (00:51:29-00:51:31) when they invade Foye. During the battle of Foye, Dike goes against Winter's order and almost gets a number of soldiers killed. During the battle, slow motion cinematography employs extreme close-ups of the soldier's faces as they frantically ask Dike to make a commanding decision. Instead, an extreme close-up on Dike's face shows him wide-eyed and stressed as he tries to make a decision.

In episode nine, overarching themes of humanizing the enemy, questioning why they are still fighting, and excessive looting by Spiers are exhibited. This is first demonstrated during the interviews with the real-life soldiers talking about the end of the war. They talk about how they were fighting for their country, and the Germans were no different. In the very next scene, a close-up on some violinists and a cellist playing Beethoven while the German people clean up their bombed town humanizes the German people. This is further illustrated when 300,000 German soldiers are marching past the U.S. troops after surrendering. Winters says about the German soldiers, "Look at them, even in defeat they know how to march with pride" (00:28:09-00:28:14), which shows a reverence for the enemy in their surrender, which is humanizing, instead of mocking or demonizing them.

The questioning of the war effort is illustrated in this episode when Nixon talks to Winters about the failed parachute mission they made earlier that day. At this point, Easy Company is in Germany, and many German soldiers have already surrendered, so the end of the war is near, and any further loss of U.S. life is practically a waste. Nixon seems frustrated from the sarcastic tone of his voice as he discusses how their plane took a direct hit and he and two other soldiers made it out, but the rest of the company died over Germany somewhere, "Boom." Winters gives his condolences, and Nixon sarcastically agrees that it is terrible and says at

least he did not die. Nixon then laments that he has to write all of the letters home to the soldiers' parents letting them know that their kids never made it out of the plane, essentially saying that they died for nothing. Winters tells Nixon to write that the soldiers died as heroes, and Nixon asks Winters, "You really still believe that?" (00:13:08-00:13:10). Winters replies with a yes and asks Nixon the same question, but Nixon just brushes it off. Nixon appears frustrated at the pointless loss of life, which furthers the questioning of the war effort.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although *Band of Brothers* exhibits overarching characteristics of Basinger's widely accepted definition of the war genre, countertendencies eclipse these narrative conventions. Many countertendencies are realistic depictions of war as illustrated in the antiwar genre, such as soldiers questioning why they are fighting and unintended consequences of war. These realistic characteristics were referred to in many user reviews of the miniseries on imdb.com, as well as from professional film critics from *Variety* (McCarthy, *Variety)*, *The New York Times* (James, *The New York Times)*, *The New Yorker* (Franklin, *The New Yorker)*, and *BBC News* (Hill, *BBC News)*. For example, the miniseries was portrayed as a balance between "the ideal of heroism with the violence and terror of battle, reflecting what is both civilized and savage about war" (James, *The New York Times)*. However, some countertendencies, such as the dehumanization of American soldiers and enemy humanization, go beyond both genres in exhibiting the atrocities of soldiers during war time. Only one professional film critic referenced these countertendencies, stating that the soldiers, "the good, the bad and those in-between—are exposed in their glory and their flaws" (Clinton, *CNN*). By discovering the countertendencies in *Band of Brothers* to this definition, it further cements Solomon's notion that the war film is "the most difficult of all genres to define, even though the idea of war is obvious enough" (242).

Accordingly, cinematic characteristics of the WWII combat film genre were evident in *Band of Brothers*; however, there were various countertendencies exhibited as well. The textual analysis revealed overarching themes of Basinger's war genre throughout the entire ten-part series. A group of military men (Easy Company) is led by a hero (Richard Winters) to carry out various military objectives. The group is composed of men from various backgrounds and ages. As the series unfolds, contrasting forces are seen throughout "night and day, action and

repose, safety and danger, combat and noncombat, comedy and tragedy, dialogue and action" (Basinger 176). The enemy is seen throughout the series, sometimes close and sometimes faceless. Rituals of the past and present are enacted throughout the series, such as celebrating at the bar, singing, reading mail, doing laundry, playing sports, celebrating Christmas, and discussing post war plans. Various battles take place that create learning and growth for the group, and many members of the group die or are injured.

The textual analysis also exhibited various countertendency characteristics in the docudrama, which fall in line with the antiwar genre. These are soldiers questioning why they are fighting and unintended consequences of war. These elements fall within Solomon's two goals of antiwar films: "[to operate] mainly in a realistic mode that serves to deglamorize the romantic elements associated with fighting for a cause, for freedom, or for the attainment of noble or heroic ends;" and "[to employ] an iconoclastic approach to debunk heroic warfare" (252).

The textual analysis revealed two countertendencies that go beyond the WWII combat genre and antiwar genres: enemy humanization and dehumanization of American soldiers. Propaganda is an overall theme of the WWII combat genre, and propaganda tends to portray the enemy in a negative light. According to visual propaganda theory, propagandists (those who are facilitating in the creation of propaganda) often diabolize the enemy or dehumanize them to help justify their actions and rationale towards the enemy during war (Bryder 103-6). Additionally, the core of the war genre comes from the character's attitudes toward the enemy, "the heroes are motivated to defend their side against an oppressive or totalitarian enemy, usually depicted only from the heroes' point of view, if depicted at all, as a source of abstract evil" (Solomon 244).

By concluding that *Band of Brothers* transcends the traditional scope of both the antiwar or WWII combat film, it has validated the soldiers' experiences in WWII by portraying both the heroics and horrors of war and not just the romanticized parts. Additionally, it has given space for post 9/11 American war films to transcend specific war subgenres and make more complex and nuanced stories. *Band of Brothers* was a key turning point for how war is viewed today in popular culture and American society.

Although this study demonstrates that *Band of Brothers* goes beyond the typical WWII combat or antiwar film in its realistic portrayal of war, further research is needed to demonstrate if this is evident in its sister WWII docudrama, *The Pacific* (2010). Additionally, this research is limited because it is applying film war genre

characteristics, which are reserved for a filmic medium, to a war miniseries, which is made for television.

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