

For my text I have chosen the HBO series *Band of Brothers* directed by Tom Hanks. More specifically I will be using the final episode of the series. *Band of Brothers* is about a company of Army Airborne infantry in World War II. The film follows 'Easy Company' from training to the last day of the war. Throughout the series, we watch as boys grow into men. We begin to connect with each character, as they do with each other. In the Episode that I have chosen the war has come to an end and the men are going home. Where the men from 'Easy Company' end up after the war is where I intend to spend the majority of my time. I will be talking about the way characters are depicted and what that says about World War II. What is being said about the world then and world now, and where *Band of Brothers* is telling us we should be heading.

In the series, and ultimately being pulled together by this final scene is the justification of the World War II. In this final scene the men are happy and smiling, despite having gone through the traumatizing experience of war. In the previous episode the men had discovered a concentration camp and freed the prisoners. Going back one more episode further the men had been asking why are we here, fighting this war. Connecting these events we see one of the ideas of Peter Ehrenhaus coming through. In Why We Fought: Holocaust Memory in Spielberg's Saving private Ryan Ehrenhaus states; "...a declaration of moral principals explaining why we fight...justification for waging war and accepting its horrors and scarifies in a moral crusade against the Nazi program of Holocaust." What the quote and the movie are both saying is the disgustingness of WWII is bearable and forgivable because it was for the greater good.

Also showing through is the American Ideologies and world situation of the time. Let us listen to the narration of the scene. Each man upon returning home was successful and well adjusted, unlike the veterans of Vietnam. In the movies about Vietnam, such as *Rambo first blood*, the men are homeless drifters. They are not productive members of society and are treated poorly. This is a fact pointed out by Susan Owen points out in Memory, War and American Identity: Saving Private Ryan as Cinematic Jeremiad when she writes: “Where as post Vietnam cinematic veterans are angry, disillusioned, and crippled by remorse...” (Page 264). Conversely, the men of *Band of Brothers* are to be respected for their sacrifice, and their future achievements. They embody the ideals of the America of that time. They are selfish less, dedicated, honorable men. They represent strength of spirit and a unified America. All things we are suppose to connect to WWII, post-WWII, and the men of that time.

Now, where is *Band of Brothers* sending us? This can be simple answered by the game they are playing in the final scene. Baseball is the great old past time of America. It represents a constant in American history and a connection between then and now. Also let us consider the goal of baseball. In order to score you must advance a man around all the bases ultimate returning “home”. Baseball represents the American jeremiad that Susan Owens writes about in Memory, War and American Identity: Saving Private Ryan as Cinematic Jeremiad: “ The jeremiad has had three rhetorical functions in American literature and public address: to name the covenant (the special people), to make public lamentation (falling away from promise, and to imagine redemption (connect the past to the future).” (Page 252) When the scene opens the first thing we see is a soldier sliding into home plant. The constant of baseball through the years and the

notion coming home represents the last portion of the quote perfectly; the idea of returning to what has been lost.

Finally, I will connect all the notions discussed, to conclude with one large theme. I first brought attention to the justifying of war through just cause and greater good. The rhetoric used to show this is the soldier's evolution from confusion, to happiness free from trauma. I then moved on to use the rhetorical function of the narrator telling us about the bright, respectful future these men went on to have, and the depiction of the shoulders as heroes embodying the American Ideologies. Finally we saw the use of baseball as a rhetorical connection to the past and an urge for us to return "home". *Band of Brothers* is saying let's return to a time when people were united. To a time when we all stood for things and those who fought for, and represented the core values of America were not left to wonder as drifters.