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Violence in Quentin Tarantino Films

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyze violence in Quentin Tarantino films. The investigated films are *Inglourious Basterds* and *Kill Bill Vol.1* and *2*. The project focuses on individual characters and themes represented in the films and is attempting to answer various questions about morality, ethics and philosophical meaning of Tarantino's films. The project is mainly concentrated on the positive side of Tarantino's artistry and attempts to justify certain themes as beneficial for the audience.

Introduction

Quentin Tarantino is undoubtedly one of the most controversial film directors in the world. Many film critics refuse his usage of explicit violence and connection of brutality and humor. On the other hand, many find him to be a unique and brave director with a very specific vision and ingenious dialogues of his characters.

We decided to look deeper into the philosophical significance of themes represented in his movie work and analyze the usage of violence. The project talks about theory of aggression and violence, the effect of violence on younger audiences and how it is used films.

It continues with introduction of the director and his film work and the practical part concentrates on three films which serve us for analysis of the topics mentioned in theoretical part. We talk about various characters and whether their behavior is morally justifiable and therefore beneficial for the audience which is watching the movie. We are also interested whether people can learn something from the films and whether they have philosophical deepness.

The thesis is attempting to answer questions regarding justifiability of violence and to prove that in the movie world, violence can be viewed positively without a negative effect on society. It also emphasizes the importance of differentiating between real violence and violence in films.

We are not film critics and therefore we cannot judge the films on professional level, however our main goal is to critically analyze and talk about themes we find to be important and worth paying attention to. The thesis is based on literature, valuable online sources, views of various film critics and a subjective point of view.

1. Theory of violence

This chapter focuses on the theoretical conception of violence and aggression. It deals with various definitions of aggression by multiple authors as both innate and acquired feature of human personality. It covers the aggression among people and most importantly its connection with violence. The theory of violence deals with the issue of where and when we find violence, as well as its presence in power. The analysis of these two terms will serve me as a model for the practical part of the thesis. We will use the acquired information for analysis and better understanding of violence in Quentin Tarantino films.

1.1 Theory of aggression

This chapter introduces basic information about aggression and its simple division. It also introduces violence as a subcategory of aggression or its manifestation in society. There are many distinctions of aggression, we will mention innate and acquired aggression, instrumental and emotional aggression, as well as aggression impulsive and controlled.

Even though we all seem to know the manifests of aggression in society, authors find it to be a very complicated term which is not easily understood and defined. We encountered with definitions that perceive the term in dissimilar ways.

Slaměnik and Výrost (1997) claim that aggression is a form of behavior focused on harming and hurting of another human being. Malá (2005) suggests that aggression is a basic and natural human force that needs to be controlled. According to Matýs (2009) aggression is a multidimensional phenomenon which involves continuum of basic forms of aggression leading to complex aggressive behavior that precedes violence and terrorism (Hodúrová, 2011, p.10,11).

It can also be defined as a psychological trade with the function of harming nature, people and things. From the psychological point of view, it serves for adaptation, preservation of life, self-defense and self-assertion as an ethically neutral force (Poněšický, 2005, p. 22).

Innate aggression

Innate aggression should not be perceived as behavior, but rather as an abstract concept including many emotions and impulses. These two include rage, contempt, hostility and imaginary scenarios connected to them- to revenge oneself, to kill, to destroy. It is important to note that aggression can also have a positive tone, for example when someone uses aggression to fight for liberty or destruction of evil (Poněšický, 2005, p.22).

Lorenz Konrad (1963) connects the positive side of aggression with Darwin's expression "the struggle for existence" which talks about the inter-specific fights among animals and their will to improve and survive. The reason why certain species disappear, and some evolve is a result of aggression and fight between them.

Acquired aggression

Many psychologists emphasize reactional aggression, which is either normal or maladaptive reaction to frustration (Poněšický, 2005, p.35). In contrast, Poněšický (2005) believes that upbringing a child without any frustration can cause development of their aggressive behavior. That is because the person is not prepared for any difficulties in life and therefore they get frustrated and irritated by any situation in the future.

In addition, Heinz Kohut (1979) says that primary aggression serves for separation and individuality of a child. However, narcissistic behavior and destructive form of aggression are caused by lack of empathy in childhood. Trimborn (2003) adds that separation from mother gives rise to anxiety and frustration, which leads to aggression (Poněšický, 2005, p.37).

In conclusion, Dollard et al. (1939) proposed the first systematic theory of aggression partially as a reaction to World War II. They stated that aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of aggression and in contrary, frustration always leads to some form of aggression. This statement clearly formulates that there indeed is such thing as acquired aggression and it is not just a purely congenital, biological thing.

1.1.1 Other classification of aggression

Čermák (1999) says that the most common distinction of aggression is instrumental and emotional. Instrumental aggression concentrates on reaching a target coming from the outside. Injuring someone is a secondary effect of this type of aggression. The usage of instrumental aggression is based on planning ahead and consideration of all possible outcomes of it. On the other hand, emotional aggression is signified by negative emotions and strong rage. Here, aggression is not a way to reach something, but it is the target itself. Berkowitz (1993) adds that there is another distinction- controlled aggression, where the initiator thinks deeply ahead his actions and impulsive aggression, where spontaneity is the main factor (Čermák, 1999, p. 10).

1.1.2 Aggression and violence

In this part of the chapter I will be dealing with the most important feature of aggression – its connection with violence. Violence is a form of aggression and they cannot exist without each other. It is crucial to point out that the analysis of violence in Quentin Tarantino films is not possible without noting and understanding the connection between aggression and violence.

M. Veigel (2003) sees aggression as a reaction to traumatic experiences which creates tendencies to use violence in solving problems. Till Bastian (2001) states that there is a certain amount of satisfaction in perfect functioning and subjection to the system, which is typical for German Nazism. This aggressive obedience is due to Bastian a result of extremely strict parenting and some political groups can misuse violent actions as a justification of obedience or faithfulness to a political ideal. F. Sutterlity (2002) takes this to the extreme and claims that violence is a form of liberty, crossing of biological boundaries, suppression of instincts and breaking out of the nature. This proves that without the aggressive tendencies, either innate or acquired, no violent actions would appear. People deal with aggression through violent behavior and misuse it on personal and social level (Poněšický, 2005).

Besides the connection, we must note that aggression and violence differ. While aggression is both positive and negative, violence has more evil sides. Aggression might be perceived as a source of energy and evolution, a motivation for independence and survival. Violence is a social behavior that leads to disruption of evolution or continuity of someone's life (Poněšický, 2005, p. 50). We could state that anything that attempts to disrupt or destroy life of a living creature has solely negative undertone.

However, some authors do not agree. Bernstein (2011) says that Hannah Arendt (1970) believes that there is a positive side to violence, when it comes to fabrication. Work and labor are part of creating the world and if violence is present, it has neutral connotation. In addition, Tarantino films might create an illusion that violence is solely positive, however the evilness of it is expressed in exclusive application in movies as a source of entertainment and refusal of it in real life.

To sum up, aggression and violence are viewed as two different terms with strong connection. Violence is a type of behavior and aggression as a motivational factor. Some authors state that violence is a subcategory of aggression. I must mention that I spoke about innate and acquired aggression while there are is also another important division, irrelevant for

my thesis. I will use the positive and negative side of aggression to justify and point out various manifestations of violence in Tarantino films in the practical part of my thesis.

1.2 Theory of violence

The aim of this chapter is to talk about value of violence, types and theme of violence in power. It also opens the crucial topic of where and when violence takes place. The found information will be used and referred to in the analytical part of the thesis.

Violence is an object of many author's discussion and its true meaning or value remains multifarious. For example, Poněšický (2005) discusses whether all forms of violence should be reduced to a physical hurting and killing of someone, or whether just the threat and thought of killing are inherent components of violence. Similarly, authors can't agree on whether violence equals to psychological and physical trauma or if it can serve as a positive energy that helps people to overcome issues and difficulties. This shows a scarce way of viewing violence- as an occasionally neutral or even beneficial form of behavior. Nevertheless, Jean-Marie Muller strongly refuses to admit there is such thing as positive violence, because he believes that any attempt to define violence as a good thing will lead to individuals justifying any form of their gruesome violent actions (Žižek, 2008, p. 60,61).

The interpretation of violence as subjective and objective is remarkable. Subjective violence is the most obvious type which is understood as a disruption of normal functioning of relationships or society. The objective type includes two forms – a very complex “symbolic violence” in language and “systemic violence” as very often catastrophic acts of political and economic systems (Žižek, 2008, p.5, 6). The second type is invisible, because it represents a normal society in which we notice the forms of subjective violence (physical attacks, fight, terrorism etc.) (Žižek, 2008, p.6).

Loewenstein (2017) talks about understanding of violence. He indicates that the awareness of violence after World War II began fading and people started to see it as something archaic, unknown and deforming. Even nowadays, we see it as something barbaric and fanatic. However, there are authors who see violence as something natural and even normal people take part in it (Loewenstein, Hlavačka, Šístek and col., 2017, p. 265,266).

To analyze violence, we must ignore the traumatizing and devastating effect on a victim. It is impossible to think rationally if we consider the pain the victim confronting a violent act is feeling. That is exactly why we should not confuse factual truth (exact and emotionless analysis

of violence) and authenticity/truthfulness (the actual experience of a victim) (Žižek, 2008, p.7). When it comes to analysis of subjective and objective violence, we are obliged to take in consideration that there are both direct and indirect forms of violence appearing in relationships, power, violent threats and political ideology (Žižek, 2008, p.14).

Lastly, to give an example, the direct form of violence is a physical act such as murder or brutal attack, while indirect form can be an ideological violence such as racism, antisemitism, discrimination etc. (Žižek, 2008, p. 15).

1.2.1 Where and when we find violence

Majority of violent incidents take place on regular places. Violence can appear at locations where the territory is unclear. This so-called social violence that people know from war or gang fight grows from the need of power. War fighting is a typical example of violence induced by longing for power. However, territory should not be confused with an actual physical place. Fight for territory is a metaphorical fight for identity and that is exactly what makes violence so devastating. It destroys identity. People fight and kill to defend an imaginary territory-respect and morality. They do not kill to defend their own life but to defend the way they view themselves (Miller, 2008, p.91, 92).

Speaking of areas of violence, Loewenstein (2017) indicates the phenomenon of war. Cohesion of army and thoughtless killing is the condition for survival of an individual soldier. This so-called spatial violence is performed mechanically however sometimes it can be accompanied by feeling of delight (Loewenstein, Hlavačka, Šístek and col., 2017, p. 267).

When it comes to the literal location of attack or murder, the attacker uses violence where they believe to not be disturbed. Even a seemingly immediate attack with the aim to kill is a planned action and the attacker uses the location wisely (Miller, 2008, p.93).

In contrast to the attack, the hunting of victims takes place in a crowd. The predator searches for any sign of weakness, uses eye contact, body language and waits for reaction (Miller, 2008, p.94).

Considering the role of time, we must consider two terms, the actual violence and the threat of violence. Either the act itself such as attack or murder is already happening, or there is just a threat that comes from someone who is planning to use violence, wants to hurt somebody but has not done it yet (Miller, 2008, p.95). In connection, Poněšický (2005) discusses whether the threat should be viewed as a form of violence. In some ways, the threat could serve as a mercy

from the attacker because they warn their victim and give them the essential time to prepare (Miller, 2008, p.95).

1.2.2 Violence and power

Power and violence are closely linked. Throughout history, majority of the most influential people have been using violence to gain power over the world. In relation to fighting for power, Jessica Benjamin says that violence is someone's intention to force others to be just like them, the inability to accept differences among people and in the best case to get rid of their dissimilarity (Poněšický, 2005, p.111).

When speaking of power, the relationship between the one who is in charge and the controlled one is greatly important. They often don't have any interest in discussing their relationship. The powerful person sees their position as matter of course and the controlled one doesn't admit their position due to shame (Poněšický, 2005, p.109).

Loewenstein (2017) mentions W. Sofsky (1996) who deals with the mystery of power. In his views, power comes from the need of safety of the weak and from the ability of the strong to keep authority over them. This authority is kept through violence and the protection from violence by spreading fear. There is no life without violence- the harmony of safety and obedience of the weak (Loewenstein, Hlavačka, Šístek and col., 2017, p. 268,269).

The misuse of power that often leads to violence occurs when narcissism is stronger than good intentions to govern society. The acquired power tends to make the mighty person insane (Poněšický, 2005, p.118). Hitler, Napoleon or Salvador Dalí had to live in illusions, often using violence on those they despise and falling into deeper illusions of themselves (Poněšický, 2005, p.117).

One of the instruments for spreading power during World War II were concentration camps. The confrontation of violence and innocent victims also ruins relationships among people partially because the offenders felt no regret or mercy for the victims (Loewenstein, Hlavačka, Šístek and col., 2017, p. 268).

Power is also related to sadism, which includes the fascination of being able to govern life and death. However, sadistic rulers and dictators often end tragically. That is due to the insatiability of absolute power, when powerful ones surround themselves with people who admire them and as they attempt to improve and build the power, it becomes more and more unbearable for the controlled ones (Poněšický, 2005, p.119).

In conclusion, power can be used well or misused by people with high status, however it doesn't always occur in high positions of society. Longing for power can certainly influence lives of individuals in their families and relationships. People long for power among both small and huge, formal and informal groups while attempting to transform differences and collisions in society. It is not important how big or important the social group is, if power is used badly it leads to usage of violence and has negative outcomes.

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we described the basic theory of violence and aggression, their division and relation to other topics. We used the themes that are relevant for the main aim of my thesis, while we primarily concentrated on various points of view of different authors. The acquired information will be critically analyzed within the films Kill Bill Vol. 1, Kill Bill Vol. 2 and Inglourious Basterds.

2. Quentin Tarantino

To comprehend Tarantino's film work, we must take a deeper look into his life and philosophy. This chapter concentrates on the artist's life and influences, both his own and film critic's views of violence in his work and his philosophical connection to Friedrich Nietzsche. It also includes parts of various interviews with Quentin Tarantino that were filmed through many years, where he expresses his opinions and opens himself to public. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the director along with how he uses violence in his work.

2.1 Life and career beginnings

Quentin Jerome Tarantino was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1963 (TheFamousPeople.com Editors 2018). He moved to California with mother when he was two years old. His mother was very young and struggled financially and instead of paying for a babysitter she would take her son Quentin to a movie theater with her. Besides going to a theater, Tarantino watched many films on television. His parents could never qualify what he was watching, and they never thought that the things could bother or influence him, so from a very young age Tarantino would watch films for adults (Tarantino 2010).

Throughout early boyhood, Quentin wanted to be an actor, because the passion for movies influenced him into thinking he wanted to be part of them. As Quentin was getting older, he started to get deeper into how films were made and who worked on them. After watching a

film, he would know exactly the names of people involved in the movie-making process. He decided to quit school at the age of sixteen, because school reminded him of prison. In 2010, Tarantino said that school was the worst institution ever imposed on him and he absolutely hated it. Aged 16, Quentin Tarantino got a job at porno cinema as an usher (Tarantino 2010).

Later, he began working in a Video Archives, where he was exposed to a fantastic collection of movies. He began to write several screenplays, including *The Romance* and *Natural Born Killers* (Biography.com Editors 2014). At this time, he started filming his very first short movie on a sixteen-millimeter camera, which was later expanded to a feature. For three years, he was shooting the film *My Best Friend's Birthday*, financing it completely on his own. Tarantino believes that this was his films school, since he learnt how to make a movie on his own instead of studying it in theory (Tarantino 2010).

In 1990's, after Tarantino improved his skills, he started co-working with directors and producers, such as Tony Scott and Lawrence Bender. Tony Scott bought rights to his script for *True Romance*, transforming it into a movie in 1993. Lawrence Bender secured the production of his directorial debut *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), for which Tarantino also wrote a screenplay. The actor Harvey Keitel, who signed on as an actor and producer for *Reservoir Dogs* proclaimed that he was impressed by the screenplay as he read it. Another cast included Steve Buscemi, Michael Madsen and Tarantino himself. The directorial debut did well overseas and made Tarantino one of the most talked-about figures of Hollywood (Biography.com Editors 2014).

Quentin Tarantino has more than just diligence, he is able to use the longing of generation for sex, drugs and violence in his films, which often leads to misunderstanding by many critics (Clarkson, 1996, p.13). The famous following movie work and director's success will be spoken about in the chapter "Quentin Tarantino films".

2.2 Philosophy of Quentin Tarantino

For many years, critics have been arguing whether there is a philosophical significance to violence in Tarantino movies. Some say that Tarantino is all about style of a substance, some say he has glamourized violence, some say he is a genius. There is no doubt that he is the maestro of on-screen violence, however in 1994, the director proclaimed following: "Violence is just one of many things you can do in movies. People ask me, 'Where does all this violence come from in your movies?' I say, 'Where does all this dancing come from in Stanley Donen movies?' If you ask me how I feel about violence in real life, well, I have a lot

of feelings about it. It's one of the worst aspects of America. In movies, violence is cool. I like it. “(V Renée 2016).

In another interview posted online in 2013, Tarantino argued violence by saying that since a very young age, he has been able to tell the difference between real life violence and the one used in films and said that violence in films is entertaining (Tarantino 2013). Tarantino even calls himself a cheerleader of violence in cinema and he is very unapologetic about it. To defend himself, he explains that Japan is one of the least violent societies in the world, while their cinema has been the most violent one for the past twenty years. The director’s relish is that his characters can encounter absolutely anything, everything is possible in their on-screen lives (Tarantino 2015).

The American journalist Dan Rather asked the director during a 2015 interview, how he manages to make people walk out of the cinema smiling after they watched an incredibly violent film. Tarantino explained that movies must make him feel many different emotions and especially as a director, he wants to pull off contradictory emotions. He believes to be the kind of director who is the conductor while audience is his orchestra. Tarantino aspires to make people feel various emotions, feeling amused, disgusted and even traumatized at the same time. He also claims he can’t help himself to make things funny, however in his own words the strategy goes: “Laugh...laugh...laugh...stop laughing...laugh! “, while the stop-laughing part is often something horrific and violent (Tarantino 2015).

Gangster movies and movies including martial arts have one thing in common- they prefer action to philosophical reasoning. However, Tarantino uses a strategy of breaking these conventions with long dialogues about themes that have nothing to do with the plot. These themes are often connected to mass media. The main attraction for intelligent spectators might be an illustration of mass culture trend, as well as the way the films refer to older films (Greene and Mohammad, 2009, p. 16, 17).

2.2.1 Nietzsche and Tarantino

Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche is very comprehensive, and it is very difficult to connect him to Tarantino complexly. That is why this chapter will only express the connection between these two rebellious, unconventional artists in the sense of their understanding of art and fascination with violence.

Is it possible that the German philosopher and American director have similarities? Travis Anderson (2009) says that they do share common ground. He believes that some of Nietzsche's thoughts might help people to interpret themes in films of Quentin Tarantino.

Besides being very passionate about their work and reaching success at a very young age, Nietzsche and Tarantino share something much less obvious – Greek tragedy. Anderson (2009) compares the violent and conflicting protagonists of *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) along with music and dramatic scenes to the heroes, music and attractiveness of Greek tragedies. The provocative analysis of Greek tragedies in Nietzsche's *The Birth of tragedy* (1872) offers the key to understand art (Mohammad and Green, 2009, p. 54, 55).

Like Tarantino, Friedrich Nietzsche was fascinated with the artistic depiction of brutality and suffering, especially when it comes to the cruelty of Greek tragedies. As a reaction to criticism, Nietzsche proposed two questions, which could very likely be asked by Tarantino as well. At first, what truth about human nature are we trying to hide by refusing to discuss the source and impact of art? Secondly, how is it possible that artistic depiction of violence, cruelty, suffering and death doesn't evoke the same emotions as violence in real situations? In addition, why does violence in art bring esthetic pleasure (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.68, 69)? The first question could be led by film critics to Tarantino, when he refuses to take responsibility for the impact of his art. The second question could be led by Tarantino to the critics who fail to value the philosophical significance of violence in his movies.

Friedrich Nietzsche has a lot to say about eccentricity of art. In "*The Birth of tragedy*" (1872) Nietzsche expresses that sensitive Greek artists discovered conflict between two impulses of human nature. An impulse to set boundaries and an impulse to disrupt or destroy them. This contradiction might be interpreted as control of oneself and eccentric outburst. Nietzsche adds that esthetic analysis of art proves that Greeks inculcated these two impulses into two gods – Apollon and Dionysus. Apollon's impulse concentrates on controlling wild emotions while Dionysus's impulse refuses restraint and celebrates violence (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 69, 70).

This complicated distinction of motives in art offers an interesting interpretation of Quentin Tarantino films. As the two impulses in art are a normal form of an artistic expression, we can state that any immoral or disturbing aspect in his films are nothing more than an artistic expression. His expression shows suppressed desire to get rid of institutional limitations that diverse people into subcultures, social classes and races. Interpreting his expression like this

could enable us to see Tarantino as an exquisite critic of culture (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.71).

Even though it is very complicated to compare these two very diverse intellectuals, there are certain aspects in their philosophy which connect them. Nietzsche was dealing with and analyzed similar issues as Tarantino. Some of Nietzsche's opinions and findings help interpret Tarantino's usage of violence and can even justify it. Besides their rebellious nature and tendency to break conventions, there is a deeper connection, especially when we consider Tarantino's unintentional reflection of Nietzsche's philosophy in films.

2.2.2 How Tarantino uses violence

To demonstrate Dionysus's impulse we can state that violence in Tarantino films is often unexpected. It comes as a sudden outbreak of anger or incomprehensible reaction. Based on a Julian Palmer (2016) analysis of the films, there are few examples of how violence can be understood and used in different situations. Palmer says that in *Django Unchained* (2012), Tarantino uses violence to introduce a villain – Calvin Candie. The brutality is juxtaposed with pleasurable feelings. Calvin Candie, just like Adolf Hitler in *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), enjoys watching violence in front of him and takes a lot of pleasure from it. In comparison, Mr. Blonde in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) sees cops as less than humans, the same way Calvin Candie sees slaves. He enjoys watching them suffer. Contrastingly, in some cases the violence can act as a comic punchline, as it was used in *Django Unchained* (2012) scene, where Miss Lara is shot after being told Goodbye.

Palmer (2016) continues with introducing *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and its notorious sequence where Mr. Blonde is torturing a cop, but there is a very long built up and contradictory music playing between his actions. This constant threat of torture keeps the audience in stress. Tarantino uses music to warn that extreme violence is about to come. However, when extreme violence comes, the camera moves away just like most viewers do. In this moment, audience feels safe for a while. When Mr. Blonde is outside of the building, we hear normal everyday sounds. As soon as he steps back to the warehouse with a gasoline in his hands, the music starts again, which signifies that something horrific will happen.

Palmer (2016) adds that there is a correlation of sex and violence, which is most apparent in the *Death Proof* (2007). Not only the built ups and following outbreak of violence can be compared to sex and orgasm, but also the parts of body that are amputated and smashed during a car crash in *Death Proof* are previously sexually objectified. Tarantino's violence operates

multiple parts of the brain, there many emotions people feel while watching it. There is a question, whether his violence could make someone commit an aggressive crime in real life or whether it is quite the opposite (Palmer 2016). In conclusion, the unexpectedness, long built ups, humor, momentary pleasure from violence and contradictory elements such as music or philosophical dialogues leading are typical for Tarantino movies.

To overview various opinions on Quentin Tarantino, we can firstly use a complex comment of Johann Hari from 2009. In comparison to Palmer, Hari is skeptical and often fails to understand the usage of brutal violence in his films. At first, Hari defends the violence in *Reservoir Dogs*, as he says that violence was shown here as it really is. However, Hari continues that after *Reservoir Dogs*, Tarantino has been squandering his cinematic talent. There is a strong criticism on usage of violence in *Kill Bill* and *Pulp Fiction*, where it is used as a source of humor, explaining that instead of a gag reflex we are given a gag. According to Hari, human suffering should never be portrayed as trivial, it should never turn pain into a punch line.

Hari continues by saying that our nature is to empathize with suffering strangers. *“Any work of art that denies this sense – that is based on subverting it – will ultimately be sullyng. No, I’m not saying it makes people violent. But it does leave the viewer just a millimeter more morally corroded. Laughing at simulated torture – and even cheering it on, as we are encouraged to through all of Tarantino’s later films – leaves a moral muscle just a tiny bit more atrophied”* (Hari 2016).

Based on the critic of Ella Taylor from 1992, violence used in *Reservoir Dogs* makes her angry, because it hides the real gruesomeness of violence, which is portrayed with a cold light-mindedness (Greene and Mohammad, 2009, p. 65). In contrast, Mohammad and Greene (2009) claim that Tarantino’s violence is a lot more philosophical than in another director’s work. Another thing strongly criticized by Taylor is the usage of vulgarities, black humor and racist language. When critics ask Tarantino about morality and social harm that his films can cause, he stays dismissive. He emphasizes that artists should not care about the impact of their work, which obviously doesn’t justify the horrific actions his characters do.

Nevertheless, to defend Tarantino, we must acknowledge that the unwillingness to succumb to social rules is typical for all artists. Mohammad and Greene (2009) simply don’t believe that Tarantino’s work is just a pure senseless provocation (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 66,67).

To present a negative perspective, we should acknowledge multiple studies and opinions. *“Violence in the media has been increasing and reaching proportions that are dangerous.”*

Anything that promotes something can be called propaganda. What we call entertainment is really propaganda for violence. If you manufacture guns, you don't need to advertise, because it is done by our entertainment industry, „said Emanuel Tanay, MD, a retired Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Wayne State University and a forensic psychiatrist (Arline Kaplan 2012). Tanay's negative opinion on violence in media clashes with Tarantino's celebration of it.

In a psychological study presented by Keith Perry in 2014, watching violent films makes people more aggressive. *“Watching violent movies really does make people more aggressive - but only if they have an abrasive personality to start with, a study shows.* “In this study, scientist found out that the violent behavior that might be provoked by violent films or games depends strongly on how aggressive the person is to begin with. Dr. Alia-Klein said: *“Hopefully these results will give educators an opportunity to identify children with aggressive traits and teach them to be more aware of how aggressive material activates them specifically.”* (Keith Perry 2014). The results of this study offer both defending and criticizing Tarantino's usage of violence. While he is right that he can't be responsible for people actions as an artist, it is also true that some of the extremely graphic scenes fully shown in the films might inspire naturally aggressive individuals, especially children.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we introduced Quentin Tarantino as a successful and talented director, whose complex philosophy is being expressed in his work. The chapter dealt with his career beginnings, connection to Friedrich Nietzsche and various views of his usage of violence in films. The chapter didn't go deep into the movie work, because it will be discussed in the following segment. We acknowledged some of the negative and positive sides of violence in Quentin Tarantino films and we will use it as a base for the practical expression of it in movies.

3. Quentin Tarantino films

This chapter will present the movie work more closely, while concentrating on the themes and signs that appear in most of the films. Its goal is to introduce the philosophical themes that make Tarantino's work so interesting and disputable, sometimes even controversial. It will state questions such as whether there is a philosophical deepness, whether we can justify revenge and aggressive behavior or whether music plays an important role in the films. These questions shall be answered in the practical part of the thesis. This chapter will exclude violence as an individual subject, but violence significantly permeates every single one of the other themes.

As said in the previous chapter, the following movie work and success of Quentin Tarantino after *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) should be briefly displayed here. The film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) was a commercial and critical success, receiving seven Academy Award nominations and winning the award for Best Original Screenplay. Another distinctive film is *Jackie Brown* (1997), which received mainly positive critics and was called his more mature work. In late 1990's Tarantino began working on a World War II script, which he soon started calling his masterpiece. Instead of tackling the war movie, *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2003) and *Kill Bill Vol.2* (2004) followed as his significant work. Then, Tarantino co-directed the film *Sin City* (2005) along with Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller (Jim Smith, 2009, p. 367).

The year 2007 gave rise to *Death Proof*, which Tarantino considers to be his worst work. October 2008 was the time when Tarantino finally began to shoot his war masterpiece *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), for which the German-Austrian actor Christoph Waltz received Academy Award and Golden Globe. In 2013, Tarantino received another Academy Award for the film *Django Unchained* (2012) which met with great critical and commercial success. In 2015, *The Hateful Eight* was released and received multiple nomination, winning Academy Award, BAFTA and Golden Globe for music (Biography.com Editors 2014).

The US premiere of Tarantino's thriller *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is scheduled on August 9, 2019. It should be the first movie by Quentin Tarantino which is based on a true story and the American actor Leonardo DiCaprio said that its screenplay is the best out of all Tarantino's previous movie work. Besides DiCaprio, the film stars Al Pacino, Margot Robbie, Brad Pitt and many others (www.csfd.cz).

3.1 What the films are about

Quentin Tarantino creates one of the most offensive and subversive films of today (Greene and Mohammad, 2009, p.15). Even though Tarantino (2004) himself claims that he is constantly shooting the same movie, it is hard to believe. We don't have to state how the films differ, however for this thesis, we must point out the similarities.

The first answer to the questions of what the films share is that there is always a brutal, cruel character in whose life something goes wrong due to an incident, other people or carelessness (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.24). We can mention Vincent Vega in *Pulp Fiction*, Bill in both *Kill Bill* movies or Hans Landa from *Inglourious Basterds* as an example of this. The second crucial sign of the films they share is that violent behavior is a consequence of unsuccessful actions of the antagonists. When their anger goes out of control, people must suffer

(Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.24). The third thing they share is that there is always a little bit of morality and mercy among the brutal and cruel behavior. On top of that, the good characters often show strong sense of morality and braveness. Tarantino attempts to display both good and bad people, whose behavior is controversial and sometimes empathetic and moral (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.26, 27).

There is also a question, whether we can learn something about human nature from his movies. We can assume, that the films show that bad people will always receive punishment. However, this assumption can't be justified since the fate of characters in Tarantino films does not represent the reality of life. Maybe the stories show just one of the points of view of how bad people should end up (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.27). In addition, even if the films were presenting it as reality, could they prove it to be truthful? The films rather remind us of real stories that we heard from news or media, where sinful people ended up being punished for their actions. Also, the films and their main characters could offer us an advice to think twice before we decide to act violently or emotionlessly, because in the end we will pay for our terrible decisions. Nevertheless, we must repeat that the fact that this is how reality is presented in Quentin Tarantino films doesn't mean that we always encounter this in real life (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.28).

3.2 Philosophical significance

Are there any philosophical questions that the films are attempting to answer? Is there a philosophical deepness? Does music play an important role? Can we justify violent behavior through revenge and do the films explain basic moral rules? Can we learn something from the characters? These questions come up to our minds while watching Quentin Tarantino films, but what if he is just trying to shock and amuse us? What if he is just playing with us and there is no philosophical meaning in the long dialogues and unexpected bursts of violence? This thesis will try to analyze violence along with the other topics, but before we do that, we must briefly discuss some of the basic themes in theory.

3.2.1 Morality and ethics

In an article for *Britannica* Cydney Grannan says that morality and ethics loosely serve us to distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong. She adds: "*Many people think of morality as something that's personal and normative, whereas ethics is the standards of "good and bad" distinguished by a certain community or social setting*". Certain things are viewed

as moral or immoral differently among individuals and social groups. Different societies and their members value different standards, morals and ethics. However, one thing that is seen to be immoral in most modern societies is violence, especially an extremely brutal and cruel form of it.

James H. Spence (2009) describes three ways of understanding morality. Traditional morality, nihilism and something in between. Traditional morality says that there are objectively given rules and these rules form the basis of morality. Nihilism refuses objective values which could justify moral rules and that means there is no morality. The third way of understanding morality is based on using social interactions and human nature. Even though there is no objective values, there are basic values built in human nature which makes us behave morally or immorally. This means that morality is a result of hundreds of years of interaction among people (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 87,88).

But how can we say that Quentin Tarantino's movies display morality and how can we justify their violent actions? In *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) we meet men whose physical actions are often brutal, but their conversations are ethical. In their discussion about tipping a waitress, being a professional or trying to save the members of their crew we must admit that they are far from being immoral bastards (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.85-102). They constantly talk about what is right or wrong and their whole existence is absorbed by ethics. But still, can we take them seriously? Can we take the ethics of Beatrix Kiddo in *Kill Bill* seriously and apply it to real life without any doubts? And most importantly, can we connect the moral behavior to a justifiable revenge?

3.2.2 Revenge and Mercy

In the 2017 article for Psychology Today, Peg Streep says that "*Revenge as a response to injustice has a long literary history, and doubtless dates to pre-historical times. Whether it's Odysseus slaughtering the suitors who've taken over his house or the Old Testament intoning "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," the theme of revenge has never lost its luster as countless contemporary variations in movies and books from high-brow to low attest. From "Hamlet" to "The Count of Monte Cristo" to "Carrie" and "Gone Girl", the pulsing energy of revenge keeps us spellbound*".

There is no doubt that revenge is a very complex and attractive topic that has been part of artistic expression for hundreds of years. No matter whether it is physical or psychological, it creates strong emotions in those who perceive art. In Quentin Tarantino's work, revenge seems

to be portrayed as something justifiable, moral and acceptable by society. Even when the actions used to reach the proper revenge are extreme, they make us feel sympathy for the protagonists. Revenge undoubtedly makes people feel various emotions. These mixed emotions open questions, whether revenge is purely negative or whether there is an upside. Is revenge an unacceptable way to behave or is it as normal as being merciful?

Based on Tarantino's film, we could state that mercy is quite common in society. But what often drives his main characters is a righteous revenge- the opposite of mercy. If we agree that mercy should be part of our behavior, how can we say that revenge is righteous and justifiable? Tarantino thinks that if revenge was not righteous, people wouldn't enjoy his films so much (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 104, 105). It is true that we tend to sympathize with the characters when they experience pleasurable feelings seeing their enemies suffer. So how can we connect the two? Is revenge in pure contrast to mercy or do they share the fact they can be both accepted by society in specific situations?

In Tarantino's films, we never see that act of mercy would replace revenge. Mercy is right and desirable, in some situations it is a moral duty. If a delinquent hurts his victim, the duty to be merciful is canceled and the victim has right to a justifiable revenge. It is obvious that both Tarantino's and Kiddo's views lack mercy, but they are logical. But if it truly is logical, why do most philosophers refuse revenge (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 115,116)?

3.2.2.1 Justifiable revenge

Revenge and retaliation are two different terms. David Kyle Johnson (2009) says that revenge is driven by emotions and the need to see our enemy suffer. Compared to retaliation which goes by the motto eye for eye, revenge has no limits in how much they enemy should pay for their actions. In other words, retaliation uses objectively appropriate punishment which can be done by anyone, while revenge use any type of punishment that the person chooses to be adequate, no matter how cruel it is. In contrast to retaliation revenge is more emotional, personal and is based on the desire to see the sinful suffer. In the movies of Quentin Tarantino, we deal with revenge, not retaliation (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 107,108).

There is a huge number of cases in Tarantino's work which proves that the director might believe revenge is justifiable and right. Nevertheless, in most of the films the audience must analyze it themselves because the morality of revenge is hidden. Chronologically the first film that talks about the morality of it is *Kill Bill Vol.1* (2003). David Kyle Johnson (2009) admits that his friend Jason Southworth had told him that *Kill Bill* can be interpreted symbolically as

a revenge on Americanization of Asian culture. There is a lot of connection to the famous actor and martial artist Bruce Lee (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.109,110). On the other side, we can read the justification of revenge through what the characters in *Kill Bill* say. In *Kill Bill Vol.1* Beatrix Kiddo says that when you manage to revenge on someone, there is a proof that God exists, and you do what is right. In *Kill Bill Vol.2* Budd claims that Beatrix Kiddo deserves her revenge and he deserves to die.

3.2.2.2 Mercy

Mercy is a considerate form of behavior, especially in relationship to those who we have power of (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.105). The number of times we encounter mercy in Tarantino's films is comparable to how many times we encounter revenge. For example, in *Kill Bill*, Bill acts merciful as he refuses to kill Beatrix in the hospital. In the second film, Bill shows mercy when he lets Beatrix talk to her daughter and then even gives her opportunity to kill him. We diverse between considerable mercy and conciliatory mercy. The first one is based on protecting others from hurting and it is obligatory. The second one is based on forgiving the ones who hurt us, and it is not morally obligatory. People who are capable of conciliatory mercy are obviously more ethical but people who don't forgive are nor acting immorally. In conclusion, based on this theory people are not obligated to forgive the ones who hurt them. It seems to be clear that Tarantino uses this philosophy very often and certain form of mercy and even revenge should be part of our natural social behavior (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 115, 116).

3.2.3 Music

Samuel Antezana in the article "*The importance of music in film*" talks about the role of music in film industry. He claims that music dictates the emotions audience members will feel during the most memorable moments of the movie, as well as it can "make or break" the experience. He adds that "*Quentin Tarantino is a prime example of a filmmaker who combines original scores with soundtracks of his choosing. It is quite difficult to forget the bone-chilling yet mesmerizing tune that Elle Driver whistles as she makes her way to an incapacitated Beatrix's hospital bed to assassinate her in Kill Bill Vol. 1 or when Vince and Mia do the twist to Chuck Berry's "You Never Can Tell" in Pulp Fiction*".

What is the connection of music to violence? In most American films, music has the role of synchronizing the action on the screen. In some cases, it strengthens the action, in some even

forces the emotional response of the audience. Tarantino likes to break these conventions. In many of his films, music is used ironically, contradictorily to the violence on the screen. Tarantino himself said in an interview in Cannes that he enjoys the usage of bubblegum music, rock' n' roll for fourteen-year-olds. He uses the music as a contrast to the cruelty to the point that the audience asks: "What is wrong with this?" Travis Anderson (2009) says that Tarantino is right. The music, which is usually very happy and melodic, creates an important element for creating ironic emotional reactions. We experience rather dissonance of music and action than the harmony and traditional role of music in movies (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.75).

In comparison to the Antezana article, Tarantino truly does want to make or break an experience out of watching the film, by making us feel disgusted by the action happening on the screen and moving our feet to the rhythm of the melodic sounds of a song we all know at the same time. This makes us remember certain moments that the director sees as important.

3.3 Conclusion

The last chapter of theoretical part of this thesis talked briefly about the movie work and some of the basic themes that Quentin Tarantino represents in his films. The chapter didn't include violence as an individual topic because it has previously been discussed in detail and it is also a natural part of each of the other themes. All the chapters of theoretical part will serve us for critical analysis of themes in three films- *Kill Bill Vol.1*, *Kill Bill Vol.2* and *Inglourious Basterds*. The focus will be violence and its role in the movies, however the mercy, revenge, morality, music and philosophy will play an important part as well. The aim is to answer questions regarding the philosophical meaning of violence, aggression and revenge.

4. Inglourious Basterds

In the first chapter of practical part of this thesis, violence will be investigated through the Quentin Tarantino film *Inglourious Basterds* from 2009. The film will be examined based on the theoretical part and the acquired information coming from various authors. In the introduction, the plot of the movie will be briefly talked about and later we will focus on the main characters and their violent behavior, various important scenes and themes represented in the film. We will be concentrating on philosophy of Quentin Tarantino and other authoress's views on violence, aggression, power, mercy, revenge and ethics pictured in the movie. We will attempt to answer questions regarding the philosophical themes.

4.1 The plot

The black comedy war film is divided into five chapters and takes place in German-occupied France during the World War II.

It opens with a scene in 1941 France, where SS colonel Hans Landa enters the house of a farmer Perrier La Padite hiding Jewish Dreyfus family. After they agree on Nazis leaving La Padite for the rest of the war, SS soldier shoot the Dreyfus family hiding under the floor. Young Shosanna Dreyfus is the only one who survives and manages to escape by running after Landa decides not to shoot her.

Three years later, Shosanna lives in Paris under alternative identity and meets Fredrik Zoller, a German war hero who turned into an actor and depicted himself in a Nazi propaganda film. He insists the premiere of the film should take place in Shosanna's cinema. This offers her great opportunity to revenge on Nazi leaders by burning them down while playing the movie. She plans the revenge along with her lover Marcel and they reedit the fourth reel of the film by adding a short clip of Shosanna telling the Nazi leaders they will die.

On the other side of the "revenge line" there are Basterds- Jewish-American soldiers that are famous for killing and scalping Nazis. Lieutenant Aldo Raine recruits eight American soldiers to the commando unit and they also recruit Sergeant Hugo Stiglitz, a German soldier who murdered thirteen Gestapo officers. Along with British Royal Marine Lieutenant Archie Hicox they plan to attend the film premiere with the help of German film star Bridget von Hammersmark, an undercover agent. After a failed attempt to meet the film star in a tavern placed in French village, Hammersmark gets injured and Stiglitz, one Basterd and Hicox get killed. In need of a different plan, two Basterds and Aldo Raine decide to attend the premiere

as Italians along with Hammersmark who's leg is injured. One of her shoes and a napkin with her name is left in the tavern and is found by Hans Landa who investigates the scene.

At the film premiere, two of the Basterds, Donny Donowitz and Omar Ulmer, join Raine in posing as Italians, hoping to fool the Germans unfamiliar with the language. However, Hans Landa who speaks Italian talks to the Basterds and Hammersmark before sending Donowitz and Ulmer to their seats, realizing they are American. He takes the actress to a private room and then strangles her to death after the shoe matches her foot. Raine and another of his men, Smithson "The Little Man" Utivich, are taken prisoner, but Landa cuts a deal that he will allow the explosive mission to proceed in exchange for immunity and rewards.

During the screening, Shosanna and Zoller kill each other right before the fire ignites behind the movie screen. Two of the Basterds are still in cinema, shooting people from above until the bomb explodes and kills everyone in the theater. In the meantime, Landa, his radio operator, Raine and Utivich drive to the Allied territory where Landa surrenders. Aldo Raine shoots the operator and curves a swastika into Landa's forehead which is a sign he can never remove.

4.2 Hans Landa

Hans Landa is introduced in the opening scene as a linguistic genius, intelligent, good-mannered and highly articulate man. His charisma makes the audience emerge into the conversation between him and Mr. La Padite, leaving us tense and worried about what is to come. The extension of the opening scene and length of the conversation between the two gentlemen is a typical manner of Tarantino, extending the tension as long as possible before the violent drop comes. Landa cold heartedly orders the officers to shoot Dreyfus family, the whole scene accompanied by excellent music and camera work. But why was Hans Landa introduced this way? We could possibly read the scene as an introduction of a villain, psychopathic and aggressive person who has very high manners but quickly and disturbingly changes into a monster.

Based on Žižek's theory of violence, the usage of violence in the opening scene is an example of both direct and indirect form of violence – something that is present throughout the whole film and therefore it is wise to place this scene in the very beginning. Even though antisemitism is a big theme in *Inglorious Basterds*, we are presented with rather vicious and explicit outbursts of attacks, which would however not be there if the indirect form of violence didn't exist. Both direct and indirect forms of violence are mashing together in the movie.

When Hans Landa says:” *Au revoir, Shosanna!*” while pointing at her with gun and smiling, is Tarantino trying to show us that the officer is capable of mercy towards Jews? That is very unlikely. Mercy is a considerate form of behavior, especially in relationship to those who we have power of (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p.105) Is Landa in power of the girl? It is easy to believe, since his job is to find Jews and kill them, however in the moment he decides not to shoot her, he gives her freedom and chance to escape the system for a while. We must remember that in French, *Au revoir* can be translated as “*to our meeting*” and can be read as Landa’s believe they will see each other, and she will get what she deserves as a Jew. So even if he was capable of mercy, he only lets Shosanna run away since he believes they will meet again. Whether he implicates that she will get killed by him directly or by the Nazi system is not important, however the fact he let her go doesn’t seem like a big deal for him.

Hans Landa meets the girl three years later in Paris. In this scene, his ability to show mercy comes out. He treats the girl as a gentleman, showing little signs of turpitude by asking Shosanna about her family and ordering her a glass of milk. It is not exactly clear whether Tarantino is trying to tell us Landa recognized Shosanna as the Jewish woman he almost killed or whether it is all just a big coincidence. Considering Landa’s intellect it would be hard to expect he is not aware of who Shosanna is, however the uncertainty of the situation makes the whole scene even more incredibly tense and difficult to watch. The violence may not be shown directly, but it is hidden in the words, long looks and relationship between the two. Landa is violating Shosanna by ordering what he wants her to be served, keeps her in one small room with him and makes her answer unavoidable questions. Tarantino wanted us to feel the fear of the victim, he wanted us to try to imagine what the girls felt – he violates the audience.

The next time we encounter the symbol of predator in this film is when he kills Bridget von Hammersmark by strangling. This scene is a perfect example of undisturbed violence, when the predator chases his victim into a place where they can be on their own, away from the rest of the world. The violence takes places away from the eyes of people, however it is still there and as gruesome as ever. Is it possible to view the strangling in a hidden place in a private room as systematic violence happening in countries all over the world during World War II? Can Landa symbolize Nazism itself? Is his power over the woman comparable to the political power and violence around the globe? We believe it can be so. Dictators often present themselves as figures that offer people safety and privileges if they listen to them. Everything seems to be nice, perfect and sweet until an individual does something the dictator doesn’t approve. Landa’s behavior of a perfect gentleman speaking multiple languages and walking around as a man of

manners quickly transforms into an extremely aggressive and powerful act. Violence in this case can be explained as a symbol for power of the Nazis had over Europe. It was quick, unexpected, vicious, revolting and unfortunately successful and smartly done. No matter how much some people tried, they couldn't do anything about the spreading aggression and power unless they wanted to lose their lives. The closeup on the face of Bridget von Hammersmark while she is suffocating is like the hopelessness of Jews and people during the war in general. The powerful predator is building their space, successfully fighting for territory and all they can do is to either submit or die. Jessica Benjamin says that violence is someone's intention to force others to be just like them, the inability to accept differences among people and in the best case to get rid of their dissimilarity (Poněšický, 2005, p.111). Nazism is practically based on this theory. As the German actress proves to be working for another country, not submitting herself to the system, she gets what she deserves in the eyes of Nazism- she gets killed. The inability to accept difference causes both systematic and direct violence towards the "black sheep."

While encountering Aldo Raine and Utivich in the end of *Inglourious Basterds*, Landa is showing signs of ethical behavior and mercy. Even though his intentions are rather ignoble and self-centered, we can't help but sympathize with him at this point. It is obvious that Landa's personal gain is more important than the power of Nazi Germany which he threw over his shoulder to end the war. Landa doesn't seem to care that the Nazi leaders will die as his own good reputation is preserved. It is likely that Tarantino wanted the audience to feel certain amount of sympathy towards this character after he showed ethics by debating with his enemies. Instead of killing the two he decides to show mercy and discusses the following actions which could be beneficial for both sides. He even gives them freedom of choice to decide what should be done and surrenders himself under specific circumstances. The display of small fragments of morality in the end of the film show what philosophy Tarantino values. As opposed to senseless outbursts of violence and aggressive characters, Tarantino gives us an example of good and ethical behavior present even in the most ridiculous and unexpected situations.

Overall, Hans Landa is an aggressive, powerful and intelligent character whose main personality traits served Tarantino to symbolize and display certain issues of the time. Landa's main qualities are shown both directly and indirectly. Through his words, actions and facial expressions, audience can feel the spreading of Nazi power and violence towards Jews. Can his violence and need to govern be justifiable? From his point of view, certainly not. Landa is a villain and the negative portrayal of his vicious aggression is more important than his ability of mercy. Tarantino pointed out the senselessness and horror of violence of the time.

4.3 Shosanna Dreyfus

Shosanna is a Jewish girl who escapes tragic death by Nazis at young age and creates a new identity of Emmanuelle Mimieux. Her owning of cinema might be Tarantino's personal preference of the world of cinema, as well as the brilliant cooperation of it into the story line. Basically, the whole film is obsessed over film itself, because most of the main characters including Nazi leaders finally meet and die in the theater.

The themes presented through Shosanna are morality, revenge, violence and mercy. Shosanna is a moral woman, because she values her origin and is aware of her self-worth which gives her incredible amount of braveness and drives her revenge. Speaking of innate and acquired aggression, it is difficult to believe she would be able to perform such actions without experiencing the trauma of war. We cannot debate that her aggression is purely acquired but the inner aggression was ignited by death of her family and the whole political system which is turned against her existence. Shosanna's absence of mercy towards Nazis is understandable since not only her own family was directly viciously attacked but the whole basis of her culture and identity is completely shattered. From her behavior we can learn that in the most extreme cases, revenge is not only driven by personal needs but by the needs of a group that is seriously oppressed and humiliated. Is her expression of extreme group violence justifiable? Let's take this scene by scene.

The second time Shosanna meets Fredrick Zoller in a cafe, she refuses him in good manners. She feels uncomfortable in presence of a German soldier and tries to avoid him quickly. However, when she fails to prevent meeting him again after being pushed against her will into Zoller's private meeting with Joseph Goebbels, the opportunity of revenge comes into her life. As much as revenge is perceived as something nonsensical, we feel the same emotions regarding Shosanna's opportunity to give the Nazis what they deserve. David Kyle Johnson (2009) says that revenge is driven by emotions and the need to see our enemy suffer. Compared to retaliation which goes by the motto eye for eye, revenge has no limits in how much they enemy should pay for their actions. In other words, retaliation uses objectively appropriate punishment which can be done by anyone, while revenge use any type of punishment that the person chooses to be adequate, no matter how cruel it is. Shosanna's revenge is justifiable from the point of view of history, knowing the amount of lives that World War II claimed. It is also justifiable from the point of view of her family, own culture and descent. Why did she use such extreme way to revenge her injustice? It had to be powerful, since she was basically forcing

Nazis to experience what other people were experiencing during war. It was not just a personal fight for her own satisfaction, it was rather the overturn of roles in society. The fire that had been eating Jews through Holocaust ate the Nazis gathered in a small area just like Jews had been being killed in concentration camps. The fear of these dreadful places was removed into a cinema that ironically played a film celebrating violence.

“We find somebody who can develop and process 35mm print with a soundtrack. And we make them do it or we kill them.” These Shosanna’s words prove how quickly she is changing throughout the film. Following by the scene where she and Marcel throw a man onto a table and threat they will kill him and his family if he doesn’t do what they want, the aggression is present both in actions and words. Shall we acknowledge her aggressive behavior? Driven by strong emotions and need for justice, people do incredible things and take risks in achieving their goals. Shosanna’s revenge is brutal, violent and emotionally driven, however taking in consideration the atmosphere of the time, is it still as extreme? The absence of mercy is obvious. We diverse between considerable mercy and conciliatory mercy. The first one is based on protecting others from hurting and it is obligatory. The second one is based on forgiving the ones who hurt us, and it is not morally obligatory. People who are capable of conciliatory mercy are obviously more ethical but people who don’t forgive are nor acting immorally. In conclusion, based on this theory people are not obligated to forgive the ones who hurt them. Therefore Shosanna’s may not be ethical, but still is not morally obligated to forgive. Whether she acts ethically in other situations does not determine the way she acts regarding this situation.

Tarantino is not trying to tell us that ethics are not important since you have been hurt, but we are not obliged to show mercy and act morally if someone denied our own existence and dignity. In fact, showing mercy could possibly prove that we have lost our dignity and value of self-worth. Shosanna doesn’t back down from her plan since she is strongly convinced the revenge is something that needs to be done to restore justice. So even when she is not ethical in this situation, in fact she is giving many people hope for life, justice and freedom, which is far more ethical for the whole society rather than deciding not to revenge. Viewing this from 21st century point of view, it is hard to believe that violence was so ever-present even when people were trying to act morally. We must not forget war and how hopeless and senseless it was- which means that even the morality of people must have been affected by the presence of war. If we want to be moral, we must revenge on those who attempted to destroy us- therefore morality will come back into this world. Out of many interpretations whether Shosanna’s revenge is justifiable, we are closest to the believe that it truly was. Her actions could not be

modelled onto anybody else, but considering her origin, life story and surrounding, we can use her as a symbol of bravery and fight for dignity.

Based on Tarantino's connection to Friedrich Nietzsche, we can ask this question- how is it possible that artistic depiction of violence, cruelty, suffering and death doesn't evoke the same emotions as violence in real situations? While watching Nazis die and specifically the scene where Adolf Hitler receives never-ending stream of shots into his head, it almost evokes feelings of celebration and pleasure. No matter how violent and disturbing it is, since it is on movie screen we feel delighted and satisfied. There is a possibility that Shosanna and her successful revenge represents the climax of the movie, so the more violent the attack is, the more intense the climax is. This form of artistic expression of Tarantino proves that as much moral we might consider ourselves to be, we still sympathize with Shosanna who made up an incredibly aggressive form of revenge on someone. Therefore, morality is present.

Finally, Shosanna Dreyfus being the main female character in *Inglourious Basterds*, she leveled the movie up into a moral lesson which we can take seriously. If we get caught up in the extremely violent performance of her revenge, we miss how bravely and ethically she acted and the fact she is killed by Frederick Zoller makes her story even more admirable. Even though she was murdered as well, she managed to take the planned revenge into its end and successfully defeated her enemy. Her own life was the cost for her sacrifice and consistently prepared revenge that is justifiable.

4.4 Aldo Raine and Basterds

What drives Aldo Raine's and Basterds actions and can we compare them to Shosanna and her story? Aldo Raine is the leader of Basterds who received nickname "The Apache" for his penchant of scalping Nazis. He states he needs eight Jewish - American soldiers and after they will be dropped in France they will kill Nazis. His character is rather humorous, yet still driven by revenge and hate towards the enemy. The origin of his soldiers and the aim of Jews killing Nazis is again a manifestation of revenge. The fact that Aldo Raine and his soldiers bring humor into the film symbolizes their positivity and slightly enforced sympathy towards them to the audience. If we laugh at someone's jokes we like them, right? What strikes the audience is how primitive and stupid they act in certain situations and in the scene where Aldo Raine and two Basterds encounter Hans Landa, the comparison of their intellect and strength of character is apparent. It certainly doesn't mean that Raine and Basterds are stupid or weak, however there is a slight feeling in inferiority of their characters.

So why exactly does Tarantino present a villain as a charming genius while showing the simplicity and humor through the positive characters? Could it be interpretation of how people viewed Nazis and Jews at the time? The misuse of power that often leads to violence occurs when narcissism is stronger than good intentions to govern society. The acquired power tends to make the mighty person insane (Poněšický, 2005, p.118). Insanity of both Basterds and Hans Landa is undeniable. Even though Basterds are peculiar example of morality, depicting Nazis as monster that deserve to die and only die, their values are crooked and ways to defeat enemy are immensely cold-hearted and perverse. They want to see Nazis die and suffer, which is the main motivation of their existence. Their insanity results into unnecessary deaths on both sides. The humorous side of the film could depict absurdity of the whole idea of one culture or race being above the other or could offer us a bit of relief in very serious and violent sections. The reason why Basterds fail to complete their mission in French tavern with Bridget von Hammersmark is yet another example of absurdity of hatred between cultures, followed by the funny scene where Aldo Raine expresses his painfully unconvincing Italian.

Looking deeper into the scene in tavern and violence occurring there, we are witnessing Tarantino's love for long stretching dialogues that keep us glued to the seat and force us to tensely wait for the outburst of brutality. The scene is both comical and serious, mashing the two elements together to demonstrate familiarity of the situation (the game they are playing) along with the unfamiliar intension of their meeting (to meet an agent and finish their plan to kill Nazis in cinema). When the first shots of gun occur, audience receives vibrating violent scene where majority of people lose their lives in splits of seconds. After a very long discussion, chatting and laughing we are pushed to the wall by explicit violation of our minds. As in all Tarantino's films, the violence is unexpected and quick, full of energy and dynamic. It appears in a very ordinary place, behind the closed doors of a tavern. The shock that comes with the brutality soon ends and we encounter debate between Aldo Raine and one of the men. Here we notice his sense of mercy when he offers the man to live since his son has just been born. The glimpse of morality shows us that there is always a little bit of goodness even in the most chaotic world. Even though the man gets shot in the end, there was an attempt to debate things in rational way and Aldo Raine proves himself to be a man of good manners.

"Inglourious Basterds" is the name that speaks for itself. The Basterds are positive characters that strive to get rid of the enemy, so why are they called inglorious? Is it because their violence is revoltingly brutal, and they should feel shame for what they are doing is it supposed to be viewed from the Nazis point of view? We can presume that Tarantino wanted

people to feel confused about their role in the film. They are against antisemitism as most of us are, but even when they share the same values, aren't they doing the same immoral things to Nazis that Nazis have been doing to their people? Is their revenge justifiable? Bastard is certainly not a fluttering name, but are they called like this by Tarantino or Nazis? It is disputable whether they are supposed to be presented as moral people since their sense of morality is overlapped by need to see suffering and pain. That being said, Basterds don't serve as any example of morality.

On the other hand, one of the instruments for spreading power during World War II were concentration camps. The confrontation of violence and innocent victims also ruins relationships among people partially because the offenders felt no regret or mercy for the victims (Loewenstein, Hlavačka, Šístek and col., 2017, p. 268). Do Basterds have right to act immorally and dish out the same amount of violence to Nazis since their people experienced the same? Based on their philosophy, violence and revenge to the enemy should be celebrated and valued. They are commando of people who will give Nazis what they deserve and will do anything to achieve it. They have their own morals that most people connect to, but they manifest it in horrific way. Curving a svastika into someone's head or scalping them is a horrifying picture. In connection to Shosanna, their values and thought of morality in violence is comparable. No one says that violence is right, but sometimes it needs to be used to set things back into the right order. Especially in such extreme situation as war is. Therefore, the violence Basterds expose is revolting and shocking, yet still watchable by audience who understand their intentions. Just like in Shosanna's case, twisted society produces twisted views on morality.

4.5 What we can learn from Inglourious Basterds

The extreme violence audience is exposed to in this film is close to the real violence happening in World War II. It might sound ridiculous to compare the horrors of war to a 21st century American movie, but if we truly want to learn we must view things differently and with respect for the director. Tarantino himself did not experience the forms of oppression that Jews or African - Americans did, yet he is trying to bring us closer to the whole absurdity of the past. To read a black comedy film as a life lesson is quite impossible, but we still find philosophical deepness and importance to this film. The movie explores values of being driven, need for power, right for revenge and justice for all people. Multiple characters in the movie are driven by their emotions, personal morals and political beliefs and yet they are all twisted at the same time. Inglourious Basterds introduces various characters juxtaposed with each other, hating

each other without any objective reason – everything is purely subjective. They either must succumb to the political system or use extreme intervention.

Tarantino doesn't use violence just for the effect and shock value, he uses it wisely to point out important topics. The negative emotions we experience are being thrown into our faces by watching awful violence towards people that happened in the past. We wouldn't realize how terrible it was if the film didn't show any explicit scenes. Even though the film is completely fictional and isn't based on personal experience, the themes people were concerned with at the times are real. The basis of the philosophy of this film is on the symbolism of powers and oppression of people in war. The violence is present in all humans while they use it differently. Tarantino made us hate the villain Hans Landa who we can read as Nazism itself (ignoring the fact he exposes himself as overcoat in the end of the film). Jewish girl who fights for justice is responsible for the majestic climax of the movie – again, the power of the week symbolizes how we can fight no matter what. Audience is happy when the revenge goes well and when Aldo Raine acts immorally and decides to break the deal with Landa by killing radio operator and curving svastika into Landa's forehead, we still feel that the justice was done. Violence will always be negative, but it doesn't mean that people can't learn from it and when used wisely in film, it can serve as an excellent example of the faults of our society. Overall, *Inglourious Basterds* deal with the themes of revenge, power and violence in very interesting way and if watched closely and deeply we can assume that the usage of these topics in film is beneficial for society and certainly enjoyable. The film proves that in very bad situations, revenge is wise and acknowledgeable, violence is wrong yet necessary and the need for power is unavoidable.

In this chapter we analyzed selection of characters and scenes from the film *Inglourious Basterds*. The information from theoretical part of the thesis served us to better understand and examine various themes and topics. We concluded that the film has deeper philosophical meaning, concerning with issues with violence, revenge, ethics and different cultures. Tarantino doesn't only use violence for style and humor, he also points out the negative aspect by creating villains who are morally twisted. He expresses his views on morality through characters in his movies from which we can learn and, in many ways, avoid copying their behavior. Violence in this film is very explicit and serves to shock, scare, entertain and bring the audience near to the horrors of war. Therefore, we must conclude that even though there is controversy surrounding very brutal violence Tarantino exposes us to, he is doing it for a good reason.

5. Kill Bill Vol.1

In the second chapter of practical part of this thesis the American martial arts film Kill Bill: Volume 1 from 2003 will be examined. Martial arts, revenge and violence are the most prominent features of this movie, we will take a deeper look into the way violence is being depicted, as well as the philosophical meaning of revenge. The chapter will be divided into several parts, each dealing with a specific topic connected to the film.

5.1 The plot

In El Paso, Texas, the Bride is attacked by the *Deadly Viper Assassination Squad* while practicing a wedding ceremonial with her friends and future husband. She is pregnant and loses her daughter while the attack. The leader of the squad named Bill is told by her that the baby is his, however he shoots the Bride in the head anyway.

Four years later, the Bride goes to the house of Vernita Green, a former member of the disbanded assassination squad of which they were both members. They engage in a knife fight but are disrupted by Vernita's young daughter Nikki. In the kitchen and out of the sight of Nikki, Vernita tries to surprise the Bride with a pistol hidden in the box of cereals but misses the target and instead gets killed after the Bride throws knife at her. Vernita dies in front of her daughter, which Beatrix did not intend.

For years earlier, after the investigation of what happened in the chapel, the Bride is in the hospital and Deadly Viper Elle Driver comes to kill her with lethal injection in her sleep. Bill calls Elle right before she manages to kill the Bride, telling her that it would be dishonorable to kill her when is not able to defend herself.

Back in the present, the Bride wakes up from the four - year coma and realizes she has lost her daughter. After escaping from the hospital, she decides to kill Bill and four members of the *Deadly Viper Assassination Squad*, picking her first target to be O-Ren Ishii. O-ren is the leader of Tokyo yakuza, after being trained as an elite assassin. Her parents were killed by yakuza boss when she was just a child and she took her vengeance on him.

The Bride travels to Okinawa to obtain a sword by legendary swordsmith Hattori Hanzō whose former student was Bill. The Bride then fights with O-ren, her yakuza army, bodyguard Gogo Yubari and the elite Crazy 88, killing them all-in never-ending sword fight. She tortures Sofie Fatale, O-Ren's assistant and lets her live as a threat and information to Bill.

5.2 The theme of revenge

In the 2017 article for Psychology Today, Peg Streep says that *“Revenge as a response to injustice has a long literary history, and doubtless dates to pre-historical times. Whether it’s Odysseus slaughtering the suitors who’ve taken over his house or the Old Testament intoning “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” the theme of revenge has never lost its luster as countless contemporary variations in movies and books from high-brow to low attest.... “*

Kill Bill is built on revenge itself. The whole movie resolves around a woman whose longing for revenge drives her to kill all her enemies. Admitting Peg Streep and her ideas on it, revenge has been the interest of artistic expression for many years. Why is it so sensitive and why do some people refuse it? Can we justify the revenge as an acceptable or even admirable phenomenon?

When the Bride encounters Vernita Green, the first person she wants to kill, they have an interesting conversation about revenge. Firstly, the Bride says: *“It’s mercy, compassion and forgiveness I lack, not rationality”*. To that Vernita responds: *“You have a right to want it get even.”* and the Bride responds: *“No! To get even? I would have to kill you, go up to Nikki’s room, kill her, then wait for you husband and kill him. That would be even, Vernita.”* After the Bride kills Vernita, daughter Nikki appears and is being told that her mother deserved to die. The Bride finishes the scene with line: *“When you grow up, if you still feel raw about it, I’ll be waiting.”* This might be one of the most important scenes regarding revenge in the film, since the Bride’s character opens about her views on it. Not only she admits that she doesn’t value mercy, but she also insists that revenge is something that needs to be done. Even the little girl has right to revenge on the Bride in the future.

Logically, what we are being told is that the Bride is righteous, since she believes people deserve to pay for what they have caused. Her views on revenge are not strictly driven by emotions and rage, she is logically reconstructing the right for justice among people. In fact, the Bride doesn’t even give them what they deserve- she gives less. Her revenge involves killing those who killed her child, future husband and friends- instead of killing their children and close ones as well. The Bride insists that if Vernita’s daughter feels like she needs to revenge, she should do it. Therefore, the right to revenge applies on all humans that have been hurt by someone, no one gets excluded. Having said that, the Bride is right and there is nothing immoral about her revenge, or is it?

Can we take the ethics of the Bride in *Kill Bill* seriously and apply it to real life without any doubts? And most importantly, can we connect the moral behavior to a justifiable revenge? We believe it is possible. As Tarantino himself said, people wouldn't enjoy his films as much if revenge wasn't righteous. In his movies, we never see mercy replacing right to revenge. His characters often lack mercy (as the Bride said) and feel like the most moral thing to do is to give their enemy what they deserve. Most people who like *Kill Bill* sympathize with the Bride and long to see her opponents suffer- which might be based on how society views morality. If people agree with her, they must have the same opinion. By any means we should not use the same ways she does (brutal violence) but the basis of her revenge is logical and sensible.

James H. Spence (2009) describes three ways of understanding morality. Traditional morality, nihilism and something in between. Traditional morality says that there are objectively given rules and these rules form the basis of morality. Nihilism refuses objective values which could justify moral rules and that means there is no morality. The third way of understanding morality is based on using social interactions and human nature. Even though there is no objective values, there are basic values built in human nature which makes us behave morally or immorally. This means that morality is a result of hundreds of years of interaction among people (Mohammad and Greene, 2009, p. 87,88). Based on this, regardless of which approach we take towards morality, any of these could be applied on *Kill Bill* and its main theme of revenge. If we believe that there are objective rules that form the morality of our society, we all somehow naturally understand them. If Vernita agrees to meet with the Bride and fight, she accepts the fact that she might have broken those objective rules. She is even stating it might be sorry for her to apologize. Nihilism denied any form of morality and the chance of forming a righteous society. Therefore, even if we don't agree with the Bride, we are not allowed to say that her actions are wrong since there is nothing negative for us to say about her decision to revenge on people. She is simply not breaking any rules. In the third and most important case, we have the morals inherited inside of us. Both the Bride and Vernita understand that Vernita has done something wrong and deserves to be punished. To sustain morality in society, people must take responsibility for their actions and admit that they have ruined or broken moral rules. They naturally feel that their actions are immoral based on their DNA and social interaction they have built over centuries. There is nothing wrong with the Bride's revenge, as long as she states that Nikki has right to revenge on her as well. To sum up, even though we can justify her behavior from the philosophical principle, her aggression and violent actions are not part of it.

5.3 The explicit violence and humor

Does the Bride have right to use brutality and to be eager to see her enemies suffer? Yes, since the brutality allows Tarantino to use violence unrealistically and for amusement. There are at least three brutal scenes in the film that stay in most people's minds after watching the film. First, the scene where O-ren Ishii cuts off Mr. Tanaka's head, second when the Bride fights Crazy 88 and thirdly when the Bride cuts off Sofie Fatale's hands and leaves her alive as a threat. What do all these scenes have in common? Besides the obvious violence, it's humor. We can't help but feel amused by how the violence is being portrayed, unrealistically and expressively. The color of the blood is rather orange, streams of it are squirting across the room transforming the victim into a comic deformed torso.

At this point, we might connect two contradictive arguments regarding violence in cinema and violence in real life. On one side, people believe it is dangerous to portray it, other say there is obvious difference between them and actually discourages the audience to act like that in real life. As Tarantino said, he has always been able to tell the difference between the two and clearly hates the thought that someone would get inspired to get violently based in watching his films. He also said he isn't responsible for what his art causes. If he didn't show us explicit violence and left us imagine what is happening to the victim (in some movies violence is not shown but expressed just by sound or music) we would take it more seriously. The fact he throws the brutality in our faces might serve him as a way to show how ridiculous it is and how different it is from reality. We don't normally see people getting their arms or heads chopped off and we certainly don't expect one woman to kill tens of men running around with swords. It certainly takes some level of maturity to realize that, but since you are old enough the film, you should understand that the director is ridiculing the way violence is used and we know that in reality things look completely different.

So why is it that people feel more amused than disgusted while watching these scenes? Simply, because the violence is not real and extremely exaggerated. If something is taken to the extreme, it comes to a point where it is funny. On the serious side, Johann Hari (2009) is skeptical and often fails to understand the usage of brutal violence in his films. According to Hari, human suffering should never be portrayed as trivial, it should never turn pain into a punch line. Hari (2016) continues by saying that our nature is to empathize with suffering strangers. *“Laughing at simulated torture – and even cheering it on, as we are encouraged to through all of Tarantino's later films – leaves a moral muscle just a tiny bit more atrophied.”* But is that

really true? Are our morals transformed by laughing at violence in film? Tarantino is not expressing violence as positive, in fact, his extreme depiction of it and sense of humor it accompanies is proving us how this should only be done in cinema. While people watch a film, they are taken into a whole new world of “movie reality” which is simply impossible and often unimaginable in reality. Fictional films are not there to describe our own lives, they are there to entertain and point out something important. If we don’t complain about people flying and performing magic in movies, we shouldn’t complain about violence.

On the other hand, studies prove that certain expression of violence might make children more aggressive. In a psychological study presented by Keith Perry in 2014, watching violent films makes people more aggressive. *“Watching violent movies really does make people more aggressive -but only if they have an abrasive personality to start with, a study shows.* “In this study, scientist found out that the violent behavior that might be provoked by violent films or games depends strongly on how aggressive the person is to begin with. This takes us back to responsibility that Tarantino takes for his work. If his mentality was turning around the fact that the depicted violence makes people aggressive, he could stop making films at the spot. The problem is, violence has always been present and the believe that art has power to destroy our morals and views on violence is simply ludicrous. Being an adult, we must decide whether we want to watch a film depicting violence, if we are children the responsibility is on our parents. Also, if a person is naturally aggressive they would have been aggressive even if they didn’t watch the film. The fact that it is supporting their inner traits is not an argument to judge Tarantino’s work. Anything dangerous depicted in art could be viewed as unacceptable from this point of view, which denies artistic expression. Art is not reality and people shouldn’t be mad if it depicts a taboo or something that is gruesome or repulsive.

Based on this analysis, we feel that we should let ourselves enjoy O-ren Ishii chopping Mr. Tanaka’s head off since the whole scenes is followed by the quote *“If you’re unconvinced a particular plan of action I’ve decided is the wisest, tell me so. But allow me to convince you and I promise you, right here and now, no subject will ever be taboo. Except, of course, the subject that was just under discussion.”* O-ren Ishii has a reason to act this way and is very logical. When Mr. Tanaka mentions her Chinese and American heritage as negative, he gets what he deserves- his bad behavior is payed off with her bad treatment. In its pure brutality, the whole scene is logical, comical and expresses ethics- the right behavior that is to be expected by yakuza members. If they act badly and therefore break ethics, they are given punishment. The rules must be followed and no matter how extreme the punishment is, it is justifiable. In

fact, there is a positive side to O-ren ishii's treatment. This particular act of violence might be read as the importance of respect to authority. When we neglect the fact how brutal she is, we must admit that this way O-ren is maintaining respect and expresses the importance of following good manners and admiration of authority.

When it comes to the Bride's fight with Crazy 88 and Gogo Yubari, all we see is an amusing unrealistic pseudo samurai fight where the woman in the middle kills enormous amount of trained sword fighters. This scene along with many other could be seen as "revenge on Americanization of Asian culture" as Jason Southworth indicated. The only way the Bride is capable of killing the whole group is using her extraordinary Hattori Hanzō sword. The hype around the sword and Hattori Hanzō himself is slightly amusing, because its is taken to the extreme and makes the whole situation even more surreal.

As for the scene with Sofie Fatale, the Bride is using her as a threat for the rest of the squad and to let Bill know about her intensions. It is quite logical to long for awareness of your intension from the side of an enemy because it makes the revenge more intense and enjoyable. Besides it being very gruesome, being given the advantage of life from someone whose life was threatened to someone who was involved in the killing is a price of mercy. The Bride acts violently but rationally. When it comes to the scene of the Bride's and O-ren Ishii's final fight, their respect to each other and morality they fight with is profound. As the music kicks in we are being presented with an ironic and contrasting song to the serious samurai fight scene- yet another example of the revenge on Americanization of Asian culture. As O-ren Ishii herself proclaims "*Silly Caucasian girl likes to play with samurai swords.*" And later gets cut and says: "*For ridiculing you earlier I apologize.*" we can see the irony of Asian and American culture intermingle, when white American uses better Japanese sword than the Asian boss of yakuza. Later after being killed O-ren Ishii proclaims with respect: "*That really was a Hattori Hanzō sword* "; in a way dying with awe to the Japanese master and the Bride. Since the women fight with respect and honor to each other, the violence is just a way to defend themselves and express their strength through fight.

5.4 What we can learn from Kill Bill Vol. 1

As the Bride's revenge escalates and her intension to kill all the people she has aimed to is starting to be a huge success, audience feels that justice is being achieved. It is a fake and exaggerated for of justice but still works really well. Through this movie we are being told that it is extremely important to live in justice and everyone should have right to fight for their

dignity and pay for their bad actions. Again, it is just a movie and the actions cannot be taken literally. Tarantino is not telling us to kill people who have hurt us, but our wish for the Bride to succeed is a symbolic wish for justice for people in general. The violence and martial arts depicted in Kill Bill Vol.1 are not only there to amuse and ridicule certain situations, but they also show us how respect, authority and self-defense is important for our society. The connection to Asian culture is also Tarantino's personal preference for these cultures since one of his favorite films is Battle Royale (2000 Japanese film) to whose director Kinji Fukasaku Kill Bill is dedicated to. The initial meaning of martial arts is to defend yourself and the Bride's revenge is in a way a form of self-defense. Since martial arts combine fight and respect that is exactly what the movie is doing. Even when the violence is brutal, its hidden aim is to achieve justice and moral relationships among people. It depends on how we watch the film.

6. Kill Bill Vol. 2

In the last chapter of practical part of this thesis the film Kill Bill: Volume 2 will be examined. The movie was shot simultaneously with Kill Bill: Volume 1 but due to the final length the director decided to slip it in two parts. Kill Bill Vol. 2 offers the same themes as the first movie, however there is a stronger focus on philosophy and it includes the denouement. We will concentrate on the main character Beatrix Kiddo and other characters and their connection to the philosophical themes. We will examine the meaning of the ending and why it is important Beatrix Kiddo succeeded with her revenge.

6.1 The plot

The Bride's former lover, the father of her child, and the leader of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad Bill arrives unexpectedly and orders the Deadly Vipers to kill everyone at the wedding. Four years later, the Bride has already assassinated Deadly Vipers O-Ren Ishii and Vernita Green. She goes to the trailer of Bill's brother and Deadly Viper Budd, planning to ambush him. Budd has been warned by Bill of her approach; therefore, he shoots her in the chest with a shotgun blast of rock salt and later sedates her. He calls Elle Driver, another former Deadly Viper, and arranges to sell her the Bride's unique Hanzō sword for a million dollars. He then seals the Bride inside a coffin and buries her alive.

Years earlier, Bill tells the young Bride of the legendary martial arts master Pai Mei and his Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique, a death blow that Mei refuses to teach his students - the technique that supposedly kills any opponent after they have taken five steps. Elle arrives

at Budd's trailer and kills him with a black mamba hidden with the money for the sword. She calls Bill and tells him the Bride has killed Budd and that Elle has killed the Bride and uses the Bride's real name for the first time: Beatrix Kiddo. Beatrix ambushes Elle and they fight. Elle, who was also taught by Pai Mei, gets her eye plucked out by Beatrix which leaves her blind.

In Mexico, Beatrix meets Esteban Vihaio, who helps her find Bill. She tracks him to a hotel and discovers that their four-year-old daughter B.B. is alive. She spends the evening with Bill and B.B. After she puts the child to bed, Bill shoots Beatrix with a dart containing truth serum and interrogates her. She recounts a mission in which she discovered she was pregnant and explains that she left the Deadly Vipers to give B.B. a better life. Beatrix disables Bill and strikes with Mei's Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique, which she kept secret. Bill makes his peace with her, takes five steps and dies. Beatrix finally finishes her revenge and leaves with B.B. to start a new life.

6.2 Pai Mei training

The fact that Beatrix Kiddo receives her training from Pai Mei is very important for the whole story. At one point it saves her life, since she is buried alive and manages to use a technique of crushing through wooden coffin with her fist which she has learnt from the master. At first, Beatrix receives bad and harsh treatment by Mei but as she proves to be very hardworking and driven, he starts to see her in a new way. That might be one of the reasons why he teaches her Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique, that she uses to kill Bill. Killing Bill is the climax of the whole movie and the way she kills him is not a coincidence. Beatrix uses the most honorable and respectful way to get rid of the person she despises the most. Even though they make peace in the final scene and we can assume Beatrix still has feelings for Bill, it is obvious that he is the person responsible for the revenge and he disappointed Beatrix the most out of all Deadly Viper Assassination Squad. So why did he receive the most peaceful death, based on the values of martial arts? Bill deserves to die and as his brother Budd says at one point of the movie, Beatrix deserves her revenge. The way Bill dies may symbolically express Beatrix's former relationship to him. They used to be lovers and since he is the father of her child, she feels the need to kill him with more respect than chopping his body parts off. His death is not about violence, it is about precise and valuable technique Beatrix has learnt while training to become a better fighter. Overall, whatever reason Beatrix received training for, she manages to use it in a valuable way- to fulfill her revenge entirely.

6.3 Elle's and Budd's death

Ironically, by Killing Budd, Elle Driver helps Beatrix greatly. Compared to Beatrix, her murder of Budd is a lot more sinister and pointless. The reason why she plans to get rid off Bill's brother is because she intends to obtain the unique samurai sword which belongs to Beatrix. There is nothing ethical and justifiable about her choice to kill Budd. Being portrayed as a negative character by Tarantino, the murder corresponds with her personality. In the first movie, she wants to kill Beatrix by injecting her with venom, which is very similar to the way Budd dies- he gets bitten by a dangerous, aggressive snake. Snakes have always been a symbol of something sinister, evil and wrong, just like Elle Driver herself. That makes Elle's tragic destiny even more enjoyable, since getting an eye plugged out and being left blind is for many people a lot worse than being killed. If we think about it deeply, we might compare Beatrix's ability to Pai Mei's ability to plug someone's eye out. The fact that Elle has received the first plugged out eye by Pai Mai and the second one by Beatrix, sends the Bride to a whole new level of authority over Elle. Elle in fact poisoned Pai Mei before her encounter with Beatrix and therefore she deserves to be killed in a way the master himself would do it. She doesn't exactly die but her blindness signifies the fact she disrespected authority and needs punishment. Here we encounter yet another symbolism of importance of authority and respect to elders, which is one of the features of Eastern Asian culture. Regardless of how brutal Elle's and Budd's death is, we can easily observe the moral difference between the two- we are not satisfied with Budd's death (he should have been killed by Beatrix) and we are satisfied with what happened to Elle.

6.4 Bill

Can we justify Bill's violence and revenge? Certainly not. His situation is completely different and during his final conversation with Beatrix, she expresses her disgust of how he reacted to finding out Beatrix was pregnant and getting married. His fake "mild and gentleman" mask overshadows the "masochist" he is (as he says right before shooting Beatrix). He was the initiator of the whole crazy revenge ride and he wasn't even aware of what he has caused. It is natural to believe that a leader of Assassination Squad would have aggressive and twisted personality traits, but the mass murder targeted on Beatrix that he ordered the Squad to do was simply unacceptable. His decision was ridiculous, and it provoked ridiculous behavior from Beatrix. Even though the whole revenge is crazy, and we see Beatrix as the emotionally driven woman incapable of mercy, we must remember that her ex-lover Bill is the reason for it all.

Again, Quentin Tarantino named the film Kill Bill and immediately pointed out that Bill is the evil character that needs to be murdered. As his actions were extremely immoral, overacted and brutal, he and his squad deserved to die. This is yet another reason why we might assume that Tarantino doesn't celebrate crazy, violent killers but strong, rational and powerful heroes like Beatrix. We certainly don't think our moral muscle gets atrophied because of Kill Bill.

6.5 The meaning of “happy ending”

As the film climaxes and the audience finds out that Beatrix will truly achieve what she has been aiming for such a long time, they feel enormous relief and satisfaction. Just like Beatrix Kiddo, they experience the same emotions. It is hard to hold the tears at the point where she is lying in bathroom sobbing and laughing at the same time, expressing her gratitude. Why did Tarantino decide to let her succeed and what does her successful revenge signify? Beatrix Kiddo is a hero who managed to fight injustice and became happy and grateful in the end. What strikes the audience the most is how “normal” she acts, hugging her daughter and starting to live an ordinary life with her young daughter. Tarantino might have wanted to point out that Beatrix is not just an assassin as Bill proclaimed, however she is a loving mother capable of giving up her life for her child. If she was just a killer, she would act heartlessly and selfishly. Beatrix Kiddo is a strong woman who stood up against those who betrayed her. That is exactly why her violent behavior doesn't define who she is. As a trained assassin she is obviously and naturally violent towards her opponents and there is nothing admirable about her job, while connected to her personal story of revenge, she is using violence as an unavoidable weapon towards people who have made terrible mistake.

Finally, the violence in Kill Bill Vol. 1 and Kill Bill Vol. 2 evokes various mixed emotions based on who is watching the film. Some people disagree with it, some people love it, some can appreciate what is hiding behind it, some see it as a pure artistic expression of Quentin Tarantino. Even if the violence served for style and humor, for which the director is often criticized, it is not the main thing we are supposed to get from watching the movies. What we like about Beatrix Kiddo is not violence, it is her strength and unwillingness to back down in front of her enemies. Notice how people like Beatrix and dislike the Squad, while they are both violent. That is because the qualities they share are not important, it is what makes them different that matters. After analyzing the characters, scenes and themes connected to the movies, we came to conclusion that in Beatrix's case, revenge is justifiable and the depicted “fake movie violence” goes perfectly with the ironic music and serves as entertainment.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the films we concluded that in certain situations and in the film reality, violence can be justified as a way to express style, humor and shock value. There is nothing particularly wrong with the usage of movie violence as long as it is logical and beneficial for the development of an individual character. We realized that even though movie violence can have effect on younger audiences, it always depends on the psychological predispositions of the person and therefore the effect of it is not the director's responsibility.

We realized that there is a moral side to Tarantino's films, when the director is indirectly trying to show us what is wrong and what is right. By creating positive and negative characters with different life stories and behavior Tarantino teaches us a moral lesson of differentiating between who deserves good and who deserves bad. We also concluded that revenge can be justifiable in a particular situation, in this case Beatrix Kiddo and Shosanna Dreyfus whose lives were destroyed, and they deserved to pay back. This made us realize that mercy is important however certain people do not deserve it and therefore there is nothing immoral about being unmerciful.

To sum up, we fulfilled the expected outcome of the thesis by answering questions regarding the themes. We expected that the violence and revenge in Tarantino's films are justifiable, and we proved it by the analysis. Even though many of these conclusions are subjective, various theories and texts helped us confirm the opinion. No piece of art and no artist can be viewed objectively entirely positive or negative by the whole society but many critics including us agree that there is a deeper significance to films of Quentin Tarantino and that his work can be beneficial for people.

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Résumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá filozofickými tématy obsaženými ve filmech režiséra a scénáristy Quentina Tarantina a zaměřuje se především na používání explicitního násilí a brutálního chování hlavních postav. V teoretické části představuje teorie násilí a agresivity, kterou poté využívá pro analýzu v praktické části. Práce představuje tři filmy Quentina Tarantina v nichž analyzuje násilí, pomstu, etiku, morálku a další témata související s filozofií Quentina Tarantina. Práce se snaží o ospravedlnění chování postav ve filmech a zdůrazňuje význam a filozofickou hloubku filmů, které mají přínos pro naši společnost.

Annotation

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Název práce:	Násilí ve filmu Quentina Tarantina
Název v angličtině:	Violence in Quentin Tarantino Films
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce se zabývá filozofickými tématy obsaženými ve filmech režiséra a scénáristy Quentina Tarantina a zaměřuje se především na používání explicitního násilí a brutálního chování hlavních postav. V teoretické části představuje teorie násilí a agresivity, kterou poté využívá pro analýzu v praktické části.
Klíčová slova:	Quentin Tarantino, násilí, pomsta, agrese, film, Hanební pancharti, Kill Bill
Anotace v angličtině:	The thesis talks about on philosophical themes in the films of Quentin Tarantino and it focuses on the usage of explicit violence and brutal behavior of the main characters. The theoretical part introduces theory of violence and aggression which is used for the analysis.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Quentin Tarantino, violence, aggression, film, Inglourious Basterds, Kill Bill
Rozsah práce:	53 s.
Jazyk práce:	Anglický jazyk