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## BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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The Bride as a heroine and a role model in Quentin  
Tarantino's films

**Čestné prohlášení**

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## Obsah

Abstract .....	5
Introduction .....	6
1 Theoretical part .....	7
1.1 Basic theory of film characters – a well-written character .....	7
1.2 Theories of role models and heroines .....	8
1.3 Quentin Tarantino – childhood and the beginnings of his career .....	9
2 Analytical part .....	11
2.1 Character analysis questions .....	11
2.1.1 Question one: Does the character meet the requirements of a well written character having both interior and exterior parts fully developed? .....	12
2.1.2 Question two: Does the character have the same value as the opposite gender? .....	12
2.1.3 Question three: Can the character be considered as a heroine suitable for the twenty first century? .....	13
2.2 The character's analysis .....	14
2.2.1 A short analysis of the work of Quentin Tarantino and its significance to the society .....	14
2.2.2 The basic information about The Bride as a challenging leading role .....	15
2.2.3 The Plot Overview .....	16
2.2.4 The Bride as an active action heroine .....	17
2.2.5 The theme of maternity and humanity of The Bride .....	19
2.2.6 The Bride defying the gender binary .....	21
2.2.7 The Bride as a role model suitable for the twenty first century .....	24
Conclusion .....	27
Biography .....	28
Appendices .....	30
Résumé .....	33
Annotation .....	34

## Abstract

The main aim of this thesis is to summarise and analyse the artistic work of American film director and screenwriter Quentin Tarantino, focusing on one of his most famous female characters, The Bride from Kill Bill films. It also describes the character's impact on the society and her possible position as a role model and a heroine, especially for the young generation. She is therefore analysed as a film character, a female action heroine and as an example of valuable qualities. Quentin Tarantino's artistic work is considered to represent quality as well as popularity. As a result, it serves as a medium for communicating values to the masses.

## Introduction

There is no doubt, that the name Quentin Tarantino is one of the best-known names in Hollywood and the world of cinema in general. The aura of admiration that surrounds him is a result of his passion, artistic work, personality and luck, which all contributed to his great success. There are hardly any people who have not seen any of his films or at least heard his name.

It is therefore quite difficult to choose only one of his creations and analyse it thoroughly without remembering the value of the rest of his work. However, if there is one film that undoubtedly deserves to be considered as a subject of heroism and feminism, it is Kill Bill.

Although Quentin Tarantino belongs to one of the most admired film directors of the author of this thesis, it was only the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2017 where she saw both volumes of the film. The screening was presented by Uma Thurman herself in an open-air cinema full of excited fans as a tribute to her career. The atmosphere was therefore breathtaking and the reactions of the crowd made it quite clear, that the main character called The Bride was a symbol of a strong action heroine beloved by the viewers.

As a result, The Bride deserves to be thoroughly analysed not only as a well-written female film character, but also as a role model she represents with her persona.

It is quite clear that any of these statements are essentially subjective. The problem lies within the idea of art itself which is fundamentally subjective as well as the theories concerning role models. Therefore, it can never be analysed in an objective way because the opinion of the reader, listener or in this case the viewer is always affected by the subjective point of view. That is why this thesis analyses the character of The Bride using character analysis questions based on various sources and a subjective point of view of the author.

## 1 Theoretical part

The theoretical part of this thesis focuses on outlining the general information connected to the issue of female characters in the films of Quentin Tarantino.

It is also structured into three main chapters. Firstly, Basic theory of film characters – a well-written character, secondly Theories of role models and heroines, and thirdly Quentin Tarantino – childhood and the beginnings of his career.

Each chapter has a purpose of showing the most basic information required for understanding the topic without going into unnecessary details. All the information mentioned in this chapter are referred to in the analytical part.

### 1.1 Basic theory of film characters – a well-written character

This chapter focuses on the definitions of film characters and the most commonly used guidelines for character writing. For this purpose, two written sources are used to develop a list of requirements for a well-written character, both being known to be used by filmmakers. As it is one of the main ideas of this thesis, there is no need to distinguish between male and female film characters, since they deserve the same amount of attention from the writers and should also be based on the same rules and to avoid stereotypes.

One of the most reliable sources of guidance for screenwriters is Syd Field with his *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. As the director Alice Nellis stated in her preface to the Czech edition of Field's guide: Syd Field in a clear and simple way names the practical rules which are applied in contemporary style of film screenplay. (Field and Houdek 2007)

In the chapter defining a well-written film character and the process of creating the character Field describes the interior and exterior part of character's personality, each having different function in the presentation of the person. There are three basic components of the exterior life: professional, personal and private. All of these three components have to be fully developed to make a character whole. (Field and Houdek 2007)

To specify the issues of the three components, there are additional questions related to each component serving as a character development. For instance, the professional section is connected to the character's job, namely their workplace, daily routine or their relationships with their boss and co-workers. The personal part, on the other hand, answers questions regarding a person's private relationships with family members, friends or even enemies. In private section the writer develops character's behaviour in isolation from others, their dreams, goals and needs.

While answering questions such as these, the screenwriter outlines the basic foundations for a functional character. (Field and Houdek 2007)

Linda Aronson also developed a practical technique called the character table which focuses on describing private, personal and public life of a character in the past as well as in the present. Aronson states that the viewer should be able to recognise the psychological origin of the characters, their strengths and weaknesses, their public roles and current events of their lives. Furthermore, Aronson agrees with Field on the importance of the character's activity which should be shown through the storyline. (Aronson and Graeberová 2014)

Another aspect of a well-written film character are four essential qualities that the characters should perform, namely a strong and defined dramatic need and individual point of view. They should also personify an attitude and go through a certain change or transformation. (Field and Houdek 2007) These four elements depict a consistent work on character development precisely and are therefore included in the characters' analysis.

## 1.2 Theories of role models and heroines

This chapter focuses on outlining the theories concerning the topic of role models. The research is based on two studies connected to the issue, one describing the ideal characteristics of a role model, the other giving useful guidelines on the choice of a role model and how to analyse their behaviour and subsequently follow their example in the most appropriate way.

As doctor Marilyn Price-Mitchell wrote in one of her articles from 2017, a positive role model can serve as an example that inspires young people to live meaningful lives. According to her, the key for becoming a quality role model is to offer actions of integrity, optimism, determination, compassion and hope.

However, during her research, doctor Price-Mitchell noticed that teenagers and adolescents often require a stronger development of passion, determination and confidence in their role models. It seems to be important that the person has a clear idea of what is important to them and has not only the motivation but also the ability to put an effort into creating things that would make a difference. (Price-Mitchell, 2017)

Based on her research, doctor Price-Mitchell created a list of qualities suitable for a perfect role model: they should show passion and ability to inspire, have a clear set of values, show commitment to community, selflessness and acceptance of others and the ability to overcome obstacles. (Price-Mitchell, 2017)



Another definition of a role model is specified in an article from 2017 on The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) web pages. It states that a role model is a person who serves as an example by influencing others. Although the most important role models for children are their parents and caregivers, they also look up to other members of society to help shape their behaviour in relationships and while making difficult decisions. As a result, other relatives, teachers also become their role models. It is also interesting how children and adolescents try to copy the behaviour of celebrities, such as athletes or even characters from books, films or video games. At this point parents are supposed to help their children choose positive role models. (AACAP 2017)

The suggestions given by AACAP are for example to allow children to identify the specific qualities they admire in their role models, to give examples of members of society who can be considered as persons showing an exemplary behaviour with a positive influence on the rest of the community or to share one's personal inspirational role models. (AACAP 2017)

It is also important to react appropriately to a negative behaviour of a role model. To encourage critical thinking, AACAP suggests that children should decide what their opinion of the role model's actions is. As a result, children can realise the possibility of both positive and negative behaviour and influence of people and start deciding which qualities they choose to follow. Moreover, it is recommended that children think of their own hypothetical reaction and behaviour in a specific situation. They may consequently alter their priorities and choose another role model to follow in such situations. (AACAP 2017)

To sum up, it is a crucial task to choose appropriate role models in children's life. Every person shows signs of both positive and negative behaviour therefore every role model can be inspiring in certain situations. Using critical thinking, children should develop the ability to identify these inspiring qualities and to avoid the negative influence.

### 1.3 Quentin Tarantino – childhood and the beginnings of his career

It is necessary to understand one's past, motivations and experiences to analyse his artistic work. Therefore, the last section of the theoretical part of this thesis outlines the biography of the writer, actor, producer, director, cinematographer and editor Quentin Tarantino.

Quentin Jerome Tarantino was born on the twenty seventh of March in 1963 in Knoxville, Tennessee. His father, Tony Tarantino, an Italian-American musician and actor from New York. His mother, Connie (McHugh), is a nurse from Tennessee and gave birth to Quentin at the age of sixteen. Quentin was quickly relocated to California after his parents separated early in his life.

From the age of two onwards, Quentin spent his early years in the suburbs of Los Angeles. (Success Story n.d.)

Although Quentin was quite young at that time, he spent a considerable amount of time in front of the television, absorbing every detail of the children movies. Later on, he started going to the cinema with the same passion. (Bailey et al. 2014)

In spite of the adult film ratings, Quentin's mother and stepfather did not forbade him to watch the movies which allowed him to study mature cinema from the very young age, however inappropriate. (Bailey et al. 2014)

Due to Tarantino's great interest in cinema, he decided to leave high school at age fifteen to pursue an acting career, taking classes during the daytime and watching classic films by night. Struggling to survive, he started working as an employee at the Video Archives rental store near his home which resulted in one of the most prolific film consumption periods of any person working in Hollywood today. As a result, Tarantino build his immense knowledge of cinema and created his own individual style. (Success Story n.d.)

Moreover, thanks to his gained knowledge and a great passion, Quentin Tarantino decided to make his own contribution to the cinema and started writing his first screenplays. In between his work shifts, he began writing the first characters of his career, many of them based on his colleagues and even himself. (Bailey et al. 2014)

Eventually, Tarantino wrote the screenplay for Reservoir Dogs, which resulted in his first film. The movie had a successful premiere in 1992 and decided about Tarantino's career as a screenwriter and a film director. (Success Story n.d.)

## 2 Analytical part

There are many strong female characters in Quentin Tarantino's films and some of them represent valuable qualities worth attention. Mia Wallace in *Pulp Fiction* from 1994, O-Ren Ishii in *Kill Bill* from 2003 or Shosanna Dreyfus in *Inglorious Basterds* from 2009 are only a few female characters to mention from Tarantino's film career.

However, it is without a doubt The Bride who deserves the position of his most inspiring, powerful and also controversial female character. As the leading role in *Kill Bill: Volume 1* from 2003 and *Kill Bill: Volume 2* from 2004, she managed to cause a vivid discussion about the role that women play in action films and how they can overcome obstacles connected with such a challenging character.

Although The Bride was not the first action heroine to appear in cinema (e.g. Trinity in *The Matrix* from 1999), she surely is one of the most significant figures in female character writing and became a widely known action heroine for the society.

For the purpose of this thesis, the character of The Bride is analysed on the basis of character analysis questions concerning the topic of inspiring strong female characters. Such method allows a structured analysis divided into chapters based on specific peculiarities connected to the issue.

The analytical part of this thesis consists of character analysis questions and their meaning and subsequent analysis concerning each topic. There are also chapters related to the significance of Tarantino's films and characters, basic information about the character of The Bride as a challenging leading role, and finally an overview of the plot of *Kill Bill*.

### 2.1 Character analysis questions

This chapter focuses on the character analysis questions and explaining their meaning. The questions are formulated based on several film reviews, analyses and theories of film and role models by various authors (e.g. Field and Houdek, 2007; Price-Mitchell, 2014; Hemery, 2008; etc.), some from professional writers and film critics, others from independent sources such as webpages and blogs, which can be considered useful for the purpose of this thesis.

For the purpose of a general analysis of a film character relevant to this thesis, three questions were formulated, where the first one is split into two parts:

- Does the character meet the requirements of a well written character having both interior and exterior parts fully developed?

- Is the character an active action heroine?
- What are the inner motivations for her behaviour? How are they connected to her maternity?
- Does the character have the same value as the opposite gender?
- Can the character be considered as a heroine suitable for the twenty first century?

2.1.1 Question one: Does the character meet the requirements of a well written character having both interior and exterior parts fully developed?

There are various definitions of character writing based on different theories. In one of his famous quotes Syd Field for example claims that the character's essence lies within their action. It is what they do that defines them, not what they say. Building on that, the character should therefore be active and should be causing things to happen by their action, not just reacting to things happening around them. (Field and Houdek, 2007)

Linda Aronson supports this statement saying that in film the character is defined by its actions and has to be presented by the storyline. She admits that this technique is quite opposite to writing theories concerning literature, where the character is usually presented with their feelings and thoughts. (Aronson and Graeberová 2014)

Both of the authors state their specific theories and instructions concerning the character writing whereas sometimes these differ only slightly. A strong character is supposed to be well structured, active, have an individual point of view, dramatic need or motivation and go through a certain change. The character should also be able to function as the opposite gender to avoid stereotypes. (see Chaper 2.1 for detail)

2.1.2 Question two: Does the character have the same value as the opposite gender?

In some independent sources (e.g. Wadsworth 2017; ScreenCraft 2016) the authors of blogs and articles tend to draw the reader's attention to the insignificance of the character's gender. They often suggest useful guidance for nonprofessional writers, one of them being the switch of the gender of the character. The point of this test is to avoid stereotypes, which is one of the main themes of this thesis. Therefore, it is used as a valid theory for the study questions in a characters analysis.

To refer to ScreenCraft, some of the most admired female protagonists in the recent film history were originally written as male characters. Sandra Bullock's role in *Our Brand Is Crisis* was formerly supposed to be played by George Clooney until she suggested accepting it instead. Angelina Jolie in *Salt* was initially intended as an action role for Tom Cruise. Also Sigourney

Weaver's Ripley from the Alien franchise deserves to be mentioned. Ridley Scott's decision to change Ripley's gender resulted in a unique action heroine amidst a slew of muscular male counterparts. Therefore, a female character clearly does not need to embody masculine traits to be compelling or successful, however switching genders can help avoid stereotypes and give a refreshing take on a familiar role. (2016)

It is worth mentioning that Syd Field lists useful questions for character writing and the very first question on his list is whether the character is a woman or a man (Field and Houdek, 2007). For the purpose of this thesis this question will not be considered a valid instruction or guidance. On the contrary, the guide cannot serve as the ultimate source of information, since the book was originally published in 1979 and therefore does not necessarily meet all the requirements of contemporary screenwriters or viewers. The purpose of this thesis is to value the revolutionary view of film characters that contradict many traditional definitions and rules. (see Chapter 1.1 for detail) It can be emphasized that Quentin Tarantino produced his own rules and offered the viewers something unaccustomed.

### 2.1.3 Question three: Can the character be considered as a heroine suitable for the twenty first century?

It has been proved by a substantial number of studies that humans learn through modelling others (Price-Mitchell, 2014). It needs to be remembered that at the same time the film industry became one of the most valid mediums for transferring not only artistic visions but also opinions, ideas and values. It is therefore a task of crucial importance to create films that carry valuable lessons not only for the young audience but for viewers in general.

As the times change and the world offers a new range of obstacles as well as opportunities, the society also evolves and starts expecting different qualities from the people aspiring to success in a career or life itself. A noticeable progress has been made for example in tolerance, confidence, ability to speak for oneself or the capability of reaching one's high goals. There is a visible change in those requirements throughout the history.

It is also quite obvious that the society tends to create a certain need for a role model to follow. (see Chapter 1.2 for detail) This need seems to originate from the human tendency to learn from an example of people who they find more successful or evolved in certain useful aspects of life. This phenomenon is probably best observable in the youngest members of society who are still looking for their ideal role models.

This list of attributes serves as a list of requirements concerning the analysed female character of Quentin Tarantino's film *Kill Bill* to verify her function as a role model suitable for the modern-day era, no matter the age or gender.

## 2.2 The character's analysis

This section consists of a series of character studies concerning the most distinctive female character in the work of Quentin Tarantino analysing her contribution to cinema and value as a role model. The analysis is split into sections based on an issue and topic that is being discussed. The study is based on subjective character study, written sources, articles and interviews with film creators and actors.

### 2.2.1 A short analysis of the work of Quentin Tarantino and its significance to the society

This chapter focuses on an analysis of a value that the artistic work of the director and writer Quentin Tarantino carries. His contribution to culture and entertainment is directly related to his opportunity to create modern role models.

As Tarantino himself said during his acceptance speech at the 85th Academy Awards in 2012, he believes that if people know about him in the future, it is going to be thanks to the characters that he created. (Tarantino 2012)

While Quentin Tarantino can be considered as one of the most famous directors of the modern era, he is also often criticised for his use of violence in his films. Therefore, not many film critics or viewers find him appropriate as a creator of art suitable for young people or characters that could be considered role models.

However, many disagree with those statements and although they find Tarantino's work at least unconventional, in their opinion his characters often represent a new point of view when it comes to character writing. Their main focus is on his female characters which are in many ways almost revolutionary.

Furthermore, some studies confirm that Tarantino's female characters often demonstrate qualities that are usually considered admirable and useful if adapted appropriately. As a result, feminist writers and viewers respect them as role models and heroines deserving their attention (e.g. Stewart 2016; Davis n.d.). (see Chapter 1.3 for detail)

Another interesting fact is that Tarantino manages to connect art with entertainment which gives him an exceptional opportunity to influence masses by his artistic vision.

Generally speaking, entertainment and art differ in many aspects which are usually easy to recognise for a keen viewer. They use a specific film language concerning for example the visual element, symbolism and metaphors. The gravity of the theme may also vary for the purpose of the film is either to allow the viewer to explore an interesting way to spend their time or to offer him a possible change in his life requiring his attention and effort.

However, the main difference between art and entertainment lies within the audience. While entertaining films are made for the viewer, artistic movies are created for the artist who desires to express themselves or to be astounded by someone else's vision. The number of people in the audiences therefore differs and so does the number of potentially influenced viewers.

Consequently, it seems difficult to combine an artistic vision with an attempt to express one's opinion and to inspire a change in any matter. For this reason, it is quite impressive that several of Tarantino's films created an ongoing discussion about some important issues. For instance, *Django Unchained* from 2012 caused a vivid dialogue within the society concerning slavery or civil rights which unfortunately still seem to be current topics, although the film was critically acclaimed for the writing, directing, acting and cinematography and also received several awards.

### 2.2.2 The basic information about The Bride as a challenging leading role

This chapter describes the challenges connected to the role of The Bride and also gives the basic information about her biography.

Beatrix Michelle Kiddo is the lead character in the two-part film *Kill Bill*. She is the protagonist known as The Bride with a codename Black Mamba while her real name is not revealed until the second volume of the film. She was portrayed by Uma Thurman who began her co-operation with Quentin Tarantino by starring in his earlier film *Pulp Fiction* in 1994. The character of The Bride is known to be a product of their collective work which started during the filming of the cult movie *Pulp Fiction*. (Russell n.d.)

*Kill Bill* is a classical revenge movie split into two parts, both connected with the genre of martial arts films. However, it is not a conventional martial arts movie as it drifts into the genres of action, crime and thriller as well, and the formula is repeated in the second volume of *Kill Bill*. Tarantino successfully combines the visually impressive choreography of Hong Kong martial arts with the operatic bombast of a spaghetti western. (Hemery 2008)

Volume 1 from 2003 is an action crime thriller with strong references to classical Asian martial arts films. (ČSFD n.d.) Moreover, the movie contains a passage explaining one

character's origin story using only the art of Anime and Manga. The film in general is filled with radiant colours and highly cinematic takes of scenes located mostly in interiors and in the city. (see Appendices 1, 4 and 5 for details) The dialogues are usually quite dramatic when it comes to phrases and action.

Volume 2, on the other hand, which had its premiere in 2004, is usually officially connected with the same set of film genres, however it shows a strong influence of spaghetti westerns from the 1960s and 1970s visible primarily in the different colour palette using softer colours, a typical western scenery using natural locations such as forests or deserts. (ČSFD n.d.) (see Appendices 3 and 6 for details) The interactions of characters are also less dramatic as for the use of words. However, the dramatic aspect is better captured in acting performances and the captivating energy that character carries inside.

Although the main cast mostly changes for the second volume, The Bride stays the only character connecting both genres and therefore needs to fit in both of the environments. The role demands a physically fit actress with a captivating acting performance capable of portraying both a broken woman and a strong vengeance seeking assassin. There is no doubt that Uma Thurman was the perfect choice for the writer and director Quentin Tarantino since he wrote the role specifically for her. This statement is supported by the fact that Thurman became pregnant shortly before the scheduled filming but Tarantino was more than willing to wait until she was ready to work with him and did not consider a recast. (Russell n.d.)

### 2.2.3 The Plot Overview

This chapter briefly outlines the events of the both volumes of Kill Bill describing the main characters and summarising the plot. Even though the films are split into non-linear chapters, the plot of Kill Bill can be described quite shortly.

After discovering that she is pregnant with her boss and lover Bill, Beatrix Kiddo decides to leave her career as a member of a group of professional assassins called Deadly Viper Assassination Squad. She quietly leaves the vipers faking her own death and tries to start a new life in El Paso, Texas. She intends to settle down and get married to Tommy Plympton. (Tarantino 2003)

Upon learning she is still alive, Bill organises the Massacre at Two-Pines Wedding Chapel where Beatrix and all that are present at the wedding rehearsal are supposed to be murdered by the vipers. Bill shoots pregnant Beatrix in the head and leaves the chapel. Although The Bride



miraculously survives the murder, she goes into a four-year-long coma and delivers her baby during that time.(Tarantino 2003)

The squad therefore represents the main antagonist organisation of the story. The group is composed of four women and two men: Beatrix Kiddo, Vernita Green, O-Ren Ishii, Elle Driver and also Bill and his brother Budd. The Codenames of all members except for Bill are the names of snakes. Bill is called Snake Charmer and hence is signified as the leader of the squad.

Years after the massacre, The Bride awakens from the coma and the child that she was expecting is gone. She seeks revenge on Bill and his team of assassins who orchestrated her unsuccessful murder and took her baby. She kills all her enemies one after another and overcomes a number of obstacles on the way to her goal.

During the final act of Kill Bill: Volume 2 Beatrix finally faces her arch enemy. The moment she is about to attack Bill she finds herself standing face to face with her daughter called B.B. Kiddo by Bill who has been taking care of her as a father since she was born. Till this moment Beatrix was unaware that she had been alive and in shock becomes a member of the family for the evening still carrying her hatred towards Bill. (Tarantino 2004) At this point the film genre changes dramatically and becomes a dark family drama with complex relationships and motivations.

After a long conversation with Bill concerning their past and sins, Beatrix Kills Bill using The Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique which is the deadliest, most fatal blow in all of martial arts. In the end not only does Beatrix fulfil her intention of revenge, but she also becomes a mother as she wished. (Tarantino 2004)

#### 2.2.4 The Bride as an active action heroine

The main focus of this chapter is to analyse The Bride's activity as an action character and to answer the question whether she is a well-written character with a fully developed exterior part of her personality.

There is no doubt that Beatrix Kiddo is an active character. Although there are many moments where she describes her plans and motivations to the audience through short monologues or voiceovers, she does not hesitate to execute them. Moreover, she became one of the most beloved action heroines of all time with remarkable skills and power to overcome obstacles.

To evaluate these statements, Beatrix does not wait until she finds help to make her plan a reality. Unlike many other action heroes, she does not put together a team to make sure she will

manage to defeat her enemies. In spite of knowing she will not face some of the antagonists unprotected, she does not seek help other than a proper weapon to fight them with. She surely proves her martial abilities while killing all the members of O-Ren Ishii's army called The Crazy 88 and her personal bodyguard, a girl called Gogo Yubari, before finally facing O-Ren Ishii herself. It is quite clear that Beatrix Kiddo mastered her fighting skills to an impressive level and also shows remarkable independency.

For these reasons, the general public views The Bride as a negative role model due to her role being commonly described as a killing machine. She is being seen as an action character promoting violence among young women in order to achieve their goals. On the other hand, it is important to notice that Beatrix clearly shows emotions and is driven by them throughout the film and therefore cannot be considered a machine. Furthermore, she does not follow anyone's orders as a such a machine would. The film required such an amount of excessive violence due to the number of opponents. It served as an impending threat and also a logical conclusion that the leader of a major global organisation would have an army protecting her life. The Crazy 88 is therefore a necessary obstacle on The Bride's way to her vengeance. (Stewart 2016)

Beatrix Kiddo is a strong representation of the changing role women play in becoming more active within movies. In this case, Thurman not only plays the part, but also appears as an assassin for she has a strong, athletic frame, and depicts the role of a killer realistically, thanks partly to her ensemble of swords, knives and other weapons. (Hemery 2008)

Furthermore, her physical skills and willpower are also expressed for example in the sequence where she slowly manages to restore the strength in her paralysed legs after waking from a coma. Another example appears in the second film where she fails to surprise Budd in the recreational vehicle that he lives in and as a result, he buries her alive in a coffin. Although she feels defeated at the beginning, she manages to apply a blow she learned from her master Pai Mei and literally punches her way out of the coffin and back to the surface. Not only she actively uses her martial skills to survive, but she also expresses the power of her mind.

It is a remarkable writing choice by Quentin Tarantino for he does not use this moment to let any of the characters rescue Beatrix. It is quite common that in inescapable situations such as this one, an unexpected ally appears to help the main protagonist and presumably build on character's empathy and gratefulness. This way the writers create an unstable platform where they can temporarily humanise the hero. Tarantino avoids this common mistake and allows his heroine to save herself and yet gives her enough opportunity to express her feelings in other parts of the movie and also this one.

This scene serves well as a character building moment. It proves that despite what the viewer might be thinking at this point, Beatrix does not consider her revenge a suicide mission. After everything she has experienced, including rape, child loss and her own death, she shows a powerful will to live. She does not give up on her desire to avenge the injustice that was done to her and her child so she could finally live a better life. Therefore, her motivation does not compose only of vengeance, but also of a possibility for a chance to change her life and start a new one which she could not possibly have with a group of assassins trying to murder her or her family.

The importance of Beatrix Kiddo's actions was well summarised by Dune Stewart in his entry about the character of The Bride as a role model in feminism. He states that through her actions Beatrix Kiddo becomes a role model for a modern woman. She inspires with her independency, willpower and bravery. The Bride represents a defining role for the cinema's new take on women's capability to perform a challenging task. (Stewart 2016)

To sum up, The Bride proves to be a character with a fully developed exterior part and functions as an active character capable of making independent decisions. She shows the ability to overcome almost impossible obstacles thanks to her willpower and skills.

#### 2.2.5 The theme of maternity and humanity of The Bride

This chapter focuses on the interior part of The Bride's character, her motivations and psychological analysis concerning her positive relationships inspired by her humanity. It also outlines the theme of maternity reappearing throughout both films.

There are very few moments where Beatrix shows empathy. As she says since the beginning, she lacks forgiveness and compassion and therefore punishes her enemies without mercy for it is her rational decision. (Tarantino 2003) Moreover, she rather rejected personality features which are typically characterised as female and became stereologically more manly to reach her goal.

Nonetheless, in Kill Bill: Volume 2 she clearly expresses her unwillingness to hurt those who have not hurt her and acts as a protective mother. In the scene, where Beatrix learns that she is pregnant, she finds herself as a victim of another attempt murder taking place before the main plot of the film. A female assassin called Karen Kim is sent to kill her and Beatrix manages to buy herself time by expertly aiming her gun at her murderer's head as she is being threatened with a gun herself. Both women recognise an equal in each other and that fact forces them to communicate.

Unexpectedly, the scene does not become another bloody spectacle but turns out to be one of the most human moments of the film. Beatrix reasons with her enemy and informs her about her pregnancy proving it with a pregnancy test lying by the door. There are several moments that would allow The Bride to kill Karen with only a small amount of risk. However, she decides to let her leave safely and they both go home, as Beatrix suggests. Moreover, Karen manages to congratulate her on her way out of the hotel room.

There are several possible reasons for The Bride's actions. Her motivation could be inspired by survival or mercy but most probably by her newly born maternal instinct, since the scene foreshadows her change in character connected with the final act of the film. It is there, where Kiddo meets her daughter living with her former lover and her greatest nemesis – Bill. The expression in Uma Thurman's face clearly indicates shock and realisation of a far greater goal in her life than vengeance.

As mentioned above, this transformation is being foreshadowed throughout the films. Kiddo decides to leave her career as an assassin behind after she becomes pregnant and tries to change her life. At the massacre at her wedding rehearsal she informs Bill about his fatherhood trying to inspire mercy in him in her final moments before her death. After awaking from a coma, she suffers greatly realising her loss of a baby and devotes her life to revenge, quite possibly in an attempt to hide her pain.

As Uma Thurman described her emotion during the scene, Beatrix was heartbroken and it is worth mentioning that an average audience member can relate to such an emotion. Usually in this state people feel sad at first, but then immediately either become vague or suddenly angry at the likely cause behind that emotion. As Uma Thurman states in her interview, "She is a life-giver not a life-taker." This could be the reason for the small number of emotional scenes in the film, for while being angry at Bill, her determination for revenge resulted in a greater boldness in her expressions. Beatrix clearly had one goal in a form of killing Bill. (Stewart 2016)

Moreover, she is unwilling to kill one of her enemies called Vernita Green in front of her daughter. These moments are being used as a foreshadowing of the transformation concerning the discovery of her daughter B.B. Kiddo. The scene captures the change that is necessary for a well-written character.

Throughout the film, Beatrix shows an ability to develop functional or even friendly relationships not only due to the change caused by her pregnancy. She shows great respect and humbleness towards masters of their craft and is more than willing to learn from them and her

own mistakes. Thanks to her social skills and personal charm she manages to convince Hattori Hanzō, a former master swordsmith, to make her one last katana suitable for her revenge on Bill, his former student. It is worth mentioning that Hattori Hanzō swore a blood oath not to create another sword in his life. Nevertheless, his sympathy towards Beatrix and her plan overpower his vow. Consequently, he makes the best sword of his career that according to his words would serve well even against a god. (Tarantino 2003)

Beatrix Kiddo's relationship with legendary master of the Bak Mei and Eagle's Claw styles of kung fu called Pai Mei is also worth noticing. He is surely a cruel teacher with questionable values. However, thanks to her hard work and attitude towards suffering, Beatrix changes his mind about her abilities and character and as a result teaches her The Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique mentioned in The Plot Overview which he has not taught one single student before. (Tarantino 2004)

Later in the film, Beatrix Kiddo's respect towards her master results in her duel with Elle Driver. Because of Driver's dishonour and verbal disobedience during her training, Pai Mei removed her right eye. Elle poisoned Pai Mei as a vengeance and confesses her actions to Beatrix during their final meeting. Although Elle Driver's fate is unknown, she lost in the duel and had her second eye removed as a result. The Bride finds it a fitting punishment for her and leaves her alone to possible death. Kiddo's actions clearly show her positive relationship with Pai Mei as she chooses his method of punishment over her own to honour her master. (Tarantino 2004)

In conclusion, although The Bride could be perceived as a violent character from a certain perspective, she does show strong human motivations and positive attitude towards many aspects of her life. She goes through a certain change due to her maternal instinct and her experience. She is partially a quite empathetic character. Her interior is therefore fully developed and she can be considered a well-written character.

#### 2.2.6 The Bride defying the gender binary

This chapter describes the relationship between the character of Beatrix Kiddo and the stereotypes usually connected to female characters. It also discusses the issue of her functionality as the opposite gender that follows from the lack of these stereotypes. There are several elements connected to the topic that are analysed in this section, namely the visual element concerning the costumes and cinematography, the behavioural element involving aspects of bearing, and narrative element regarding the problem of independency of the character.

In order to analyse The Bride's visualisation, it is necessary to take a closer look at her costume. She wears her famous bright yellow jumpsuit for the fighting sequences during the first movie, which was inspired by Bruce Lee's costume from the film *Game of Death* from 1978. (see Appendix 1 for details) It has long sleeves and trouser legs with black stripes on each side. It has a rather sport function requiring a comfortable and fitting style. As a result, the costume does not objectify Beatrix and does not express her sexuality. On the contrary, it has a radiant colour only to allow the main character to captivate the viewer's attention during the complex choreography of the fight scenes in Japan.

There is however a different opinion expressed in Richard Hemery's essay from 2008, where he clearly describes The Bride's costumes as attractive to the male audience which might objectify her in a visual way. In the film Uma Thurman appears active, confident and feisty. Aesthetically, she is shown throughout the film in tight clothing. (Hemery 2008)

Such statement might degrade the previous opinion, however, according to Hemery, it helps develop Beatrix Kiddo's position as a confident character.

Back in the US, Beatrix usually wears jeans and a beige leather jacket which are also serving as quite comfortable clothes during several duels in the film. (see Appendix 2 for detail) The colours are visibly less flamboyant, more natural, for there are no fight scenes that would include more than two characters and therefore are easier to understand without any significant visual clues.

During the Massacre at Two-Pines Wedding Chapel Beatrix is wearing her wedding dress which is of course feminine, however also does not sexualise the character. (see Appendix 7 for details) During these scenes she can be seen either as heavily pregnant, or as beaten to the point of death, which happens to be the very first glimpse of the lead character that is shown on screen.

A few scenes later she is shown in a coma in a hospital attire, lying on her bed after four years of not taking care of her appearance. Here Quentin Tarantino clearly decided to show character's strengths and weaknesses, as a fighting sequence with Vernita Green separates the two scenes, however did not elaborate on the character's looks. Such decision resulted in a quite effective character introduction expressing her values, motivation and abilities instead of her beauty.

It is worth stating that for the majority of the film, Uma Thurman does not have any amount of make-up and her hair is not styled. (Hemery 2008) She seems natural and therefore

more believable in her performance which surely helps the character's expression and development.

Another important element is the behaviour of the character, namely whether she behaves in a way that could apply only for women. Although there are feminine features that can be involved while writing the character, it needs to be remembered that they should not overpower the characteristics connected to the psychological part of personality, for every human has both a feminine and masculine side, one usually stronger than the other.

To specify the idea of a stereotype and its presence in writing, in a report that is based on an extensive investigation written by William and Best in 1982 gender stereotypes were described as a set of features typically associated with a specific gender. Women are usually presented as weaker, less active, and more concerned with affiliation, nurturance, and deference while men are most commonly viewed as stronger, more active, and higher in achieving autonomy and aggression. (Birren 2013)

Beatrix Kiddo is a good example of a well-balanced character. Throughout the film she frequently expresses features that are commonly associated with men, but also is shown as a vulnerable woman. She can clearly be gentle and full of optimism, however faces her male enemies and allies as equals and manages to communicate this equality.

As it was written in one of the essays on a blog of Kristen McCauliff's Women's Studies 2010 class, Classifying Beatrix Kiddo as either feminine or masculine is impossible as she defies the gender binary. In this way Quentin Tarantino develops a characterisation of The Bride that is feminist in its gender ambiguity. (Mccollum 2008)

This balance is carefully created by a well-written character's storyline which allows her to express her personality as completely as possible. She changes her status from an assassin to a lover, to a cruelly treated student, to a mother, to a victim of a massacre, to a vengeful killer and finally to a mother again. She makes independent decisions and takes actions to complete them while also having an individual narrative that does not exist only to support a male character's storyline.

As Quentin Tarantino himself stated in an interview with Rebecca Murray at the time of the release of Kill Bill: Volume 1, the movie does not take place in the universe that people consider a reality. In his world women are not the weaker sex and have exactly the same predatory hunting instincts as the men, the same drive to kill or be killed. (Carolan 2014)

As a result, Beatrix Kiddo gains a unique opportunity to become one of the best developed characters in cinema. However, she does not do so due to her strong masculine side or her aggressive behaviour. On the contrary, she is a statement of the writer expressing the insignificance of gender in character writing, which in its nature is feministic. (Carolan 2014)

#### 2.2.7 The Bride as a role model suitable for the twenty first century

Finally, this chapter focuses on the character of The Bride as a potential role model representing values suitable for modern men and women. It therefore answers the question whether she could function as a role model for the young members of society. (see Chapter 1.2 for detail)

There is a substantial number of various examples proving Beatrix Kiddo's value as a strong female character. She shows impressive physical abilities and remarkable psychological strength. She is not being visualised as a sexual character and with her behaviour she avoids stereotypes that have been imposed on women throughout history. Moreover, she is rather well structured as she has an elaborated past visible in key moments showed in the film, and also has a dramatic need based on her past. However, the question stays, whether she is capable of functioning as a role model, especially in the twenty first century.

In 1974 feminist film critic Molly Haskell described the issue of female characters in film and specified three main types of women in film, namely The Extraordinary woman which portrays a strong powerful figure, The Ordinary woman which are common, passive and are precursors to soap opera characters, often victims, and finally The Ordinary who becomes an extraordinary woman. The last type of a female character is shown as a victim at the beginning and later rises and endures the oppression. (Haskell 1974)

The character of Beatrix Kiddo balances between the Extraordinary woman and the one who overcomes the obstacles and rises again. She is being mistreated by her lover, friends and masters who put her under a physical and psychological pressure that result in a trauma. Her ability to endure her suffering can be considered inspiring and worth following, not only in the twenty first century.

Some of the characteristics of a role model are surely quite easy to notice in the character of The Bride. Her determination, for example, is one of her strongest features and is being expressed throughout both of the films. (see Chapter 1.2 for detail) She creates a plan of revenge and is prepared to go through every action that her goal requires. A Hemery stated in his essay, the image of a strong, active woman is likely to become as attractive proposition to female



audiences as it is to males. This theory is agreed upon in an article by Showalter, who states that there is something exhilarating in the mere spectacle of a woman acting fearlessly and resourcefully. (Hemery 2008)

Nonetheless, other attributes of a hero are less obvious for an average viewer and demand a certain attention to detail and film language. Firstly, Beatrix Kiddo's integrity is surely worth speculating. She devoted her life to a career of a professional assassin and spends an alarming amount of her screen time killing her enemies as a part of her vengeance. It needs to be admitted that vengeance represents a very negative attitude towards enemies and stands against peaceful pacifism and communication, both much more useful values in the real world, inspiring tolerance and diplomacy. (see Chapter 1.2 for detail)

On the other hand, vengeance might be the main storyline of the film, as it is in many film classics from the past, but it also serves as a punishment for the injustice, which is the very basic purpose of almost every story. Some might argue that it should not be the hero that decides of the faith of the antagonist, especially if the punishment appears in a form of death. Although it might degrade a character's value as a symbol of pacifistic ideology, it surely adds quality to her character development. As discussed in the chapter called The Bride as an active action heroine, thanks to her decision to kill her enemies and face them on her own, she becomes an active independent character with a personal point of view. (see Chapters 1.2 and 2.2.4 for detail)

The antagonists of Kill Bill are being portrayed as undoubtedly evil characters which have caused a serious damage to The Bride. They acted out of jealousy, a lack of mercy and incapability to understand their friend's wish to leave the life of crime and start a new, decent one. This dichotomy of good and evil is quite well summarised in one of Budd's lines from the film Kill Bill: Volume 2: "That woman deserves her revenge. And we deserve to die. But then again, so does she." (Tarantino 2004)

It is therefore clearly stated, that despite all the main characters having serious flaws and committing crimes in their past, Beatrix stands above them as she tried to change her life and escape the group of assassins and was severely hurt by the others, who had decided to kill her. At another point of the same conversation, Budd states that he does not dodge guilt and does not elude paying his comeuppance. (Tarantino 2004) There is no doubt, that the antagonists committed crimes too great to be forgiven and some of them are even aware of their upcoming fate and understand The Bride's actions.

To sum up the issue of integrity, despite using violent techniques, Beatrix stays the protagonist of the story as the only character fighting the injustice. Consequently, Quentin Tarantino brings moral to the story and creates a sort of fable for a mature viewer with a sense of exaggeration. He also creates a heroine who fights her own battles and takes independent actions, which is also a significant quality to follow.

As mentioned in the section called Beatrix Kiddo as a mother and a human, she expresses compassion in certain conditions, for example concerning her motherhood, injustice or damage caused to her friends. She does not show any intention of hurting those who have not harm her in a personal way. Furthermore, she shows signs of mercy while being in danger herself, which demonstrates bravery and good will.

Optimism and hope are also mentioned in the section, as she manages to overcome her defeat and despair and finds enough strength to survive and accomplish her goal.

Finally, the last requirement for a fully functioning heroine is her confidence and her passion. A character's confidence does not necessarily have to compose of strong words and aggressive behaviour. On the contrary, confidence usually has foundations in a stable set of values, so the heroine could be certain about her needs and aspirations. Therefore, she should not easily change her opinion under the influence of her environment. Although she should go through a certain change as a character, at the same time she can be stable in her basic values and opinions. Beatrix Kiddo shows this stability with her moral values and her attitude towards her enemies. Even though she is human and can express compassion, she is also an assassin and does not hesitate to take a life from someone who has betrayed her. She has made a decision to avenge the injustice, but also makes her family and a new life a priority.

In *Kill Bill the The Bride* seeks both to defend her own life, while simultaneously seeking out the former members of a squad of assassins that she used to be a part of. (Hemery 2008) As a result, Beatrix Kiddo proves her ability to fully function as both, a mother and a killer.

These actions define passion quite well as well as the effort she put into her plan, the determination during her training and her ability to embrace happiness after she defeated her enemies and secured a safe life for her and her daughter.

In conclusion, despite being an action heroine with quite controversial methods of executing justice, Beatrix Kiddo can be a fully functioning heroine and a role model suitable for the twenty first century, for she represents one of the revolutionary depictions of a strong female character with exemplary qualities.

## Conclusion

To summarise the research and the thesis in general, the analyses of the character of The Bride have a rather positive outcome. She is clearly a well-structured character with her past having an impact on her present life, she communicates her opinions, values and motivations through her actions. Throughout the storyline she manages to show both the fearless and the vulnerable side of her personality which make her character whole.

There is no doubt, that The Bride is the main character in the story of vengeance and is therefore placed in a genre that focuses on action and violence. However, Quentin Tarantino proves that a strong female character can also show her empathetic and gentle side. Such a decision made by the screenwriter allows the audience to identify with the main protagonist and also see her more as a human being than a killing machine.

Although these characteristics do not necessarily make The Bride a character worth following as a role model, she demonstrates many of her positive qualities to fulfil the requirements to become one. She surely is passionate and brave, but also sensitive which makes her strong.

On the other hand, she uses quite violent methods to reach her goal which may be confusing for the viewer. Such peculiarities cause a vivid discussion concerning the violence in film and its influence on the young generation. It is also connected to the problematics of role models and the subjectivity of their qualities, as there are many violent heroes in pop culture serving as role models since they demonstrate other exemplary values.

In conclusion, Quentin Tarantino dares to show the action behind every good deed of his action heroine and allows her to balance between the good and the evil. This phenomenon can be observed throughout his artistic work and could be studied thoroughly. It can be stated, that every person struggles with the dichotomy of good and evil on everyday basis and that is why The Bride can be the hero of the masses.

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## Appendices



*Appendix 1 (Aldersley 2011)*



*Appendix 2 (Hunter 2013)*





*Appendix 3 (Shay 2016)*



*Appendix 4 (Knox 2014)*



*Appendix 5 (Knox 2014)*



*Appendix 6 (Shay 2016)*



*Appendix 7 (Aldersley 2011)*



## Résumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá stručným shrnutím a analýzou umělecké práce amerického filmového režiséra a scénáristy Quentina Tarantina. Zaměřuje se především na jednu z jeho nejnámějších ženských postav, Nevěstu z filmů Kill Bill, při čemž ji hodnotí z pohledu filmové scenáristiky, teorie budování postav a teorie životních vzorů. Práce také popisuje dopad postavy na společnost a její pozici hrdinky především pro mladou generaci. Práce popisuje dílo Quentina Tarantina jako novodobé médium vhodné pro předávání hodnot díky jeho originálnímu stylu, uznávané kvalitě i stálé popularitě. Zaměřuje se rovněž na zdůraznění kvality filmových postav v jeho filmech, při čemž jsou vyzdviženy především ženské hrdinky.

## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Krystyna Pękała
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<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2018

<b>Název práce:</b>	Nevěsta jako hrdinka a vzor ve filmech Quentina Tarantina
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	The Bride as a heroine and a role model in Quentin Tarantino's films
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Bakalářská práce se zabývá stručným shrnutím a analýzou umělecké práce amerického filmového režiséra a scénáristy Quentina Tarantina. Zaměřuje se především na jednu z jeho nejznámějších ženských postav, Nevěstu z filmů Kill Bill. Práce také popisuje dopad postavy na společnost a její pozici vzoru a hrdinky především pro mladou generaci.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Film, Quentin Tarantino, scénář, postava, Kill Bill, Nevěsta, feminismus, vzory
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	The main aim of this thesis is to summarise and analyse the artistic work of American film director and screenwriter Quentin Tarantino, focusing on one of his most famous female characters, The Bride from Kill Bill films. It also describes the character's impact on the society and her possible position as a role model and a heroine, especially for the young generation.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Film, Quentin Tarantino, screenplay, character, Kill Bill, The Bride, feminism, role models
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	CD
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	34 s.
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Anglický jazyk