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The theme of racism in the American films *The Green Mile* and *Django Unchained*

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů literatury.

V Olomouci dne

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Abstract

This bachelor's thesis will be dealing with Racism in American culture, particularly in American films. This thesis will be divided into ten parts – The Introduction, The General description of racism, The relationship between religion and racism, Development of racism on the American continent, Racism in American film, African-American representation in Hollywood, Black Actors and Actresses Who've Won Oscars and The depiction of two films, *Django Unchained* by Quentin Tarantino and *The Green Mile* by Frank Darabont. The main objective of this thesis is to describe and analyse the anti-racist elements in the films *Unchained Django* by Quentin Tarantino and *The Green Mile* by Frank Darabont. I focus on the representation of anti-racist thinking, which is closely linked to anti-African American racism, which is very relevant in contemporary American culture.

1. Introduction

As the title suggests, this thesis will be dealing with racism in American culture, particularly in two American films. The aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse the anti-racist elements in the films *Django Unchained* by Quentin Tarantino and *The Green Mile* by Frank Darabont, racism in American suburbia and its impact today. Another aim is to investigate the changes in Hollywood cinema industry approach to anti-racism movement.

The first chapter, General Description of Racism, will provide the reader with basic knowledge about racism in general.

The next part, The Relationship between Religion and Racism, will be dealing with the question of religion and racism, the right and wrong from the perspective of an interplay of the two and an all-around description from the ancient times to the present day.

The following chapter, Development of Racism on The American Continent, will provide an insight into this problem and will help the reader understand this topic on a larger scale.

The next chapter, Racism in American Film together with African-American Representation in Hollywood will be dealing with the situation in film, mainly the African-American culture and its representation; some examples will be provided.

The last chapter will be concerning two films, one is from Quentin Tarantino and is called *Unchained Django*, and the other one is from Frank Darabont and is called *The Green Mile*. This chapter will analyse the anti-racist elements in both films and describe these films in detail. Lastly, a film review and a comparison with the book will be provided.

2. General Description of Racism

The phenomenon of racism, especially in the light of relatively recent history, is often understood in the context of slavery. However, the available materials clearly show that both negative social phenomena developed completely independently and a certain intertwining did not occur until the modern age.

Paradoxically, the peak period of racism did not occur until the twentieth century, when segregation laws and restrictions on the voting rights of African Americans living in the American South were created and when the Nazis led by Hitler sought to exterminate entire ethnic groups in Europe through racist ideology.

The only racist regime that did not end with World War II was the South African apartheid regime. It did not disappear until after the formation of the majority government in the 1990s.

Although openly racist state regimes have almost disappeared, racism as such persists in some form in the twenty-first century.

A recent study of racial relations in Brazil showed that discrimination by institutions and individuals against those who are considered inferior may persist under the illusion of non-racism.¹

Evidence of this is the rise of resistance against refugees fleeing the war in the Middle East or the active involvement of the Black Lives Matter in anti-racism protests following the death of the African-American George Floyd caused by the disproportionate use of force by US Minneapolis police in May 2020.

According to George M. Frederickson, racism originated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was originally expressed in religious terms.²

From the current point of view, the racist approach can be defined as the view that ethnic-cultural differences (language, customs, and kinship) are considered innate and unchangeable. By this definition, racism differs significantly, for example, from xenophobia or religious intolerance, which are essentially eliminated by assimilation in the first, respectively transition to another faith in the latter case. There are always two elements in racism - firstly,

¹ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 17

² FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 18

there is a permanent difference, and in the second case, it is the power used to express superiority over racially different people.

The terms racism exploiting and racism exterminating appear in some professional literature.³ The first species is associated with white supremacy, while the second with anti-Semitism. However, this division is not entirely accurate, as at certain stages of historical development one form changed into another according to how it was perceived and needed by the dominant group of people.

The incidence of racism can certainly be traced on different continents and different nations, but the one that developed in Western Europe and America had by far the greatest impact on world history.

3. The Relationship between Religion and Racism

It is a very widespread notion that racism has existed since ancient times, as slavery was widespread in Greek, Roman, or Egyptian society. However, despite the fact that there was a division into civilized and barbaric nations, the term "race" is an unknown term. Anyone could fall into slavery, either because of debts or as a prisoner of war.

However, ethnic prejudices also existed in these ancient communities. They dealt with, for example, Jews who refused to accept the religion of the empires in which they existed. Nevertheless, they had the opportunity to renounce their religion and convert to the socially accepted faith, thus eliminating their differences.

Likewise, there was opposition to Judaism in early Christianity. Jews posed a specific problem for Christians because they had different interpretations of religious history and also refused to attach special importance to Christ the Savior. If Christians believed that Jews could not get rid of their curse, it would be possible to speak of racism in this case, but the generally prevailing view was that their conversion to Christianity was possible. The idea that Jews are naturally irreparably bad, internally corrupt, and their physical destruction is, therefore, the only possible way to purge society emerged, as a pure form of racism, much later.

³ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Racismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 133 reference no. 5

The foundations for later racism against Jews were laid in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when Christians become far more hostile. Competition arose between Jewish merchants and Christian merchant associations. Jews have been criticized for very unpopular business practices - lending money at interest. However, the secular power did not repress them in any way, on the contrary, it cooperated with them and used them, for example, to collect taxes. To some extent, it also protected them from mob violence.

Later in the 14th century, the demonization of the Jews, which associated them with the devil and witchcraft, began to spread in folk tales and folklore.

Cecil Roth, a pioneer of medieval anti-Semitism, stated in his work that the Jews were considered less human and capable of any crime, imaginable and less imaginable, precisely because they deliberately rejected the true faith.⁴

However, Church leaders rejected such ideas and, on the contrary, tolerated the coexistence of Jews and Christians.

However, the situation has gradually changed as societies in Europe have faced plague epidemics, rising state power and bureaucracy, and the growth of market economies.

According to George M. Frederikson, the denigration of Jews over the centuries, whether as helpers of Satan, international financiers, or instigators of the world revolution, has always taken the form of mass paranoia.⁵

Thus, in principle, medieval Christians began to practice a racist approach to members of other religions by denying them the race for the human race through a purposeful interpretation of the Bible.

Manifestations of racism in the late Middle Ages were not limited to Jews, but with the expansion of Catholic Europe, they also affected the population in the conquered territories. Feelings of superiority and dominance became even more characteristic of later attacks on overseas continents. However, the ethnic discrimination of the time lacked signs of racism. If the indigenous population accepted Catholicism, unequal treatment was often the target of condemnation by the Church as a violation of the rights of Christian society.

⁴ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 134 ref. 9

⁵ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 30

However, the truth is that medieval Europe was an oppressive society that was intolerant not only of Jews and lepers but also of anyone whose faith or behaviour was different at a time when religious and moral conformity was required more than ever before.⁶

Because Europe did have very limited contact with the people of equatorial Africa until the middle of the fifteenth century, a form of racism based on white supremacy did not exist. After the Portuguese expeditions to the West African continent, contacts with the local black population became more frequent, but from the religious point of view, the assessment of the local population was very favourable. This was partly due to the fact that Africans were perceived by the Catholic Church as helpers in the fight against expanding Islam. Proof of the positive attitude was the depiction of one of the three kings at the birth of Jesus as a black man. It cannot, therefore, be accepted as true that Europeans had strong prejudices against blacks even before the slave trade began.

According to historian James H. Sweet, Christians learned between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to associate black skin colour with slavery in Iberia, where they adopted this style of behaviour from Muslims.⁷

Black Africans were forced to perform menial and degrading work and were also the most conspicuous slaves of the Moorish lords. Muslims and Christians thus began to subconsciously associate the people of Sub-Saharan Africa with lifelong slavery. This connection was completed in the second half of the fifteenth century when Portuguese sailors acquired their slaves on their payments around Africa and began trading in them.

In the early Middle Ages, after the pagan Slavs inhabited Eastern Europe and Russia converted to Christianity, there was no other European nation that could be enslaved based on religious difference. The lack of cheap labour was thus replaced by the purchase of slaves from the Sub-Saharan continent.

More than the approach to African slaves, the behaviour of Christian society towards Jews was closer to the modern concept of racism in the Middle Ages, especially in Spain. Although Spain was a pluralistic society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with Christians, Muslims, and Jews living in relative peace side by side, later wars with the Moors began to

⁶ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Rasismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 134 reference no. 17

⁷ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Rasismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 135 ref. 23

incite religious zeal among Christians. This began to show increased hostility and later open hostility not only to Muslims but also to Jews. Many Jews, because of escaping repression and forced exile, converted to Christianity. As this affected a large number of the population living in Spain, the Church and Christian society were very suspicious of this act. They believed that the conversion to another religion was only feigned to the Jews and that they still secretly profess their original faith. Many Christians resented the fact that converts were able to hold prominent positions in the royal service and called for their exclusion from public life.

In the fifteenth century, the concept of blood purity (*Limpieza de Sangre*) originated in the Spanish Church. It stigmatized the entire ethnic group, pointing out its religious shortcomings, which could not be eliminated by assimilation or conversion to Christianity, and thus became historically the first openly racist doctrine.

The French historian of anti-Semitism, Léon Poliakov, states that the Spanish approach to converts was based on the assumption that Jews were bad by nature, not just because of their faith, and that church hatred turned into racial hatred.⁸

The doctrine of blood purity is by no means comparable to the Nazi approach to Jews. Its application was uneven, in medieval Spain, converted Jews could still hold public office, had representatives among the nobility, and a certificate of origin could also be purchased.

The discovery and colonization of the American continent brought a completely new situation to the Spanish Church. The crucial question was what status to grant to the indigenous population - the Indians. Eventually, the official views of the Spanish monarchy and the Catholic Church became established that the indigenous population was endowed with reason and could be converted to the Christian faith.

However, the Church had to solve a complex problem in different approaches to the indigenous population. On the one hand, there are American Indians for whom baptism is possible and enslavement is unacceptable, and on the other, there are black Africans, on who's suffering the basis of the slave trade was built. Claims began to emerge that the different colour of the skin was the result of some biblical curse. However, as George M. Frederikson points out, there was one possible justification for holding Africans in slavery,

⁸ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Rasismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5. p. 136, ref. 33

regardless of their religion - the myth of Cham or Canaan's curse, based on a dark passage in Genesis.

The slave traders then used this interpretation to justify the fact that all their slaves are blacks from Africa.⁹

Gradually, these arguments passed into the perception of black slaves throughout European society. The origins of racism in the form of white supremacy over people of a different colour and anti-Semitism can be traced back to the late Middle Ages until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

4. Development of Racism on the American Continent

In the American colonies, enslavement was not determined by colour, but by legal and religious status. In addition to black slaves, some white servants were not treated much better. However, slave societies granted partial freedom to some groups of African descent.

During the 18th century, based on the European Enlightenment, scientific ideas began to emerge, which laid the foundation for the modern concept of racism. Naturalists and ethnologists such as Carl Liné, Friedrich Blumenbach or Georges de Buffon have tried to describe the human population based on physical characteristics and divide it into races.

In America, Thomas Jefferson commented on racial segregation in his Notes on the State of Virginia. He argued that blacks had the same sense of morality as whites, but considered them an uglier race.¹⁰

George M. Fredrickson states that racial typology in the eighteenth century provided the framework for the onset of open biological racism in the nineteenth century.¹¹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, several democratic revolutions took place in Europe, which further questioned slavery and racial superiority. In the northern United States, slavery was gradually abolished. However, in the south, growing cotton and tobacco was a

⁹ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 43

¹⁰ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 138 ref. 15

¹¹ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 55

major economic activity that required a great deal of human labour, and politicians there rejected the abolition of slavery, even based on racial prejudice.

In the mid-nineteenth century, two major ethnological trends emerged that dealt with ethnic races. Monogenetic theory promoted the idea that all human races came from a single one, while polygenetic theory proclaimed the idea of several separate racial species.

American ethnological opinion leaned toward the theory of several unequal racial species that existed on this continent - whites, blacks, and American Indians.¹²

Proponents of slavery used this ethnological theory to explain innate black inferiority without conflict with evangelical Christians.

They also used a simple explanation that slavery already existed in biblical times and was never condemned by Christ, and therefore cannot be considered sinful by George M. Fredrickson.¹³

The black population experienced segregation and discrimination even after release from slavery, in the northern United States. The colour of the skin thus became an obstacle in itself to belonging to a certain nation. This position was supported by a decision of the Supreme Court issued in 1857 concerning the free black man Dred Scott. The decision was abolished only with the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which introduced equal citizenship for all persons born in the United States in 1868. The abolition of slavery was eventually accepted in South America because it was a phenomenon that slowed economic development. However, efforts to emancipate blacks continued to run into practical life with opposition from white Americans, who were unable to consider them equal. The racist attitude towards blacks was exacerbated by the fact that the abolition of slavery and economic development increased the demand for labour and created black competition, which was difficult for the white population to cope with. Even on the political scene, the issue of black emancipation did not receive support. While the abolition of slavery used to be a major theme for liberal and democratic political parties, no one was interested in promoting the equal rights of the black population.

¹² FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 138 reference no. 15

¹³ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p.68

Open racism in the United States in the early twentieth century is explained by George M. Fredrickson, among other things, by the fact that blacks were associated in the minds of whites with primitivism, backwardness, or hopeless old-fashionedness.¹⁴

According to Fredrickson¹⁵, the open racist regime is characterized by the following features:

- The ruling class professes an official racist ideology, with the differences between the superior and subordinate races being permanent, unchanging and insurmountable
- Mixed marriages are prohibited by law, the purpose of which is to maintain the purity of the superior race
- The division of the rights of the superior and subordinate race, the possibilities of exercising in the life of society (racial segregation) are determined and also enforced by legal measures
- Persons belonging to a subordinate race may not hold public office and do not have the right to vote
- Most members of the persecuted group have severely limited access to economic opportunities or are targeted in poverty

In the post-Civil War period until the middle of the twentieth century, although there was discrimination against the black population in the northern United States, it was not an openly racist regime. Many marriages were tolerated by mixed marriages, and state institutions could employ people of other skin colours. Before the start of World War I, the attitude of the white part of the population towards black people also changed in the American South. Racial segregation turned into racial separation and allowed blacks to be educated and in some ways, albeit inferior to the official inferior system.

The aftermath of World War I significantly changed the relationship between blacks and whites in the United States. The high demand for labour initiated the shift of the black population from the South to the North. There they also got the opportunity to vote again. Black soldiers who fought on European territory, after returning home, expected to be treated

¹⁴ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5, p.77

¹⁵ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p.82

in the same way as white soldiers. In the South, however, they again encountered lynching or hostility from the Ku Klux Klan movement.

After the founding of the National Association for the Enhancement of Colored Population in 1909 and in connection with the scientific theories of the American pioneer of modern anthropology Franz Boase, who described ethnic differences primarily with cultural influences and not just the biological race, the American South's approach to the black population became unsustainable. Between 1917 and 1939, several U.S. Supreme Court rulings were issued against segregation and restricting access for people of colour to state-funded graduate education.

However, neither the new political influence of African Americans nor the increased powers of the federal government in the South have yet led to the complete abolition of segregation.

George M. Fredrickson states that the reason was the maintenance of the constitutional doctrine of the powers of individual states of the union and the complete commitment of the Southern Democratic Party to the theory of white supremacy.¹⁶

The turning point in the history of racism was World War II. The most influential approach to racism was the knowledge of the Holocaust and the gradual independence of the colonies in Asia and Africa. Bringing racism in Nazi Germany to its extreme form and provoked moral resistance not only in Europe but also in American society. As a result of the transfer of power in the former colonies, new states emerged, where the doctrine of white supremacy was unequivocally condemned.

In the 1950s, UNESCO issued a statement stating that science did not support the theory that human groups differed in their innate mental or emotional abilities and that there was no convincing evidence that racial mixing had harmful consequences.¹⁷

Politicians in the United States have realized that racial segregation is too reminiscent of Nazi access to Jews and as such cannot be morally justified and is inconsistent with national interests.

A study of the relationship between blacks and whites was published in the American Dilemma study. The author says that “This war (the struggle for equality) is crucial for

¹⁶ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p.92

¹⁷ FREDRICKSON, George M. Rasismus: stručná historie. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p.100

the future of blacks, just as the black problem is key in this war. The position of blacks in America will change as a result of this war.”¹⁸

The United States Congress passed key civil rights laws that outlawed racial segregation nearly twenty years after World War II and did not lift the ban on mixed marriages until 1967.

At the international level, human rights are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was approved by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The second legal norm that has emerged as a measure against racism at the international level is the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 8 December 1948 as Resolution 260. The Convention entered into force on 12 January 1951 and defines genocide as a crime under international law.

5. Racism in American Film

The American culture among music, television, film, and video game industries often face prejudices against minorities, which results in racist portrayals of people of different skin colours in the media. As John D. H. Downing states in his book *Representing race*.¹⁹

On a very elementary inter-textual level, it is indeed unquestionable that if the only coverage of Latinos on US television is as criminals, or the only representation of Native Americans is as whooping warriors of a bygone age, or the only time we see Arab Muslims is when they are portrayed as terrorists, then there exists a serious deficiency with the tight little boxes in which these groups are permitted to breathe.²⁰

Such a depiction of national minorities is a reflection of a phenomenon called the American dilemma.

¹⁸ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Rasismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 147 reference no. 51

¹⁹ DOWNING John D. H. Professor, Professor Charles Husband. 2005. *Representing Race: Racisms, Ethnicity and the Media*, SAGE Publications Ltd, ISBN: 9780761969112,076196911X

²⁰ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Rasismus: stručná historie*. Přeložil Veronika MATYSOVÁ. Praha: BB art, 2003. ISBN 80-7341-124-5 p. 45

This dilemma reflects a deep-seated conflict between a national creed that endorses the fundamental equality of all persons, and the segregationist and discriminatory realities surrounding the actual treatment of America's racial and ethnic minorities.²¹

The media and film, among others, have a major impact on how the American public perceives racial differences. In response to the racially unbalanced and stereotypical portrayal of African Americans in films, the Black Arts movement emerged in the 1990s. Filmmakers often used the noir style in their works, which is characterized by an emphasis on depicting breaking the law, anger, violence, and despair. Rap and various types of hip hop, which is characteristic of the work of African-American artists, are used as musical accompaniment.

Classic Hollywood cinema was never kind to ethnic or minority groups ... Indian, black, Hispanic, or Jewish, Hollywood represented ethnics and minorities as stereotypes... Classic Hollywood film is ethnographic discourse.²²

The portrayal of blacks in American film can be divided into several stages of development:

- Display of segregation 1930–1945
- Films made between 1947 and 1962 that depict the negatives of segregation
- Works created after 1970 that highlight the positive benefits of assimilation
- Works created around 1990, which, on the contrary, describe separatism and life in the suburbs

A special element in the period before the Second World War was the depiction of blacks in accompanying, unrelated roles. In this way, black musicians such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong or black jazz singer Lena Horne, Ethel Waters got on the movie screens.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Hollywood film industry, under the influence of a strong social movement, leaned towards portraying blacks as film protagonists with sympathetic human characteristics. Popular actors and actresses of the time were Sidney Poitier in the 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle* and Ethel Waters in the 1952 film *Member of the Wedding*.

²¹ NORMAN K. Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence*, SAGE Publications, 2002. ISBN: 0803975457,0803975449,9780803975446,9781847876324 p. 1

²² LÓPEZ, Ana M. 1991. "Are All Latins from Manhattan? Hollywood, Ethnography, and Cultural Colonialism," [online] p. 404–405 in Lester D. Friedman (ed.), *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Filming in 1969 and films such as *Uptight Slaves*, *The Learning Tree*, *The Lost Man*, *Putney Swope* marked the beginning of a separatist movement that resonated in the art world throughout the 1970s. The authors addressed the issues of interracial marriages and negative phenomena in black ghettos.

The 1970s are sometimes described in terms of filmmaking as ‘The New Black Hollywood’.²³

The genre of blaxploitation was born, which depicts black characters as heroes and not, as was previously common, as fraudsters, villains and victims of crime. Like film music, the style of funk and soul appears in these titles. Blaxploitation included various genres of films such as criminal (*Foxy Brown*), action / martial arts (*Three the Hard Way*, *Sweet Sweetback's BaadasssssSong*), westerns (*Boss Nigger*), comedy (*Uptown Saturday Night*, *Cotton Comes to Harlem*), musical (*Sparkle*).

In the 1980s, blaxploitation of films declined, and black actors and actresses began to appear in supporting roles aimed at white audiences. Examples are *An Officer and A Gentleman*, *Rocky*, *The Color Purple*. The theme of assimilation was also included in the action films *Lethal Weapon*, *Die Hard*, *48 Hrs* or comedies with actors Eddie Murphy (*Beverly Hills Cop*) and actress Whoopi Goldberg (*Jumpin 'Jack Flash*).

It was not until the late 1980s that titles began to reappear, where black actors became the main characters again. Typical examples are the *Mississippi Burning* from 1988 and *Driving Miss Daisy* from 1989.

In the 1990s, there was a departure from such film themes, and with the arrival of directors such as Spike Lee and Robert Townsend, separatism, life in the suburbs, and the influence of gangs on life in the ghettos returned to cinema screens as the main theme. Films of this genre include *To Sleep with Anger*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Hollywood Shuffle*. Rap and hip hop began to be used as musical undertones for films.

If we are talking about the racist portrayal of minorities in American film, we cannot omit other ethnic groups either. People of Hispanic or Latin American descent have also been portrayed in certain stereotypical roles in Hollywood films. Usually, terms such as Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Mestizo, Mexican, and Spanish American were used in films to indicate

²³ BOGLE, Donald. 1994. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: “An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films.” [online] p.257 in 3rd edn. New York: Continuum

belonging to this ethnic group. Hispanic film characters in films very often expressed negative character traits. As a result of these negative submissions, the Mexican government even banned the screening of films produced by some American film studios on its territory in the 1920s.

During President Roosevelt's reign, the film industry became less hostile to portraying Spanish Americans, but a racist undertone was still present in the films. During the 1950s and 1960s, films such as 1955's *Blackboard Jungle* and 1950s *The Lawless* were made about attempts to assimilate the Hispanic minority into the majority white American population.

As Denzin describes in his book, Hispanic-themed films formed four basic elements over the next decade:²⁴

- the civil rights movement
- the repeal of miscegenation laws
- the development of the *Spaghetti Western* directed by Sergio Leone and starring Clint Eastwood (e.g., *A Fistful of Dollars*, 1964, *For a Few Dollars More*, 1966, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, 1966)
- the training of a group of Hispanic film professionals who would come of age in the 1980s

Hollywood films continued to portray Hispanics and Mexicans in supporting film roles in a somewhat negative and stereotypical way. As a counterweight to such a film presentation by Hispanics, films such as *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* in 1982 and *El Norte* in 1983, made by the Chicano Cinema Coalition, were made differently.

In the years 1987–1988, the Hispanic Hollywood period took place in Hollywood, similarly to African-American creators. It included films such as *La Bamba*, *Born in East LA*, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *Stand and Deliver*,²⁵ which were intended for Hispanic audiences. Their purpose was to fundamentally change the perception of the Hispanic ethnic group, as has been the case with Hollywood film studios on film

²⁴ NORMAN K. Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence*, SAGE Publications, 2002. ISBN: 0803975457,0803975449,9780803975446,9781847876324 p. 31

²⁵ KELLER Kevin Lane. 2007. *Advertising and Brand Equity* [online]. SAGE Publications Ltd, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607897> p.163

screens so far. Thus, the Hispanic way of life, tradition and culture come to the forefront of the scenarios with an emphasis on its specifics.

The last ethnic group to be portrayed in American films with a racial subtext were Asians. In general, the portrayal of Asians in American films can be characterized as follows:

It is a cinematic history of racial violence, a history that ignores cultural differences and presumes essential racial identities. This history treats all Asians as if they belonged to the same ethnic, religious, and national group. It does not differentiate between Asian nationalities, for example between Korean, Chinese, and Japanese.²⁶

Films containing Asian elements have been heavily influenced by military conflicts, ranging from the Russo-Japanese War, through the First and Second World Wars, and finally the Korean War and the conflict in Vietnam. Even under the influence of these historical events, Asians were portrayed in films almost exclusively in negative and inferior character roles. This phenomenon became even more pronounced after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. By the late 1950s, dozens of films had been made depicting Japanese as repulsive, sadistic, and fanatical warriors, while white characters as heroes fighting barbaric Japanese hordes. Examples of such films are *Wake Island* from 1942 and *Purple Heart* from 1944.

After the end of World War II, the theme of war films was replaced by the theme of the conflict in Korea.

Americans seemed unable to distinguish the Japanese from the Chinese and the Koreans, although the Korean War would become the site for the construction of a new version of the Yellow Peril.²⁷

In the 1950s and 1960s, films were made depicting the status and life of white men in Asian prison camps, such as *Bridge on the River Kwai*, 1957 or *The Manchurian Candidate*, 1962.

The civil rights movement, which has been taking place in the United States since the 1960s and was conceived as an African-American struggle against the majority white population, has not affected the Asian ethnic group. Therefore, with few exceptions, it was not reflected in filmmaking. On the contrary, the Vietnam War has helped to reinforce the negative

²⁶ WONG, Eugene Franklin. 1978. "On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the Motion Pictures." [online] New York:Arno Press, p. XVI

²⁷ WONG, Eugene Franklin. 1978. "On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the Motion Pictures." [online] New York:Arno Press, p. XVI

perception of the Asian ethnic group by the American public. Thematically, films from this period reflected various forms of the impact of the Vietnam War on people's lives - films from the Vietnam Fight such as *The Green Berets*, 1968, from the environment of war and hippie opponents such as *Alice's Restaurant*, 1969 and films about war veterans *Who'll Stop the Rain*, 1978.

Highly acclaimed films were made in the 1970s, which were also influenced by events from the fighting in Vietnam, especially *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979).

In the history of American cinema, we cannot find any period of Asian ethnicity similar to The New Black Hollywood. In the 1980s, a series of films starring Sylvester Stallone (*First Blood* (1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985)) was drawn from the Vietnam War, emphasizing patriotic themes.

This exaggerated patriotism was subsequently corrected by themes such as *The Killing Fields* (1984), *Platoon* (1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) and *Born on the 4th of July* (1989), which significantly changed the one-sided, racist and tendentious portrayal of Asians in war-themed films. This was also attempted by director Barry Levinson in *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), which portrays the experiences of a military radio host during the Vietnam War in a slightly different way than is usual for war-themed films.

However, racism about the Asian ethnic group is not only associated with Japanese or Vietnamese and war films. Hollywood studios created works depicting the domestication of Asian Americans, such as *Chinatown*, 1974, or in response to the growing popularity of popular martial arts films with Bruce Lee (*Fists of Fury*, 1971) or a similar theme by *The Karate Kid* (1984). Towards the end of the 1980s, two feature films with an Asian theme were made. The first was *Empire of the Sun*, 1987, based on Steven Spielberg based on J. G. Ballard's autobiographical bestseller of the same name, which depicts the story of a boy separated from his parents on his escape from Shanghai occupied by the Japanese army at the beginning of World War II. The second part was Bernard Bertolucci's 1987 film *The Last Emperor*, which describes the life of the last Chinese emperor.

In the 1990s, the filmmakers tried to create a somewhat different view of the events of the war between the Americans and the Vietnamese, respectively. Americans and Japanese. Films such as Oliver Stone's *Heaven & Earth*, 1993 and *Rhapsody in August* 1991, directed by Akira Kurosawa, portray the impact of the turmoil on human destinies.

In conclusion, a brief description of Hollywood's approach to portraying ethnic minorities in cinematographic work is Denzin's assessment:

Each ethnic cinema, as a set of performance texts, creates its version of the racial order; that is, it connects its historical, cultural, and social circumstances to these discursive practices. These circumstances are familiar, and many of them cut across ethnic groups (religion, wars, drugs, gangs, miscegenation and immigration laws, multiple nationality groups, ghetto life).

For blacks: slavery, strong black women, hustlers, specific film genres: musicals, social consciousness, comedies, blaxploitation, buddy, hood. For Hispanics: strong women, American and Italian Westerns, Latin musicals. For Asian Americans: geishas, Charlie Chan, the 'Yellow Peril,' adventure, mystery, and war films. Thus, every historical moment, with its cinematic formations, articulates aversion of the American racial system. And these moments and formations are of course tangled up in social science theories of race and ethnic relations.²⁸

6. African-American Representation in Hollywood

African Americans in major film roles have always been a very controversial topic. It was not until several decades later that the first African-American woman, Hattie McDaniel, became an Oscar winner. At that time, she played the head slave Mammy in David O. Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*. She won the award for Best Supporting Actress in a racially segregated hotel.

"Through most of the 20th century, images of African-Americans in advertising were mainly limited to servants like the pancake-mammy Aunt Jemima and Rastus, the chef on the Cream of Wheat box."²⁹

The roles played by African American actors and actresses were by no means diverse. In general, they focused on either segregation or cruel life or the path from poverty to wealth.

"Many researchers argue that media portrayals of minorities tend to reflect whites' attitudes toward minorities and, therefore, reveal more about whites themselves than

²⁸ NORMAN K. Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence*, SAGE Publications, 2002. ISBN: 0803975457,0803975449,9780803975446,9781847876324 p. 38, 60/69

²⁹ STAPLES, Brent (11 February 2012). "Black Characters in Search of Reality". *The New York Times*. Retrieved 21 April 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/opinion/sunday/black-characters-in-search-of-reality.html>

about the varied and lived experiences of minorities".³⁰ This is what led to a singular perspective and opinion to dominate mainstream media.

In Richard Dyer's *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, he says that "research repeatedly shows that in western representation white overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard."³¹

Unfortunately, this representation became the norm in Hollywood film, which, however, then led to problems creating ideas about race representation in ideologies, stereotypes, racism, oppression, and representation.

Dyer also states that "race is not only attributable to people who are not white, nor is the imagery of non-white people the only racial imagery."³²

With the help of various elements in the film, racism can be expressed and emphasized. This usually occurs mainly in dialogues to maintain power and authority in Caucasians. The problem is that in a Hollywood movie, there are mostly characters who have immense power and strength and are white, and such elements then look very racist and unethical.

"National self-consciousness, generally seen as a precondition for nationhood – that is, the shared belief of desperate individuals that they share common origins, status, location, and aspirations – became broadly linked to cinematic fictions."³³

Although some realized it, others less so, such a battle between representation, ideals, and ethnicity was still fought.

"The sensitivity around stereotypes and distortions largely arises then, from the powerlessness of historically marginalised groups to control their own representation."

³⁴

³⁰ BRISTOR, Julie; Lee (1995). "Renee". *Public Policy & Marketing*. 1. 14: 48–59. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Race-and-Ideology%3A-African-American-Images-in-Bristor-Lee/a66bf6b3339b5656e20f35a8a5f297cc9f3f4242>

³¹ DYER, Richard. *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, [online] 1997

³² DYER, Richard. *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, [online] 1997

³³ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

³⁴ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

Therefore, it is necessary to support the depiction of different cultures and not just white ones, and to prioritize them as a model and not to respect other races. Therefore, the need for Afro-American actors in Hollywood is almost essential.

“Furthermore, in that the Hollywood system favours big-budget blockbusters, it is not only classist but also Eurocentric, in effect if not in explicit intention; to be a player in this game one needs to have economic power.”³⁵

The lack of representation of different races is tied back to the times of colonialism and the postcolonial perspective in film.

On the other hand, Europeans were able to create an assembly of colonialism and its culture, which generally imposed the awareness of privileged "lesser breeds without law"³⁶.

In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam examine the main ideas of racism and various motives, arguing that history refers to racism as “positional, relational and means that diverse groups have occupied the functional slot of the oppressed.”³⁷

This also continues in Hollywood as a harsh reality as “racism is above all a social relation – systematized hierarchization implacably pursued... anchored in material structures and embedded in historical configurations of power.”³⁸ Shohat and Stam combine racism as a consequence of colonialism.

Nevertheless, even in the current situation, the film roles played by African-American actors are similar. Among the most famous films starring an African-American actress in 2011 was the film called *The Help*. At the Oscars, she was nominated for the category, Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role. Octavia Spencer won this category and was the only African-American woman to win an award that evening.

In *The New York Times* was written: "Race in American cinema has rarely been a matter of simple step-by-step progress. It has more often proceeded in fits and starts,

³⁵ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

³⁶ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

³⁷ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

³⁸ SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

with backlashs coming on the heels of breakthroughs, and periods of intense argument followed by uncomfortable silence." ³⁹

6.1. Old Hollywood

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there were no African-American actors or actresses in Hollywood film at all. In the 19th century, the so-called Blackface became very popular as a form of entertainment. Blackface could employ virtually any character without having to be a dark-skinned person.

For example, actor and singer Al Jolson made blackface famous for characters such as Amos 'n' Andy and Jackie Rabinowitz. In the year 1930 blackface disappeared due to racism.⁴⁰

In 1951, Amos 'n' Andy was shown on television, so Clarence Muse published a pamphlet called "The Dilemma of a Black Actor." In this pamphlet describes how African American artists were trapped. He wrote: "There are two audiences in America to confront, the white audience with a definite desire for buffoonery and song, and the Negro audience with a desire to see the real elements of Negro life portrayed. Despite its demeaning caricatures, he argued, the program at least moved African-American performers to center stage."⁴¹

The roles played by African-American actors were still subject to the same old norms and stereotypes.

There was the Mammy who helped with raising children, the Tom who served white people, the Coon who was someone like a clown and acted funny and goofy, then there was the "Tragic Mulatto" who tried to "pass for being white", and the Buck who was a hypersexualized man and everyone saw him as a threat.⁴²

³⁹ STAPLES, Brent, 2012. "Black Characters in Search of Reality". [online] The New York Times. Retrieved 21 April 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/opinion/sunday/black-characters-in-search-of-reality.html>

⁴⁰ GUERRERO, Ed. 2012. Framing Blackness: The African American Image. ISBN 9781439904138

⁴¹ STEVENS, Dana. 2005. "Caricature Acting". [online] The New York Times, Retrieved 21 April 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/27/books/review/caricature-acting.html>

⁴² SHOHAT, Ella and Robert Stam. Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, London: Routledge, 1994. [online] Retrieved 21 April 2021

6.2. New Hollywood

African-American actors and actresses appear more often on the big screen, but their roles are still exceptional in really popular movies. "with the stakes high, many studio executives worry that films that focus on African-American themes risk being too narrow in their appeal to justify the investment. Hollywood has nonetheless shown an interest in recent years to bank more heavily on African-American actors and themes.

" The lack of presence of the African Americans in supporting or starring roles is stated "only 4 out of 10 movies turn a profit, according to the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers. But because pictures with nearly all-black casts come along more infrequently, they tend to stand out more when they fail."⁴³

The year 2013 was definitely one of the turning points in Hollywood cinematography, African-American films like *12 Years a Slave*, *Fruitvale Station*, Lee Daniels' *The Butler*, *Best Man Holiday* and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* were released. The release of these films had a huge impact on the film industry because of the African-American cast. The 2014 Academy Awards were arguably a turning point for African-American films, with the film *12 Years a Slave* taking home the Oscar for Best Picture.⁴⁴

Today, many observe and mostly believe that Hollywood has changed for the better, mainly because of directors such as Spike Lee and Tyler Perry. Both directors tried to cast mainly African-American actors in their films. Both directors have very different views on the portrayal of the African American community, so both have gained popularity.

The very popular Disney joined the movement and in 2009 introduced the first African-American princess Tiana. People felt that "the color barrier is breaking down in Hollywood."⁴⁵

There is still a thin line between the new and old Hollywood attitude towards race "The consolidation of a black presence in the movies and television did not signal the

⁴³ BARNES, Brooks. 2008. "Race and the safe Hollywood Bet". [online] The New York Times. Retrieved 21 April 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/weekinreview/19barnes.html?_r=1

⁴⁴ "The Oscars: Winners". [online] Oscar. Archived from the original on 20 February 2021. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170219195852/http://oscar.go.com/nominees>

⁴⁵ BARNES, Brooks. 2008. "Race and the safe Hollywood Bet". [online] The New York Times. Retrieved 21 April 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/weekinreview/19barnes.html?_r=1

arrival of a postracial Hollywood any more than the election of Barack Obama in 2008 spelled the end of America's 400-year-old racial drama.”⁴⁶

In a 2016 article⁴⁷ The Economist were concerned with the problematic of the 21. century and found out, "...the number of black actors winning Oscars in this century has been pretty much in line with the size of America's overall black population. But this does not mean Hollywood has no problems of prejudice. As the data show, it clearly does." The article focuses mainly on to low African American membership numbers in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and under-representation at lower levels: "the whitewashing occurs not behind the closed doors of the Academy, but in drama schools (shown in the SAG membership) and casting offices". The article also suggests and highlights one issue and that is explained "while and black actors may have gained more acknowledgment in the Oscars as of the 2000s, other minorities are still under-represented.”

7. Black Actors and Actresses Who've Won Oscars

A major advance in Hollywood film has been the success of African-American actors and actresses. The Academy Awards offered only 16 African-American acting awards, which many disliked and created controversy and caused a movement that expressed under-representation in Hollywood #OscarsSoWhite.⁴⁸

7.1. Sidney Poitier

As the author Eudie suggest, Sidney Poitier became the very first Black man to win the coveted Best Actor prize for his role in *Lilies of the Field*. At that time, it was also considered unpolite and the racial barrier was still there as Anne Bancroft, who presented the award to Poitier, kissed him on the cheek to congratulate him. Later in 2002, Poitier received an Honorary Award at the Oscars.

⁴⁶ DARGIS, Manohla. 2011. "Hollywood Whiteout". [online] The New York Times. Retrieved 21 April 2021 https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/movies/awardsseason/13movies.html?_r=2

⁴⁷ J.T., Prospero, 2016. "How racially skewed are the Oscars?". [online] The Economist. Retrieved 21 April 2021 <https://www.economist.com/prospero/2016/01/21/how-racially-skewed-are-the-oscars>

⁴⁸ EUDIE Pak, 2021. "10 Black Actors and Actresses Who've Won Oscars", [online] Biography, Retrieved 22 April 2021, <https://www.biography.com/news/sidney-poitier-black-actors-actresses-oscar-win>

7.2. Morgan Freeman

To take a look at more recent actors, a perfect example is well-known Morgan Freeman. He won his first Oscar in 2005. He has already had four nominations. Freeman won for Best Supporting Actor for his part as Eddie *Scrap-Iron* Dupris in Clint Eastwood's boxing drama *Million Dollar Baby*.

8. Depiction of Racism in *Django Unchained*

8.1. Quentin Tarantino

Screenwriter, director and actor Quentin Tarantino was born on March 27, 1963, in the American city of Knoxville. As a teenager, he was influenced by television series, comics, popular music and especially movies. After all, among his first occupations was a presenter in a cinema and also an employee in a video rental company. This allows him to study the works of filmmakers up close, to analyse the scenes, editing and dialogues that interested him in specific works.

He and his friend start creating film scripts and offering them to film studios. He gradually began to establish himself as a screenwriter, for example, he signed the screenplays for the films *True Romance* (1993 by Tony Scott) or *Natural Born Killers* (1994 by Oliver Stone).

The first successful film where Quentin Tarantino is written not only as a screenwriter but also as a director is *Reservoir Dogs*, from 1992. He used a specific style of directing in this film, which could significantly distinguish his film from other films of a similar genre.

Nevertheless, he was accused by some of using an exaggerated number of violent scenes.

Two years after this film, he made another, and in a way ground-breaking, film, which has already established himself permanently among important Hollywood filmmakers. It is a 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* which he also directed and co-wrote. In this film, for the first time, he also made significant use of his knowledge, which he acquired by studying while working in cinemas and video rentals. In the film, references to the works of other important filmmakers are used in an artistic form. He was also inspired by literature and used a discontinuous structure of storytelling in his film. In the same year, *Pulp Fiction* won Best Picture at the Cannes International Film Festival and the following year the Academy Award, given by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for its original screenplay.

Tarantino also used his unique directorial manuscript in other films and garnered positive feedback from both film critics and the general public. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association awarded the Golden Globe the best screenplay or direction for the 2012 *Django Unchained* or 2019 *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. Arts and Sciences as well as the BAFTA Award from The British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

Quentin Tarantino used such different and characteristic methods in his films that together with several other creators he became the founder of a specific film style.

These films all signified a change in aesthetic - a new aesthetic direction in Hollywood film. *Reservoir Dogs*, *Falling Down* (Schumacher 1992), *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino 1994), *Strange Days* (Bigelow 1995), *Se7en* (Fincher 1995) are all new-brutality films, and the one feature that they all share in common is their attempt to renegotiate and reanimate the immediacy and affective qualities of the cinematic experience within commercial Hollywood.⁴⁹

Films using this style are clearly distinguishable from other action films and blockbusters, especially in the way they approach the depiction of violence. Tarantino exacerbated this method by often setting part of the film's plot in an African-American environment, an element that permeates his entire filmmaking. He uses tools that allow him to draw the viewer completely into the story and forget about the world outside the film, although the film experience itself may not always be pleasant. The plot on the film scene replaces the viewer's thinking and the director has the opportunity to shock the audience as planned.

Some film critics initially argued that form prevailed over content in Tarantino's filmmaking and that they carried no message or political significance. However, in the later period, his films were also highly rated in terms of content, especially for emphasizing the anti-racist subtext. At the same time, the director's intention was highlighted, when at present, oversaturated with pictorial perceptions in the media, he was able to form and convey to the viewer with the help of the image even an important content message.

⁴⁹ GORMLEY Paul, *New Brutality Film: Race and Affect in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, Intellect Ltd, 2005. ISBN: 9781841501192,1841501190,1841509264. p. 8

Within a culture where many images are bombarding us at the same time, the particular physical conditions of the cinema with its singular and large screen, film may be capable of provoking more powerful affective responses than ever.⁵⁰

Tarantino's films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Reservoir dog* or *Jackie Brown* use in their theme imitations of the aesthetics of rap and "gangsta" style, which are elements that are abundantly typical of African American culture. The peculiar way in which Tarantino expresses his strongly anti-racist stance in his films is the overly racist dialogues used by actors in some scenes. This directing intention allows the viewer the opportunity to compare the almost grotesque effect of these dialogues with how racism can be perceived in everyday life.

8.2. Django Unchained

In the film, director Quentin Tarantino continues the genre of blaxploitation, which is also evident in his earlier films such as *Reservoir Dogs* or *Jackie Brown*. As described above in the history of Hollywood film, blaxploitation was a revolt against the classical film industry of its time. It was characterized by the inclusion of the director and the main characters by people of African-American origin, while the screenplay often focuses on typical manifestations of the African-American culture of the time.

However, Quentin Tarantino approached blaxploitation in the film *Django Unchained* in his own distinctive way, combining a classic theme from the wild west of the mid-19th century with an anti-racist motif. He was thematically inspired by black westerns such as *The Legend of Nigger Charley* in 1972 or *Boss Nigger* in 1975, as well as plantation films such as *Mandigo* in 1975 and *Drum* in 1976, which targeted African American audiences. The title of the film itself is derived from the work of Django by director Sergio Corbucci from 1966. Also, in the case of *Django Unchained*, it is a western, which formed a major genre of American cinema until the 1970s, but from which "New Hollywood" in the 21st century almost dropped. In his adaptation of the spaghetti western, which is a very admired genre for Tarantino, the director combines sections in which he alternates drama, action and comedy. At the same time, however, he is only freely inspired by the genre and leaves it as the environment in which the main story takes place. The caption at the beginning of the film informs the viewer that the plot is located somewhere in Texas, which associates a place where slavery is considered self-evident and normal at the time. African Americans are

⁵⁰ GORMLEY Paul. *New Brutality Film: Race and Affect in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, Intellect Ltd, 2005. ISBN: 9781841501192,1841501190,1841509264. p.26

considered a lower animal species, have the status of the mere property and are referred to by the derogatory term negro.

The story takes place in 1858 before the outbreak of the South-North War. The main character is the escaped slave Django, who sets out to save his beloved Broomhilda woman from white slavers. He loses her while trying to escape from a slave cotton plantation, during which the two are caught and divided. Django is ruthlessly flogged, shackled and sold at a low auction price, his wife being dragged to another owner's plantation. In the film, we follow his gradual transformation from a poor illiterate slave to a cold-blooded and confident gunslinger. A key role in this transformation is played by the German immigrant Dr King Schultz, originally a wandering dentist, who set out in America on a much more lucrative career as a criminal hunter, for the capture of which he collects the announced reward. The ironic and flowery Shultz frees Django from slavery and offers him to embark on a career as a human hunter. Django is the only one who can identify the Brittle brothers, who caused his capture in an unsuccessful attempt to escape slavery, and who is also the subject of Schultz's interest as wanted criminals. While tracking down criminals, Schultz learns of the unfortunate fate of Django's wife. Schultz promises him that if they are successful enough and the Brittle brothers end up, they will help him find and free Broomhilda in return. Although Schultz is a sarcastic, clever, and pragmatic man, he is also a great opponent of slavery and respects Django's desire to reunite with his wife. Schultz's decision will also be helped by the similarity of Broomhilda's name to the main female character of the German knightly legend of Siegfried and Brunhild, whom Django introduces as she tries to give him hope and courage to find his wife.

Schultz fulfils his promise and helps Django find in the archive information about the sale of slaves to the infamous Candyland farm, where the ruthless slave-owner Calvin Candie rules, who does not hesitate to severely punish any disobedience to his slaves. Before travelling to Candyland, Django must take on the role of a black slave as part of his disguise, accompanying his companion as a "professional advisor" to buy the best slave for mandingo - a struggle between two people for life and death. Such a person is despised not only by whites, for whom he is still an inferior person but also by slaves, for whom he is a symbol of someone who has no compassion for his fellow men, even though he has the same origin. Despite the fact that it is extremely difficult, Django is able to preserve this disguise even in moments when he is surrounded by the cruelty and brutality of slavers, during which he loses his balance even the otherwise indifferent Dr Schultz.

The main heroine Broomhilda is subjected to beatings and torture, which is only part of the overall humiliation. She is the property of her master because she is a member of an inferior race. However, in the film, she only plays the passive role of a woman who endures all suffering with dignity and determination and, as in the legend of Siegfried and Broomhilda, she is also waiting to be liberated by her beloved husband.

Their opponents are in the story of the heirs of a slave plantation, aptly named Candyland, Calvin Candie and his old butler Stephen. Candie is a snobbish and at the same time cruel and heartless slave, who styles himself as an educated member of the French aristocracy, but in reality, he likes a primitive and brutal Mandingo struggle. During it, two slaves fight at the command of their master until the very end, when only the stronger of them remains alive. To entertain himself and his company, Candie bets heavily on the winner, and the wrestler he owns is the subject of his considerable earnings.

Candie is more of an opponent to Dr Schultz because they are both similar in style of speech, irony and self-centeredness. The slaver proves this in a scene where he gives a lecture on phrenology, the doctrine of the connections between the physical characteristics of the brain, the shape of the skull and the mental abilities of an individual, to the society he hosts in his house, thus proving the innate superiority of the white race. The tension between the two men culminates in a key scene in the film when Schultz falls out of his feigned role as a wealthy supporter of the mandingo struggle and lets his moral principles, which he follows in life, surface. This ultimately has fatal consequences for him.

In the final, Django will face the most disgusting character represented by Stephen. Not only will this servant reveal the trick Django and Schultz have prepared, but he later proves to be a very savvy, unscrupulous, calculating and cold-blooded type of man who can abuse his own ethnic group and manipulate other people, including his master, to achieve his goal. At the end of the film, Django must use all his wit and bravery to defeat Stephen and get out of an almost hopeless situation.

The main plot of the film is the journey of the protagonist and the effort to free his imprisoned wife, but this time it is not just about retribution for the injustices against specific persons, but in a sense about the revenge of the slaves on their oppressors. In the scenario, specific moments point to this several times. For example, in a scene where Django and his partner Dr Schultz are looking for criminals who work on the farm as slave overseers. At one point, Django turns to a group of African-Americans who have gathered around one of the guards

and challenges them, and then the guard, after addressing him on his behalf and identifying him as a wanted criminal, he wants to shoot him. The camera then captures the details of the astonished expressions on the faces of the surrounding slaves, who ponder in vain how deeply the inviolability and superiority of the white man over a person of a different colour was disturbed by this act.

Likewise, the subsequent reaction of the owner of the plantation, who officially recognizes the law and thus accepts the destruction of criminals on his land, but in fact is outraged from the bottom of his heart that one of the law enforcement officers and thus the one who gains power over whites is a black person.

An interesting element is the antagonistic cast of two African Americans in the lead roles, where Django plays a positive hero, while the butler of the white slaver Stephen, although a slave himself, plays a demonic and negative character. In the film, the division into "good" and "bad" according to skin colour does not work, but rather according to the condemnation of their actions.

A certain intended effect is the depiction of white slavers as not very intelligent people. The owner of a farm employing fugitive criminals as a slave overseer is fooled by the naive story that the purpose of visiting Dr Schulz and Django is to buy slaves at exorbitant prices. Calvin Candie has to be discovered by his black servant Stephen, the real reason why two visitors are interested in his wrestlers. The slaver, who is addressed by Big Daddy, goes to the head of Ku Klux Klan members to avenge his insult, but while riding a horse he is hindered by a white balaclava, which is a kind of identification of clan members but must eventually take it off so he can find his target at all. Also, a group of white guards transporting Django to forced labour in a quarry is fooled by the story of the reward that awaits them if they obey his instructions, take off his handcuffs, arm him with a revolver and follow him to the farm from which he was tied they took away.

Compared to them, Django, after liberation from slavery, becomes a wild beast that realizes its power and uses it cleverly and cold-bloodedly to find and free his beloved wife, Broomhilda. However, thanks to his love for her, he is not only a soulless machine for killing, but he also experiences a legitimate fear of her fate. Broomhilda is portrayed as an intelligent being who was able to learn German from her previous masters, which she demonstrates in the film in an interview with Dr Schultz, when, due to caution and the need for secrecy, she is given information in German about the real reason for the visit.

However, what white characters lack in intelligence, they make up for with violence, brutality and a penchant for causing suffering. Plantation slavers would rather sell Django to another slaver to slowly strike dead while working in a quarry than to kill him immediately. The insidious owner of the farm, Calvin Candie, who indulges in the senseless torture and killing of slaves, lets the blind wrestler be blinded for his own pleasure in a match between two slaves, and only then orders him to be killed. In the same way, to entertain the surroundings, he arranges for the runaway slave, after being brought back to the farm in handcuffs, to be torn apart by dogs trained to hunt people.

The imaginary turning point and the culmination of the plot is a conversation between Dr Schultz and Calvin Candie when Schultz notices during a tour of the library that one of the stored books is *The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas. Schultz asks Candie if this is his favourite book and if he knows anything about the writer. Candie replies that she likes the book very much and at the same time considers the writer as proof that only a white man is able to create such a work of art. As a follower of pseudoscience phrenology, he is convinced that African Americans are already an inferior race due to their skull shape. Then Schultz completely shocks him by informing him that Alexander Dumas was black.

The director Tarantino, true to his reputation as a geeky cinephile in the film, expresses in a specific way his affection for the African American race. Slaves look more sympathetic and also smarter than their masters, who openly criticize primitive racism and slavery. The only white man in whom the author left the role of an opponent of slavery is the German Dr Schultz. He was not afraid to open one of the darkest sides of American history, and he did so in a way that is inherently shocking - the protagonist is a freed slave who has become a hunter of people for whose capture a rich reward is offered. It cannot be a greater controversy and manifestation of an anti-racist stance than an African-American who, in a territory with the tolerance of the slave system, seeks white criminals to bring the living or dead into the hands of justice.

One of the critics writes about the theme of the film, *Django Unchained*:

At the same time, the depiction of the racism of the people of the Wild West and the slave system corrects the injustice of the classical pistol epics, which usually conceal

the fact that the myth of the land of freedom and new possibilities was redeemed by the enslavement of several ethnic groups.⁵¹

Tarantino works on *Unchained Django* with a racism theme similar to the way he worked with the Holocaust in his previous film, *The Inglorious Basterds*. It does not adhere strictly to history but presents an alternative model of historical development to correspond to general notions of justice. His treatment of the topic of oppression is always presented to the audience from the point of view of those most affected. Whether slaves are facing torture and humiliation from white masters in the first case or Jews persecuted and liquidated by Nazi soldiers in the second case. In both cases, the director touches on very serious topics but presents them to the viewer in a form in which he projects legends, myths and fiction and transforms the plot so that evil does not go unpunished.

Over the years of Quentin Tarantino's filmmaking, he has successfully presented his distinctive style, which is characterized by chronologies of narration, branching dialogues, as well as a mixture of black humour and theatrical violence. This creator's distinctive handwriting is also evident in the film *Unchained Django*.

9. Depiction of Racism in *The Green Mile*

9.1. Frank Darabont

Frank Darabont was born in a refugee camp in 1959 in Montbéliard in France. His parents were Hungarian and they escaped from Budapest to Los Angeles because of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. He went to Hollywood High School and his first job was as a production assistant on the film, *Hell Night* (1981). Then he worked as a set dresser and dreamed of being a writer. Eventually, he received his first writing credit for *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*. Frank Darabont belongs to one of the six filmmakers whose first two feature films received nominations for the Best Picture Academy Award: 1994's *The Shawshank Redemption* (7 nominations) and 1999's *The Green Mile* (4 nominations). Darabont is a three-time Oscar nominee and “he collected Oscar nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay for each film (both based on works by Stephen King), as well as nominations for both films from the

⁵¹ FLÍGL J. ”Nespoutaný Django / s ideologií v zádech vstříc širokému publiku”, [online], Cinepur, March 29, 2013, Retrieved 15 April 2021, www.cinepur.cz/article.php?article=2463

Director's Guild of America, and a nomination from the Writers Guild of America for *The Shawshank Redemption*. He won the Humanitas Prize, the PEN Center USA West Award, and the Scriptor Award for his screenplay of *The Shawshank Redemption*. For *The Green Mile*, he won the Broadcast Film Critics prize for his screenplay adaptation, and two People's Choice Awards in the Best Dramatic Film and Best Picture categories. *Majestic* (2001), starring Jim Carrey, was released in December 2001. He executive-produced the thriller, *Collateral* (2004), for DreamWorks, with Michael Mann directing and Tom Cruise starring. Future produced-by projects include *Way of the Rat* at DreamWorks with Chuck Russell adapting and directing the CrossGen comic book series and *Back Roads*, a Tawni O'Dell novel, also at DreamWorks, with Todd Field attached to direct. Darabont and his production company, Darkwoods Productions, have an overall deal with Paramount Pictures.⁵²

Frank Darabont had the great opportunity to direct some very famous books from Stephen King's collection and he managed to film them incredibly well. It is interesting that every time they worked together, it resulted in an incredible work that won a lot of awards. King is one of the authors who has a very rich work, and therefore there is no shortage of its various film adaptations. Many directors have tried to process King's works, but none of them has succeeded in such a high-quality way as Darabont. Of course, there are exceptions like Mick Garris, he directed *The Stand*, *The Shining* remake and *Sleepwalkers*, and they became very good friends with King. However, Darabont has no competition when it comes to the quality of workmanship.

“Darabont has adapted multiple King stories, and they've all arguably been terrific. He may not have the lengthy King-based resume of Garris, but he definitely has a much higher hit to miss ratio, and it's impossible to imagine him directing something as bad as *Riding the Bullet*.”⁵³

The best film in history that Frank Darabont has ever directed is probably *The Shawshank Redemption*. It was based on Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* from the collection *Different Seasons*. The main character of this film is called Andy Dufresne. It is a man and he was convicted for the murders of his wife and her lover.

⁵² HUTH, D. “Frank Darabont Biography” [online]. IMDb, Retrieved 15 April 2021, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001104/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm

⁵³ KENNEDY M., 2020 “Every Stephen King & Frank Darabont Collaboration” [online], Screenrat, Retrieved 19 April 2020 (<https://screenrant.com/stephen-king-frank-darabont-every-collaboration/>)

However, he claims his innocence. Andy is sent to prison and there he makes a friend called Red. Red is a very strange guy and he is capable of getting almost anything someone asks for or what they need at the moment. *The Shawshank Redemption* was nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars but unfortunately did not win. *Forrest Gump* was the overall winner.

Another very popular film adaptation is called *The Mist*. It is a film from the year 2007 and it is a full horror story. Frank Darabont did not usually specialize in this genre, but he has shown that he can be a good filmmaker of horror stories than this typical genre. *The Mist* was based on King's 1980 novella found in the *Skeleton Crew* collection. The film had also a very good cast and Darabont managed to create Stephen King's Lovecraftian creatures. These were probably the scariest monsters in the horror film.

Lastly, Darabont wrote and directed *The Green Mile*, based on Stephen King's 1996 novel. Unfortunately, it was not so successful as *The Shawshank Redemption*, but this story about a prisoner is said to be one of the best King adaptations of all time. With this film, Darabont proved that his non-horror stories are much better and the adaptation did not lack the quality and any other matters as his horror stories.

9.2. Green Mile

The Green Mile is an American film directed by Frank Darabont and based on Stephen King's non-horror short story called *The Green Mile*. The film received four Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor for Duncan, Best Sound and Best Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published. The budget of the film was very high and Tom Hanks has been chosen to play the main role. Michael Clark Duncan was discovered in this film as pure talent. He became famous very quickly. In the supporting roles appeared David Morse, Bonnie Hunt, Doug Hutchison and James Cromwell. King was surprised and happy because Darabont as he said makes the narrowest genre specialization in the world - "He makes films based on Stephen King's books set in the base".

The story of the film begins with Paul Edgecomb, who watches the film *Top Hat* starring Fred Astair in a retirement home. While watching the movie he is emotional, so his sobs are heard by Elaine, she has to see what's going on. They start talking to each other, and Paul begins to tell her an old story that Paul experienced as a warden in prison 60 years ago. More precisely, in block E, where the worst prisoners who have been sentenced to death are located. This is

the place at Cold Mountain Penitentiary's death row, nicknamed "The Green Mile", also thanks to the floor, which is painted green here and it should make the prisoners feel better.

In 1935, Paul is overseeing officers Brutus Howell, Dean Stanton, Harry Terwilliger and Percy Wetmore, and reports to the chief warden Hall Moores. John Coffey is brought to the Green mile and sentenced to death after being convicted of the rape and murder of two girls. John Coffey is a huge African American man, who is illustrated as very bad person due to his masculine body and his race. Throughout the story we can see the change of people's judgements and that not all African American people are really that bad and even though John Coffey is very huge and by the looks of it almost everyone would say about him that he is for sure the criminal. Paul very soon can see John is not so bad as everyone had told him and John is proving it in as many ways as he can.

There have already been two other prisoners in block E, Eduard "Del" Delacroix and Arlen Bitterbuck. Another character is slightly stupid Percy, the nephew of the state governor's wife, who likes to brag about it and is proud of his connections, so he is not responsible for anything. He doesn't treat the prisoners nicely and intentionally causes bad things. He is not particularly popular and only stays there due to his connections. He is very set on Del, who has a mouse named Mr Jingles as his pet. Percy is always trying to kill him.

Paul gradually begins to realize that John has some supernatural abilities and begins to doubt his guilt. In the film appears a scene where Paul is suffering from a severe bladder infection for a long time and John sees it and wants to help him. Paul is unsure about it at first but the pain is so bad that he finally allows John to help him. Paul comes to John closer but very scared and what John does absolutely shocks him. John can cure it with just a touch. Paul stands there speechless and eventually realizes that John has a supernatural God power to heal others. This is again confirmed by the fact that he was able to bring the mouse back to life, Mr Jingles. Another scene is where Percy kills Mr Jingles and Del and almost everyone else is sad about it, so John says that if they bring him the mouse quickly enough, he can bring it back to life. By this time, Paul is almost sure that John is innocent and just wants to help the others from suffering. Meanwhile, a new prisoner, Wild Bill, is brought to the block by Wharton, who often attacks the guards and racially insults John.

Everyone wants to get rid of Percy as soon as possible, but it's not as easy as it seems at first glance. Percy is still making it up and deliberately doesn't want to leave. Eventually, he agrees that in exchange for his resignation from prison and acceptance of a job in a madhouse, Percy

can lead Del's execution. This scene is a very good example of evil and that evil is caused by white person not African American. The point, where Percy really messes up and it is truly seen as mean and evil is during the execution. He is supposed to wet the sponge in the water before he puts it onto the prisoner's head and he intentionally does not dip it in the water. The water there is used to conduct electricity into Del's head and when this is not done it results into Del suffering a horrible and painful death. Everyone in the crowd was shocked and scared and John was mentally forced to feel Del's pain. Paul is strongly unhappy with Percy and as a punishment for his actions, Paul and the other officers tie Percy and seal his mouth, forcing him to spend the night in an isolated padded cell, so he can regret his actions.

While Percy is imprisoned, Paul and the others have a chance to get John out of jail. Paul got the idea that John could help heal Melinda Moores. Melinda Moores is the wife of Cold Mountain Penitentiary warden Hal Moores. She is a very sad woman mainly because of her end stage cancer. She does not have a lot of time to live. Paul wants to try John Coffey's magic to try to cure her. With the help of others, they sneak out of jail at night. Luckily no one sees them and they head out to Hal Moore's house. As they came there, Hal is a bit unsure about it, because John does not look like the friendliest person on the planet but with the explanation of Paul, he eventually agrees, so that John can come in and try to help Melinda. John comes very carefully to her bed and sees her laying down exhausted. He grabs her and absorbs her bad energy toward him and then he realises it into an air leaving everyone speechless again, because Melinda is fully cured. She gives John her St. Christopher cross as an acknowledgement for what he did. Later on, they manage to secretly smuggle John back. This is the turning point of the story when everyone sees John is a kind and gentle person with only the best intentions and not the black monster as they thought when he arrived in the prison. The only true monster there is Percy. When they return, they finally release him, but vigorously warn him that if he does not leave, they will report all his malicious actions.

Later, John can transfer the pain Melinda had to Percy's brain. Percy stops and is silent for a while and then shoots Wharton a moment later. Paul and everyone else are horrified and can't believe their eyes. Subsequently, John can mentally show Paul that Wharton was the real killer of the girls for which John was wrongly convicted. No one but Paul and the other workers believed him. By showing Paul what happened, John transferred his supernatural energy to Paul. In the end, Percy goes crazy and can't even talk, so he's taken to a mental hospital, where he was supposed to work.

Paul and the others become sad at the thought of executing an innocent man, so out of desperation, Paul devises a plan to get him out. John, on the other hand, tells him that it's a nice gesture but he no longer wants to live and feel the pain of others and experience with them all the terrible things that are happening in the world. His last wish is to watch the film *Top Hat* with other guards. Later on, that day of the execution, John asks if he has to wear a black bag over his head because he is afraid of the dark. After the execution of John, Paul decided to leave this job and finds another one not so stressful.

Towards the end of the film, Paul finds himself back at the retirement home and says that Mr Jingles is still alive and that John has given him a supernaturally long life. Elaine meets Mr Jingles and is very surprised how cute and talented he is. At the very end, Paul finds himself at Elaine's funeral, thinking about his life, that all his loved ones have already died, and he is still alive at the age of 108.

9.3. Critical Response

Even though the film was awarded and nominated several times, not everybody felt the same way about it. As we can see in the criticism of Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian* from February 25, 2000: "If you can stand this three-hour-plus stretch of saccharine gibberish and patronising racial politics, you've got a stronger stomach than me." (Bradshaw, 2000) In contrast to Bradshaw, a criticism by Ebert (1999) claims that taking an extra time for developing the story was a good step. He states that in case of a two-hour film, it would definitely lose its essence (Ebert, 1999).

On Rotten Tomatoes the film holds an approval rating of 78% based on 134 reviews, with an average rating of 6.83/10. The website's critics consensus states, "Though *The Green Mile* is long, critics say it's an absorbing, emotionally powerful experience."⁵⁴

CinemaScore audience gave the film an average grade of "A" on an A+ to F scale.⁵⁵

Roger Ebert, a film critic, gave the film 3 1/2 out of 4 stars and wrote, "The film is a shade over three hours long. I appreciated the extra time, which allows us to feel the passage of prison months and years ... it tells a story with a beginning, middle, end, vivid characters, humour, outrage and emotional release".⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "The Green Mile (1999)". Rotten Tomatoes. Fandango. Retrieved January 16, 2020

⁵⁵ "Find CinemaScore" (Type "Green Mile" in the search box). CinemaScore. Retrieved August 3, 2020.

⁵⁶ Ebert, Roger (December 10, 1999). "The Green Mile". RogerEbert.com. Retrieved June 7, 2020

Lisa Schwarzbaum wrote for Entertainment Weekly about the film's length but was very impressed with Tom Hanks' performance and Darabont's direction. She said, "Darabont's style of picture-making is well matched to King-size yarn spinning. The director isn't afraid to let big emotions and grand gestures linger." ⁵⁷

Desson Thomson of The Washington Post called the storytelling "brilliant", and said, "From its deceptively easygoing beginning to the heart-wrenching finale, *The Green Mile* keeps you wonderfully high above the cynical ground." ⁵⁸

Honeycutt of The Hollywood Reporter wrote, "By inflating the simple story with a languorous pace, pregnant pauses, long reaction shots and an infinitely slow metabolism, Darabont has burdened his movie version with more self-importance than it can sustain." ⁵⁹

9.3. Interview with Darabont

In one interview for online magazine Creativescreenwriting⁶⁰ by Daniel Argent and Erik Bauer a question was asked about the guilt of John Coffey, if he is guilty or not?

Frank Darabont says: "But those are red herrings. What's fun about working with such material is ultimately, the question of their innocence takes a back seat to the story. It's not a huge gasp to reveal that John Coffey is innocent. He is amazing in other ways. And it's how the effects those around him that is significant. That's the character-based, character-driven story that I'm interested in telling. Is he innocent, is he guilty? It's not the big plot point of the movie. So, I love those red herrings.

Could there have been a middle ground between innocent and guilty? Could the story have functioned if John Coffey may not have committed that particular crime but may have had a record. Dirtied their souls a little bit.

A story can work in that fashion, but I think this story could not have worked in that fashion. It's more than a question of a sympathetic main character for the audience.

The character has a purity of soul that drives what he does and what he is, and if he

⁵⁷ Schwarzbaum, Lisa (December 10, 1999). "The Green Mile". EW.com. Retrieved June 7, 2020

⁵⁸ Thomson, Desson (December 9, 1999). "The Green Mile: Above and Beyond (washingtonpost.com)". The Washington Post. Retrieved June 7, 2020

⁵⁹ Honeycutt, Kirk, November 29, 1999. "The Green Mile: THR's 1999 Review". The Hollywood Reporter. Retrieved June 7, 2020

⁶⁰ BAUER E. 2016, "Frank Darabont on The Green Mile", [online], Creativescreenwriting, Retrieved 19 April 2020. <https://www.creativescreenwriting.com/frank-darabont-on-the-green-mile/>

was guilty of his crimes, it would so fundamentally change the character that the story wouldn't be the same.”⁶¹

9.4. Comparison with the Book

The book for the film was written by Stephen King, for whom horror stories and novels are otherwise typical. However, the book *The Green Mile* deviates somewhat from his typical manuscript. The author was inspired by the way in which the famous English writer Charles Dickens published his books and published a literary work to be continued. *The Green Mile* was originally published as six separate sections, which were published at approximately monthly intervals from May to October 1996.

There are two storylines in the book, one taking place in Louisiana in the 1930s and the other in recent times. The writer managed to capture the then atmosphere of the American South in the story in the form of memories of the protagonist very faithfully.

The chosen way of telling the story then offers a perfect opportunity to create a functioning psychology of personalities. Although the characters in the novel act rationally, it is often a logic influenced by prejudice or distorted self-weakness.

The story is not only presented in black and white; it describes very serious things and the writer considers, among other things, the issue of guilt and punishment. The mysterious line, which is lightly and non-violently incorporated into the story, also plays a role, quite important for understanding the character of some characters. Although the novel describes two completely different groups of people, the humanity, respect and esteem that some actors, either from one side or the other, hold among themselves do not disappear. Overall, it is precisely these human characteristics that make the novel very touching, but not overly pathetic. The reader was certainly interested in the overall tone of the work, where the author deliberately uses various opposites to increase the psychological effect. A convicted felon who cares for a small animal next to him is a prison warden, whose cruelty surpasses most prisoners or the miraculous cure of a seriously ill person in addition to the detailed brutal death in an electric chair - all of which are targeted at the reader's emotions. However, the writer was careful not to cross the line he had set and strictly avoided rejecting a straightforward description of remorse or condemnation. The author works just as carefully

⁶¹ BAUER E. 2016, “Frank Darabont on *The Green Mile*”, [online], Creativescreenwriting, Retrieved 19 April 2020 <https://www.creativescreenwriting.com/frank-darabont-on-the-green-mile/>

with morbid and violent scenes. If they are included in the story, they are not used on their own and for the first time, but they are essential for the further development of the story. The Green Mile is a book whose theme strikes the reader, you can find a lot of ideas to think about, you can return to it repeatedly, without getting bored.

When a book becomes a model for filming, it always raises expectations about how the film will turn out. In the case of two novels by Stephen King, The Green Paper and Shawshank Redemption, both adaptations were extremely successful and rightly ranked among the best film adaptations of books ever made. This is evidenced by the responses and awards that both the first and the second of the named films collected after their release in cinemas.

10. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to describe and analyse the anti-racist elements in the films *Unchained Django* by Quentin Tarantino and *The Green Mile* by Frank Darabont. Another aim is to investigate the changes in Hollywood cinema industry approach to anti-racism movement.

The general description of racism was the theoretical part, which was based on introducing the topic from wider perspective to the reader.

The next part, The relationship between religion and racism, described necessary information about the evolution, how religion and racism is linked.

The following chapter, Development of racism on the American continent, was more specific to the situation in America and slavery there.

The chapter after, Racism in American film together with African-American representation in Hollywood dealt with filmography in general and the African-American culture and its representation with examples.

In the last chapter, the practical part, I analysed two films, that were primary centred around racism. First was from Quentin Tarantino, *Unchained Django* and the second one was from Frank Darabont, *The Green Mile*. This chapter analyses the anti-racist elements in both of films and describe these films in detail. Lastly, there will be provided some interviews and reviews concerning the respective films.

I argue that the two movies in question are representations of anti-racist thought which reflect the specific problem of anti-African-American racism inherent in contemporary American culture and society. The present claim is that while different in style and resolution of the main conflict of the plot, both movies point out the inconsistency, irrationality and dehumanizing unethicity of racist thoughts, actions and attitudes.

Overall, racism is still a big problem in America. This is evidenced by the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, which originated after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis as a result of police brutality. A trial has now taken place that found the intervening white police officer guilty and sentenced him to many years in prison. These social expressions also have a mirror image in culture, where voices are growing after the greater use of artists from non-white ethnic groups. For the second time in the history of Hollywood film, the director of

Chinese nationality, Chloe Zhao, won the Oscar as the first Asian woman and second woman ever to win the best director at the Academy Awards, but she was blacked out from live television in China. The award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences starting in 2022 must meet the new criteria that the Academy has introduced into its principles. And these include not only artists but also filmmakers, production and distribution companies. The Academy thus wants to contribute to the suppression of racial discrimination in the artistic sphere. However, the real results will be shown in the near future.

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Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo popsat a analyzovat proti rasové prvky ve filmech Nespoutaný Django od Quentina Tarantina a Zelená míle od Franka Darabonta. Dalším cílem je prozkoumat změny v přístupu hollywoodského kinematografického průmyslu k hnutí proti rasismu.

Obecným popisem rasismu byla teoretická část, která byla založena na představení tématu širšímu pohledu čtenáři.

V další části, Vztah mezi náboženstvím a rasismem, byly popsány nezbytné informace o vývoji, jak je náboženství a rasismus propojen.

Následující kapitola, Vývoj rasismu na americkém kontinentu, byla konkrétnější pro situaci v Americe a tamní otroctví.

Kapitola po filmu Rasismus v americkém filmu spolu s afroamerickým zastoupením v Hollywoodu se zabývala obecně filmografií a afroamerickou kulturou a jejím znázorněním na příkladech.

V poslední kapitole praktické části jsem analyzoval dva filmy, které byly primárně zaměřeny na rasismus. První byl od Quentina Tarantina, Nespoutaný Django a druhý od Franka Darabonta, Zelená míle. Tato kapitola analyzuje protirasové prvky v obou filmech a podrobně je popisuje. Na závěr budou poskytnuty některé rozhovory a recenze o filmech a režisérech.

Celkově je rasismus v Americe stále velkým problémem. O tom svědčí vzestup hnutí Black Lives Matter, které vzniklo po smrti George Floyda v Minneapolisu v důsledku policejní brutality. Nyní proběhl soud, který shledal vinným zasahujícího bílého policisty a odsoudil ho na mnoho let vězení. Tyto sociální výrazy mají také zrcadlový obraz v kultuře, kde po větším využívání umělců z nebílých etnických skupin rostou hlasy. Podruhé v historii hollywoodského filmu získala režisérka čínské národnosti Chloe Zhao Oscara jako první asijská žena a druhá žena, která kdy vyhrála nejlepší režii na Oscarech, ale v přímém přenosu byla zatemněna v Číně. Ocenění Akademie filmových umění a věd počínaje rokem 2022 musí splňovat nová kritéria, která Akademie zavedla do svých zásad. Mezi ně patří nejen umělci, ale také filmaři, produkční a distribuční společnosti. Akademie tak chce přispět k potlačení rasové diskriminace v umělecké sféře. Skutečné výsledky se však ukážou v blízké budoucnosti.

ANOTACE

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Rok obhajoby:	2021

Název práce:	Téma rasismu v amerických filmech Zelená Míle a Nespoutaný Django
Název v angličtině:	The theme of racism in the American films The Green Mile and Django Unchained
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá problematikou rasismu v amerických filmech, konkrétně filmy Zelená Míle a Nespoutaný Django. Cílem práce je popsat prvky rasismu ve vybraných hollywoodských filmech. Tato práce byla rozdělena do 10 kapitol. První kapitola se zabývá úvodem do problematiky rasismu a historií, druhá kapitola se zabývá spojitostí mezi rasismem a náboženstvím, třetí kapitola se zabývá vyobrazením rasismu na americkém kontinentu, čtvrtá rasismem v americkém filmu a poslední kapitola je o vyobrazením rasismu ve dvou filmech, Zelená Míle a Nespoutaný Django.
Klíčová slova:	Rasismus, rasismus v USA, rasismus v americkém filmu, Zelená Míle, Nespoutaný Django, Afro-americká reprezentace Hollywoodu
Anotace v angličtině:	As the title suggests, this bachelor thesis is dealing with Racism in American culture, particularly in American films, The Green Mile and Django Unchained. The aim of the thesis is to describe elements of racism in selected Hollywood films. This work was divided into 10 chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction to racism and history, the second chapter deals with the connection between racism and religion, then follows depiction of racism on the American continent and the last chapter is the depiction of racism in two films, Green Mile and Unchained Django.

Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Racism, racism in the United States, racism in American film, The Green Mile, Django Unchained, African-American representation in Hollywood
Přílohy vázané v práci:	
Rozsah práce:	35
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina