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Depiction of American History in Quentin Tarantino's Movies

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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Cílem bakalářské práce je analyzovat tři filmy od režiséra Quentina Tarantina (Nespoutaný Django, Osm hrozných, Tenkrát v Hollywoodu) z pohledu historické fikce. Práce se bude soustředit na otroctví a jeho stereotypy ve filmu Nespoutaný Django. Ve filmu Osm hrozných se bude soustředit na dobu těsně po americké občanské válce a na soudobou rasovou diskriminaci. Následně se ve filmu Tenkrát v Hollywoodu zaměří na kult Manson Family. V dalších kapitolách bude popsán historický kontext a v závěrečné kapitole bude provedena komparativní analýza dříve zmíněných filmů a historického kontextu.

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## **TITLE**

Depiction of American History in Quentin Tarantino's Movies

## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis deals with the comparison of historic fiction depicted in three chosen films by Quentin Tarantino (*Django Unchained* (2012), *The Hateful Eight* (2015), and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019)) and relevant historic context. The first chapter focuses on slavery and its stereotypes in *Django Unchained*. The next chapter focuses on the post-Civil War Era and racial discrimination in *The Hateful Eight*. The final chapter focuses on the Manson Family Cult in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*.

## **KEYWORDS**

Quentin Tarantino, Django Unchained, The Hateful Eight, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, slavery, racial discrimination, Manson Family

## **NÁZEV**

Zobrazení amerických dějin ve vybraných filmech Quentina Tarantina

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá srovnáním historické fikce vyobrazené ve třech vybraných filmech Quentina Tarantina (*Nespoutaná Django* (2012), *Osm hrozných* (2015) a *Tenkrát v Hollywoodu* (2019)) a historického kontextu. První kapitola se zaměřuje otroctví a jeho stereotypy v *Nespoutaném Djangovi*. Další kapitola se zaměřuje na dobu po Americké občanské válce a soudobou rasovou diskriminaci ve filmu *Osm hrozných*. Poslední kapitola se zaměřuje na kult Manson Family ve filmu *Tenkrát v Hollywoodu*.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Quentin Tarantino, Nespoutaný Django, Osm hrozných, Tenkrát v Hollywoodu, otroctví, rasová diskriminace, Manson Family

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## Introduction

This thesis deals with the depiction of actual historical events in the three chosen films by the American director Quentin Tarantino – *Django Unchained* (2012), *The Hateful Eight* (2015), and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019). Firstly, in the action Western film *Django Unchained* (2012), the thesis will deal with the depiction of American slavery in the late 1850s before the final abolition of slavery in the United States of America. The second film, *The Hateful Eight* (2015), was chosen for the study of the depiction of the era after the American Civil War and the racial discrimination of the time period. Although slavery was abolished, people of dark skin were still treated differently in comparison to white free people. The most recent film by Tarantino that was chosen, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), is meant to discuss the depiction of a worldwide known American cult, the Manson Family.

Since this thesis deals with the real historical events of three films, it has been divided into three separate chapters accordingly. Each of them deals with one film and its selected topic and provides the theoretical materials with a historical background related to the specific topic and then the final subsections of each chapter present the depiction created by the director of all of three films, Quentin Tarantino with comparison to the real historical events.

The first chapter describes the film *Django Unchained* (2012) and shares a few critical reactions that discuss the film's number one topic – slavery. Subchapters are dedicated to the history of slavery, American slavery, and slave punishments. The last subchapter describes the depiction of slavery in the film and compares it to real historical events. The second chapter deals with the film *The Hateful Eight* (2015) and again contains a few critical reactions. The subchapters later describe the era that followed the American Civil War and the final subchapter, once again, describes the depiction of the era in the film and compares it to real historical events. The last chapter deals with the most recent film by Tarantino, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) which depicts Charles Manson and his followers, the so-called Manson Family. The first subchapter describes only essential information about the cult leader, members, and their crimes and the last subchapter shows the depiction of the Manson Family with a comparison to real historical events.

All three films were filmed for entertainment purposes, and it is expected that many portions of the three films will contain an immense amount of fabricated scenes, stories, actions, and characters, that are necessary for a smooth flow of the storyline and are not related to the real historical events. The three chosen films are also expected to contain a great portion of humour that takes pressure and weight off of the depiction of the intense historical events, thus the film could be watched even by those who cannot bear bloody scenes, injustice, and violence.

The author of this thesis does not expect all three films to cover the chosen topics accurately according to real historical events.



# 1. Django Unchained

*Django Unchained* (2012) is the 7<sup>th</sup> film of the director Quentin Tarantino. The director is well known for collaborating with the same actors across his film portfolio and this controversial and provocative action western *Django Unchained* (2012) is no exception as some of the actors appear also in other films this thesis deals with. The leading role of a slave named Django, later Django Freeman, played by Jamie Foxx, who is bought by a German former dentist, now bounty hunter, Dr King Schultz, played by Christoph Waltz. Django and Dr Schultz make an agreement of helping each other. First, they kill wanted cruel slavers, the Brittle brothers, for which Django gets his freedom, a horse, and money. Then Django and Dr Schultz become business partners and together they try to buy and free Django's wife, Broomhilde von Schaft, out of slavery from evil plantation owner Calvin Candie, played by Leonardo DiCaprio. After several obstacles and the deaths of Dr Schultz and Candie, Django and Broomhilde are both freed from slavery.

The film was a huge success even though it covers a very controversial, promiscuous, and sensitive topic of slavery in the south of the 1850s United States of America. American film critic Roger Ebert commented on the film by saying: "His [Tarantino's] films challenge taboos in our society in the most direct possible way, and at the same time add an element of parody or satire."<sup>1</sup> Tarantino is well aware of the seriousness of the topic he decided to cover in this film and so the story is filled with humorous moments usually created by the brightness of Dr Schultz to take some weight off of the film.

Quentin Tarantino was asked in an interview for Channel 4 News about why he wanted to make a film on such controversial topic – slavery, to which he answered:

I have always wanted to explore slavery in a film before. But I think actually my real reason – I have always wanted to explore slavery, but I guess the reason that actually made me put pen to paper was to give black American males a Western hero. Give them a cool folkloric hero that could actually be empowering and actually pay back blood for blood.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Faster, Quentin! Thrill! Thrill!" Roger Ebert, published January 7, 2013, <https://www.rogerebert.com/roger-ebert/faster-quentin-thrill-thrill>

<sup>2</sup> Channel 4 News, "Quentin Tarantino interview: 'I'm shutting your butt down!'" posted January 10, 2013, YouTube video, 00:15

Later Tarantino stated that it would be impossible to make a movie about slavery that would not be controversial and that he is happy the film is creating a nice debate, as slavery was not discussed in America for many years.<sup>3</sup>

The New York Times critic A. O. Scott commented on slavery problem-solving in *Django Unchained* (2012) while comparing it to Steven Spielberg's film *Lincoln* (2012) by saying:

You could almost imagine the two films, or at least their heroes, figuring in the kind of good-natured, racial-stereotype humor that used to be a staple of stand-up comedy: "white guys abolish slavery like this" (pass constitutional amendment); "but black guys, they abolish slavery like this" (blow up plantation). ... It is digressive, jokey, giddily brutal, and ferociously profane. But it is also a troubling and important movie about slavery and racism.<sup>4</sup>

Scott aptly described the film by highlighting the way white and black people dealt with the slavery problem through papers and violence and agreed on the importance of a film covering such topic. With no doubt, Tarantino was able to raise a discussion about slavery, but some critics were concerned with rather unexpected topic of the director's race. Race and racial issues are also one of the main topics of *Django Unchained* (2012) and a few critiques pointed to the fact that the writer of this film has white skin. This led many people to discussion whether Tarantino should or should not have written this piece, since his race was not the one oppressed. Tarantino commented on this criticism in an interview by saying:

It's been a long time since the subject of a writer's skin was mentioned as often as mine. You wouldn't think the colour of a writer's skin should have any effect on the words themselves. In a lot of the more ugly pieces, my motives were really brought to bear in the most negative way. It's like I'm some supervillain coming up with this stuff.<sup>5</sup>

Other negative reviews were concerned about the usage of a controversial and racially offensive word that was used to refer to dark-skinned persons in a negative connotation. The word 'nigger' is considered by many as controversy and provocation, as it was used more than one hundred times during the whole film, as the author of this thesis counted. The director was asked about the usage of the word in an interview for ABC News, where he stated that "...I

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<sup>3</sup> Channel 4 News, "Quentin Tarantino interview: 'I'm shutting your butt down!'"

<sup>4</sup>"The Black, the White and the Angry," A. O. Scott, The New York Times, published December 24, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/25/movies/quentin-tarantinos-django-unchained-stars-jamie-foxx.html>

<sup>5</sup> E. Alex Jung, "Quentin Tarantino Says He Never Saw Ava DuVernay's Selma and That TV-Movie Comparison Was Meant As a Compliment," Vulture – New York Magazine, published October 14, 2015, <https://www.vulture.com/2015/10/quentin-tarantino-dissed-ava-duvernays-selma.html>

don't think anybody is actually going out there saying that we used the word more excessively than it was used in 1858 in Mississippi and if that's not the case then they can shut up it's my job to tell the truth."<sup>6</sup> Although the usage of the N-word may seem very controversial and excessive, it suits the time period in which the film is set.

Though most of the reviews were positive and agreed that such a sensitive topic needed to be filmed and covered for a long time in its true unfiltered colours with showing the cruelty, disrespect, and violence, many critics were in the complete opposite, and some even without seeing the film. Spike Lee, who is an American director of *Malcolm X* (1992), stated that he does not plan on watching *Django Unchained* (2012) as it is disrespectful to his ancestors. He continued on his Twitter account by writing a tweet: "American Slavery Was Not A Sergio Leone Spaghetti Western. It Was A Holocaust. My Ancestors Are Slaves. Stolen From Africa. I Will Honor Them."<sup>7</sup> Antoine Fuqua, an American director, commented on this situation with Spike Lee and Tarantino by stating that his friend, Jamie Foxx, would not have acted in a racist and disrespectful film.<sup>8</sup>

To conclude that, the film shows incredible amounts of violence and terrible punishments that slaves had to experience but it still cannot depict the true inhumanity and brutality of the real events that happened during the American slavery period. The film collected both, positive and negative, reviews and started a much-needed debate, conversation and eye-opening about slavery and racial issues that led to people being aware of the awful crimes. The following chapters are dedicated to slaves and slavery.

## 1.1. Slavery

The 7<sup>th</sup> film of Quentin Tarantino, *Django Unchained* (2012), is besides the romantic story of Django and Broomhilde, mostly centered around the topic and depiction of slavery in the southern part of the United States of America, specifically in Mississippi in 1858 and the following year. Though the film follows slavery only in the United States of America in a very

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<sup>6</sup> ABC News, "Django Unchained': Tarantino, DiCaprio, Foxx Answer Critics," posted January 1, 2013, YouTube video, 02:04

<sup>7</sup> "Spike Lee Calls 'Django Unchained' 'Disrespectful,'" Rolling Stone, published December 27, 2012.

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/spike-lee-calls-django-unchained-disrespectful-99480/>

<sup>8</sup> "Django Unchained wins over black audience despite Spike Lee criticism," Ben Child, The Guardian, published January 3, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jan/03/django-unchained-spike-lee>

short and particular period of time, slavery has existed for more than 4,000 years and it was not always only about the suppression of a specific race or some minority.<sup>9</sup>

Martin A. Klein defines slavery, in his second edition of the book named *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition* (2014), as a “system of total control by some persons over the bodies and labour power of others.”<sup>10</sup> Klein then further describes the differences that slavery may have in different cultures and parts of the world. He also pointed out that slavery may look very different depending on the position of a slave – some slaves may have had at least some rights, but others did not. For example, when a female slave served as a concubine, she could be present around powerful people whom she could possibly influence thus she could be treated better, but other, not so privileged, slaves could have no influence and live in misery while working in a mine or on a plantation.<sup>11</sup> Certain slaves experienced better treatment due to their position whereas others were not so fortunate.

Slavery was not always only about getting a servant that could be treated differently to free persons. Originally slavery was about absorbing the captive person and making them a full member of society, e.g. female captives usually became wives and male prisoners could take place of somebody who died in war or due to an illness or they were tortured or killed. Also, both male and female captives could be ransomed.<sup>12</sup> Later started the transition from absorption of a captive and making them a full members of society to simply owning the captives and using them for work and hard labour. Klein described the meaning of a slave person as: “The slaved is owned. He or she has no family. The slave can be forced to do any kind of work. His body, or more often, her body, can be used in any way her owner wishes.”<sup>13</sup> Though slaves were not given proper education, undoubtedly some of them were intelligent, unlike some of the representatives of the supreme part of society, as shown in *Django Unchained* (2012). Another type of slavery that is described in the *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition* that was common in many places of the world, was a special type of slavery called pawnship or debt slavery. This type of slavery existed in parts of the world where there were no properties in private ownership, so nobody was able to pledge for example a house or land. The way a

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<sup>9</sup> Martin A. Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, 1.

borrower could secure a loan was to pledge himself or a member of his own family. After debts were paid off the security of the loan could return to ones family.

The majority of slave systems experienced a bit of amelioration and manumission as it was slowly evolving. Klein describes the amelioration in his publication as “a possibility to improve of his or hers [slave’s] well-being and a slave who was born into the society,”<sup>14</sup> also addressed as the slave “born in the house,” or so-called the Creole in the West African and Americas slave societies, were to expect better treatment and somewhat higher status among other slaves. Creole slave was raised to speak their master’s language and was aware of their culture. But even though the Creole slaves had higher status among other slaves, they still had to work long hours. Only a minority of slaves was slowly manumitted, though it was important. Unfortunately, when a slave gained one’s freedom, it did not secure him a better social status and in the Americas, freed slaves were kept in a social middle ground because of their racial differences.<sup>15</sup> Although a slave became a free man to a certain extent, one was still excluded from society due to physical differences.

Dorothy Schneider describes the attempts of the U.S. Congress to ban the international slave trade, as the country had more slaves than needed and also because many people started to be against slavery and thought it was wrong. Several states agreed to not import African slaves and some had forbidden their citizens to be a part of the trade, however, many ignored these laws and African slaves continued to be imported into the U.S.A. North experienced economic growth based on immigration, industrialization, and free labour. South and North both expanded to the west more and more and new states were joining the Union when they had to choose whether to be a slave or a free state. This led to the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that separated free and non-free states, which according to Klein lead to slave revolts and isolation of the South. North and South were becoming distant by the topic of slavery and in 1850, Fugitive Slave Act was meant to help by returning escaped slaves to their masters. Later during the American Civil War, in January 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves and in 1865, the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution of the U.S. abolished slavery, followed by 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendment that gave the freed slaves U.S. citizenship and defined their rights.

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<sup>14</sup> Klein, Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition, 5.

In conclusion, slavery in the world exists for more than one could imagine and can be seen in many forms, as it began with the absorption of the captive and making them a full member of society and later developed into slaves being seen only as workers for hard labour whose lives did not matter. After many years, the slave trade and slavery were finally banned, and slaves gained their rights, though they were still looked at differently for their race. American slavery is to be further discussed in the following chapter.

## **1.2. American Slavery**

Slavery in North America is recorded in rudimentary records to as far as the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the land was still mostly wilderness.<sup>16</sup> There were a few unsuccessful attempts to colonise the land of America, but harsh conditions or weather ruined the attempts during which many slaves died or were able to escape. Not much is known or recorded about the lives of the first African slaves who were brought to America by Dutch traders in 1619, near Jamestown in Virginia. Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider state in their publication named *Slavery in America* (2007) that the Dutch traders probably brought 19 blacks whom they have saved from a Spanish slave ship and that they were most likely not slaved for life but only for a fixed period of time and they were hired as servants.<sup>17</sup> Later other slaves were used as indentured servants and it was not until 1660 when the labour force decided they are bonded for life.

British colonies in both, northern and southern parts of the U.S.A., started slowly with the slave trade at first during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and then it rapidly increased during the 18<sup>th</sup> century when colonists realized the great need for hard workers to be able to colonise this new continent and survive the harsh conditions and challenges that the new land provided. As stated in *Slavery in America*, at first, colonisers wanted to use Indians but then they turned to the Africans who were already working as slaves in many parts of the world. Almost all colonies' governments in Europe were encouraging slavery and by the time of the American Revolution, slavery happened to be legal in each of the original colonies.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 49.

Slavery in the southern parts of the U.S.A. was settled and organized by those who considered slaveholding and slavery as their way of living, meanwhile in the North Atlantic coast was slavery slowly dying because of its rocky and poor soil with only small farms. Southern territories, on the other hand, had big farms with fertile soil and were in need of many hands to help with clearing and cultivating those lands.<sup>19</sup> According to Klein, the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 by Eli Whitney – a machine that could cheaply remove the seeds from cotton, led to a huge spread of slavery,<sup>20</sup> as the plantations needed a bigger supply of workers because of the increase in international demand of southern cotton.

Since the transatlantic slave trade existed for many years, after the successful colonization of America, the slave trade became a business for many people even off the oceans. Schneider states that the domestic slave trade, within colonies, was developed by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Slave traders often tried to flip their slaves with the vision of profit, so they bought in cash, which often persuaded the planters, and then resell.<sup>21</sup> Slave trade developed even into a form of private sales. Within these private sales, the owner of the slave sometimes showed some sympathy, as he did not want to sell out of the city, so the slave was not parted from ones family and of course, not all slavers were like that, as presented by Schneider, an example of an advertisement in the *New Orleans Bee* of a slaver who apparently did not care about the slaves' wishes at all:

NEGROES FOR SALE.—A negro woman, 24 years of age, and her two children, one eight and the other three years old. Said negroes will be sold SEPARATELY or together, *as desired*. The woman is a good seam-stress. She will be sold low for cash, or EXCHANGED FOR GROCERIES.<sup>22</sup>

Besides private sales, slave traders, and resellers, there was another option for getting rid of or purchasing a slave – slave auctions and sales. Schneider summarizes these auctions as a place where the slave was 'fixed up' in a 'nigger jail,' to be inspected, look better and healthier to the buyers. Slave traders who were selling often tried to hide defects and modify age, to get the highest possible price. Those slave jails had multiple functions – one, a holding place for those

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<sup>19</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 50.

<sup>20</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, xvii.

<sup>21</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 55.

<sup>22</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 58.

waiting to be sold; second, to provide accommodation while the master is traveling; and third, to punish the slave.<sup>23</sup> Slave auctions were a place where even a defected or a slave in a miserable condition could be sold for a high price due to being spruced up by the slave traders.

In conclusion, during the first settlements, slaves were bonded with their master only for a fixed period of time but later it became permanent. Southern colonies needed more slaves than northern due to fertile soil on their big plantations and the invention of the cotton gin. The American slave trade had many forms, e.g., slave auctions, private sales. Slave auctions did not only have the function of selling the slaves but also functioned as a punishment for their disobedience which will further be discussed in the following chapter.

### **1.3. Slave punishments**

Slaves were being punished, sometimes brutally, for all kinds of crimes, disagreements, disobediences, laziness, or mistakes they have made on their masters' property or elsewhere in the town. All the punishments acted on enslaved people were usually harsher than the punishments of a free person. Klein revealed that slave owners and their employees could beat the slaves, whip them or use as sexual partners and entertainment.<sup>24</sup> James Ramsay, who worked for a few sugar plantations saw those harsh punishments that slaves had to experience and described them in his book called *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) as:

The ordinary punishments of slaves, for the common crimes of neglect, absence from work, eating the sugar cane, theft, are cart whipping, beating with a stick, sometimes to the breaking of bones, the chain, an iron crook about the neck... a ring about the ankle, and confinement in the dungeon. There have been instances of slitting of ears, breaking of limbs, so as to make amputation necessary, beating out of eyes, and castration... In short, in the place of decency, sympathy, morality, and religion; slavery produces cruelty and oppression. It is true, that the unfeeling application of the ordinary punishments ruins the constitution, and shortens the life of many a poor wretch.<sup>25</sup>

Ramsay summarised the horrific punishments that slaves had to go through while working on a sugar cane plantation, as slaves had no protection from their owners. There are many more publications of those who witnessed these brutal and inhuman acts or even of freed slaves who

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<sup>23</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, *Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition – Second Edition*, 125.

<sup>25</sup> "Slave punishments," John Simkin, Spartacus Educational, last modified January 2020. <https://spartacus-educational.com/USASpunishments.htm>



experienced it. A slave named William Box Brown wrote about what he saw on a tobacco plantation that shows slavers had no mercy even about little mistakes:

On one occasion I saw him take a slave, whose name was Pinkney, and make him take him off his shirt; he then tied his hands and gave him one hundred lashes on his bare back; and all this, because he lacked three pounds of his task, which was valued at six cents.<sup>26</sup>

Another type of punishment, that was visible to everyone at first sight, was burning a letter onto a runaway's face – human branding, that would mark them for life. The *North Carolina Standard* published an advertisement in July, 1838, about a reward for returning a runaway slave and her children:

Twenty dollars reward. Runaway from the subscriber, a negro woman and two children; the woman is tall and black, and a few days before she went off burnt her on the left side of her face with the letter M. ...<sup>27</sup>

To summarize this chapter, slave punishments were a cruel and sometimes brutal way of slavers to persuade their slaves to behave according to their wishes and needs. No little mistakes were being overlooked, as a few statements and descriptions of events of freed slaves or other people present on the plantations prove. The inhuman punishments had countless forms, starting with whipping and ending with human branding. Many of them are depicted in the film *Django Unchained* (2012) in the following chapter.

## 1.4. Depiction of Slavery in *Django Unchained*

As mentioned before, the director of *Django Unchained* (2012) wanted to create a film about a topic that not many people talk about or are afraid to discuss. Slavery is a sensitive topic for many, even to this day, but not talking about it or not spreading awareness of those terrible and brutal acts against humans would be also repulsive. Even though Tarantino's 'trademark' in his films is mostly violence and revenge, he found a way to incorporate humour that lifts some weight off of those scenes showing huge amounts of blood and violence. The humorous lift-up is mostly carried by the irony and sarcasm of the two main characters – Django and Dr Schultz. Tarantino did not use his other 'trademark' of multiple storylines thus *Django Unchained* (2012) will be commented on in chronological order of the film.

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<sup>26</sup> Spartacus Educational, "Slave punishments."

<sup>27</sup> Spartacus Educational, "Slave punishments."

In the opening scene, which takes place in 1858 Texas, Django is being transported from an auction by two slave trade brothers, who did not give Django, nor the other slaves, anything more to protect them from the weather than a blanket, shorts, and chains. The slaves were exhausted, cold and barefoot with scars from whipping on their back. They all are approached by Dr Schultz who refers to the slaves as 'poor devils' at first but later he does not change the way of speaking to the slave traders and slaves. Schultz talks to everybody with respect as if he is not seeing big of a difference between the slaves and slave traders, to which one of the slave traders tells him to stop talking to them like that. Later in the scene, Schultz shoots dead one of the traders and only injures the other one, so he can officially purchase Django and fill out the selling papers. Schultz then again shows his position towards the other slaves as he kindly asks one of them to hold his gun. Besides Django, Schultz purchased even a coat, shoes, and a horse to secure comfortable travels for the both of them. Before Django and Schultz leave, they let the remaining slaves decide whether to save their transporter or to 'go to a more enlightened area of this country and shows them the way.

Even though Django and other slaves experienced bad treatment in form of light clothing in winter, Dr Schultz showed them all a respectful approach of a white man, which was not common in real world. Schultz showed his honorable character by legally purchasing Django, a horse and a coat, though he could have just killed both slave traders and leave. Besides that, he gave the remaining slaves a choice whether to continue being a slave or kill the slave trader and escape to the free North.

The film proceeds to Daughtery town in Texas where Django and Schultz cause a fuss with a black man riding a horse. One of the citizens even yells in shock 'nigger on a horse,' which certainly refers to seeing an unusual event. Next, the duo enters a local bar where they cause another shock to the bar owner, as a slave should not enter the bar, and goes for the sheriff to sort this situation out. Meanwhile, Dr Schultz informs Django about what he does for a living – bounty hunting, by saying 'slave trade deals in human lives for cash, a bounty hunter deals in corpses.' Schultz then expresses feelings of guilt for enslaving Django and wants to make an agreement that would help both of them – Schultz would get his bounties and Django would get a horse, money, and most importantly, his freedom.

The next passage of the film leads the viewer to a Tennessee plantation where yet again, Django causes a fuss by arriving on a horse, to which the plantation owner, Mr Bennet tells him: 'it is

against the law for niggers to ride horses in this territory' and Schultz reacts: 'Django is a free man and he cannot be treated like a slave, he must be treated as an extension of myself.' This causes another wave of shock for other slaves who are confused about what treatment should they use. Mr Bennet tried to make it clear how Django should be treated by comparing him to a local town citizen with low social status. The following scene depicts slave punishment for breaking eggs. The female slave was dragged on the ground, tied to the tree, and was about to be whipped by Dr Schultz's bounties. Before the woman is whipped, Django and Schultz kill the three bounties they came for and symbolically cover cotton on the plantation with the red blood of a slaver.

Collecting the bounties from Bennet's plantation escalated by a Ku-Klux-Klan alike riot that wanted revenge and to kill both Django and Schultz. Those men who took a part in this revenge attempt had a slight problem seeing through their hats, thus riding a horse would be very difficult. Humour covering this scene perfectly lifts up the tense atmosphere off of a very sensitive topic and the riot ends unsuccessfully with the death of Mr Bennet that gets shot off of a horse by Django's hand which impresses Schultz because Django's shooting skills as a slave should not be as precise as that.

Further on into the story, Django and Schultz make another agreement to become business partners and bounty hunt together during winter and slowly they are moving towards Mississippi where they will find a lead to Django's wife, Broomhilde, who was human branded with the letter R on her face for trying to escape slavery. While Django is 'killing white folks for money,' Schultz teaches him how to read and some manners of an educated man, e.g. taking one's hat off when entering a building. Once the duo arrives in Mississippi, they get to look through a trade book that records sales and shows the slave's name, buyer, and price that has been paid. After finding out who has bought Broomhilde, they are preparing for their new roles as black slaver and Mandingo fights enthusiasts. Django is not particularly happy about his new role and says: 'a black slaver is lower than the head house nigger and buddy, that's pretty fucking low.' He is well aware of the slave social ladder where collaborates of white cruel people are placed at the bottom.

The following part of the film introduces Calvin Candie. The actor of Candie, Leonardo DiCaprio, described this purely evil character he played in his own words by saying: "...this was one of the most narcissistic, self-indulgent, racist, most despicable characters I have ever

read in my entire life.”<sup>28</sup> Candie is a slaver who loves the feeling of being feared and having power over others. He enjoys Mandingo fights where slaves fight for life. Candie also loves to be viewed as an educated powerful man who prefers to be called monsieur Candie though he cannot speak French and would feel embarrassed if somebody found out. After Django and Schultz meet with Candie in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, Django immediately shows his manners when he points out to one of Candie’s employees that a hat is not to be worn inside a house. Soon after he is approached by an Italian Mandingo fighter owner, who has lost the battle, and is asked about his name and its spelling. Django shows his education by replying ‘D – J – A – N – G – O, the D is silent.’ This scene depicts that slaves did not necessarily have to be uneducated.

Django and Schultz then return to Candy land with Candie, his workers, and a couple of slaves, who despise Django as he is acting as a rude black slaver. At the edge of Candie’s property, they find a run-away Mandingo fighter who cannot fight anymore as he is mentally and physically drained. Candie faces this problem as a businessman who purchased the slave and did not get enough fights for the money he paid. Before Candie decides about the slave's future, he uses the word ‘reimburse’ but the slave, who did not get proper education does not know its meaning. Candie and his uneducated-looking employees laugh at the slave for that and humiliate him which is then followed by letting the dogs tear the slave apart as a punishment.

Once everybody arrived in Candy land, they are welcomed by a black house slave named Stephen, whose father and grandfather worked and served Candies family for decades. Stephen immediately sees Django on a horse and screams ‘Who this nigger up on that nag?’ Again, it was not allowed for a slave to ride a horse and it left Stephen shocked and angry. As the guests were making their way into the house, Dr Schultz asked about meeting Broomhilde, who was raised by a German slaver that taught her German language and Schultz wanted to speak in his native language for once after many years abroad. Unfortunately, Hildi was currently being punished in a hot box – a metal box placed in the lawn where slaves were put in naked for days to boil. Everyone thought that Schultz wanted Hildi not only for speaking but also for sexual service, so they cleaned her up and made her look presentable.

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<sup>28</sup> ABC News, “Django Unchained!': Tarantino, DiCaprio, Foxx Answer Critics,” 02:23

Later that evening, Schultz and Django wanted to fake-purchase a Mandingo fighter and also Broomhilde but Stephen noticed something no one else did – Django and Hildi knew each other. Stephen, the house slave who has served Candie for many years betrayed his own race to protect his master and look better in Candie’s eyes. The evening continues by Candie cutting up the skull of his former slave to present centers of obedience. It all escalates into confirmation that Hildi and Django are married. While filling the papers for the purchase of Hildi, Schultz and Candie have a little encounter when Schultz, a real educated man, talks about Alexander Dumas. Candie, not as educated as he wants to be seen, confirms that Dumas is a great writer and he appreciates his work and angry Schultz tells him that Dumas’ skin is black. The evening ends with the death of Schultz and Candie and Django and Hildi are to be punished.

Candies’ sister wants Django to be punished by hanging his head down and cutting off his testicles but later she decides that a better punishment is to sell him to work in mines where he will suffer for a long time and die. On his transport to the mines, he approaches the transporters and outsmarts them to give him a gun and shoots them immediately. Then he comes back to Candie's mansion and takes revenge on Stephen by knee-caping him (shooting to the knees) and blowing up the whole place.

To conclude and compare that, the aim of the film was not to show real historical events but to depict the violent crimes that were committed against slaves during the long American slavery period. Even though probably everybody is aware of the brutal crimes against enslaved human beings, seeing them depicted by Tarantino may give chills to all the viewers of the film.

*Django Unchained* (2012) depicts the main fictional character named Django, who is a slave, facing racist comments since the first scene of the film. He and other slaves were referred to as ‘poor devils,’ and throughout the whole film, they were repeatedly being referred to with the insulting N-word, which in reality was used even more excessively on a daily basis. Many critics stated that the usage of a racist and insulting N-word was too excessive, as the word is used more than one hundred times in the whole film, but in reality, it most likely could have been even worse, which supports event Tarantino.

The depiction of the slave trade and slave trade long ruthless moves of the slaves when they were not given much protection from the bad weather conditions and had to transport only by foot, as slaves were not allowed to ride a horse, was depicted up to shocking reality.

Slave punishing was shown to the viewer in a not-bloody-violent manner. Human branding, whipping, hot box, etc. are examples of the slaves' punishments that did depict the cruel and inhuman acts of violence that has happened during the American slavery period, though here the director took a step back and did not try to depict those horrific punishments in more realistic approach. The film showed many visuals of the results of the punishments, e.g., scars from whipping, and burned letter onto ones face, that slaves had to carry on their bodies for the rest of their lives.

The film presented a white man's way to find pleasure and fun – Mandingo fights, when the master of a slave sent him to a brutal fight where one of the fighters had to die. This aspect of the film was fabricated to show the evilness of an enslaver who enjoys watching a person die. Though these fights made the film much more interesting, it was a fictional addition to the storyline, because in reality, slave owners would not risk having their strong slave killed due to economic issues.

Though Django and other slaves were treated with disrespect and often even violence, they never experienced these kinds of behavior from the fictional character of Dr Schultz who was a white educated man that mostly carried the humorous and ironic scenes of the film that occur frequently so the viewer has no problem bearing the seriousness of the slavery topic.

The film *Django Unchained* (2012) depicts all the aspects of slavery according to real historical events that happened during the times of American slavery though the real view of punishments and inhuman treatment can never be reached, filmed, and recreated again.

## **2. The Hateful Eight**

Quentin Tarantino's 8<sup>th</sup> Western thriller film named *The Hateful Eight* (2015) follows multiple storylines and shows a time frame of only one day. Yet, the length of the film reaches three hours of watch time. The film besides the depiction of an attempt to rescue a wanted criminal depicts racial discrimination and the treatment of a dark-skinned former Union soldier soon after the American Civil war when blacks were supposed to be treated as equal to whites.

The ultra-violent film was commented on by *The New York Times* and *Vulture* critic who has won a Pulitzer Prize for criticism, mentioned in his review the following:

It's hard to shake the suspicion that, deep down, he believes in nothing but sensation, and that he's spent the last decade or so stridently identifying with oppressed groups so that he can get a gold star for making the kinds of films he'd be making anyway.<sup>29</sup>

The reaction reacts to Tarantino continuously writing films that depict and deal with something people are afraid to discuss. *The Hateful Eight* (2015) is dealing with the racial issues during the Reconstruction period and A. O. Scott, *The New York Times* critic summarized this issue of the leading role Warren who fought in Civil war for freedom:

Marquis is well aware that neither his service record nor his connection to the martyred president will secure his dignity or protect him from bigotry. Before long, racial epithets and threats of harm are coming his way from all directions.<sup>30</sup>

The Reconstruction period and racial discrimination of the time period will be further discussed in the following subchapters.

## **2.1. The Reconstruction Period and Racial Discrimination**

The Reconstruction period took place in the United States of America between the years 1865 up to 1877. During this time period, there were two main factors that affected the Reconstruction. The first one, according to Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, was the fact that freed slaves struggled to quickly learn how to be regular citizens of the U.S., how to earn money for living and often they were trying to exercise their rights<sup>31</sup>, or shortly, they did not know how to function as lawfully free citizens. To summarize this up, the blacks were having hard times trying to claim their rights and equality as freed men and women. The second factor stated by Schneider, was the unstoppable desire and passion of white southern citizens who would not stop to re-establish their white dominance and regain the way of life they have had before the Reconstruction.<sup>32</sup> Carl Schurtz, who observed Southern territories in the summer of 1865 stated: “The emancipation of the slaves is submitted to only in so far as chattel slavery in the old form could not be kept up. But although the freedman is no longer considered the property of the

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<sup>29</sup>“The Hateful Eight,” Matt Zoller Seitz, RogerEgbert, published December 22, 2015. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-hateful-eight-2015>

<sup>30</sup> “Review: Quentin Tarantino’s ‘The Hateful Eight’ Blends Verbiage and Violence,” A.O. Scott, The New York Times, published December 24, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/25/movies/review-quentin-tarantinos-the-hateful-eight-blends-verbiage-and-violence.html>

<sup>31</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 346.

<sup>32</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 346.

individual master, he is considered the slave of society.”<sup>33</sup> The pressure of white southerners on bringing back the times of slavery was visible in the way society perceived freed slaves as they became slaves of a society that considered them not equal. The freed slaves later in a short time gained their black leaders, who were educated in politics. Some of those leaders were free slaves from North who moved down to South to help others. Schneider also states that the blacks became allies with the Republican Party, especially with the radical wing.<sup>34</sup> Schneider then describes that freed slaves did not seek vengeance for the crimes and mistreatment that has happened to them. The freed people only wanted to be considered and be treated as normal equal people, unfortunately, whites were having trouble with meeting freed slaves in positions with authority, e.g., lawyers were having problems referring to a freed slave as a ‘gentlemen of the jury.’<sup>35</sup>

During the Reconstruction period, many whites were against the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery and, as Schneider revealed, refused to let blacks vote and even burned their schools and churches.<sup>36</sup> Schneider describes the violent organization that terrorized lives of the freed slaves, Ku-Klux-Klan, as ‘The most long-lived and largest white supremacist organization, whose members included both recognized ruffians and respectable men. ... During Reconstruction, it terrorized blacks. ... It required its members to take oaths that obligated them to put the organization and loyalty to other members before government, even to the extent of committing perjury.’<sup>37</sup> This organization led by white supremacists, who lived in the ideology of saving the white race from the blacks, caused the deaths of many freed slaves during their raids on schools, churches, and individuals.

To conclude that, the freed slaves were free from slavery in a legal manner that could not affect their perception by former slavers and other whites. Many of the freed slaves were struggling with starting a new free life as it was something they never experienced themselves. Citizens of the South were demanding their old ways of life back but the freed slaves had an ally in form of a radical Republican wing that tried to help and fight for ensuring their rights within the U.S.A. Freed people had high hopes for the Reconstruction period as it was a hope for their

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<sup>33</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 346.

<sup>34</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 346.

<sup>35</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 347.

<sup>36</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 350.

<sup>37</sup> Schneider, *Slavery in America – American Experience*, 490..



new life. However, the white supremacist organization threw the hopes of freed slaves out of the window and refused them as new members of their ‘pure and safe’ society.

Racism and racial issues during the Reconstruction period became a big problem of the society as many of the white citizens used the N-word, which is an insult word used to describe a person of a dark-skinned-race, as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary.<sup>38</sup> Racial discrimination is defined by an online source called United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.<sup>39</sup>

To conclude that, during the Reconstruction period freed slaves had to experience all kind of violent and non-violent bad treatment, either by physical attacks or by being referred to and called by insulting words.

## **2.2. The Depiction of the Reconstruction Period in The Hateful Eight**

The 8<sup>th</sup> film directed by the director Quentin Tarantino called *The Hateful Eight* (2015) is a film set in the time of the Reconstruction period after the American Civil War during which freed slaves were becoming proper citizens with rights and proper parts of the society but were still being treated with disrespect and on-going racial discrimination. The film with multiple timelines switching between one another follows a story of a fictional character named Major Marquis Warren, starring Samuel L. Jackson, who meets his fellow bounty hunter John Ruth, starred Kurt Russel, and together they are heading with their bounties to the town of Red Rock to collect their bounty money. On their way they are stopped by a blizzard and have to stay in a local haberdashery where in a short period of time everything goes wrong as a brother of one of the bounties tries to save her life. The film ends with the deaths of all the characters.

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<sup>38</sup> “Nigger,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, last modified (unknown), <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nigger>.

<sup>39</sup> “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,” United Nations Human Rights, last modified January 4, 1969, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>.

*The Hateful Eight* (2015) is a post-Civil war era film that shows mainly the perspective of an Afro-American Union Soldier Warren. The first sign of racial discrimination comes into place when Major Marquis Warren is standing in the middle of the road to block any carriage that may come to ask for help with transport. As John Ruth's carriage is approaching O.B. uses the word 'nigger' towards Warren. Which was then, and is up until today, an insulting and discriminating word used by both blacks and whites. Later Warren is called an 'African bounty-hunter,' which is again an insulting way to refer to a dark-skinned person. Daisy Domergue, who is on her way to the death penalty, still feels that she is above dark-skinned Warren and calls him 'nigger' multiple times throughout the film as well. Upon that, John Ruth tells her that black people do not like being called 'nigger' anymore, as if they ever enjoyed this label, which was in a way defending Warren from the racial discrimination used but was insulting at the same time. Warren then persuades Ruth to take him to Red Rock by showing him his letter from Abraham Lincoln, whom he claims was his penfriend during the Civil war, which is later shown not to be true. Showing a connection to Lincoln and seeing the pride of Warren speaks for itself, as he feels connected and appreciated by such a high-positioned politician. In the Minnie's Haberdashery there was Warren, who fought against slavery, and Stanford Smithers, who fought for the Confederation. There is shown a contrast between those who fought on the opposite sides of the Civil war as Warren tries to be respectful towards Smithers at first, but after a few racist comments, Warren starts mirroring the behavior of pro-slavery people. The two fighting sides met yet once again. Warren fought in the Civil war to kill crazy white people and Smithers fought for the blacks to stay in chains. Again, those words depict very disrespectful and inhumane behavior toward all freed slaves. Later in the film, there is a passage that stated that the Confederation wanted Warren for a reward of 30 thousand dollars, but the price lowered with time. All of this happened because Warren set up a fire in a camp with prisoners where he killed both white and black people, which was the reason that he was dismissed from the cavalry. This act of violence from a black Union fighter was unacceptable as the Union fought for equality and better treatment. The conversation between Warren and Smithers continues and escalate to Smithers being shot in revenge for the Confederation soldier ordering deaths of black prisoners during war.

Fast forward to the finale of the film, where a bloody and violent shooting and killing occurred, Mannix and Warren are lying seriously wounded in bed, waiting for their deaths while reading aloud the fake letter from Abraham Lincoln.

To summarize and compare that, the main fictional character named Warren experienced throughout the whole film many forms of racial discrimination, though it was paradoxically during the Reconstruction period when freed slaves were supposed to be treated equally, with respect, and without insulting and disregarding someone's race. Warren experienced being called many insulting words and phrases, such as 'nigger.' During his stay at Minnie's Haberdashery, Warren was confronted by a proud Confederation former soldier who stated that he has fought for the blacks to stay enslaved and in chains, which is an incredibly insulting statement, but according to the real historical events it was what the Confederation soldiers were in a war for. Warren also dealt with a bounty hunter who called him the N-word as well and who thought she was still better than Warren, though she was a dangerous criminal waiting to be hung for her crimes. The Reconstruction period was thought to make the position of blacks better within the society but not every member of the white supremacy agreed to that and behaved accordingly.

### **3. Once Upon a Time in Hollywood**

Quentin Tarantino's most recent 9<sup>th</sup> film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) brought back memories of the terrible event in Hollywood that happened to an eight and half months pregnant movie star Sharon Tate and her friends in the late 1960s. The friend group was killed in an extremely inhuman and bloody killing attack, not even having mercy for the pregnant actress whose unborn child also died during the event.

The film though is a fabricated story with detail of the Manson Family implemented to create a breath-taking climax. The storyline turns around an actor Cliff Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stunt double Rick Booth (Brad Pitt). The two fictional characters are the neighbors of an actress Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie) and her husband and director Roman Polanski. The story jumps between Tate and Booth but their storylines are connected by the Manson Family. Later in the film, Booth visits the Spahn Ranch where the Family is located and gets into a disagreement with the members. Manson's followers do not attack the house of Dalton directly because of Booth's encounter, but because they decide they want to kill who taught them how

to kill, which were the actors in general. Family members break Manson's wishes to kill at Tate's house and get killed while trying to attack the Dalton's house.

*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) chose not to depict and recreate the horrific murders that happened in Tate's home. On the other hand, Tarantino chose to move the climax from Tate to her neighbours. Tarantino was asked about this change of reality in an interview for DEADLINE where he commented on it by saying:

Yes, and the morbid thing about that was, once I realized it could be a day in the life, and started to write that, the murder that we know is going to happen was now operating as a dramatic motor to some degree. I don't know if you feel it much the first day, but once we're onto the second day, it's like every single scene is getting you closer to August 8th. It was morbid, the fact that this real-life murder was pulling the characters along.<sup>40</sup>

To sum this up, Tarantino's intention was not to show and film a true crime story but he rather wanted to modify the story and apply it in lightly throughout the whole film to make viewers excited to see what happened on the day of the actual murders. The possible knowledge of viewers was another factor that could have affected viewers' excitement for the final murderous scenes.

Incorporating a theme of the Manson Family may be disturbing for many. To raise a debate about the movie was not its initial intention, unlike in the previously discussed film *Django Unchained* (2012), where the discussion about slavery was partially a goal of the director.

### **3.1. The Manson Family**

Charles Milles Manson was an infamous American criminal, cult leader, and also a musician. A man whose name is well known all around the world as he and his followers from the cult, named Manson Family, committed a wide range of minor but also two horrific and violent crimes. As Melnick states that these acts were smartly constructed in order to initiate a race war.<sup>41</sup> The smartness of his crimes rests in the fact that he did not commit any of these crimes

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<sup>40</sup> Quentin Tarantino Digs Deep On 'Once Upon A Time... In Hollywood' As He Fears "Dark Night Of The Soul," Joe Utichi, DEADLINE, published December 18, 2019. <https://deadline.com/2019/12/quentin-tarantino-interview-once-upon-a-time-in-hollywood-indie-filmmaking-1202809425/>

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Melnick, *Charles Manson's Creepy Crawl – The Many Lives of America's Most Famous Family* (New York: Arcade Publishing), 2019, 16.

himself but instead he implemented his thoughts, ideas and ideology into the heads of his followers, who were later called the ‘murderous crew.’

Many would wonder how somebody could be even able to create a cult with such a murderous and violent outcome. Charles Manson did not have an easy upbringing filled with love and patience, probably the complete opposite. Jack Levin, who is an American sociologist and criminologist, interviewed Manson over the phone while he was serving a life sentence in prison for the crimes he constructed, in order to collect data for his book about serial killers. Levin stated that Manson was often neglected and abused during his childhood and that nobody vividly cared for him which is the reason why he enjoyed his position as a cult leader followed by youngsters into the desert.<sup>42</sup> After a childhood without care and love it was easy for Manson to fall for the fame and admiration of his followers. Levin also stated that he is certain about Manson being a sociopath, as most killers are. He then commented on the key signs of a sociopath, e.g., no empathy for victims and manipulative manners, which both fit the description of Manson’s behavior.<sup>43</sup>

The cult, Manson Family, was set in the United States of America, California, and was active for many years even before the brutal crimes committed by the cult members. Callahan reveals that the majority of the members were young people who had troubled relationships with their families and were looking for a major change in their lives.<sup>44</sup> The beginnings of the cult were filled with words of love and peace, as it was one of the things that the young members were longing. As mentioned in Callahan’s article, Manson was smart in choosing new members of his cult, as he was targeting people who were easy to manipulate – social outcasts with emotional instability.<sup>45</sup> According to Bennett’s article that described majority of the cult members, one of the first vicious members that joined Manson in his Family was Charles

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<sup>42</sup> “PROFESSOR RECALLS INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MANSON A DECADE BEFORE KILLER’S DEATH,” Molly Callahan, News@Northeaston, published November 22, 2017.

<https://news.northeastern.edu/2017/11/22/professor-recalls-interview-with-charles-manson-a-decade-before-killers-death/>

<sup>43</sup> “ News@Northeaston, “PROFESSOR RECALLS INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MANSON A DECADE BEFORE KILLER’S DEATH”

<sup>44</sup> News@Northeaston, “PROFESSOR RECALLS INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MANSON A DECADE BEFORE KILLER’S DEATH”

<sup>45</sup> News@Northeaston, “PROFESSOR RECALLS INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MANSON A DECADE BEFORE KILLER’S DEATH”

Watson, nicknamed Tex, as they met through their mutual friend.<sup>46</sup> Another member mentioned by Bennett that Manson found was Lynette Fromme, nicknamed ‘Squeaky,’ who was a homeless college dropout that was experimenting with drugs and joined the Family at Spahn Ranch in 1967 and she did not participate in the Tate murders.<sup>47</sup> Next member, that Bennett describes, is Susan Atkins, nicknamed Sadie, who was in her mid-teens abandoned by her father and because of that she dropped out of high school and had to find a way to take care of herself. Sadie took a part in the Tate murders.<sup>48</sup> Next important member of the Family mentioned by Bennet is Patricia Krenwinkel who reportedly did not experience difficult childhood but became enamoured with Manson and later participated in one of the Family’s crimes.<sup>49</sup> Linda Kasabian is yet another high school dropout hippie who joined the Family by meeting one of the female members. According to Bennett, Kasabian was the only member with a driving license thus she was a key part to the killings of Sharon Tate and her friends. Last member that needs to be mentioned, as she appears in Tarantino’s *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), is Catherine Share who was an adopted child that later dropped out of college and started acting in soft-porn films. Because of her acting opportunity, she occurred at the Spahn Ranch and shortly after became a member. As mentioned before, Manson as well as his followers, were carefully choosing only new members that did not have the happiest childhoods and that would be easy to manipulate. According to Melnick, Manson referred to the Family members as his children<sup>50</sup> which made the emotionally unstable people very easy to affect and push them towards his ideas and ideology. Manson was not the only one who was inviting new members but also his followers at the time could bring in a new suitable member. There were dozens of other members of the Manson Family cult that do not need to be mentioned as they did not play any major role in the film. Additionally, Tarantino’s *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) depicts only some of the real members of the Manson Family, thus this chapter did not discuss the members who did not appear in the film.

The members of the Family occupied a place called Spahn Ranch, located in Los Angeles and owned by a farmer named George Spahn. Melnick described that the ranch used to be a movie set when Westerns were popular and later it was used as an accommodation for the Family

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<sup>46</sup> “Your Guide To The Manson Family Members — And Where They Are Now,” Juliet Bennett Rylah, LAist, last modified October 2022. <https://laist.com/news/criminal-justice/manson-family-guide-where-they-are-now>

<sup>47</sup> “Your Guide To The Manson Family Members — And Where They Are Now,” LAist

<sup>48</sup> “Your Guide To The Manson Family Members — And Where They Are Now,” LAist

<sup>49</sup> “Your Guide To The Manson Family Members — And Where They Are Now,” LAist

<sup>50</sup> Melnick, Charles Manson’s Creepy Crawl – The Many Lives of America’s Most Famous Family, 91.

members in exchange for taking care of the property and sexual service of some female members, especially Lynette ‘Squeaky’ Fromme who was Spahn’s favorite.<sup>51</sup> Fromme commented on George Spahn by writing: “... He was eighty years old and, although his blindness had for five or six years kept him in a world apart, he was mentally still present ...”<sup>52</sup> The Family members became his eyes and helped him take care of his property until they committed two murders and faced trial.

Manson and his family members were convicted in 1971 of the Tate-LaBianca murders that were committed in August 1969, one in the house of director Roman Polanski and his wife, eight and half months pregnant actress, Sharon Tate, and the second one in the home of Rosemary and Leno LaBianca. According to a Grand Jury Indictment; Case Number A-253156,<sup>53</sup> the murders happened on a late evening on August 8, 1969, when cult leader Charles Manson instructed his devoted followers, to go to a house of Polanski and Tate and to kill everyone present. As stated in the police report published on a webpage dedicated to Manson’s case, Charles Watson, Susan Atkins, Linda Kasabian and Patricia Krenwinkel then arrived to Tate’s house, cut the telephone line and proceeded to kill multiple innocent people, later facing charges and jail time for the brutal murders.<sup>54</sup> The film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) depicts only the relation of Manson and his cult members towards the actress Sharon Tate, her friends, and her neighbour, thus the LaBianca murders will not be further discussed.

### **3.2. Depiction of the Manson Family in Once Upon a Time in Hollywood**

The 9<sup>th</sup> film of the director Quentin Tarantino, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), depicts a fictional story inspired and loosely tied around events that truly happened in Hollywood in the 1960s. The film follows the life of fictional characters, actor Rick Dalton and his stunt double Cliff Booth, who are trying hard not to let their careers fade away by leaving to film a Spaghetti Western in Italy. Dalton’s house neighbours with the house of actress Sharon Tate and her husband, film director Roman Polanski. Charles Manson and his Manson Family is tied into the story by a couple of scenes throughout the whole film. Although the Family seemed

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<sup>51</sup> Melnick, Charles Manson’s Creepy Crawl – The Many Lives of America’s Most Famous Family, 182.

<sup>52</sup> Lynette Fromme, Reflexion: Lynette Fromme's Story of Her Life with Charles Manson 1967–1969 (The Peasenhall Press., 2018), 480.

<sup>53</sup> “INDICTMENT - Grand Jury Indictment; Case Number A-253156,” CHARLESMANSON, accessed November 20, 2022. <https://www.charlesmanson.com/prosecution/indictment/>

<sup>54</sup> “INDICTMENT - Grand Jury Indictment; Case Number A-253156,” CHARLESMANSON.

not to be a central focus of the film, in the end, they step forward by coming into Dalton's house with the desire of killing whoever is inside. Finale of the film is full of blood, screaming and brutal violence but luckily the drugged killers did not cause any deaths other than their own.

The first scene of the film where the members of the Manson Family are presented to the viewer is a couple of minutes into the film, while dumpster diving looking for food, singing and it is cross-linked with a scene where the female member of the cult are walking down the street, still singing one of Manson's song named 'Always Is Always Forever.' Later they all are carrying their finds back to Spahn Ranch to feed the rest of the members. Looking for food in dumpsters was a daily routine for female members. In the following scene, Manson's followers see Cliff Booth and Rick Dalton for the first time, as they are crossing the street in front of their car. Booth is showing clear interest in one of the girls by his looks and facial expression, but also by showing her a peace sign back. Both Dalton and Booth are fictional characters that only carry the storyline thus they never did interfere neither with Manson nor with his followers.

The next scene where Manson's girls are depicted is again an encounter with the fictional character Cliff Booth who was driving by the girls who were sitting on a bench. The first scene, depicting Charles Manson, takes place at the house of Sharon Tate and Roman Polanski when Manson is looking for Terry and Dennis Wilson who used to live in the house, and is directed to someone else who may know where Terry is by Jay Sebring, a friend of Tate. The following scene shows one of Manson's girls meeting Sharon Tate, as Sharon offers the girl a ride and after they arrive they even hug.

In another scene where Tarantino depicts one of the Manson's girls as Booth sees her, yet again, on the street while driving, but this time he decides to stop. Their encounter begins by Booth asking her about the pickles she found in her previous dumpster session and then she is offered a lift to Chatsworth where the girl is headed. This surprised Booth and the girl explained to him that she usually gets a lift to the movie ranch she stays at from tourists who then proceed to take a horse trail ride adventure accompanied by some of the members of the Family. In the following scene, Booth finds out that she and her friends are staying there permanently, which he is shocked about. The girl then finds out that Booth used to film movies at the ranch and that is why he wants to visit eagerly. During the ride, the girl also shares her hatred towards actors and their pretending of killing people on TV shows when real people are being killed in the



Vietnam war. Before they arrive at the Spahn Ranch the girl, nicknamed Pussycat, offers Booth a sexual service which he does not accept because she seems to be very young.

The next scene concerning the Family members is directly at the Spahn Ranch where some of the members are watching TV in George's house. Squeaky hearing a car sends one of the girls outside to see who that could be. Booth then looks around his old movie set and meets another member named Gypsy. After meeting Gypsy, Pussycat finds out that Charles Manson left the ranch for Santa Barbara and is sad because she wanted the two of them to meet.

The following scene depicts two of the members, Tex and Lulu, about to give a horse trail ride to a pair of enthusiast tourists. Tex though is called to meet with Booth, and they have a little friendly chat. After that, Booth starts asking about George Spahn, the owner of the ranch, as he knows him from his filming day at the ranch. The members describe that they are taking care of George and say that the two cannot meet as it is his nap time, but Booth becomes suspicious and makes his way toward George's house. Squeaky orders other members to get rid of Booth but he insists and goes to see George. George's house is not in the best condition as it is dirty, full of trash and the dishes have not been done in some time. Booth continues towards George's room and Squeaky warns him that he will be hard to wake up since she and George encountered in a sexual activity in the morning. Old George does not recognise nor remember Booth or Dalton and continues to tell him that he is blind and only wants to go back to sleep. Booth keeps making sure that George is well taken care of but George does not seem to care at all. Towards the end of the Spahn Ranch scene Pussycat and other members of the Family yell at Booth to leave, but Booth's tire has been punctured by a male member which ends up fighting violently with Booth who proceeds to make him fix the puncture. Tex comes back to the ranch from a tourist ride but Booth has already left.

Fast forward a couple of months when Tate is heavily pregnant, she and her friends are having a fun evening while Booth is with Cliff at his house finding a forgotten LSD cigarette that he has bought some time ago from a hippie girl. Soon after, a car with Tex and three other members arrive at Dalton's address, with Tex telling them that Manson told him to 'go to Terry's old house and kill everybody in there. Make it witchy.' One of the girls in the cars comes up with an idea to kill the people who has taught them to kill in TV shows and proceed to go to Dalton's house while one of the members runs away in a car.

Approaching the final moments of the film, the trio from Spahn Ranch, arrive at Dalton's house where they first meet Booth and Dalton's wife. Tex is pointing at Booth with a gun while other arrivals stand by the walls. All of the Family members are visibly stressed, probably intoxicated and very unpredictable, but Booth is not scared. An incredibly violent and brutal action fight takes place in the living room and Booth with his dog are trying to fight everybody off. Later even Dalton's wife starts to fight with one of the female members. The brutal fight shows an absolutely excessive amount of head injuries, stab wounds, and screaming which is a link to the reality of the Tate murders where all the victims were multiply stabbed. In the finale of the fight, Dalton sets a screaming member on fire with a flame thrower that used to be a movie prop and puts an end to the brutal madness.

The film ends with the deaths of the Manson Family members and pregnant Sharon Tate inviting Rick Dalton over to her house to meet her friends. This final scene does not depict any historical event as in reality Tate and her friends were murdered by the Manson Family members.

To conclude and to compare the movie's depiction of the Manson Family cult-related events, the movie is set in Hollywood in the late 1960s, when Sharon Tate is becoming a famous movie star, which is true to reality as she acted in many films that amazed the Hollywood community and reached major success. Majority of the film though spins around fictional characters Rick Dalton and Cliff Booth who had the most encounters with the Manson Family members, though they did not meet Charles Manson himself. These encounters are impossible to depict according to reality as Dalton and Booth are both fictional characters who could not meet Charles Manson and his Family. The film also depicts Spahn Ranch, a former movie set later used as an accommodation for the Family members, accordingly to historical reality. The owner of the Ranch, George Spahn, let the Manson Family use his property in both, film and in reality, in an exchange for the sexual service of female members, especially of George's favourite Lynette 'Squeaky' Fromme. Manson Family was depicted earning money by horse riding tours for tourists and eating food from dumpsters, which also corresponds with reality as it was one of a few ways the Family collected money. The fictional encounter of Booth, George, and the Family members at Spahn Ranch was not depicted accordingly to historical events due to Booth being a fictional character. The final brutal and violent bloodbath carries some details of the real events of Tate's murders, for example by causing an excessive amount of head and stab injuries to the members. This is a distant link between the brutality and unmercifulness of the

real Tate murders, where the victims were stabbed, shot or beaten sometimes even over thirty times. The violence also fits Tarantino's desire to shoot violent bloody scenes. Sharon Tate and her friends surviving the arrival of the Manson Family is, unfortunately, departed from reality where all of them were brutally killed. In conclusion, the depiction of Charles Manson, his Manson Family members, and their murders was depicted accurately only partially in the film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019).

## Conclusion

This thesis discussed the depiction of real historical events in three films by the American director Quentin Tarantino. In the action Western film *Django Unchained* (2012), the thesis discussed the depiction of American slavery in the late 1850s before the final abolition of slavery in the United States of America. The second film, *The Hateful Eight* (2015), was chosen for the study of the depiction of the time period after the American Civil War. In this period, though slavery was abolished, people of dark skin were still treated differently by society than white free people. The most recent Tarantino's film that was chosen, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), was to discuss the depiction of a worldwide known American cult, the Manson Family.

The depiction of historical events concerning slavery in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) is for the most part very accurate, as he depicts the incredibly brutal, cruel, and inhuman treatment of slaves working in houses and on plantations of white plantation owners. The slaves were a property of their owners thus they were allowed to treat and punish their slaves as they wished and the enslaved people had little to no rights. Their racial and other physical differences led to white people feeling superior to the slaves. The slaves were being punished even for little mistakes, e.g., breaking an egg, by being whipped, raped or by being human branded onto their faces, which was mostly a punishment for the runaway slaves.

Though the depiction of slavery, rude treatment, and racism was depicted, for some critics, over excessively, the film was filled with humour, romance and events fabricated only for the entertainment purposes and for incorporation of Tarantino's 'trademark' – violence. This violence takes place in the final revenge scene of Django when he kills the white slavers and a cruel black house slave Stephen. The director's approach to the raw violence of whipping, being put in a hot box or the final revenge scene could never depict the inhuman and tremendous actions that were made against dark-skinned human beings during the pre-Civil War period. There is probably something for everybody to hate about *Django Unchained* (2012) or something to make one mad but the need for the depiction of such horrific and inhuman crimes was necessary for a long time.

*Django Unchained* (2012) fulfilled and surpassed the expectations of the author of this thesis of the depiction of slavery in the U.S. slavery South and the brutality of white slavers, mostly

because the director and actors found a way to explicitly express all the brutality and violence and also because the film was supposed to be shocking to the viewer and was supposed to raise a discussion of such topic that shall never be forgotten or thought of as unimportant. The film brings real clarity over the era of slavery and finally gives slaves their winning revenge hero.

The depiction of the Reconstruction Period in the United States of America in the years 1865 and 1877 in the 8<sup>th</sup> film by Quentin Tarantino was recreated according to real historical events. In that period of American history freed slaves were meant to be free citizens with all the rights of white people and were supposed and expected to be treated equally and with respect by the rest of the society. The assimilation of freed slaves into their new lives and into society was not easy for them as is depicted in the film where the main character is being called by the N-word over and over again even by a bounty that is soon to be dead.

*The Hateful Eight* (2015) fulfilled the expectations of the author of this thesis by depicting black freed people not being treated accordingly to the thought of the Reconstruction period when blacks and whites were starting their lives as equally important citizens.

The depiction of Manson and his Manson Family cult in the 9<sup>th</sup> and most recent Quentin Tarantino's film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) was not created as a whole plot line radically drifting around the cult but it was a slow, not very frequent, depiction of fictional scenes that were based on real historical events. The cult was shown with hints of truth alongside the fabricated fantasy. The manners, hierarchy, as well as the relationships between the cult members, were shown with precision and most of the recreated real historical events were depicted only in detail. The most horrific crime of the cult, the Tate murders, was not depicted in the film accurately but was turned into fabricated murder attempts in the neighbourhood of Tate with links to the real murders, e.g., an excessive amount of head-beating injuries. Tarantino really did pay attention to a lot of details related to the cult as he depicted. For example, a detail that has happened in reality was Spahn Ranch occupants giving horse rides to tourists. Tarantino also depicted the position of Tex as his stunt while he is away which is accurate with reality.

*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) did not fulfill the expectations of the author of the thesis as the depiction of the Manson Family in the film was not centered around the cult nor did it show much of the Family's life before the murders. On the other hand, it was pleasantly

surprising how Tarantino managed to incorporate the cult theme in the beginning only as a slim thread carrying only a little to no information, but as the film proceeded it slowly escalated and moved the cult into the foreground of the film and created the violent finale.

The outcome of this comparative analysis of the three chosen films of the director Quentin Tarantino is that the films do depict real historical events but only to a certain level as the director needed space in the film for an interesting storyline and multiple fictional characters to keep the viewer entertained the whole duration of the film. *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015) depicted the history of American slavery, racial issues, and the Reconstruction period mostly according to the real historical events. The film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) was meant to show a happy ending for the murdered actress Sharon Tate and thus it did not depict the Manson Family's history according to the real events. The quotations from the three selected films were used to help demonstrate attitudes and insights toward each compared issue.

## Resumé

Filmy *Nespoutaný Django* (2015), *Osm hrozných* (2015) a *Tenkrát v Hollywoodu* (2019) jsou hollywoodské filmy amerického režiséra Quentina Tarantina, které jsou inspirovány významnými částmi amerických dějin. Tato bakalářská práce výše uvedené filmy zkoumá z pohledu historické fikce a porovnává ji s reálným historickým kontextem.

Konkrétně film *Nespoutaný Django* barvitě vyobrazuje otroctví a jeho stereotypy před americkou občanskou válkou, což zásadně ovlivnilo vývoj amerických dějin a samotných Američanů, kteří si nesou důsledky otroctví až do současnosti, kdy rasismus a slova jako například ‚Nigger‘ stále ukazují rasovou nenávist a segregaci. Režisér Quentin Tarantino, který byl v jistých částech svého dětství vychováván přáteli jeho matky, s tmavou barvou pleti, je silně zaujatý proti rasismu a rasové nenávisti, která po staletí provází Američany na cestě historií. Hojně užívání rasistických prvků, nadávek a neskutečného násilí konaného na Afroameričanech v průběhu celého filmu ho dokonce při natáčení *Nespoutaného Django* je mnohými kritizováno a považováno za urážlivé, avšak Quentin Tarantino sám řekl, že ve filmu není ukázáno nebo řečeno nic horšího, než co se dělo na americkém jihu v dobách otroctví a sám svůj film za urážlivý nepovažuje. Dále zmínil, že je nutné, aby existovaly filmy, kde je tato nechvalná část amerických dějin vyobrazena v jejich pravé, kruté a prakticky necenzurované podobě a že člověk určité úrovně film zajisté nebude odsuzovat, ba naopak.

Ve druhém Tarantinově filmu, *Osm hrozných*, kterým se tato bakalářská práce zabývá, režisér kromě fiktivního děje sledujícího příběh lovců hledaných zločinců, vyobrazuje chování a přístup bělochů vůči Afroameričanům v době těsně po Americké občanské válce. V této době byl rasismus a nerovnoprávnost stále běžnou denní rutinou, se kterou se Afroameričané museli potýkat. I když výhra severu v občanské válce úředně osvobodila a zrovnoprávnila všechny Američany, stejně to nestačilo, aby byli respektováni a bráni jako sobě rovní v očích bělochů, kteří ve válce stáli na straně jihu. Zkrátka úředně nastolená rovnoprávnost nedokáže nastavit i rovnoprávnost mezilidskou, která bohužel i v dnešní době v určitých částech Ameriky existuje pouze částečně, protože někteří jedinci se řídí pouze obalem, místo obsahem. Při natáčení tohoto filmu již režisér neměl takový problém a úzkost z vyobrazení tohoto nepochopitelného a nelidského chování, protože jeho předchozí film, *Nespoutaný Django*, s podobným motivem, sklídl u veřejnosti převážně pozitivní ohlasy.

Film *Tenkrát v Hollywoodu*, což je v současné době poslední počín režiséra Quentina Tarantina, vyobrazuje, či se spíše nechal pouze inspirovat, méně známou událostí, která svou nemilosrdnou krutostí pohoršila celý Hollywood, Ameriku a menší část zbytku světa. Režisér se nechal inspirovat ohavnou vraždou slavné Hollywoodské herečky a zároveň manželky režiséra Romana Polanski, Sharon Tate a jejích přátel. Skoro devět měsíců těhotná herečka a její přátelé, kteří byli v té době v jejím domě na návštěvě, byli zabiti členy kultu Manson Family, vedeného fanatickým Charlesem Mansonem, který celou vraždu vymyslel a zprocesoval, ačkoli se jí vůbec nezúčastnil. Film je tímto hrůzným činem pouze inspirován, a i když Sharon Tate ve filmu figuruje, tak k samotné vraždě u ní doma nedojde a členové Manson Family místo toho zamíří svůj úkol vykonat do sousedního domu obývaného fiktivními postavami děje.

Tato bakalářská práce se v každém filmu zaměřuje na jedno hlavní téma. Ve filmu *Nespoutaný Django* jde o téma otroctví a jeho stereotypy. Dále ve filmu *Osm hrozných* se soustředí na dobu těsně po Americké občanské válce a soudobou rasovou diskriminaci a v posledním filmu, *Tenkrát v Hollywoodu*, se zaměřuje na kult Manson Family a jeho známou vraždu herečky Sharon Tate. Ke každému tématu je věnovaná kapitola, kde je nejprve nastíněn historický kontext a jsou zde uvedeny případné definice, pojící se s tématem. Následně se práce zabývá konkrétním vyobrazením jednotlivých motivů v každém filmu a popisuje konkrétní scény děje, kde se daná problematika nachází a vyobrazuje. Tato konkrétní scéna je vždy nejprve popsána a následně analyzována. Práce se především zabývá komparací filmové scény a reálného historického kontextu, zmíněného v předchozích kapitolách.

První kapitola této bakalářské práce se soustředí na otroctví a jeho stereotypy v době před americkou občanskou válkou. V této kapitole je prvně uveden historický kontext k otroctví obecně. Je zde například definován pojem ‚otrok,‘ slovo označující bezprávého člověka považovaného za majetek jiného člověka či společnosti a dále je zde diskutován trh s otroky a jeho varianty a modifikace. Tato kapitola také uvádí jednotlivá práva a omezení práv otroků, jako například nemožnost se vzdělávat či opouštět pozemky svého majitele. Zotročení byli v Americe převážně Afroameričané, ačkoliv takto vlastněni byli i příslušníci mnoha dalších ras, nicméně jejich postavení není předmětem zkoumání této práce. Další podkapitola se zabývá tresty, kterými byli trestáni otroci za jakoukoli sebemenší nedochvilnost, odmlouvání, nedostatečné pracovní nasazení či pokus o útěk. Navazující podkapitola poté ukazuje na



konkrétních scénách filmu otroky a chování otrokářů vůči nim. Následně je porovnána skutečná historie a Tarantinem vyobrazená historická fikce.

Druhá kapitola této práce se zabývá filmem Osm hrozných a dobou těsně následující po Americké občanské válce, kdy ačkoliv Afroameričanům již byly navráceny jejich práva, nebyli ničím majetkem a tudíž měli být bráni jako sobě rovní občané, tato skutečnost nenastala a i nadále byli považováni za nižší členy společnosti, pokud vůbec byli společností jako její členi uznáni. Následná podkapitola se opět zabývá konkrétními scénami filmu, které ukazují přetrvávající rasovou nenávisť, utlačování a ponižování Afroameričanů. Poté jsou tyto scény porovnány s Tarantinovou historickou fikcí.

Poslední, třetí, kapitola popisuje kult Manson Family, jeho vznik, činy a členy. Kapitola nejprve rozebírá samotného Charlese Mansona a jeho následovníky, kteří jsou relevantní pro zkoumaný film. Tato kapitola dále detailně popisuje i noc vraždy těhotné herečky Sharon Tate a jejích přátel, kteří byli zabití čtyřmi členy kultu Manson Family, kteří v té době byli pod silným vlivem zakladatele a vůdce Charlese Mansona. Na tuto kapitolu navazuje podkapitola, která se opět zaměřuje na konkrétní scény filmu, které obsahují a vyobrazují vše spjaté právě s kultem Manson Family a následně jsou tyto scény porovnány se skutečnými událostmi evidovanými s případem zmíněného kultu.

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